

Chapter One

OCT 2006

Damarri was laid up in Trinidad, being just outside "Hurricane Alley", there is a thriving and very efficient industry in boat storage on the Island. It took us a couple of weeks to get her back in the water. Nothing major but just general maintenance, a few minor modifications and re-antifouling the bottom but everything seems such hard work in this temperature and humidity. The temp is in the 30s most of the time but the killer is the humidity which is close to 100%, and then we had a regular thunderstorm at about midday most days.

A bit of excitement, we had an EARTHQUAKE and quite a big one at that... It was just after breakfast and I was using the cafe's wireless hotspot to finish some e-mails. Ute had gone back to our room and then gone over to start work on the boat. First there was a big "rumble", there are some HUGE machines which move the boats around the yard so my immediate thought was that it was one of those passing close by but then the whole building shook and at first I thought the boat hoist had hit the building but when it continued to shake for a few seconds I realised it had to be an earthquake. Then it stopped and I could hear some people screaming and I was about to dash down to find Ute when it started again. It was so violent that it would have been difficult to stand and I could see the whole building wobbling like a jelly! The second shock was probably only about 5-10 seconds but it seemed like a lifetime. Then as soon as it stopped I ran downstairs to find Ute only to find that she wasn't there so I started towards the boat and found her coming back towards me. We were both mightily relieved to find each other, and OK.

Ute had been inside Damarri (still out on the hard and propped up by what we had thought were rather flimsy props). All the boats had rocked and rolled but amazingly none fell over but that was not much comfort to Ute at the time as Damarri was situated between two much larger boats and if either of them had toppled it would not have been funny. Later, on the news we heard that it was a 6.0 on the Richter scale and the epicentre was just about 20 miles from where we were. In the scheme of things a "6.0" is not that great but I was absolutely amazed at how violent it was and at the fact that there was apparently no damage to the building, not even any cracks. I understand there was some slight damage to buildings in Port of Spain and one guy was killed when he fell off a ladder but otherwise it seems that we got away with it pretty lightly. I just dread to think what it must be like to experience a BIG earthquake. This was quite enough thanks!

We finally re-launched on Wednesday 11th Oct. Our intention had been to go once round the bay to make sure everything was OK and then setstraight off for Grenada. However there were a couple of "teething problems" and it seemed a wiser course of action to stop off in a bay just round the corner from the boatyard and sort things out before setting off for the 80 mile night sail to Grenada so that was what we did. We went into "Scotland Bay" which is situated in a nature reserve in the top/left corner of Trinidad. At first sight it is a very beautiful place, almost like a fjord, cut deep into the hills all of which are covered with dense forest. There are no roads to Scotland Bay so it looked promising. Unfortunately it turned out to be the place where all the "Trinnies" come for recreation and there was a steady procession of pirogues and other fast motor boats turning up for noisy parties on the beaches. Not quite what we had expected as we sailed in!

An unfortunate side effect of all this recreation was the huge amount of rubbish, mostly plastic bottles, slopping around the bay. However, in one of the quieter

moments, as the Sun went down we could hear a series of loud "Roars" echoing around the bay, it was reminiscent of "Jurassic Park"! Then Ute remembered something she had read in the guide book and reached for the binoculars. The roars turned out to be coming from a colony of Howler Monkeys. These creatures are quite big, perhaps the size of an Orangutan, with bright red/brown hair and boy do they howl !!!

I slept that night in the cockpit and had a somewhat restless night with quite strong winds whistling through the anchorage and several nocturnal comings and goings of both cruising boats and Trinnies and I didn't like to ask what they were up to in the dead of night!

The sail up to Grenada takes about 16 hrs so since we get about 12hrs day and 12hrs night, whenever you leave you are going to have to sail over black water. We wanted to leave and arrive in daylight so decided to leave in the late afternoon and sail through the night. We sailed out of the passage between Trinidad and a small off-lying island and about half an hour out into open water, as if to say "Welcome back" we were joined by some Dolphins! We spotted them from some distance off and they actually diverted to come over and say hello, swam around us for a few minutes and then continued on their way. They were different to the dolphins we have seen so far on our travels, after a good look through the book we think they may have been "Rough Toothed Dolphins" but it was jolly nice to see them nonetheless!

After that it was an uneventful sail and we arrived in Grenada's Prickly Bay at about 0700 the next morning. It was almost like coming home as Prickly Bay was our landfall after the Atlantic crossing. This has been a very quiet year for hurricanes but technically it is still "Hurricane season" until the end of October and although Grenada is just outside the main danger area, it is still very much "Low Season" here which is wonderful because the weather is just lovely and there are only a few boats here!

Our plans from here are somewhat unsure. The last few weeks have been quite stressful so we plan to stay here in Grenada until at least the end of the month and do as little as possible, maybe have a look at a different bay or two. Then we will probably wander north up the Island Chain again for a few weeks. Longer term, we would like to go through the Panama Canal and thence to the Galapagos Islands and then onwards across the South Pacific. Needless to say, this is a big commitment and not something to be undertaken lightly as it means that, once we have gone through the canal, we will not be able to return for about two years. Because of the prevailing winds, the quick way home will be the "long way round". Suffice it to say that we have already spent a lot of money on charts and don't want that to be wasted but after 30 yrs of flying with BA I have learned not to believe anything until I see it!

So (to strains of The Ride of the Valkyrie) Damarri is sailing again! Paul, Ute and Damarri.
Paul Jefferies