



John Campbell

Crewed Chartering

Beyond the pale

By Patience Wales

Here are some of the things we did not do during our week-long crewed charter aboard the Morgan 60 Red-head IV from The Moorings in St. Lucia: the dishes; fix dinner, lunch, breakfast; clear in or out of new ports; get up at night to check on whether or not we were dragging; move unless we felt like it. And, since Knowles and I were determined to learn to boardsail, any problems we might have had with my grandmother's philosophy—unless it hurts it's bad for you—were taken care of. If "pride goeth before a fall," my hubris has been saturated for this lifetime.

While it is an obvious truth that bareboat chartering and going with a crew are different experiences—bareboating puts you on your own, the boats are smaller, the areas covered are shorter and more circumscribed—the problems and pleasures are about equal in quality, but vary in manifestation. Much as I love bareboating and the sense of living with my decisions on my "own" boat, I was looking forward to being taken care of and to making tracks, to the overnight passage that we planned to take by bypassing Martinique to give us more time in the other islands we wanted to visit. Sailing on a big boat with long legs would be fun. In fact, it was more

than fun, more than the excitement of using ham radio at sea via California to talk with Bebe's post-operation father in Florida. It was more than the legendary physical delights of the wonderful food, drink, and merriment inherent in spending a week in luxury's lap. Chartering with a crew had for us some unexpected side features.

John and Lana Campbell, Red-head's regular crew, have spent years in the Caribbean, both aboard their own boat and on the Morgan, and they were fond of and at ease with the island kids, Bebe, Kenneth, Knowles, and I have also cruised off and on in the Caribbean for years and have always enjoyed its people.



Debe Wurzerich

Dominica's greenness acts as backdrop to everything from clothes to boats

But John has a way with the young vendors that is both straightforward and endearing. We sailed altogether from Antigua to St. Lucia, stopping at Guadeloupe, Les Saintes, and Dominica. Dominica is a green jungle of an island, beautiful to look at but with few tourist attractions and with high unemployment and illiteracy rates. When a cruising boat comes into Prince Rupert Bay on the island's northwest coast, invariably several canoeloads of kids paddle out to sell their shells and coral jewelry, and it's easy to be impatient with them. John was not impatient. He knows that we as tourists are commodities, and he was friendly, businesslike, and fair. He liked the kids; he paid attention to them; he took them seriously, he looked at what they had to sell, and he bought what the boat needed. Then he bought for us the services of one boat for a trip up the Indian River the next day.

Watching him deal with these youngsters, we realized that all he really did that was different from how we usually behaved was to pay serious attention to what they had to sell even if he knew he didn't want to buy. Take the Indian River trip, for

example. John negotiated—\$10 is the going rate—for a canoe to tow the four of us upriver in the boat's inflatable so that we could take our time rowing back down the shoal-lined stream, and he sent Albert and John, our guides, away proud of having "won" us, of having been chosen with care.

Beyond the food and the fun, a successful crewed charter imparts the warmth that comes only from the people you meet

The river is the almost-underground kind covered by mystery and leafy treetops, the kind where sea serpents would surely lurk if they frequented rivers. Then the stream bursts suddenly into bright bubbles of sunlight, and the green becomes shining and new, like a just-born garden. Along its edges, rising out of the banks, are trunks of trees looking like whorls of driftwood beaten by the sea.

Later we were to fly over Dominica and realize once again how distinctive each of these islands is, how unlike one another, and what an extraordinary world within a world

the Caribbean is. When we left Guadeloupe we left cosmopolitan France, complete with marinas, bistros, and fast-paced modern towns. When we arrived at Dominica we found the poverty and primitive facilities that make the island very much a Third World country. It's cruising from city to country.

Meanwhile, we were living on a modern town of our own. We did keep the air-conditioning turned off, but we adapted horrifyingly quickly to the corrupting creature comforts of *Redhead's* microwave, radar, and stereo tape deck and to Lana's fine cooking served elegantly either on the verandalike cockpit (all we needed was a weeping willow) or in the café-comfort of the main saloon.

As usual, the weather was wonderful: warm, windy, sunny, with just enough rain to make us appreciate the sun. We had assumed the weather would be fine, the way most of us do when we're on vacation, as though the world is set up for our happiness. I am always amused (but not at the time) at how angry I am if we encounter a rainy stretch in the islands—how dare it rain on our picnic!

There's an ambience about crewed chartering that is very different from bareboating. The mood is not passive—we hiked, swam, snorkeled,



Bate Wincerich

Lana (left) and I check out some delicious tropical island veggies

walks, smell flowers, all the time getting ready for The Passage. Ours was overnight from Dominica to Marigot Bay, St. Lucia, a distance of about 100 miles. Because we wanted to make our landfall in the late morning we had an early supper and then stood out to sea. The thing about making a passage is that whether it's for 3,000 miles or 100, you have to do certain things: take dinghy aboard; take outboard engine aboard; tie down all movables; set up watch system; stow all breakables; check charts, weather, current tables. We might as well have headed for Trinidad or on to Tahiti. There's an excitement in the air before any passage, though, a sense of serious matters being undertaken. And in this case the reach down to St. Lucia was a vacation-style dream.

Picture a waxing moon, a long, full sea running, a big, strong boat loping along in a fresh breeze. Lying below off watch, I could hear the night sounds, the creaking of the rig, the watch trimming the jibs and checking the chart—those eternal motions that are part of seagoing. It is all so comforting somehow, and so satisfying. Everyone does his job all to the same end. Martinique slips by, then Rodney Bay, and by noon we are tied up at The Moorings's dock in Marigot, heroes, having braved the sea.

Beyond the food and the fun, a successful crewed charter leaves you with another kind of fullness. The Campbells meshed with our lives for a week. We lived with them, sailed with them, traded sea stories . . . we really got to know them, and they us. When Albert, our Indian River guide, told us that his canoe, *Sea Vision*, was painted in "my style," we all understood that his style was multi-colored and bright—a sea vision to remember. As usual, it comes down to the people. Everything else fades; the iridescent sea, the parrot green of Dominica's hills, the tan on our backs. But Lana and John and the kids selling shells stick in our minds. When we dream about our charter on *Redhead*, it's their warmth that touches us.



fell off the sailboard—but it's definitely follow-the-leader. This is another reason why the brokers say that who the skipper/crew are is much more important than what the boat is: The skipper/crew are land-guides as well as boat personnel. John Campbell is nuts about forts, for example, and it was hard not to be caught up in his enthusiasm. We hiked up to Fort Napoleon on Terre d'en Haut in the Îles des Saintes, our next port after Guadeloupe and where we spent two days, and crawled all over the fortress from basement to battlement.

The anchorage at Bourg des Saintes is one of those ample, protected round pools that lets you see

the world come and go: the ferry from Guadeloupe, a couple of French warships with sailors and helicopters standing at attention on deck, a myriad of yachts ranging from barely afloat to big, bright, and beautiful. I could have sat there a month, just watching and eating and drinking and swimming, both before and after the daily board-encounter session. In fact, our only two problems during the week were the chronic diseases of time and weight. The first slips away, and the second comes to stay.

In many ways this week was a mini-slice of ocean cruising. You meander down the islands, staying here longer than there; you eat ashore; you buy fresh food, take