

omy of the island was founded.

Cruising boats come not only to sample French living at its best, but to stock up on the cheapest liquor in the Caribbean and to visit the chandlery owned by Loulou Magras. For more than 10 years now, Loulou has run what is perhaps the best stocked chandlery in the eastern Caribbean.

One sailor, who has been a long-time friend of Loulou's, is Paul Johnson. Many years ago, Paul sailed from England in a 16-foot essentially open boat called *Venus*. Realizing there was perhaps an easier way to cross oceans, Paul became a boatbuilder in England and built himself a chubby little 28-foot double-ender. Like all Paul's boats, she was a gaff ketch.

Paul sailed his new *Venus* out to the islands, and cleaned up the then thriving traditional class at Antigua Race Week. He became disenchanted with the way Antigua Race Week had shifted toward serious racing and one day, while bemoaning this fact to Loulou, they decided to start their own regatta.

From these humble beginnings, the regatta has flourished. Between events, Paul has done a lot more sailing, designing and building. For himself, he built a new *Venus*, 42 feet on deck, of foam sandwich construction. For Loulou he built a 34-foot strip plank and epoxy version. Loulou has named his boat *Pluto*. For this year's regatta, another 42-footer and a 28-footer joined the fleet to complete the family.

In addition to these four gaff ketches, there were some 136 other boats entered. There were nine multihulls, ranging from a 50-foot Spronk catamaran to a lightweight 38-foot Newick trimaran down to a 16-foot Hobie cat.

On the other end of the scale came the big schooners. *Lindo*, a Baltic Trader rigged as a three-masted topsail schooner, was the biggest at about 130 feet. Just a little smaller was *Puritan*, a gaff schooner, and *Marie Pierre*, a staysail schooner.

In between these extremes was just about every imaginable type of boat. There were some sporty looking Swans and some salty looking double-enders. There were several workboats and even Jimmy Buffett's beautiful little Alerion sloop, *Savannah Jane*. We were fortunate to sail on a boat that perhaps most typified the spirit of the regatta. She is a 68-foot schooner called *Water Pearl*. She was built about five years ago on the beach in Bequia, in the Grenadines, by Chris Bowman and friends. Chris now skips the boat, and is co-owner of her with Bob Dylan. (See "The Boats of Bequia" by Tad Brady, June 1981.)

The festivities began on Saturday evening with the skippers' briefing—held in the road outside Loulou's shop. It was scheduled for 4 p.m. "Caribbean time" which, by our watches, was a little after 6 p.m. Loulou began by announcing that all the race programs were still at the printer in Miami, so verbal sailing instructions

would have to suffice. The main message was that anybody caught trying too hard would be penalized by the committee. Everyone was reminded that we were all in the regatta for fun. Protests, accidents and collisions were forbidden.

We joined *Water Pearl* early next morning and met the six vociferous Bequian crewmen. The shouting and hollering that was to accompany *Water Pearl's* progress around the course began before we had even cleared the harbor. The breeze was very light and the crews of some of the slower boats were having second thoughts about racing.

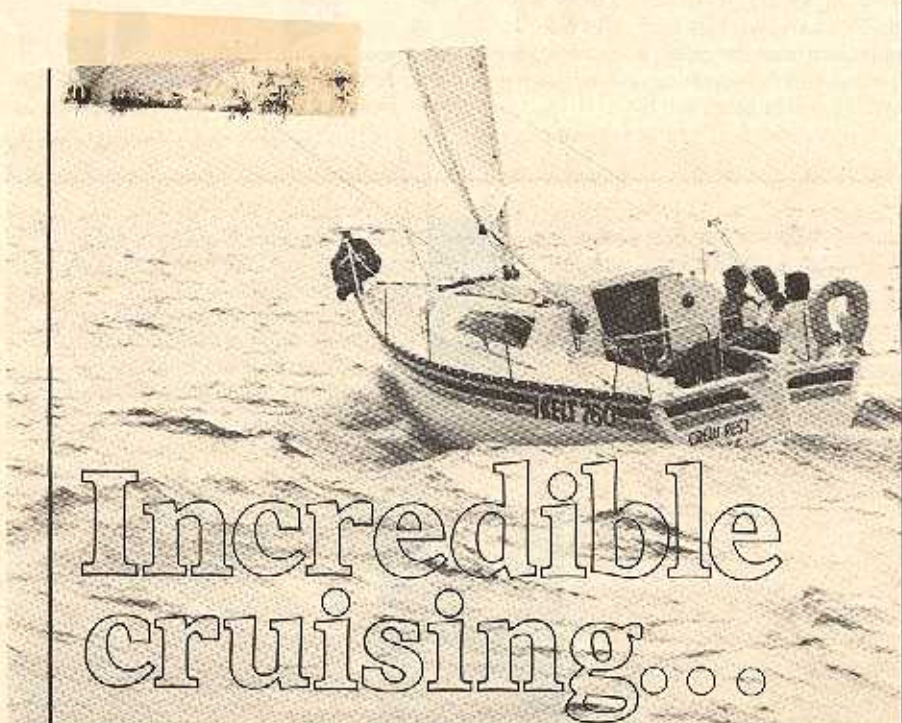
The scorn and derision from our crew finally shamed the crew of *Lindo* into taking down their awning and *Lena Marie*, a slightly smaller Baltic Trader, reluctantly pulled up her anchor and followed us out toward the starting line.

We were entered in the Tall Ships class, which consisted of the more unwieldy craft. The idea was to start them first and get them out of the way before the bulk of the fleet started.

On the run down to the little island of Fourche, the more sprightly of the smaller boats began to pass us. Up with the leaders was *Naga*, a Newick-designed trima-

The Caribbean Regatta For Cruising People

St. Barths or, more correctly, St. Barthélemy, is a small, typically French island about 90 miles north of Antigua. It has long been a Mecca for cruising boats in the Leeward Islands and, before that, a home for a fleet of smuggling boats upon which the econ-



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Loulou's Pluto is a 34-foot version of Venus.

ran that had started more than an hour behind us. She sailed past with impudent ease as we settled down to work on the pile of sandwiches and cold beer that appeared from the galley. It was most pleasant to sit in the sunshine and to watch the procession of boats sail by.

It was about 8:30 p.m. when we crossed

the line, or where the finish line had been. The committee boat had long since given up and gone off to join the festivities. But we didn't care. As far as we were concerned, we had finished, and even if only by default, we had won the Tall Ships division. As to the other divisions, well, as an Irish friend once said in similar circum-

stances, "It took a hell of a lot of good boats to beat us!"

By Monday morning the wind had increased somewhat for the singlehanded race around the island. Indeed, the wind was just a bit too strong for some of the more ambitious plans to get spinnakers on some of the longer boats.

Most people were content to relax on the beaches in preparation for the next day's carnival parade, while the stalwart skippers bashed their way around the island.

Unfortunately, the carnival never really happened. As the appointed time drew near, the heavens opened and heavy squalls began to blow from the west. The wind and the swell coming straight into the harbor caused what Loulou described as "a little panic." We stood out to sea that night as our anchor seemed reluctant to keep hold of the bottom.

There was still a good stiff breeze blowing as we returned to Gustavia the next morning in time to watch the start of the Gaffers' Race. It was perhaps fitting that the race was won by Paul Johnson in his 42-foot Venus. However, the results were academic; just the spectacle of seeing the fleet bash to windward in the 25-knot winds made the trip to St. Barths worthwhile for competitors and spectators alike. See you there next year!

John Campbell

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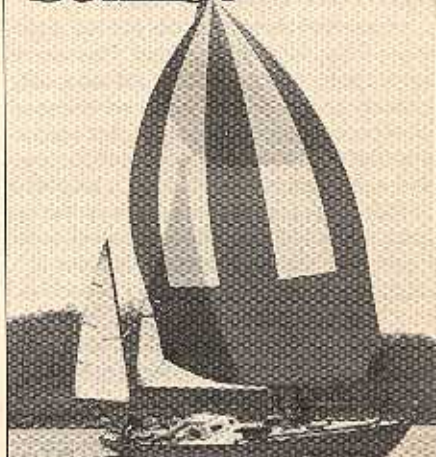
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