

LOG of 'MIMI'

VOLUME 4

MARATHON, FLORIDA KEYS WINTER, 2003 - 2004

CHAPTER ONE – MARATHON, FLORIDA KEYS

Vaca Key, Faro Blanco Marina (Bayside)

October 27th Monday

Docked Faro Blanco Marina, Marathon, FL Keys [Upper 80's, Clear, Wind East 10]

MIMI'S winter home. This is a rest day for every one except Capt Jim, he works around boat doing odd jobs, here and there. Betty cleans some and washed clothes in between chapters of a good book. Dick drinks beer and sets around on some old chairs behind the boat watching people come and go most of the day, then grilled some wings for cocktail hour, that turns out to be our supper. Thoughts of never leaving this place crossed everyone's mind, it is so peaceful. Betty going to bed to read, as Ralph and Ralph finally get to watch 'Water World', Jim makes it through the first 1/3, Dick 2/3 then its off to slumber land.

October 28th & 29th Tuesday & Wednesday

Docked Faro Blanco Marina, Marathon, FL Keys [Upper 80's, Clear, Wind N-NW 15+]

Florida Bay white capping all day, giving some swell in the marina, lets us adjust docking lines to suit this type and direction of wind and waves. We were pretty well right on the first time, so not much adjustment needed. Today is 'pump-out' day; the City of Marathon, working with the marina's, has a large inflatable boat with pump-out tank. We sign-up for the 'Shit List' by Sunday and they come on Tuesday and pump-out the holding tank. The marina pays \$5 per boat (token amount). It's a good program that reduces overboard dumping and improves water quality. Rented a car from Enterprise, so Betty went grocery shopping, then Jim went to a canvas shop to get some HD snaps and 4 straps sewn sun pad hold down (the one's that blew off during a Chesapeake thunderstorm). J&B watch movie 'With Malice', Ralph goes to bed, all this doing nothing wears you out!!!

October 30th Thursday

Docked Faro Blanco Marina, Marathon, FL Keys [Mid 80's, P-Cloudy, Chance of Rain, Wind North]

Wind blew all night from N but not uncomfortable. Today we got serious with some unpleasant jobs, like cleaning the grill, cleaning dock lines etc. We went to Seaside Sea Food for lunch and check it out, they have stone crabs, so probably do a supper there soon. Rain started so rushed back to boat to close and button it up.

October 31st Friday

Docked Faro Blanco Marina, Marathon, FL Keys [Mid 80's, P-Cloudy, Wind N 20 & Gusty]

Halloween tonight. Very windy today. Ralph and Ralph drive to Ft Lauderdale for the boat show, Betty stays at boat so the boys can do some serious 'stuff' shopping and check out the new

Neptunus 62 and talk with Ray Thompson. Jims back is bothering him, he hurt it helping move a dink or something. In June it was an elbow, last year left knee and year before right shoulder (aint it hell to grow old) so we took it slow through the exhibits, making a number of stops at the various beer tents. We have dinner with Kay and Will Steeves and swap show as well as boating stories, seemed strange, but without Betty Halloween dinner was not nearly as wild as last year!!

November 1st Saturday

Ft. Lauderdale, FL [Mid 80's, P-Cloudy, Wind N 20-25+ Chance of Rain]

Ralph decides to fly back to Tennessee rather than Wednesday; Jeanne having medical tests and needs to be there. Capt Ralph back at the MIMI by 10:30 AM, so Betty's plan for the day is patio furniture shopping. It is almost a 'saga' worthy of story telling...Home Depot delivery cost too high and not until Monday or Tuesday, so we stuff 4 chairs, table, rug, and umbrella into the rent car (sub compact). Umbrella base needs sand; we will get tomorrow (just the beginning of this part). We are carefully watching the low pressure between Bermuda and Florida that is causing this wind, it is going to come right down the keys, but so far is still a 'no name'. Movie for tonight is 'Cape Fear' one Betty has been wanting to see since we came by Cape Fear up in NC. A little roll at the slip at high tide with waves clearing the breakwater.

November 2nd, Sunday

Docked Faro Blanco Marina, Marathon, FL Keys [Mid 80's, P-Cloudy, Wind N 20-25 & Gusty]

It's a good day to finish the patio furniture 'saga'. Betty gets an early start on the umbrella project (crack of 10:00am) and heads to beach to fill the plastic base with sand. With walk on beach and looking for shells, it is 1 ½ hour trip. When she returns, we add water for extra weight and we're set...except the pole the store clerk said was inside the umbrella...wasn't. So it's 2 trips to get the right pole, now we find the piece of -----(doo doo) base will not tighten on the pole & the plastic finally breaks....PLAN B we will make a concrete base, we could not find a statuary shop, so to keep Betty from borrowing someone's mail box base, we go back to Home Depot. We dismissed using concrete blocks, or a cast iron base (not heavy or large enough), so we will just make our own. 2" dia. x 8" pipe nipple, an 18" x 24" x 6" plastic mortar mixing pan, and 2 60 lb sacks of 'Sacrete' are the components, along with a potting rake for a mixer. With Betty as supervisor, Jim cuts hole in center of pan (8" pipe, 6" pan) then fill pan with 'sacrete', it is a masterpiece that has to work. During cocktail hour while grilling Cornish Hens on the spit, neighbors Jim and Jane Rifkin stop by to examine the 'project'. Jane suggests painting and Betty joins with idea to add fish, while Jim R doubts the paint will stick to the plaster.

This job turns out to be an all day fiasco, a hard day for the old bad back, and it better work!!!!

November 3rd, Monday

Docked Faro Blanco Marina, Marathon, FL Keys [Mid 80's, Clear, Light Wind, Chance of Rain]

During the night, the wind layed and lack of wave noise woke up Capt Jim, who was having a fitful night with umbrella nightmares! After making coffee, but before the newspaper, Jim Checks out the umbrella stand...it works, not real pretty, but it works (it should at about 120 lbs). Later the plastic pan is removed and the concrete (even with honeycomb) looks better. Betty failed to get up early, 'forfeiting' her deal with Jim to go to Bahia Honda Beach (would have been rained out anyway). Most of the day spent on getting ready to 'depart for Texas' projects and getting MIMI secure as possible in slip.

Neighbors Jim, Jane and Butch catch a lot of fish (mostly Snapper) and announce a fish fry for tomorrow night..... looking forward to that.

November 4th, Tuesday

Docked Faro Blanco Marina, Marathon, FL Keys [Mid 80's, Heavy Rain]

Thunder and heavy rain at 6 AM with usual gusty wind, umbrella stand did its job..... Betty left it up all night. Our boat wash crew (FISH TALES - Kim Kuntz & Alison Beck) show up at 10 am in their uniforms...BIKINI'S...of course as Captain of the boat and first time, Capt Jim closely supervises!!!! Unfortunately, heavy rain postponed work for the day around 11:30, probably all those old eyes could take!!!

The rain is from the remnants of the tropical depression that almost grew enough to gain 'name' status as a tropical storm or hurricane, it finally ended around 5 PM. Just in time for the dock fish fry. The fresh Snapper was fabulous and food brought by all.... perfect, makes us want to fish for the rewards, next time around. Our neighbors at the fish fry were....

Jane & Jim Rifkin

Ocean Alexander 'Sanborn' – Marathon
Regulator fishing boat 'Riley'

From Connecticut, the Rifkin's are spending their 5th winter at Faro Blanco.



Cathy & Butch Neibur

'Maybe Baby' – Marathon

From South Carolina, they are 'live-aboard's' at Faro Blanco for 5 years.



Marie & Tom Smith

Californian 'Adventure' – Tampa

From Tampa, it's Marie & Tom's 2nd winter at Faro Blanco and they are now here full-time. Photo to be added later.

Loretta & Tim ...

Not a rowdy bunch, probably subdued from the large meal. We depart around 10 PM to make final preparations for departing tomorrow. Our new friends and neighbors, Jim & Butch are keeping an eye on MIMI while we are gone.

Other dock neighbors include:

Gary Bach

‘Wood Duck’ and center consol fishing boat ‘Urin Trouble’ Gary is from Wood Island, Connecticut.



Jerry Connell - Viking 60 Sportfisher ‘Arcade’ – Pt. Pleasant, NJ. Jerry, captain and guide, often brings his daughter, Abigail to the dock and on fishing outings.

Bill & Joan Jungen - Chris Craft ‘Morning Star’ – St. Louis, MO Bill & Joan subsequently departed Faro Blanco. First for a month in Key West then on the Fort Lauderdale.

Bob Ryan.. - Bertram 45 Sportfisher ‘Miss Annie’ (also has a 60’ Hatteras motor yacht

Ron Fairbanks, Faro Blanco dock master has made us feel welcome at our laid back, tropical winter home in the Keys. It was a great 3 weeks, wonderful trip, good weather, and now new friends in a Paradise. MIMI is truly a wonderful motor yacht and the Neptunus folks are impressive with superior service and customer care.

As usual, we look forward to the next adventure on the ‘MIMI.’

November 28th, Friday

Docked Faro Blanco Marina, Marathon, FL Keys [Mid 80’s, Clear, wind L/V]

We return!!!!!!

It has been 3 weeks and we are ready for a boat fix. Temple was 38 degrees and it is 87 degrees on the MIMI, wow is this great or what. We need to enjoy it while it lasts; tomorrow we are in for a change with a front on the way.

Our good neighbor Jim Rifkin stopped by with a mess of snapper they caught today, a welcome back thing we really appreciate. Tom and Marie (ADVENTURER) have Marie’s daughter and son and 2 grandchildren here for Thanksgiving.

The boat washing crew did a good job, MIMI looks great, we are just so glad to be back. It has been a long day since 5 AM, we are relaxed and will bed down early.

November 29th, Saturday

Docked Faro Blanco Marina, Marathon, FL Keys [Low 60’s – Low 70’s Cloudy, wind NW 20-25]

Cloudy and cool makes the wind chill biting. The front came through around 2 AM with big wind, the waves picked up immediately. At high tide the waves crested over the sea wall that protects the marina, giving us plenty of action in the marina. Two small 20’ & 24’ center console fishing boats docked at the marina gas dock have to be moved, they are bouncing so badly they tear off fenders and are causing damage to boats and the dock.

Betty gets up a 9:30AM, could not sleep any longer than 13 1/2 hours! On the way through Marathon, Betty spotted signs about an Art festival, so now it is a got to do today thing, with the wind blowing only a few artists show up for the 'Fest' and Capt Jim gets a reprieve. Here is to the wind gods!!

We do some used-car shopping, mistakenly we are thinking we can buy vs. rent a car... not so, at very best a break even deal. Most could not even be trusted for a 10mi trip let alone to or from the airport.

For dinner we grill the snapper, it is so awesome, we never get tired of it. The movie for the night is 'Sling Blade', really well done, but it goes on the top 20 worst movie list.

November 30th, Tuesday

Docked Faro Blanco Marina, Marathon, FL Keys [Mid 60's – Upper 70's, Clear, N 15-20]

The wind shifted more to the north and began to lay after midnight.... 'down' to 15 – 20! We think it is going to be a nice day. Oops!!! Wind back up to 20 with higher gusts by 10AM. No complaints though, it is nice out of the wind in the sun, so we just enjoyed a relaxing day doing nothing.

December 1st, Monday

Docked Faro Blanco Marina, Marathon, FL Keys [U 60's – U70's, Cloudy, N 15-20]

Windy day.... with gusts to 25 or better.

It is a Boat and Patio projects day, Betty shops for pots & flowers & planting stuff, Jim starts work on the Lazzette, organizing, cleaning and painting. The Neptunus paint lacked quality in the Lazzette and the engine room, dull finish and absorbs dirt and impossible to clean, so repaint with Interlux Brightside white (hi gloss, hard finish, easy to clean). The painting will take several days because of the tight spaces, and besides who is in a hurry.

Betty buys a bag of sea shells and some adhesive, components of her work of art umbrella base. Remember the base, concrete (refer to Nov 3rd entry), even though it was already a work of art, Betty wants it covered in sea shells, tomorrows project.

December 2nd, Tuesday

Docked Faro Blanco Marina, Marathon, FL Keys [U 60's – U70's, Cloudy, N 15-20]

Still blowing and cool. Betty's project requires several trips to the shell store and in the end is really nice, an opinion confirmed by all of our dock neighbors. Question is, do they really like it, or are they just being nice? One thing for sure, it is in it's permanent location, because at 120+ pounds and with sharp shells all over it, it is going to be a real chore to move it!

During Betty's project, Jim is going to clean the dink, first time since leaving Baltimore. Upon removing the tarp discovers that some 'Ralph' forgot to remove the drain plugs and there is about 6" of water in it, which contributed to the mildew and deterioration of the empty Fosters boxes (cardboard) used to prevent ponding on the tarp. Bad idea, blue and red dye came off and stained dink. Made Capt Jim come up with better solution, a PVC strip was used to form a rib or bow to elevate the tarp to drain, the rib was actually a PVC piece used to finish PVC lattice, bought at Home Depot.

December 3rd, Wednesday

Docked Faro Blanco Marina, Marathon, FL Keys [L70's-U80's, Clear, N 10-15]

This is more like it!!! Our kind of hard.... cold winter day! Lazzerette work continues, painting and hanging a 'rope rail' for hanging extra dock lines and various other ropes. Betty puts rope lights on our palm tree, a 10 minute job; Jim connects the electricity, a 3 hour job. An adaptor to marine 3 prong twist lock outlet is required; West Marine wants \$75 so we make one for \$15 with 2 trips to Home Depot thrown in for good measure. Now what, one of our A/C chiller units not cooling, Tom recommends S.A.L.T. (Sea, Air, Land Technologies) a company coming tomorrow to look at it.

December 4th, Thursday

Docked Faro Blanco Marina, Marathon, FL Keys [L70's-U80's, Clear, N 10-15]

Bob Williams of S.A.L.T. arrives around 9:30 to work on A/Cs. Jim gets him started then leaves Betty in charge while he and Jim Rifkin drive to 'World Wide Sportsman', a big sports 'candy store' in Islamorada, about 20 miles from the marina. Purpose of this was to get Capt Jim started on fishing gear. Jim Rifkin does a lot of fishing and in addition to their M/Y 'Sanborn', has a 26' Regulator center console fishing boat 'Riley' with 2-200 HP Yamahas. After that, all PM dedicated to lazzerette painting.

December 5th, Friday

Docked Faro Blanco Marina, Marathon, FL Keys [M70's-M80's, Clear, Calm]

Perfect day for some boating, but 'Fishtales', our bikini clad wash crew is due and we are not sure what time. All the guys on the dock look forward to this weekly entertainment. It turned out one of the girls got sick and they cancelled so some disappointment on the dock.

Jim, Jane, and Jerry (skipper of the 62 Viking 'Arcade' docked on our starboard) and his daughter had a good fishing day. They gave us a nice Mackerel fillet, which we will put to good use.



We exchanged our Avis \$300 per week rent car for an Enterprise \$150 per week car. Betty negotiated based on 2 weeks rental per month for the next few months. They did not have a sub compact so Betty gets a Mitsubishi 'Spyder' convertible.... Kewl!!!!!! We get a call from Ralph, he and Jeanne along with Larry and Janet Stiedles, the marina owners up in Tennessee are coming for New Years, arriving Dec 30 to Jan 5th. We are looking forward to that. Heavy rain around 7PM, makes sleeping so good.

December 6th, Saturday

Docked Faro Blanco Marina, Marathon, FL Keys [L60's-L70's, Cloudy, N 20-25/G30]

Winter is here again!!! This cold front arrives at 2AM, the magical time, bringing strong gusty winds. Clouds break-up mid morning and it is nice in the sun. Jim & Betty drive (top down) to World Wide Sportsman for shopping and lunch of Conch Fritters and Cracked Conch, it is wonderful.

Bilge cleaning rounds out the afternoon, then we grill the mackerel (slathered with garlic and onion powder) it was good, but not as firm as snapper or trout. We are not getting picky, just an observation!!!

December 7th, Sunday

Docked Faro Blanco Marina, Marathon, FL Keys [M50's–M60's, P-Cloudy, N 10-15]

PEARL HARBOR DAY.....Brrrrr cold day. Our heaters are working good, first time since we left Canada in May. Betty drags Jim to a flea market on Pine Key, 2nd flea market in 2 days, and the only 2 Jim has ever been to in his whole life, opinion is obviously not printable, but it is what was always expected. Then to top it off, the Cowboys loose to the Eagles 36-10, not a really good day!!!! On the other hand, we could have been away from the boat!

December 8th, Monday

Docked Faro Blanco Marina, Marathon, FL Keys [M60's–M70's, P-Cloudy, N 10-15]

Jim is going fishing with Jim K. and wife Jane, but first got to get a Florida fishing license. You can do it by phone and credit card, costs non-resident for year (saltwater) \$36, they give you temp number over phone and now you are legal. It is a little breezy but they are needing more fish for the dock Christmas party and fish fry. We will miss the party when we go back to Texas.

Fishing was poor, barely enough keepers for a mess of fish for us, caught two 24" Shark, a Blow Fish and several coral bass and a few Mutton Snapper, so it was a fun day regardless, it was really nice to be out fishing, Jim and Jane are good to be with and they really know how to fish.

After returning and while relaxing, heard this loud crash of something falling, it was a soap dispenser peeled loose and fell off the wall in the forward shower. A new project was born.... The dispenser in the master shower fell off a couple months ago... double sided tape isn't strong enough to withstand rough seas.

December 9th, Tuesday

Docked Faro Blanco Marina, Marathon, FL Keys [M60's–U70's, Cloudy, N 15-20]

Light winds early then picked-up later in day. Jim R & Ron the marina manager leave early to get in some fishing before the winds get up to 20 as predicted, they limit out by noon; Capt Jim should have been there today!!! The lazzerette & engine room project is finally completed this morning. Unfortunately, the deck speakers are another challenge, going to need a Tech's help for that.

December 10th, Wednesday

Docked Faro Blanco Marina, Marathon, FL Keys [L70's–M70's, Cloudy, L/V]

Light rain, on and off, then improving to partly cloudy by late morning. Jim and Betty drive (top down) the 60 miles to Key West so Betty can get a shopping fix. The shopping began in earnest after a fine yellow fin tuna lunch at the Half Shell Raw Bar, located at Key West Bight Marina.

Amazingly, all that shopping and only 'gathered' a conch shell (\$1.50) for grandson Ruffin. The mine field included the Wyland Gallery, beautiful stuff...paintings and glass and Italian Jewelers coin pendants from silver treasure found in the wreckage of the 'Atocha'.

December 11th, Thursday

Docked Faro Blanco Marina, Marathon, FL Keys [M70's–Low80's, Clear L/V]

Clear and sunny.... a glorious day.... Marathon's 81 degrees is the high in the nation!!! We call this 'Preparation day' since we are returning to Texas tomorrow. Betty cleans, washes clothes etc, while Jim finishes projects that he can. Fishtales wash crew wash MIMI and Steve Grassley of S.A.L.T. comes by for boat orientation and quote to monitor MIMI and exercise engines, genset and thru hull valves while we are away. In the process the swim platform failed to come back up...panic! Finally called, Doug Nichols, brother of Neptunus owner Ken Nichols, makes the swim platform hydraulic system for Neptunus. He called and walked Jim through the manual valve engagement and afterwards the lift worked fine, just a stuck valve, we ordered a replacement solenoid and filter.

With a clean boat, we dine out at Annette's Lobster House for a final stone crab & broiled Dolphin with wasabe sauce. A good send off dinner we thought.

December 12th, Friday

Docked Faro Blanco Marina, Marathon, FL Keys [M70's–U70's, Overcast, Windy]

We timed everything perfectly for our 9:10 AM flight from Key West.... except Enterprise is the only rent car company not located at the airport, which we found out the hard way. At the time it actually seemed worse than it was, we were shuttled in with plenty of time. Short pants for 2 weeks why stop now, temperature was in the 40's with wind and light rain, should have quit while ahead...brrrrrr!!!!

Last 2 weeks went fast, we intended to do some cruising, but 'things' got in the way plus the many days of high winds. We did have a lot of sunshine and a got a chance to get to know our fellow boaters and neighbors as well as become more familiar with the area. We regret that we will miss the Christmas party, organized by Jane Rifkin; it would have been great and a good opportunity to meet and know more of our dock neighbors.

December 25th, Thursday

Marooned Temple, Texas [L40's–Low 60's, Clear L/V]

Our plans were, after a big Christmas dinner with the family, to spend tomorrow in Ft. Worth with Betty's mother and celebrate niece Carol Ann's birthday (25th) and mother Mildred's (30th) then fly on to Key West on the 27th. Son Drew and his wife Cathy were expecting first baby January 11th, but the baby decided to not wait. At 11:45PM a call is received that Cathy is in labor.... so much for the plans.

December 26th, Friday

Marooned Temple, Texas [L40's–Low 60's, Cloudy L/V]

Betty and Rachel arrive at Scott & White hospital around 12:30AM, Jim at 5:00AM and baby Zachary Allen Dennison at 5:10AM at 6 lbs 13 oz and 19". He is a beautiful baby and the Mom

and Dad are ok, no problem, so we depart for Ft Worth after one more trip back to see the baby and parents.

December 27th, Saturday

Returning from Fort Worth, TX [Marathon 70's, Clear L/V]

After a short visit with Mildred, we are off to Key West, arriving at 3:30PM, flights were all full and ½ hour late, but no problem. Airports are crowded with holiday travelers. Home on the MIMI at 5PM in time for cocktails in the Cockpit and a Cuban 'Punch-Churchill' a Christmas gift from another builder (competitor and friend) John Kiella.

December 28th, Sunday

Docked Faro Blanco Marina, Marathon, FL Keys [M60's–M70's, Cloudy, NE 15/G20]

Relaxing day, grocery shopping and small projects. Picked up new dock lines package at marina office, 1 ¼ “ x 60’, 2 of them, what a load. Ralph and Ralph measured lines before ordering, need schooling on measuring diameter of rope, these were much bigger than expected. Dock neighbors made a lot of fun of these and ‘consensus’ was that the dock would break up before MIMI’s dock lines break. Guess it should have been 1” like the other 2 we ‘measured’. Now that we had all that comment, got to use them, boy are they big, but even when slack, they do not stretch and do the job..... and will always be a good conversation piece!!!

Before you know it another cocktail hour, the days just evaporate when you are on the boat and around the water. The winds began to lay, we are hoping it stays that way, because Jeanne who is arriving Tuesday can not handle big waves.

December 29th, Monday

Docked Faro Blanco Marina, Marathon, FL Keys [U60's–U70's, P/Cloudy, E 10]

Not a bad day.... partly cloudy made it a little cool in shade but nice in sun. Jim and Betty drive to World Wide Sportsman on Islamorada for some more ‘stuff’ and especially some zip off leg pants for Jim, no more of this not being able to leave in shorts and freeze when getting back to Texas, or coming back to Florida and landing in long pants!!!! The store has a dock and restaurant, so we have cracked conch and yellow fin tuna for lunch, and Fosters beer on tap, our kind of place!!!!

Back at the marina Betty helps neighbors Jane and Cathy collect coconuts to be decorated as pirate heads for the New Years Eve party. It was a ‘hard stressful’ day in the keys, so had to hit the sack early.

December 30th, Tuesday

Docked Faro Blanco Marina, Marathon, FL Keys [L70's–M80's, Clear, L/V]

Jim & Betty make preparations for guests arriving tonight, bedding, re-arranging, food planning, etc. Mostly it is Betty, while Jim keeps an eye on Jim R. and Butch doing a North Carolina Pork BBQ, sauce is vinegar w/red pepper, rub is sugar and Cajun spice, it is different but sooooo good.

Dick (Ralph), Jeanne, Larry and Janet arrive at 7PM; they caught earlier flight so got here a couple of hours early. They had to have a couple of quick Rum & Coke; the traffic all the way from Miami was heavy. We rushed to ‘Fish Market’ to get Stone Crab and as usual it was fantastic, back to MIMI for ADD to end a good night. A light mist

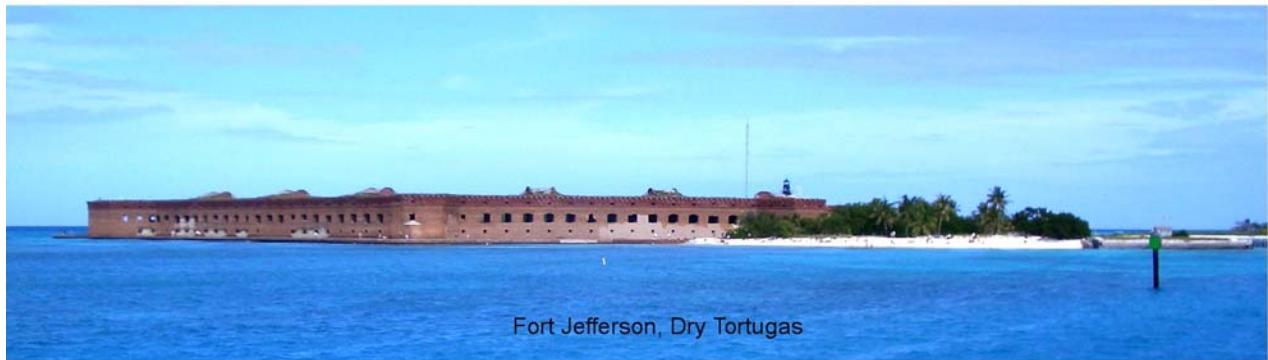


but pleasant sitting on the patio before bed time.

December 31st, Wednesday

Docked Faro Blanco Marina, Marathon, FL Keys [L70's–M80's, Clear, E/SE 10]

Going cruising.... We head out at 8:30AM on the way to Dry Tortugas, as we pass under the bridge out of Florida Bay into Hawks Channel, the swells from the SE were 2-3 on our port quarter, giving the MIMI a rolling ride at first, Jeanne immediately gets sick as she heads for the bunk forward of the boat, worst spot on the boat. We got her back in the saloon on the couch with her towel, and pan, which stabilized her as the roll was not much there. When we turned west, it was much better, as we had very little movement on the boat and could speed up to adjust for the swells.



We arrive in Key West by 11AM and took a harbor tour around the marinas to get familiar for the return trip. No space available for over New Years and beyond they said, so it is on to the Dry Tortugas (70 miles west of Key West) where we will spend New Years Eve. We decide on the North passage, you can go north or south around the Marquesas Islands, it was a good choice, not much swell, we were there in 2 ½ hours and anchored at Garden Key by 3PM. This place is unbelievable; it is cluster of 7 islands with coral reefs and beautiful white sand. Construction on Fort Jefferson began in 1846. The fort was to guard the Florida straights from enemies and pirates, but it was never completely finished because it became obsolete after the advent of a 'rifled' cannon that could penetrate the brick walls as opposed to the old cannon balls.

To toast our arrival, we get an early start on cocktail hour with extra toasts to our 'pin point' navigation skills. The wind pipes up to over 15 but the anchorage is pretty well protected. We count over 20 boats anchored, including 2 mega yachts anchored south of the Fort about a mile or so. It was a little unnerving when the seaplanes that bring tourists over from Key West take



off and land right beside our boat, and sometimes between us and other boats anchored, but not really dangerous, just different!!!

Jeanne feels much better and joins the group, even having a cocktail. One by one everyone 'sort of' dresses for New Years Eve, pretty flowered shirts and blouses, not too dressy but party going stuff. Jim cooks Mahi Mahi fish on grill; we dine on the upper deck watching the most beautiful sunset ever. Now the hard part... stay awake until Midnight... that was the party theme 'keep em awake'. The trip, big wonderful meal, lots of toasting, good wine, more toasting, sunset then moon watching, a chore to keep awake for some. Dick goes to bathroom and lays down to 'rest eyes', but Larry made himself a pest, so finally gets up at 10:30. Jim puts on 'Water World' to end the year right and even stays awake thru the whole thing, only needed one prod, and amazing as it seems, all the women even watch the movie again!!! Will wonders never cease!!!

NEW YEARS EVE AT THE TORTUGAS. We watched via satellite TV the coverage of NY Times Square and the ball dropping, as well as the other spots around the country. They covered Key West, with it's large gay population, it was a big gay bash!! There was a transvestite riding in a big shoe hanging from a crane and a lot of people running around clad only in body paint. Betty had all the party stuff, hats, horns, etc, we sang 'Auld Lang Syne' drank champagne and made noise for about 15 minutes. The other boaters were already in bed, or at least their boats were dark, so we did not last long and off to the bunks to listen to the waves hitting the boat, music to some of us, unheard by others!!!!

January 1st , Thursday

Anchored Fort Jefferson, Dry Tortugas [L80's NE 15, Clear]

New Year's Day - 2004. Capt Jim up and making coffee at 7, Ralph up at 8, everyone else sleeping it off. So it is lower the dink and off to Fort Jefferson early while the rest of the crew sleeps in. What an awesome place, Jim's first trip, Ralph has been coming here since 1975 and is one of his all time favorite destinations and anchorages.

It is hard to believe Fort Jefferson was built when the only transportation was sailing ships. Millions of bricks, lumber, concrete, food, water, and workers all had to come by boat from Baltimore on the east coast and New Orleans on the gulf coast. During the Civil War, it was a dumping ground for criminals and rebellious soldiers from the Union Armies.

It was the largest masonry fort in the U.S covering most of the 25 acre island and with a half mile of 50' high walls and a moat surrounding it. Because there is no fresh water on the island, a cistern was constructed to store rain water, but when the walls began to settle, salt water leaked in and polluted the water and thus the name 'Dry.' Tortugas is Spanish for Turtle, and is the name given to the island by the Spanish when they stopped here to gather Sea turtles for food. In 1935 Franklin Roosevelt set aside Fort Jefferson and surrounding waters as a national monument. In 1992 the area was designated as Dry Tortugas National Park in 1992 to protect both the historical and natural features. It is very hard to describe, but the best word, is fascinating to say the least.

After Jim and Ralph tour the Fort, Jim dinks back over to the boat to check in, but since no one ready yet, sent Larry back to get Ralph, who was having fun people watching as the 2 fast Cats bringing out 100 per boat arrived. They come from Key West paying \$98 each to spend a day at the Fort. Later, Larry carries the women over for a tour and to sun on the nice beach, on the south side of the Fort, while Jim is trying to catch fish off the stern of MIMI with bacon and chicken

pieces. Obviously no fish around here are interested in that kind of bait. Larry leaves girls to their sunning and comes back to the boat to try his hand at fishing, with no luck either. The girls call on the VHF at 2PM promptly, ready to come back, the water taxi does it's job. The tropical sun was already turning very white skin a little pink, it does not take long.



Meanwhile, Larry has snorkel gear on, surveying the bottom for 'stuff'. Swimming on Jan 1 is a worthy goal (hi fives all around). After the girls were brought back, Capt Jim, Larry and Dick load on the dink with the idea to go over to Logger Head Key where the light house is, it doesn't look far. As we cleared the protection of the Fort and Bird Key in a 10' dink with 5' waves this is not good, so as prudent sailors would do we turned around to get really wet getting back into the lee of the Fort. Since we were already wet when we returned to MIMI we lowered the platform and semi swam (sat in the water up to our waists). Larry put on the snorkel and layed on the platform a let us know what was flashing by on the bottom (MIMI was sailing at anchor in 50' arcs), Florida lobsters, but mostly weeds.

Then we noticed steam coming out of the generator, but not too serious looking, so procrastination sets in, which is a tropical zone thing. Later we get around to it. We counted 15 sailboats, 3 M/Y, and 4 fishing boats anchored this PM, and the 2 Mega yachts still anchored way out. A 3rd Mega yacht arrived around 4 and joined the other 2. These boats were anchored in such a position the sunset was directly behind them, what a beautiful picture. Again all day long the sea planes landed and took off all around us; we could count the people on board and waved to each one.

Capt Jim, or Chef Jim fixed Cornish hens on the spit, along with sweet spuds and young asparagus spears steamed to perfection. As usual ate and drank too much wine so when 45 minutes of 'Pirates of the Caribbean' had gone by, Betty gone to bed, Jim crashed on the sofa and Dick and Jeanne gone to bed, only Larry and Janet were left. Later Jim finds Larry asleep in the chair at 11:30, even Janet had deserted him.



January 2nd, Friday

Anchored Fort Jefferson, Dry Tortugas [L70's - M80's NE 15, Clear]

Capt Jim and Larry the real 'trooper' are up at 7AM, getting ready to work on the generator, as now it had a lot of steam, and the A/C not working, remember yesterday, the procrastination probably not a good thing. The generator intake hose was discovered to have been clogged with sea weeds, after they had taken the water pump apart and found nothing wrong with the impeller. Another 5 minute job 1 hour long!!!

Some of our neighbors leaving early this AM, but since it is a 10-14 hour sail, probably not early enough. We have breakfast then get ready to leave at around 9:30. All fixed and fed, we are ready to go, at this time the wind was E/NE at around 12, just under white capping, so it is a little rough with wind waves on our nose. Jeanne gets a little under the weather right away, but once she moved up on the fly-bridge deck, she settled down and enjoyed the ride. We were going to stop at the Marquesas Islands, but with the direction of the wind, our anchorage was not very stable, all the ladies requested that we go on to Key West.

We were very lucky to get into phone service at 12:30 and called Conch Harbor Marina, they had a spot that just became available as a boat left a day early, and we were the first to call. This marina is located in the Bight, were we wanted to be. Our generator had quit again, so really need to stop so we could fix it right. We arrived at 1:15 and got into our slip at 2:15, Jim and Larry washed the boat, Betty and Janet head to the shopping area, Dick and Jeanne take a nap.

Betty and Janet return at 5:30, we all get ready to find a drinking and eating place. We did not go far, ended up at the Conch Republic Seafood Restaurant on the west side of the Bight. It was already very crowded, so we get around the big bar, and when people leave, we grab seats. Our bar maid Kate, was very good, and libations flowed freely and often. This is where we decide we will eat as well, so we put our names on the list. 6:15 to 8:30 at the bar put us all in a good mood and hungry too. Food was wonderful, our waitress was Erica from Baltimore, she made it fun and very interesting.

While at the bar, we met Jeannette (from Iowa and a little drunk) she was with her boy friend along with another lady and her boy friend. She had on some flashing costume jewelry, and our Janet just had to have some, so while we were at the dinner table, the girl selling it looks us up, as Jeannette had gone to find her!!! Ok we are suckers.... flowers and flashing jewelry for all the girls, including toe rings, martini glass pins, and finger rings. Of course Janet tries to fix her martini glass and loses some of the parts, Larry again a trooper is on the floor searching the area for this little tiny part, to no avail. Janet takes off and goes hunting for the sales girl, it was a comedy from the very get go!!!

We head back toward the boat, most of the bars are closed or were closing, and Capt Jim and Ralph head for the boat, Trooper Larry escorts the ladies looking for a bar to have more drinks. They found one, had a drink, stole the glasses and walked back to the boat. Just another day in paradise!!!

January 3rd, Saturday

Docked, Conch Harbor Marina, Key West, FL Keys [M70's - M80's L/V, Clear]

Beautiful morning, 7:30 and it is already almost 80 degrees. Our neighbor tied across the dock from us was 'Themis', a 150' plus mega yacht owned by a lawyer from Charleston. The 'dink' was a 40+ go fast boat; they put on top with a crane of some kind. Friendly crew we estimate 5 to 7 people. They have been here for 2 weeks, and heading for the Bahamas next week.

In front of us is 'Bobs Adventure', a unique snorkeling boat where you ride a personal submersible underwater and breathe normally. Some rig, probably can take up to 50 people at a pop. Key West has done a fantastic job of rebuilding the Bight, there is a board walk all the way around, with lots of bars and restaurants. 4 marinas, plus some private dockage, it is an extension of Duval street, so lots of tourist now visit this area too. People watching is a chore, plenty of people to watch, like the biker chick who had leather chaps on, over her thong (bare butt just a shining), afraid to ask her how it was to sit on the bike seat when it is hot!!! One man and 2 kids just went right aboard the 'Themis', wanted to know if this was the charter boat they were going on!!!

Monty's (from Miami) has outdoor bars adjoining the marina, including a swimming pool. They have a band that plays all afternoon and evening; serve food at night and close at 10 PM when crowd starts thinning down.

Around 10:30 AM we start out to go 'shopping', but after 10 minutes, we split up on Duval Street, the women ('gathering') and the men power shopping. The men make 12 plus blocks, and then come back on the other side of Duval, meeting the girls at 12:45 at 'Jimmy Buffets Margaritaville' for hamburgers in paradise. After lunch we split up again, the girls head up Duval, for more gathering, the men down Duval in power mode again. Ralph need a 'T' shirt so stopped to find one, had way too much help from Capt Jim and the Trooper, so finally run them out of the store and selected 2 great designs that even fit good... Running out of places to shop??, the men check out Mallory Square where we are supposed to meet the ladies at 5:30, having done all this retire to the boat for cocktail hour.

The girls call on the phone and remind us that 5:30 at Mallory Square is mandatory, so we head out. Now for anyone that has never been there before, it is like a circus, with people putting on acts of all kinds all over the place; Jugglers, escape artists, balancing acts, dog and cat acts, etc. etc.... We decide on going to 'Billy's Fish bar and Grill' to watch the sunset, eat oysters and dips

and of course more drinks. Sunset at Key West is fantastic with boats going by, including two 'go-fast' boats showing off and a cruise ship leaving just before sunset. We joined in the clapping for the sunset; it is just a great tradition.

We head back toward the boat, stopped at the Conch Republic Seafood Bar to have a drink and everyone go to the restrooms. Everyone gone but service was so poor outside, we just left, buying cigars from a vender right outside the door. Tried to go into the 'Raw Bar' but cigar smoking was not allowed, so went to Monty's. Ate more appetizer stuff and had a few drinks, while listening to their Reggae band. Ralph and Janet did their version of dirty dancing a couple of times, but quickly wore out after all that 'shopping' and walking. Back to the boat for night caps and pistachios, Jim crashes while Ralph and the Trooper stay up to finish nuts and drink all of Jim's expensive booze.



January 4th, Sunday

Docked, Conch Harbor Marina, Key West, FL Keys [M70's - M80's E 10 - 15, Clear]

Kind of a sad day, we've got to leave today for Marathon and home on Monday for the guests. We are all a little hung over besides. After cleaning up the pistachio shells, they claim Ralph pitched every where, we get ready to leave, of course the crew not really ready even at 9AM. Our masterful skipper Capt Jim gets us out from the dock with only 4' clearance with 'Bob' in front and the 40' go-fast dink in the rear. Then masterfully backs into an inside slip by the fuel dock, so we can pump out our holding tank. At 9:45 we are on the way back to Marathon, so naturally the wind picks up and the waves are 2'+ on our nose. It is like a slalom course dodging the crab pots all the way to 7 mile bridge, but with careful skippering, we make it in 2 hours without our props snagging a crab pot float. We work our way into Faro Blanco to fuel up, then on to the slip.



Larry & Janet Steidles

Betty and Janet head to the beach, Larry and Jim wash the boat, and as usual Ralph and Jeanne nap. Some how we all end up at the back of the boat at cocktail hour, like it was a magnet. Jim puts a roast beef on the spit, everyone takes a shower while supper cooks, then we have a great 'last supper' with plenty of good wine and lots of toasting. We all hate to see this one end.

January 5th, Monday

Docked, Faro Blanco Marina, Marathon, FL Keys [M70's - M80's NE 10, Clear]

Very sad day, Janet, Larry, Jeanne, and Dick head to the airport in Miami at 7AM, back to very cold weather in Tennessee. It was just a wonderful trip for all, MIMI handles 6 guests well, and the trip was great.

Jim and Betty spend the day preparing to depart for Texas tomorrow, not looking forward to the cold temps Texas is having now. Jim meets with Steve Grassley of S.A.L.T. to discuss projects and yacht management plan for checking on 'MIMI' while in Texas.



January 6th, Tuesday

Docked, Faro Blanco Marina, Marathon, FL Keys [M70's - M80's NE 10, Clear]

Planned departure of 6 turns into 6:15 and makes it a little tight at Ft Lauderdale, but we walk right on the plane. Can not wait..... to be coming back to 'MIMI'.