

LOG of 'MIMI'

VOLUME 4 (CONTINUED)

MARATHON, FLORIDA KEYS

WINTER, 2003 - 2004

CHAPTER THREE – MARATHON, FLORIDA KEYS

Vaca Key, Faro Blanco Marina (Bayside)

Friday, January 23, 2004 – Docked Faro Blanco Marina – Marathon, FL

It's good to be back home, on the 'MIMI.' It was an uneventful trip, but Friday afternoon is a little slow going on the 'Overseas Highway'... lots of traffic. MIMI looked great, having received a top-to-bottom wax job while we were gone. Jay Lutskus teamed-up with Kim and they did the job in just two days. Kim says "Jay is a big-time hard worker." Weather was cold when we left (zip of pants legs are nice); Keys have been cool and windy in the low 60's to low 70's for about 2 weeks but the forecast is for the 80's with south and westerly winds for the coming week.... Hope it holds... weathercasters are just horoscopes with numbers!

We join Tom and Marie (Adventure) for dinner at the Marathon Yacht Club... pretty nice place. Sue & Bob Grote 'Ragtime' (Morehead City) and Claire & Ed Kwasnick 'Rascal', boaters from the outer FB Marina dock, joined us. It's a grill your own (yours or theirs) on a big round pit outside. ADD's and we're still in the sack by 10:00pm!

Saturday, January 24, 2004 – Docked Faro Blanco Marina – Marathon, FL

M60-M70, N10 shifting to South L&V

As forecast, the Wx is warming. Jim R. & Butch invite Capt. Jim to join them fishing today. Having had shoulder surgery 2 weeks ago ('warranty service,' builder-speak – redo of same shoulder done 1 ½ years ago), so Jim goes along for the ride, but no fishing... not supposed to lift anything for 6 weeks. We anchor about 50' from Jerry & his 7-year old daughter Abigail. Catching is pretty good, with Abby catching the most and biggest. Tonight Ed & Clair are having a dock pizza party. The set-up the making's and everyone (about 50) builds their own stacked high 8" diameter pizza; then place it on the BBQ grill.. real good! A cool evening the 2 gas grills took the chill off.... Lots of boating stories exchanged.

Sunday, January 25, 2004 – Docked Faro Blanco Marina – Marathon, FL

L70-L80 Clear W10

MIMI's 'Electra-Chef' grill is great for cruising, but 'Hot Wings' and 'Baby Back Ribs' are pretty messy and involve a lot of clean-up, so the decision is made that it's time to purchase a gas grill for the patio.... Grill more with less mess for dock parties, etc.. The Home Depot 'Big Easy' gas grill is too big for the small rent car, so Butch lends a hand with his pick-up. And having purchased 8 or 9 grills over the last 3 years, what harm is one more going to do? First grilling was 'Dick's Hot Wings;' whole bag (covered the big grill) was consumed in short order with friends during dock cocktail hour. Speaking of Dick... he's transporting a 29' sailboat from Blue Springs, TN (near Chattanooga) to Panama City, FL and is anchored this evening in 'Old Lock #1' and should make Mobile in 2 days. He called to tell us he'll be having Crab Claws at the Restaurant at the Grand Mariner Marina on Dog River (off Mobile Bay) in a couple of days. They're awesome overeating is a the norm.

After several days of whining and fussing about how hard it is to board the MIMI at low tide, Butch comes to the rescue and 'loans' us boarding steps. Actually Bob Ryan left the steps with Butch last year and Butch felt Bob wouldn't mind... They help a lot. Wings served as dinner for us and we retire to watch 'Once upon a time in America,' a 2-disc DVD about a New York boys gang.... They grow-up to be serious gangsters.... We crash after disc #1.

Monday, January 26, 2004 – Docked Faro Blanco Marina – Marathon, FL

L70-L80 Clear W10-15

Marathon Boat Yard is scheduled to do 200 hour service on MIMI's Caterpillar engines this morning. Bobby (a transplanted New York Italian mechanic) shows at around 8:45 and does the oil & filters. A loose belt is discovered (no lock washer) in the port alternator cover and a missing bolt from the starboard flywheel cover... minor stuff, but good to find and fix. Injector and valve lash adjustment is scheduled for tomorrow.

Betty finds a tennis partner in Joan Jungen ('Morning Star'). It didn't last long though, because Joan is pretty competitive and over does it right away; she takes a fall after just 15 minutes. She's hurt but not too seriously.... Big bruise along her hamstring... from knee up.

Ralph checks in while anchored, just out of the river channel, in dense fog.... 2 hour delay. We enjoy more grilled Mutton Snapper caught by Jim R. today. Great day, don't know where it went. Tried to watch disc #2 of the movie, but it's hard to see through eyelids... postponed until tomorrow.

Tuesday, January 27, 2004 – Docked Faro Blanco Marina – Marathon, FL

L70-U70 P/Cloudy W10-15 – Lt. Rain Showers

'Arcade' undocks at 6:45 (first light); Capt. Jerry and crew Larry (local fishing guide) are transporting her to Nassau where the owner will join them for a few days. With Arcade gone there are empty slips on either side of MIMI ... better view. Ralph checks in... Thunderstorms last night... dragged anchor a little... should have put out 2 anchors. Should make Dog River by dark.

Betty, still learning to play tennis, finds a club and pro to take lessons. She's trying to talk Marie and Jane into taking it up. In the mean time, the pro puts her onto some players. Jim 'plays' with dock-lines... adjusted set during the wax job and not quite right. Time for reading, 'Free Masons' by Jasper Ridley, a gift from son John who was told "it's a great book;" made it about half way through and gave up... full of facts about the 13th century founding and famous members. It's work and not all that great. Books on loan include 'Battle Cry of Freedom' by James Mcpherson and 'John Paul Jones' by Evan Thomas from Jim R. and 'Last Train to Paradise' by Les Standiford from Tom

An expected cold front arrives around 3:30pm, dropping the temperature with a wind shift to the NW then North....good timing on the dock lines! Jim R. brings more Snapper which we grill within hours of his catching. Finally get through disc #2 of the movie... it would make the all-time 20 worst list with a weird ending, we re-ran it and still didn't get it!

Wednesday, January 28, 2004 – Docked Faro Blanco Marina – Marathon, FL

L60-M60 P/Cloudy, NW20

House cleaning and chores today, before afternoon departure for Miami Lakes, FL

Thursday to Saturday, January 29 to 31, 2004 - Miami Lakes, FL

U60's Cloudy & Windy with occasional rain

Betty and Jim regularly serve as judges for the Builders Association of South Florida, judging home and commercial entries. It's a great opportunity to view really new and innovative architecture, style and design. Often entries will price from the \$150's to as high as \$20 million. Betty drew the 'black bean' and judges landscaping for 2 days! She didn't let that stop her; she found ways of getting into the homes, many of which were being judged for other features as well. Jim gets to judge upper-end, including the home that is ultimately awarded 'Best of Show'.... a 3 story 'Italian Riviera' style home overlooking Biscayne Bay... everything authentic including poured-in-place concrete columns and cornice work and Italian marble everywhere and a beautiful dock. With judging complete Saturday afternoon, J&B head home to MIMI in a driving rain storm.. Good to be home.

Sunday, February 1, 2004 – Docked Faro Blanco Marina – Marathon, FL

M70-U70 Lt/V – Super Bowl Sunday

Up early, Jim is using a squeegee to dry the boat after all the rain... a fiasco in the making when the squeegee head pops off the pole handle and falls into the water and quickly floats away (ebb tide) and out of reach... what else? Soooooo lets get the dink out. With Arcadia in the Bahamas, no problemo, just lower the transom lift and out we go. After retrieving the squeegee, Capt Jim decides to explore a little.... little is all too; with all the sea grass (from all the north wind) the dink's jet

intake clogs quickly and it's a limp-back and hope it doesn't die thing. On re-loading the dink... the hydraulic valve is stuck again! This time, the system over-pressures and hydraulic fluid pumps overboard... not good, especially in the Keys... good thing it's biodegradable! Finally get it working and call the manufacturer... and a new valve is on the way. By this time MIMI is dry.

Everyone on the dock is getting ready for the Super Bowl – we do chicken on the patio spit. Our plan is to eat at half-time. A beautiful night and what a way to watch the game... in shorts, under the stars and watching the NE Patriots defeat the Carolina Panthers. Our kind of harrrrrd coooooold winter day!

Monday, February 2, 2004 – Docked Faro Blanco Marina – Marathon, FL

L70-L80 Clear, Lt/V

MBY mechanic's Charlie and Bobby arrive at 1:30pm to do the 200hour CAT service. Charlie gets Bobby started and will be back to do the valves & injectors. Oil & filters done last week and new sea-water impellers on order; it's fairly routine, except removing the valve covers is challenging because of the small clearance between them and the deck drain gutter piping. After a small modification; had to cut the pipe... we'll add a sleeve and it will be easier next time.

'Morning Star' departs before noon; she's headed to Key West for a month, then Miami and Ft. Lauderdale, where she'll be put up for sale. Betty hangs pink flamingo lights from the patio umbrella, a first for FBM; 'admired' by all. Jim R. is convinced we're related to the Clampets! Jim R. has a good day fishing and drops off a mess for us... dinner plans change immediately!

Tuesday, February 3, 2004 – Docked Faro Blanco Marina – Marathon, FL

L70-L80 Clear Lt/V

MBY Bobby returns at 8:00am to finish the CAT service work. That finished he starts on the sea water impellers... also a real job. Getting the port one out requires removal of the fuel filter but we finally get it out... Oh! Oh! Set-back! Our CAT service kit (paid a bundle for it) has the wrong parts in it! The ones ordered by MBY are wrong too, so Bobby takes the old one to order by. Another set-back... zinc's in the kit are wrong too and require a trip to West Marine and with the right one's change out 5. A call is made to CAT and they are looking into the problem.

Our ribs dock party gets started after fish cleaning; Jim R. brought in a good catch including 2 nice Grouper. Marie and Ron (dock master) brought in an ice chest full of Mutton Snapper, which Capt Jim cleans and Marie gives us because her freezer is already full of fish. The ribs weren't the greatest; Jim is still trying to get the 'handle' on the new grill... it got too hot and had flare-ups. May have to get a 'Big Green Egg' but not this year! Good time on the dock and everyone said they liked the ribs... (being nice).

Wednesday, February 4, 2004 – Docked Faro Blanco Marina – Marathon, FL

L70-L80 Clear Lt/V

MBY is waiting on parts... should be in tomorrow. Kim 'Fishtales' does her bikini boat washing thing and the guy's on the dock confirm that she did a good job. Last night after ribs, Jim drops a Cutco knife in the bay... next to MIMI. While trying to retrieve it with a magnet this morning, a Manatee swims by. It may be the one that hangs around the other end of the Marina. They love fresh water and folks feed it from a hose.

Capt Jerry brings 'Arcade' home this morning; the owner stayed on the boat in Nassau but they never once took her out fishing. Ken Burton (CAT Toromont in Canada) thinks all parts in the kit are wrong and will have to exchange... we're to send a list. Betty won a tennis 'round-robin' match as she gets to know some local tennis gals. Grilled Snapper for dinner.

Thursday, February 5, 2004 – Docked Faro Blanco Marina – Marathon, FL

M70-M80 P/CI N10-15 Lt. R late

It's time to build spread sheets for MIMI, including a service schedule & log, components, parts, phone numbers, 'to do,' etc., so Jim spends the morning getting started... this will take a while, but really needed. Neptunus could (and should) furnish these; it's info they have and need to keep and could easily be furnished owner's in digital and print form. Bobby (MBY) arrives around noon and has the impellers changed by 2:30pm and the engine room cleaned-up.

The Manatee returns and this Cathy N. is feeding it fresh water with a hose. Manatees have a scrunched-up face with tiny arms and this one, 8' or 9' long would hold the hose, while drinking, like a baby holding a bottle. Butch and Cathy's dog 'Buff' (Jimmy Buffet) is in love.... perhaps lust! He follows her up and down the dock, keeping a close watch for more than an hour.

Neptunus' John Coholan calls with instructions on how to separate the dining lights from the galley lights... it worked! One wire was wrong so the galley lights couldn't be turned-off and keep the dining lights on. It was easier than changing a light bulb... almost. Betty gets in a domino game (loves to gamble, no matter the game) with Marie & Cecilia (Virginia Beach, VA), Tom and Gary. Grilled Snapper again... we never tire of it.

Friday, February 6, 2004 – Docked Faro Blanco Marina – Marathon, FL

M70-M80 P/Cloudy, NW 15-20

It's a boat projects day... getting tiresome. 1) Made window sunscreens (2-windows at side of windshield) 2) Installed shelf in Lazzaretto 3) Stowed oil inventory 4) Clean and vacuum Engine Room (construction dirt) 5) Genset – replace leaking O-ring – it was crimped when Larry S. & Jim checked it New Years day at the Dry Tortugas 6) Bi-weekly check-up with SALT, our monitoring company 7) #1 A/C chiller has been acting up... problem appears to be a water flow restriction 8) Freezer – found problem with door seal was the bracket that hold the freezer in place. Sounds like all we have is problems; we've had our share, but some of these things are to be expected in a new boat.



Betty played tennis. For dinner Betty wants to try 'Hurricane's' a dive looking restaurant that is supposed to be good. It wasn't! We had a drink and headed for Annette's for some good food. MIMI's water tank is low and Betty forgets to cut the water off before going to bed; it 'fills' all night! Oh well, perhaps the Manatee got it from the overflow.

Saturday, February 7, 2004 – Docked Faro Blanco Marina – Marathon, FL

M70-M80 P/Cloudy Lt/V

It's a musical slips day with multiple boats moving to better slips... a continuing result of 'Morning Star' departing. More projects: 1) Clean Genset (after impeller leak) 2) Engine Room Bilges – clean 2 areas that do not drain well 3) Install extension cord to provide electricity to the engine room work-bench (Neptunus should have thought of that) 4) Install dock mat at the steps (keep gravel and dirt off the deck) 5) MIMI spreadsheet work.

The forecast cold front arrives on schedule, bringing north wind and dropping the temperature to the low 60's... almost freezing! At the same time a birthday party for a local gets going; his name is 'Squeak.' Jim R. says Squeak is a real Conch (Conch Republic). We join the party about the time super grilled chicken, pork and beef is being consumed in large quantities... beer too. The party is outside, behind one of the cabins... many have been celebrating for several days, including Squeak. Boom box music but little dancing... Squeak dances with Betty and Jane. The wind chill has most in long pants with jackets... Jane has gloves on. We're back on the MIMI by 9:00 though the party continues for hours. It's amazing how just a few years shortens your appetite for late night parties!

Sunday, February 8, 2004 – Docked Faro Blanco Marina – Marathon, FL

L60-M60 P/Cloudy N20

Jim finished 'Last Train to Paradise' last night after the party. It is about Henry M. Flagler, partner of John D. Rockefeller when they built the Standard Oil of New Jersey Trust into the biggest company in America and of his subsequent railroad and resort hotel building in Florida. He extended rail to south Florida and virtually founded Miami. Most of the book is about his building of the 150 mile long railroad across the sea to Key West. Completed in 1912, after 7 years of incredible challenge, it operated until huge portions of track and bridge were destroyed by the 1935 hurricane. That hurricane packed winds in excess of 200 miles per hour, the heaviest yet, to ever hit the U.S. The railroad never turned a profit because

Flagler's vision of a Key West sea port transporting freight to the mainland never materialized and passenger traffic couldn't support it. Flagler said he would have been rich, were it not for Florida. He invested more than \$20,000,000 in it... and that with no environmentalists to deal with!

We hit the Pine Key Flea Market and found Keys outfits for grandchildren and wind chimes. It's a cold, windy day and our dock neighbors are hibernating. We made a stop at Office Depot for supplies. Just snacks for dinner due to a late lunch of grilled Snapper sandwiches.

Monday, February 9, 2004 – Docked Faro Blanco Marina – Marathon, FL

L70-L80 Clear Lt/V

The wind abated during the night and the weather returns to 'normal' around here. Jim spends a good bit of the day on MIMI spread sheets. Shoulder pain has increased from all the boat work so it's good to give it a rest... may have overdone it. Betty joins a happy hour domino game while Jim does Cornish Hens on the spit... good but they're better on an Egg.

Tuesday, February 10, 2004 – Docked Faro Blanco Marina – Marathon, FL

M70-M80 P/Cloudy Lt/V

Dwayne of SALT arrives around 8:30 to install valves and manifold to the 2 A/C Chiller's to balance sea water volume to each unit. Looks like it did the job. Also the guest cabin air handler won't come on; he changes out the control board and thermostat and it's working fine. This is the second control board they've changed-out and concern is... do we have a bad batch? Grilled Snapper for lunch.

Wednesday, February 11, 2004 – Docked Faro Blanco Marina – Marathon, FL

M70-M80 P/Cloudy Lt/V

Betty plays tennis. We depart for the Miami International Boat show tomorrow and on to Texas on Sunday. The show will be good but were not looking forward to returning to the cold and wet Texas weather. Today we clean and prepare. It's probably the prettiest day we've had... so in the afternoon, we drive to Bahia Honda State Park (MM37), about 10 miles from Marathon, it is a 524 acre park with beautiful beaches, both Oceanside and bayside. It is managed to look as closely as possible the way the area did when Europeans first arrived and it contains one of the largest remaining stands of the threatened Silver Palms in the U.S. Back at the MIMI it's Pina' Colada's for the girls, while Jim designs a removable 'desk' to fit over the lower helm, for the notebook computer. It will keep the 'stuff' off the dining table.

Thursday, February 12, 2004 – Docked Faro Blanco Marina – Marathon, FL

M70-M80 Cloudy Early then Clear, E5-10

Sad time... three weeks in Florida and although we'll be in Miami until Sunday, thoughts of returning to Texas and cold, rainy weather... not good. IHW! The late afternoon drive with the sun on the emerald and aquamarine waters took our minds off of Texas weather.

Monday, March 1, 2004 – Temple, Texas M50 – L70 Clear, L/V

Up at 4:00am for the 6:00am flight to Miami, J&B would get to the MIMI by 3:30pm.... except for a stop in Key Largo to see Jon & Sandy Franz's marina; 'Garden Cove Marina.' It took a little while to find it. Franz hasn't been there in 10 years and his directions were a 'little' cryptic! We took pictures for Jon to see how it has changed. A restaurant 'Buzzard's Roost' has been added, so we had a late lunch on the outdoor patio right next to the boat launch. The, ocean side marina is served by a narrow channel that opens into Hawk Channel that runs from Miami to Key West.



Lots of traffic on the 'Overseas Highway' today... including biker's; some sort of biker rendezvous in Key West this week. Also a Monday and a lot of week-ender's are headed back to the mainland. We finally arrive. 'MIMI' is in great shape having received her weekly wash job this morning by Kim 'Fishtales'.... she also cleaned the teak deck.... No harsh cleaner or teak oil! Everything was in top condition except the refrigerator door which had been left ajar by Dana of S.A.L.T. who regularly checks on the boat. He checked on the frig to be sure it has power and didn't get the door completely closed..... last time it was the freezer. So we trash the stuff, fortunately it was pretty empty and mostly butter, spreads, etc.. The unit was frozen up and took a while to thaw.

May be coincidence, Jim & Jane, Butch & Cathy are having 'Fat Night' on the dock; Chicken fried steak, mashed potato's and green beans.... and they have enough for us. We almost decline, Betty isn't feeling very good (mostly tired) and we had a late lunch.... Decided ... a 'little' wouldn't do any harm, yeah, right! Butch had even baked a cake for desert.... Betty saved hers for breakfast, yuk! It was a great evening, windy, but not too cool for shorts. We were 1st to leave and turned in early... poured but didn't drink the ADD.

Tuesday, March 02, 2004 – Docked Faro Blanco Marina, Marathon, FL

U60 – U70 Clear - P/Cl – E15-20

Betty is up at the 'crack of 10:00'..... yesterday was a long hard day and sleeping on the MIMI is soooo good! It's a pretty morning.... Partly cloudy and still windy. Christmas packages from the Miami Boat Show this morning!! Back-up stuff, you know 'redundancy' ... VHF radio and Sounder.... Hope never needed.

'Miss Annie' returns to slip on our port.... She's been in Lauderdale where owner Bob Ryan has had her for sale... she didn't and now she's back here. For many years Bob owned Chrysler-Plymouth auto dealerships and served on the Chrysler Board with Iacocca. After deciding the company was in deep trouble and management was doing nothing to fix the problem, he resigned from the board, sold his dealerships and bought GM and still owns several 'Ryan' dealerships in the Dallas/Ft. Worth area.

The wind is keeping the fisher people off the water so we had to buy fish! Great Yellow Fin Tuna & Stone Crab was available just down the street at Keys Fisheries. Spent most of the day getting settled-in and doing small projects; retrieved packages from the Marina; there were 7 including stuff purchased at the Miami Boat Show. Rigged a 'desk' at the lower helm; consists of a 'whiteboard' (opposite of 'blackboard') clamped to the steering wheel. Good place for the computer; not always in the way on the dining table. Xingular wireless & large attachment email is wrecking havoc with our being able to communicate efficiently. Somehow Drew (back at the office) gets going.

Jim Hightower, a real Texas 'oil man' and land developer friend of more than 30 years, arrives around 5pm. He is on his way back to Texas after a lot of sailing; he raced in Lauderdale last week and late January in Key West. He came in 2nd over-

all this year at Key West (1st place last year) and as he says “not bad for a hick from central Texas.” Jimmy sailed into Key West yesterday, single-handing it from Ft. Lauderdale and arriving around 5:00am.... Way to go Jim! Wife Cindy is back in Texas (taking care of business).

Jim has another sailboat in Kemah, Texas ‘Smells Like Fish’ It’s gotta be good! Jimmy once had a J30... Cindy loved it and according to Jim, it took a long time for her to get over it. Same boat as the Jeanne, Ralph’s (Dick Jones) sailboat they’ve had for nearly 20 years.

Following cocktails and Hors’ D’oeuvres (Stone Crab with mustard sauce) on the MIMI, we dine on Grouper & sesame crusted Yellow Fin Tuna (rare) at Annette’s. Wish Cindy could have been here. We’ve gotta hook up with them sometime soon.

Wednesday, March 03, 2004 – Docked Faro Blanco Marina, Marathon, FL

L70 – L80 – Cloudy-P/CI – E-SE 15-20 G25 Occasional sprinkles

Windy – still no one fishing... tonight we’ll grill the Tuna. Lazy day.... Betty says she’s already acclimated to doing very little! She does that quite well... This is what went on around us today:

- Tom & Marie – Acclimated
- Jerry – Washes ‘Arcade’ and puts a lot of over-spray on the MIMI
- Jim & Jane shop in KW for remodel stuff for the Condo they are buying in Marathon (they are selling one in Connecticut)
- Butch & Cathy are working on deck teak (correction to prior log entry – their boat is a ‘Marine Trader.’ They get the award for working hardest today!

Steve Grasley of S.A.L.T. calls with info on some MIMI projects we’re planning, including the on-going effort to connect Salon stereo with the Bridge and Cockpit. Macerating strainer will run around \$5k ... gonna have to think about that one for a while. Also need, for redundancy, another sounder and VHF radio.

The Tuna was terrific. We begin watching ‘Band of Brothers’ but Jim has difficulty watching through eyelids and will have to backtrack tomorrow. The multi-episode made-for-HBO set of DVD’s was a gift from friend and former employee Steve Ward. Steve is now in the Video sales and rental business ‘Take-1.’

Thursday, March 04, 2004 – Docked Faro Blanco Marina, Marathon, FL

M70-M80 – P/CI – E/SE 15-20 G25

Except for the wind, it’s a pretty day. Betty is up early for tennis at 8:30. Ralph calls; he’s decided not to buy new sailboat and took the DJ Explorer (Houseboat) off the market.... For How many times now? Says he’s getting to old to start over in another sailboat and besides Jeanne does better in the houseboat and he still has the J30 for when he has the itch to sail.

Weird day; must be a lot of days like this for the ‘retired.’ Plenty of projects to do, but none of them were appealing.... Finally decided on a couple but struck out because some component was missing, or something. Dick’s famous dock hot wings on the big grill tonight.... They all disappeared during cocktail hour. After which Jim watches portion of the movie he missed last night. Betty joins in for the next chapter and sure enough, Jim will have to watch it tomorrow!

Friday, March 05, 2004 - Docked Faro Blanco Marina, Marathon, FL

M70-M80 – Clear - P/CI – E/SE 15-20 G25

Wind has been blowing for more than a week with no sign of letting up soon. Fisher people are in withdrawal. Jane is busy planning the big fishing tournament and fish fry.... March 20th unfortunately J&B will be back in Texas then.

Today’s project is to put the registration numbers on the Dink. Sounds easy.... But it’s a boat and it’s on the swim platform... the outside side is a little challenging. With a few time-outs to talk business issues, with folks back home, the whole project only took about 5 hours... nice job! Betty does domino’s with Tom & Marie on Charlie’s triple-deck houseboat ‘Casa Del Mar’ from Secretary, MD. Said she won?

Wind appears to be laying.... it’s not so bad, but everyone is sick of it. Grilled Dolphin for dinner and episode 4 of Band of Brothers... J stays awake for the whole thing!

Saturday, March 06, 2004 – Docked Faro Blanco Marina, Marathon, FL

M70-U80 – Clear – E/SE 10

Wind is finally down and all the fisher persons are antsy to get on the water, though they doubt fishing will be much good... they say it will take a few days for the water to 'settle-down' from all the wind wave action. We'll see.... Betty plays tennis while Jim tries to make the computer wireless email work #\$\$%##!

Bill 'Morning Star' arrives from Key West this morning, on his way to Miami and later Ft. Lauderdale. His wife Joan is not with him; he hired a 1st mate for the trip. Bill is "glad to be out of Key Weird!" Butch & Cathy catch a few fish but are back early, having forgotten to take drinks (beer). Jim & Jane bring in a nice catch and distribute filets to dock neighbors. Jane is organizing a fishing trip for girls (Jane, Betty, Marie and another, with guide Captain Donnie Braswell for next Thursday. They'll have a ball but Donnie's life will seem dull from then on.

It's a beautiful evening the winds are light & variable and we have a candlelight steak dinner in the cockpit. The day just 'evaporated' ... happens all the time on the boat!

Sunday, March 7, 2004 – Docked Faro Blanco Marina, Marathon, FL

M70 – U80 – Clear to P/Cl – Lt/Var

Bill undocks 'Morning Star' at 6:45, headed for Miami. Butch is driving his van (with dog 'Bo') later this morning. It will be a great cruise.... with little wave action, dodging crab pots is the only thing to keep you awake. It is so nice a day, we kept thinking about going out for a 'spin'.... but 'Keys Disease' set in and we didn't get 'round to it.'

We were shocked to learn of the Baltimore harbor tour boat that turned-over during a violent storm. Reported winds were 60-70 miles per hour and apparently there was no advance warning. Report so far is 1 dead and 3 missing. Tour boats regularly cruised by our slip in Inner Harbor East Marina last summer.

The dock is very quiet today... with all the fisher people out. Wind and cooler weather is forecast for tomorrow. For now, it's beautiful.... and a perfect evening... everyone was invited to a 'bring your own' dock 'happy hour' over by the 'Casa Del Mar' ... finger food.... but it is about a block walk back to the 'MIMI' for drink refills. Betty gets in a domino game on the upper deck with Jim, Butch & Cathy back at 'Maybe Baby' drinking beer and telling stories, followed by another episode of 'Band of Brothers.'

Monday, March 08, 2004 – Docked Faro Blanco Marina, Marathon, FL

L70-M70 – Clear to P/Cl – W15-20

Betty plays tennis this morning while Jim finds more boat projects. 'MIMI' gets a wash by Kim of 'Fishtails' ... Dock water went off when she is about ½ done.... and not back on until late. She'll have to finish up tomorrow. Grill Snapper sandwiches for lunch then a hard day at Sombrero Beach (ocean side) it's on the lee side of the island and with spring break there are perhaps 200 on the beautiful small public beach.

Arrangements were made with Marathon Boat Yard to haul 'MIMI' next Monday for a bottom job. We'll deliver her early in the morning and Jerry Connolly, captain of 'Arcade' will bring her back Thursday or Friday (we'll be back in Texas).

The dock was clear by 6:00pm.... 75 degrees.... But the 'wind chill' drove all onboard.

Tuesday, March 9, 2004 – Docked Faro Blanco Marina, Marathon, FL

M60-M70 – Clear – N15-20

'Cold front' and wind shift... brings dry air and sea grass back to Faro Blanco. When the wind is in the north the sea grass collects in our side of the marina from the shore to about 20' out and it appears thick enough to walk on. It clogs the sea strainers (A/C is running all the time and using sea water to cool the unit) so they have to be inspected and cleaned daily.

Another tennis day for B... most on the dock are wearing jackets! J spends a good deal of time on business matters and organizing MIMI spread sheets. Pork roast on the spit, sweet spuds and salad for dinner... so good. We watched 'Fair & Balanced' in lieu of 'Band of Brothers' tonight... needed a break from the misery of WWII.

Wednesday, March 10, 2004 – Docked Faro Blanco Marina, Marathon, FL

M60-M70 – Clear – W15-20 then N15-20

The wind shifts back to the west am... then back to the north around 4pm... the ‘cold’ ran most off the dock early. Betty does tennis again and Jim changes out a bad valve in the Transom Lift hydraulic system. Seems to be working fine, but getting some hydraulic fluid leakage outside the boat... probably a loose fitting; we’ll check it out when doing the bottom job. Also, moved the boat manuals into file boxes in lieu of 3-ring binders provided by Neptunus. The binders are difficult (so big) to handle. Changed the sort from manufacturer’s name to item, it’s easier to find stuff.

Grilled the last of our Mutton Snapper for dinner... need the weather to improve so we’ll have more fish! Donnie called off the girls fishing trip for tomorrow; forecast is for wind and cold (low 60’s). We finished Band of Brothers... pretty emotional ending.

Thursday, March 11, 2004 – Docked Faro Blanco Marina, Marathon, FL

L60-L70 – Clear – N20

The wind continues and cool, but warm in the sun and out of the wind... duh! Went to see Jim R’s new condo (they close tomorrow) but it was locked. About a 20-year-old 3-unit, 3-story Condo, with view of the harbor and golf course on the street side, the exterior is in good condition. Comes with dock (they’ll probably dock ‘Riley,’ their fishing boat, there) swimming pool and a tennis court. Great location!

Cocktail hour domino game for Betty... ‘broke even.’ Basically a Keys day... don’t know where it went!

Friday, March 12, 2004 – Docked Faro Blanco Marina, Marathon, FL

M60-M70 – P/CI – N15-20

Lots to do today... can’t remember what exactly and until priorities are determined; we may have to just contemplate. While doing the log this morning a visitor flew in and perched on the bow rail of ‘Arcade.’ Not many pelican’s board boats... they seem to prefer the rock jetty.

Betty’s off to Tennis and Jim, still contemplating projects for the day, is reminded by Betty, that the transom lift appears not to be all the way up and in the locked position. Immediately becoming a priority, Jim runs it down ... works okay, but coming up, the starboard cylinder doesn’t close and the deck stops ... it’s racked with the port full-up and starboard about 1’ down ... time to call the factory!



Being Friday, the hydraulic expert is already departed, getting an early start on the weekend. The problem could be another bad valve or the hydraulic leak resulted in water infiltration (or both), causing the starboard cylinder not to function. Neptunus advice is to equalize the platform level (by letting it down again). This procedure results in leveling... but now it won’t raise above the water level ... setback! Actually BIG SETBACK! Now, John Coholan contacts John Ward at Neptunus Ft. Lauderdale office. His advice is... “Get the platform level... put a rope on the starboard side and have several big guys hoist that side while using the lift to raise the other side ... soooo Betty recruits, Butch, Gary, Tom & Jim R. It was quickly realized that the dink must come off... a project in itself. The lift is a foot from the full-down position and taking no chances all agree it best to avoid taking it all the way down. So Captain Jim wades into the hydraulic fluid polluted, otherwise clear and pristine Faro Blanco water to remove the dink hold-downs... after wisely removing money clip from pocket. That done, Jim & Tom push from the bow, but the dink won’t go...so Jim moves to the stern (to lift up) and Gary joins Tom on the bow; it goes right away, and so does Capt. Jim! The water is actually pretty warm or maybe it feels that way because Capt. Jim is now coated in oil! Oh, well, its probably good for dry skin, but for certain not for the ole’ cell phone. Now all who are trying to help must be called and given Betty’s phone number... needed a new phone anyway... just not now! Another learning experience.

Having no luck, the 4 guys on the rope agree that a ‘come-along’ is needed and the strategy shifts... of course there are numerous suggestions from wives observing the fiasco from the dock just a few feet away. A come-along is quickly borrowed from Dock Master Ron, and the new approach begins. Ropes are attached to the lift and the starboard stern cleat but with concern for fiberglass marring, Betty provides Neptunus logo towels (the one’s that don’t dry... and previously used

for rope chafe protection during hurricane Isabel), they again prove invaluable! After more than an hour, the lift is finally level with the water, with a long way to go, when it doesn't look like it will elevate higher. Another call to John Ward... he'll get another opinion and call back. It's lunchtime and may take a while, so the project is suspended and all but Capt. Jim and Butch depart. They decide to give it one more try and amazingly the lift responds and in a few minutes they have it all the way up and secured.



Unfortunately, there are no pictures of the fiasco; Betty wished for the camcorder (it's back in Texas), but failed to take any stills... would have been great in the log. Only shot we have is after the fact... Note the rope; it's back up in case the built-in locking devices failed to latch.

It takes the rest of the day to clean-up and coordinate Dave (from S.A.L.T.) who arrives at 2:00pm, as previously scheduled, to install a back-up VHF radio and topside components of a back-up depth sounder. The through-hull transducer goes in next week when hauled out. Biggest mess is the oil tracked onto the teak deck; it soaked in and soapy water won't touch it... this will take some time, but will eventually be okay. John Ward is driving down to Marathon Monday morning to investigate (and hopefully fix) the hydraulic system. Neptunus is great in responding to needs we've had.

Tonight there's a dock dinner party at the 'Bubba Hut.' It's a Tiki-Hut located behind several fishing boats (guides Larry Bell & Donny Braswell). Grilled hog, chicken, and pork ribs by Lars... he's incredible with a grill... with great dishes brought by everyone. Rum Cake, combination desert and ADD, was declared the best anyone had ever eaten, unfortunately we can't remember who made it! By now most are ready for more ADD so a good-sized group (Betty dragged Jim) go to the 'Angler's,' an upstairs bar by the pool... neat place. Anyhow, it was Jim's second-in-life Karaoke experience... except for Ken, the assistant dock master who used to be in a band, it was awful! There were many good stories, especially about Donny & Mindy whose framed pictures are among the many fishing pictures on the walls.

Saturday, March 13, 2004 – Docked Faro Blanco Marina, Marathon, FL

L70 – M80 – Clear – N5-10 increasing to 15-20

The wind finally lays during the night and it's gonna be a really nice day. Betty is off playing tennis, but will be back in time to go to Palm Island for lunch... with 14 others. The outing, scheduled for last night, was re-scheduled due to the Bubba Hut conflict... which is when Betty finagled an invitation.



We depart in 2 vehicles... 6 in a Yukon and 10 in Cathy & Charlie Powell's hot pink Lincoln stretch limousine; it's quite a limo with a couple of TV's, bar, etc... perfect for the Keys. It was entertaining watching passing motorists expressions while drinking Bloody Marys. The trip to Little Palm, ordinarily about 45 minutes took an hour and 15, due probably to an accident on the busy 2-lane overseas highway.

The Little Palm boat shuttle is on Little Torch Key and only a short trip to the island. It is a beautiful retreat with small 1 bedroom, 2 bath cottages (with hot tub but no TV or Phone... cells aren't permitted in most areas) that during high season go for \$1,300 a day. The small marina runs \$7.00/day/foot (boat length) with a daily water allowance of 1 gallon/foot. That information pretty much prepares us for the price of lunch. In addition to covered, open air dining, there are dining tables on the beach with a sunset view that includes the dock and hungry Pelicans on the rocks.

It couldn't have been a more perfect day at the island with a northeast wind, temperature in the low 80's and outdoor dining on the lee (south) side. A great time was had by all... only took 6 hours for lunch (left at 10:30am and back by 4:30pm! Dinner plans have been cancelled! Word is there's a domino game at 5:30 on the Casa Del Mar.



Sunday, March 14, 2004 – Docked Faro Blanco Marina, Marathon, FL

L70 – L80 – Cloudy, Occasional Lt R E5-10

There will be a lot of cleaning and readying for Monday's delivery of 'MIMI' to the boat yard, trailering the dink and finally heading to Miami for the return flight to Texas on Tuesday.

Monday, March 15, 2004 – Docked Faro Blanco Marina, Marathon, FL

L70 – M80 – P/Cloudy, NE10 – 20 G

Almost everything is ready to go by 9:00am when Captain Jerry arrives to make the trip over to Marathon Boat Yard for the haul-out. It's calm as we head west from Faro Blanco to cross under 7-Mile Bridge to the Atlantic side where the wind is howling out of the NE. Jerry says he wouldn't want to be in the Gulf Stream today. The stream is like an ocean river flowing north and it gets really rough any time the wind is from any northerly direction. The Marathon Boat Yard canal is a hard turn to port after clearing Boot Key draw bridge; opening wasn't necessary because we clear it easily with our 22'+ and the bridge at 24' clearance.

By the time 'MIMI' is power washed and set on blocks/stands, Neptunus' Larry Czocher ('choker') arrives to fix the



'MIMI' Dry Docked – Marathon Boat Yard

transom lift; turns out hydraulic fittings were just 'finger-tight' and leaking fluid badly. In the process it was learned that there are 4 'sacrificial' zinc's on each hydraulic arm... nothing about them in the owner manual so they hadn't been checked... good thing we found out now.... they all needed to be replaced. After repairing a couple of gel-coat breaks at the chine, she'll get 2 coats of bottom paint Interlux 'Micron Xtra') to retard marine growth. She should be ready to splash in a week and Jerry will pilot her back to Faro Blanco.

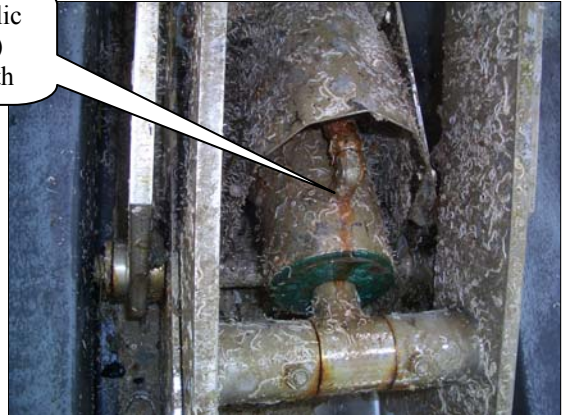
Tuesday, March 16, 2004 – Temple, TX

U60 – U70 – P/Cloudy, N5 – 10

Home by 2:00pm and in the office by 3pm! Worst transition thing... long pants and real shoes instead of flip-flops or top-siders... a real adjustment, not to mention no 'Red Beer' (Foster's mixed with Clamato juice) mornings around 10:00am!

Lots of things to do before our return April 2nd.

Leaking Hydraulic Fluid (not good) & Marine Growth



Thursday, April 1, 2004 – Temple, TX

L60-U70, Clear & Windy

Jim made the mistake of letting too many people he was departing for the Keys on Friday... so business activity increases steadily. Next time departure date will be given as a day earlier, so perhaps the last day can be spent 'cleaning-up' rather than a series of 'fire-drills.' Home and development activity has been brisk, following lackluster months of December, January and February, with record new home sales. Back-to-back appointments right up until 6:00pm resulting in Jim being ½ hour late for Rachel, Raleigh & Ruffin's; it was an honor to be their first dinner guest in their new home. Betty is in a tennis tournament and is winning. Subject to winning, she'll be playing through the weekend and flying to Florida on Monday.

Friday, April 2, 2004 – Temple, TX

U50-L70, Cloudy, Windy, Chance of Rain late (Marathon L70-L80 Clear, NNW 25-20 - cool after sunset)

Jim's 6:00am Continental flight (Killeen-Houston-Miami) puts him in Marathon at 2:30pm and on the boat by 3:30 after a couple of stops including 'Captains Three' fish market for some Snapper & a Tuna steak; Snapper tonight and Tuna tomorrow. Betty's tennis may get rained-out. While checking-in at the Continental Airlines in Killeen, the agent dropped Jim's Drivers License and it fell through a crack between the computer monitor and cabinet resulting in several employees taking the counter apart before the ID was finally retrieved.... none to soon either, because other passengers were already boarding. Gotta get another government ID for back-up. Houston fog delayed landing by about 15 minutes and a quick connection made for a dash through George Bush airport... to what felt like the opposite end of the terminal... most were already boarded.

If not for a couple of stops, one at 'Captains Three Seafood Market' for fresh Snapper and a Tuna steak, the trip to the MIMI could have been made by 2:30pm. She looks great... Jerry & Butch brought her back from MBY. While there she received bottom job (special paint for the transom lift arms & cylinders), and back-up depth sounder and VHF radio antenna's. Neptunus also had them completely flush the lift hydraulic system, fill with new oil and filter. Jerry says she's getting about 1-2 knots more speed at the same RPM. A windy day (most have been this winter) but the trip over was fine. The turn-around in the small channel at the MBY lift was pretty tight though. Having never had a boat with a thruster, Jerry tried it out, though he didn't need it. Surprising that the Viking doesn't have one. Tennis wasn't rained out and Betty and her team won and will play again Saturday. Grilled snapper for dinner then early to bed; it's been a couple of long days.

Saturday, April 3, 2004 – Docked Faro Blanco Marina, Marathon, FL

U60-U70, Clear W15, clocking to NNW15-20 late afternoon – cool after sunset

Three boats depart for the Bahamas this morning: Cinderella, Miss Annie for about a month and Arcade for a couple of days. Jim R. says by May 1, many will be gone for the summer. We're not sure when we'll depart (long-range planning) but want to meet Ralph at Kentucky Lake by early July... probably leave in May.

Routine stuff today... re-set dock lines; Jerry & Butch did a good job, just needed tweaking. Butch didn't complain about the two big lines. Everything is in order in the cabin so it's time to retrieve packages from the marina office, include: CAT replacement parts for the engine kit (correct this time), Transom lift oil filter and Sony stereo (to replace the one on the bridge). Leftover grilled Snapper sandwich for late lunch.

Today's shopping included groceries at Publix, wine and liquor at Marathon Liquor, and of course a West Marine 'fix' for a few things. By the time everything is put away, it's cocktail hour and as the sun sets (no green flash) a jacket would be needed, so everyone scurries to their boat for the evening. Grilled Tuna (awesome), wine and HBO... another day in paradise evaporated.

Sunday, April 04, 2004 – Docked Faro Blanco Marina, Marathon, FL

Low 70 – L80, Clear/Partly Cloudy, WNW 10-15 G

Up early but not feeling great... must have had some 'bad' wine last night! Project for the day is to get the dink back from Tom's trailer. The wind kicks up (of course) and the ride over was wet with salty spray. With wind in the west there is a lot

of sea grass everywhere... of course the jet sucked it in so, until the grass is cleared from the intake, the dink won't go much faster than a fast idle. Sooo the trip from the Marathon Yacht Club took a while, no biggie... Abundant sea grass behind the MIMI, made loading a little challenging. Everyone wants an east or southeast wind to rid the area of sea grass and get back to fishing which isn't good when it's windy and especially when out of the west. Bad discovery... water in the bilge compartment where one of the transducers were installed; a slow leak will have to be fixed.

Arcade returns around 3:30pm... its just a short 60 mile run to where they went for some sport fishing. Arcade cruises at 30 knots so it's a quick 2-hour crossing. Making the trip was Arcade's owner, 2 guests, Jerry & Bill (crew). They had great fishing (fished the equivalent of 2 half days) and brought back a half dozen Yahoo, the biggest, about 5' long, had a girth of about 24". Jerry filleted and then cut it all into 1" thick steaks... this is sushi grade material! Of course they contributed a couple of packages to J&B; a couple of pieces were grilled with a steak... terrific appetizer shared with Jerry & Bill as they wrapped-up at about 9:00pm (we had all forgotten to spring forward for daylight savings time). Bill says "Some Yahoo [pronounced Yayhoo] was fishing with Ballyhoo and caught a Yahoo! Ballyhoo is the bait of preference around here.



Monday, April 5, 2004 – Docked Faro Blanco Marina, Marathon, FL

Low 70 – L80, Clear, P/Cloudy, WNW 10-15 G

Not a lot to do today except clean house and wait for Betty to get here. Water is found in a bilge compartment that has always been dry... where a new transducer was installed during the haul-out. Ridge at MBY says 'no problem' we'll haul her out and fix it "no charge." We'll do it Wednesday at 9:00am... and blow the day. Betty arrives at 2:30; her 4:00am wake-up (3:00am equivalent because of the switch to daylight savings time) and she's bushed. On the sofa for a "just a few minutes" and she's out for an hour and a half! Jerry notices a tire on the rent car is going flat; Enterprise is not answering so Jim drives off in search of a garage. Mostly convenience stores nearby and the tire is getting to flat to drive on so a 'quick change' is made and the baby 'convenience' spare donut is put on... we'll get the real tire fixed tomorrow.

Its now well into cocktail hour and Betty is out and about. A sun loving group decide on a sunset cruise, so in two center console fishing boats we head out with visions of seeing the 'green flash;' they say, in the Keys, on clear evenings you can sometimes see a green flash just as the sun disappears from view. We motor less than a quarter mile from FBM, raft-up and enjoy music, drinks and the end of a terrific day. A Coast Guard boat cruised by and we all wave... some are anxious about the drinks... when the cutter turns our way... no alarm though... they saw we were adrift and with all the waving, thought we might need assistance.... Phew! We all, Tom & Marie, Ed & Claire, Bob & Sue, Ben & Cecilia and Vern & Linda toast the sunset. They say that if you blink, you'll miss the 'green flash'... we all blinked or else there was no flash.



Tuesday, April 6, 2004 – Docked Faro Blanco Marina, Marathon, FL

Low 70 – L80, Clear, ENE 10

Betty is up early for her 8:30 tennis match while Jim drives to the airport; Enterprise is still not answering the phone but there are 3 employees there... if they don't answer the phone maybe there'll be less work? They provide directions to a muffler/tire shop (broken down gas station) that does a quick repair job in just a few minutes.

Thinking (worrying) about the leak and fixing it, Jim puts in a call to Ridge at MBY. The worker who installed the transducer is convinced the leak must be internal to the transducer, rather than the through-hull seal. The long and short of it is that the leak was internal and after several attempts, it looks like the leak is stopped. Still not leaking at 5:00pm, the haul-out tomorrow is put on hold.

Jim & Jane have moved Riley, their fishing boat, over to the condo they bought (nice dock came with the condo) so after a good day fishing, J&B ride with Jim over to the condo. It is amazing how many boats are anchored in Boot Key Harbor; many look as if they deserve the 'harbor trash' name those with marina slips have given them.

Wednesday, April 7, 2004 – Docked Faro Blanco Marina, Marathon, FL

Low 70 – L80, Clear P/Cloudy, E 10

Still no leak and feeling better about the transducer now, the haul-out is cancelled. Dana from S.A.L.T. arrives at 9:30am; Steve Grasly (owner) comes along to get him started on the stereo project. The objective is to properly connect the outside speakers with the salon stereo and its multi-disc player. The new bridge stereo (with AUX for connecting to the Salon stereo) is smaller than the existing unit so a black 'Starboard' trim piece is made to cover the hole. AUX connector cables are purchased at Radio Shack and pulled to connect the salon and bridge, but time slips away and the project will have to finish in the morning. Marie caught fish today and a couple of packages of filets are delivered to the MIMI.

Hamburger dock party tonight at 'Adventure;' we bring tomatoes, onion and lettuce, others bring hamburger, beans, potato salad, etc. and Tom grills. Lots of boaters so boating stories abound. Butch returns from his 5-day trip to the Dry Tortugas; they towed a fishing boat and caught a lot of fish... some really nice Grouper.

Thursday, April 8, 2004 – Docked Faro Blanco Marina, Marathon, FL

Low 70 – L80, Clear P/Cloudy, E 10 early clocking to SE 15 early PM

Betty is off to Tennis before Dana arrives at 8:30am to complete the stereo project. Jim is beginning to wonder if this stereo thing is going to turn out like the BBQ grill thing on the 'Bitter End.' Having to go through a number of them before getting it right? By noon its working! Well almost; good CD stereo sound, from the salon stereo, is playing through the outside speakers but not from the satellite or AM/FM tuner. Dana leaves for another appointment and will do some research. Marie's Snapper for dinner... superb!

Friday, April 9, 2004 – Docked Faro Blanco Marina, Marathon, FL

Low 70 – L80, Clear P/Cloudy, Calm, L/Fog

Humidity increases with wind shift to the southeast, resulting in early morning fog; the first we've seen in the Keys lifts by 8:30am. After lunch, Jim and Jim go out bait fishing (Ballyhoo). Plenty of Ballyhoo, 3 Speckled Trout, a couple of small shark, and some trash fish were caught; not a great catch, but a great day on the water.

Saturday, April 10, 2004 – Docked Faro Blanco Marina, Marathon, FL

Mid 70 – M80, Clear P/Cloudy, Calm

Tennis for Betty this morning and chart work for Jim; routes to Bahamas and Mobile. Plans haven't firmed, but a trip to the Bahamas in May then depart for Tennessee in June, targeting July 7th arrival at Kentucky Lake. We would like to go up the Cumberland River to Nashville in August then back to the Tennessee River and up to Chattanooga and Blue Springs. Difficult, is to sandwich the trip between development approval schedules in Temple.

New boat in Miss Annie's slip... 'Con-du-it' Marco Island, FL. Owner Don Condee came in with his grandson Eric. Don's wife Mary Lou arrives by car tomorrow. They're in the electrical contracting and service business including residential, commercial and marine. We talked about air conditioning, which they also do, and about raw water strainers growing things in saltwater and Don says he fills the strainer with bromide tablets (swimming pool kind) about once monthly and it keeps the strainer clean with no barnacle growth at all. Wow! Sounds good, but I'll check it out with S.A.L.T. before we do it. Don also suggested the Marco Island Yacht Club as a good stop on our way up Florida's west coast to Mobile.

'Flood tide' and 'ebb tide.' Grilled Speckled Trout for dinner. Awesome evening.

Sunday, April 11, 2004 – Docked Faro Blanco Marina, Marathon, FL

Mid 70 – U80, Clear P/Cloudy, Calm

A beautiful Easter Day in the Keys. Charlie and Cathy and guests departed on the 'Casa Del Mar' (90' triple-deck houseboat) for Key West at 8:30am with plans to spend the evening and return tomorrow in time for the grilled pizza dock party. Houseboats aren't seen very often, in these parts. It's the first time they've been out since taking delivery last fall. These are the folks with the pink stretch limo's. Later, we get word they arrived in Key West okay... except they were 'waked' at the harbor entrance, which dumped the turkey roasting in the oven and made a real mess!

Betty shops for the pizza 'makins' for tomorrow's dock party, while Jim spends most of the afternoon developing a Marathon to Mobile route on the chart plotter. The trip will be Marathon to Key West and on to Useppa Island (north of Captiva Is.), Clearwater, Panama City, Pensacola, and Mobile. From Mobile it will be up the rivers Mobile, Black Warrior, and Tenn-Tom.

Texas weather has been stormy and cold. Friends Linda and Buck Prewitt are coming Monday... bet is, they bring bad weather. In 2002, they came to the 'Bitter End' in Kemah and brought cold high wind and rain that time! After grilled pork roast on the spit for a late evening Easter dinner, the weather begins to change and by 10:00 a thunderstorm passes through (tornado watch) with a tremendous lightning show and heavy rain.

Monday, April 12, 2004 – Docked Faro Blanco Marina, Marathon, FL

Mid 70 – U70, Cloudy (patchy sunshine) Rain, WNW 15-20 G

Rain early... no thunderstorm... dirty rain that leaves the boat with black streaks all over. Betty, Sue and Cecilia do last minute shopping and chopping of pizza toppings for tonight's dock party. Heavy storms are forecast for the Lauderdale area around 11:00am, which is about the time Buck & Linda's flight is scheduled to arrive.

Calibrating the new depth sounder is the project for today; depth works but the speed & water temperature won't and results in a call RayMarine tech help. The tech talks us through (stuff not in the book) a procedure to get it on track and the rest is a piece of cake! Toughest was the 40 minutes on-hold waiting for the tech.

The Prewitt's arrive at 4:00pm; the flight was rain-delayed, making the rent-car place a zoo, plus the Overseas highway was heavy traffic. Party prep is underway and by 5:30 folks are arriving. HQ is Tom & Marie's Tiki Hut and Jim & Tom's grills. Bob is the grill master and everyone builds their own... pretty good too! The party breaks up by 9:00pm and a good thing for the Prewitt's was up around 3am to catch the 6:00am flight.



Bob serving a great grilled Pizza!

Tuesday, April 13, 2004 – Docked Faro Blanco Marina, Marathon, FL

Mid 70 – M80, Cloudy (patchy sunshine) Rain, WNW 5-10 G increasing to 20-25 G

Rain during the night with wind, thunder, and lightning around 6:00am, along with and a tornado watch until 8:00am. After a long travel day, it didn't bother Buck and Linda for they were up at the 'crack of 9:00'). The forecast, after the rain passes through, is for wind 15-20 knots and gusty with 4'-8' seas subsiding to 3'-5' by Thursday; looks like we won't be going to the Dry Tortugas unless the forecast is way off.

The sun pops out and with a wet boat it's a good time to wash... the first rain was a 'dirty' rain and the boat is filthy with black streaks everywhere. Buck joins in... Betty & Linda too. Should have taken a picture. Betty and Linda get a call and they're off to play tennis... when they return it starts raining again but not 'dirty' so the wash down wasn't wasted. The rain lets up and it is humid, but pleasant, however the wind is supposed to 'kick-up' later... and it does... 20-25 knots and gusting. We were at Sombrero Beach and most (around 75) were literally blown off. Sand it the teeth, not good.

Buck & Linda treat us to Stone Crab at Keys Fisheries for dinner. We return the favor with a showing of 'Water World!' Knowing the lines, by now, Jim 'naps' through part of it, but catches the ending.

Wednesday, April 14, 2004 – Docked Faro Blanco Marina, Marathon, FL

U60-M70, Cloudy to P/Cloudy, NNW 15-30 G (27 at 6:00am)

Strong wind all night... with rocking and wave noise made for good sleeping. The forecast is not encouraging; seas in the vicinity of the Dry Tortugas are reported at 9' and not expected to let up before Thursday night and then to redevelop Saturday as a strong high-pressure area moves across the Gulf.

After tennis, we load in the little Spyder convertible (girls scrunched in the jump seat) and drive to Isla Morada and lunch at the Isla Morada Fish Company (Lobster, Cracked Conch and Grouper), followed by serious shopping at 'World Wide Sportsman' and a drink at 'Lazy Days' restaurant and bar... nice balcony Oceanside view on the lee side of the island, very pleasant. On the way we stop at Keys Canvas to pick-up the bridge helm cover; modifications were necessary to fit around the windshield brace. Turns out Captain Jim is not too good at pattern making... sure enough they did what was asked... the order was a little off! It requires rework and this time they'll come measure. Oh well, we're doing a good job contributing to the Marathon economy!



Still stuffed from lunch, we enjoy a Hogs Head brand cold-cut tray followed by 'Tidal Wave' DVD (bad!).

Thursday, April 15, 2004 – Docked Faro Blanco Marina, Marathon, FL

M60-M70, Clear, N20 G (24 at 6:00am) **Income tax day**

The wind clocked to the north during the night at high tide provided plenty of rock 'n roll in the marina. It appears the Prewitt's brought enough wind to last through their stay. NOAA reports Hawks Channel as "rough" with 8' seas outside the reef and 4-7 foot in the Dry Tortugas.

The wind lays some by 10:00am and it's a pretty day... so Betty gives the 'all clear' for dock lines and we undock... fortunately Don Condit watches and alerts us that we were indeed 'clear' except for one line; embarrassing, but could have been an accident had we been pulling out fast! Now we're off and there's only a moderate chop in Hawk's Channel. There's a sport fishing tournament so we were lucky to get a slip at Conch Harbor. They put us in their only slip, an 18 footer (center of pylons) which made our 16'-6" beam a little tight! No problem though, because Linda yelled commands (at least 3 or 4 times each) to the captain, who was wondering why they weren't using his fancy new voice activated radios.

With a 8' finger pier and tight to boot, tying-up presented some challenges but soon all were met and Linda and Betty headed of the shops while Buck & Jim stayed back to wash the salt off and enjoy the afternoon. A 70 'Sun Seeker' sport cruiser 'Endless Summer' returns from a short cruise and being the good neighbor, Capt. Jim jumps off the 'MIMI' to hand them lines. They had 2 crew (1 piloting and the other was securing bow lines) and 2 old guys and their girl friend dates. The old guys just looked at Jim... so after a few minutes of this Jim muttered a few choice words, drops the lines and says to hell with the 'good neighbor' shit! The crew later apologized for the old guys.

We all meet up on Duval Street and a stop at the 'Hogs Breath Saloon' for refreshments, raw oysters and Conch fritters, followed by more shopping then Mallory Square for sunset drinks. We're about an hour early and the wind is cool, so the girl's head back to the shops and Buck and Jim to the 'MIMI.' Dock activity is high with lots of Jimmy Buffet and Rum flowing. A couple are 'skinny dipping' in the top deck hot tub of the 90' Yacht 'Waterford' on our starboard. Clears sky

sunset and no 'green flash.' Buck & Linda treat (its hard to grab a check when Buck is around) us to Stone Crab at 'Monty's' followed with ADD aboard the 'MIMI.'

Friday, April 16, 2004 – Docked Conch Harbor Marina, Key West, FL

M60-U70, Clear, N15-20 G

Endless Summer pulls out at 7:00am... The crew is the only ones up. Betty & Linda 'have to' go back to one particular shop before we depart... Buck tags along to protect his interests! We're ready to go around 11:15am. and decide to use the new radio's; they work great until Betty loses hers overboard while wrestling with a bow line... bad words, but not from the Captain! Oh well, we'll make recommendation to the manufacturer for an improved design.



The wind is up and out of the Northeast so we have it on our nose with a 2-3' chop that got rougher as we neared the seven mile bridge and Marathon. Faro Blanco is protected from NE wind so docking was no problem, especially because Jerry & Butch lend a hand. Heavy dock line nearly took Betty overboard and Butch is complaining about his back. They are too heavy and we'll probably have to order smaller ones or loose a deck hand. Butch also complained that we failed to let them know our plans and thought we only went out for a day-cruise yesterday... almost sent the Coast Guard looking for us when we didn't return!

Buck lends a hand with the salt wash-off while Betty & Linda head for Sombrero Beach. It's too nice a day to waste! Dinner Theater tonight; grilled Wahoo and DVD 'Something's Gotta Give' Jack Nicholson & Dianne Keaton... both were enjoyable.

Saturday, April 17, 2004 – Docked Faro Blanco Marina, Marathon, FL

M70-M80, Clear, NNE15-20 G

It's been good having Buck & Linda aboard this week; they love boating and the water and that's a formula for a good time! On there way to Lauderdale, we follow in our car to Isla Morada to exchange some stuff at World Wide Sportsman, followed by lunch at 'Lazy Days' restaurant (Fosters on tap). Buck buys seafood bisque for us (to go) to be sure he has us covered for dinner. We do our farewells; it was a good visit (except for the crazy wind sock Linda brought Jim) and though it was windy and the trip to the Dry Tortugas was cancelled, there was plenty to do and the cruise to Key West was nice.



Sunday, April 18, 2004 – Docked Faro Blanco Marina, Marathon, FL

L70-L80, P/Cloudy, NEE15-20 G

Betty doubles with Charlie in 9:30am tennis match on grass court while Jim tends to a few projects, including planning for the May trip. It's a cleaning day in preparation for return to Texas Monday evening. Many will have departed by the time we return; Ben & Cecilia and Vern & Linda depart Tuesday, Ed & Claire Saturday and Bob & Sue (Tom & Marie with them) and Charlie & Cathy shortly afterward. Faro Blanco will be pretty empty by May 5th when we return from Texas. All plan on returning around November 1st and Ben & Cecilia plan to stop for the Lauderdale Boat Show on the way... they always stay at the Harbor Town Marina in Dania, FL. They suggest, on our return, that we consider crossing over to the Florida east coast via the Okeechobee Waterway and then meet them in Dania. Dinner is at Island Breezes in Key Colony Beach with Tom & Marie... terrific seared Yellow Fin Tuna.

Monday, April 19, 2004 – Docked Faro Blanco Marina, Marathon, FL

L70-L80, P/Cloudy, E15-20 G

The wind is forecast to lay this evening after a solid week of wind and just as we depart for Texas. The TD900 2-Way radio replacement (for the one Betty 'lost') is ordered 800/399-5994 (Aaron) plus 2 belt pouches for \$149.00.

So many are cruising out next week that a dock BBQ is put together for this evening and we stay for it... better than Embassy Suite's food.