

Destination Dock

by Kerri Glynn

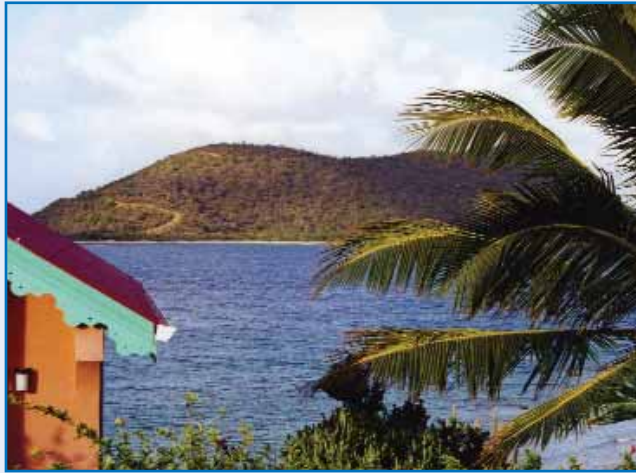
Whom are we kidding? All the dreams about traveling to exotic ports, crossing oceans, and surviving storms at sea are dreams we share with the few who do. But for the rest of us, our destination is a dock.

Let's face it - the dock is where our boats sit most of the time. We frequently visit a friend who keeps his boat at a lovely marina on the North Fork of Long Island. His sailboat sits at the end of a finger pier, and we have to walk past a collection of large cabin cruisers that never move. Not only don't they move, they'd be hard pressed to try with their cockpits filled with palm trees and tomato plants. It's hard even for us to move down the dock amid all the planters and lawn furniture. Day after day, their 'captains' and 'first mates' sit in comfortable chairs trading sea stories and cruising recipes. (I'm reminded of my mother's stories of summer evenings sitting on the stoop of her Brooklyn apartment, surrounded by her neighbors sitting on the stoops of their apartments.) It doesn't seem to matter that the cabins not only blocks the view of the water but also the sunset. And you know what? That's okay.

Sharing a dock connects us to other people who share our tastes and interests. That's why you'll tend to find some marinas are filled with powerboats and others with sailboats. This takes us away from home and puts us in a beautiful place. Most marinas have their own built-in social life - restaurants, bars, barbecues, and pools. And they provide endless opportunities for the "what if" game. You know the one: "if" you won the lottery, what three boats would buy? For many boaters, their boat is a floating condo. And that's okay.

Our boat makes the blue water voyage to the Caribbean where she spends half her year. But in the Northeast she sits on a private dock at the mouth of a beautiful harbor across from an osprey nest. We wake up in the morning and say to each other, "Where do you want to be today?" And more often than not we answer, "Right here." We can avoid the embarrassment that comes with clumsy landings, or even the greater embarrassment of experiencing the failed transmission in a crowded harbor that resulted in not only one, not only two, but THREE boats we rammed into before finally tying up to one. We can be assured of air conditioning and microwaves and computers without the noise of starting up the generator. We can read books and take naps and drink a little too much (or a lot too much), which are the things we like to do when we're away from home.

Some boaters like to re-create the dock experience a mile from shore. When we poke around harbors in our Boston Whaler, we inevitably see the "rafters" - three, four, eight boats tied up to each other for a communal party. We see them in Port Jefferson on the north shore and Three Mile Harbor on the south side. One boat holds the beer cooler and another the margarita mix. When it's time for dinner- bring on the potluck supper!



Our dock view in Marina Cay

In one boat the skipper is shucking clams, in another he's grilling swordfish while another is barbecuing burgers and dogs for the kids. Cockpit tables are loaded with salads and breads and desserts. Surefooted mariners walk casually from one boat to the other, filling their plates and swapping stories of nautical adventures (usually involving failed mechanical systems). Again I'm reminded of those Brooklyn stoops. And that's okay.

Even when we're in the Caribbean, we sail from mooring to mooring, which is, after all, just another kind of floating dock. We leave after



View from our home dock.

breakfast so we can get to our next destination before lunch. We love the British Virgin Islands because most destinations are within a few hours' sail of each other. Unlike our early trips where we tried to put as many push pins into the map as we could, we tend now to stay for days at a time in our favorite places.

Jost Van Dyke is truly our home away from home. As soon as we drop anchor, we hurry over to White Bay and hang at the Soggy Dollar Bar. Lying in a hammock under a palm tree with one of their famous "Painkillers" in your hand is truly one of those "Thousand Things You Must Do Before You Die." In the old days (before they brought the wire from Tortola), Jost Van Dyke had no electricity and no roads. You jumped off the boat and swam to shore (hence the name "Soggy Dollar Bar") where you found a table on the beach that was filled with bottles of booze and held a big jar for payment - \$2.00 a drink. Those days are gone, and now the harbor

gets crowded on a sunny day (and they're all sunny). But White Bay is still one of the most beautiful beaches in the world and the small town feeling of the Sand Castle Hotel (only six rooms) welcomes you home. On the other side of the island, Foxy's Taboo is a "Blue Lagoon" - a paradise of tranquil turquoise water with one small beach bar. If you're "in the know", you can follow the goat trail to a famous island landmark - the "Bubbly Pool" - a natural rock formation that fills with swirling water much like a hot tub. Or if you want more company than you'll find in this secluded location, head to Great Harbor where you'll find not only the famous "Foxy's" but also a fine collection of West Indian restaurants and bars. Wear your flip-flops or walk barefoot, it doesn't matter. The pace is slow and friendly and the locals know you by the name of your boat. It would be easy to spend an entire vacation anchored in any one of these harbors. And that's okay.

Marina Cay offers a Pusser's Resort (with only six hotel rooms) and some of the best snorkeling I've known. There's a school of Blue Tang I swim with regularly, as well as Hawknest turtles that cruise the bottom and don't seem to mind if I join them. The Sunset Bar is the original home of Rob and *** - a young American couple who lived their dream of owning a piece of paradise. They bought this small island from the British government (who later took it back) and build a home, stone by stone. And their romantic story makes the drinks even sweeter as you sip them on the patio while watching the sunset and being serenaded by local musicians. (And the drinks are half price at Happy Hour.) Since this island has a restaurant, a clothing store, and laundry facilities as well as a dive boat for my husband (the wreck of the *Rhone* is a popular destination), we have stayed days as a time. And that's wonderful.

I could go on about Biras Creek, home to a beautiful resort by the same name as well as the famous Bitter End. The harbor there is within dinghy distance of another Pusser's with supermarket and laundry as well as Necker Island where Princess Diana used to vacation. The hotel on Saba Rock fills up your water tank if you take a mooring. Does it get any better than this? When my husband came down with the flu during one Christmas vacation, I learned to operate the dinghy and we stayed here for five days. I never regretted not sailing on to Anegada. After all the trips we've made in these islands, we have our favorite restaurants. We've gotten to know the people. We even know the fish.

Boring? Not at all. These 'docks' provide us with beautiful places to dream about exotic ports, crossing oceans, and surviving storms. What could be better?

