

Black Boaters Summit

By Carroll Green - Photos by Joan Jackson



What a sight to behold! Black boaters ascended in great numbers during the off season in the British Virgin Islands, providing an economic boost to the usual down-turning economy at this time of the year.

The eastern seaboard of the U.S. was well represented, with mariners from Massachusetts, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, DC, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia and Florida. Other states included Alabama, Tennessee, Ohio, Michigan, Illinois, Missouri, Texas, California, Washington, Oregon and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Leading the pack was Paul Mixon, who started it all when he launched the Black Boaters Summit (BBS) some 20 years ago. Paul greeted many of us on arrival at the airport in St. Thomas, US Virgin Islands. He greeted others on the island of Anegada and at the Bitter End Yacht Club.

Some of us had the pleasure of sharing the flight from Miami to St. Thomas with Fran Kelly, a long-time assistant to Paul and a member of his crew. Also attending this gala extravaganza was Dr. Byron “Billy” Biscoe, a

practicing Ophthalmologist based in St. Thomas. Billy was there from the beginning, introducing black boaters to the Caribbean communities, and he returns each year for the annual reunions. It was a delight seeing Billy again and reminiscing well into the wee hours with him, his son, and his homies: John Quickley, Johnnie Parham, Melba Allen, Diane Moizio and Jerry Elie.



What Paul Mixon started has evolved into an increasing number of individual, but related, groups of black boaters. The Seafarers Yacht Club of Annapolis, reputedly the oldest functional black yacht club in the country, was exceptionally well represented. Joe Banks, the well known Chesapeake Bay sailor and a member of Seafarers, led an armada of yachts that not only impressed the locals, but impressed us all. Those who know Joe were not surprised; Joe has a knack for making the good better.

Joan Jackson, a member of Seafarers and a former long-time logistician for the BBS, led the group of No Drama Travel. We should all take note of how No Drama Travel conducts its business. No Drama employs local native charter boat captains. In fact, No Drama's lead captain was Kenroy Hazel, the dean of local captains and well known throughout the BVI. Andrew Cooper was the other local native captain for No Drama. The moral here is that parity and charity begin at home; support our brothers and sisters first and foremost.

We need to look beyond the veneer of paradise. Paradise for whom? Certainly not the local native population. When the local economy nose dives during the off season it is the local natives that are hardest hit with unemployment. Local native charter boat captains will direct you to native owned businesses and scenic wonders that are unknown to credit card captains. If one desires the services of local native captains, Joan Jackson can put you in touch with this cadre of skillful home-grown talent of color.

Craig Martin on S/V *Wild Thing II* led the group Nauti By Nature that included the dean of black captains, John Quickley on S/V *TouCan Play*. John was there shortly after the beginning with Paul Mixon. The mainsail of

TouCan Play ripped while being hoisted en route to Anegada. That mishap ended any notions of sailing for the remainder of the voyage.

Cleve Taylor on S/V *Liberty Choice*, was an independent. Susan Lynch, on the S/V *Pleaidies*, also a member of Seafarers, was an independent. Rex McAllister, a blessing to all of us and coming back from a traumatic brain injury suffered in a traffic accident, was also an independent. His yacht, S/V *Playlist*, included his wife Janice, daughter Anna and cousin Gwendolyn Evans, all first timers for these nautical adventures. This crew also included Lewis Ethridge and Michele Jones. The last time

I saw Janice she was still smiling from the great times they had in the tropics.

Lemart Presley on S/V *Galeaux*, had a crew of seasoned bluewater sailors that included Major General USAFR (Retired) Ernie Talbert and his wife, Admiral Richelle, Curtis and Veronica Cobb, Nadair Q, and first-timer Dr. Debra Jackson English, who purportedly had an exhilarating experience. Debra made a last minute decision to attend this celebratory event and was fortunate enough to crew with a group of VIPs. Dean Baxter Smith and Anne Gaye curtailed their worldly travels to join this crew.

Beverly and Marshall Tolbert, long-time bluewater sailors on M/V *Exit Strategy*, led a group of happy sailors that were usually the first to arrive at the appointed designation with libations in hand. Joanne Kelly, a hard working member of Seafarers and a major contributor to its causes, was a member of this illustrious group.

Allen Plaskett on S/V *After Glow*, was an independent. He was joined by crew members Dr.



Roderick Boyd, a longtime Seafarers member, newcomer Rev. Dr. Brenda Harger, Signey O'Neil and Joanne Wilburn. Yolanda Lockhart was another independent with her crewed yacht.

A special shout out to the youngest captain in the fleet, Caleb Boise on S/V *Endless Summer*. Caleb, a seasoned bluewater sailor, has been sailing the Sir Francis Drake Channel for some years now, following in the footsteps of his father, Craig. Caleb, an alumnus of Howard University, usually has a crew of fellow alumni and they are affectionately known as the millennial crew.

By my count and Paul Mixon's, there were 60 or more boats plying the waters of the Sir Francis Drake Channel. This is, by far, the largest contingent of black boaters seen in these waters.

The Race From Anegada

Ron Harris and Bill Reddick on S/V *Osprey* were callers for the start of the race. Hours after the finish the results were still being debated.

We understand from a very reliable source, a race participant, that S/V *As You Wish* (Daryl Dennis), S/V *No Regrets* (Shawn Ginwright), S/V *Galeaux* (Lemart Presley) and S/V *Moonshadow* (Keith Green), were in the hunt for first place. But as Keith describes the finish, S/V *Freedom Seeker* (Alozona Galloway), another long-time bluewater sailor, coming out of the mist and closing fast, flashed by *Moonshadow* to cross the finish line ahead of all. Anne Gaye on *Galeaux* thought she saw a foul, but Ron Harris and Bill Reddick, our race officials, were not anywhere near the finish line to substantiate the alleged foul. Congratulations to Alozona and the crew of *Freedom Seeker*.

Sightings

Alex Dawson, a BBS participant in the early years, is a long-time bluewater sailor who grew up near the

Albemarle Sound. Alex later became the director of Legal Services in St. Thomas. Shortly after taking the job, Alex came back to sail his boat back down to St. Thomas. Alex remains in the practice of law in the

Albemarle Sound country of northeastern North Carolina. Tony Ford and Darian Brown, independents, were also among faithful who were sighted.

Missing & Missed

Bill Pickney, a long-time BBS participant, was sorely missed at this year's gathering of mariners. As many may know, Bill was the first mariner of color to circumnavigate the globe solo, completing his epic voyage in 1992. Bill's book,

"As Long As It Takes - Meeting The Challenge," with a foreword by Maya Angelou, is well worth the read.

Bill Pickney and Bill Cosby served together in the U. S. Navy, and Bill shares another distinction. He is one of two black sailors certified to captain tall ships in this country. Bill is the Master Captain Emeritus of the schooner *Amistad*, Connecticut's official tall ship. Bill still has his hands on the helm sailing out of Fajard, Puerto Rico. Bill, we missed you! Hopefully all is well with you and Migdalia.

The other certified black captain of tall ships is Rob Chichester. Rob is a relief captain of the S/V *A. J. Meerwald*, New Jersey's official tall ship. Rob will be leading a voyage along the Amalfi Coast of Italy next month.

Retirements Afloat

John Alexander Quickley called me last fall while I was sailing aboard S/V *Bay Poet* in the Chesapeake Bay, asking me to join him as mate on this anniversary voyage. I immediately said yes after a three year absence from the Caribbean. Shortly after boarding, John announced that this would be his farewell voyage of crewing in the Caribbean, a decision he had made prior to making the trip down. After watching Jerry Elie, some 20 years our junior, jumping into and out of dinghies and engine



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compartments, I quickly concluded that this was also my farewell voyage of crewing in the Caribbean. John and I are four score and more, a point in life that Lemart



calls ancient, but a point we cherish and arrive at not by accident. Seniors at this juncture do not jump into or out of bed, or jump anywhere else. We tend to slide, glide and grasp firmly onto hand rails and other safety devices.

It is readily apparent that neither John, nor I, are a tribal chief, politician or pastor, since we know when to step down, step aside and simply get out of the way. We recognize diminishing skills, diminishing agility and diminishing energy; we know when to fold. Crewing in the Caribbean is history, but for now, sailing European waters continues unabated.

Good News Upon Returning Home

Lorena Bow, a former BBS participant, member of Black Ski, and a certified scuba diver who had traumatic brain surgery, remains the competitive soul she has always been. She is a member of the DC MedStar Rehabilitation Hospital rowing team. Competing last weekend in the 36th Annual Adaptive Rowing Regatta, in Philadelphia, Lorena won two medals in the competition. A hearty congratulations Lorena, from your nautical friends! 🇺🇸



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