Larikin, under sail. She's a 47-foot Herreshoff yawl

CRUISING FOREIGN—

CLOSE TO HOME

Leaving Great Inagua, Larikin heads toward the lofty mountains at Tortuga, and coasts by moonlight along the Haitian shore to the beat of Voodoo drums. Touching at Kingston, Little Cayman, Isle of Pines, and Havana, she ends her 3000-mile cruise at Key West

By AL HOOVER

Photograph by Hans Marx

The skipper and mate prior to the start

PART TWO

THE wind dropped as the day ended, but enough breeze remained to waft us into Mathew Town on Great Inagua.

Here mooring conditions were not ideal. This so-called harbor is just an open roadstead that could become extremely rough in a southwester.

Several island steamers were lashed together and anchored just out from the wharf. They were old vessels being refitted to carry supplies. A man on the dock advised us to tie alongside the cluster, which we did.

When we wanted to go ashore we would board a steamer and shout to a crane operator on the wharf. He would swing out the long, steel arm and transport us to the dock on the crane's loading pallet.

The salt industry is controlled by two Massachusetts natives, who came to the island about ten years ago. One of the owners was on a visit to the States. The other, Douglas Erickson, and his wife, Eina, welcomed us warmly. Erickson, a large, handsome young man, was a dynamo of energy. The salt plant was operated on a Yankee time schedule, with working hours from 6:30 A.M. to noon, and from 1:00 P.M. to 4:30 P.M.

About twenty persons comprise the Caucasian population of Mathew Town, all the men being employed at the salt plant. Eina, small, blonde and attractive, presided over social activities, and life seemed gay and harmonious.

Larikin's crew attended a pre-Christmas party at the big manor house. There was a tree and dancing to a Victrola. A cut glass bowl was filled with rum and orange juice punch, as potent as it was palatable.

Guests were white—except for the island Governor and the priest. The dark-skinned Governor was impressive in a spotless white suit. His manners were faultless, and he spoke with an Oxford accent, having been educated in England.

Father Smith, slender with bright, intelligent eyes, is a person of prominence on the island. He had studied medicine as well as theology, but had never received an M.D. degree. His first assignment was to the Philippines, but he was unhappy there, because, under U. S. jurisdiction, he was not allowed to doctor his flock.

On British-owned Great Inagua he was priest, surgeon, physician, dentist and veterinarian. He would skillfully pull a tooth, remove an appendix, or set the broken leg of a village dog.

Being both priest and surgeon was an ideal combination. If it seemed that the operation would not be a success, Father Smith was right on hand to administer the last rites.

All able-bodied negroes at Mathew Town work at the salt plant. It is a big industry. Many of the salt piles were more than fifty feet high and covered large areas. Big bucket cranes were continually piling up the salt, or loading it into trucks to be carted to the wharf.

The salt is obtained from sea water by the slow, simple process of evaporation. Ocean water is pumped into diked-in ponds and the sun does the rest.

This would seem to be an ideal industry, with both the brine and sunshine furnished gratis by nature—but it has its headaches. Evaporation is so slow there is just one crop a year, and if the rain comes before the crystallized salt can be harvested, the entire crop may dissolve. Most of the salt from Great Inagua is used by fish houses in New England.

One morning Father Smith appeared on the wharf with a young colored boy, Henry Bayne, aged 17. The youngster was a deckhand on the mail boat, but missed the ship and wanted to work his way to Cap Haitien. Though Henry was with us only a few days, he turned out to be the ideal sailor-servant.

Great Inagua is less than a hundred miles from Haiti. In easy stages we had covered 400 miles since leaving Nassau, though it seemed that we had traveled

less than half that distance. It had all been fine sailing and we had rested at anchor every night. As for being an uphill climb, there was frequently enough southing in the trades, and enough easting in our course, so that we could proceed close-hauled to our destination.

We spent four happy days on Great Inagua, and left there one breezy, sunny noon. The trades were really whooping it up that day. As we cleared the roadstead under mainsail alone, Larikin leaned far over and rocketed through the water like a torpedo. Spray swept the deck in sheets, and down below Betty and Joy had a hectic time trying to keep books, cooking utensils and canned goods from landing helter-skelter in the bilge.

But this thrill ride was of short duration. The port chainplate loosened, and we had to romp back to the roadstead for repairs.

The following morning we got an early start, and, carrying all sail in a softened breeze, had a fine run. When the sun set that evening we were in the lee of Tortuga's lofty mountains, ghosting along in calm water between Tortuga, a former pirate stronghold, and Haiti.

All night we glided over the still waters, while a great yellow moon walked across the sky. It was an Arabian Night's Dream. Fires sparkled high up on the forested hills and the wild, weird rhythm of drums rolled out from the land. Under the spell of Luna, Voodooism was rampant, each camp fire probably designating the meeting place of some fantastic cult.

Soon after daylight we found the channel entrance and ran into Cap Haitien Harbor, our easternmost goal.

We were already safely in when the pilot and port doctor arrived. A pilot at this stage was just excess baggage, but we had to take him aboard, though under protest.

He made a big show of directing us along an intricate route by frequently singing out, "right rudder," "left rudder." We knew from our charts that the water was all deep, so the act was comical—except that it was costing us a $6 fee.

Our circuitous course ended a long half mile from the town, when the pilot ordered the anchor down. The man was undoubtdely in cahoots with the bumboat operator, so our position was a strategic one. Now we would have to depend on the dilapadated bum boat for transportation—unless we wanted to blister our hands with a long, hard row to town. The fare was 50 cents per person —or 20 cents if we haggled sufficiently.

The bay is large, deep and open, and at times becomes very rough. It was on its outer reef that the flagship of Columbus was wrecked on Christmas Eve, 1492. It was the day before Christmas that we arrived, but we were luckier than Columbus.

In size Cap Haitien rates second only to Port au Prince, and in Haiti's heyday it was known as the "Paris of America." No other city in the Western Hemisphere surpassed it in wealth, culture and gaiety.

Today it is drab, dirty and unsanitary. Its teeming population of blacks lives mostly in shabby shacks and hovels, while in the outskirts a few crumbling walls are all that remain of great mansions, destroyed in the bloody uprising of the slaves.

The white population comprises two families, that of Bill Bird, manager of the large and active sisal plant, and his engineer, Frank MacNeal. Both men, with their attractive wives and children, live in comfortable homes on high ground above the bay. The Birds and MacNeals seemed delighted by Larikin's arrival and parties honored our visit.

Our only reason for visiting Cap Haitien, instead of the larger and more modern city of Port au Prince, was on account of its proximity to one of the most astounding ruins in the Western Hemisphere—the great Citadel of Christophe, the bloodthirsty ex-slave who became a self-designated Emperor.

Hiring a guide we motored in an ancient jalopy over bumpy, dusty roads as close to the Citadel as a car could go. Then, disembarking, it was a 3,000-foot climb up a steep, narrow trail to our destination. The guide and I went afoot, but others in the party rode small, rugged Haitian donkeys. I was about bushed when the climb was completed, and even the guide was staggering, but the laden donkeys seemed unaffected. The auto ride and the ascent took from 7:30 A.M. until nearly noon.

As for the Citadel, it beggars description. The mighty walls, made from huge slabs of stone, are 20 feet thick. Massive, iron-studded doors give admittance to endless labyrinths, gloomy chambers and dark, damp dungeons. Great cannon by the hundreds still rest on crumbling bases. All this heavy armament and the great stone blocks were lugged up by the hands of men. *(Cont. on page 32)*

Photograph by Jamaica Tourist Board

A South Sea atmosphere prevails at palm-fringed Swallow Cove, Runaway Bay —a typical fisherman's cove on the north coast of Jamaica, British West Indies

It is said that more than 30,000 blacks died during the process of construction.

Hundreds of others perished by being hurled from a stone platform at the very top of the Citadel. From this platform it is a sheer drop of 1,000 feet to the rocks and boulders below. Having erring subjects tossed from the platform, was the ex-slave's favorite form of punishment.

It would take days to explore the Citadel properly, and our time was limited. We started the return trip in the early afternoon and reached Cap Haitien before dark.

With the Citadel visited there was nothing to keep us longer in dirty Cap Haitien. As we were now at the top of the toboggan slide, so to speak, we were looking forward to the long, down-hill run back to Florida, via Jamaica, with the trades over Larikin's stern.

Occasionally during the winter months a northwester comes blustering down from the States and jostles the trades aside. That is just what happened the day we were ready to start. The wind was right in our faces and blowing hard. It meant a 60-mile beat to round Mole St. Nicolas, Haiti's northwestern tip.

But we were restless to be on the move, so, under jib, mizzen and a reefed main, we began slamming Larikin into the big, blue, foam-crested seas. The old boat seemed to enjoy the battle and kept chewing off the hard-earned miles.

It was wet work at the wheel, the spray showering the helmsman and drenching the sails half way to the crosstrees. But by early afternoon we were in the lee of Tortuga, racing along over fairly level water.

The Mole offers splendid protection from a southeast wind, but is wide open for a northwester. Reaching it we continued on until we were in the lee of the land, and blanketed by towering, jungle-covered mountains. There Larikin rested quietly like a weary duck.

Ahead of us now was a run of approximately 300 miles to Kingston, Jamaica. When we headed out early in the morning the northwester was still blowing strong, but it was a fair wind and we seemed to be actually flying.

For the first hundred miles our course was about South Southwest, to make a landfall at Cape Dammarie, the westernmost tip of Haiti. On this run we were crossing the deep indentation on Haiti's western shoreline, and were approximately 80 miles from land.

With the rollicking northwester over her stern, Larikin acted like a car on a roller coaster. It was ticklish sailing as we zoomed over the briny hills and into the valleys at a dizzy pace. Suddenly the boat took an extra wild roll and the boom jibed over with a crash. Instantly we jibed the mizzen and rounded into the wind.

There was a tear in the mainsail where it hit the spreader, but with all hands pulling and hauling we got the sail down before the rip lengthened. The damage was not great and we had the canvas patched and set again in less than two hours.

As we romped along mile after mile, lifting high on the wave crests, then plunging into the troughs, the usual happy-go-lucky demeanor of Larikin's crew slowly vanished. Complexions assumed a slightly greenish hue. Appetites had apparently been left at the Mole, for, when I suggested that Betty cook something hot, four pairs of eyes glared at me balefully.

Not that I craved any food myself. The suggestion was merely a decoy.

The strong, fair wind slammed us along at an estimated 15 knots. Cape Dammarie was abeam in mid-afternoon, so we altered our course and headed into the sunset for Jamaica. But the going was tough for the wind had worked around more to the west, forcing us to tack.

Everyone was tired of being bounced around, and I planned to put in at Navassa for the night. It is just a small, rocky island, but it has a lighthouse, and a keeper lives there with his family. The harbor, according to the chart, is just a niche in the rock, so small that rings have been cemented into its steep sides, so that boats lie with port and starboard lines as though in a slip.

Alas, the sun set before we reached Navassa, and to attempt to locate the tiny harbor entrance in the darkness was not to be considered. So we resigned ourselves to a bumpy night at sea and kept working westward with long tacks.

The following day we encountered the only unpleasant weather of the entire cruise. By "unpleasant" I mean that the sky was overcast and there were frequent showers. But it was warm, and the wind so light we started the motor to help boost us along. The trades had not blown since we left Cap Haitien, a fact that greatly lengthened this part of our journey.

It was not until the afternoon of the third day after leaving the Mole that a faint, mountainous mass appeared far to the westward—Jamaica. This called for a splicing of the main brace and Betty skillfully blended a tasty concoction of orange juice and rum.

It is a glorious sight approaching Jamaica from the sea. Towering mountains, fittingly named "Blue Mountains" loom high above the ultramarine sea, their crests dusted by a continuous parade of fluffy clouds, sailing through

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Photograph by Florida State News Bureau

Havana Harbor, Cuba, objective of ocean races from St. Petersburg

CRUISING FOREIGN

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an indigo sky. Many of the high hills are subdivided into a patchwork of gardens, among which are hundreds of vari-colored cottage homes.

Beyond a long, low sand reef lies the big harbor, with Kingston near its far end. No so many years ago swift, rakish craft flying the Jolly Roger traversed these waters as their buccaneer crews headed for the old capital of Port Royal to carouse and spend their blood-tainted gold.

Port Royal, as a pirate stronghold, was regarded as the richest and most wicked city in the world, until most of it settled into the sea, following a great earthquake. Then Kingston was founded on what was considered safer ground across the bay.

Having come from Haiti it was necessary to go through the formalities of entry at British-owned Port Royal, near the harbor entrance. Then we sailed on to Kingston and docked at the Royal Jamaican Yacht Club. It is a beautiful club and Commodore Laurie Ramson, club officials and members made us instantly feel at home.

Commodore Ramson is keenly interested in promoting a deep-water windjammer race from some American port to Kingston. If any U. S. yacht clubs are interested he would be delighted to hear from them.

The arrival of a strange yacht in any port in the Bahamas or West Indies seems to be the signal for a round of parties, and Kingston was no exception. We were wined and dined lavishly. A week slipped by with a rush—and it was time to go.

The trades had again taken over, and with clocklike regularity they sprang up from the southeast in the morning, blew hard—sometimes up to 35 or 40 m.p.h.—during the early afternoon, and eased off at sundown.

Jamaica is about 150 miles long. Leaving Kingston we ran westward, keeping about a mile off the south shore, and spent the first night in Pedro Bay. The following day we cruised on to Negril Harbor, near the western end of the island.

Trades Reach Their Peak in Forenoon

We did not always carry full sail. Occasionally we would drop the main and scud along under jib and mizzen. But that was just in the early afternoon when the trade velocity was at its peak.

When we headed out of Negril Harbor one flaming dawn the longest hop of the cruise was before us, a 350-mile north-westerly run to the Isle of Pines. But approximately 125 miles out we would strike a landfall on Little Cayman.

By now we all felt like sure 'nuff sea gypsies, and the long haul ahead worried us not a bit. All day we ran, the trades right astern and blowing warm and strong. The sky was a deep blue and the friendly sun sprinkled the vast, landless sea with silver.

There was a brilliant red, yellow, orange and lavender sunset, and as darkness came on a deluge of stars flooded the sky. The trades softened, then faded almost to a whisper. It was an ideal night at sea. Even the helmsman could relax and dream as Larikin, pushed only by zephyrs, ghosted through a starlit world.

As usual the trades awoke in the morning and sent us reeling on our way. On the afternoon of the second day after leaving Jamaica, a purplish spot appeared on the horizon dead ahead. Soon it took on shape and color and gradually evolved into a green jewel of an island—Little Cayman.

As we ran along the coast a swift, small boat with a strange lateen sail, suddenly swooped out from land, about a mile ahead, and hove to as though to intercept us.

"Shades of Captain Kidd," exclaimed Joy.

The little vessel did look piratical—but not the lone gentleman who manned her. He was tall and distinguished looking, as he stood at the helm, his iron gray hair waving in the wind.

He hailed us and when close by we rounded to. It was difficult to talk with the canvas slatting and banging, but

we gathered that we were off South Town, Little Cayman, and that we were invited ashore.

We had no intention of stopping at Little Cayman, but as I glanced inquiringly at my crew, four heads eagerly nodded approval. I signaled an acceptance to our would-be host, who trimmed his sail and headed shoreward, Larikin following at a safe distance astern.

In a matter of moments we had left the bouncing ocean behind and were gliding into a dream lagoon, smooth as a mirror. It nestled in lush green forest and was bordered by a snow-white sand beach.

On the shore was a cluster of old but substantial-looking houses, badly in need of paint. Larikin's anchor splashed into the deep green lagoon water as our guide came alongside and introduced himself.

He was Captain Taylor, probably in his middle or late sixties, but tanned, robust and as straight as a Georgia pine. We all tumbled into his boat and were rowed ashore, to visit one of the most fascinating places any of us had ever seen. It was an 18th Century village existing in a 20th Century age.

The people were all middle-aged, or older. Aside from fishing, hunting wild cattle, and the building of an occasional boat, there is no industry at South Town, and the younger generation had moved away to earn a livelihood.

Hunting cattle was the most lucrative activity, for the meat formed a medium of exchange at Cayman Brac, 20 miles away. Every week or ten days a cow or two would be killed, dressed, the meat loaded into one of the small, lateen-rigged double-enders, and sailed across twenty rough miles of open water to Cayman Brac. The little boat would return with beans, rice, tobacco, etc.

Incidentally the population of South Town is composed entirely of English people, descendants of loyal British subjects, who fled from America during the Revolution. As we became better acquainted with them their bashfulness vanished. Their generosity was appalling, and we could not but admire a thing that they tried to force upon us as a gift. Of course we declined.

Regretfully we finally hoisted Larikin's canvas and waved goodbye to the kindly people of Little Cayman. Leaving the lagoon, the trades reached out for us and one night and two days later we closed in on beautiful Isle of Pines. It had been a long open-water haul, the horizon broken only at rare intervals by some plodding freighter.

Darkness had fallen as we motored cautiously into Cararachi Bay, dropping the lead frequently. Suddenly from a jutting pier there was the flash of a heavy-calibre rifle and we heard

the zing of a bullet. Flabbergasted we moved slowly on, but stopped promptly when another bullet whined across our bow.

We turned the spotlight on our American flag; then, figuring that we had broken some harbor regulation, dropped the hook. No attempt was made to board us so we set an anchor watch and turned in.

Daylight revealed a squad-sized segment of the Cuban Navy standing on the pier with fixed bayonets. I got in the dinghy and rowed ashore to find out what breach of etiquette we had committed.

A lanky lieutenant in a sloppy white uniform informed me, with many gesticulations, that there had been a bank robbery the day previous and that Larikin was suspected of being the get-away boat chartered by the thugs. He said he would have to search the boat, a demand to which I readily acceded.

The officer and two of his command got clumsily into the dinghy, terror at riding in such a small craft showing plainly in their faces. It did not take the trio long to ascertain that we had no loot or fleeing robbers aboard and we were politely told that we could proceed.

Leaving the bay we skirted the coast for forty miles to another fine harbor at Cape Francis. It was an isolated place with no houses visible, but down the shore came a tall, dark-skinned man, accompanied by a huge dog. He was the district constable and had orders that we were not to leave until a Cuban gunboat arrived the following day to give us a more thorough search. It seems that the authorities were still all steamed up over the bank robbery.

The constable was a friendly fellow; he presented us with eighteen big crayfish. In appreciation of the gift we had him bring his shy little wife aboard for dinner that evening.

As there was still no sign of the gunboat at noon the following day, we hoisted the anchor and sailed on. Our next and last overnight stop on the Isle of Pines was Cape Corrientes, where we were well protected from prevailing winds. Leaving there the trades sent us zooming to Cape San Antonio, Cuba's westernmost tip. It was a beautiful day when we rounded the cape and fishing conditions were ideal.

And on to the States

Once again the trades bowed out before a boisterous northwester, and we had a hard beat to windward, until we had gained enough northing to lay a course for Havana.

It is approximately 200 miles from Cape San Antonio to Havana and it took three days to make the run, but harbors were plentiful along the north shore, and we were in quiet waters every night, Cayo Jutias Harbor the first night, Verraces the next. Inland there were many high mountains and by taking bearings on them we could always spot our exact location on the chart. Though few harbors were buoyed, the charts gave comprehensive instructions for entering.

We spent several days in Havana, then had a calm night crossing to Key West, using the motor most of the way. On arrival we had been just 26 days out of the States, and had covered approximately 3,000 miles.

What impressed me most during the voyage was the succession of glorious sailing days, and the unlimited cruising possibilities offered by the Bahamas and West Indies.

Navigation was easy. We carried five charts and a windage chart. Most of the charts were old, but instructions given were clear. Our chart of Jamaica was dated 1865.

During our cruise we had remained only eight nights at sea. The number could have been cut to five if we had so desired.

Along the route we had no trouble obtaining fresh water, except at Cap Haitien. Everything there seemed so unsanitary that we did not take water aboard. Bread was always hard to get. Fresh meat, when obtainable, was usually too tough to eat. But the ocean provided a profusion of delicious sea food, just for the taking. At most harbors fruits and vegetables were cheap. However, prices varied. For example, in Nassau oranges were 75 cents a dozen. In Haiti they were four for a penny.

The one fault I can find with our trip is that it was much too short. Instead of 26 days it should have lasted 26 weeks.