

## **Bahamas – Haiti – Dominican Republic – Dinghy stolen and recovered**

**December 2011 to January 2012**

When our son Jan with his girlfriend Karin visited us four weeks, we had a really wonderful time together in the Bahamas. Then we went down between Kuba and Haiti to the south coast from Haiti. During this trip we had a real gale with about 8 to 9 Beaufort wind and we had to go on through the night because of the length of the journey. This storm was so amazing for me and I enjoyed the really huge waves which came down on the boat with full force. And to have full moon at that time was an additional present for me so you could see every mountain of a wave coming for you! ☺ Once a flying fish was thrown in the cockpit, but it was too small for cooking so I gave him its liberty.

And then we had a problem with the motor. Every time we started the engine it became hot in only minutes so we had to stop. Our luck was that the wind was so great and came just from behind (the GPS showed up to 11 knots SOG).

So early in the morning we rounded the peninsular from Haiti and had to stop, because Rüdiger wanted to look after the motor, but couldn't find the reason why the motor always became so hot.

Boats from the coast came and we bought bananas and fish from them. The only problem was the language, they didn't speak English and we barely French. Then we went to bed, all of us very exhausted from the long exciting journey and slept like stones altogether.



*Anse de Hainault / Haiti*

And while we slept they came on the BRAVEHEART and stole everything they could grab in the hurry. First of all our brandnew dinghy (they cut simply the ropes), than the big dinghy motor, all our shoes, the 3 kanister from the deck with water and diesel and the dinghy tank also, the long water hose, all the fenders and lines and a lot of other things. The dinghy wasn't in the water, still hanging on the davit as a precaution from us!!

They didn't come down and we heard nothing from them. Rüdiger normally hears the fleas coughing during the night, but we were all so tired and we think it's luck that we didn't awake. Nobody knows what could have happened if we had found out about the robbery and had come on deck. I think they are really suffering from their poverty they live in and when they see a yacht like ours in their vicinity, they think we are millionaires and try to take their piece from the unexpected cake. So we are very thankful that we are still alive and now we think the stolen goods are a donation from us to the poor.

When we discovered the robbery we wanted to leave as fast as we could, but the sea was for hours absolutely calm. Then Rüdiger was successful in repairing the water pump and we could continue our trip to Salinas by motor. We anchored at Bahia Aguillas over night and the next day wind was coming and we could go on to Salinas. But then bad luck happened again and the main sail was torn in a gust, so we couldn't sail further to Salinas and had instead to go back to just passed Barahona with the wind in our back.

Here we came in the Navyport and the chef engineer from the war ship ALTAIR – very friendly and helpful and well educated, too - could help us and finally found out, what was wrong. The water heater in the galley had a leakage and that's the reason, we had all the time to put huge amounts of water in the motor cooling system, but the water always disappeared like magic. The only thing we noticed was: sometimes a tiny puddle of water in the salon and we could never find out how it came there!

Then we brought our children to Santo Domingo and they flew home again after a really wonderful and exciting holiday they will never forget.

Some weeks later our first son Stefan came with his wife Veronika (they married last summer), to have here in Bayahibe by La Romana their late honeymoon. We went together to Samaná to observe whale watching and we saw a whole family of whales. They are giving birth in February, so we were lucky to catch the best time for visiting them.

## **February 2012**

Then we came to Boca Chica, not so far from Santo Domingo. And here – we were already there for some days and tried to get another dinghy, perhaps a used one – we met a French, living in Haiti for 17 years and a friend of the Haitian president, who is working on developing the tourism in Haiti. When he heard our story from the stolen dinghy, his ears pricked up and he was very interested to hear all the details, to know the brand of the dinghy and the motor and so on. Then he told us he would leave in the next days for Haiti and try if he could do anything for us. We found that very friendly and appreciated his efforts, but didn't expect he could really do something.

Since we couldn't go on without a dinghy, we bought a big used one and a motor. And we went to the island Saona. It's a big island in the east and a highlight for the tourists to go. Every day there are going a lot of boats, smaller ones and very big catamarans, with thousands of peoples there to enjoy this really wonderful place. There are built a lot of open patios with roofs from palm leaves where the guests will eat, perhaps walk a bit and then stand in the shallow water because swimming is impossible. After two days there together with Veronika and Stefan on our boat we brought them back to Bayahibe where they stayed for the rest of their honeymoon.



*BRAVEHEART anchoring off Saona*

Then we went back to Saona because we enjoyed it there and stayed over two weeks and now we found the real pearl of the island. That's not there where all the tourists are taken to be fed and stay for some hours. No, we found a real wonderful beach with sand so pure without stones on it and no stones in the water, too. And the water there is clear and always calm and it is not far to swim and you'll lose the ground under your feet and you can really enjoy swimming. That's so great. We really love Saona! And there is a long, long walking path through huge palm forests and it's simply gorgeous wandering there. We went kilometres and kilometres under palms and finally came to a small village where the origin people from Saona live. That was what we wanted to see and not the masses of tourists which are only come here to eat, stand a while in the water and then go home again. No, that's not what we like!

When we finally had used up all our provisions and came to the limit of our fresh water, too, we had to go to a marina for new supplies. And the next was "Casa de Campo". So we went there with a bit aching in our hearts because we had to leave Saona. We passed by the hotel "Dominicus Beach", where Veronika and Stefan had their honeymoon suite and remembered when they were standing next to the white tent waving to us a farewell. Nice memories!

So we docked in the marina for millionaires, surrounded mostly by huge motor yachts and our boat looked very tiny between all the other big boats. But we were surprised because the daily charge is hardly more than for example in Boca Chica and here it's much nicer. Casa de Campo is a huge compound from about 50 square kilometres with 2.000 privately owned villas and houses. They sell only the land and every owner is allowed to build his own dream house. That's the reason that you find such a lot of different kinds of houses. Not two of them are looking the same. And all overall there are palms, palms and palms of every kind and height. It's really a wonderful place ..... but very expensive, when you will have a house here on your own. Alone for gardening and maintenance every owner has to pay monthly 2.000 \$. Normal people can't afford to pay so much money only for additional costs!!

## **Dinghy and motor recovered in Haiti**

When we had finally Internet access again after more than two weeks without it, there a real wonder has happened! Bernard Lefevre, the man from Haiti, emailed to us, that he had recovered our dinghy!!! Really!!! The motor was already sold, but they bought it back for 400 \$. He didn't insist on that we would pay this money, but we are so grateful to him, that we'll do it. Perhaps we will sell the dinghy. We don't need two of them.

Aren't we lucky?? We couldn't believe that such things really can happen. ☺ Then Bernard Lefevre tried to find a possibility to bring our lost belongings to Boca Chica and then found somebody from the NGO (Non Government Organisation), who will do that. They are going every two weeks from Port-au-Prince to Santo Domingo and now we are here waiting for our things to arrive.

Normally we would have been under way to Venezuela now. But we met people from Namibia who had sailed the islands in front of the coast from Venezuela one year and were so happy about their time there, so we got infected and changed the route of our planned sailing tour und will go to Aruba or Curacao and during summer our boat let there, because that region isn't affected by hurricanes..

Otherwise we are feeling wonderful and we enjoy every day. And the climate is so nice, not so hot. Mostly about 80 degrees Fahrenheit and very often cloudy, so that the sun isn't burning our brain to coals. ☺

Hildegard Hashagen