

"CRUISING" IN CUBA

TWO INCIDENTS OF INVOLUNTARY VISITS THERE UNDER GUNBOAT ESCORT

HOW CLOSE IS CLOSE?

By STEVE SHULKE



Although the Schulkes were told not to take pictures, they managed a few surreptitiously, as on the opposite page. In the top right one, the Cuban gunboat's mast and flag can be seen up ahead, barely showing over the cabin trunk. The shot of the gunboat with guns uncovered was taken hastily through a port. Later, once cleared, they took the shots of their pilot checking his traps and the captain talking to the children (above)

(If the political situation were different, the island of Cuba, 90 miles from Florida, would be one of the most attractive cruising grounds open to yachtsmen in this hemisphere. As things stand, however, it is a no-man's-land, and only occasionally is there a chance to glimpse what goes on behind the Sugar Cane Curtain. These two articles, received almost simultaneously, offer that chance. The Schulke family was on the first leg of a carefully planned and unusual world cruise that is to be half by boat, their 44' Islander sloop "Sea Challenger," and half by a converted World War II bomber Dr. Schulke owns and flies. He is alternating a month on the trip and a month back at his Florida dental practice.—Eds.)

OUR CUBAN ADVENTURE started the fifth day out of St. Petersburg, on our around-the-world trip. I had been kidding the kids as we were nearing Cuba about watching out for Cuban gunboats, much like you kid your children out west about seeing the Indian on the mountain, smoke signals, and visions of the old west.

Guess what? At about 0900 on Wednesday June 13, 1973, I noticed a boat on the horizon ahead of us coming at us at a fast rate. Yes, it was a Cuban gunboat and *Sea Challenger* was being headed up into the wind to stop her progress to Cabo San (Continued on page 154)

A PORT IN A STORM

By JOHN WALMSLEY

MY 58-FOOT KETCH *Gladwyena* was built on the Isle of Man in 1902, and, after ten years of chartering in the West Indies, it seemed time to put the old lady in retirement in Florida. For the passage from Antigua in April, we chose the Old Bahama Channel route as the most likely to be in protected waters. About 15 miles wide, it takes you between the Bahamas and the north coast of Cuba with its many small islands. I could find no one who had used this route for yacht passages in recent years, but, as *Gladwyena* is of British registry, I was not too concerned over sailing into Cuban waters.

On board when we left Antigua was my crew of Dick, a young American, and my two English cousins, Lynn and Angy. In Anegada Passage we had the experience, unusual in that

windy stretch, of being becalmed, and we had to start the engine. In a few hours a strange grinding noise developed in the vicinity of the gear box, and, since the transmission oil was alright, we had to conclude it was something more than we could fix at sea. We tried St. Thomas for parts to no avail and decided to press on rather than wait there, as it would be practically all downwind all the way to Florida, and all of us had future plans that required us to get there as soon as possible. We had some glorious sailing along the north coasts of Puerto Rico and Hispaniola, making one noon-to-noon run of 184 miles dead before 15-to-25-knot breezes.

In late afternoon, as we passed Tortue off Haiti, a dim outline on the horizon, the wind was definitely in-



Photos by the authors



creasing, and we made a good eight knots even after dropping the main. By midnight we had dropped the stay-sail and were surfing along over huge seas under jib and mizzen. Occasionally, out of the angry-looking sea, a great foaming wave would break across the deck. I estimated that the wind was now gusting to 50 knots as the tops of the waves were being blown off in clouds of spray, and by morning seeing the seas in daylight was no comfort at all. The sky was completely overcast, and I couldn't take a sight,
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"Gladwyena (left), our 71-year-old 58-footer, whose sail to retirement was interrupted by a Cuban gunboat

should each of the sections be? In the end Ian Bruce chose aluminum tubes that he and I arbitrarily decided would be "about right" and when two prototype hulls were made we settled down with sailmaker Hans Fogh to get the rig right, going through several combinations of section and length and sail cut before choosing the ones now in use. There comes a time, especially with dinghy design, when it is far more practical to go sailing than to keep scratching on paper.

Because of the great variety of requirements for the ever-increasing legions of sailing nuts there will always be room for good small-boat design. As composers will never run out of tunes, so yacht designers will never run out of hull shapes. And as there are more bad tunes written than good ones, so there will be more bad boats drawn than good ones. But the sailing public also grows in sophistication so that more and more the designs that grab on and stay around are the ones that have grown out of thought and experience, study and research, and above all, a familiarity and empathy with wind and water.

(Contributions to and comments on this section should be sent to Designers' Forum, YACHTING, 50 W. 44th St., New York, N.Y. 10036.)

A PORT IN A STORM

(Continued from page 81)

but Dick got an RDF bearing on Great Inagua in the Bahamas which put us west of the island. We had passed some 30 miles south of it and I had hoped to edge up under its lee, but it was now too late to try to work that way, with the wind howling out of the northeast.

According to my dead reckoning we had at least plenty of sea room for the time being, so we dropped the jib and lay hove-to under the mizzen, quite comfortably riding to the wind and seas just a few degrees off the bow. The next day, it was blowing just as hard and the engine, which we had been using just as a generator to charge the batteries, stopped, having managed to get water into its fuel pump. This meant we could no longer use the electric bilge pump, and the bilges were beginning to fill more quickly by the hour. Dick and I then had to resort to using the big hand pump on deck, which is a two-man job and necessitates hanging on by the skin of your teeth, pitching and rolling as we were.

Later that morning I realized that we were steadily being pushed down on to the Cuban coast. Dick was the first to spot a range of mountains through the hazy conditions. Setting a small jib we started running down toward the coast, where we managed to get a bearing on a headland and then ran along the shore about five miles off. During the night we picked up the light of Cabo Lucrecia, giving us a good check on our position. The sea had gone down slightly, though the wind was still blowing a good 30 knots. The bilge now required pumping every three hours, and the effort was beginning to tell on Dick and myself. By morning we all agreed it was better to put into Cuba and risk the consequences than to carry on in the condition we were in.

No sooner than this had been decided, and Angy spotted a boat with a sail heading toward us. As it came closer we could see it was a fishing boat stacked high with fish traps. As she approached us Dick yelled in Spanish and learned that Puerto Padre, a good harbor, was only a few miles down the coast. There was immediate activity on the fishing boat, and we could see a large hawser being uncoiled. I had no intention of being towed into port, not wanting to be involved in a salvage claim, besides we were still under sail and there was

plenty of wind. The fishing boat eventually understood that we did not want a tow and turned around, signaling for us to follow them.

When we were a mile or so off the coast a motor launch could be seen putting out towards us; it appeared to be a Cuban gunboat full of soldiers. Poor Lynn was quite terrified when she saw them take the covers off the guns mounted on the deck, and she was much relieved when they replaced them after making a circle around us. They then followed us and the fishing boat into the harbor through a narrow entrance between two very low headlands. We rounded up as soon as we were inside and dropped jib and mizzen, anchoring close to a small jetty. Immediately, we were boarded by a horde of officials, all dressed in green fatigues and were informed that we could not stay where we were and that they would tow us to the main harbor about two miles up the river.

Eventually we made fast to a small pier that used to belong to the American Sugar Refining Company in pre-Castro days. Then came two hours of questioning by various officials, each of whom scribbled down pages and pages of notes. I asked for permission, as we were a vessel in distress, to stay for two days to do repairs to the engine and stop the bad leak we had, but we could get no definite reply to our requests. Frustratingly, it seemed that all decisions are made only in Havana.

Eventually, the officials left to report to their chiefs. We were left under the guard of two soldiers on deck swinging Russian-made automatic rifles, but our peace was not to last for long, as a woman doctor came aboard and insisted on giving us all a medical examination, plus shots for cholera and small pox. Then more officials arrived and we were told to pack a few personal things for an overnight stay as we were going to be taken away somewhere for further interrogation. This was a bit of a shock to all of us, but there was not a thing we could do; we were completely in their power. The four of us were then bundled, including the guard and driver, into a tiny Alfa Romeo and driven 50 miles at high speed with siren wailing and light flashing.

Having no idea what sort of place we were being taken to, we were all quite surprised when the car turned off the highway in the middle of a country road and drove through the gates in a high wire fence to stop outside the front door of quite a pleasant looking villa. We were taken inside and told to make ourselves comfortable. Someone switched on a television set, and we sat and waited. After a short time we were invited into the next room where a large table had been set out for dinner and we had an enjoyable meal. After we had eaten, we sat and waited again and eventually each one of us was called, one at a time, to a small room, and the questions began all over again. There was quite a distinguished looking elderly person dressed in civilian clothes who had eaten dinner with us, who turned out to be the interpreter, and two serious looking army officers, one of whom was black. I felt that they must have been KGB-trained, wanting to know in minute detail the reason we came to Cuba, plus all our personal histories.

This whole procedure was repeated for the next three days. We had been given comfortable rooms, and Angy and Lynn, who had their own private bathroom, couldn't wait to take advantage of the hot shower. Eventually our interrogators left and we were left under the very watchful eyes of Julian, Oscar and Augustine, our guards, though Augustine spent most of his time cooking three very good meals a day for us. We were allowed to walk around the grounds during the day, pick mangos off the trees, which were the most delicious I have ever tasted, or cut down coconuts. We could not, however step outside the gates.

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One day Angy, in a fit of frustration, managed to get outside the gates and started walking down the road in the direction of the nearest village. Her freedom was short-lived. Within minutes she was escorted back to the house by our guards. After dark we had to stay inside the house and our only entertainment was the TV which had a varied program of Cuban and Russian propaganda films. It was also the anniversary of the Bay of Pigs fiasco, which was played up a lot on the television. Dick managed somehow, to keep his cool and not let this bother him too much. There were also hours of very ancient American cartoons. We did look forward to the late show however, which quite often featured an old American movie, normally in English. We spent hours playing dominoes with our guards which they were all expert at, and introduced them to playing cards, which appeared to be non-existent in Cuba. I am no card fan, but found that it was quite good therapy. It at least relieved the boredom of being shut up in the house, and took one's mind off the position we were in.

Although we were not being treated badly, it was a strain psychologically not to know what was going to happen to us. Practically the only reply we could get to all our questions was "manana," though we did hear from Oscar one day that they were working on *Gladwyena* and had managed to get the engine running. This did a lot to raise our spirits. Up to this time we had not been allowed to get in touch with our embassys, so that we could at least inform people at home where we were. Then one day I was presented with a bill for something over \$1400. This came as quite a blow to all of us. It included \$150 for repairs on the boat, \$400 for our food and lodging at the house, \$300 for the two-mile tow up the river that we had when we arrived, \$250 agent's fee, plus some other expenses. The day before we had been questioned as to how much money each one of us had with us and I think this amounted to a total of about \$450, so it was quite obvious to them that we did not have enough money to pay the bill.

The next day Julian managed to get permission from his chiefs to drive us down to the village where he had an office, and I was allowed to telephone the British Embassy in Havana and contact the Swiss Embassy for Dick, there being no American Embassy. It is very disappointing when an embassy in a foreign country will not take a distressed yachtsman's word, instead of insisting on our cabling to England or the States for the money to pay, what one could only call our ransom. This of course took another two or three days, as it was the weekend, and eventually it was the Swiss Embassy that came to our rescue. So after being held 14 days in Cuba we were told that we could leave. In fact we were ordered to sail that next day at exactly 5 p.m., even



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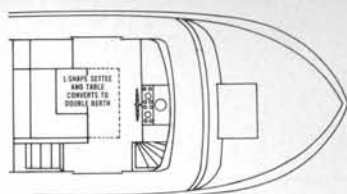
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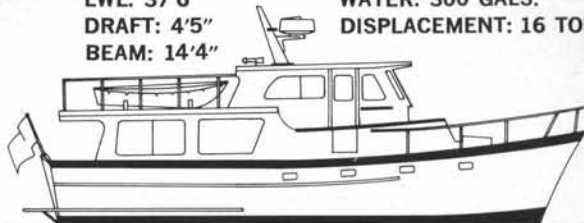
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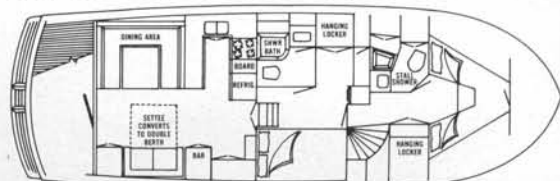


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though we had to sail back down the river against a strong tide and out into a good 25-knot wind. The most important thing, though, was that we were free again, and what a great feeling it was. By some miraculous means our Cuban mechanics had managed to repair the gear-box as well as get the engine running again. Also they appeared to have stopped the leak. We were all looking forward to a pleasant sail for the last 300 miles or so to Florida. Angy and Lynn were both very annoyed, though, when they found that all the pictures they had taken from the boat when we first arrived in Cuba had been ruined by the Cubans when they had their cameras taken away from them. We were escorted out of the harbor by the same gunboat again, and they followed us out to sea and stayed within sight of us until it was dark. We had a feeling that they were still suspicious of us even now, as we headed on our way again.

Before the voyage ended, we had one more adventure that had nothing to do with Cubans but was eerily exciting as a punctuation mark to an unusual passage. Lynn woke me one morning (in an oily calm) in the Bahamas to say some very strange black clouds on the horizon were moving toward us quite quickly. It seemed no time before we heard a terrific roaring noise, as the ominous clouds were now very close to us, and I realized I was seeing my first waterspout. While a dark mass about 50 feet in diameter and 60 feet high approached, others started to form in the distance.

In the one bearing down on us, we watched the sea being sucked up into its center and being whirled around, tapering off into spirals at the extremities like a giant lawn sprinkler. Dick, who had seen these sea tornadoes before, was quickly dropping sail, and, as we finished

lashing down the main, we watched in awe as the nearest one went roaring across our heading about 200 feet out. Though I have heard of masts being torn loose by the force of one, we felt the merest breath as it passed close by. Soon the spouts all had dissipated and the calm was dispersed by a nice breeze filling in and sending us on our way to Fort Lauderdale.

After all these unusual perils, we had a great sail for the last 100 miles. It was interesting to see Cuba, and it would be nice if yachtsmen could go there, but I don't recommend it at the present time.

SURVIVE THE SAVAGE SEA

(Continued from page 84)

and there are a number of survivors to be fed, then one cannot do with one or two flying fish although these are welcome tidbits. Fish have to be caught in quantity and with certainty and the gaff is the only sure way to bring them aboard, even when they are brought within reach by line. A gaff with a small hook is probably the best type for an inflatable raft for the hook can then be buried in the fish while bringing it over the flotation chamber and thus be less danger to the raft itself. We did not feel much of the sense of alleviating thirst by eating the raw flesh of fish (except the mako shark) but certainly sucking out the spinal fluid was a great joy, as were the eyes; two pounds of fish contains about a pint of water.

The turtle was the mainstay of our existence, although if they had not been available we would have tried harder for other fish. They are powerful swimmers and can inflict a painful bite to the unwary hunter as well as cause damage by their lacerating claws. It may be as