

# Passages

## s/v Nine of Cups

A Newsletter from Sea



Volume 1 Issue 1  
Special Holiday Edition

### Letter from the crew...

2002 has been an out-standing year for the crew of *Nine of Cups*. We've had the chance to experience an over-whelming amount of natural beauty not only in our island wanderings, but in the people we've met. We've tried to share in this newsletter some of the highlights of our passage from the U.S. through the Eastern Caribbean to Trinidad.



We keep an extensive photo journal and it was difficult to decide what were the "best" parts of the adventure to include ... it's all been wonderful.

We're happy, healthy and looking forward to spending most of 2003 in South America before heading further west.

We wish all of our family and friend's health, wealth, love and happiness in 2003 and the time to enjoy them all.

We love hearing from everyone so keep in touch.

Where in the world is NOC?  
To see our exact location, go to [www.winlink.org](http://www.winlink.org) then "station locator". Type in our call sign: "AA1ZL".



NOC at anchor St. Pierre, Martinique

### OFF THE BEATEN PATH IN GRAND TURK

The next island group heading south after the Bahamas is the Turks and Caicos, a British Crown Colony. Most cruisers opt to stop in the Caicos for provisioning and then head out. We opted to divert to less frequented Grand Turk and were rewarded by being the only boat at anchor in the harbor. Historically famous for salt production, we saw the old salt ponds, now inhabited by pink flamingos. The tiny Turks & Caicos National Museum was surprisingly informative. We caught this picture of two lizards fighting on the front porch of the museum.



### The Bahamas... Nassau, Iguanas and Columbus

Six weeks in the Bahamas is not enough to explore these diverse islands, but we gave it a try. The highlights included a week in Nassau and Super Bowl Sunday in front of a big screen TV at the British Colonial Hilton.

From Nassau, we sailed to Eleuthera and then to the Exumas, dayhopping south to several islands including a stop at Allan's Cay where the iguanas are the biggest draw and the only inhabitants. Though they're avowed herbivores, they're big and intimidating nonetheless.



Columbus supposedly made his first landfall in the New World at San Salvador. A white cross marks the spot. It was as if we were participating in history when we saw it.

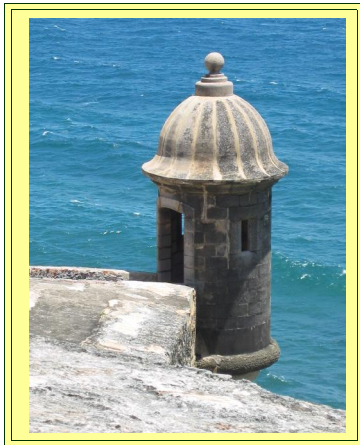




### **Couple Climbs Pico Duarte in Record Time**

Pico Duarte in the Dominican Republic at ~10,000 feet is the highest point in the Caribbean and posed no problem for the crew of Nine of Cups. They broke a new record in the arduous assault and became the slowest couple to have ever climbed the mountain. The five-day ascent was highlighted by cold, wet weather, 8-hour days of mule riding and sleeping in rat-infested huts. Marcie fell off her mule only once which did not constitute a record, but did manage to bruise her pride and her butt.

### **Puerto Rico Offers Taste of Home**



Though not a “state”, Puerto Rico is definitely part of the USA and was a welcome change for the crew ...Wal-Mart, Sam’s Club, McDonald’s and malls. A weekend trip to the capital city of San Juan, however, quickly reminded us of the island’s rich Spanish

### **It’s a Small World Department**

Upon arriving at Jost Van Dyke in the British Virgin Islands, the crew went ashore to a well-known cruiser’s bar, Foxy’s, for a local brew. Marcie was amazed to find out that the barmaid was not only from her hometown of Leicester, MA but went to school with sister, Lin.

### **Montserrat Volcano Still Smokes**

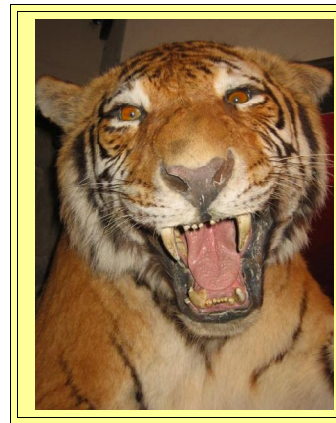
Cruisers sailing past Montserrat must still be concerned with volcanic activity. Older charts do not reflect the changes in water depths (as much as five feet in some places) or the fact that Plymouth, the original capital and major port was totally destroyed. Mariner’s warnings are issued daily.

### **Feeling Small in the AVIs**

Nine of Cups with a length of 45+ feet is a good-sized sailboat and rarely do we feel small. The anchorage in Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas, Virgin Islands was an exception however, when a cruise ship pulled next to us.



### **Couple Rethinks Shore Life After Narrow Escape**



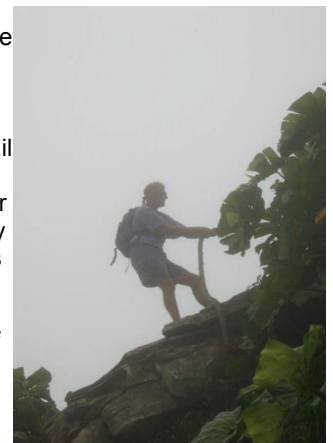
The first mate re-counts a harrowing experience in the BVIs...

I was just looking around in Pusser’s Company Store in Leverick Bay, trying to figure out just *how much* money I could spend, when I heard a low growl.

“Hmm...what could that be? A tiger?” I thought. “No, there are NO tigers in Virgin Gorda!” But I was definitely wrong! The next thing I knew, this gigantic tiger was baring its teeth, ready to pounce on me. I screamed for David...he appeared out of nowhere and slew the beast with his bare hands (his machete was on the boat!). Just another day in paradise...but no purchases at Pussers!

### **Stepping Up in Saba**

Climbing Mt. Scenery on the tiny island of Saba isn’t like the Rockies or Pico Duarte, but a challenge nonetheless. There are about 1,000 carved stone steps, followed by a muddy trail and bouldering at the top. The view was less than spectacular in dense fog...we could barely see each other. Mt. Scenery is the highest point in the Kingdom of the Netherlands, not saying much since most of the Netherlands is below sea level.





## 17 Countries in 6 Months

The crew of Nine of Cups departed Charleston, SC on 17 January 2002 for a planned 6 month passage to Trinidad, West Indies. Arriving in Chaguaramas, Trinidad in late July, the 2,652 nautical mile voyage included stops in 17 countries and innumerable islands along the way.

Where to next? The plans (always subject to change at a whim) include an extensive stay in the Western Caribbean and South America allowing plenty of time to explore and experience the various cultures and natural wonders. A circumnavigation is the ultimate goal, but there's so much to see, it could take as long as a decade to complete. Several people have asked how long we intend to keep sailing and the answer is: "as long as we can hoist the sails".

We bought our boat in March 2000 and have lived aboard ever since. We've crossed the Gulf of Mexico and spent two seasons exploring the U.S. Eastern seaboard and Maritime Canada before departing for the Caribbean last Winter.

As you're reading this, we'll be in Venezuela hopefully getting some needed maintenance and repair done including a bottom paint job (on the boat, not Marcie), rigging replacement and anchor chain re-galvanizing. All this is in preparation for the Panama Canal transit and a Pacific Crossing sometime in 2004.





### **Jelly Wins Yahtzee Tournament**

Jelly, our 2-1/2 year old ship's cat, is a good sailor and great crewmate. Although she rarely participates in chores, she looks forward to competitive games and usually wins...probably due to all the practice she gets.

### **French Islands So Civilized** *(as if this crew would know?)*

The French islands of St. Martin, Guadeloupe and Martinique were a delight. Strong coffee and croissants at sidewalk cafes, beautiful markets, wonderful food and all that great wine made these islands especially appealing to us. The vendor in the market below is dressed in the traditional Guadeloupian madras.



### **Trini's Vibrant National Bird**

The scarlet ibis, Trinidad's national bird, is without a doubt the most spectacular bird we've seen in our travels. It's not just red. It is so vibrantly scarlet, it nearly glows.



### **Tobago's Heritage Festival**

Though we won't have the chance to experience a Trinidadian Carnival, we sampled a mini-fete at Tobago's Heritage Fest. This celebration of culture, heritage and tradition was fun, enlightening and quite a spectacle including an "Ole Time Wedding", goat races and Carnival. The "Jambo Lassy" below, a traditional Carnival character, is a blue devil that begs money from the crowds.



### **Two Tour Terrific Trinidad**



Trinidad & Tobago have over 430 species of birds, 620 species of butterflies and 57 varieties of bats. The country has set aside several sanctuaries and eco-reserves to protect this natural resource. Asa Wright Nature Centre is one such eco-center and is among the top 5 in the world. We spent a weekend at AWNC watching birds and exploring the many hikes and trails. We also toured the Caroni Swamp to get a first hand view of scarlet ibis and managed to see hairy crabs and even a tree boa constrictor. Above is a Jacobin hummingbird at AWNC.

### **Few Caribs Left in the Carib**

The Carib Indians, the fierce original inhabitants of the Caribbean islands, are a nearly extinct race. While most of the other indigenous Indians were totally eradicated within 30 years of Columbus' arrival, the Caribs managed to hold out against European forces for over 200 years. A few reside in Dominica still and are now noted for their expertise in fine and intricate basket weaving.



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### **Home, Sweet Home!**



**Merry Christmas  
and Happy New  
Year!  
Marcie, David and  
Jelly**

