



**Your on the  
Street Reporter**



**Uyless Black**

**Sailing the British Virgin Islands:  
North Virgin Gorda and Anegada**

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## Sailing the British Virgin Islands Report 8: North Virgin Gorda and Anegada

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We continued sailing the BVIs with a second stop at the northern end of Virgin Gorda. At the risk of repetition, if you are in this part of the world, try to visit this place (North Sound). We liked it so much we stayed two days. Figure 16 shows the place where we moored. I have placed a white X in the figure to show our location.



Figure 16. North Virgin Gorda, North Sound, and Saba Rock.

The island near our boat is Saba Rock. We were moored a couple hundred yards from Saba, so during the day, it was unnecessary to use the dingy for shopping or lunch. I jumped into the water, swam a short distance, pulled myself onto the dock, shook off excess water, walked twenty feet to the café and---wet to the gills---ordered up lunch. No one cared what you wore or how much water you trucked-in.

Later, full of food and drink, I would burn off the lunch calories with a swim around the island and back to the boat. The only possible downsides to this short excursion were (a) drowning because of stomach cramps from too much lobster bisque and/or (b) dying from being run over by a passing speedboat. For the latter problem, most of the boats slowed to a slow speed while passing by the island and the moored boats. For the former problem, drowning from too much lobster bisque is an occupational hazard suffered by gluttonous swimmers. I made it ok, as I am at my desk composing this paragraph.

## Anegada

After two days at this extraordinary place, we set sail for the most distant island of the BVI chain, Anegada. Its position is shown in Figure 17.<sup>1</sup> Our course to Anegada is shown with the red line...excluding tacks. The black line shows our tacks.

Ha! My sail mates will keelhaul me for my rendition of our 15-mile trip. The black lines indicate what the course would have been if I were at the helm. Truth is, we took only three or four tacks, except when we neared the island. The place is surrounded by coral reefs and Skipper Steve had to do some careful navigation to close-in on a safe passage way.



Figure 17. Anegada.

It was a great sail. We had a lot of wind and made good time from Virgin Gorda. The longer sailing time also allowed your Reporter to clear-up some confusing terms. These words also provide examples of (a) why sailing is confusing to a newcomer, and (b) why English is incomprehensible to everyone.

- First, “head” is not just a toilet. It is also the top corner of a sail.
- Second, “foot” is not just your foot. It is also the bottom edge of a sail.
- Third, “tack” is not just zig-zagging. It is also the bottom front corner of a sail.
- Fourth, “luff” is not just sailing too close to the wind. It is also the front edge of a sail.
- Fifth, “clew” is not just a ball of thread. It is also the bottom rear corner of a sail.
- Sixth, “leech” is not just a blood-sucking worm, or any number of second cousins. It is also the back edge of a sail

Small wonder sailors have a mystery about them. No one understands what they are saying. I’m reminded of a George Bernard Shaw observation that I will alter for this discussion,

<sup>1</sup> *Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia.*

“Sailors and nonsailors are two folks separated by the same language.” My favorite in this regard is the comment by a Greek, “It was all Hebrew to me.”<sup>2</sup>

In spite on the linguistic chasm, I was becoming familiar with the mechanics of sailing and its associated words. My bowline was looking good. I was luffing and leeching as if there were no tomorrow.

Come to think of it, getting there was becoming more than 25 percent of the fun.

### **Anegada**

In deference to the Anegada Chamber of Commerce, I think the main reason to sail to Anegada is to sail back from Anegada. It is an island of coral and limestone that is almost as flat as a pancake. Its highest point is only 28 feet above sea level. Figure 18 shows the shoreline from our perspective as we approached the island.

Still, cutting some slack, the fishing is said to be spectacular, and we were told many of the coral reefs are beautiful.



**Figure 18. Ocean view of Anegada.**

We did not have time for fishing or reef exploration because skipper had scheduled a trip for a beachside swim. Holly and I deferred and swam around the sailboat while the other couples jumped into a taxi to make their way to the north side of the island. Upon their return, we learned: What Anegada lacks in mountains and trees, it makes up in mosquitoes and no-see-ums. Our boat mates’ painful, nasty-looking bites stayed with them for three days.

For this evening, we decided to stay on the boat to partake of a rare on-board dinner. Which leads this report to use one of my newly-coined words--- one of the favorite words of the King of Pedantry (William Safire): Segue!

Cool! Let’s segue to a short flash-back---a couple evenings before this night. Chief Bosun and Double Duty put on a skit:

### **The Legend of Capt. Bone Marrow**

Each couple was tasked with putting on a skit. Holly and I had decided to use the first play of “Sing Me a Song Title,” and assign the parts of Slim, Slimette, etc. to our crew members. But we concluded the country and western song titles were too existential for the intended

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<sup>2</sup> Shaw actually said, “England and America are two countries separated by the same language” in Leonard Roy Frank, “Quotes,” *Quotationary* (New York: Random House, 2001), 432.



frivolity of these skits. We bowed out, but Bladye and Launa more than made-up for our omission. To gain a sense of the fun we had that night, take a look at Figure 19.



**Figure 19. Captain and Admiral Bone Marrow.**

The drama began with my eye-patched niece<sup>3</sup> coming from the cabin onto the deck. Lurking in the darkness, hidden from us, was Captain Bone Marrow. The other three couples, sitting around a table in front of Launa, awaited the play's first scene:

### **Scene One**

- Launa, "Silence!"
- Good point, as most of us were loudly attempting to assuage mosquito bites with internal alcohol rubs.
- Launa, "How do you know a pirate?"
- Silence from the audience, as we were not pirates, and therefore, were not privileged to an insider's view. Also, we thought the question might be somewhat rhetorical, as in, "To be or not to be. Is that a question?"
- Launa gave us another hint, "Why are you a pirate?"
- Silence from the non-pirate crowd. ...Wait! We were in the middle of pirate seas. We recently swam around Norman (Treasure!) Island. We were, if only vicariously, pirates. And with the mosquito bites having been momentarily sealed-off with (pirate) rum, we started to get into the spirit of things.
- We silently uttered the answers to questions. To the first, "Because *we* are pirates!" To the second question, "Because we like rum!"

### **Scene Two**

- However, Launa, taking matters in hand, declared, "BECAUSE YOU ARE!"
- Yes! Having been pumped-up with this declaration, we seconded the assertion, "BECAUSE YOU ARE!"

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<sup>3</sup> I am honored that Launa has dubbed me her uncle.

- Then somehow, without prompting from the person who sits in front of the stage and helps actors who forget their lines, we sent nearby BVI wildlife and sailors fleeing with the Long John Silver cry of: “AAARRRGH!”

### **Scene Three**

- Capt. Bone Marrow enters stage center. He scowls! He rants! He asks, “How do you know a pirate?”
- Us, “Because you are!”
- Everyone, “AAARRRGH!”
- Launa then exposes the plot of the play: Capt. Bone Marrow got his name by cutting off the legs of other pirates, chewing off the flesh of the legs, eating the meat to the bone, then sucking out the bone marrow.
- As you can see from his face in Figure 19 he had pretty much exhausted his supply of limes and Cuba Libres.

### **Subsequent Scenes**

For the next half hour or so, the legend of Capt. Bone Marrow was revealed, interspersed with frequent, “How do you know a pirate?” “Because you are!” “AAARRRGH!”

The next morning, one of the men on a nearby boat asked us, “Say, what was going on over there last night?” We told him about the skit. He responded, “My children wanted to come over, but I told them it might be dangerous.”

It was time to haul anchor and haul ass. Next stop? We headed back toward the main islands of the BVIs, toward the north side of the chain.