

**Your on the
Street Reporter**



Uyless Black

**Sailing the British Virgin Islands:
One Tack Sails**

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Sailing the British Virgin Islands Report 9: One Tack Sails to Little Jost Van Dyke Island

Late October, 2008

This is the last report on sailing the British Virgin Islands. The last few days of the cruise were spent sailing from Anegada and exploring the north side of Tortola, Jost Van Dyke, and Little Jost Van Dyke Islands, as seen in Figure 20.



Figure 20. Last days of the sail.

For the trip from Anegada, Joey was given command of the bridge and the crew. Steve (our Skipper) is an experienced sailor. Joey has also had many hours on sailboats. He talked to me about the boats he used to own and sail. There was genuine affection in his voice about his crafts.

Some of his technical details were beyond me, but I could now understand most of his descriptions of his adventures. He mentioned close hauling. I knew it meant sailing into the wind at about 45 degrees. He mentioned running with the wind, which meant sailing with the wind at the stern. Close reach. Beam reach. Broad reach. I actually grasped what he was saying. I could not execute these maneuvers myself, but I could at least visualize them. As we left Anegada:¹

- Reporter, “Joey, we’re headed for Great Camonoe, about 15 miles from here. Assuming the wind stays steady, how many tacks will you need?”
- Joey, “The wind won’t stay as it is. For one, it will be affected by the upcoming islands.”
- “OK, but give me a best guess.”

¹ Conversation is paraphrased from videos and my notes.

- “With some adjustments to the Genoa and fooling around with the luff and leach, I’d say one tack.”
- “One tack! You’re kidding.”
- “Tell you what. If we make it to Great Camonoe with one tack, you’ll mix me a Cuba Libre as we pull into the bay.”
- “Tell you what, if you make it with one tack, I’ll mix the whole crew Cuba Libres!”
- “You’re on!”

Take another look at Figure 20. The long red arrow represents Joey’s one-tack sail. I was impressed. I also concluded it was not as easy as it appeared, as Joey (now named One Tack) made a lot of small adjustments to the sails.

Later that evening, as we celebrated nothing in general and everything specifically, I snapped a shot of One Tack at a local restaurant (Figure 21(a)). Notice the colorful assemblages of bracelets, earrings, and necklaces draped around One Tack’s mainframe. These rings glowed in the dark. All eight of us were so-decorated. As we made our way in the dingy to the shore, all that could be seen were these glowing rings, gliding across the dark water (Figure 21(b)). I imagine we made for an interesting sight from the shore.

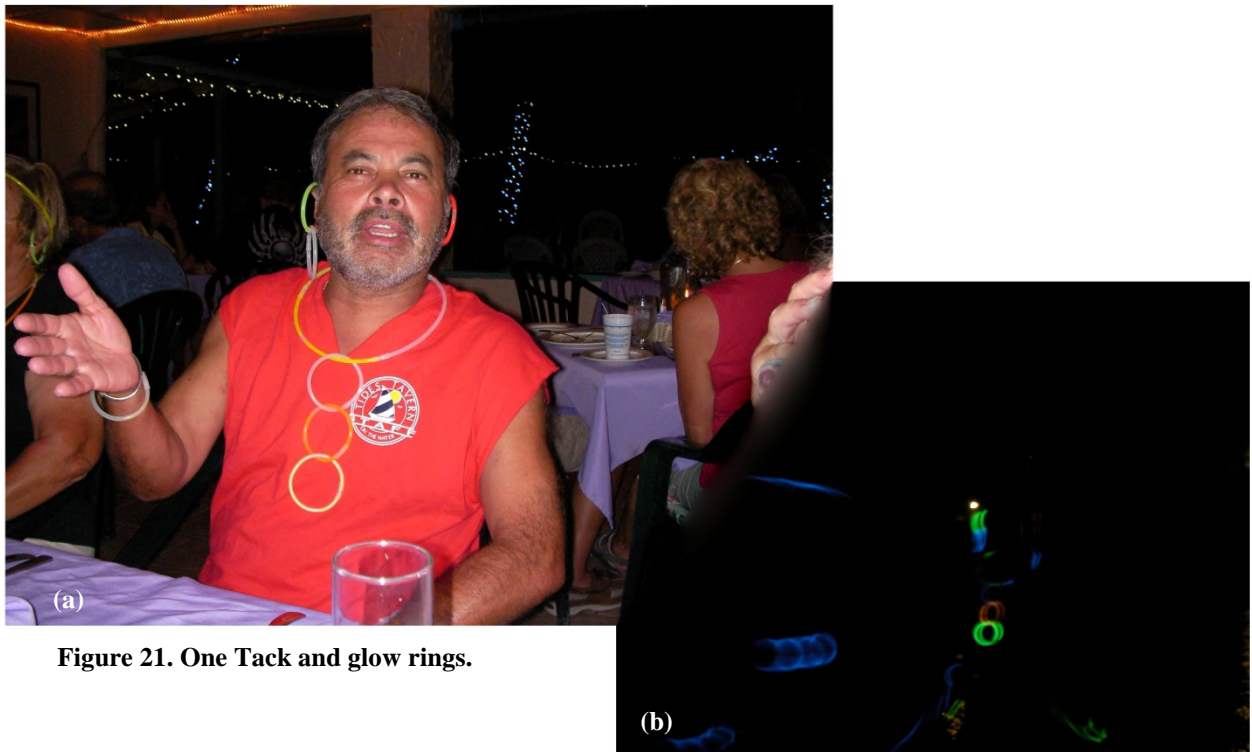


Figure 21. One Tack and glow rings.

In real life, One Tack is a respected businessman, who manages a lot of people. In the British Virgin Islands, he is One Tack, a fine sailor who entertains a lot of people.

While on this personal level, the hero of this story has only been mentioned in the second report. She is Suzi, the wife of One Tack. I nick-named Suzi Sweet Sea for two reasons. First, she is prone to acute sea sickness. Second, she sailed for two weeks in seas not so

sweet. Throughout this time, she remained stoic, cheerful, and uncomplaining. The moniker Sweet Sea is meant as a compliment to Suzi. In no way could I have done what she did.

Recommendations for Divers

During these reports, we've learned about several extraordinary places in the BVIs for swimming, snorkeling, and diving. Sadly, most of the coral in this part of the world is now gone, the victim of too many people's curious hands and awkward flippers. The best views of coral that I came across were at Diamond Cay at Little Van Jost Dyke Island. Figure 22 shows some shots I took in Diamond Cay.

I fear these beautiful seascapes will not last much longer because Diamond Cay is getting ready to expand its facilities. The same holds true for most of the Caribbean. I've swum many parts of this sea, and concluded coral marine life is in grave danger. It takes hundreds of years for a coral reef to become a reef. It takes a few seconds to wipe out this growth.



Figure 22. Diamond Cay.

Make no mistake; the continued destruction of our environment will have Mother Nature take her revenge. She already has begun her payback.

New Friends

Earlier, I introduced the crew for this trip:

- Crew couple one: Steve and Connie, known as Skipper and Skipperette.
- Crew couple two: Joe and Suzi, known as One Tack and Sweet Sea.
- Crew couple three: Blayde and Launa, known as Chief Bosun and Double Duty.
- Crew couple four: Uyless and Holly, known as Swabee and Red Hook.

Holly and I knew Steve and Connie and had visited them several times in the past. Holly also knew Blayde and Launa, as they are kin to her. So is Steve and Connie. (Cousins) I had met Blayde and Launa at a couple weddings, but did not know them well. Joe and Suzi were new to Holly and me.

I have been told a way to cement or break up friendships with people is to take a long sailing trip with them. I was told there was no middle ground. You would grow to like or dislike your sailing mates. We grew to like our sailing mates a lot. We were examples of the saying, "Friendships multiply joys and divide griefs."²

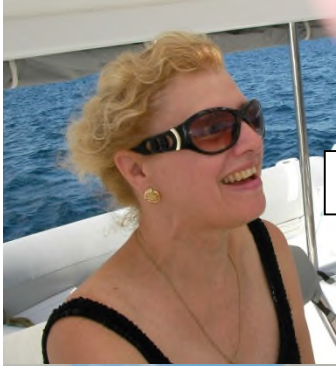
Holly and I were the elder couple of the group. We were in good shape but neither of us had much experience sailing. Steve, Connie, Blayde, Launa, Joey, and Suzi took us under their wings. Their friendships multiplied our joys. Their friendships divided our griefs (especially in manipulating the sails when tacking). Their patience with our novice skills was amazing and put us at ease. Chief Bosun re-introduced me to knot tying, a practice I loved as a youth. Steve and Joey brought me up to date with costal navigation, a task I learned while in the navy (and had not use of GPS in those past times).

In concluding these reports, here some final pictures of the gang of eight:



Chief Bosun and Double Duty talk with Sweet Sea, while Skipperette talks with Red Hook Holly at the airport.

² Thomas Fuller, *Gnomologia: Adages and Proverbs*, 1732, np.



A happy sailor.



Swabee awaits orders from the Skipper.



Double Duty once again earns her name.



Sweet Sea has the right idea.

Time to Leave

It was time to go. Two weeks in one of the most beautiful places on earth was a great way to gather research for Your on the Street Reporter reports. I can imagine the IRS might say, "If it's fun, it isn't research. If it's fun it's taxable!" So, for purposes of documentation, let me declare that these two weeks have been very taxing. That should do it.

Even if you choose not to sail the BVIs, you should visit the islands. I hope to return to swim the Caves, to check-out Diamond Cay, and to stay at Virgin Gorda for a while. I may not find myself on a sailboat again. I am not sure sailing is my cup of tea. But swimming in fantastic waters is, and I would not trade this experience for all the tea in China.