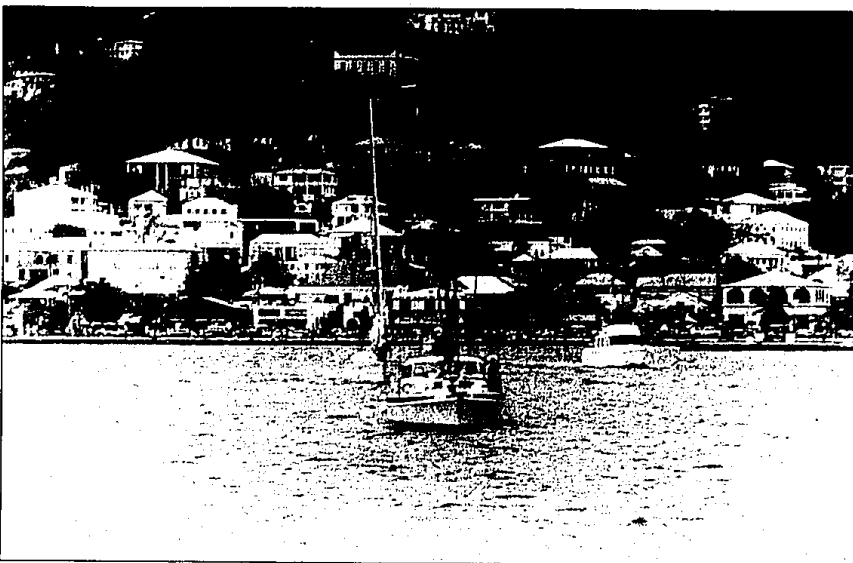


Travel Scene

Iris Sanderson Jones editor

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The Virgin Islands are lined with boats along their shores. Many of these sailors would agree that the life at sea leaves no room

for decadence. Linda, however, disagrees.

BAREBOATING in Style

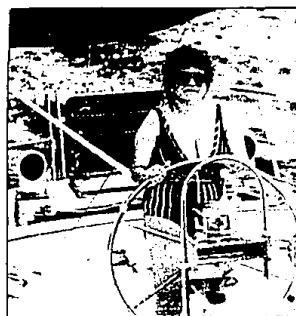


photo by MIKE HUARD

Linda Huard of Brighton doesn't give in to the rugged life on a "bareboat."

Virgin Islands reveal 'All the charms about Linda'

By Ingrid Tomey
special writer

There is something in the term, "bareboat" that suggests essence.

Sans captain or crew, shucked of the excess baggage of landlubbing, we would flee the ice and snow of a Detroit winter and set off on a track for the Virgin Islands. There were five of us with this fundamentalist approach to sailing. And then there was Linda.

On a Sunday in early February, Mike and Linda Huard of Brighton, Judy and John Gordon of Traverse City, and my husband, Paul and I of West Bloomfield, taxied from Roadtown, Tortola, the capital of the British Virgin Islands, over to Road Harbor and the home of our charter company, The Moorings.

"LOOK AT all this storage," Judy said, flinging open the closets of "Misty Isle 1," our 36-foot Beneteau. We peeked into the aft cabin which stretched sideways for an incredible 10 feet.

As we were stowing our gear, Mike clamored on board and began lowering red Samsonite luggage: five matching suitcases, one bulging carry-on, and an Adrienne Arpel cosmetic case. Linda's curly littlehead poked down, "It's so teeny down there."

As Linda began swooping through, shaking out beaded silks and strappy little heels, the cabin suddenly began looking like Fisher McGee's closet.

"I hope we have lots of water," Linda chirruped after investigating the heads. "I need my three showers a day."

FOR THE next seven days, in spite of the rigors of life afloat, Linda was as fresh as the red hibiscus that she tucked behind her ear as we set out into 18 knot breezes for Marina Cay off the island of Great Camanoe.

As we sat at our mooring at Marina Cay, we were approached by a dinghy from another boat, "Tumbleweed." Fritz Seylarth, a little bleached leprechaun, was not only collecting a \$10 mooring fee, he was selling his books, "Tales of the Caribbean," and "Mavericks in Paradise." We asked him aboard, bought his books



MIKE HUARD

Ingrid Tomey guides the ship on a sunny Virgin Island day.

and listened for an hour or so to his heartstopping tales of Blackbeard and Bartholomew Roberts.

"Books," Linda said. "Don't you have anything else to sell?" She shook her gold, bracketed-earl arms.

"Only books," Fritz said, looking genuinely regretful.

Minutes later, from below, came the sound of the shower.

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After the shower we heard pans rattling and smelled onions frying. Linda was coming alive below. "I sure could use some garlic salt," she called up. Besides the \$2,800 price of chartering "Misty Isle," we had kicked in \$19 each for provisions.

On Monday we headed into the rising sun toward Virgin Gorda and the famous rocky Baths at the southwest tip of the island. We dinged ashore, leaving Linda to sun on the fine, white beach while we trooped off to find the Baths.

Crawling on our hands and knees between house-size boulders, we came upon a huge, domed cave set like a gem in a blue pool. Beyond, were more rocks to scale and rubbing, pools full of hidden coral on which we scraped our feet and knees.

IT WAS thrilling but also frightening to be carried along by the whirling currents. An hour later, we carried our scraped and bruised limbs back over the rocks to find Linda glistening in the sun, sipping a rum and Coke. "There's a bar over there," she pointed cheerfully through the palms.

Linda not only sprung for our drinks, she salvaged our wounds with skin balms which she produced from the bottom of her bag. Dabbling some essence, called Pao Rahane behind her ears, she settled us chastened children around her for a drink and a snooze in the sun. Then it was back to "Misty Isle" for our three hour sail up to The Bitter End, a resort marina at the northeast end of Virgin Gorda.

Displaying the first bit of curiosity about our course, Linda removed the pillow from her face and called up

from the starboard berth, "Do they have rooms at this place?"

This was the beginning of Linda's relentless efforts to escape from the deprivations of bareboating.

"I could use a bath," she said. "And I don't mean the kind you just had."

BUT THERE were no rooms to be had at The Bitter End. This was high season and the resort was full. As a concession to Linda, we snugged "Misty Isle" right up against the dock, barely noticing that the cost of dockage was about the same as a decent double at the Holiday Inn. Nevertheless, it entitled us to free showers and Linda was off the boat with her pink towel and cosmetic case.

That evening, after Linda's coq au vin, we watched the six guests on board a 90-foot Kalamati, aptly named, "The Libertine," making videos of themselves and a mariachi band that they had hired for the evening. They put the mariachi player behind the camera while they drank champagne and took turns pretending they were playing the steel drums.

"Why don't they just stay on land?" Paul said, turning his offended eyes off to the sunset.

Linda looked forlorn, sitting on deck with a mudpuck on her face and her hair slicked up with something called "Thick Ends." "That great big boat and they can't even fit two more people on it," she sighed.

By midweek, we were breezing downwind on the northern edge of the island toward St. John. The clean blue of the sky seemed all of a piece with the water. The constant trade winds puffed us merrily along, past Mosquito Island, the Dogs, Beef and Guano, past great, green turtles rising like prehistoric creatures out of the water, and pelicans, and most glorious, two whales, that we and another boat tracked for at most an hour.

"DID YOU ever hear this song?" Linda trilled, looking up from her bottle of Mauve Twilight nail polish. "When I go to sleep, I never count sheep, I count all the charms about Linda."

We were happy. That night we were treating our

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Hill House proves it's a small world

Roland Jacques was on a ladder, getting his beam and plaster house ready for painting, when we carried our suitcases out of Hill House. The house has stood on this hill since the 17th century, but it always needs painting.

Youyou Jacques, his wife, was in the house, fetching the old Bible. I had just learned that her grandfather Jules Musche was born in the Detroit area in 1869.

I often find unexpected connections like that while exploring the world. What surprised me about this encounter is that Youyou once traveled from Europe to America looking for her ancestor.

We found Hill House bed-and-breakfast in a guidebook. For people who love people, the bed-and-breakfast route is more personal and less expensive than a roadside hotel. I called for reservations from the dock at Harwich, on England's east coast, when our ferry from the Netherlands landed in a light evening rain.

I'm glad that I didn't have to find the address: Hill House, The Malt-



The Maltings, Ramsey, Harwich, Essex.

ings, Ramsey, Harwich, Essex. It was about five miles and a \$5 taxi ride from the boat harbor but the taxi driver knew exactly where to find it.

He drove out of town and turned uphill through spring crops to the two houses at the top of the road. Hill House is set in a garden at the top of the hill with a swimming pool to one side and some buildings behind. The area is called The Maltings because there used to be a brewery on that hill.

Roland led us through the fine old



crossroads

Iris Jones

house and upstairs to one of several rooms available to travelers. Ours had three single beds, a full bathroom two steps down the hall, and cost 10 pounds sterling per person, which is about \$38 for the night and included a full breakfast.

Roland looks like a sea captain, strong face, square-cut beard. In fact he was in the merchant navy, met his Belgian wife Youyou while sailing around Africa and has spent the last 30 years as a river pilot, guiding seagoing ships through the estuary and into the mouth of the Thames River.

He is retired now and spends his time with his stamp and postcard collection, and looking after Hill

House, where the Jacques have lived for 19 years. Ask to see the "green book" and you will see the house marked on a 1777 road map—that's one year after the start of the American Revolution.

The house actually goes back to 1635. The Hendon family lived in it for 300 years, and were out of town on the day in 1911 when their maid came in to light some of the 13 fireplaces, to warm their return, and nearly burned the house down.

Roland found that maid in an old folk's home and invited her and her sister to tea, so he knows what the house used to look like.

Her loves family history, and so does his wife Youyou, who came to Detroit once looking for the grave of her great-grandfather; he was a Belgian brickmaker when he migrated to Detroit in the late 19th century.

Her grandfather, Jules Musche, was born in Detroit on Oct. 3, 1869, moved with his family to Toledo and returned to Belgium when he was 12 years old.

Unfortunately, Youyou didn't find what she was looking for. She knew



MICKY JONES

The 17th century Hill House is surrounded by spring crops and gardens. When travelling in Europe, this bed-and-breakfast type of accommodation is more personal and often less expensive than a roadside hotel.

that her grandfather had lived in Michigan and Ohio but she couldn't find any trace of him. I empathize with her because I was on my way to search my ancestor in Northern Ireland, and I couldn't find any trace of them either.

Our night in Hill House was only one small experience in a lifetime of travel, but it is the kind of experience that you paste in your mental scrapbook for future browsing. One small unexpected connection made while exploring the world out there.