

Saving Cahow!
(Cahow a small seabird found only in Bermuda)



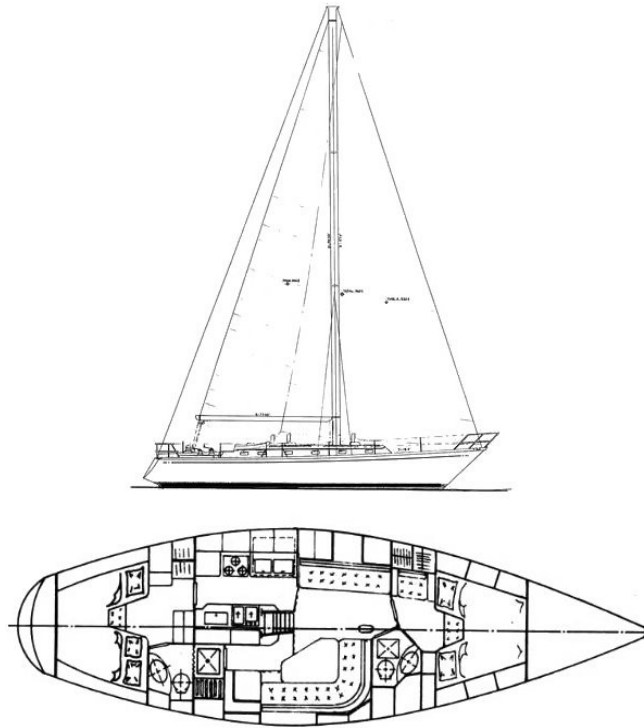
So, I bought a boat that's in the Abacos Bahama, currently a Covid 19 nogo place for American citizens and in an area that was devastated by last August's category 5 Dorian, a hurricane that dwarfed all previous hurricanes. Imagine 24 hours of 175 mph sustained winds that pounded the island. Boats that were cabled down on concrete blocks and 15ft above the high water mark were overwhelmed by 25ft high waves for 24 hours! Battered and bruised when the water receded, what was left was a tumble dryer that had run amok and splattered its load around the marina. Boats that survived were the ones that were solidly built, ones that weren't were scattered like chaff before the wind and cast up as flotsam on the beach.





Owners of these beautiful yachts were quick to claim “total loss” on their insurance and walk away with enough money to buy their next beautiful boat. But what is left are boats with varying levels of damage that are in the hands of insurance brokers, destined to either waste away and eventually be scrapped or be discovered by some optimistic sailor who thinks they can restore them to their former glory to eventually waft them over the horizon on a journey of a lifetime. Okay I'm one of the winsome spirits and I now own a yacht that could sail me and loved ones around the world or just drain what small allowances I have into a hole in the ocean.

What attracted me to this boat was it was built by one of the most revered boat builders of the North East, by a yard that had the most respected reputation of “New England” quality and by a designer who was the hero of the 1974 Americas Cup on *Courageous*. A man who had built a reputation of designing and innovation radical sail designs and who had built boat after boat that had broken the mold of innovation and won every race that was out there to be won. Ted Hood who had a touch that was uniquely his own and a style resulting in some of the most beautiful sailing boats ever built.



His yard “Little Harbor” was his ultimate goal. He sold out his sail making business and got out of racing and focused on his true love, building quality boats that he wanted to sail on. Quality and longevity were tantamount and a boat that would embody comfort and performance were his goals. The Little Harbor 44 was one of these and when I saw one of these cherished boats had been caught up in this damnable hurricane I was hooked, I had to have this boat and I would do anything to get this boat back on the water. So here I am owning a boat that is probably one of the most cherished US built boats for quality and workmanship, but with an immense task of getting her back to a state of visual beauty and seamanlike competence.



Problem being it's in a yard on an island that is difficult to get to, has no infrastructure, no water, no electricity, no services or expertise and everything that needs to be done has to be done by you. The island is still devastated and the local population are penniless, survival is day to day and the last of their worries is your trivial requirements to have water or electricity. Getting this boat back to civilization is the only way I am going to save her, but after the battering of the storm certain things

have to be done to ensure minimum seaworthiness It's not far to the US coast, but do the sails work, is the diesel clean, does the hull have a leak, where's the safety gear are just some of the considerations.

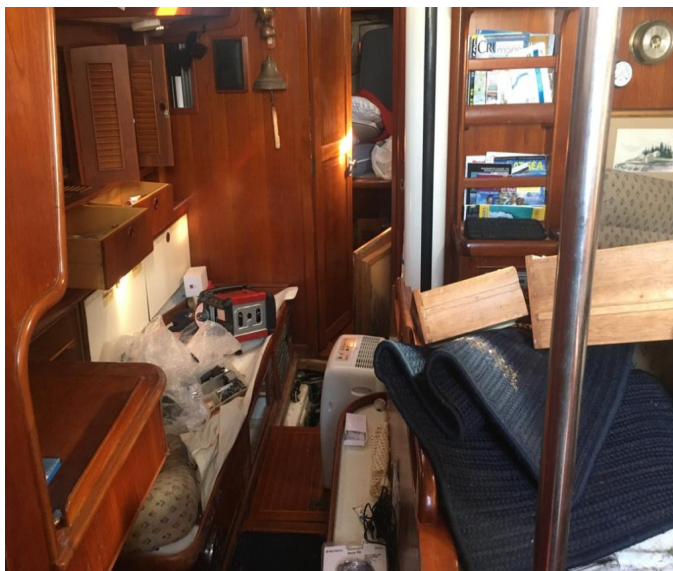
So the work begins:

It took me 2 days to get to the Abacos on what should only be a one hour flight from Florida. With my Covid 19 clearance slip in hand I boarded a late-departing BahamAir flight in Orlando that dropped me off in Nassau too late to catch a connecting flight to Marsh Harbor. I had to spend the night in a salubrious Bahamian hotel with a 5:00am flight the next morning. The taxi that promised a 4:00am pickup did not show up so there I was standing in the pouring rain wearing my Covid 19 mask trying not to panic. I was reminded that everything works out in the Islands and eventually the owner of the hotel jumped into his car, bare-footed and in his pajamas, and dropped me off at the airport.



The yard has a rule, not only do they charge you a fortune for a small strip of rocky sand, but they insist that you can't stay on the boat and have to check into a local hotel. Only one problem; there are only 2 operating hotels on the island. One is a resort struggling to reopen and rooms are \$450 per night and the other is local beer/disco joint and if they had a room to offer, it's \$185 per night. So I stayed on the boat...





This trip was mainly a look-see to see what I had purchased – was I a romantic fool who had squandered hard-earned dollars on a wreck or an uncanny sailor (if such a person exists) who had an asset that would provide enormous pleasure and value for years to come. The boat was back on her keel, but the storm and suspected looters had left the interior in a tumultuous mess. Everything that could come out of a locker was, every cushion, mattress and soft furnishing had been sprayed with a mixture of bilge-water and diesel. For 3 days I filled garbage bag after garbage bag with remnants of what had been the previous owners life. I vacillated from being a romantic fool to being an uncanny investor. At the end of day 4 the interior was habitable and was starting to look like the grand lady that she is. Looters had taken the TV set. Engine spares and a very expensive Raymarine Plotter- Radar set. I ask what will a looter do with Plotter/Radar in a town that does not even have electricity?

Now to check the exterior. She had been pounded on the sides by other wayward boats, but surprisingly there was not too much damage. The Bow pulpit is bent out of shape, the stern-rail is oddly bent, but nothing that seems like a deal-breaker in terms of getting the boat back to the USA. The tankage and diesel is still to be checked out.



I was about to start doing this when I received a panicky text message from BahamAir saying all flights in and out of the USA would end on Wednesday so my trip would have to be cut short or I would be stranded in the Bahamas for the foreseeable future. So I made a list about a foot long and caught the last plane out of Nassau along with other displaced Americans and dropped into Ft Lauderdale. My car was in Orlando....go figure.

But the spirit is strong and motivation unyielding...Semper Exspecto

