

ALDEBARAN
Report 7
Las Palmas, Gran Canaria

Saturday 20th November 1999 at 2000 hrs. or 17 hours to the start of our Atlantic Rally (ARC) and we have just poured our first drink of the day. The last item on our list is to complete this report and e-mail it to tomorrow morning before embarking on our first ocean crossing.

Since arriving in Las Palmas on 2nd November the time has flown. There always seemed to be something to do on the boat in preparation for the almost 3,000 miles of ocean ahead. John Cotter from Cobh and Mickey McCaldin from Lough Erne, good sailing friends of ours, have just arrived by air to join us for the crossing. We estimate it will take about three weeks.

The ARC, Atlantic Rally for Cruisers, organisation here is excellent and all our fears of overcrowding due to the large entry have been dispelled. We were the 4th boat in the new section of the marina that now has about 150 boats. Last Saturday all boats dressed overall giving a magnificent sight and atmosphere. Various free seminars have been run covering such subjects as, weather routing, rigging, emergency navigation, life rafts, and safety equipment etc. Each boat has had to comply with stringent safety requirements and only when all such conditions were met did the inspectors issue you with a clearance. Without the clearance the boat was not allowed to join the rally. On the social side, there have been many parties both ashore and on various boats.

On Thursday last we eventually got our repaired mainsail back and are glad to report a good job. You may remember we torn it during an involuntary gybe while on passage from Portugal to Porto Santo. I also fitted a new masthead vhf aerial that John had brought out for us. Yesterday our large 'whale 25' bilge pump stopped working and we have been unable to obtain new parts here. However we have a reserve manual and electric pump and as they say, "faster than any pump in an emergency is a man with a bucket". Everything else seems to be in order and we are hopeful of a good crossing. This afternoon we had a very extensive skippers briefing giving, among other information, a very extensive weather report for the next four days that looks very good. The only concern was hurricane Lenny that was currently active in the Caribbean.

On Friday night at a huge free reception given by the local authorities we were among six boats awarded a special plaque for various reasons. Ours was awarded for our work on the SSB radio on the passage here. This was a great honour and we are very proud of it.

Sunday 21st "D-DAY, 0830 hrs.

Last night, to conclude the festivities, we had a very good fire works display and farewell parties in various eating establishments. I am glad to report our crew were very careful on the alcohol. John in addition to being a good sailor has that unique and very use full attribute of being a teetotaler. We all took our sea sick tablets before going to bed last night and will continue taking them for a few days until we get our sea legs back. Seasickness is a major concern with everybody.

A DISGRACEFUL INCIDENT:

A big story here is of the Norwegian boat that picked up a 23 year old man from Senegal tied to a 25 gal. drum about three miles off Grand Canaria. He had been thrown overboard three hours earlier by the captain of a ship that had just left Las Palmas. The ships crew had discovered him just before entering the port. To avoid problems with the authorities the Captain had him locked in a cabin until thrown overboard. It was estimated by the medical people that another hour and he would have died. The Norwegian couple took him under their wing, got him a job and raised money for him. I will give more details of this terrible story later.

This is all for now folks and hopefully our next report will be from the Caribbean.

Pat and Olivia
Yacht ALDEBARAN