

## Roatan report week 7

OK, all the kids and Jim have arrived safely; it's time to get settled in and see Roatan. The mechanic is due Saturday afternoon so I have to be available with the dink for him. The boat is anchored out in French Harbour so I'll have to pick him up at the dock and bring him out to the boat. Everyone stowed their gear and we decide to go for a snorkel close to the boat. I've been using Joe's cell phone here on the island and asked the mechanic to call me when he was on the way.

About 3:00 I still haven't heard from Clemont. I called him to try to get an ETA. "Well, Mr. Steve, I'm trying to get another job finished up here. I'll call you when I'm done." OK, you have my number, right? "Oh yes Mr. Steve." OK, let's go over to Fantasy Island and see the zoo.

We head over there with everyone in the dink. We climbed the hill to the zoo and found the gate wide open. Most of the sheep and deer have wandered out of the fenced in area. Of course the monkeys are loose in the trees already, but they're over in the trash cans having a late lunch. The macaws have been put back in their cages so it looks like it's just the monkeys, sheep and deer that are out today. It's a great thing that the property is an island!



The kids brought some toys, shoes and books for Dory. Of course she liked the package the toys came in better than the toys! She enjoyed turning the pages in her new books.



Dory reading one of her new books.

At 4:30 I still haven't heard from Clemont. I call him back to see what's up. "Well Mr. Steve, I don't think I can make it today." OK, how about tomorrow? "OK Mr. Steve, I'll be there at 9:00." Great, this way we don't lose the whole day!

Well 9:00 comes, but Clemont does not. Surprise, surprise! I was shocked and appalled by this time. I called him at 9:40. Clemont, are you awake? "Well Mr. Steve, I wasn't you know." When do you think you can be here then? "I'll be there at 12:00 Mr. Steve." OK, fine! I'm not real happy about not knowing when he'll come because we need the dink and that screws up the whole group. We can't go diving or fishing or exploring if the dink is involved and just about everything we do is with the dink.

OK, let's learn to scuba dive. Jim and I go over the basics with everyone and show them how to put on and use the gear. We then filled the air tanks and went for an easy check-out dive right at the boat. Jim went down with them while I monitored from the surface. The kids had to clear a flooded mask and buddy breath. They went down in about 30' so they worked on clearing their ears as well.

Well 12:00 came and went but not Clemont. I called him at 1:00. What's up Clemont? "Well Mr. Steve. My truck isn't running real good and I have to change the fuel filters and such." OK, are you going to get here today? "Yes Mr. Steve, I'll get there." OK, here we sit waiting for Clemont. I decided to take everyone for a snorkel at the end of the harbour. We had a great time looking at stuff in 3-30' of water.

At 3:00 I call Clemont again. Are we going to see you today Clemont? "Well Mr. Steve, I don't think I can get there. I'm having trouble with my truck." OK, so can we make it early tomorrow? "OK, Mr. Steve. I'll be there at 10:00." Of course early is a relative thing and you are in the islands Mon.

Monday morning the boys and I got up at dawn to go for a dive on a wreck. The fishing boat is in about 40' just outside the harbour. The wind has been blowing; imagine that, so the seas are kicked up pretty good. We found the marker and tied up. The guys found that getting all of that gear on in a small boat bouncing about can be a challenge. We finally got squared away and dropped in. We followed the buoy line down slowly so everyone could clear their ears. Will and Chalmers were having a little problem but Austin wasn't. I turned around to check on Will and Chalmers and when I looked back I didn't see Austin next to me. Looking down he was on the bottom already! I had to chase him down to get him to stay with the group.

It's a neat wreck and we found a bike on the deck that I took for a ride. There were all kinds of fish in and around the boat. We went off to the edge of the reef to see what was there. You look down and it just goes on forever. We saw a small school of tuna working the edge of the reef as well as some big dog tooth snappers. Before we knew it, Will was getting low on air. We turned around and worked our way back to the wreck and dink. We managed to get all our gear back into the boat and headed back to SeaQuest.

We needed to get some drinking water in the boat's tank for the rest of the trip and with Clemont due this morning we pulled the anchors and motored over to Sherman's fishing boat. There we rafted alongside to make things easier. This way the water truck can come right to us and I won't have to tie up the dink waiting on Clemont.

We needed to put about 150 gallons of water in the boat. This is our drinking and washing water. The only way I found to get good water was to buy it in 5 gallon jugs. For this I would have the water truck deliver the 30 jugs we needed and then we'd pour it into the boat. This process takes about 30-45 minutes, but at least we were alongside the dock. When Deb and I did it we had to dink the water out to the boat at anchor.

While I waited for Clemont, Jim and the kids went to explore the town of French Harbour. Well Clemont finally made it! He brought his helper and they got right into the chore at hand, to pull the heat exchanger and see if it was plugged again. In about 30 minutes they had it out and found it loaded with stuff. They also took the expansion tank off since it looked like it needed to be cleaned as well. Off they went to the shop to clean parts. Well at least that was encouraging news!

My theory was that while we had cleaned the heat exchanger the first time, there must have been dirt in the engine block that we didn't clean. This time after Clemont and his helper got back we filled the block with water and took an air hose attached to a scuba tank and blew out the block. We did get more trash from the block. Then they reassembled the heat exchanger and we fired the engine up. Everything looked good! After letting it run for a couple of minutes we cast off the lines and headed out to put the engine under a load. I was going to make sure she didn't overheat while I had Clemont on board! We did a couple of laps around the anchorage and out to the mouth of the pass at full throttle. She was running as cold as ice!!!!



sights and sounds of French Harbour.

The kids and Jim enjoy to





We went back to our anchoring spot and dropped the hooks while Clemont cleaned up his gear. I still wasn't letting him off until we had seen the engine run loaded

and then unloaded. I wasn't taking ANY chances!!! All went well and I took Clemont and his helper back to the dock in the dink.

OK, now we can leave the anchorage and head east. Right? NOT! It was still blowing 20-30 late in the day and the seas were big. The plan was to go to Jonesville Tuesday or Wednesday and then to Guanaja before leaving for home Friday. The forecast said the wind would lighten Tuesday and Wednesday, it just didn't say which Tuesday and Wednesday! Tuesday we go shopping for the odds and ends we'll need for the trip home. The plan is to go to Jonesville Wednesday since it's only 5 miles away and then play the weather for the trip to Guanaja. We could even go late Thursday for Guanaja if the wind

and seas settle down. The passage in is pretty straight forward and I have done it in the dark before.



Allie and Chalmers in the rig

Wednesday morning we secured the boat for going offshore and said goodbye to Joe, Berthy and Dory and to Sherman and his family. We pulled the hooks and head out. As we came out of the harbour the wind isn't as heavy as it's been but the seas are still there. We head east and set the engine to motor us along at about 5 knots. There are some pretty big seas, 7'-9'. We had gotten about 1 1/2 miles from French Harbour when we took the BIG one. I didn't see it until just before we hit it. We went up on the first wave and then down into the second. Green water came all the way to the dodger. After we got through it I looked forward and something was looking odd. Hey, where'd the anchor go? The port anchor has a bad habit of jumping out of its chocks in big seas. I thought it had done that again. I went forward to secure it only to find the port anchor; the starboard anchor and the bow pulpit were gone!



The pulpit holds both anchors and the outside two legs for the metal rail. The stainless straps and leg that hold the teak pulpit to the hull had sheared off in the wave. There was corrosion around the bolts holes where it attached to the hull. Four bolts were holding the whole assembly to the hull but it was hanging straight down. I got the

crew to turn the boat around so we wouldn't take anymore waves with the pulpit hanging down. I then ran a line through the pulpit and tied it to the bow cleats to help support it.

He headed back to French Harbour to see what we needed to do. Of course going down wind is a lot easier but the pulpit was still going underwater in the big waves. We got

back to the anchorage and had to hold position with the engine until I could get one of the anchors away from the pulpit so we could set it. We had been towing the dink but had taken the engine off for the trip. We put the engine back on and got under the pulpit to get the port anchor released so we could set it.

With the anchor set, we could access the damage. The pulpit itself is not structural on SeaQuest. It was a place to hold the anchor so it wasn't on deck and to walk out on to watch the dolphins. The plan was to get the other anchor released and then take the whole assembly off for the trip home. We had to unbolt 4 support bolts and hacksaw one of the brackets off. It was pretty simple once we got into it.

While we were removing the pulpit the wind started to crank up again. So much for Jonesville! Jim took the girls scuba diving on another wreck and the boys and I did some boat chores, changed the oil, checked the battery water, stuff like that.

The weather report for Thursday was for the wind to lay down, yea, right! Joe needed to get Berthy to the mainland to see her sick cousin so he was ready at dawn to head out. We would leave for Guanaja as well. The wind didn't lay down early that morning and the seas were as big as the day before. There was no way we were going to go 30 miles straight into those seas again. We made the call to stay at French Harbour. Joe also decided to stay in because while his trip was a reach, it would be pretty rolly poly and Berthy didn't deal well with that.

Sherman loaned us his truck so I could take the group on a 3 hour tour of the island. We headed east by truck and the ride was a WHOLE lot easier! We got to see Jonesville by truck. While we didn't see the mangrove tunnel we did see the village. We also got to Camp Bay and Punta Gorda, the home of the Garifuna.

The plan to leave on Friday was still in place, we just didn't know which way we'd go to head home. We could go to the east, about 20 miles and then head north or go 9 miles to West End and the make to the north. With the sea conditions still not good I was leaning to going down wind 9 miles before heading north. We did a last walk about at Sherman's and Fantasy Island Friday morning. It takes 2-3 hours to prepare the boat for the return trip and I wanted to be on the road by 3:00. The kids wanted to have a last 'real' shower. They had found some outdoors showers at Fantasy Island and had used them a couple of times. We got everything squared away and picked up both hooks. Because of the missing pulpit we stowed one in the lazarette and tied the other to the deck on the bow.

It was 3:15, the anchors were pulled and we did a last drive by of Sherman's dock on the way out. The wind was blowing 15-20 from the NE which wasn't the best combination but it could be worse as we would find out later.

I've asked the kids to add some of their thoughts about the trip.

Ohmigoodness!! This year in Roatan was super awesome!! It started with another "mishap" at the airport that got me in earlier than everyone else. I arrived 2 ½ hrs earlier

than the rest of the group. Now where as I may have booked the “wrong” flight at least I got to Roatan this time! So when I arrived at the airport there Jim and Steve had already made arrangements to have me picked up. When I came out of the airport I saw Sherman’s truck and recognized it almost immediately, but as I approached the car I only saw Sherman, no Steve. The coolest thing about seeing Sherman for the first time in a year though was that he recognized me from a whole year ago!! Last year we didn’t have a lot of contact either! So once we found Steve we started back to Sherman’s Iguana Farm. On the way we began to reminisce a lot about last year and had a few laughs. We also began to talk about one of my good friends Kate Schooly. Kate is one of my good friends from school and I had found out that when she was growing up she lived on her family’s Chinese junk in French Harbour and her father was very good friends with Sherman. I had brought pictures for Sherman and his family that Kate’s mom had printed off for me to bring. He was so excited that I had brought them up and was amazed at what a small world it is that he knew one of my best friend’s dad back in the day. All the talk about last year and about the Schooly’s showed me how truly amazing Sherman is. He has an honest interest in past contacts and is a very kind person. He spared no expense for Steve and our group the entire time we were there. For me one of the best parts of the trip has been being able to talk to and spend time with Sherman and his family. They are a wonderful family and I hope that Steve wants to return to French Harbour next year so that we can spend more time with this wonderful family!!

This trip was also full of firsts for me. We were all taught how to scuba dive and each took a dive on a wreck. The only diving I have ever done was just deep enough to help my grand father to clean the bottom of his tug boat. So this was a really cool experience for me to dive to 65 ft and not have to hold my breath. Another first of mine was getting to actually walk around the city of French Harbour. Last year we were only there for like 3 days and we didn’t have the opportunity to look around. The city itself was pretty down in the dumps but Sherman says it’s because the actual structures of homes and buildings are not as important to the people as the belongings. There were many times when we would see a pile of rubble that can only be assumed to have been a building and in the back ground is a sport fish. A few other firsts include going up in the bosun’s chair to adjust the rigging, and breaking the bow pulpit, along with many adventures at sea on the way home! Overall this trip has been pretty incredible with experiences that I won’t soon forget and memories to last a lifetime!!

¡Pura Vida!

Allie Gray

Good day everyone its Chalmers!

Well life on the island is a totally different world compared to life at home. So many new things came into perspective when we flew over Roatan, for example you could see little plumes of smoke everywhere, I asked Jim what those were and he said that lots of Hondurans burn their trash, though it’s not the cleanest method it gets the job done! There are many memories to come from this trip but there are a few that stick out the most! Roatan has a totally different lifestyle than back home in Fort Myers. One of the big things that I noticed were that all of the houses are near the same, old and have only the necessary things, like a shower, kitchen, bedrooms, along with the occasional T.V.. But all of the accessories that they use daily are the ones that stick out! When we

went for a walk in French Harbor I saw lots of new trucks and cars in front of a house that looks like it would collapse with the lightest breeze!

Lots of little things seem to stick out like when the locals say hi every chance they can! The island has only a few big cities where everything happens and aside from that the island is all dirt roads! But if you follow the roads they will take you to a place that will take your breath away! A couple of days before we left Steve took us on a “3 hour tour” through the island and over the bumpy dirt roads and we all got to see the natural beauty of the island.

When we first landed I noticed a lot of differences from the U.S., one of the biggest ones being that there aren't any speed limits! So when we tried to cross the street it had to be fast! There are also a lot of free animals, like Sherman, a man who Steve knows, has an iguana farm. And when we take our walks through the city you could find tons of varieties of animals! Oh and it is legal to sit in the back of a pickup truck! I bet that's the last time I'll ever be back there!

One of the biggest surprises when we were on the boat was that there were no fish! Steve said that he has only caught one fish through the 6 weeks of being on the boat! That is most surprising because when we go snorkeling in the crystal clear water we see tons of little fish, but no big fish!

Before we left for the states Steve wanted us to tune the rig of the boat, which meant making the mast as straight as possible. So I had the opportunity to go up the mast in the bosun's chair and tighten the intermediates which keep the middle of the mast from bending. It's quite the view from 20 feet in the air! My next objective is to go all the way up!

On day 5 on our way to Jonesville there were some pretty sweet waves, around 4 – 6 feet! So mid way into the trip I notice the port anchor moving and ask Steve what we should do! He says that I should go up and tighten it, of course I wasn't that crazy about going up to the bow in that weather but I still went! Everything is going fine and I'm about to turn around when we hit this wave head on, so my whole front side gets covered with salt water! And then I finally get to make it back behind the dodger where it is nice and dry! But only about 5 minutes after that we take a wave bigger than the one that hit me, there was “green water” all of the way up to the mast and when that settled Steve noticed that there weren't any anchors! So Steve and Will go up to investigate and find that the whole pulpit was ripped off! And was held on by 3 bolts and the anchors! So I guess it's a good time to head back to French Harbor!

Well this trip has been full of great experiences and I have learned many things but I think that the trip home will be the most interesting!

-Chalmers Pierce

Hey, it's Sarah!!! This is my basically my first trip outside the US, and it is such a contrast.

When we arrived in Roatan, I was surprised by how busy the airport was for this little island. Also, there are a lot of free-roaming animals on the island, though none of them are mean in any way, shape or form. One of the coolest contrasts I discovered was

that it is legal to ride in the back of a pickup truck here. However, if you're riding in the back on a dirt road for a long time, you'll turn red from the dust sticking to you! I learned this from a 3-hour tour Steve gave us of Johnsonville and some other places here. But you get an unobstructed view of the natural beauty of the island.

The most interesting I saw here, though, happened when Jim, Chalmers, Will, Allie, Austin and I took a walk through French Harbour. A lot of the houses in this part of the island are run-down, but outside parked in the driveway are brand-new cars and trucks. It took us by surprise when we saw this and we learned that their family and possessions mean more to them because they can always move into a new residence, but they cannot replace things that are vital or have been in their possession for generations.

I have experienced a lot of first times on this trip, too. For instance, I scuba-dove for the first time, snorkeled with massive tarpon, barracuda and sea turtles, seen a school that doesn't have vacation from June to August but from October to January, climbed up the mast in the bosun's chair, fueled a 50-foot sailboat and so many other cool things!

One of my firsts was scuba-diving. I was a little nervous at first because it felt a little strange breathing underwater. But after I learned to clear my ears and calmed down, it was actually really cool. A few days ago, Allie, Jim and I went scuba-diving on "The Wall". Basically "The Wall" is a 60-foot tall wall of coral that has just grown on top of the previous generations and created this massive underwater metropolis. We got down to sixty-five feet and swam a little ways away from it and what should rise from the depths, but a shipwreck!! It was probably an old tanker or cargo ship that was sunk after it grew too old to continue work. But if any of you have seen *Titanic* at the part where they first discover it and the ship just emerges from the shadows, that is what it was like, except you are submerged and it is looming over you. It was too awesome for words, my friends.

After we were there for about a week or so, we decided we would sail down to Jonesville before we actually left for home. It was blowing about 20-30 knots out of the East and had waves of almost five feet! The scary part was that the waves were breaking against us and hitting the dodger extremely hard. We were about a third of the way there, I would guess, and we had just hit this particularly nasty wave. After the water washed off our deck, we noticed that the bow pulpit was missing! The wave had snapped through a three-inch piece of wood and all that was holding it up was the primary anchor and a couple of bolts! We turned around and went back to the anchorage to fix it.

The island was a learning experience and I wish we could stay longer and hope to come back to visit again.

~Sarah Hansen

Hello its Will and all I can say is this trip came with its share of new experiences like traveling to a different country, drinking soda other than root beer out of a glass bottle, oh and my favorite being able to be only few hundred yards from a mountain from shore! The first surprise of the trip was the size of Roatan! It is ten times bigger than I imagine; the island combined memories of summers in the Green Mountains in Vermont and a tropical island with iguanas, palm trees and people! Speaking of people all of them are wonderful both older and younger Sherman's were

very inviting, both of them showed us the island and I am very thankful for that. Also the food was wonderful. We found a meal with very generous a serving of beef, beans, rice, and something else that slips my mind that was delicious for only a little more than 60 limps or \$3! I am liking Roatan a lot!

This trip I also did my first dive! As everyone will agree I was very excited. Both of our dives I had the least amount of air! Our first dive was just off the side of the boat getting used to being under water. Our other was at a fishing boat wreck it was amazing! We went to about 60 feet down and around the drop to 120 feet. It was like nothing I have ever seen or done. I am now fixed on getting certified when I come home because it was definitely something I enjoy.

~Will Hackett

Hello this is Austin and the first thing I would like to say about this trip is that it was the best vacation I probably be on this whole summer and probably the next summer as well. Another thing I would like to say before I begin on what I liked about this trip is that I have to say thank you to the people that put their time and effort into making this trip happen. Ok to begin with I would like to say I noticed about the island is how everything seemed like paradise. I got out of the plane and everything seemed like a true tropical paradise. It was amazing, we got into the truck that Steve had borrowed from a man to come and pick us up in. The first thing I noticed about driving in Honduras at first, it was a little scary. There are no lines in the middle like we have in the USA. So some of the people seemed to drive crookedly. But I got used to it after a while and on the bright side there was no law saying that you can't sit in the back of a truck there. So most of the time when we drove around I sat in the back of the truck.

When we got to the boat I immediately noticed how beautiful the water was there. I wanted to go snorkeling right away. When we finally did I noticed how desolate the bottom was in some places. Then I heard Steve say how Roatan is extremely over fished. But as we got closer to the reefs it started to get better. Also another thing I noticed how deep it got so quickly there. A few hundred yards away from the shore it got to one thousand plus feet. During one part of the trip they were going to teach us how to dive. I already knew how to dive a little bit because I have had two other previous dives before so I wasn't that worried. Except this time I wasn't going to be on an octopus or messing around in a pool! It wasn't that bad but I could tell some of the other people who have never done it before were kind of scared from what I could tell. They taught us the basics on how to dive and the first dive we went on was a small wreck about forty-five feet deep or so a next to it was a reef with a large drop off at the edge that went down to a hundred plus feet. It was very cool and I plan on getting my divers license when I get the time to do so. My mom already has it but my dad and I still need to get it. Well this tip was extremely unique and fun and I really had a great time and come back next year maybe.

Sincerely,

Austin (Skippy)

