

Bocas del Toro

10/23/2007 - 11/04/2007

Took a slip from Tuesday through Saturday. Expected the wind to not be as good as at anchorage, and therefore warmer and more bugs, but assumed getting to know people at the marina would be useful. Water was available so spent a few hours washing down the boat. Wi-fi also available so caught up on communications.

Went into Bocas to report to the Port Captain. She said I needed a Zarpe from Colon to Bocas. I told her my lawyer advised that since I had my Panama cruising permit I only needed a Zarpe on leaving Panama. I asked her what needed to be done now and she said she didn't know, that it was my problem not hers. Called Eduardo and told him to get things resolved. Seems Zarpes are needed for cruising between ports within Panama but Eduardo did get the situation resolved. Actually, I believe the Bocas Marina manager and his assistant did more to get things resolved than Eduardo - they know the Port Captain, gave her a call and nicely told her to lighten up.

Bocas has changed in the last 2 years - in my opinion not for the better, just more people. Restaurants are not as good and many people I knew have moved on.

Wednesday based on Glacier Bay's guidance tried to track down the reason for the starboard genset's "Exhaust overheating" fault. No luck, but Glacier Bay also emailed me the updated Genset manual so I decided to change the fan belt. Opened the panel to access the fan belt - the belt had disintegrated! Actually 2 of the 5 belt sections were intact but the others were in threads. It seems the ones that broke knocked off the leads to the thermocouple on the exhaust manifold and that probably caused the "Exhaust overheating" fault. Changed the fan belt and the genset worked - problem solved. Guess when the system warns it is time for service I need to pay attention and service.

Thursday explored Bocas, got cash and did some provisioning. Duane found, what his guide book described as the only gourmet grocery in Panama - think that was an overstatement. Also, met with Jim, the Realtor, and arranged to visit the Salt Creek property Monday in order to establish a selling price. On way back to marina stopped at El Limbo and discovered Paki and Jimmy are still there, when I first stopped by I thought the person at the desk said they were no longer at El Limbo. Asked Paki if he knew anyone interested in sailing with me to the States - he didn't but a person that overheard our conversation said she knew someone that might be interested.

Friday went into Bocas to have dinner - Duane's last night he returns to the States tomorrow.

Saturday went with Duane to airport, flight left at 0830. Stopped by El Limbo to visit with Jimmy, think he is trying to hit me up for additional fees for watching after the Salt Creek property. I terminated their services last time I was here 2 years ago. They never seemed to do any of the maintenance they agreed to and Paki was using the property for his Survival Series without asking - still they were expecting full payment. Back at the marina cleaned the boat, dumped the trash, settled my account, and moved out to the anchorage. By evening was convinced anchorage is cooler with way fewer bugs than marina.

Sunday more cleaning and enjoying being at anchor - although it seems the Wi-Fi is down. Port genset fan belt service warning came on so changed that fan belt immediately!

Monday visited Salt Creek. There has been some erosion but I believe it actually improved the beach. The beach always was the most valuable part of the property so, if anything, I believe the erosion has improved the property. On the way back to Bocas stopped by Tranquilla Bay, a resort built over the past several years by 2 young Texans - they have done a beautiful job. To me, it gets closer to rightfully being called a resort than anything I have seen in Bocas.

Tuesday - since Salt Creek has over 600 ft of beach front Jim has suggested I split the property in two. Says it will probably sell faster and if some one wants the total property they can always buy both lots, of course, assuming they show up before someone has already purchased one of the lots. Don't expect the property to sell overnight but think eventually it will. Eduardo is preparing the necessary documents to split the property. Got a call from someone interested in sailing to the States with me. He had tried to get on as crew on another boat in Bocas but was too late.

Wednesday - a neighbor in the anchorage suggested I place crew wanted posters in the hostels in Bocas. They quickly found there crew that way - they leave tomorrow sailing back to the States.

Thursday posted crew wanted posters in Bocas. As I put up the poster at one hostel 2 guys asked if they could join. One didn't have a valid US passport or visa so not eligible, the other seems promising. Later got a call from a friend of the first guy that contacted me about joining as crew, he also is interested. Turns out these 2 guys also know the guy I met at the hostel. With some luck I might end up with a full crew - that would be a first.

Friday, 2 of the potential crew stop by the boat - no experience but believe they will do. If I can finish the clearing out process in time will leave Monday - weather doesn't look great but the best for at least a week. This weekend is a big holiday so may have a problem checking out. Jimmy also stopped by the boat. He asked for \$40,000 for what he called property maintenance and protection he provided Salt Creek over the past 2 years. Hinted that if I don't pay he can/will put ownership of the property into question. Emailed Eduardo and Jim about Jimmy's request and threat.

Saturday, the third potential crew member showed up, all 3 are good so we are ready to go. I'll try to complete the exit process tomorrow so we can leave at first light Monday morning. Finished all the routine checks preparing the boat for passage.

Sunday called for a water taxi at 1000, didn't arrive until 1105 - Bocas is a mad house, the streets are full of marching bands. Went to immigration at the airport, then to the Port Captain's office at the other end of town and then back to immigration. Customs closed because of the holiday so the Port Captain said to forget about them. Me, the 3 crew and Asanagi were fully checked out and I was back on the boat by 1330 - seemed like it took longer than it actually did. The guys are to come aboard around 1500 or 1600. Will have an early night and leave for San Andres tomorrow around 0600.