

Newsletter # 8 Horta to Lisbon

We checked out of Horta and left the morning of July 25th for Terceira. Rather than do an overnight the 70 miles to Angra do Herosimo on Terceira, we planned only to go the 30 miles to the island of Sao Jorge, anchor in the somewhat exposed harbor for the night and then do an easy run the next day to Angra. Actually we should have at least gone ashore at Sao Jorge and explored this island but we were in a hurry and felt that we couldn't see everything. We also knew that the law of cruising is that when we cruisers get together and talk about where we have been, the place that you missed is always described as, "Oh man, you missed so and so, that was THE best!" It turns out that wherever you didn't go is always the best.

Be that as it may, we did give Sao Jorge a miss and instead went right on to Angra Do Herosimo. Rather than go into the new marina in Angra, even though it was only US\$ 8.50 a day, we took the opportunity to anchor just outside the marina harbor. While the anchorage was exposed to the southeast, it was OK because the winds were predicted to blow out of the northwest for the next week and the holding was good in sand with a depth of 30 feet.

Angra is one of the most romantic towns we have ever been to, including Paris. From the water's edge, the town climbs up the hill and spreads out like a geisha girl's fan. No buildings are more than three stories other than the Church. There are little squares whenever three or more streets may converge and all the squares have tables and chairs covered by umbrellas and a place to get coffee and pastries near by. Old Portuguese stores, trendy shops and sidewalk cafes line the cobblestone streets, many of which are for pedestrian use only. In fact we were surprised at how many upscale fashionable stores and expensive cars there were. I often wondered where the Azoreans, got all their money. And yet, the place has all the old world charm. It is definitely not spoiled.

One night Kitty and I had a quiet dinner by ourselves in a wonderful sidewalk restaurant. After dinner, we just walked the streets for an

hour holding hands. The locals would smile at us and say, "Boa noite" as they passed by. We felt like Cary Grant and Audrey Hepburn in "Three Coins in the Fountain".

As we walked back down to the dinghy dock, we heard a man call out, "Hey Connecticut!!" We looked over and there was Betinho, the guy from Horta who helped me find a store to buy our battery charger. He was just getting out of a small cabin cruiser pulling up to the dock. After hugs and hellos, he introduced us to his cousin, Manny, and mentioned that Manny had a big van and took people on tours of the island. This was Tuesday and we immediately made an arrangement for Manny to take nine of us on a tour of the island on Thursday. He said that his fee would be \$105 Euros or \$125 US. Not only that, he agreed to take us all to the Bull run in the next town Wednesday evening, all for the same \$105 euros.

At 4:30 Wednesday afternoon, Manny showed up at the dock with his van that had room for one passenger in the front, three in the first back seat, three in the second back seat and he had garden chairs in the very back for the last two people. We all piled in and rumbled over the countryside to the fishing village that was having the Bull Run.

When we got there, the locals were already claiming places that would give them a good view. Manny ushered us to a spot on top of a retaining wall at the head of the beach where benches were set up to view the impending spectacle. We claimed nine seats and then perused the view in front of us. Just in front and eight feet below us was a road that crossed the upper end of the U shaped beach. The road came down the hill from the town on the right side of the beach and then made its way across the head of the beach and on up the left side to a bunch of houses that sat looking down on the area. To the right of the beach and halfway up the hill towards town was a cutoff from the road to a big cement and stone pier that was itself about eight to ten feet above the water. On the pier was a crane that the local fishermen used to pull their boats out of the water.

No sooner had we gotten situated than a truck came with four large wooden crates, or more correctly pens, that housed four angry bulls. The crates were deposited half on the road half on the beach directly in front of us. While the guys in charge of the bulls were setting up,

there was a bunch of very athletic young men playing soccer on the small beach and a group of tanned hard-body young Azorean girls in teeny weenie polka-dot bikinis playing and jumping into the water; supposedly oblivious to the lean, bare-chested soccer players with rippling muscles who in turn didn't seem to notice the knockout gorgeous girls.

I was not oblivious to either the girls or the soccer players and promptly got out my camera and started clicking away. Let me say that the girls in the Azores are, as a group, amongst the most beautiful in the world. They all seem to be tall, lithe, tan, with full lips long dark hair and big beautiful eyes. Each one has a twinkle in her eye as though she were having a grand time. Rarely did we see a frown or scorn.

While I am on this subject, let me divert from the Bull Run for a moment and make another observation. While all the young women between 16 and 26 could be Playboy centerfolds, by the time they are in their thirties and certainly by their forties, they have spread out, their hair has started to go grey and they seem to waddle rather than prance. Rather than bikinis, they wear drab dresses well below their knees. This may be the result of the fact that every snack shop, bar and grocery store displays big signs on the sidewalk advertising frozen ice cream cones, pop cycles and ice cream sandwiches. Also on every block there is at least one "pasteleira" selling mouth watering pastries and coffee. Actually the fact that the middle aged women had lost their sex appeal was alright with me. I wasn't paying any attention to them because I felt like I was only twenty six. Kitty on the other hand, thought I was acting like I was only six, taking too many pictures of the girls and not enough of the bulls.

OK Back to the Bull Run. At exactly six-thirty, two of the bull tenders fought the bull, while still in his cage, to get a rope around his head and brass covers screwed over his sharp horns. That done, they raised the end of the cage and coaxed him out onto the beach. Once free of the cage, the bull shook his head up and down, snorted and pawed the ground. Spying the soccer players, who seemed to be just as oblivious to the bulls as they were to the girls, he took off after them. They stopped their game and all ran like hell for the water and

started swimming for their lives. The bull followed them into the water until he was chest deep.

He stopped, turned back towards the beach and spied a couple of brave fellows taunting him from the head of the beach. They were waving their arms and their feet were spread ready to take off up the hill. That's all the bull needed, he put his head down and charged the so called brave men who were now running on the road up the hill. At the same time, the spectators lining the street also ran for cover. The bull followed them to the top of the hill when the four guys holding the rope that was still tied around his head pulled it tight and stopped him from running amok in the center of town.

As soon as the bull left the beach, the soccer players were back and the game resumed.

The bull turned back down the hill and spied four or five more brave fellows taunting him from half way down the hill next to the entrance to the pier. One was using an open umbrella as a crude matador's cape. The bull ran after him and charged down the pier. There must have been at least fifteen guys on the pier. The high wall on the land side of the pier prevented them from escaping that way and therefore all of them ran for the water's edge as the bull charged. In their haste to get away from the bull they began pushing and jumping into the water. Not to be outdone the bull too jumped into the water after his tormentors. Chaos ensued.

The bull was finally coaxed back into his cage by the rope tenders and the beach began to fill with fully clothed, soaking wet spectators and tormentors who were wading ashore after having dived into the water as their means of escape.

There ensued a fifteen minute intermission before the release of the next bull. I left my bench and walked up to the pier. There was a group of people crowded around a girl sprawled on the pier. She was obviously in the water when everyone else jumped in and had gotten banged up in the mêlée that followed. There was a very cute, obviously Portuguese, twelve or thirteen year old leaning over and watching as someone was trying to revive the water soaked girl. I turned to her and asked in my best Portuguese, "O que esta

acontecendo?” (What is happening?) Where upon she replied in perfect English, “I’m sorry, I don’t speak Portuguese!” This was August and the population of the Azores doubles as all the emigrants and their families return to visit their extended families and roots.

Back on our observation wall, a man with a gimp leg and a deformed right arm carrying a cooler in the crook of his bad arm limped and squeezed his way along the wall in front of us yelling something that obviously meant, “Get your peanuts and candy here!!” He was as popular as the peanut and ice cream vendor in Yankee Stadium and was sold out within ten minutes. After the intermission the whole procedure with the bulls was performed all over again. This went on for three more bulls.

Finally it was over and Manny drove us to a little local restaurant on the edge of town. When the nine of us crowded into the restaurant, we overwhelmed the place. The waitress showed us into our own private room in the back. After dinner, as everyone was getting up to go pay the bill in the front, still acting like a six year old, I stuck a french fry in my left nostril and walked out. In the main dining room that we had to walk through to get to the cashier, there were four very beautiful girls in their twenties sitting at a table. I barely noticed them and hadn’t realized that they had seen me. Alison on Shadowfax grabbed my arm and said, “Come on dad, it’s time to go home and take your medication!”

When I got to the cashier's room, Don from Chautauqua who was behind me said that the girls were all laughing at me and dragged me back into the room with the french fry still stuck up my nose. Well the girls broke out in hysterics. The bottom line is that Don got a picture of me with the french fry still in my nose and the girls crowding around me and laughing. They gave me their address and made me promise to send them a copy of the picture.

The next day at 10 am, Manny showed up back at the dock with his big van ready to take us on our tour of the hot spots of the island. Our first stop was the fishing village of Sao Mateus where we saw fishermen repairing their nets and working on their big dory type fishing boats, one of which was being painted a bright red. From there we went along hydrangeas lined roads to the Furnas Do

Enxofre or The Caves of Fire, where hot sulfur gases were escaping from deep in the center of the earth. There underground fires were burning away and emitting a putrid smell as if a hundred sumo wrestlers who had consumed mountains of beans the night before were hiding in the caves.

The next stop was the Algar Do Carvao a geological nature reserve formed by huge caverns some 300 feet deep with many stalactites and stalagmites. When we got down into the caverns the sight was truly magnificent with a stream of sunlight coming down from a small hole at the top. The rays of natural light were augmented by many spotlights shining up at the tops of the different caverns. The geology of the islands is special because they are so relatively new formed by volcanic eruptions deep beneath the sea only a few million years ago. In fact the islands are still in an active state; witness the eruption on Faial only 50 years ago.

Back in Angra, there were two points of interest that we took advantage of. One was the free internet at the very museum where George Bush and Tony Blair held their summit meeting before the Iraqi war. The other was the beautiful Olympic size indoor swimming pool. Allison and I had been bragging to each other about how we used to swim almost everyday, when we were back home, as a way to keep fit. Pretty soon this developed into a pissing contest as we compared times and distances. The only way to resolve this was to have a swim-off at the pool.

This was one of the most beautiful pools I have ever swum in. However there was practically no one in the pool except for two young kids and Allison and I. We jumped in and started to warm up: but, the warm-up turned into the contest. We both hit the first wall at the same time. In fact we hit the first ten or so turns at the same time. However, eventually Alison started to pull away ever so slightly. I turned up the volume and kept up for another lap. Then, however, she began to steadily pull away and after a mile had about three laps on me. Damn, I let a woman beat me!! But I rationalized it by the fact that she is 24 years younger than I.

After two weeks in Angra, we had heard that there was to be a festival in Praia da Vitoria on the north east corner of the island. As it

was only two and a half hours by boat, we upped our anchors and sailed up to Pria. But before we left we made a quick run up the hill to the super market. It is a long way up, and I found out just how long when I left my carry bag in the market and didn't discover it was missing until we were getting into our dinghy. I had to hoof it all the way back up the half mile long steep hill to retrieve it. By the time I got back to the dinghy, I was bent over hyperventilating and sweating to beat the band. I just don't know how anyone over sixty could live in this hilly town no matter how beautiful and romantic it is.

The festival in Pria was fantastic, with dancing in the streets, live bands both traditional and rock and roll, parades and floats, one with Miss Pria da Vitoria in her gown and crown. We walked to four different squares to listen to four different types of music. It lasted all weekend. We had to stay to almost the end each night as our boats were moored in the Marina right next to the main street where everything was happening and there was no sense in trying to sleep through the revelry. Wheeuw, this laidback cruising life style sure can get tiring with all the partying we have to do.

Ponta Delgada on the island of Sao Miguel was only a short overnight hop. This is the main town of the Azores and supposedly the capital although each island claimed that its own main town was the capital of their own island. It was time to go exploring again, so we hopped the bus from Ponta Delgada to Nordeste, the city on the north east point of Sao Miguel. It was a three hour bus ride with beautiful vistas and scary moments when the bus barreled around hairpin turns on the sides of steep drop-offs that went waaaay down into the sea. We spent two hours looking around the town and then got the only bus that would leave that day to go back to Ponta Delgada. That was another three hour bus ride.

The next day Keith, Alison, Kitty and I were sitting in a park dedicated to a famous poet of the eighteenth century. The plaque on his statue stated that he had committed suicide. As we were quietly sitting there taking in the serenity of the park, Kitty idly said, "I wonder what was so miserable back then that he would commit suicide?" And, Keith, just as idly replied, "They didn't have lip balm!"

We had heard that there was a spectacular walk along the rim of an old volcano about twenty minutes by cab out of town. Looking down into the volcano from the hiking trail along the rim we could see two lakes, one green and one blue and a small town called Sete Cidades nestled alongside the lakes. On the other side of the volcano rim, we could look down and across some fields and see the ocean far below. The cab let us out at the lookout at the start of the trail. We would walk along the top of the volcano and then down into Sete Cidades where we would catch the afternoon bus back to Ponta Delgada. Good plan except that the walk took longer than we had realized. By the time we got to the main road that wound down into Sete Cidades it was getting close to 4:30 when the bus would come. And, we still had at least a mile and a half to go.

The others voted to stay put and flag the bus as it came by on its way to Ponta Delgada. I, however, tried to talk Keith into sliding down the steep hill into the crater and cutting across the cow field at the bottom to reach the main road. This would cut out about a mile of winding main road. Keith looked down the almost vertical hill and said I was crazy. No amount of coaxing would get him to put himself into a position of danger and he considered that slope foolhardy and too dangerous to attempt.

I looked down the steep slope once more and said to myself, "Hell I am tough. I can do that! Let Keith stay with the "girls!" And so I headed off. After two steps I had slid about twenty feet down the slope and realized that it had to be a go because there was no way I could get back up to the road where Keith and the "girls" were.

In a few minutes, I was almost at the bottom and only had to negotiate one more thicket of brush and bushes. I could smell victory. Yeah, I'll show that whimp. But, the thicket was bigger than I thought and the ground fell away under me as I tried to step into it. I started to fall and grabbed for the branch of a small sapling covered with vines etc. The branch broke and I fell headlong into....a briar patch. As I lay there unable to move, two thoughts ran through my head. One was how glad I was that I hadn't been able to talk Keith into coming with me; and, the other was when the rabbit in Uncle Remous said to the fox, "Please mister fox you can do anything you want with me; but,

PLEASE don't throw me into that Briar patch!" Oh if only I were a rabbit.

After lying motionless for about five minutes contemplating my predicament and realizing that nobody would ever find me where I was, I knew I just had to brave the briars and get myself out of there. With superhuman effort derived from the absolute unwillingness to prove Keith right, I managed to tear my way free with only a few bleeding scratches and cuts on my arms, face and legs.

I finally broke into the cow pasture that would lead me to the main road into town. Right then, I knew exactly what Martin Luther King meant when he said, "Free at last. Free at last! Free at last!" I looked a wreck as I limped along the road with bloody torn pants and scratches all over my face and arms and briars still tangled in my hair. Would you believe that I managed to get to the bus stop just as the bus was pulling up. Had I been five minutes later, I would have been stuck in town for the night with no way of telling Kitty that I was in fact alive. God must have taken pity on me; or rather he must have taken pity on Kitty. From now on, I promised myself, I would listen to Keith.

The others got on the bus when it climbed to the top of the crater on its way back to Ponta Delgada. When they climbed aboard and saw that I had made it, they all breathed a sigh of relief. I slept well that night and good thing I did as we had agreed to sail for Europe the next day.

It was Monday, August 11th and we tuned into the Herb Show before going to bed to learn what kind of weather we may expect on our trip to northern Spain or Portugal. We learned that there was a tropical storm to the north and west of us that had recently been downgraded to a tropical depression. A front from the center of the depression south east to the Azores would approach Ponta Delgada on Tuesday. However the front would not have very strong winds with it. Herb concluded by saying, "Sit tight for a couple of days... unless you leave!"

Herb's warm and friendly voice has begun to sound to us like the Wizard of Oz or the Oracle at Delphi. He gets to know all of us as we

check into the net every night on our passages. He seems to have a paternal instinct towards his hoard of voyagers, as though we are all his kids. He follows our voyages and is concerned if someone doesn't check in when we should. Occasionally some of us need to be disciplined like kids.

If a yacht checks in and complains that he is having a hard time hearing Herb, when other boats in the area seem to be hearing him fine, Herb immediately tells the poor sole in no uncertain terms that he must be running his inverter or he must have his email modem on.

Once I checked in at the formal time between 1930 and 2000. However, we were about to eat dinner and since Herb usually didn't get to the boats in our area until an hour later, I turned the radio off until 2100. When I turned it back on and heard Herb make a final call for me, I acknowledge him. But, before he gave me the weather in our area, he scolded me for not staying tuned. The propagation in our area had been very good earlier so he had already called the boats between the Azores and Europe. Actually he was very correct. Because he contacts such a great number of boats, he must run the net like clock work or he couldn't possibly help everyone who requests his assistance.

On Tuesday August 12th, we left Ponta Delgada in company with Alison and Keith on Shadowfax. We had not yet decided where we were going to make our landfall. We were considering going to the northwest part of the Spanish coast and visiting the rivers just south of Cape Finisterre; but, weren't sure we would have enough time to do them properly. The other alternative was to go directly to Lisbon and thoroughly enjoy it before heading further south for the winter. At this point in the passage it didn't matter because wherever we were going, we first had to make some northing. In fact at our check-in that night, Herb advised us to go north of 40 degrees north latitude to keep good winds. Below that latitude the wind would swing around to the northeast late Wednesday and we were headed northeast.

We were at 38 degrees north latitude when we checked in, which meant we had to make 120 miles in 24 hours. Not hard to do if we had wind; but, the wind died away 2130 so, reluctantly we turned on the old iron genny and powered off into the sunset. By check-in time

on Wednesday we had made it to 40 degrees 10 minutes north. However, now Herb was telling us that it would be better if we could push still further north to 41 30.

It had been totally overcast with no sun or stars since we left. At least we got some wind by Wednesday evening and were finally able to sail. By Friday we were at almost 41 degrees north and the wind was 15 knots out of the north. We were heeled to starboard barreling along at 6.5 knots heading east northeast. Just when we thought all was perfect, tragedy struck!!! I heard Kitty yell from the head, "Oh Shit!" I ran to her aid only to find that the toilet seat had broken in two. Since we have a hard fast rule that EVERYONE no matter their sex or business MUST sit down at all times, it meant that until I could fix it, we both had to endure cold hard porcelain rather than a nice curved wooden seat. Bummer!! Literally a BUMMER!

We have a twice daily radio schedule with Shadowfax and a couple of other boats just to gossip and trade position reports. On Friday evening's radio schedule we learned that Keith and Alison saw a whale blow right next to their boat and then expel a huge red cloud from his rear-end. Keith was very excited as he thought that seeing a whale was rare; but, seeing a whale actually take a dump was indeed rare. This seemed to be turning into some kind of scatological passage for both boats.

On Saturday night's "Herb Show" Herb assured us that if we continued to stay north of 41 degrees north we would have north winds at 15 knots "into tomorrow night's time frame." From the very first, Herb had advised us to go north. After hearing the lousy conditions other friends of ours experienced because they had stuck to the rumb line, we and Shadowfax raised our glasses to Herb for once again keeping us in good winds. Our toast went like this,

"Herb is my Sheppard and I shall not worry
He allows me to avoid rough seas
And causes me to sail in gentle breezes."

Sunday morning on our radio schedule with the other boats, Chautauqua told us that during the night he had heard a freighter talking to another yacht on channel 16 VHF. After the freighter got

through, Chautauqua called the other yacht to say hello and find out who they were and where they were going. Part way into the conversation the other yacht asked Chautauqua if they knew of a boat named Tamure! The other yacht turned out to be KuKara with Karl and Peri McIlroy on board.

Kitty and I had traveled with KuKara all across the Pacific in 1988 and through the Solomon Islands, Indonesia, Southeast Asia, and the Red Sea in 1989-90. We last saw them in July 1990 in Cyprus. The first couple of years we were home we kept in contact with them. But, subsequent Christmas cards had been returned with "addressee unknown" stamped on them. We had lost total contact with them over ten years earlier and had often wondered what had happened to them. By this time we had already decided to go straight to Lisbon and apparently that is where Karl and Peri were headed as well. It would be a grand reunion. What a truly small world it is.

We closed with the coast Monday morning passing perpendicular across the shipping lanes where we had no less than ten ships on the radar within an eight mile radius. On the morning radio sched., Peri pointed out that just inside the shipping lanes and south of Lisbon the chart had a large area marked as "submarine exercise area". She then offered the thought that maybe Portuguese submarines were so fat that they needed to exercise a lot.

1930 hours, Monday August 18th, a day before my birthday, we dropped anchor in Cascais Harbor. Even after all the sailing Kitty and I have done over the years, including two circumnavigations, we both had a tremendous thrill and gave each other a big hug as we realized we had just crossed another ocean.

Cascais is a beautiful town just twenty miles east of Lisbon and 35 minutes by a \$2.50 round trip train ride. We intended to stay in Cascais for a couple of weeks; but, we have been here now for almost four weeks. We have been having so much fun and meeting such exciting local people that we have found it too difficult to raise the anchor. But, that is another story for the next chapter. In the meantime we love to hear from all of you and hope you are doing as well and having as much fun as we are. Our email address is: Kuhner@mail.com

