

As a result of some goading by Wallace and others, yes I am finally finishing the blog.  
Thank goodness for a new lap top with Word and access to reliable wifi.  
This is Part 6 of 7

## Vero Beach to Peck Lake Anchorage

Nov. 23, 2016

A short half day ride today to Peck Lake where we anchored for the night. The plan was to go into the Marina in the morning for water and to pump out, but as it turned out there was no room at the dock. Lots of wind surfers having fun today.



## Peck Lake to Lake Worth

Nov. 24th.

Left Peck Lake at sunrise. ...



and arrived in Lake Worth. So close now. Just have to wait for a weather window to cross the gulf stream. As it turned out, the next window was opening up at 4 the next morning, so there was no time for last minute provisions as we had planned. Wallace said if the window is there we are taking it or we may be waiting weeks, and that's not an option.

We moved Dirt Free a 1/2 mile south to be closer to the inlet when we left.

### **Christmas lighthouse:**



Got up early at about 4 am and listened to the other boats that were going out to see what they were saying about the waves. They all said the same thing, it was a bit like a hobby horse but nobody was turning back, so we left at 6:30 am and we were on our way to the Bahamas.

Our crossing was a breeze (no pun intended) although we were chased by a squall for the last hour or so, but we made it before it caught us. I have been in rougher water on Lake Ontario so I was thrilled with the ease of the crossing. The Gulf Stream was my fear and I'd heard horror stories about how rough it could get. If it is the same on the way back I'll be a happy Admiral.

Arrived in West End Bahamas at 3 p.m. on Nov. 25th.

We docked overnight at West End and cleared customs here. I had heard that we would need to fly a quarantine flag and that we may be boarded but nobody boarded the boat or asked any questions of us. As it turned out the customs office was just closing for the day so it was just sign here and you're in.

We left the next morning and arrived at...

### **Ocean Reef Yacht Club, Freeport**

We had booked Ocean Reef earlier in the year in March but we didn't know if they would be open after Hurricane Matthew as they weren't answering emails from us and their web site showed a lot of damage. We had also booked the Jib Room in Marsh Harbour as a back up just in case.

But luckily when we arrived they were up and running, although there was no power on the docks for the first 8 or 9 days, which was a minor inconvenience. Most of the palm trees and other vegetation was gone but the amenities were wonderful and they were working hard to clean everything up.





We were lucky to get a slip at the end of the row, so no boat on one side of us leaving plenty of room to keep the dinghy down.

*Our new home for the next two months.*



This building had a third storey that was ripped off by Matthew and ended up in the parking lot. It is getting a new roof and a paint job and the work crew is busy every day. There were two boats that sunk and cars in the parking lot were crushed.

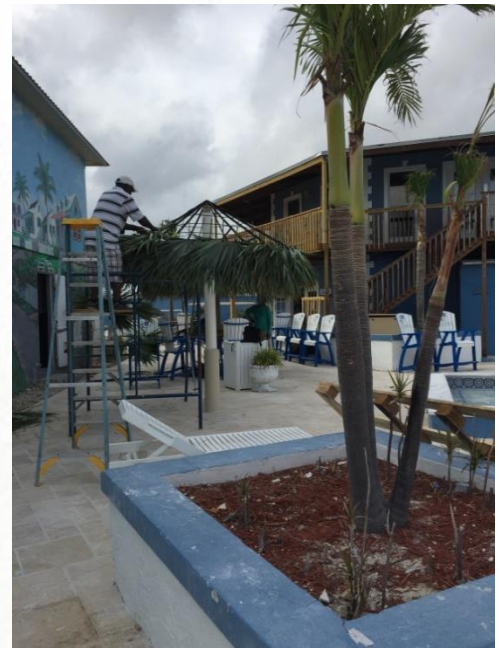


All the cabanas had their palm leaves replaced and patio tiles were mended.

We had no luck catching fish during our crossing so the first order of business was to ride the bikes into Lucaya for some conch fritters.



The Bahamians had a wonderful view of their situation, regardless of the damage not a soul was lost and they were truly grateful for their good fortune.





Well, it was almost Christmas. I took down the greenery I picked from the Mangroves at Vero Beach as they had seen better days (I have to concede that Wallace was right...it was too early to decorate). Anyways, palm fronds worked perfectly and what's Christmas without a sea fan.





We took the dinghy out almost every day to the canal where the beach was white and inviting and the water was calm and warm. A great place for a picnic or shelling and lots of sting rays swimming by.

Oh Wallace, there's a bottle of wine here waiting for you.



Hello, why don't you stop working and join me Wallace.



How about I get it uncorked for you.



Oh Wallace I'm drinking alone over here.



Never mind, I found someone to drink with. we'll try to save you some.



Too late, we're smashed.



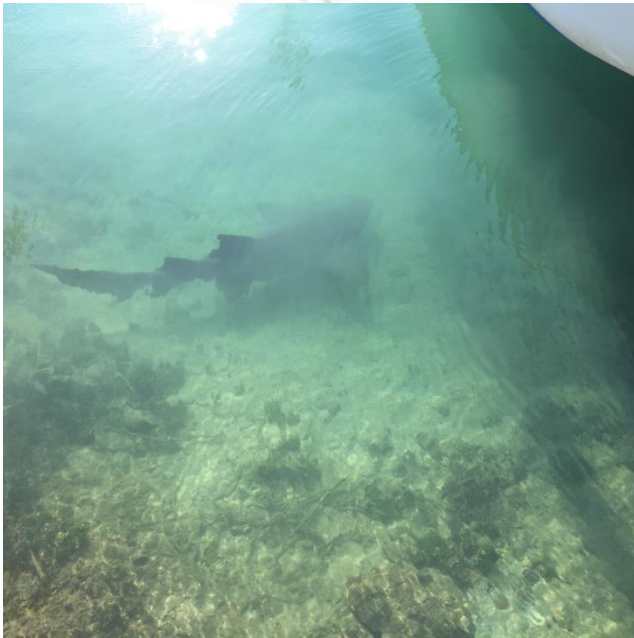
If you are ever at Ocean Reef, visit the canal and look for Alan. He is the Bahamian sitting under the tree with his cooler. He dives on nice days for 5 or 6 hours straight and then drags his cooler, with a rope tied to his ankle, back with him from the reef to the canal loaded with fish and lobster (crawfish, they have no claws but the tails are like the lobster I am used to but a bit firmer and sweeter). \$5 for lobster or huge fish filets.

Wallace and I took Alan out one day in the dinghy and it was exhausting just watching him dive and dive and dive some more. He is younger than us, but not by much. We got 8 lobster tails, a snapper and a hog fish, all delish.





Leslie, a friend of Wallace's runs a fishing boat out of Ocean Reef (Wallace will take our son-in-law out when they all visit). These nurse sharks follow him in for the scraps.



### ***Beach Finds***

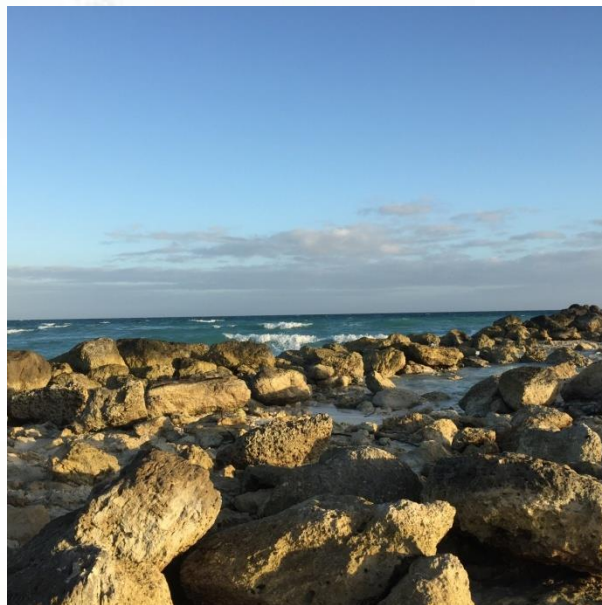
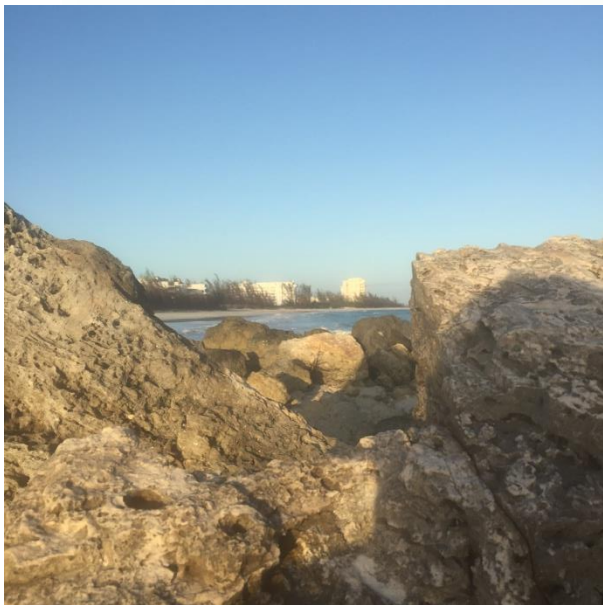


Rode the bikes into downtown Freeport one day, 12 miles but worth the ride. Met Rudolph and his roadside BBQ. He is just out in a field with his BBQ, next to a bar, so you go in and get your beer and then mosey over and have lunch. We told him we would be back with the kids and he promised to have a picnic table and conch fritters for us when they came in January.





## *The Canal*



## Exploration Interlude

We decided that we would go explore for three or four weeks before the family came to visit, so on Dec. 21st we set out for Great Sale. We took the Grand Lucayan Canal cutting across Grand Bahamas. Our auto pilot was having issues, no data, no computer = no work.

Wallace worked on it while we anchored at Great Sale and we left the next morning for Alan's Pensacola. Auto Pilot now working well. We stayed at Alan's for the day and spent some time on the beach. Cruisers had set up a station where they could leave what they weren't using for other cruisers and named it Walmart. Wallace was picking through the items and hid something under his towel and snuck it to the dinghy. He said found me the perfect Christmas gift, I would not believe my eyes, something I had been after for a while. I was a bit sceptical of what could be found on a beach exposed to the weather and bugs for god knows how long.

The beach offered rays, fish, sponges of huge proportions and turtles. We chased a turtle with one flipper in the dinghy to get a better look...those things are incredibly fast.

Another beautiful sky:



Travelled along to Spanish Cay and then to Green Turtle Cay. Dec. 23rd. I was sitting putting on my make up (I know make up on a boat, who does that) and I smell something electrical burning. 8:45 am - Merry Christmas, the alternator overheated and was fried. Wallace unhooked it and we ran on battery power.



## Green Turtle Cay

We stayed at Donny's Marina in Black Sound, GTC to try and fix it and have a look around. Met Keith on Global Hopper, who our friends Rosie and Claus said to look up because he know all the goings on for Christmas. He had a spare alternator which he gave to Wallace (cruisers are a special breed who stick together and look out for each other). Unfortunately it didn't fit our boat.

We spent Christmas at Sundowners (a local bar that the cruisers go to for Happy Hour). Pot luck dinner where we met Cheryl and Jim (also a surveyor) and he also happened to have a spare alternator (it didn't fit either).

Wallace stood in line for the lobster bisque for ages only to find the last bowl went just before he got there. Well didn't the lady drop by Dirt Free the next day with a fresh batch just for him.

My gift was a calligraphy set, I had just said I would like to try it and there it was.

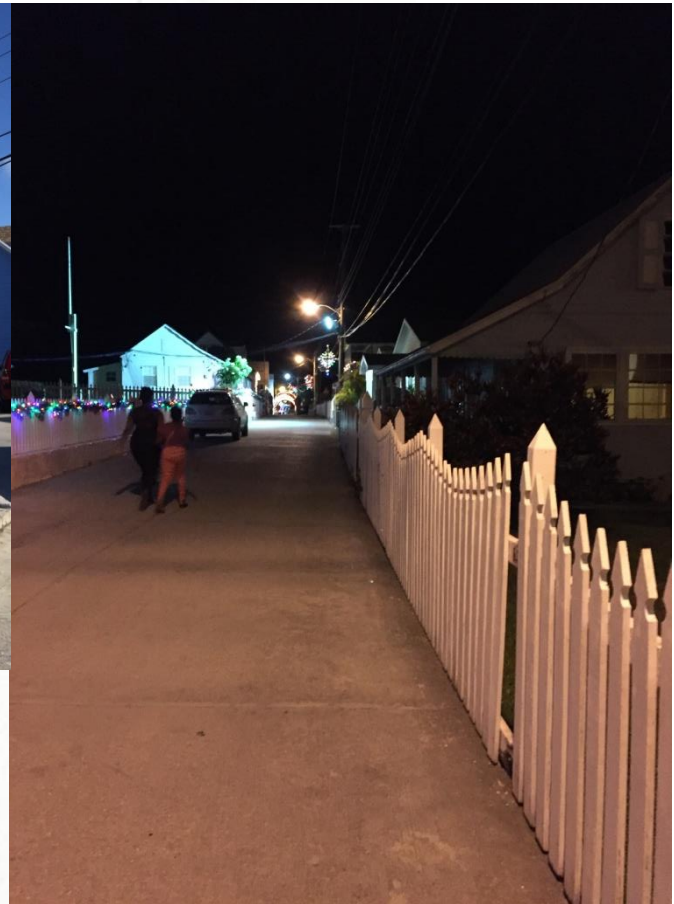


## Christmas at Sundowners

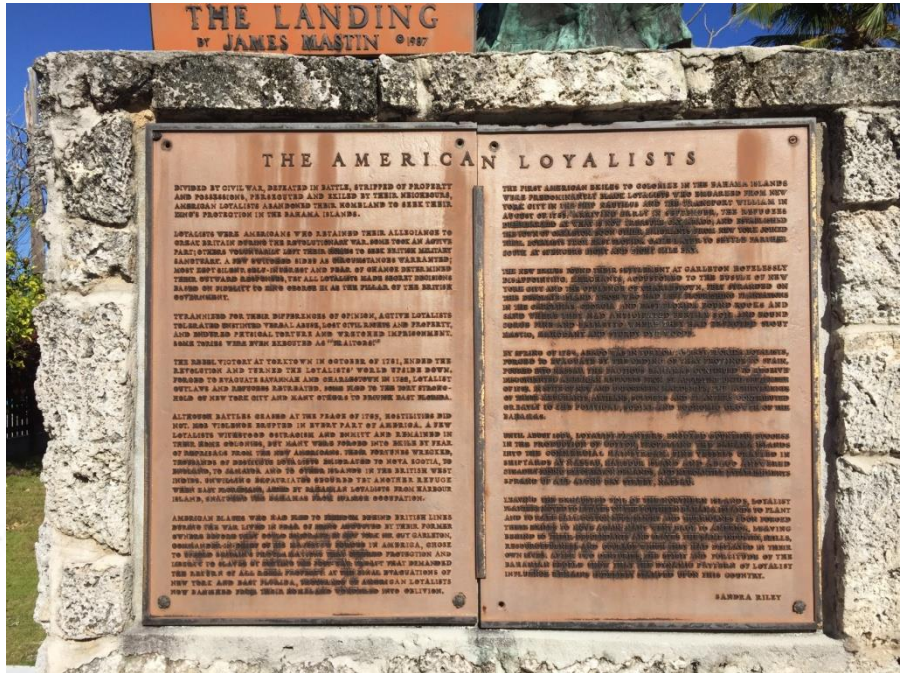




## Around Greet Turtle











It's just not the same without snow (ha)





## The Abacos

December 29,

Marsh Harbour

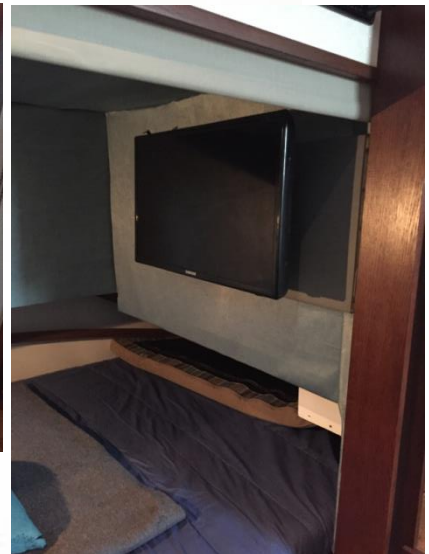
Marsh is where you go for parts you don't have with you. Met Linda G who kindly called around for an alternator guy for us and then picked us up and drove us to his shop to order what we needed. The people on this cruise, both locals and cruisers have been so amazing, helpful and friendly. If you are waiting to cross a street, the cars stop to let you go first (would not see that in Canada). Everyone says good morning and stops to talk like you are a long time friend (I think when we get home and start talking to strangers, they will think we are either insane or out to mug them...such a shame).

So we spent a week here waiting for the alternator to come in. It was expensive, \$450 US for a \$100 Cdn. part, but what can you do. Next year, we bring lots of spare parts with us. This year we were in too much of a rush to leave after spending 6 weeks getting the hydraulic steering to work again.

Lots of spare time to draw ...make the spare room guest ready...



and explore Marsh Harbour.



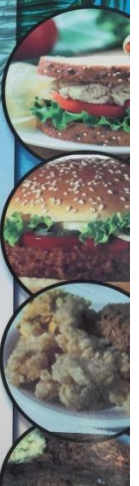








LUNCH MENU		
ASK ABOUT OUR DAILY SPECIALS		
SANDWICHES		
.....	LOBSTER (seasonal)	
\$8.80	Cracked Lobster w/fries .....	\$13.00
\$12.00	Cracked Lobster Dinner w/2 sides.....	\$15.50
\$8.80		
\$11.00	FISH	
.....	Fish.....	\$8.80
\$6.00	Fish Snack w/fries.....	\$12.00
\$9.00	Fish Dinner w/2 sides .....	\$14.00
	CONCH	
	Cracked Conch w/fries.....	\$8.80
\$5.50	Cracked Conch Dinner w/2 sides .....	\$13.00
\$8.80	Fritters (6) w/calypso sauce .....	\$3.50
\$8.80		
\$8.80		
\$11.00		
	BEVERAGES/DESSERTS	
d .....	Coffee, Tea, Water, Soda	
Salad .....	(sm).....	\$1.25
	(lg).....	\$2.50
	Triple B, Ice Tea, Hawaiian Punch .....	\$1.65
	Coconut Water, Soda 20oz, Switcha .....	\$2.50
	Gatorade .....	\$2.50
	Beers (Kuli, 6oz) .....	\$2.75









## Manjack Cay

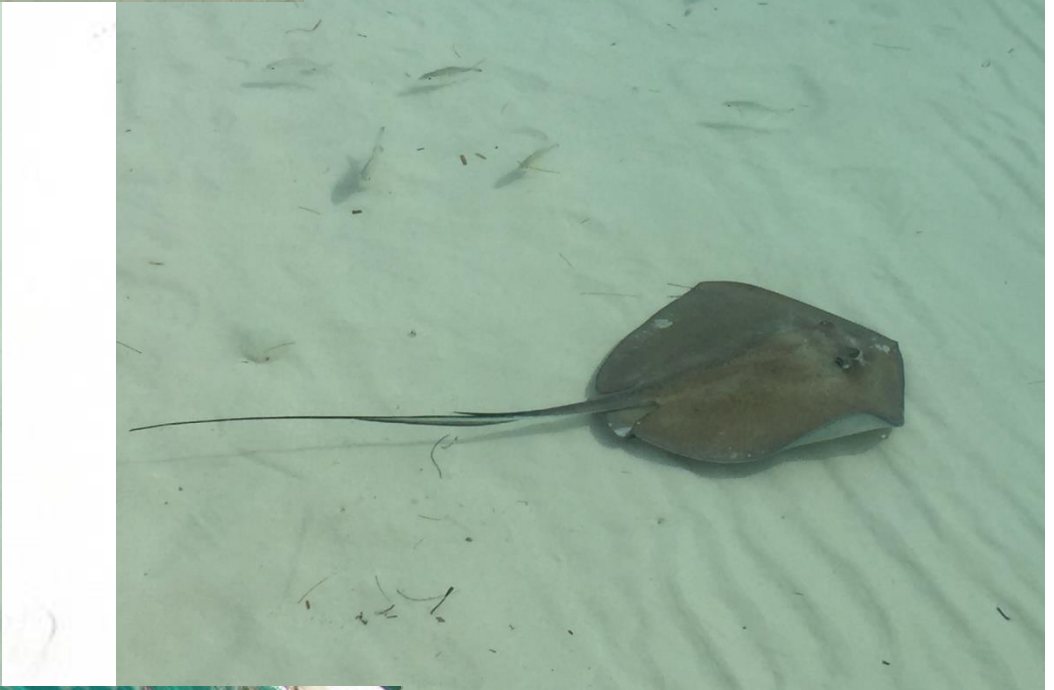
Jan 5, 2107

Alternator finally replaced and we are ready to head out again, so off to Manjack Cay.

We tied up at a dock here with room for two boats only, ours and the fishing tour guide boat that arrives each afternoon with a crowd for a fish lunch. Saw my first star fish and many rays that are not shy as they are accustomed to being fed by the fishing tourists.

This was just a lovely spot, our own little paradise.























## Ocean Reef Bound, Kids are Coming

Jan. 8

Headed back to Ocean Reef leaving us plenty of time before the kids arrived on the 21st.

This is a great place for family to visit as they can fly into Freeport which is a half an hour from the resort. There is plenty to entertain guests with here if they visit as you will see.

Arrived back on Jan 14th so we had time to get things ready for the visit. The boat is a bit difficult to get on to at low tide so Wallace borrowed a ladder and installed it for the little ones (Jorja, 8 and Jillie 5).





Took the bus to Lucaya for groceries; knapsacks and the bikes were not going to cut it for this shopping order. We had the grocery store, Solomon's, freeze our meat order for pick up the next day. Here is a sampling of some of the crazy pricing down here.





Red peppers, \$5 ea, \$.89 each for potatoes and a birthday cake \$69.00. There must be a secret store where the Bahamian's shop!!





## Two Dollar Bar

The best deal on the island, burger and a beer for less than McDonalds and it's the best burger in the Bahamas served by Ginger, the friendly waitress. Bring your sharpie and commemorate your visit. Just a short walk, bike or dingy ride away and you can tie your dinghy at the condos free of charge.









**More Beach Finds**





Went to Freeport for fuel filters and lunch.

*I've never busted through saloon doors before*













## The Arrival

J4 Visits the Bahamas (Julie, John, Jorja and Jillie)

Jan. 21st, 2017

First time in a plane for Jorja and Jillie and the first time out of the country for John. Jorja was so worried she was sick in the cab to the airport, but she braved her fears to visit with Nana and the Walrus. We haven't seen them in 5 months, for me that's an eternity.

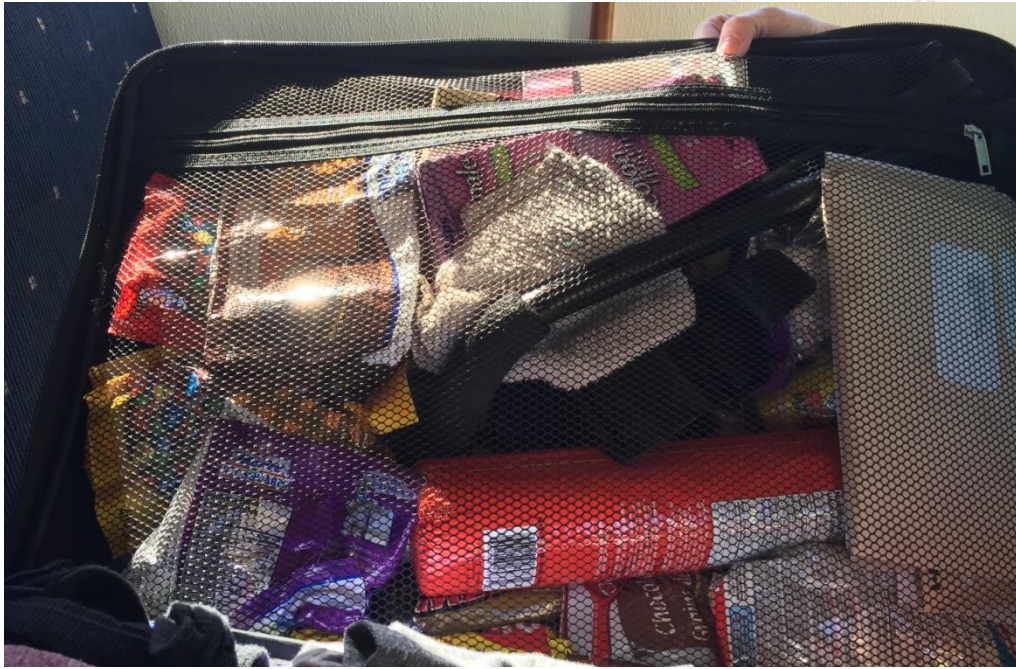








They asked what they could bring and we said chocolate, lots of it. Treats are very dear in the Bahamas. Their checked luggage contained nothing else but our mail!



First a dip in the pool and then off to visit Rudolph for roadside BBQ who came through with a picnic table, chairs and conch fritters as promised.

























What's a trip to the beach without a sand castles and a little horsing around?













Girl's Day at the Beach, Boy's Day Fishing





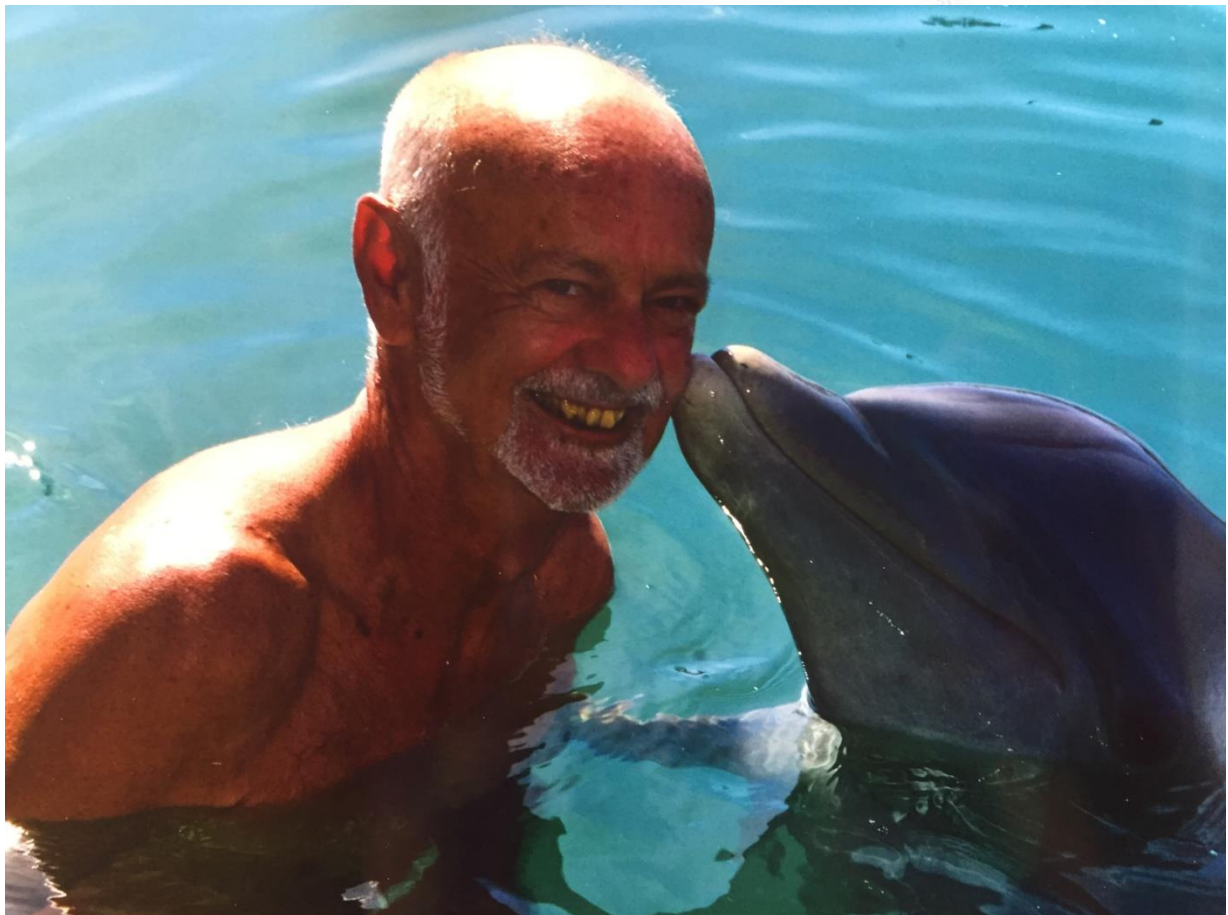




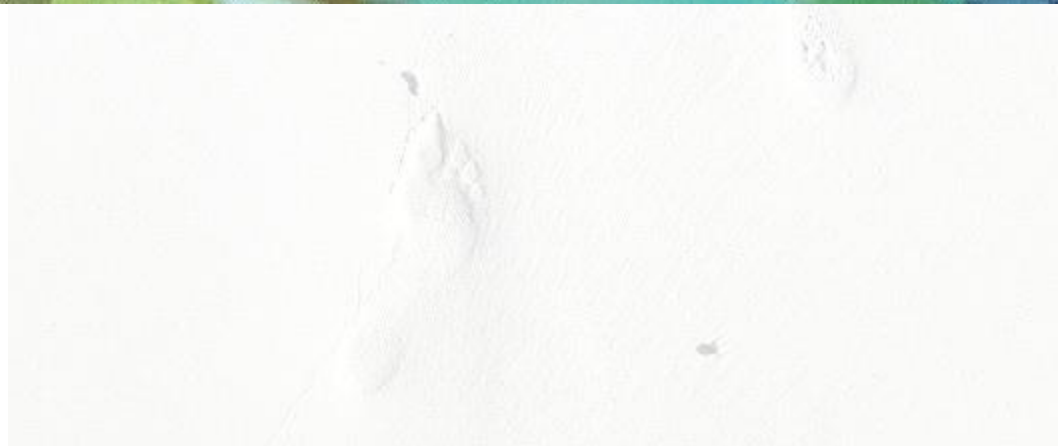
## Dolphin Encounter, fun for the whole family!













And then the week was over and they were gone and it was very quiet.



End

One more chapter to go...

Back to the Abacos and then Home