



This is the type of dreamy sailing the Cape-built schooner *Titch* is enjoying these days under an American owner in the Bahama Islands in the West Indies. Two Cape men are still with her—John Allen, as skipper, and Teunis Roux. No rig sets a ship off more handsomely than the topsail schooner and nothing presents sails better than a lofty trade-wind sky. Photo: John Allen

EARLY in September, 1963, Teunis Roux and I helped carry Arthur Holgate's big black sea bag through Kennedy Airport to the South African-bound plane and with a sad "see you back home" returned to *Titch* to pack our own. We did not, though, till almost a year later. Said John P. Ohl, the new owner, "You boys are welcome to stay on for as long as you like and, if you run short of cash, well, I guess we can arrange to let you have some pocket money!"

September was spent on Long Island Sound dodging yachts, buoys, beacons, lighthouses and other hazards to carefree navigation. The boss, joining ship for a weekend cruise, would be preceded by great heaps of lovely grub. Big fat chickens, steaks the size of soup plates, melons from California, cherries from Maine, milk from contented cows.

No wonder, then, that with more attention to menu than course we found ourselves on a lee shore with the wind rising and the seas short and nasty. Clawing off, the yankee jib-sheet parted which was embarrassing—but,

helped by engine, we made a funk hole that night, faces a little red.

The coming of October brought cold weather to New York and *Titch* joined the general exodus of yachts heading for the sunny south. Late one windy evening we swept down the East River on an ebb tide, past the fairy towers of Manhattan, past Liberty, and out into the Atlantic, shaping a course for Florida. During that first night, far from the coast, we were boarded by a few scruffy Bronx sparrows who had muffed their navigation and were heading for Africa.

A little south of Cape Hatteras, Hurricane Jenny which had seemed to be heading for Bermuda, swung towards the coast. For a couple of days we scooted along before the fringe winds under forestaysail and storm trysail, going like a bomb. Occasionally a sea would come into the cockpit with the net result of putting out Teunis' pipe, the only thing visible between oilskins and sou'wester.

Tiring of being buffeted about, we did a night approach on Cape Canaveral. Every rocket gantry, and there are

TITCH AMONG THE ISLANDS

JOHN ALLEN, who sailed from Cape Town two years ago, tells of a cruising man's dream world.

OPPOSITE, TOP TO BOTTOM:

John Allen traditionally swigs green coconuts on the beach of Fallen Jerusalem, Virgin Gourda, British Virgin Islands. The charter ship *Cutty Sark* in English Harbour, Antigua, now a mecca for most long-distance cruising yachts.

A typical West Indian landfall in the Leeward group.

Ship-style holiday "shack" at moorings, Isles des Saints. This is the sort of *gaucherie* that is spoiling beauty spots all over the world. We need a stop to this in South Africa, too.

And here the good work continues. Arthur Holgate, who built and sailed *Titch* to the Spanish Main, busy gluing up the main boom (37 ft. long!) of his new 73 ft. schooner. Behind is Fred Ladegourdie, the shipwright who planked *Corsair* and *Speranza* and a few other fine jobs, too.

scores of them, sports flashing red lights. The harbour buoys flash red too. Some boats are just born lucky.

In March, after an extensive refit at Spencer's Yard in West Palm Beach, *Titch* crossed the Gulf Stream for the Bahamas. The Bahamas . . . a scattering of 3,000 islands, cays and reefs over a sea ultramarine, turquoise and green. Palm trees, bright beaches, a thundering of surf and quiet lagoons. And over all, by day and night, the whispering Trades. You may know of a better place to funk hole; I do not!

By way of Grand Bahama and the Berry Islands we wandered down to Nassau, the tourist mecca of the islands.

A handy passenger steamer was anchored in the roadstead and, using her lee, we put on a special show of sail dowsing. Down came jib, staysail and fore. Down ran the main. . . . Up shot an unnamed crew member, foot caught in the throat halyard. Cheers of delight from the tourist-thronged rail.

We stayed in Nassau just long enough to top up with provisions, water and rum.

South west of Nassau is the island of Andros, about 60 miles long by 15 wide. The coastline is deeply serrated, some of the bights cutting right through the island and navigable by shoal-draught yachts.

We anchored *Titch* in the mouth of Middle Bight and used her as a base for subsequent exploration by dinghy. A short pull out to sea brought us to coral gardens where large grouper could be had for the spearing.

Nearby, a shallows drying at high tide was covered with conch and other shell-fish. A mangrove swamp provided plump crayfish and the palm trees drinking nuts—surely the place for a beachcomber!

This was the pattern of life for the next few months. Each island visited seemed more delectable than the last. But an end came to lotus eating in mid-June with orders to return to New York.

With no vacation sailors aboard, we were now a crew of two and fell into the routine of two hours at the wheel and two below. The off-watch pillow and blanket in the deckhouse stayed warm for days on end.

Reaching Morehead City, we took the Intracoastal Waterway to Norfolk, sneaking past Cape Hatteras on the landward side. This was luxury travel. By day beautiful scenery and at night a quiet anchorage and sleep, blissful sleep.

Leaving Norfolk we sailed past the mighty moored battleships at a fine clip, the lee rail buried and 10 knots on the clock. On reaching the open Atlantic, however, the wind failed completely and we motored over an ocean so mirror-flat that stars were reflected, without distortion, on the "wine dark" sea.

New York was fogged in and our compass, always temperamental, now chose to quit completely. With an indifferent R.D.F. we homed on the Ambrose Light vessel, travelling in a woolly world, the perimeter of which was haunted by grey phantoms, wailing horribly. The light keeper, anticipating any questions, shouted "New York thataway" and it was.

Two hours later we hailed Liberty as an old friend and completed the round trip, the finest holiday of our lives.

