



Merry Christmas and a Happy 2007
From Long Passages in Fort Lauderdale, Florida



In 2006 we finally completed our 3-year circumnavigation, 11 years behind schedule and full of memories. We roamed from Europe to New Zealand, winding up in the USA. Long Passages had an easy year with a short cruise and a piggyback ride to Florida.

Spain

We started the New Year in sunny Spain on a drive and hike through Cabo de Gata, a pretty park with flamingos and plentiful wetland birdlife with our friends Micael and Ligia. This was all preparatory to going to Morocco, a place warmer even than Spain. In June we returned aboard Long Passages, this time with Denis, to Palma Mallorca where we explored the fantastic cathedral and drove around the island – with hoards of tourists that compete for the beautiful beaches of this popular destination. A short ferry ride away is Barcelona, and there we visited the Sagrada Familia, a whimsical cathedral designed by Gaudi where construction was started 100 years ago, and continues apace – with predictions that it may take another 100 years to complete. It is one of the most bizarre buildings we have ever seen. We returned to Palma in September to follow up on a decision we had made in June – to ship Long Passages back to the US rather than sail her back. It was a difficult decision, but now we had to prepare her for shipment and await arrival of her transport ship, due mid-November. We re-acquainted ourselves with Hans and Gisela, friends from Antalya, Turkey and their smart African Grey parrot Costas, shared Octoberfest brew, and sold our one remaining vehicle (a Ford) just in time to load LP on MV Explorer and bid her a safe trip to Fort Lauderdale.

Morocco

This is another exotic destination that we enjoyed tremendously. Many Europeans, particularly French, travel to the Moroccan beaches along the Atlantic to



enjoy the warm breezes and escape cold blasts from the Arctic. We crossed in our motor-home from Algeciras (near Gibraltar) by ferry to Ceuta, a Spanish colony in Morocco and headed for the

interior. As usual, the people were very friendly and the scenery was stunning. We drove around for a month, visiting Meknes, Marrakech, Casablanca, the High Atlas mountains, and Erg Chebbi in the Sahara. We wandered through markets, slept in a tent in the desert, rode camels and enjoyed the Moroccans. A visit to Volubilis, a distant Roman outpost in Africa, showed us how far the empire extended. Our low point was when a water pump failed in a small village

at an oasis and then we had to be towed out of our campground by a tractor due to the first snowstorm they have had in 40 years. But the generous help offered by our hosts made it an interesting experience rather than a horror story.

Italy

Long Passages spent the winter snug in Vibo Valentia on the southern coast of Italy, and we returned to her after our month in Morocco – by way of Florence. Our friends Pete and Jeanette showed us the wonderful world of art and architecture in this magic city where works from Michelangelo, De Vinci, and Rubens grace many squares and museums. Back in Vibo Valentia the winter social life was in full swing with Friday night parties, singalongs, and boat chores. We were a bit sorry that we had missed much of the socializing, but we met a new set of friends and enjoyed our time there. Denis, Bob's son, arrived in May for a bit of 'overseas experience'. While 'waiting for weather' we took a train to Pompeii and visited the amazing ruins that had been buried by the eruption of Vesuvius in 79 AD. Finally, the weather gods smiled and we piled aboard LP for a cruise through the Aeolian Islands and Sardinia to Palma, Mallorca.

New Zealand

In March, we decided that we had been away from our adopted homeland long enough so we decided to fly to New Zealand to look at houses, price them, and perhaps even buy one if things worked out. We had a wonderful visit, reacquainting ourselves with friends in Auckland and Northland and visiting our favorite spots on the coast. In the end, our bid to buy failed but we learned a bit about the real estate market in NZ. Our cruising friends Chip and Leslie and their three children had settled on a 100 acre farm, and we enjoyed a week with them, their horses, dog, and wide open spaces. In Auckland, Russell and Laonie hosted us for two weeks and they wore us out with their fast-paced social life.

France

In the Spring we stopped in Paris on our way to the UK and met our friend, Sandra, who was in town for a

Fashion Fabric Show – Judi got to visit many of the haute couture houses of Paris while Bob wandered the streets with a camera. On the 4th of July we returned



to share the City of Lights with Sharon, Judi's sister. On a whirlwind tour we took in the sights of Paris,

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Versailles, and the Brittany coast including St Malo Mont St Michel, and the Normandy Beaches. After their visit we returned in the Fall and found that France off-season was delightful – friendly service, uncrowded towns, and lower prices. We loved the Brittany coast, Burgundy and the wine country of Medoc, and the Dordogne. We visited the 15,000 year old cave paintings of Lascaux and then reveled on the French Riviera where the rich and famous gather, St Tropez, Cannes, and ultimately Monaco. The casino at Monte Carlo was a little disappointing (we only entered the tourist realm where tables only have a \$300 minimum bet), perhaps the real gambling rooms were more like the Bond movies!

United Kingdom

Southern England became our unofficial 'home' for 2006 and we passed through 4 or 5 times for medical checks, to visit friends, or as a waystation on our way overseas. In March we zipped through on our way to New Zealand, pausing long enough for medical checks (all OK) and to buy two laptops (one turned out to be a big mistake). In April we had a 48-hour layover; long enough to share some wine and stories with our author-friends, Rory and Sandra, also a pair of globetrotters. In May Judi visited for a minor medical procedure and in July we returned with Sharon and Linda (Judi's sister and friend). This was Sharon's first foray into the UK, and we tried to make it memorable with visits to:

- **London**, with all of the highlights: Buckingham Palace, Big Ben, British Museum, and the Tower of London – we left out plenty so she has an excuse to return.
- **Stratford-upon-Avon** and Shakespeare's digs
- **Blenheim**, one of the classic country palaces
- **Bath**, a beautiful remnant of Roman times
- **Wales** and Carphilly and Conwy castles
- **Dublin** – a brief peek into Ireland



Her three weeks seemed very short but we covered a lot of territory in France and the UK. In August we became homeless – again. We built a website to advertise our motor-home and within two weeks a new set of owners plunked down their money and drove it away, leaving us and our belongings stuffed into a compact Ford Escort 1500 miles from Long Passages. Finally on our way out of Europe we passed through one last time, and prepared a typical American Thanksgiving dinner for our dear friends John and Peggy who have been so kind to us during the last three years.

Shipping News

Our trusty yacht had an easy crossing of the Atlantic, boarding a yacht carrier in Palma Mallorca on 12 November and being unloaded on 10 December in Port Everglades, Florida. She went the scenic way, stopping in Martinique for a bit as her fellow yachts were unloaded for a sun-filled winter in the Caribbean. She arrived in excellent shape, with only a little soot to show for 2000 miles in the hold of the MV Explorer.

Back in USA

By early December we had returned to the US to pick up *Long Passages* and spend the Holidays with Bob's son and family – for the first time in 14 years. A side benefit was that we got to attend Denis' graduation as he picked up an Information Technology degree from Florida State University – and prepared to begin study for his Master's.

Circumnavigation complete

And this completes our trip around the world. We



started in 1992, have sailed on all of the major oceans, visited approximately 56 countries and territories, met numerous cruisers and people from many other lands. We have been

helped and befriended by strangers, have rediscovered that people in all lands want the same: a better life for themselves and their families, and have tried our best in our small way to help those we meet along the way. It has truly been a wonderful and life-changing experience and we will remember it always.

Plans

We will be selling our cherished *Long Passages* in 2007 and will try to catch up with friends we left behind more than 14 years ago. Then we look forward to a little more permanence and less living out of cramped spaces and suitcases so we will be looking for a land nest in about a year.

We wish all a **Merry Christmas** and a healthy and prosperous **New Year 2007** and all who are interested can keep up with us on www.longpassages.org.

Cheers and hugs,

 Judi A. Pester

Bob & Judi