

## **Hard water, a bang and a stench, emergency rooms, and guardian angels: the Maine Cruise wasn't dull!**

By Joseph Kelliher

The first hint of more trouble was Gordon Talley's voice on channel 72. He was in the middle of an exchange with another boat and I heard only scratchy phrases. Finally we clearly heard him say that he would stand by Marty until the tow boat arrived. Peter Griswold and I looked at each other and expressed same thought: "Not Marty....not again!"

Planning a three week cruise starts many months ahead with visions of bright mornings, breezy passages through emerald islands, seals, porpoises, sunsets and crisp cool nights. Visions.....

*Sails Call, Portland and Nose Job*, (A list of boats and their crews can be found below) assembled in Sandwich on Saturday July 21 as a large high pressure system moved east, stalled, and started pumping hot humid air up the coast causing endless downpours and awful heat in southern NE and lots of fog over the colder Maine waters. In Maine the fog was thick and durable at times, but was hardly noteworthy by the end of this cruise.

Our plan was to leave Sandwich at 0800 on Sunday, run all night toward Monhegan and arrive in Tenants Harbor (south of Camden) by 1500 on Monday. There we would be met by *Janina* and *Efficacy*, who had moved their boats north earlier. On the following Saturday two chartered boats would join us for a few days, and *Second Act*, the only power boat, would join us for the last week.

Because of weather concerns we delayed our departure until noon, found a favorable 10 knot SE breeze, clouds, but no rain, and headed north. We kept our motors on and our jibs out, motor sailing all night at a brisk pace in 6 to 8 foot rollers. We saw the moon for a few hours before it set and the sky lightened by 0400. Around 0600 the fog rolled in and though we passed within a few hundred yards of Monhegan, we never saw it. By 1200 we were in Tenants, a 24 hour run instead of the usual 30 hour slog. Janina had not arrived and Efficacy had pressed on and was 15 miles ahead in Rockland. The fog lifted a bit as we anchored; some of us went for quick swim, others napped and some observed that "It is 5:00 somewhere!"

But as Marty Becker freely admits, he has a habit of finding lobster pots, mooring lines and tow lines with his propeller. And, yes, Nose Job's crew spent some time clearing Marty's dingy line from his prop. He forgot to shorten the tow line before backing down to set the anchor. This was only a prelude for what was to come, for Marty and others.

### **Shredded belt, a dangling light, and what was that?**

Tuesday morning fog dulled the rumble of passing lobster men. We crept up the Muscle Ridge Channel, by Owls Head light and into the ample protected harbor of Rockland, full of marinas, restaurants, museums, boat yards and a commercial fishing fleet. All of us had slips reserved. Just as Marty approached the dock engine alarms sounded. He was able to tie up and found that a drive belt had just shredded. That proved to a fairly easy fix as a Hamilton Marine store was only 200 yards away. A dangling steaming light halfway up his mast required a bosun's chair and 30 more minutes.

Marty's first three problems were fairly minor and were solved with modest efforts. But any sense of accomplishment and relief quickly disappeared.

The day before his crew had heard a very loud bang, "like a gunshot", from the interior of the boat. They had not been able to explain it..... until now. A hint of an unpleasant aroma had grown into a reeking stench. The holding tank vent line had been pinched closed and, when pumping the head, the tank had burst- with a loud bang. The staff at Hamiltons began to see more of Marty and his crew. More on his crew later.

In the midst of this clean up Marty discovered that his three batteries would not start the engine. As they were eight years old he replaced all of them. That would



Marty replacing the charger



have worked if that was the actual problem. Twenty four hours later all were run down. By now they were on a first name basis with Hamiltons and a new charger was acquired. It *seemed* to put the electrical issues behind them.

Wednesday and Thursday had predictions of possible thunderstorms and thick fog, *Janina* had not yet caught up to us, I had developed a glitch in my crew swap out plans and Marty was effectively disabled. We decided that two more nights in Rockland were in order. We visited museums, took photos of the visiting Swedish replica Viking ship *Draken*, had a group dinner and stocked our larders.

### Fog, sun and delightful gunkholes

On Friday we left Nose Job behind with plans that they would meet us on Saturday. *Sails Call*, *Janina*, *Efficacy* and *Portland*, headed through the Fox Island Thoroughfare, and found our way to Seal Bay, on the east end of Vinal Haven. The fog, which had dropped on us as we crossed west Penobscot Bay, gave way to bright sun among the islands. Seal Bay, as the cruising guide promised, was a secluded delight which has been added to my favorites list.

Saturday we again played tag with the fog as we motored through the Deer Island Thoroughfare and turned NW into the Eggamoggin Reach, reaching Benjamin River by early afternoon. Benjamin has a boat yard with rental moorings and many classic Down East boats. Malek Al-Khatib and Ridge White had chartered sailboats and were to meet us there. Malek, Robin and Mark Kearins arrived on their 38'



Morgan and had Ridge and Louise with them! Ridge's charter boat had engine problems, and Malek and Robin invited them on board for the night. We did get good news as Nose Job arrived by late afternoon, seemingly ready to go! Finally, for one night we had all participants in a single harbor and things seemed to be falling into place.

On Sunday Malek dropped Ridge and Louise back in Bucks Harbor to pick up another boat. But by late afternoon we received a VHF call telling us that the second boat had also failed and that they were heading back home. What a disappointment after all the planning and travel!

Sun and good breezes accompanied us to Castine, home to Maine Maritime and a village full of majestic elm trees. But Nose Job's gremlins were still active and Marty took a spot on a dock to cure more electrical problems, this time needing a regulator to finally solve the battery/charger issues. This would take an extra day. The rest of us headed across the river and deep into Smith Cove for a very pleasant evening.

### 10 tons, 5 knots, and a sudden stop

Monday was sunny with a nice southerly afternoon breeze and we tacked down the west side of Islesboro to Camden. Coming from the north there is a narrow entrance mostly used by those with local knowledge. Another half mile brings you to the favored entrance which is wide and deep enough for windjammers to pass each other without concern. Walter Baggett used the north entrance in *Efficacy*, a very sturdy Mariner 39. He struck a ledge while motoring at 5 knots which brought the boat to a full stop. His crew was tossed about but fortunately suffered only bruises. That afternoon a diver's inspection found serious dent in the front of his keel but apparently no fatal damage.



On Tuesday a phone call to Marty confirmed that he was ready to leave Castine as we headed on one of our longer runs to the Friendship Harbor area of Muscongus Bay. As planned, Malek and crew decided to remain in Penobscot Bay for the remainder of their charter. Heading south we again navigated Muscle Ridge Channel- it's really lovely in sunshine and not fog- and turned west and then north, finally passing through Friendship. Always known as a "working harbor", I was astonished to find

150 to 200 lobster boats on moorings, and we anchored in nearby Hatchett Cove. Marty closed the gap,



reaching Tenants  
miles behind us.

**MOST- not all- of the lobster boats in Friendship**

Harbor, about 10

### **Good friends, a car - and a boatyard**

Now began a week of short runs with our Wednesday stop in Round Pond on the east shore of Pemaquid peninsula and only a few miles from the Carole and Gordon Talley's summer cottage.....and their car.

Marty caught up and we had *Portland*, *Sails Call*, *Janina* and *Nose Job* on moorings. The Talleys had made reservations for us at a waterfront restaurant, but as we gathered we were told that Walter was experiencing vision problems. He and Lillie had taken a taxi to the nearest hospital. During "attitude adjustment hour" text messages were exchanged and we learned that Walter had a detached retina. To our surprise they returned to the restaurant to have dinner with us, but he had to be at Boston's Eye and Ear at 0700 the next morning!

Proving, once again, that boaters are terrific people, Carole arrived in her car at 0230 the next morning as Lillie and Walter stepped out of their tender! Walter arrived in Boston to be examined, have both eyes operated on, and walked out before the day was over! He and Lillie stayed in Barbara and Tom's Newton condo for a couple of nights before heading to their home on the Cape. And, yes, his recovery is progressing well.

But *Efficacy* has a large bilge, and it was filling every 6 hours since hitting the ledge. In Round Pond is Padebco boatyard, maker of classic Downeast style cabin cruisers. The owner had just erected a new shed and was looking for winter business. Walter, before heading to the local hospital, knew his summer was likely over, and arranged to have Padebco haul *Efficacy*. It will be put inside and overhauled in time for next season. Gordon took photos showing that the keel was set back ¼ inch by the collision.

The three remaining boats visited Pemaquid Harbor and Christmas Cove, where Second Act joined us. Then it was on to Boothbay for a two night stay. Monday took us to one of our favorite stops on the Sheepscot River, Robin Hood Cove. The heat and humidity were not as bad as in Boston, but moorings offered a welcome breeze not found on slips. And the fog was always lurking nearby.

### **Not Marty, not again!**

Now it was time to start for home. Heading south out of the Sheepscot we found a SE breeze that we put to good use as we passed Seguin Island and headed for Casco Bay and our Potts Harbor destination. We were about an hour behind the others when, 3 or 4 miles from Potts our VHF crackled with news about Marty and a tow boat. He was only about two miles from Potts when the cable running from his rudder to his wheel





parted. He dropped his anchor, and by the time we arrived on scene the tow boat was about to take control. Once again he found himself tied to a dock with repairs to attend.

Some of us had jobs looming on Monday, and as he was in a safe place and had experienced crew, we bid him goodbye the next morning. We hoped that he might catch up, but the next day, with his cable now replaced, his engine overheated and he had to put into Portland for more repairs. He did safely negotiate the rest of the trip and was back in Vineyard Haven on the following Monday. The rest of us stopped in Biddeford Pool and Gloucester before spitting up for our final runs to Boston, Westport and Fairhaven.



### **Just lucky or proof of guardian angels?**

I haven't detailed every glitch, leak and mechanical failure that we encountered. For example huge mats of seaweed wrapped prop shafts and clogged raw water strainers. Those are just a part of any long cruise. But time and again I marveled that the really bad things happened at the right time and the right place.

- Nothing bad happened when we were 20 to 30 miles off shore on our overnight run.
- Marty's problems left him in marina slips and not anchored in one of our gunkholes.
- When he needed a tow Marty was only 2 miles from our destination.
- Marty's crew of John and Steve are both engineers whose talents were precisely what Marty needed at the time they were most required.
- When Walter needed to get to Boston, the Talleys provided transportation, and Barbara and Tom offered their condo.
- Padebco Boatyard needed work, had a new shed and hauled out a leaky *Efficacy* within 24 hours.

**Mats of seaweed-  
everywhere!**

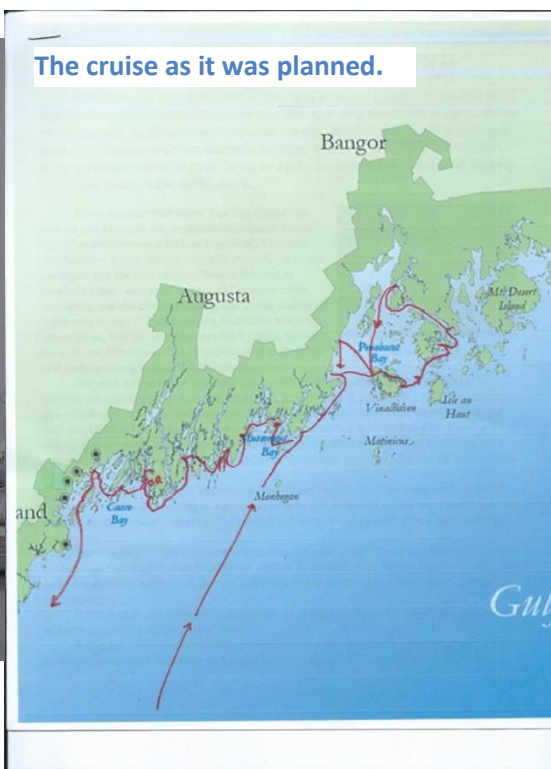
### **Lessons learned**

- Know your boat, do thorough preventive maintenance, carry spare parts and stop and think carefully when diagnosing a problem. Marty's batteries may have been OK. The charger and/or regulator proved to be the likely cause of his electrical issues.
- I learned an unusual lesson. While under way it may be wise to remove your inflatable vest when you go below. I snagged my pull tab when making sandwiches. It inflated perfectly, by the way.
- Unlike Cape Cod, Maine tides have 9' to 10' changes. In a large bay that causes a lot of water to flow in and out. When anchoring I found that when the wind dies the tide takes over and sends boats corkscrewing in all directions. We never bumped but I should have left more room between my boat and a Cape Dory.
- Good crews are worth more than gold. Marty's crew included John, a retired friend who came up from Virginia for a chance to sail in Maine for a week and Steve, who works full time, and looked forward to a two week vacation doing the same. Sue Haley signed on for the last week, expecting to be home by the last Saturday. Instead John and Steve spent almost all of their first week helping to diagnose and repair a non-stop list of problems. I have asked myself "Would I have stayed or gone home?" And I don't know what my answer would have been. But both remained aboard, uncomplaining. Sue enjoyed a couple of harbors and then Marty lost his steering and his engine overheated. But she changed her schedule to be sure that Marty had crew all the way back to his home port. They all were loyal, skilled, hardworking and never complained to the rest of us about the hours spent helping Marty. They will have my admiration forever!
- And the next time I talk about leading a cruise- just slap me!

Rockland- the lighthouse on the end of the breakwater makes an appearance



The cruise as it was planned.



Seal Bay, east end of Vinal Haven



Early morning, Benjamin River, Eggamoggin Reach





Sunset in Smith Cove near Castine



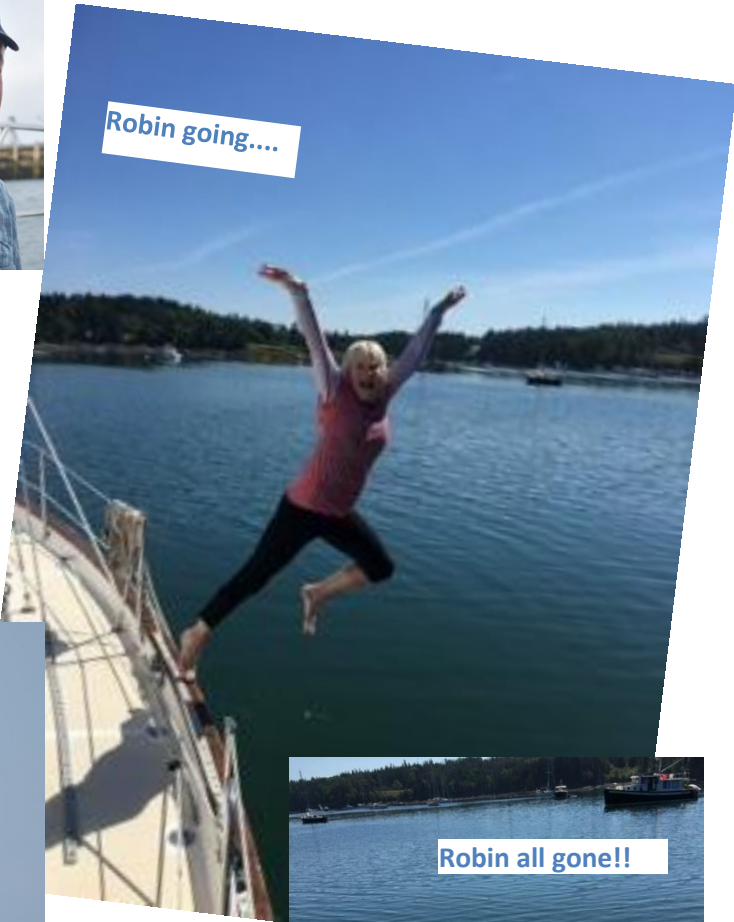
Peter Griswold



Brian Paslaski



Mark Kearins



Robin going....



Robin all gone!!





Janina



Second Act



EFFICACY



Nose job



Portland

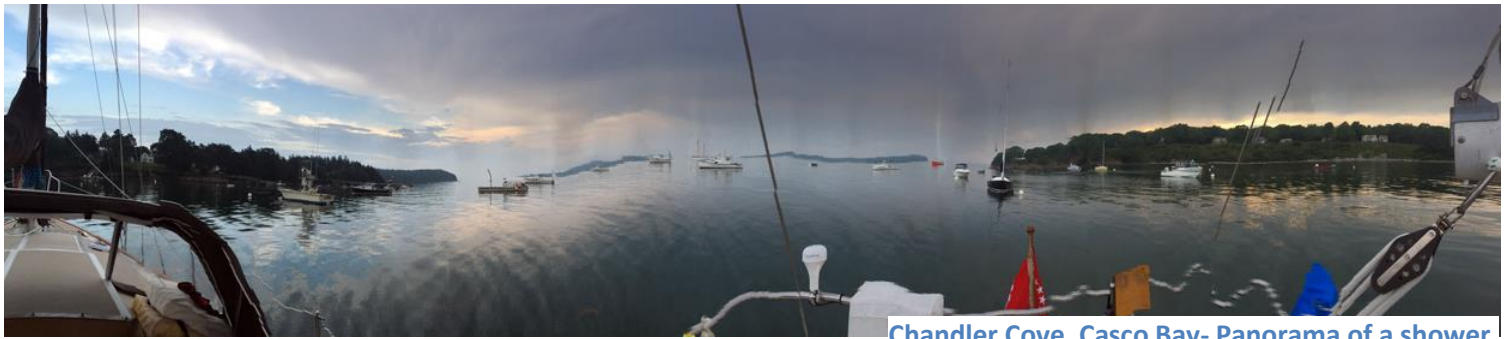


Sails Call



Panache and Malek

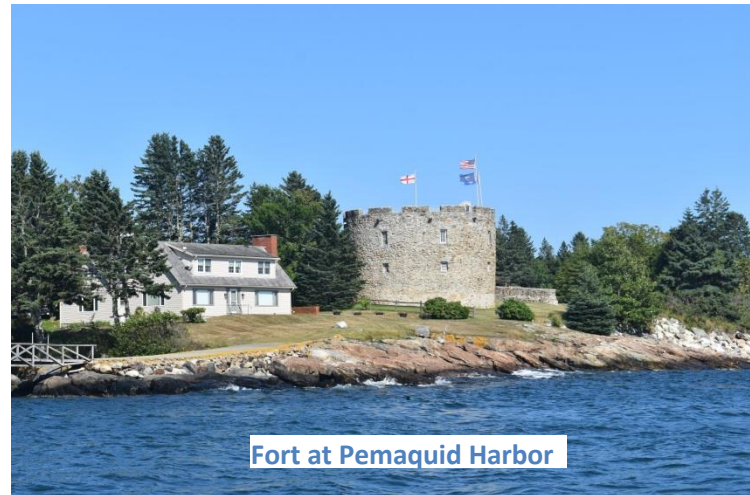




Chandler Cove, Casco Bay- Panorama of a shower



Owls Head lighthouse, Rockland



Fort at Pemaquid Harbor



Marty Becker, Jeff Gardiner. Gordon Talley, Carole Talley, Rich Terry, Steve Mullen, Kerry Jackson



## The Coveside Restaurant in Christmas Cove.....

has been a favorite of boaters for decades. I remember eating there on cruises with my parents in the 1960s. Hundreds of yacht club and cruising club burgees adorn the rafters and walls. And now finally, so does a Great Blue Hill pennant!



## Boats, captains and crew-

**PHOTOS ON LAST PAGE- SCROLL DOWN!**

Skipper and crew	Boat name	make	type
<b>Marty Becker</b> Steve Mullen John Bozena Sue Haley	<b>Nose Job</b>	Morgan 35	sail
<b>Malek Al-Khatib</b> Robin Assaf Mark Kearins	<b>Panache</b>	Charter-Morgan 38	sail
<b>Andy Sumberg</b> Barbara Herrman Tom Gonsioroski Mindy Sumberg	<b>Portland</b>	Catalina 35	sail
<b>Joseph Kelliher</b> Timothy Kelliher Peter Griswold Brian Pasalski Kerry Jackson	<b>Sails Call</b>	C&C 32	sail
<b>Ridge White</b> Louise Rothery	<b>Avalon</b>	Charter- Catalina 30	sail
<b>Gordon Talley</b> Carole Talley	<b>Janina</b>	Island Packet 26	sail
<b>Walter Baggett</b> Lillie Shortridge-Baggett John Crawford Erica Kraft	<b>Efficacy</b>	Mariner 39	sail
<b>Jeff Gardiner</b> Rich Terry	<b>Second Act</b>	Grand Banks 35	power



## Boats and crews in Benjamin River



Lillie and Walter Baggett, Erika Kraft and John Crawford



Brian Paslaski- top. Joe Kelliher and Peter Griswold- bottom



Carole and Gordon Talley



Andy and Mindy Sumberg, Tom Gonsioroski and Barbara Herrmann



Robin Assaf and Malek al-Khatib- top, Mark Kearins, Ridge White and Louise Rothery- below



John Bozena, Marty Becker and Steve Mullen