

Dear Tim,

You are now the age that I was when we set sail on Felicity. There is already an account of that year in Felicity's log, which is posted on [spillthebeans.org](http://spillthebeans.org) but that is simply a brief account of what happened each day. There is no mention of anybody's feelings or motivations. This is my attempt to remedy that shortcoming.

For the last 40 years I have thought of this trip in terms of what we did and what happened. It never occurred to me to think about our motivations or what we learned either about ourselves or about seamanship.

My first exposure to sailboats was in the Stockholm fiords. When we lived on Lidingö our neighbor Bob Henderson had a small sailboat and we took several afternoon sails on it. At the age of seven, I found that quite boring. Bob Henderson and Robert once tried to race that boat across the Baltic. They encountered heavy weather and lost some of their rigging. It was a most unfortunate trip although nobody was injured.

My next experience came when I was seventeen. I was invited to join a party of Boy Scouts who chartered three sailboats on the Broads in England. I have posted an [account](#) of that trip and its successor on [spillthebeans.org](http://spillthebeans.org).

Other than a few days on Long Island Sound with a Harvard friend and one day's racing in Rhode Island, that was all of my early experience. But I was firmly of the opinion that I liked boats, and particularly sailboats. (I also had five years' experience both as a cox and a rower at St. Paul's.)

Shortly after we moved to Wellesley our neighbor, Herb Glick, took us sailing in Buzzards Bay aboard his wooden yawl. As a result of that outing, I worked out a deal with Herb that we would share the boat the following season. Sadly, the deal fell through and instead we bought a Pearson 26, which we named the Wee Walrus. We kept the Wee Walrus at Burr Brothers in Marion and sailed her for a couple of years. Among other destinations, we went to Quisset, Cuttyhunk, Martha's Vineyard and Hadley's Harbor. At that point I developed an obsessive interest in sailing and read all of the books on the subject that I could lay my hands on. You may remember some of these as they resided on a couple of shelves of the bookcase to the right of the door into the hall from the TV room in Cambridge. In 1976 we sold the Wee Walrus and bought a Hinkley Pilot, which we named Amaranth.

With Amaranth we ventured further afield. For quite a number of summers we took Amaranth to Maine and cruised along the coast from Rockport to Mount Desert. The summer that you were born, we did not launch Amaranth and instead bought a J20 that I sailed in Boston Harbor. (I suppose that it had a name but I don't remember it!)

All of this raises the question of why I was so obsessed with boats and seamanship. All through my life I have had what Possum called "projects." I suppose that this was simply another project. From my point of view, what they all had in common was the requirement and opportunity to learn a lot about something. Among my obsessions were: Meccano, trainspotting, electronics, rallying, photography, sailing, and travel. I think that my interest in each of these subjects went well beyond normal. Each of them contributed a useful skill. From Meccano I learned a lot about mechanical stress and how to strengthen trusses; from trainspotting how to get around to the stations in London and where various

kinds of engines were used; electronics has been useful all my life. I used it to transform a part time job baby-sitting ultra-high vacuum systems into a more substantial job building control systems and reverse engineering measuring instruments. I also used it to adapt the trigger mechanism for a spark chamber system in the Harvard physics labs. For rallying we couldn't afford the fancy equipment to enter the "equipped" class. We made up for this by using computer tables created at night at Honeywell and by sheer determination. Jeff introduced me to photography and I built darkrooms on Whittier Street in Cambridge and in the basement at Bird Hill Avenue. (Meg built the one at Glen Road.)

At the moment I have a hard time understanding why I cared so much about boats and why I wanted to spend time aboard. Yet it is clear that this desire survived our year in Europe. Afterwards we spent time sailing in Maine aboard Felicity and considered equipping her with radar so that we could sail in Nova Scotia where there is even more fog than in Maine. After our year abroad I took considerable pride in my seamanship. When we chartered a boat in Alaska I remember being complimented on the way I brought the boat into the dock to refuel. I also remember knowing how to get the boat away even though the wind was blowing directly onto the dock. Much of this skill I learned on Felicity. Reading is no substitute for practical experience at sea.

Sailing was an interesting challenge. Most sailors learn from other, more experienced, sailors. I didn't have that opportunity so I read everything I could get my hands on that touched on the subject. Some of it was highly relevant, like Eric Hiscock's *Cruising Under Sail*; other books were marginally related, such as *Moby Dick*. When we went sailing, I would take every opportunity to experiment and learn new things. In the *Wee Walrus* we used to sail onto the mooring. That worked fine until the day when we ran over the dinghy painter and ended up pointed the wrong way with the dinghy sunk behind us. Once I got that situation sorted out, I took the water-logged outboard to Burr Brothers and explained what had happened. The response was: "What did you do that for?" I also experimented with jury-rigged self-steering and spent a lot of time learning about celestial navigation – right down to the level of reading about spherical trigonometry.

In 1979 I was the navigator on Bob Colvin's boat *Oh Happy Day* for a Marion to Bermuda race. We ran into quite a lot of bad weather and the navigation was mostly dead reckoning. I got a sun sight at noon on the last day and was looking for a star at dusk that would have allowed me to get a fix, when one of the crew shouted out: "Is that the one you're looking for." He was pointing to the flashing entrance buoy to Hamilton Harbor in Bermuda. I guess the dead reckoning won out. This was my first real experience offshore and we learned quite a lot. Particularly the importance of keeping the boat dry!

Recently Bob told me that we came in second in our class in that race. I was surprised by that since we were inexperienced and the boat was heavy and slow. It made more sense once he continued to tell me that there were four boats in the class.

Then, in 1982, Hinkley's held a reunion party in Southwest Harbor for all of the Pilots that they had built. We attended that. *Amaranth* was a bit small for our needs at that point. She only had four berths and you slept on the cabin sole. While we were there Mom saw a new Souwester 42 that Hinkley's had on display. She came back very excited and thought we ought to get one. My reaction was that if we were going to buy something that expensive then we ought to use it to go somewhere worthwhile. We had sold WG&L to Thomson in 1980 and I wasn't happy working for them. So, that idea turned into the notion of spending a year abroad, on a boat. We ended up placing an order with Hinkley's for a Souwester 42, which became Felicity.

So, to some extent, the entire voyage was an excuse to get away from Thomson and start some new career. I don't know that I was conscious of that at the time. I had done something similar when I left Honeywell to go to MIT. In the later case I was very much aware that this was a way to switch career paths.

That fall I spent a good deal of time working on plans for an Atlantic crossing and spending a year on a boat. This was right up my alley. I love working out the details of how some task is to be accomplished. First, I had to recruit a crew for the crossing. Amanda Cross's husband, Torpey, was an obvious choice since I'd sailed with him before and he had a lot of experience. Next, was Jeff Bean who had a good deal of experience sailing in San Francisco Bay. From Bob Colvin's crew I took Colin Brown, Nils Bruzelius, and later the navigator Pete Coggins. Initially David Collins was going to be the navigator but he backed out later on. I also asked Bob Colvin, but he elected not to go.

To keep the crew up-to-date I sent out a series of progress reports that kept track of the building of Felicity and of our plans for the crossing. I have posted these on [spillthebeans](#); they are rather long to include here! Each member of the crew had an assigned task:

- Bill – Captain
- Torpey – Bosun
- Pete – Navigator
- Colin – Medical officer
- Nils – Quartermaster
- Jeff – Engineer

This system worked out well. Each and every member of the crew ended up exercising his assigned function. Nils planned all of the food, right down to individual meals. Colin provided a superb medical kit, which fortunately we didn't need. Jeff repaired the propane system when it failed and Pete got us to Falmouth with considerable accuracy. Torpey was the most experienced person aboard and was an invaluable member of the crew. Besides he taught us to make baggywinkle. (Old rope used to prevent chafing.)

The crossing itself was relatively uneventful. I am glad to have done it but I wouldn't go out of my way to repeat the experience. Nils, on the other hand, has made several more Atlantic crossings. Some people plain like to sail. Others, like me, are interested in new experiences and once is enough. My favorite example is David Collins, who genuinely likes to sail. He is perfectly happy sailing along in good weather, enjoying the sun and the sea. I find that very boring. I'd much rather be trying something new. Either a new sailing technique or a new passage. Bird Island at the entrance to Marion harbor is separated from the shore by a narrow, shallow passage. At high tide there ought to be enough water for us to get through. I never did work up the courage to actually try it though.

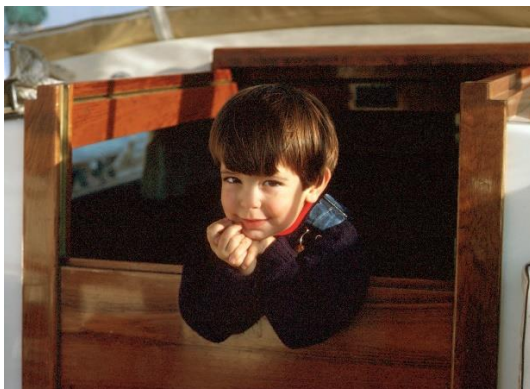
Once we got to England we had to work out a modus vivendi for the coming year. Our experience up to that point had consisted of two weeks vacation aboard a boat once a year. It didn't take long to work out that wasn't going to be a good way to live. We were getting up late; I wasn't bothering to shave; and, in general, things weren't terribly well organized. We quickly learned that it paid to get up early and maintain a disciplined style of life.

In retrospect, there were two sides to our trip everywhere that we went. On the one hand we needed to manage our daily life on the boat. That meant buying and cooking food; finding acceptable anchorages; deciding where we were to go next. The other side consisted of arranging to see things. In some harbors the world came to us. Thus, in Dartmouth, a British frigate came in and anchored and provided days of entertainment. (Video of it leaving on [spillthebeans](#).) She actually had a steam launch to take people ashore. In other cases we had to make our own arrangements. We rented a car to visit Stonehenge, where we met Meg's godmother, Donna Stone. This was quite by accident and we decided to go to Bath together on the spur of the moment. Bath was much more interesting than Stonehenge.



Sailing in England was, for the most part, much like sailing in the US. We could anchor in the harbors; there were public docks to go ashore; the villages had shops with the food we needed. Usually there was a chandler with any specialized supplies that we wanted. It was a bit of a shock to find that English law allows people to own the sea bottom, so we were required to pay for the privilege of anchoring. In the US, the law, for the most part, only allows ownership down to the high tide mark. There are, however, a few colonial deeds that still convey ownership beyond that point.

We had originally planned to go as far as London but we only got to Cowes, about half way. The reason was simply that we spent more time than we'd anticipated in each port that we went into. Partly this was waiting for good weather, partly it was finding that there were lots of interesting things to do wherever we went.



In Cowes we first met the Grahams and *Lionheart*. They came into the marina where we were tied up and I noticed the American ensign. I went over to say hello but found them rather preoccupied at the time. In Cowes we had Felicity hauled so that the propeller could be changed from the folding one that we had used for the Atlantic crossing to a three-bladed version that I thought would be better in the canals. (It turned out to be mismatched to the boat and less effective than the folding prop.) We also had crutches made to support the mast once we took it down in France. There are quite a few low bridges that we had to go under in order to pass through the canals, so we had to take down the mast.

I hired a Chanel Pilot to help me with the crossing from Cowes to Le Havre. Only once we were sailing down the Solent – well healed over – did he bother to tell me that he had never been on a sailboat before. Nonetheless I was very glad to have him. Because of the timing of the tides we were crossing at night and there was a whole parade of ships going both down and up the channel. I was not an expert at reading all the complicated lights that they used and I doubt that they were paying much attention to us.

Le Havre turned out to be rather a dreary place. It had been bombed to smithereens during WW II and then rebuilt without much understanding of what makes an urban area work. The streets were too wide and long; there were few commercial establishments on the streets; altogether quite unattractive.

In Le Havre we had our mast taken down and laid out on the trestles on the deck. How I managed to tell the dock workers what I wanted I don't know. Perhaps I didn't have too – everybody wanted the same thing.

Once the mast was down we were stuck for a while. There are two routes from Le Havre into the Seine. One is through a canal, which had a reputation for being difficult. The other was out into the river estuary, which could be rough in less than perfect weather. Furthermore, you could only go on certain days of the lunar month. You had to have the tide with you so that you could get above the first lock at Rouen. There was nowhere below Rouen to anchor or tie up. What we didn't know, and what the French deny, is that there is a tidal bore in the river. (The French claim is that it has been engineered out of existence. The reality is that it is still there. We talked to a boat that had been caught in it.)

When we crossed the Seine estuary, we had a physics lesson. A sailboat is MUCH more stable with the mast up. All that mass up high prevents the boat from rolling. With the mast on deck, we rolled like mad. If I'd understood that in advance we might have opted for the canal. The rest of the ride was uneventful and pleasant.

Rouen was a remarkable contrast to Le Havre. It too had been heavily damaged during the war but the rebuilding was done much more sensitively. The cars were diverted around the central city; many of the old buildings were preserved; altogether it was a lovely place.

From Rouen we rented a car and visited Normandy. One of the highlights was our dinner in a country hotel where the power went out so we finished the dinner by candlelight. The beaches where the D-Day landings took place were most impressive. It is hard to imagine how anybody got ashore.

We quickly learned that river travel was quite different from English salt-water harbors. There was nowhere in the river to anchor and the banks were uninviting. This meant that we had to tie up to quays in towns, which were few and far between. Also, the French shops have the habit of shutting for

one day a week. The particular day varies from town to town. This became clear when we tried to buy groceries on a Monday and found that was closing day. We had very little food left on board so the lesson was driven home.

The locks on the Seine, below Paris are large with slippery ladders. You have to climb the ladders to make the boat fast and we were inexperienced. In spite of some awkward moments nobody ended up in the water and no damage was done. By the time we reached Port Saint Louis, three months later, we had been through several hundred locks and had discovered that we could secure the boat with a single line.

Entering Paris a few days later was a great experience. We loved seeing the bridges and the sights along the river. We ended up in the Basin de l'Arsenal. This was a new mooring area off the Seine accessed by a lock. It had been built as part of the Canal Saint-Martin. For us it was perfect. It was here that we made friends with the harbor master, who lived with his family right next to the spot where we tied up.



In Paris we did quite a bit of sight-seeing: Louvre, Eiffel Tower, Fauchon, Jeu de Pomme, and Versailles. We also went to see the latest *Star Wars* film in French. The log records a trip to a nautical book store in search of a guide book for the canals. I wonder how, in those pre-Internet days, we knew that there was a nautical book store, let alone where it was.





We left Paris on October 30<sup>th</sup> and headed up the Seine and then the Yonne. We were planning to use the Canal de Bourgogne which reaches the Saône near Dijon. We got all the way to Sens before we learned that there wasn't enough water in the Bourgogne for us to get through. The gentleman at the Pont et Chaussées office told us to go back and take the Canal Lateral de la Loing, the Canal Lateral á la Loire, and the Canal du Centre. At least there was another way through!

We headed back down the Yonne to Montereau. On the way we passed *Tristram* going the other way. *Tristram* was a converted tender from a World War I battleship. She belonged to an English fisherman and his family. He was unable to fish during the winter so they were headed towards the Mediterranean for Christmas. They had not heard about the low water in the Bourgogne and were grateful to be told. We sailed in company with them for the remainder of our time in the canals.

I have fond memories of our passage through the canals. To me the route was scenic and interesting. Amanda remembers it as being cold and spending her time below feeling seasick, listening to the engine noise, and looking after you. I remember the canals as warm and sunny. The log confirms Amanda's memory. That is a fine example of how people can experience the same events very differently. At some point we learned how important it was to get off the boat and let everybody have some fun ashore but, in the canals, we had an imperative goal and a considerable drive to keep going.



The issue was indeed the cold. It was OK until we got to the Canal de Centre, which climbs over the Massif Central and passes through Monceau-les-Mines, a grubby coal-mining town, which is the real reason for the Canal de Centre. There, we encountered ice in the canal for the first time. It was very worrisome making our way through a thin sheet of ice. I thought that it would do serious damage to the finish on our hull but this didn't happen.

Lionheart left Paris after us but was ahead of us in the canals because of our detour towards Bourgogne. We got messages from them via the lockkeepers. Nothing happened on the canals without the lockkeepers knowing.

It was a great relief to reach the Saône and link up with Lionheart again in Chalon. Once we were in the river we no longer had to worry about ice and there was no danger of being frozen in for the winter. We

also had a whole lot of new skills to acquire since the current in the river was quite a contrast with the placid canals.

We had Thanksgiving in Chalon with Lionheart. It was a considerable effort to find a turkey and we had to pluck it ourselves.

Our progress down the rivers was swift since we were going with the current. We celebrated Mom's birthday in Lyons. Henry and Puja agreed to watch our boat and you, Meg and Amanda, so Mom and I went out for a celebratory dinner. We weren't any good at choosing restaurants so we ended up having a Chinese dinner in the gastronomic capital of France. The log notes that the quay is in a highly disagreeable state but when Melinda and I visited in 2018 it had been cleaned up and looked most attractive.

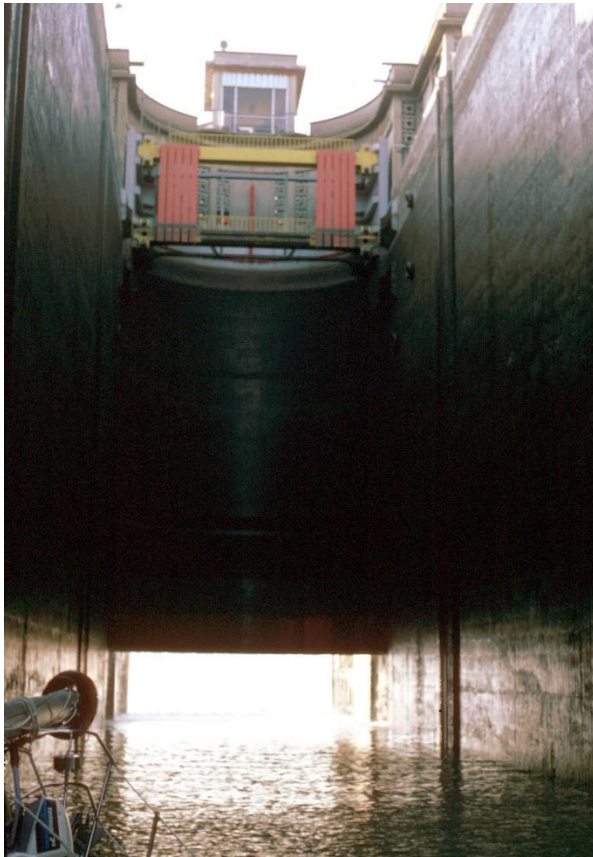
Below Lyons we were on the Rhône. The current there was very fast; until the new locks were installed you were required to have a pilot on board to transit the Rhône. The locks themselves are designed for large barges and are enormous. They are also very deep. The bollards that you tie up to are floating rather than being fixed on the lip of the lock. That is essential since even if a rope was long enough to reach from the bottom, it would lose all ability to control the boat as the level sank.



Later on, we met up with a couple who had had a major misadventure in the Bollène lock. This is the largest of the Rhône locks and is 23 meters deep. When they got into the lock the sluices opened and the water level started to go down but the upper gates didn't close. They said it looked like a waterfall coming into the lock. Eventually the lockkeeper realized that something was wrong and closed the sluices. At that point the water level started to go back up. Their boat caught on a projection in the lock wall and sank. They were rescued by an emergency crew from the fire department. One of the firemen asked if they had a camera. They had one but it had sunk with the boat. The fireman, who was dressed for diving, went back into the lock and retrieved their camera. He said: "Here, you are going to need this." I have seen the pictures of the water coming in the upper gates. At first the authorities said that it was impossible for the sluices to open without the upper gates being closed. After the photographs



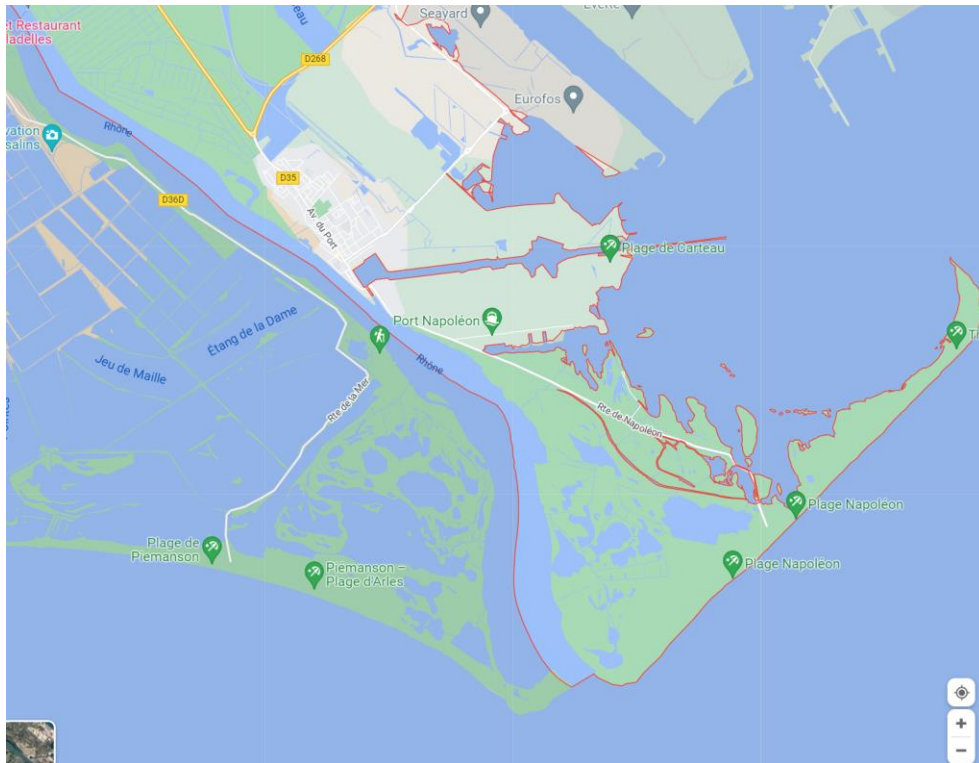
demonstrated that this was untrue, they eventually relented and paid for the damage. It also turned out that the lockkeeper had his nieces and nephews in the control room that day, which was strictly against the rules.



The mistral blew while we were headed down the Rhône. It is difficult to understand how miserable this was. The weather is bright and sunny but the wind is bitterly cold and blows fiercely. Whoever was on the helm wore many layers of clothes and was still freezing.



We put our mast back up at Port St. Louis near where the Rhône empties into the Mediterranean. The arrangement is that there is a crane immediately below a lock that takes you into the actual harbor for Port St. Louis. We got our mast up and transited the lock with no problem. Lionheart wasn't so lucky. They arrived later in the day and weren't able to get their mast up before the crane closed down. Then the lockkeeper wouldn't let them through the lock on the grounds that they would just come back through the next day. That forced them to tie up outside in the Rhône, which was more than a little dangerous. Our guess is that the lockkeeper simply didn't like Americans. We met both people who disliked Americans and others who came up and thanked us for what our country had done for them during the war. Most of the lockkeepers were very pleasant and accommodating. A few were rather grumpy.



The crane and lock are right next to the river, with a small square basin just north of them. We spent several days in the basin, which is actually quite large. This is the town where Mom and Puja rented a car to go to a laundromat. On the way back they were on a narrow street and were confronted by a large truck. It was clear that they needed to back up but they couldn't figure out how to get the car into reverse. Eventually the truck driver got out and showed them that they had to press down on the shift lever.

After several days of Mistral we shifted to Frioul, which is an island close to the entrance to the harbor at Marseille. It is also near the Chateau d'If, which is a spectacular castle on a small island. It was of particular interest because we had just read the Count of Monte Cristo, which features an imprisonment in the Chateau d'If.

Our original plan had been to take the boat out of the water for the winter at Port Grimaud. We had even made arrangements with them to do so but we were quite a bit behind schedule and we needed to

leave for Spain. So, we secured Felicity as best we could in the marina at Frioul. Reading the log, it is quite clear that I wasn't too happy with the arrangements but we didn't have much choice.

From Marseille we took a series of trains to the southern coast of Spain where we had rented a house and where we were meeting the Collins for Christmas. We stopped and spent the night in Barcelona and Madrid.

Once in Spain, we celebrated Christmas, visited Ronda but then got a message from Henry that there had been a force 11 Mistral and our starboard mooring line (belonging to the marina) had parted. There was some damage to the port side and stern but not enough to interrupt our trip. We flew back on the 30<sup>th</sup>, abandoning the Collins.

Soon we left for various ports along the French Mediterranean coast. It turned out that we could continue during the winter in the Mediterranean as long as we picked our days for venturing out of the harbors. We had to learn the "Mediterranean moor", which, in France, meant backing in towards the side of a pier and picking up a mooring on the way in. You tied up the stern to the pier and the mooring held the bow off. Once we got to Italy there were no more moorings and we had to learn to set the anchor as we backed in. Other than that, we had no particular trouble in the Med.



In Saint Tropez, we were tied up alongside the harbor wall right in front of the main street with all the shops. Even in 1984 we could not have been in Saint Tropez at any time in the sailing season without a reservation made long in advance. A few days later a large boat was sunk in a Mistral exactly where we had been tied up. By that time we were in Port Grimaud and the wind came off the dock over our stern. I have a newspaper clipping that records the wind as reaching 90 knots. The following picture shows us tied up in Port Grimaud before the storm arrived.





From Port Grimaud we continued along the French coast visiting Nice, Antibes and Monaco. In Monaco we were in a modern port opposite the zoo. We could hear the lions roaring at night. It was here that a boat arrived next too us at 4:00 am. It had very large engines that gurgled and only stayed about 15 minutes. We suspected that they were transferring drugs. Not sure which way!

From Monaco we went on into Italy. When we checked in, we were faced with an enormous pile of paperwork and many stamps. When we left we discovered that our crew included "Timothy Bean, Able-bodied Seaman."

I had studied both French and Italian at Berlitz before we left but my French was way better than my Italian. Nonetheless, when we went into a store in Italy, we would invariably be told that we spoke such wonderful Italian. A true cultural difference between Italy and France.

Possum, Robert, and Carin Malmberg visited us while we were in Porto Venere. We had Easter dinner with them at their hotel. The dinner included a leg of lamb that was chopped up by an enthusiastic waiter with a machete. Bits of lamb were sprayed all over the dining room.

In Italy we travelled as far south as Agropoli, from where we took a bus to see Paestum, which has several very well-preserved Greek temples.

From Agropoli we went back north to Ischia where we turned the boat over to a delivery skipper who sailed (well, mostly motored) her back to Maine. We went on to Milan, Como, Bern, Brussels, Bruge, Ansterdam, and London on our way home.

Which leaves us with the question of what did it all mean? Amanda says it was the greatest adventure of her life. I certainly am very pleased to have done it and can't quite conceive of having continued in an office with Thomson. We all have to make choices as to what we will do with our lives. In no way do I regret this one. We extended our trip by a month over our original plan. If we hadn't had other commitments (such as schools and the need to earn a living) I suspect that we would have continued. Was that just inertia, or did we really enjoy that life more than our lives back in the States? It's hard to say. Looking back, I doubt that I would be any more pleased with our trip if we had extended it to Turkey and Egypt as Lionheart did. On the whole, I think it was just about right.

