

“To all things there must be a beginning.”

– *Shaolin maxim* –

“Are you preparing for something, Michael? If not, then you should be. It is said that, when the gods give so many talents to one person, then great things are expected of them in return.”

– *Tulku Anil* –

Forward: Michael and Me

When I created the character of Michael Cameron, I took shortcuts by allowing him to copy much of my life, my past history. When the idea of this work began to take shape, the bones were already there. Friends had suggested I tell the story of my sailing adventures between Bermuda and the Bahamas on *Mystic Lady*. Much of that got lifted from my *Captain's Log*. For this, I merely had to novelize what I'd written, then weed it down. It hits too close to home in far too many places, having to relive the loss of *Mystic Lady*, then the loss of Susan, my first wife, but that's the nature of art.

To set the record straight, I'm not Michael Cameron. I sometimes wish I was. He seems to get younger, stronger, as I get older, lose more hair, and feel the stiffness of arthritis in my hands more often. I'm as smart as Mike, but I think he's wiser and more patient than I. He has the benefit of a writer who thinks his every action through before committing him to it. And he will live a lot longer than I will. I hope Mike and Carrie live forever.

I'd left teaching and had started cruising, playing music in pubs on occasion, before my son was born. For the math of ages to work, Mike's Sean would have to be born while he was still teaching; a few hurricanes and tropical storms had to be delayed 3 years. Because Mike is four years younger than I, most of the dates before the beginning of *Once a Samurai...* are three

years later than their corresponding dates in my life. I saved a year by having him be promoted from grade primary to grade two, skipping grade one. They'd wanted to do that with me, but my mother wouldn't let them.

I continue to practice Kung Fu and Katana-juitsu. But, with my recent diagnosis of having Demyelinating Tissue Disorder, (a form of EncephaloMyelitis — sort of a 'lite' version of M.S.), who knows how long that will last.

But this book is about Michael and Susan Cameron, and Michael and Sean Cameron. We also get to meet Carrie Laughlin, destined to become Mrs. Carrie Cameron.

Enjoy.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D.C. Rhind', with a stylized flourish at the end.

D.C. Rhind
2011 – 07 – 19

Part One:
Michael

1: A Beginning

*SeaView Extended Care, Eastern Passage, NS
September, 2007*

Mike Cameron watched his father resting, eyes closed, following the rise and fall of his chest with suspicion, as if each movement might be the last. His relationship with his father had walked the edge of a knife for most of his life. Detective Inspector Will Cameron (retired) seemed to find it easier to relate to his older son, the extravert jock. He'd been MVP of his college hockey team, while Mike, the younger, the introvert, the bookworm, musician, martial arts expert, now writer, had always been a mystery to him. Will didn't like mysteries. If you couldn't solve one, you threw it on the unsolved pile and took up the next one. Mike had spent most of his forty-six years in the unsolved pile.

He wasn't feeling sorry for himself; he was too factual and analytical for that. 'It is what it is,' he would have said. But he knew that all of this was true, just as he'd known from the other side of the world that his mother was dying — had died before he could get to an airport to fly home; just as he'd known his father had terminal, untreatable lung cancer. He couldn't have explained how he knew; he just knew. Sometimes it was just like that; he felt something or saw it in his mind, and knew it was true.

He'd been at a Lamasery in Tibet, studying with a Tulku named Anil. He couldn't just show up at Lhasa airport — the PRC (People's Republic of China) government controlled Tibet, and they had no idea

Mike was there, just as they had no inkling of the nine months he'd spent at the hidden Shaolin Temple in Loyang, Henan. He'd had to sneak himself and his seventeen-year-old son Sean over the border into Bhutan, fly to India, then to London, then home.

So much had happened in his life that it seemed a blur — as if someone had taken the lives of many different people and mixed them together as his life. Yet, through it all, the one permanent thing had been his involvement in the martial arts. It made him shake his head. Had the bullies been the ones to ultimately shape his life? He nodded to himself, realizing the truth of it.

Sydney, NS (Grade 6)

Running — *Just make it to the end of this block and turn the corner, and you'll be safe*, he told himself.

Hard hands fell on his shoulders and hurled him to the ground, where he fell against a tree. Instinctively he curled up into a ball, trying to protect his head and stomach at the same time.

The bully — Earl Miller — began kicking him in the back. After the fourth kick, he cried out in pain, a spasm through his spine forcing him out of fetal position, letting Earl begin kicking him in the stomach.

“Think you're smart, don't you punk? —Mr. Cop's little brat — Show up at my school and make me an' all my friends look bad with your high marks. Not so smart now, are you punk?”

Mike went back to hugging his bruised gut, waiting it out, tears flowing quietly. The bully would tire of him soon enough — he always did.

“I hate that school,” he cried on the way home — eight more blocks to Bentinck Street. He'd started grade six at a new school — the old school where he'd

been happy for six years, since he'd started in Grade Primary, a sort of compulsory kindergarden, didn't make you write your own notes in Grade Six — then printed off what notes you needed and gave them out. Colby School made you take notes. His mother decided that he should switch to Colby, so that he'd be better prepared for taking notes in Junior High.

Great, he thought. Something more to look forward to next year — Grade Seven. He was already hearing horror stories about Woodill Junior High and the tough kids there. Even the principal, "Skully McKeighan, was the stuff of horror stories.

The year dragged on — a series of beatings — never a telltale mark on his face to draw suspicion. Miller and his friends were very careful about that.

Once Mike confided to his mother about what was happening. She called his teacher, who kept Earl behind a while after school, her plan: to give Mike a head-start. But Mike caught how Earl looked at one of his friends, giving a hint of an evil smile. That afternoon, Earl's friend substituted for him.

At least, come spring, he wasn't curled up in snow or slush, and they could no longer rub snow in his face. Still, it was pretty much the same.

His mother would ask, "Michael, how did you get these grass stains on your clothes? You know, it's really hard to get grass stains out." He'd just make up a story about falling or skylarking with a friend, and apologize.

Woodill Jr. High was as bad as expected — Earl Miller was there waiting for him. He barely survived until Grade Nine — that's when they started coming in twos and threes — the favoured trick has for two to intimidate from the front, while the third, often smaller, got behind you. The third might kidney-punch, or sometimes crouch low so that you'd back up into him and fall over him.

The final straw came one rainy day just before Halloween. While two distracted Mike from in front, the third shoved Mike's books from behind. Mike's books, all newly covered in brown paper, got dumped in the mud. "Hey, Little Mikey, you dropped your books," one of them taunted. The other two joined in as the first one laughed.

Something inside him snapped. A rage built up in him, ringing in his ears. He grabbed one kid and hurled him into the mud, turned, and drove a fist into the gut of the second. Before number three could take in what was happening, Mike's fist was flattening his nose and splitting his upper lip. He kicked this one in the crotch for good measure, then dealt the one doubled over from the gut punch a double-handed blow to the side of the head. As that one dropped, Mike turned to the one still slipping in the mud. Grabbing him by the jacket, he seemed to be helping him up, but just long enough to give him three good punches to the face, then drop him back into the mud. He was about to lash out with another kick, but stopped himself. As tempting as it was, he was an expert on being kicked — he'd been kicked while curled up in the grass, in the autumn leaves, and in the snow. Mike knew all about kicking, enough to know he'd never do it to someone else when they were down.

A car pulled up next to him and stopped. *Mr. McKeighan*. Mike froze in place, seized by panic.

"They started it!" Mike blurted. "They —"

Mr. McKeighan, (known by all the kids as 'Skully' because of his bald head and bony facial features), gave a curt nod. "I'm sure they did, Michael. Why don't you gather up your books out of the wet and get in. I'll give you a drive home."

Mike got in. On the way home he developed an entirely new impression of just who Mr. McKeighan was.

After the holidays, no one bullied him — word had gotten around — he was the crazy kid who might go nuts and almost kill you when he got mad.

The following fall, in Grade Ten, at Sydney Academy, it started again, though some kids still whispered that Mike might ‘lose it’ if pushed too far. Then, at the end of October, his father enrolled him in karate classes.

He was just a month into Grade Ten when his father announced that they’d be moving to Dartmouth — Will had landed the job of Detective Inspector — head of investigating detectives for Dartmouth. After the amalgamation, he stepped up to the position of Detective Inspector for HRM.

Starting again as the new kid at Prince Andrew High was, for the first time in his life, fine. Then there was David Black: highest grades in the class, and hockey player. It began with little shoulder checks in the hallway. Later, in retrospect, Mike would figure out that his presence threatened David’s claim to the highest marks in the class — for the entire grade, no doubt.

Finally, after a couple of weeks, torn between the boiling fury inside him and the desire to crawl into a hole, his peripheral vision caught sight of Black approaching in the hallway. Mike was just opening his locker. As a flash of what he assumed was some kind of intuitive fore-sight, he saw it all play out in his mind: Black changing course at the last second, arms thrusting forward to slam Mike into his locker.

Instead, Mike sidestepped, seized Black by his jacket, and slammed *him* into the locker.

“It this how you want it to be between us?” Mike asked through clenched teeth. “Is this how it’s gonna be?”

He released his grip on Black and watched as he lowered his eyes and walked away.

"That was good," a voice said, the accent awkward, hard for Mike to follow.

He turned, taking in Chinese features.

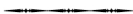
"I'm Lau Kai Peng," the boy explained, "from Hong Kong. I'm called Dominic. What style was that? Look little like Wing Chun. I teach Wing Chun and Bak Sil Lum." (With his accent Mike thought he'd said *boxi-lung*, and got him to repeat it.) "I teach a Chinese Boxing Club three days a week in the gym. You want to join?"

"Sure," Mike replied, offering to shake Lau's hand. "What's Chinese Boxing?"

"Gung Fu," Lau replied, giving it the Cantonese pronunciation, "Kung Fu."

Mike nodded, wondering what Kung Fu was.

That afternoon, from across the room, Black caught his eye and gave a slight nod. After class, he walked with him to the next class.



Thinking back, he realized that he'd lived more of a life than most people. He'd been a Biology teacher in Bermuda, a performing musician in bars, a Kung Fu instructor, a junior master in Katana-juitsu (a form of Samurai swordsmanship), and was now the published author of three fantasy novels, with his fourth about to be released. He'd also seen death hit too close to home. He'd looked death in the eye many a time himself. Now he was watching it slowly take up residence in his father. He'd seen death move in before. He'd dealt with the pain, the loss.

Here we go again, he thought. *Another turn at bat...*



Little Harbour, Abaco, Bahamas

August, 1999

Tears filled Mike Cameron's eyes, obscuring his vision, as he fumbled with the Robertson screwdriver, trying to undo the two small brass screws that secured the end cap to the brass-coloured cylinder. Images flowed before his mind's eye: images of standing on the deck of the freighter, *Maria Sittas*, shedding similar tears. It was 200 nautical miles southwest of Bermuda and *Mystic Lady* was sinking after holing herself on a derelict shipping container. But that was the past and, run, walk, limp, or crawl, he had to keep moving forward. Life only moves in one direction, never backward.

As he looked across the calm little bay of Little Harbour, Abaco, toward the A-frame bar on the beach, a sea turtle raised its head and seemed to study him before ducking under, swimming under the surface, then diving toward the bottom, disappearing. This used to be one of his favourite places, but today he had no heart for it; he had no heart for anything. He had no idea what kept him breathing. He was just looking for a feeling of release, a belief that life could have meaning. They called it closure. To Mike it was just dull pain. He was barely aware of little Sean's presence next to him in the dinghy — and for Mike constant awareness of everything around him had been almost uncanny, a Zen thing.

He'd returned to the Bahamas to keep a promise.

After ten successful passages of about 730 nautical miles each (one was over 900), some might look upon him as an experienced sailor or master mariner, but he'd have laughed at the description. He was certainly a sailor who had had many experiences and had been forced to decide in a hurry what to do to solve a problem, yet, he considered himself a cautious and conservative seaman.

Now he felt less than that. He was just numb and empty, looking for something he couldn't even name. So much had been lost in a three year period: a boat, a precious person, and his faith in himself. At times it felt like all he had left was his memories. What he was looking for was a reason to live.

He finally got the top off the urn and slowly poured out the ashes — the mortal remains of Susan Cameron — watching them settle toward the bottom as a cloud.

“Good-bye, Mommy,” Sean said in a small voice.

Mike glanced and his son — Susan's face on Michael's frame — and forced a rictus of a smile. The boy would be ten in a couple of months. A mop of blonde hair fell in bangs over his forehead. His smile was a sad one, but he'd shed no tears, not since the night they'd rushed Susan to the hospital, her body wracked with seizures, though she seemed in a coma. He still had his father. That seemed enough for him. That knowledge was probably the only reason Mike was still breathing. He'd certainly considered the alternatives, but he couldn't cop out on his son.

Back on the *Albatross*, he watched as Sean took up a length of rope and his plastic sword, and went off to play pirate on the foredeck. Mike then went below, dumped a handful of ice into a glass, splashed a generous amount of Glenlivet over that, then returned to the cockpit where he could keep an eye on Sean.

SeaView Extended Care, 2007

“Hey, Mikey. You still here? Good God; it must be after midnight. You should be home with Sean, not here watching me. I'm fine. The antibiotics have driven out most of the pneumonia.” Will Cameron's declaration was interrupted by a hacking cough.

Mike jolted back to the present from his painful reverie. He studied his father. It was almost as if he could see inside him, see the cancer spreading, consuming the healthy cells in both lungs.

Will reached a hand to cover Mike's.

"I'm not going to die tonight, son," he insisted. "Doc says I might even hold on for another year, if I'm stubborn enough. And you of all people know how stubborn I can be. We're cut from the same cloth that way — that and the spooky gut-instinct we've always shared. Damn; think of the cop I could have been if I had your smarts, Mikey. I could never relate to all the stuff going on in your head. Billy was so much easier to figure out. So I related to him and let your mother try to figure you out. I'm sorry, Mikey — Mike; I can see now that I was wrong to take that attitude, just as I can see the blackness in your eyes. Fight it, Mike. You've had a hell of a life, and still have a hell of a life ahead of you. That much I can see. Come on, Mikey; you've got lots of happy memories in there. Lock the black ones in the closet and dwell on the happy ones."

Will Cameron's voice trailed off; his eyes drifted shut again as he dozed off.

Come on, Mike agreed, fight the darkness. Find a way to deal with this. Dad needs you and Sean needs you. Do it for them. There must be a billion happy memories you can haul out. Find one.

Spanish Point, Bermuda Spring, 1986

Mike was trying to fit a piece of poplar into place as part of a settee frame in what would become the main salon of a 26-foot sloop. The piece was a tight fit, refusing to go into place by just a hair's breadth. He took a breath, compressed his abs, and blew the breath

out through pursed lips — Chi-Kung power breathing from King Fu — and drove his palm against the end of the 2-by-2 frame. It popped into place to Mike's satisfaction — no hammer tracks, just a — *oh, crap* — just a blood stain. He grabbed a rag and scrubbed at the stain, obliterating most of it, annoyed at the imperfection, though he knew it would be covered by mahogany and never seen again.

He looked at his palm, pulled out an inch-long splinter, and sucked at the blood a moment, then raised his hand and calmed his thoughts. It took less than a minute. He looked at his palm again and smiled. The bleeding had stopped. The wound would close over in an hour or so. It was a bit creepy, but he'd always been weird that way, a fast healer.

The sun, blaring in on him through the open framing of the deck and roof, raised a film of sweat. He needed a break. Climbing up to the cockpit floor, he stepped to the edge of the deck, ignored the ladder at the stern, and dropped lightly to the ground, then stepped back.

Sitting in her cradle behind the house, *Spirit of Freedom* was slowly taking shape. He shook his head and smiled.

He'd never been on a sloop with a cabin, but his friends were convinced that he could build one. He'd designed his own plans from information he'd interpolated from the 3-leaf brochure of a Cape Dory 25D. The brochure had provided a cutaway surface view and a cutaway profile. A knowledge of algebra and trig provided the rest. She had a plywood core, fiberglassed inside and out, with 1600 pounds of lead ballast inside her hollow keel. The deck and superstructure were of wood, coated with epoxy.

Now that the framework for the settee bunks in the salon was finished, he could lay the mahogany floorboards. Then he'd shape the front panels and tops of the bunks with mahogany plywood. He'd been

surprised at the availability of mahogany in Bermuda — Brazilian ply, with it's lighter grain, often with hints of green and purple heartwood, and dark African mahogany planks.

He grabbed the hose, peeled off his T-shirt, and sprayed a shower over his head. It wasn't all that cold, but it helped.

"No hug for you; you're all wet." His wife, Susan, was approaching from the kitchen door, a tall glass of ginger beer in one hand and a book in the other. She'd been reading *Dove*, by Robin Lee Graham. "Well, maybe just a little one," she said with a giggle, coming into his arms. Then, "Here; I put lots of ice to make it cold. I'll get you a refill when it's gone. So how's the boat coming?"

Mike smiled. "When it cools off tonight, I'll put the salon floor down. Then I can stand in there without balancing on cross frames."

As he gulped the first cold swallow, Susan eyed the book, eyed him cautiously, then looked back at the book.

"So, what are you thinking?" he prompted her, smiling, knowing where her thoughts were heading.

In answer, she held up the book. "Could *Spirit of Freedom* go across an ocean? I mean go cruising to exotic places like Robin Graham did in *Dove*?"

"You mean like St. George's?" Mike joked, referring to the port at the east end of Bermuda. "Damn; I haven't even finished the first boat, and you're hinting that we need a bigger one. Robin Graham was an adventurous sixteen year old when he set out to sail around the world in *Dove*. By the time he was three quarters of the way through, he'd lost faith in *Dove*, and finished the voyage in a 33-footer. Are you serious?"

"Well, yeah," she replied. "I think it would be great to wander around, visiting neat places like Caribbean Islands or the South Pacific."

Well, that was it. As much as they loved their weekends and summer holidays on *Spirit of Freedom*, they were constantly watching and wishing for something bigger. But, even in that context, *Spirit of Freedom* taught them a lot about what they needed and what they didn't. Her engine was an OMC 14 hp and her electrical system was limited. They had lights, a VHF, and a 6" b/w TV. Her stereo was a 'ghetto blaster' that played cassettes, and her 'head' was a porta-pottie! They had to take the battery home every few weeks to charge it.

He'd put a lot of hard work into her construction and had imposed upon a small army of friends and students from the Kung Fu classes he taught three days a week for help with turning the finished hull by hand so that it sat upright in the cradle. He'd thought things through carefully, calling upon everything he'd ever learned about woodwork and fiberglassing from a father who, though he was the Detective Inspector for the Halifax Police, had an uncanny talent for woodworking and had build canoes out of fiberglass. But, with all of this, he was amazed that it floated and mesmerized by the fact that it actually sailed well.

On launch day a flatbed truck hauled it down to the city docks as the sun was rising. The contractors were supposed to make all the arrangements and had chosen the cruise ship dock on Front Street in Hamilton. Next thing Mike knew, the Harbor Master was standing next to him, wanting to see the permit for what was happening. It could have been embarrassing, ending in the boat being trucked back home, but the Harbour Master adopted an attitude of "hurry up and get that thing in the water, then get this truck and crane off my dock!"

Years later, both he and the Harbour Master had laughed about it when Mike found out that he wasn't just the Harbour Master, but the Director of Marine and

Ports: the man who had the last word when Mike finally got his Captain's License.

As the crane lowered it, the hull sank deeper and deeper into the water. He wondered if it would ever stop or just sink to the bottom, then the straps went slack and she bobbed back up a few inches. The waterline he'd calculated mathematically sat one inch below the water's surface.

Mike leaped outward, caught one of the crane ropes, and lowered himself hand-under-hand a few feet, before dropping to the coachroof. He mounted the outboard on its stern bracket, got it started, then cleared the sling straps and motored over to the steps of a side dock.

Moments later, the crane was holding the 28-foot mast up so Mike could attach the stays. To Mike's chagrin, most of the stays were too long. So much for careful calculation! The *Staylock*® terminals were reusable, but he needed rigging cutters to shorten the stays. So, they laid the mast down on the roof and prepared to leave.

Mike got the mast lashed to the cabin-top, then friends who had come to watch and help out suggested that, mast or no mast, it was Miller time! There were some cold cans in the cooler and Susan took one of the few known photos of Mike with a beer in his hand. There they were, sitting on the boat he'd built, floating in the harbour.

Soon they started the engine again and set out around the corner for what used to be Pitt's Bay Boatyard. He must have been voicing his amazement at how everything worked, because his friend, also named Mike, teased, "And it turns to starboard, too!"

Soon they were settled on the little work dock at the yard, using the gantry to hold the mast, while Mike cut each stay and refitted the terminals. The forestay was just fine but the backstays were 6 inches too long.

The topstays and lower shrouds were 4 to 6 inches too long.

It was late afternoon when, with the mast fully stepped, they sailed around to her mooring in Mill's Creek, not far from the house. They ate supper aboard, watched the little black and white TV for a while, then flipped out the settee extensions that turned two facing salon settees into a king size bed with the mast compression post in the middle.

Before they could nod off completely, they were accosted by the sound of a motorboat and rowdy noises outside. Thinking it was some drunken hooligans, Mike charged on deck to find two small motorboats filled with more friends who couldn't make the launching and had come to applaud their success.

That was the beginning. There were many weekends of just sailing around the Great Sound, anchoring in cozy coves to go snorkelling, and subtropical nights aboard. Mike practiced sun sights with his *Davis®* plastic sextant and dreamed of far away places.

They started sailing up South Channel, which runs along the northern coast, up to St. George's. Weekends in St. George's were pretend cruises. Then they started sailing there via North Channel, a curving, more offshore channel, which often allowed better sailing wind and gave a fabulous view of the northern barrier reefs. It led to new snorkelling, diving, and spearfishing territory. The best, though, was cruising to St. George's for the weekend.

After a couple of years of spending weekends and sometimes almost a week aboard, they got a feel for what they wanted in a bigger boat... and what gadgets they did or didn't need. They saved every cent they could, including some windfalls that had come their way.

In the January of '88, while visiting a friend on his boat at the Royal Hamilton Amateur Dinghy Club

(R.H.A.D.C.), Ian declared, "I may have found your next boat," then led them down the dock to point out a lovely, sleek-looking cutter, just over 36 feet long.

"His asking price seems a bit high, but he's been trying to sell it for a while," he pointed out.

"That's a bit out of our league," Mike answered quickly. "We were thinking of something a little smaller, like 32 feet, and hoping to spend less."

For a couple of months they wandered along the dock regularly, looking at *Ngaire* (Ni' ree – New Zealand Maori for moon blossom) Then, one day in July, they got caught in the act.

"Are you Ian's friends?" a voice behind Mike asked in an English accent. It was Robin, *Ngaire's* owner. "Come aboard," he invited. "Have a look at her."

Mike stepped lightly to the bow rail, then down to the deck, reaching back to help Susan aboard.

It's a proven ploy, Mike thought. Don't mention price, don't talk of sale, just invite them for a look. A potential buyer can't help but look at her, picturing her as being his boat. He knew he was falling for the proven ploy.

She was lovely – huge compared to *Spirit of Freedom*. She had a foc'sle, head and closets, salon, galley, and a quarter cabin, boasting berths for 6. She even had water heaters and water pressure.

"I'm going sailing on Sunday. Want to come?"

"Sure!" Mike and Susan answered in unison. What the heck, it wasn't a commitment to buy.

Next Sunday they motored out of the berth and had a lively sail out into the Great Sound. She handled like a dream. Mike didn't care for tiller steering — even *Spirit of Freedom* had a wheel — but she balanced well and, as he got a feel for her, she suddenly didn't seem so big.

As they were returning to the dock, Robin said, "Well, Squire, I'm looking at a bigger boat, so I'd be

willing to sell her for ...” He proceeded to drop the price by more almost 15%.

Mike was surprised, but cautious. He expected to soon have more than enough. Mike cautiously assured Robin that they were interested, but not ready to commit.

At the end of the summer, they joined R.H.A.D.C. and, in honour of the occasion, decided to have dinner at the club. Mike managed to get away from his desk at school before 4:30. As he sat at the club bar, waiting for to Susan to arrive, a friend of Robin’s came in and sat next to him.

“Did you hear about Robin?” Martin asked. When Mike looked puzzled, he went on, “Exxon is reducing the size of the offshore office here by about 75% and he’s part of the cut. Immigration has given him three months to settle his affairs. If he can’t find another job, he’ll have to leave.”

As Mike digested the implications of this, Susan arrived, grinning from ear to ear when he told her the news.

“If you want to make him an offer on *Ngairé*, there’s no better time,” his friend prompted.

Getting the bartender to pass him the phone, Mike called Robin and made an offer. Within the week, *Ngairé* was officially theirs. By the end of the month, she was re-documented as *Mystic Lady*.

2: Detective Work

SeaView Extended Care, 2007

Mike's reverie was shattered by the eruption of violent coughing next to him. It subsided almost as soon as it started.

Will Cameron's eyelids fluttered. "I'm okay, Mikey," he insisted, his voice so weak it was as if he was talking in his sleep.

Mike grabbed the oxygen mask and let his father breath from it for a while, then added more eucalyptus oil to a vapourizer on the window sill. He checked his father's pulse, then put his head to Will's chest to listen to his breathing.

"Try this," a rich, musical voice said. A short blond with a full-bodied figure in nurse's scrubs held out a stethoscope to him.

Mike nodded, took the stethoscope, then listened.

"The congestion is less," he observed. "He must have just loosened a large patch of phlegm and expectorate it."

The nurse smiled. "You're Michael, aren't you? Will speaks of you a lot — insists you should have been a doctor."

Mike rolled his eyes. "I thought I was through hearing that mantra when my mother passed." He extended his hand. "Mike Cameron."

"Carrie Loughlin," she replied. Her smile seemed to make her face glow, her emerald-green eyes sparkle.

Mike turned away more quickly than he meant to.

“Well, since there’s no cause for alarm, I’ll leave you two alone.” She smiled again as she left.

“She was right; you’d have made a hell of a doctor.” His father’s voice faded more. “...hell of a detective, too.” The last trailed off as a sigh.

Mike wondered about that. He’d only ever played detective once in his life, when, the future of one of his students hung in the balance.

Bermuda
September, 1988

Mike circled the two students sparring in the center circle, watching for flaws, and calling out advice and warnings. Both were good; both filled him with pride at their progress and dedication.

Several times he interrupted his focus to glance around the room, hoping to spot a late arrival. Jamal Simmons, one of Mike’s more dedicated students — so dedicated that he was rarely late and never absent — had yet to show.

Finally, the doors to the high school gym burst open. Mike wheeled about, expecting to see Jamal fighting to contain himself from bursting out explanations as to why he was late. That aspect of discipline came slow to Jamal. Instead, the man standing there looking flustered and agitated was a much larger, older man. Mike recognized Jamal’s father; they’d met at annual parent-teacher evenings, and he always came to pick Jamal up after class.

Frowning, Mike approached the man, escorting him out into the hallway. His gut told him something was wrong.

“They arrested him!” Simmons blurted. “I know he didn’t do anything — they’re accusing ’im of murder. It’s crap. Yeah, ’e did some stupidity, but that was before you got hold of ’im. He’s been good since then.

You made him think 'e was someone, that 'e had a future."

"Mr. Simmons, take a deep breath. Who arrested Jamal, and what can I do to help?"

He had gripped the anxious father's shoulders and stared into his eyes, hoping to get past the panic to the rational part of the man's mind. It always shocked him how he could do this but, over the years, he just learned to accept it. It worked.

"He works nights on the Canadian Base, just past our place."

Mike nodded; he knew this; he'd written a reference for Jamal.

"Some janitor got killed while Jamal was workin' in the kitchen — he chops up stuff mostly — wants to be a chef — but that janitor was over by the — whatever they call the doctors' office."

"The infirmary," Mike offered.

Simmons nodded. "Why would he kill anybody? They say it was about drugs, but my boy never had nothing to do with drugs. He don't even sneak a drink since 'e got with you — all that mind-controlling-your-body stuff you teach. It's been good for him. No way he did this."

Mike nodded. "What can I do?"

"You can go talk to them; see what's really goin' on. What did they call it? You can be his advocate. I can't afford no lawyer, but your name came up — you're Canadian, and you have a high security clearance for a civilian."

That puzzled Mike. Maybe it had something to do with teaching disarming techniques to members of various police forces.

"Give me a minute."

He went back inside and called the class into line, then dismissed them early. The chorus of groans amused him — he never got a response like this on the

odd occasions when a biology or math class was cut short.

He turned back to Jamal's father. "Go in your car; I'll follow you. Just give me a moment to call home." He used the pay phone to alert Susan to what was happening, then got in his car and followed Simmons on the winding drive out to Daniel's Head.

Security scrutinized his ID, then admitted him. He parked off to one side and approached the infirmary building, now cordoned off with yellow tape.

The man who approached took Mike by surprise — he was expecting the uniform of a military investigator, either a petty officer, a chief, or a master chief. The man who intercepted him flashed CSIS credentials — the Canadian Security and Intelligence Service. Mike didn't like him; the man was an asshole right out of the gate. It was all cut-and-dried; he'd convicted Jamal in advance.

Mike decided not to waste time on useless questions.

"May I see the body?" he asked.

The man, Kendrix, hesitated, then nodded. "Fair enough; just don't touch anything."

Mike responded with an arched eyebrow — Susan called it his Spock look. "You seem to have started this investigation with a lot of assumptions, Agent Kendrix." His tone was a cold one. "We'll get off on a better footing if you start by assuming that I'm not stupid. The fact that I'm here means that you've checked me out. You know who I am and what my fields of knowledge are."

Just then an officer appeared. From his insignia, Mike assumed he was high in the command hierarchy.

"Mr. Cameron?" the man asked. "I'm Commander Carmichael, Base Commander. I gather the boy's father has asked you to be his advocate in lieu of a lawyer. We don't usually do this — of course, there'll also be a pro-bono military counsel for the boy." A hint of a

smile showed. Mike decided that the Commander was amused by how Mike had handled the arrogant Kendrix.

“Commander,” Mike asked, “has Jamal ever been in trouble on base? For that matter, has he been in trouble on or off base in the past year?”

“No; not that I’m aware of,” the man replied. “I’m told he’s a diligent worker and very respectful.”

Mike instinctively liked the commander much more than the CSIS agent. The man was middle-aged, possibly a grandfather. There was a paternal air to him.

“So there’s no reason to suspect him of stealing drugs.”

“None whatsoever,” the commander replied.

Mike nodded.

“Then why is it assumed he was stealing drugs?” Mike asked.

“What else was he doing in the infirmary after dark? The place was closed. You have to call the duty nurse to get help.” It was Kendrix who interjected this.

“So you’ve placed Jamal at the scene?” Mike asked. “You have evidence placing him there?”

“A witness,” Kendrix shot back. “A mechanic saw the kid climbing through a window.”

Mike pondered that.

“Commander, where is the motor pool from here?”

“Two streets over, that way.” He pointed.

“And where does the mechanic live?”

“A block passed the motor pool.”

“And the commissary is a block away in the direction of the motor pool.”

“That’s correct,” the commander confirmed.

Mike nodded. “So the mechanic was curiously out of his way — a convenient coincidence. When was Jamal allegedly spotted climbing through the window?”

“8:15,” the commander replied.

“And the time of death?”

“8:20, based on...”

“Liver temperature,” Mike finished for him, nodding. “When was Jamal last seen in the kitchen?”

“One of the cooks says 8:15, but the kitchen clock is a minute slow.”

“The cook is mistaken,” Kendrix interjected. “You can’t trust his recollection of time.”

“Really?” Mike countered. “A cook who earns his living by timing what he cooks is unreliable as to time, yet a mechanic is unimpeachable?”

The commander smiled.

“You were going to show me the body,” Mike reminded the CSIS agent.

“Is there a chance?” Simmons hissed in Mike’s ear. “Can you get ’im off? I know he didn’t do this. The commander likes you...”

“Shh,” Mike cautioned. “Mr. Simmons, I need you to relax. And you *can* relax. Jamal didn’t do this; now, just let me prove it. For that I need a clear head.”

“You *know* he’s innocent?” the father asked.

Mike nodded. “Don’t ask me how I know; I just know.” There, he’d said it. He hated saying such things; it went against everything he’d been trained about the scientific method. Yet, it was a fact — there were times when he simply knew things as certainties, with no explanation. He’d learned to trust his gut. The only time it had ever gotten him in trouble was when he rationalized it away and ignored his feelings.

“Jamal has a blue belt in Kung Fu; the janitor was struck in the spine, strong-armed across the throat, and his neck broken by wrenching his head to one side.” Kendrix made this pronouncement with an air of authority. “Those are typical martial arts techniques.”

Mike smiled. “Actually, Jamal would more likely have used a praying mantis pincer grip on the windpipe rather than strong-arming across the throat. As for wrenching the head to break the neck, I hope your janitor is five-foot-six and a light-weight, otherwise

your description of Jamal strong-arming his throat and breaking his neck that way flies out the window.”

The janitor was neither five-foot-six nor a lightweight. He was over six feet tall and well over two hundred pounds.

Mike stood by the table in the infirmary and examined the bruising across the throat. He then studied how hair had been torn from the left side of the janitor’s head.

Mike glanced at his watch — 10:00 PM. He frowned. “Well, rigour will have set in, so we can’t sit the body up. Commander, you’re about the janitor’s height. Since I’m only about an inch or so taller than Jamal, would you mind helping me prove a point?”

Mike didn’t wait for the officer to comply; he simply stepped behind him and tried to encompass the hold that had been used on the janitor.

“As you can see,” he explained, “my arm isn’t long enough to comfortably grab the hair where the janitor’s hair was clearly grabbed, and I’m on my toes to strong-arm the throat.”

“So the kid was panicked; he did the first thing he thought of,” Kendrix insisted. “Maybe he leaped up onto the janitor’s back.”

“No, Agent Kendrix; you need to go back to Investigation 101.” Mike was totally confident now. “When someone panics, he falls back on training or instinct, and does something with which he’s comfortable. I don’t teach this technique; it relies too much on physical strength. Wing Chun Kung Fu was devised by a woman. It relies on science, using balance, leverage, friction, and momentum against the opponent. It never relies on strength. Jamal wouldn’t do something so foolish.”

“He panicked,” Kendrix insisted. “The janitor caught him in the act and took him by surprise.”

Mike chuckled. "Make up your mind, Agent Kendrix," he said. "You now say that Jamal panicked because the janitor took him by surprise?"

Kendrix's self-righteous nod only served to broaden Mike's smile. He gestured with a hand toward the janitor's body.

Kendrix just snorted, dismissing whatever Mike meant to imply without even seeing what it was. It was the Base Commander who began nodding.

"Yes, it's obvious, isn't it," he declared, "it was clearly the janitor who was taken by surprise."

Mike nodded. "Whoever did this did it by choice. Jamal could have run at the janitor from behind, kicked his feet out from under him, then bolted for the door or a window and gotten away. My guess is that the janitor already suspected the perp, and the perp knew it. He killed the janitor out of choice.

"Look at the bruising across the front of the throat. That's a thick forearm — thicker than mine, and my arms are a lot more developed than Jamal's. The arm has to be longer than mine to comfortably grab the hair that way. No, gentlemen; you're looking for a man over six feet tall, with a muscular build. He'll also have greasy hands, like a mechanic. Look at the grease trace on the neck and head, as well as the upper back. That's black axel grease. Do they use that in the kitchen? I'm sure your cooks would have smelled it on Jamal and sent him to wash.

"Even the extended-knuckle punch to the spine is too high for Jamal. He'd have hit in the lumbar region, not the lower thoracic. So how tall is the witness — the mechanic?"

"Now, see here..." Kendrix blurted.

Mike turned on him. "This mechanic wouldn't happen to be a friend of yours, would he? He's placed at the scene; he's an explainable source of the axel grease on the victim; and he's conveniently the only one who places your chosen patsy at the scene, even

though it requires Jamal running here from the commissary, entering the building, being surprised by the janitor, then inexplicably surprising the janitor in turn, all in about two minutes.”

“The mechanic is about my height,” the commandant mused. “And he failed a drug screening a few months back — it crossed my desk. We routinely re-screen, and he passed the second time.”

“Or submitted someone else’s urine,” Mike suggested. “Is he also a weight-lifter?”

“He’s muscular,” the commandant confirmed. “And I believe he had some commando combat training, but washed out due to some discipline issues.”

Mike nodded. “Is he right-handed? The perp you’re looking for is right-handed. Jamal, by the way, is left-handed.”

The commander turned to an MP standing nearby and said, “Detain seaman Chapman for questioning, and see to it that Jamal Simmons is released immediately.”

“Just a minute,” Mike interrupted. He was studying the backs of the janitor’s elbows. “Commander, is there a large magnifier available?”

“Well,” the commander mused, “this isn’t a proper pathology lab, but there must be something Ah; there —”

He went off to one side and returned with a lighted magnifier on a swing-arm, mounted to a stand on wheels.

“Perfect,” Mike commented. As soon as the commander had plugged it in, he turned it on and studied the janitor’s elbows.”

“What have you found, Mr. Cameron?” the commander asked.

“It looks like perimortem bruising — not extensive, in fact, difficult to detect. If we could have Jamal brought here, as well as seaman Chapman, we might establish something once and for all.”

The commander nodded to an MP, who went off, returning after a few minutes with Jamal. "Chapman should be here in another minute or two," the MP told the commander. "I asked Branson to escort him here."

Jamal looked terrified, but, when he saw Mike and his father, he looked relieved. He cast a pleading glance at Mike, who gave a faint smile and nodded.

"Jamal, just peel of your shirt and we can establish your innocence in less than a minute," he said.

Looking relieved, Jamal hauled his T-shirt over his head and stood there.

"Now, raise your arms," Mike instructed, shining the lights of the magnifier on his ribs. "You, will, note, commander, the lack of any trace of bruising on Jamal's ribs. I'm sure you'll agree that, Jamal is so slight compared to the deceased janitor, that it would be impossible to elbow him in the ribs on each side without leaving visible bruising."

Handing Jamal his T-shirt, he added, "I think you'll be going home with your father shortly."

A second MP entered, bring a large burly man in grimy blue work pants and a sloppy T-shirt.

"Where is the shirt you wear while working?" Mike asked.

"It's well after-hours,": Chapman declared. "I changed out of it. That's not a crime, is it?"

Mike just smiled. "Depends why," he quipped. "Peel off the T-shirt."

"Why?" The tone was defiant and belligerent.

"Seaman Chapman, the commander barked, then glared at the mechanic, who stripped to bare chest, showing reluctance.

Mike noticed how he favoured the areas of his lateral ribs, under the arms on each side.

"Raise your arms," he instructed, smiling. Then, to the commander and Kendrix, he added, "We don't even need the magnifier." Indeed, the bruising was plain to

see. "Any questions as to whom it was that the janitor elbowed in the ribs before his neck was broken?"

Chapman tried to make a break, lungeing at Mike in an apparent effort to shove him aside.

Mike dodged the arms, parrying the right arm in passing, levering it into a position straight out behind Chapman's back, palm-up, encompassing a wrist-lock, his left palm exerting pressure on the elbow. Chapman's face came up against the table with a loud thud. Immediately, the two MPs rushed to Chapman on each side, taking him into custody, getting his hands handcuffed behind his back.

"I think seaman Chapman, by his own actions, has just confessed his guilt," the commander commented.

Turning back to Mike, he held out his hand. "I'm grateful for your input, Mr. Cameron. You should consider a career as an investigator. Perhaps CSIS may be looking for a good man."

He then turned on Kendrix. "Agent Kendrix, I'll be asking our investigative service to look into any connections you may have with Chapman. I'll also be suggesting that CSIS do the same."

There were daggers in Kendrix's eyes when he glared at Mike. Mike just ignored it.

"I think you can take Jamal home, now" he told the boy's father. "After a hot bath and a good night's sleep he'll be fine. I'm sure he'll have a lot to talk about in school tomorrow. And I'm equally sure his job here is safe. He'll be a bit of a hero in the kitchen for a while." He gave Jamal a wink, adding in a low voice, "I'll see you tomorrow."

"I'd love to know what connections might turn up between that CSIS agent, Kendrix, and the mechanic, Chapman," Mike mused after he and Susan had gone to bed. "I have a gut feeling that CSIS guy was

involved. From the moment I met Kendrix there was something I didn't like about him."

"Maybe you should become a private detective," Susan joked. "I know teaching is getting to you."

"It's not teaching that's getting to me;" Mike argued, "it's babysitting the kids who don't want to be taught. If I could focus on teaching instead of having to field all the interruptions, I'd be fine."

Susan hugged him. "Well, at least we have the weekends to look forward to."

3: Planning a Cruise

They spent every weekend that September sailing up to St. George's at Bermuda's east end, and taking *Mystic Lady* to all the places they'd enjoyed with *Spirit of Freedom*. It was the time of the southern migration, when Bermuda played host to the charter vessels en route to the Virgin Islands from New England. Meeting all these boats bound for exotic places could only fuel the dream and, before long, they were seriously talking about a summer cruise.

"Bermuda isn't the best place to start cruising from," Mike commented to an American sailor one night, sitting in the cockpit. "All you 'mainlanders' can wander down the coast to a Florida, and cross over to the Bahamas. If you put your dividers on the chart, Bermuda is thirteen miles long. No matter where you go, you're looking at a minimum of five days on the ocean, then trying to find a rock in the middle of the ocean when you come home. So much for easing into blue water cruising!"

"What about your uncle in Fort Lauderdale?" Susan asked.

Mike frowned. "He actually a great-uncle, my grandmother's sister's husband. I haven't seen him in about twenty years. Still, I really like him — what I remember of him."

Mike got out the West Indies chart and started looking at the route.

"The Abacos are in the way," he commented. "That's a cluster of islands in the northwest part of the Bahamas."

He went below and grabbed the Bahamas cruising guide.

"We can clear Customs and Immigration in Marsh Harbour, then run down the east coast and turn west into Northwest Providence Channel, between Grand Bahama and the bank islands, like Great Isaac and the Bimini chain. Then we cross the Gulf Stream to Lauderdale. The good news is that we have Chart Kits for Florida and the Bahamas. I can spend the winter studying those and practicing sight reduction with my sextant."

They spent the spring doing sea trials out off St. George's, going out of sight of the island and finding their way back. Mike was certified in celestial navigation, and now had a chance to compare sextant fixes with a brand-new transit SatNav. Sitting at his chart-table, he cocked an eyebrow. Even with the plastic sextant, he was plotting lines of position that were within a nautical mile of his SatNav location. He felt better than adequate as a navigator.

Mystic Lady was a lady on the ocean, too, passing all tests with elegance and grace.

Breaking the news to the families was a mixed experience. Mike's father always started phone conversations by asking how the boat was. Mike replied by telling him that they were thinking of taking an ocean trip.

"So, what do you think?" Mike asked his father.

Detective Inspector Will Cameron drew a long breath. Mike tensed, ready for disapproval. What he got surprised him.

"Your mother and I never raised any stupid boys, son," he began. "You've always been methodical, your head all full of logic, like that Spock guy on *Star Trek*. You'd have made a hell of a detective, Mikey. I'm sure

you've looked into every aspect of this and wouldn't do it on a whim. I know teaching has been a source of stress, especially the lazy kids you just can't reach. You get better satisfaction from your Kung Fu and swordsmanship classes, but that doesn't pay enough. Still, it's nice to know those three black belts you earned aren't going to waste. Coming back to sailing on the ocean, I know you'll be careful and sensible."

"Your father was on ships in the Navy," his mother said. "Lots of Nova Scotians have spent their lives on the ocean. Your ancestors in Scotland built ships and sailed them; according to your Grampy, a couple of relatives were even clipper ship captains. Just be safe."

"Well, that takes care of my family," Mike said when he'd hung up. "Let's hope it goes that smoothly with your mother. When are you having lunch with her? Are you sure you don't want me to come?"

Susan shook her head. "She's my mother. You dealt with your folks; I'll deal with mine."

The following Wednesday, Susan came home from work, threw her bag on the floor, stomped to the kitchen, poured herself a glass of wine, and collapsed into a chair at the kitchen table.

"That bad?" Mike asked. He was rolling out dough to make a pizza.

Susan nodded. "Worse. She asked if we needed any official permission, as if she'd make sure we didn't get that permission. God; why does she think she has to control everything I do? She's even meeting with her lawyers! Can you believe that?"

"Maybe we should introduce her to Ed and Wendy?" Mike suggested. Ed had been programming computers for Goddard Rocket Laboratories when there were no programming languages. They'd escaped on their 36' wooden ketch several years before and had a wonderful outlook on life.

They tried it, inviting all to dinner at the Club. The final result seemed little more than a marginal

reduction in tension. It was okay for other people to do it, but not her daughter.

The first weekend of October they were heading up to St. George's, testing the new Autohelm in semi-rough conditions. That weekend, they invited cruisers from a visiting boat over for drinks. They approved the Abaco/Providence Channel route to Florida, and confirmed what Mike had read about getting into Marsh Harbour. Mike glanced at Susan and smiled, knowing she was now just as intrigued and curious about the Abacos.

It's starting to feel real, Mike thought. "Have you ever planned something and your mind seemed to think it was going to happen, but it was a while before you fully accepted that it was really going to happen?" he asked aloud.

Their guests smiled. "That's how we felt planning our first trip," the wife said.



Bermuda, May, 1989

"This is amazing!" Susan cried. "Look at those reefs. I can't believe the colours! I can see fish!"

"Sorry, Sunshine;" Mike said, "I'm mostly thinking of the sickening crunch if I screw up my steering in the next fifty yards."

They'd sailed up north shore via North Channel, over-nighting in St. George's. Shortly after dawn, they'd sailed out Town Cut onto the ocean. The run down south shore outside the reefs was great, increasing Mike's confidence in both himself and the boat. Now, at mid-afternoon, they were picking their way through Hogfish Cut, a path through the reefs, west of Church Bay, that would bring them in not far from Ely's Harbour.

Mike heaved a sigh once they'd passed the last marker, a post with an arrow pointing which side to stay on. After that it was a lazy cruise past Cambridge Beaches, Somerset, and Casemates Prison. Then, rounding the tip past Casemates, they sailed past Dockyard and in the Great Sound, headed for Two Rock Passage and Hamilton Harbour. It was only a bit more than thirty nautical miles, but it was another adventure and an important milestone.

"I had lunch again with Mom, today," Susan announced one day after work. "She keeps harping on how she'll feel a lot better if we have at least one crew member, someone who has ocean-crossing experience. What do you think? If I stall her, I might get a few more free lunches out of it," she added with a giggle.

"There's merit to it. I suppose I could put some notices up at the Dinghy Club."

Mike printed some notices and posted them on the bulletin board.

"Well," one member told him, "the tradition is to pay their airfare home, but there are lots who expect to be paid as much as \$1000 for what would amount to sitting in the cockpit for four hours out of twelve, keeping an eye on sails and instruments, while the autopilot steers the boat. Still, there's one guy — you may not have met him, since he doesn't have a boat. He crews with Vance when he races — Australian guy, an accountant. He's crewed all over the South Pacific. Here; I'll give you his name and number."

Mac Fraser wanted to return home to Queensland by sailing as much of the way as possible. He'd done a multitude of deliveries in the South Pacific, and spoke of places with names like Vanuatu and Vila. He was quick to smile and, even without his round, wire-

rimmed glasses, looked like Radar O'Reilly from M.A.S.H..

Mike discussed it with Susan, and they took him for a sail. Partway through the day, Mike glanced at Susan, smiling. She gave him a nod.

"I think we've found our man," Mike said to Mac.

Mac nodded. "Well, I like the boat, and I like the captain. You've got good instincts. You'll gain experience fast, mate; you're boat-savvy. My only worry is Fort Lauderdale. I don't know how to head on from there. Let me think on it."

Mike nodded. "I'll look into whether or not I can get you to somewhere past Lauderdale."

All it took was a phone call. Flying from Miami to San Francisco cost less than from Miami back to Bermuda. When Mike offered Mac a ticket, they had a deal.

With that settled, Mike began experimenting to calculate fuel consumption. Even though *Mystic Lady* was a sailboat, the Bermuda-Azores High settled in every summer, leaving hardly any wind, sometimes as far south as Abaco. It occurred to Mike that they might have to do some motoring until they hit the easterlies just north of the Bahamas.

After some experimenting, he estimated fuel consumption as near 1/2 gallon per hour at cruising speed (5+ kts, motorsailing). Since the fuel tank held 25 gallons, he decided to carry another 40 gallons on deck in eight jerry cans, four on each side deck, lashed in place. They also filled a storage locker with ten 2-gallon water jugs, just to be safe.

Sunday, July 2, 1989, dawned sunny and beautiful. Mac arrived at 9 am with a set of bagpipes, a kit bag, and two cases of beer. Being one of the more sober Bluenosers, Mike eyed that amount of beer with

suspicion. After all, they only expected to be at sea for six days to the Bahamas, then two to Florida.

As they were departing the club, Mac broke out the pipes and, with a heart-stirring skirl, piped them out of port. A few friends were there to see them off, but Susan's family were conspicuously absent. This was not an approved venture and was not going to receive any form of support. Mike fought back the anger and forced a smile, but he could see the pain in Susan's face. The message was clear: *you're only family when we like what you're doing.*

Mike had obtained port clearance in Hamilton for a departure via Hogfish Cut. (The following year, they opened the 24 hour center on Ordinance Island, St. George's, and all yachts had to enter and depart there.)

Ian followed to the start of Hogfish Cut, getting some photos of *Mystic Lady* under full sail. By supertime, however, the engine was running and didn't get shut off until Marsh Harbour. What wind there was was from the southwest and was slowly dropping. They tried tacking south for a while, but soon gave up in favour of motorsailing.

Log excerpts:

Tuesday, July 4, 1989 (Day 3)

Position (19:30) N30° 15', W68° 30'.

Genoa away. Need engine. Winds very light now. Genny beat against spreader and tore for about a foot. Poor appetite. Think it's the patches (Scopolamine).

Wednesday, July 5, 1989 (Day 4)

Sailing better. Fixed fuel gage (bad wire). Sue's on watch.

17:00. Dolphins! A pod of Spinner's dolphins came over with one Atlantic Bottlenose and showed off at the bow!

Calm water... like glass. Ditched the ear patch and feel better. 400 miles out.

Friday, July 7, 1989 (Day 6)

15:30. DRS pulling well. Dolphins and Cuvier's Beaked Whales! (The latter, we decided later from photos, looked more like pygmy sperm whales.) Dolphins left whales and came to play, then went back to the whales. Got photos.

Saturday, July 8, 1989 (Day 7)

7:20. Sailed all night! Position N27° 01', W76° 14' or 56 NM (nautical miles) from Man o' War. Anxious for a real sleep.

13:15. Land Ho! Sighted Elbow Cay & Man o' War.

21:00. Now on Gov't Dock in Marsh Hbr. Had trouble finding the place. Sleep!

Rhumb line was 730 NM and they'd logged 806.75 NM. All in all, they'd managed a pretty straight course, considering they'd started by tacking south from Bermuda in hopes of catching wind and actually sailing.

What the log never recorded was Mike's fears of running out of fuel. Even when they could sail, using the engine meant an extra two knots of speed and that's an important difference. As it turned out, they had five gallons to spare on arrival! Mike regarded it as a major success in calculation. Susan's mother insisted on seeing it as proof that they didn't know what we were doing.

There was something about night watches. *I must be nocturnal*, he thought. Starry nights in the cockpit were so peaceful, whether looking at the stars, listening to music, or reading with a flashlight. He'd make a hot drink, check position and plot on the chart, update the log, and sometimes write song lyrics. Flying fish would land on deck. On occasion, he'd stand in a horse stance, one foot on each cockpit seat, and do a brief Chi-Kung workout.

And there were dolphins. Like kids taking turns playing with a garden hose, one would ride the bow

wave while others kept pace, waiting their turn. Soon, as if sensing the others' impatience, the one at the bow would race away from the boat, leaping into the air, while another took his place.

There were two overpowering memories of the passage: the calmness of the sea and the heat. He had a tendency to sit under the canvas dodger for shade, but, with no frontal opening, it was like an oven. They had no refrigeration and the ice in the icebox was gone after three days. By the time they arrived, Mike was feeling pretty dehydrated.

Soon they were settled on the Government Dock, enjoying a much needed sleep. Always one to worry about things for which he was responsible, Mike had been awake for the previous forty-eight hours in anticipation of landfall in the Bahamas.

When the customs man finally arrived, he was rather surly.

"You could have arrived on a week day," he declared. "It's only a day or two from Florida; there was no reason to show up here on a Sunday."

Mike just smiled. "Actually, we left Bermuda six days ago, and we weren't certain how long it would take to get here. I'm Canadian, with Bermudian status; my wife and son are Bermudian, though my son is also Canadian, and our friend, here, is from Australia. No Yanks today, sport."

The man suddenly broke into a grin and became the soul of hospitality. His name was Brad. "How was your trip? It's been hot here. If you need fuel or water, there's the Conch Inn and Marina right over there, up in the corner of the harbour. There's both a restaurant and a proper dining room, good food at both places, though the restaurant fare is more burgers and such."

That evening Mike sat in the cockpit, playing a few songs on his live-aboard 12-string Ovation. It started with a few boaters who took a seat on the dock and started offering him beer in return for playing requests.

Before long it was more like an impromptu dock concert. The dock was pretty crowded. Not much of a beer drinker, Mike gave most of his 'earnings' to Mac, who enjoyed the evening thoroughly.

The next day they were off again by noon. The run down the east coast was a beat, but, once they rounded Hole in the Wall at the southern tip of Great Abaco, they were sailing through Northwest Providence Channel on a broad reach.