

Good Day my Friend,

As usual the first thing I wish, is to find you and your family well and happy, hoping that life is treating you mentally and physically sound.

Yes, yes I know, you have not heard any news from me for a while and I do apologies again. I have been really busy and have proof of it, listen to this... I just bought my own 37ft sailing yacht. A dream came through :)

Well since doing the Middle Sea Race in Malta, in October, I flew back on Lolita in Majorca and sailed across the Atlantic to St. Marten in the Caribbean just before Christmas. Since then we cruised twice with the owner visiting St. Bart's, Anguilla, The British Virgin Islands and US Virgin Islands. After that we got Lolita ready for three main race Charters, same American group. Heineken in St. Marten was first, followed by spring series in BVI's and presently just finished Antigua Race week. In Between races I flew and hitched rides on yachts to Antigua three times to examine and survey my yacht buy. Long stories to tell during these 5 months but the highlight of all, on the 18th of March I took over my yacht Loieusebel, to be and is unofficially renamed Mahina.

For a brief history and description of LouiseBel, she is a modified Norlin 37, built in Sweden and finished in Germany in 1975. She is 11,55m long, 3.55m wide and 2.1m in draught [Depth]. In the first ten years she sailed from the Baltic Sea into the Mediterranean, then to the Caribbean and back to the Med. The following ten, then owned buy this lovely Dutch Couple, she sailed back to the Caribbean and cruised the South East islands. Since then, these former owners opened a business in Antigua and mainly used LouiseBel as a home. The modification made from the original, fiberglass model included the raise of the topsides four inches, to satisfy the tall first owner. Doing so the coach roof starts from a foot behind the mast, giving the foredeck plenty flash space and more headroom inside. The coach roof is wooden and varnished giving her the look of a classic ocean cruiser. Due to higher freeboard, more weight was added to the keel. The Rig is a double spreader, aluminum sloop. She also has an independent self-steering wind vane on the transom.

The Dutch couple did major up keeping. Boat has been osmosis treated, topsides painted, bottom well looked after, new Yanmar 35hp engine, interior comfort, solar panel installation and varnish upkeep. The major things left to be taken care off are the deck and the rig. The boat has sailed very little in the last 10 years. But that's all right, that is when I come in!

My first step was to make the boat in safe sailable condition to sail to St. Marten. I rigged two external main and jib halyards, the original are wire ended and super stiff, too long baking in the Caribbean sun. On Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> March, 1400hrs I was on board my yacht and by Sunday noon I weighed anchor, destination St. Marten, 90Nm NW of Antigua under full sails on a broad reach, wind from the ESE 15knts. Chris Godfrey and Jane Manley joined the adventure. On the first Gibe the main came down. The halyard block I attached around the masthead was of low strength and broke. So we headed to the lee of NW Antiguan coast and thanks to the help of my colleagues in taking me up the rig, manage to replace it with a more heavy-duty block and off we went again on course. It was my first great happiness on the boat. The sail was great, trying to get a quick feel of the boat but pretty good going movement, so an awesome sail. It was a great feeling, me on the helm, Antigua fading away behind Mahina, the sun setting to my port quarter and the actual boat herself is Mine. Such a different feeling and great energy!

0500hrs Monday the 20<sup>th</sup>, I drop the pick in Simpson Bay and at 0830hrs I was back at work on Lolita. Mahina is at home base now. So I spent the following weeks, in the evenings after work hours, going through the boat and getting organized to sail her to Trinidad for my yard period. Trinidad is out of the hurricane belt and quite inexpensive to carry out work. I think that is the best choice for her and me at present. Mon captain Chris advised me that the only slow working week we got was the one before Antigua race week so I took the offer of a week off, and was getting ready to leave on Monday Morning of the 11th April for my 450nm plus trip down south.

Since the boat is not yet organized for single handed sailing, like no electronic autopilot, rig not to be trusted, hank on No 2 sail and storm jib only, and mainly, because of the running rigging setup, it is a long procedure to change sails and put reefs in [reducing sails], alone especially. For this reason I was looking for a friend to give a hand, mainly to have some sleep. I found one person, which also bailed on me (due to last minute job offer) on Sunday evening. It was a mission in doing so for of a short notice and busy season. So I decided leave alone. It was Noon on Monday when I left St. Marten; first stop to be is Antigua to pick up my Life Raft.

Wind was light SE 8-10 knts on the nose. I motored sailed to Antigua arriving in Falmouth harbor, 90Nm later at 6am in the morning and dropped anchor in Pigeon Beach. It was super quiet and calm, so I slept for 2 hours. After a quick Coffee and bowl of cereal, I ran ashore. As planed I picked up my life raft and searched around for my second man with no joy. Time was ticking so I went back to the boat to organize her for the second leg straight to Trinidad, 375nm to go. Picked up

anchor, went round to English harbor for twenty gallons of fuel and by sunset I was sailing on a close reach with a Southeasterly force 3 towards Guadeloupe under full sail. And yes that was great... the boat steering herself and me loving the whole thing and every moment.

At around 4am on Tuesday I was in the lee of Guadeloupe and wind had died down completely. I was feeling exhausted and with no autopilot were I could motor to course, I dropped my sails and let the boat drift and went down below for a three hour kip, Doing so, I drifted 3 miles north. Wind was still light, so I motored sailed for another 3 hours till the breeze filled in from the east, hoisted my jib and off sailing again. Since I was running out of time, I decided to cut straight to Grenada, where from there I would turn left only 10 degrees to Trinidad. So the furthestest west I was from the Windward Islands was 40nm, still in radio communication and assistant if something wrong had to happen. I was also being conservative on the rig and boat so was constantly putting reefs in the main and changing headsails. Especially between the islands, where gusts were strong, up to 30's and swell up to 6+ feet. Speed was slow for this reason but all I wanted was to take Mahina to Trinidad in one piece. Sleep was very little but enough many a times. Ones body gets used to it, I guess.

Friday the 15th.

Progress was good and boat behaving really well. I'm happy. It is unbelievable when u are sailing a yacht how many ideas of modifications and things that are wrong show up. I had some leaks and other frustrating things, which I was not surprised. That is why I'm heading to Trinidad.

That Friday morning was different; first of all I was 30nm west of St. Vincent, which is not my favorite place. The weather was overcast and squally thus obstructing my sunrise. Boat is still moving along on a port tack under storm jib and 2 reefs in the main. All ok on deck, I went down below to cook some boiled eggs. Doing so I started hearing this squeaking wood noise on the port side. Strange I reckoned, because before the boat was quite silent below. You know that feeling of being on deck blowing hard, but inside is quite and calm, like a different world! Well had a look around the chain plates and to my own unbeliveness, saw the port deck moving up and down. The chain plate broke.

Shit shit F\*\*K F\*\*k was my first speech aloud. Run on deck, looked up, and Mahina was still sailing. Disengaged the self-steering and hove to [tacking leaving the jib backed up]. Ran up forward and dropped the main. Then I got all the halyards I could spare and tight them around the jib car, the closest strongest point close to the chain plate, and one around the forward cleat. Sea is bad, 7ft, easterly wind 24knts what shall I do? If I sail on a starboard tack, most probably closest I'll go is to Martinique. Just came from there and Grenada is 45nm ahead. Decided I need to keep going. So I drilled, rather punched in, 2 holes through the deck, on either side of the chain plate and put a spectra loop around the all shrouds to the inside. Luckily I did the same with around the bottom inside part of the chain plate and attached a turnbuckle screw between and took tension on it so I hold the chain plate down. For more personal assurances I rigged a similar thing to the bottom of the mast. Ok see how we go. Dropped the storm jib, engine on and altered course to Grenada. I had drifted 8 miles in 4 hours northwest in the mean time. Sea and wind on the port side again rig seemed steady. Went down before to check what is happening. The deck was still moving, especially on wave motion but might hold, fingers crossed. So due to the swell forward of the beam, I dropped my speed to 3knts and steered most of the time to ride the waves, praying that the rig will not fall. 45Nm to go, at 3knts and hand steering is a long way!!

Saturday 3am.

Made in the calmness of St. Georges bay in Grenada and this is what I love about sailing. One time you are in a mess, and the next u are dropping anchor in a peaceful anchorage and rig is still there! The plan was to sleep till seven, plenty, then take the chain plate out and go ashore and weld it, come back, put the rig as it was, organize Mahina again and off to Trinidad. So it was, after a couple of phone calls to organize Monday for a haul out and my return to Lolita, by sunset I was sailing under one reef and jib for my last leg to Trinidad, an easterly wind 17knts. 80Nm to go.

There was definitely no sleep there, traffic was unreal, even an oilrig was in the way!!! By the morning I already started seeing Trinidad and at noon I was tied up alongside 65 footer in Peake's yard Chagaramas. Congratulation Mahina and Eleandro you made it in one piece together. Mahina, first long sail in years and Eleandro, it was my first single handed experience. After this trip, Mahina is definitely the name given to my 37ft yacht. Man I loved the whole solitude thing of me being alone on the ocean on my boat.

Mahina was pulled out of the water on Monday around noon. I made sure she is well laid up and by Midnight I was in Antigua waiting for Lolita's Arrival. We got the boat ready for our last charter race and then on Friday afternoon, Saturday practice day, I felt this enormous pain on my right chest and ended up in a clinic for 24 hours and missing the entire racing week. It was Pneumonia.

Good Day my Friend,

I'm OK now.

So I'm taking it average easy this week. We have a busy schedule ahead on Lolita. Owner is cruising and then heading up to the States, Newport Rhode Island, soon after, where I shall be based before leaving Lolita at the end of July, to attend Mahina for the refit in Trinidad.

Major things to be done during the refit:

Re-wire the boat

Re-plumb

Replace standard and running rigging

Paint mast and boom

Modify deck and rigging layout

Remove teak deck, to be saved or not is still questionable

Windlass installation

Autopilot installation

All the above jobs are to be designed and carried out by myself.

In October I will start freelancing. So anybody knows of or u need a delivery crew I'll be available. My website will be always amended with present location and accessible phone No. Maybe go to Malta again for the Middle Sea Race and then a delivery to the Caribbean or maybe from the States too. By the way, three quarters of Mahina is on a loan account!

For more information and photos, visit my website at [www.geocities.com/eleandromlt](http://www.geocities.com/eleandromlt)

Mahina will also be available for skippered charters from the beginning of next year. Charter would either be for a single couple or a group of 4 friends looking for an adventure. Details to follow later in the year.

And always love to hear news from You.

Happy Days

Eleandro

St. Marten

P.S. Mahina means Moon Goddess in Polynesian.