

END OF LOCKDOWN IN SIGHT

June 8, 2020

Phases...

The Spanish government recently announced that on Monday, June 8, more than half of the country will enter Phase 3 of the country's four-phase plan toward the new normalcy in this era of a novel coronavirus and COVID-19 disease. Phase 3 means increased freedom of movement within the recovering regions, and more openings in the service industries, including restaurants and bars that will be permitted to expand their operations from 50% to 75% of capacity. (Places hardest hit and more slowly rebounding from the pandemic, like Madrid, will remain in Phase 2 awhile longer, according to the government spokesperson.)

One of the consequences of the prolonged lockdown in Spain, as it has been in many locales around the world, was that barbershops and hair stylists shut their doors. And although I no longer maintain a military haircut, I still look forward to getting a one fairly often; and in fact, an admittedly unusual pastime of mine is to get them in foreign countries where communicating with the barber isn't straightforward. Since it had been >4 months since my last haircut, I immediately jumped at the chance for a haircut when Vicki offered to give me one – even though communicating with her is always as easy as pie.



A barber with benefits! I was way overdue for a haircut after more than 4 months without one, so I jumped at the chance when Vicki offered. She did a great job, don't you think?

We've been allowed to sail during Phase 2, but only out from and returning to the same marina. Under Phase 3 rules, we'll be able to transit to different marinas, and even to different provinces, but have to remain within the same region. Regions are somewhat analogous to states in the U.S., and provinces are somewhat like counties. For us, Cartagena is in the Murcia Region, and there are several nice ports and

anchorage in the region that we could visit; however, longer sails to Valencia (in Valencia Region) or to Mallorca (in Balearics Region) will have to wait until Phase 4, which isn't expected until June 22.

Mail Call!

In our last post we described our ordeal with Correos Express, the Spanish express mail service – that wasn't... This time we describe another problem with international mail. Shelby and Maebel sent Vicki a care package for Mother's Day that one could reasonably have expected should have been delivered by May 15, give or take a few days. Indeed, U.S. Postal Service tracking showed it arrived in Madrid on 18 May, and that it was released to Spanish Customs on the May 20. We thought we'd receive a notice in a day or two to pay some sort of import tax, and so we waited a few days for that, and when it didn't come, I went to the main post office in Cartagena to see what could be done. Apparently, not much. We still don't have the package!

I've been bounced around like a ping pong ball – in person, on the web, and by email – between the Correos (the post office), ADTPostales (a branch of the postal service that interfaces with the Spanish customs service), and the tax office. Fortunately, our friend Juan Peñuelas seems to have relatives and friends everywhere, including a brother who works in the tax office in Madrid. With their help, we've been able to make some progress, we think, and just today Juan told me his brother says our package has been "liberated." We're hopeful that Vicki will finally receive her Mother's Day care package from Shelby and Mae later this week. Stay tuned for the thrilling conclusion!

More Boat Work

Since our last post, we've been busy with more boat chores, of course. As anyone who's owned a boat know, you're never really done with them, and the harsh marine environment ensures the need for continuous preventive maintenance and repairs *adum finitum*. In the past few weeks we've tackled some pretty major projects. The first was long overdue preventive maintenance on our anchor windlass. That's right, the same one that ripped a cleat horn off a forged bronze hawse pipe, as reported in our last post.

I disassembled, cleaned, lubed and reassembled the top end, and I was going to do the bottom end gearbox and motor assembly – something that was only 3+ years overdue. However, I couldn't find a YouTube how to video, and having never taken the heavy beast down before, we decided to ask for help from the nearby boatyard. That turned out to be a smart move because it took two experienced electricians 8 man-hours to get the unit down and out of the confined space of the anchor locker. That said, it was clear by observing them that it was discovery learning for them, too. But in the end, it was still worth the *boat buck** because they took the unit back to the shop, completely disassembled it, cleaned it, replaced all the seals (not just the ones in the maintenance kit I provided), lubed, reassembled and painted it.

(*For those who don't know, a *boat buck* is roughly equivalent to \$1,000. It's uncanny how often something for a boat that looks so simple to repair or make ends up costing somewhere in the neighborhood of a *boat buck*, and often considerably more.)



Look at our sweet new fender covers. Vicki made them from a sock-like material we found in Gibraltar that the boat guys there said was also great for soaking up oil spills. We bought a huge role of it, and Vicki is putting it to good use.

Meanwhile, when Vicki wasn't continuing to bake artisan bread a couple of times a week, she was making cool looking fender covers for nearly all of our 14 fenders. She used some nifty sock netting we discovered in Gibraltar that is also useful, they told us, for mopping up oil spills. She also tackled more varnish work, this time the notoriously difficult aft hatch over our cabin. It's challenging of all the detail work, which includes 7 teak slats over the plexiglass cover with caulk at both ends to prevent water intrusion, and it has a solid wood frame requiring varnish inside and outside. During the previous two touch-ups, we've only done the outside, but the inside was screaming for some love this go around.



At left. Vicki tends to sour dough starter that she's been *feeding* for 3 months. She's baked bread; crackers, and pretzels, too. Yum!



At right. Vicki putting on the second of eight coats of varnish. Of course., this is after removing the old varnish and caulk, sanding, and priming. Looking great, Hon!

But the two most important projects this time involve our running and standing rigging. The running rigging is the ropes, blocks, and winches used to raise, lower, shape, and control our sails, and the standing rigging are wires, chains, and pressure plates that support our two masts. We noticed several months ago that the traveler (used to control the position and shape of the mainsail) had significant corrosion and was simply showing signs of 30+ years of wear and tear. (Can you relate?) And we learned in the Azores, now 8 months ago, that the spreaders that keep the shroud wires pushed out away from the mast are missing bushing inserts at the end that prevent the ends from being chafed by the wires they support. As I write this, both are works in progress, but the former required several hours of work to remove the traveler unit from the cabin top, and the latter required going up the mast in a bos'n chair to take some precise measurements of the size and shape of the spreader tips so we can fabricate aluminum bushing inserts. We'll write more about these projects next time, but as you can no doubt imagine, we're talking several *boat bucks* here.



That's some nasty looking corrosion. And the fasteners were galvanically welded to the aluminum, too.

We rendezvoused in the Azores (Aug. 2019) with Stephen Demas, a friend we first met in Herrington Harbour, MD (Mar. to May 2018). A former rigger, he offered to check inspect our standing rigging. That's when we first learned we had a problem with chafe at the tips of our mainmast spreaders. But it took us until now to do something about it. You can see the stainless steel shroud line wearing into the aluminum end of the spreader. We now have a great plan to fix the problem.



Almost Back to Normal

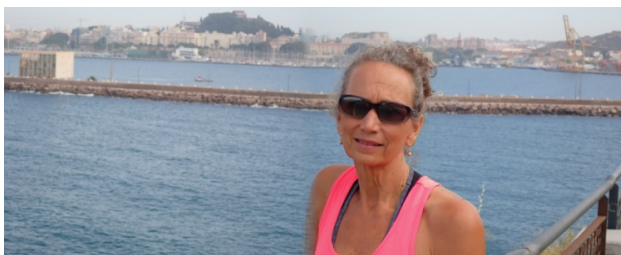


Now that we're in Phase 2 of Spain's reopening and shelter-in-place rules have been relaxed, we decided it was time to get and about and see more of the area we've been living in for the past 4-1/2 months. Rather than do our morning fitness programs on or next to the boat, for example, Vicki took Saylor on several brisk, long walks through the adjacent village of Santa Lucia, and out the coast road to a nearby beach and fortaleza from the 1700s. And on Saturday morning, we decided to combine fitness with our first breakfast out in 3 months, by walking to a beachside restaurant along the same route.

First of all, I relearned that Vicki speed walks much faster than I am capable of. Although she has often accused me of walking too fast when we're out shopping, the reality is I just don't saunter in those kinds of places. But out on a fitness trail, she does circles around me – literally – just to get her heartrate up and keep it up. I played catch-up the entire 5-mile roundtrip, while Vicki did 6 miles because of circling back for me.



But despite the newfound freedom of mobility being enjoyed by many locals, it's clear that things are different and will be for quite some time. We saw scores of joggers, walkers, roller skaters, and bikers along our route. About 25% were wearing masks while exercise, and nearly everyone was carrying masks (including us) for when the requisite 2 meters separation could not be maintained. And at the restaurant, tables were widely spaced on the picturesque terrace overlooking the crescent shaped beach, and all of the waitstaff wore masks and some wore gloves while serving their customers. But the café con leche and tostada with olive oil and tomato were every bit as tasty as we remembered.



What's the plan now?

Assuming Spain advances through its phased reopening, as described above, we anticipate setting sail from Cartagena during the last week of June. We will probably sail to Torre Vieja first, to shake out the cobwebs and test boat systems.



Like the SS *Minnow* of Gilligan's Island fame, we discovered during our 3-hour cruise last weekend that we have plenty of cobwebs to shake out after not having gotten underway since late January (except to travel the 1/2nm to/from the boatyard). We picked a beautiful sunny Saturday afternoon with only a gentle breeze blowing through the Reál Club marina and calm waters in the harbor just outside the marina. However, within seconds of clearing a headland on the east end of Cartagena Bay, we were suddenly and unexpectedly experiencing 25 knots of wind off the port bow and 6-8 high peaked swells as well. With the wind and swells coming from the side like they were, *At First Sight* was getting rocked back and forth, to and fro, like a metronome keeping time for a lively *salsa*. Although we thought we had rigged most everything for going to sea, we obviously hadn't because in the 3-5 minutes it took us to first turn into the wind (to stop the rocking) and then slowly steer toward the lee of the headland to get out of the wind, the main cabin of *AFS* was strewn with gear adrift.



The main cabin after 5 minutes in some pretty wicked crossing swells.

We regrouped, picked up the mess, and changed our plan for the day. Rather than a 12nm sail to the secluded Cala Cerrada where we had contemplated anchoring overnight, we decided to just motor around the inner harbor for the next 2 hours, poking our bow out into the open sea a couple of times to see if things had calmed down. They hadn't. But, hey, after months tied alongside Muelle de Levante, it was great to just get underway.



U.S. Memorial Day aboard S/V *At First Sight*, in safe harbor, Cartagena, Spain, May 25, 2020.



One of the best aspects about retirement is being wed to a schedule, and we don't have much of one. We should be leaving Cartagena sometime soon. We think we're going to spend a few weeks in the Balearics (Ibiza, Mallorca, Minorca, etc.). Spending some time in Sardinia sounds great. And we're tentatively planning to winter over in Sicily. Lots of places to take on or discharge crew. Think about it!