

# Kirt Hine

## Letters To His Sons From Yacht Marigo - 1968

(Compiled by Ted Hine – April 2003)

The following 2 letters were written by Kirt to his sons from aboard Marigo over an extended period during 1968.

The first letter was started in February of 1968 as Marigo sailed from St. Thomas heading north back to the Bahamas and was continued in April after Marigo reached Florida on the trip north to New York. This letter was never finished....it just stops after page 10... and wasn't mailed until it was included with the second letter in the fall of 1968.

The letter dated February 23, 1968 was written starting half way through Kirt and Mary's first of many cruising seasons aboard Marigo. It tells of sailing south from Nassau in the Bahamas to St. Thomas in the Virgin Islands early in 1968. The opening reference to the "Yacht Marigo Racing Team" is due to the fact that Kirt's 3 sons had arrived for a visit aboard Marigo during Christmas 1967 (a few weeks before) at Highborn Cay in the Bahamas with T-shirts for all aboard bearing those words (and, if my memory serves me correctly, a depiction of a martini glass).

The second letter (dated November 9, 1968) was written from Jupiter, Florida as Marigo was pausing during the trip south for her second cruising season in the Caribbean. In the time since the first letter was written Mary and Kirt had sailed Marigo back to New York in the spring, had spent the summer repairing and refitting her and then cruising north through Long Island Sound to Martha's Vineyard, Cape Code, and Marblehead, Massachusetts, and had then again sailed south in the fall to Florida. At the time this letter was written the decision to move from Garrison, NY to Jupiter, FL had been made and plans were being made to acquire a home in Jupiter (which they would occupy in the late spring of 1969 after returning from the Caribbean).

Note that an ongoing theme in both letters is the need for Kirt to be constantly fixing something onboard which had broken, a never ending challenge which would continue as long as Marigo continued her sailing adventures.

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Start = 2  
but never finished  
last year!

## Yacht Marigo

Long.  $66^{\circ} 10'$  West (on about 35 miles  
N.W. of ST. Thomas  
off Puerto Rico)  
Lat.  $18^{\circ} 35'$  North  
Feb. 23, 1968

To Yacht Marigo Racing Team:

Marigo has reached the southern most point of her maiden voyage (ST. Croix last week with soya old Aunt Margareta + Florence Rich aboard) and is now bound N.W. for the Bahamas. It's 5:20 P.M. We're motoring in a very moderate sea with a light breeze astern and ST. Thomas disappeared astern an hour ago. Puerto Rico is just barely visible off the port beam. Our next landfall will be Grand Turk Isl. in about 48 hours.

After you yacht racers flew north we were a couple of more weeks in Nassau. We finally received and installed the new refrigerator motor and had a new part made for the busted jib furler. I thought it was going to be real cheap - \$2.75 per hour for machinest labor (\$8.00 in the U.S.) but they are so slow those native black boys they added up \$80.00 worth of labor, and took them  $1\frac{1}{2}$  weeks.

Then we hesitated to start south with just us 2 on board. It's almost  
(over)

1,000 miles Nassau to St. Thomas and <sup>off</sup> there are some long ocean stretches. (We're on one now of 72 hours.)

And you'll remember those Exuma Cays all look alike when you see them for the first time and the water shallow so navigation is quite a precise and demanding chore.

So we looked around for a native or U.S. Captain or experienced crew but didn't quite find anyone whom we thought would fit the picture.

Then about 10:30 AM Jan 15<sup>th</sup> while walking past the pool at Nassau Harbor Club I passed someone. We both did a double take 2 steps past each other. It was Cap. Dick Ryan. Cap. Ryan was at the City Isl. Boat Yard on his 50 ft. Ketch "East Wind" when we were fitting out Marigo there.

He said he was bound for St. Thomas. I said can we follow you. You navigate and we can follow and make the grade. He said I'm leaving in 10 minutes for Highborn Cay - come along.

Mary and I ran fast. Last minute provisions, shape up ship, ~~cast~~ take in unbelical cords, cast off, stop at fuel dock for diesel and in 1½ hours were in pursuit of East Wind.

From the

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## Yacht Marigo

We crossed the Yellow Bank at flank speed but saw no ships ahead. Then a faint message on the radio that some ship ~~and~~ had turned left to Eluttera.

We thought we had lost "East Wind."

But we churned on ~~at~~ and about 5:00 P.M. eased into Highborn on the range. There was East Wind with everyone aboard waving to us.

The next day we did an all day hitch on the ocean side of the Exumas to Staniel Cay, and the following a longer hitch working our way in at night at Georgetown, Great Exuma.

There we were weathered in for 4 days. While she blew and the ocean waves rolled we were snug in the lee of Stocking Island.

There we discovered "East Wind" needed mechanical + electrical advice + labor, and Cap. Dick Ryan gave us the benefit of his 15-20 years experience at sea in all areas of navigation, splicing, ship handling etc and we found the start of a great friendship.

There we also made friends or really first saw - the gorgeous 70 FT Ketch Pandora IV. She was bound for St. Thomas with her

(over)

professional crew of 4. Seeing her at anchor nearby made us feel not so chicken about not trying that stormy ocean. (4)

Three "East Winds" 3 charters gave up and flew out leaving just Cap. Rick and his fiancée Pat so we are now 2 ships with a short crew, for an ocean voyage.

April 14<sup>th</sup> Jupiter Fla.

As you can easily see from the date this writing was interrupted for a considerable time. The interruption will be explained when that part of the voyage is reached.

Two only on board is a very short crew for running in the ocean because of the night watches. With 2 we stand 2 hour watches and it's then 2 hours on + 2 hours off, and by morning you're pretty pooped.

After 4 days of blowing the wind ceased and when we arose about 6:30 a.m. we saw big Pandora IV sliding out of the anchorage.

Pandora IV called Marigo during the 11:45 a.m. radio watch and said the Ocean was O.K. and they were off the

From the

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## Yacht Marigo

Coast of Seng Is. bound for Clarence Town,  
were we heading for Clarence Town?

We told them we were still in the anchorage waiting a high tide about 1:00 pm. to cross over to Georgetown, about 1 mile, for fuel + water and then going direct to S. Caicos, about 150 miles beyond Clarence Town. They said they might see us there.

At Georgetown, a rather primitive native town, East Wind tied up to the small fuel dock and we nestled alongside East Wind.

We asked about the water and all the native could tell us was, "all 12 boats use it." So while the hose was pulling water in our tanks we all took turns in the shower and thereby ended up with full tanks and showers for all hands.

When about to cast off lines a young freckle faced lad came on the dock and asked to work for his passage south.

(over)

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I hesitated in answering and Cap. Ryan said "I think you would be smart to take him aboard." I agreed and the lad ran for his gear, all in a small pack, and in ten minutes we were under way.

Our new crew (for no pay) was John Kernahan of Chicago. He said he was 18. I think 16. He had adventured to Nassau used his savings to buy a 17 ft centerboard boat. Under sail off Highborn Cay bad weather caused the native island freighter Dunmore to take him aboard, his boat in tow.

Later when the weather eased he tried to sail on but his boat wouldn't sail. - No centerboard! So Dunmore took him aboard again and in tow his boat dismasted and broke up.

So he found himself on a native freighter where he said one meal a day was all, and that when the Captain who was drunk all the time ordered someone into the galley. The meal he said was usually greasy potato cakes only.

From the

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## Yacht Marigo

The way out of Georgetown to the Ocean is winding to miss the shallow sand bars and 40 minute long. Thirty minutes along as we followed East Wind's lead, I noted the engine temperature high and going up. (An old habit I learned as an airplane pilot - eyeball the instruments frequently.) A quick 4 blasts on the horn, the international emergency signal and I started for the engine room. As I started the high temp. warning buzzer sounded off.

We stopped the engine and got the engine hatch up, revealing that water was half way up the engine. While we drifted toward shallow water, a happy way to drift when sinking, and East Wind circled us like a mother duck I dove into the bilge and found the sea cock which brings salt water in  
(over)

for engine cooling and closed it. (8)

With our new crew John on the hand bidge pump, and the electric bidge pump and shower sump pump, now under water, all going, we pumped down the water, found a  $2\frac{1}{2}$ " hose had come off, the salt water line at the engine, repaired it and in 15 minutes were following East Wind into the Ocean.

We motored all afternoon and rounded the end of Song Island about 8:00 o'clock at night. With winds too light for sailing and small seas we motored all the next day and night and following day hoping to make South Caicos anchorage by 6:00 P.M.

We made it about 9:00 P.M. after dark and worked into the anchorage close behind East Wind with some frige nail chewing. It's about like going into high barn at night. There are no marks or lights and it's a bit nervous guessing how far off this or that dark object you should be to stay off the coral.

From the

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## Yacht Marigo

And there was Pandora IV blinking her speaker lights to give us an assist.

We dropped anchors and all hit the sack tired from two nights of ocean watches.

S. Caicos is a tiny spot in the ocean a few miles from Grand Turk where our first astromights were taken after splash down. We chose S. Caicos because it has a quite well protected anchorage while Grand Turk has only an open poorly protected road.

At S. Caicos one anchors under the protection of a long narrow cove about a  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile from the town which is 99% a native village but does sport a small informal hotel and a large air strip.

It's a refueling spot for small aircraft bound for Puerto Rico or St. Thomas and has fuel for boats, diesel or gasoline.

We laid over here for a day with East Wind as did Pandora IV for a

(over)

rest, time to refuel etc.

The morning after coming in we didn't get much rest. The "Turks and Caicos" islands do not consider themselves a part of the Bahamas and claim to be a separate entity still a British protectorate and so there is the customs thing.

So at 7:30 A.M. the natives come out in an outboard boat and pound on the deck and climb on board. We sleepily welcomed them aboard, signed their customs papers and when their outboard was half way to East Wind realized to late to stop them that Cap Dick and his fiancé were their first night alone at anchor since the charterers left.

The sign East Wind had on her rail saying "Do not disturb," made no difference! The natives banged the deck and climbed aboard and so Dick + Pat + Mary + I were all up and going early.

Jupiter Fla.  
Yacht Marigo Nov 9, 1968

Hi Greg:

It was really great to find your long newsy letter here on our arrival.

We had a good run to here - if a chore since we've done it a couple of times before. Hurricane Gladis just gave a lick at us when we were already out of the ocean in the waterway - and as she passed Cape Hatteras on her way north - we took off south. So we shortcutted the distance between us fast -

As she approached we were at Great Bridge Va. where we found we could get hauled + painted real cheap. So at 9:00 A.M. Fri ~~AM~~ we were on our way up the marine railway. - Then scrubbed. then - dried over the lunch hour - then bottom painted - and at 4:30 P.M. back in the water - with Marigo's bottom as clean + painted as can be.

And the big deal is \$5.00 an hour for the labor - instead of 7.50 an hour as in N.Y. or Fla. and those Va. colored boys worked hard.

(over)

12 mi. S. of Norfolk.

So we started from Garrison on schedule - (2)  
 on Oct 15<sup>th</sup> - if under last minute pressure - and I  
 made our first decision late in the evening -  
 whether to turn right into Atlantic Highlands  
 for a tee up rest or head Marjorie into the  
 Ocean and keep going - We both said - lets go!

It was a good decision - One could  
 have paddled a canoe down the coast -  
 no wind - no waves - Lots of fog but  
 no strain with the radar.

Two days and two nights from Garrison  
 we were on our way into the huge Norfolk  
 complex at ~~grog~~ Norfolk - Portsmouth  
 I/d. - (Hampton Roads etc.) We arrived  
 at grog dawn -

Please excuse the poor writing -

I'm trying to write and run the Hi-Seas.  
 radio at the same time -

Sun - Nov. 10<sup>th</sup> - Next day -

W.O.M. - Miami Hi Seas came in  
 and interrupted this writing last night.  
 The reception was too poor for a phone  
 connection but I had a long discussion with  
 the Tee. - (technical operator). He gave me  
 a long dissertation on what good reception  
 we will have thru W.O.M. when we get  
 south in the islands. When we're there they

have beam antennas to focus on us. (3)  
 For this location which is really too close  
 for Hi Seas frequencies they use a vertical  
 whip.

Back to our voyage to here. - The  
 McKelvys joined us in N. Carolina and came  
 to Jupiter - 10 days running. Bill liked to  
 read the chart and steer. This was great  
 he steered us most of the way.

We had some cold - 38° F. for a couple  
 or three mornings to get up to. But now  
 we are in Jupiter under the influence of the  
 Gulf stream - (about 2 miles off the coast)  
 and the weather is warm and great.

We ran out of batteries twice on the  
 way down. Anchored out for the night -  
 anchor light on - lights + music in the evening -  
 and in the morning not enough juice left  
 to start the Onan. That's why the main  
 eng. starting bat. is separate. So I  
 started the main eng. and with it's 100 Amp  
 gen. charging the ship bats - could start  
 the Onan.

Here I found an independent bat.  
 manufacturer. He checked the bats. in the  
 boat. Voltage OK - Specific gravity of the

(over)

electrolyte OK. He said that's not the whole story on batteries so he took one to his plant. (4

I went to his plant the next day and he had one cell out of the case. There was only about  $\frac{1}{2}$  of each lead plate left. The rest sort of rotted off.

So tomorrow we get all new batteries with much heavier construction. You'll remember our present ones were Nassau build and put on at Highborn Cay. So now we find they were chincy construction. Moral - It pays to pay for quality if you can get it -

Which is the long way around to get to your "Plaster" ski boots - you can't ski without good boots so find enclosed our check for \$105.00 which I trust will cover the cost. (The Jupiter sport shops don't feature ski boots so I'm hard pressed to find the cost here.) - Merry Xmas\*

Hank already has a check of the same amt. for his Xmas trip to St. Louis to see Laura. And a check is going to Ted by this same mail - Like equal time for all candidates hey! -

(5)

We had some fun today. The word was around that macheral were running. So we fired up 80 80 and tried the inlet. Normally the seas break on the 3-4 ft bar and you can't get thru - One of those breakers would flip a whaler - But the sea was calm and we got out and for an hour's fishing came back with one Cerro macheral and one blue fish for dinner.

Mrs Dodge drove my car down last week so we're in fine shape here. Marigo in #1 slip right in the corner by the restaurant - Ted will remember it - and our transportation in the parking lot.

Mr. Timpon drew us a sketch of an idea for a house here and a draftsman from Pratt & Whitney - is reducing it to working drawings - (moon lighting). We meet with him again tomorrow night.

We are also looking at houses to buy which would save us the headaches of building. So one way or another we should be residents of Fla. in the late spring.

Mr. Timpon plans to join us in a couple of weeks when after - new batteries - new main eng. fuel pump - freezer packed

solid with U.S. beef - and all sea stores on board - we will head Marigo into the ocean and to the islands -

While we're here the phone is - 305-746-4215 or 746-4300 and now and all winter - Miami Hi Seas operator - station W.O.M. While the transmitter is in FT Lauderdale it's called Miami Hi Seas Operator -

So if you all have any needs don't forget C.O.D. - That's call on Dad -

Much love

Pop -

Please fwd this to Ted + Ted pls.  
fwd promptly to Hank - + Hank pls.  
fwd. promptly via air mail to Jerry  
whose address is  
E. Jeremiah Wellman  
Box 952  
Phillips Exeter Academy  
Exeter, N. H. 03833