Let's Build a Boat on a Beach
Self-Taught Boat Builder and Artist: Gregg Buyskes

By Chris Morvan

In past centuries, before the days of combustion-engine trucks and massively powerful lifting devices, people built ships where it was convenient. And that meant on or very near a beach from which they could be launched.

A long-time resident of St. Maarten wants to turn back the clock to those days and build a replica of a slave ship or a trader right next to the sea, with visitors paying to see it being constructed.

It’s a novel idea which, given the right backing and presented in the right way, could be a tourist attraction as well as creating jobs.

The man behind the idea is Gregg Buyskes, and he knows it can be done, because in 2001 he and his family sailed here from their native South Africa in the Providence, a wooden boat he had built himself.

With no previous experience of boatbuilding but skillful hands, a pragmatic nature and a ton of common sense, Buyskes found out all he could about the subject, and modelled his vessel on a proven success.

“I based it on Spray, Joshua Slocum’s boat that he sailed single-handed around the world in,” Buyskes says.

Slocum was the first man to accomplish the feat, and he did it in a gaff-rigged sloop.
Letter From the Editor
April 5, 2019

Happy April to our readers. I hope you didn’t get caught believing any April Fool’s jokes—and if you did, I hope they were good ones!!

This weekend marks International World Health Day, so make sure to get active and do some water or nature based activities. If you have been negligent on making doctor appointments or blood draws—now is as good as time as any. Take care of yourself first so that you have the strength to be able to help others.

In this issue, we have covered the arts, non-traditional water activities and some typically forbidden topics that we hope to shed light on. Please enjoy as our writers went above and beyond this week to provide you articles that you simply will not read elsewhere.

If you enjoyed our publication and would like to continue to read from home, please use the QR code to the right to access our digital publication on our website.

Hilary Grant, Editor

Online Portal

For in-depth information about our island, consult ST-MAARTEN.COM - the official online portal. Please use the convenient QR codes with any smart phone to access individual pages directly.

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ST-MAARTEN.COM Weekly Edition

ST-MAARTEN.COM Weekly Edition is a publication of DigiPost Media:

DigiPost
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97150 St-Martin
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Distribution: Aquiles Raphaela
Email: distribution@st-maarten.com

St. Maarten/St-Martin Internet Portal: www.st-maarten.com

Print: The Daily Herald

Please email 'letters to the publisher' to sxm@email.com
April Born Enjoy Diamond as Birthstone

By Hilary Grant, GIA Graduate Gemologist

Diamonds have a long past as mesmerizing objects of desire. In the first century AD, Roman naturalist Pliny said it best, “Diamond is the most valuable of all things in this world.” And now, Diamond is the birthstone for April.

Known as the hardest gem of all, diamond is made of just one element: carbon. Most diamonds are over a billion years old and form deep within the earth under extreme conditions.

Diamond forms about 100 miles deep within the earth under extreme heat and pressure. It’s thrust violently upward until it arrives at or near the earth’s surface; but don’t plan on seeing this in your lifetime: the last eruption happened over a million years ago. The world’s love of diamonds started in India, where diamonds were gathered from the rivers and streams. Historians approximate that India was trading diamonds as early as the fourth century BC.

Thankfully we have come a tremendously far way in cutting and polishing diamonds to be the twinkling showpieces that we can use in jewelry. Happy Birthday April babies- next time you look at your diamond celebrating your day of birth remember everything it went through to become the birthstone for April!

SMYC Raffle to Benefit Youth Sailing Program

The Grant Thornton Multi Class Regatta will take place this weekend- April 6th and 7th.

The races are geared for all ages and participation is open to several different types of vessels. After the races finishes on Sunday, the St. Maarten Yacht Club (SMYC) is hosting an event to benefit their youth sailing program.

Starting at 1PM participants and visitors will be able to look through a ‘yard’ sale with merchandise to purchase. The prize ceremony from the weekend’s regatta will be held at 2:30PM, followed by live music at 3PM.

Throughout the evening all attendees can purchase a $5 raffle ticket for amazing prizes from local businesses and SMYC Members! Money spent during the yard sale and on raffle tickets will all be donated towards the SMYC Youth Sailing Program.

This amazing program offers lessons to all ages of children interested in learning how to sail. These classes can be applied to many job opportunities later in life, which is especially important for youth that grow up on an island like St. Maarten.
Empire State of Mind: Girl Talk

Continued from Page 1

Miss X is tall, athletic-looking and elegant, with long dark hair and pale skin. At 2 o’clock on a quiet Wednesday afternoon she is wearing a figure-hugging teal-colored dress and high heels. She’s all legs and shoulders and chest, but she’s not self-conscious about it. And she’s friendly, with a kind smile and that Latin American habit of touching your forearm when she speaks.

We’re in a kind of cafeteria, this beautiful girl and I, with a grizzled, non-nonsense man sharing our table because he is acting as her bodyguard. This is the Empire, a gentleman’s club formerly known as Defiance. We’re using the cloak-and-dagger name of Miss X because she guards her privacy closely.

She is a prostitute. It’s an ugly word often replaced with the more jocular “hooker”, or, in the determinately PC 21st century, sex worker. But there is no really pleasant, affectionate term, because society as a whole condemns these girls. Perhaps the nicest is “ladies of the night”, although the girls here are available from 11 in the morning, so if afternoon delight is your thing, it can be arranged.

It is more accurate to say that Miss X and her colleagues – I’ve got two more lined up – are currently working as prostitutes, because this is a short career, both through choice and through man’s inherent ageism, which insists that sex is the province of youth. Anyway, these girls don’t want to be doing what they are. They are doing it for the money.

“You get accustomed to it,” Miss X says. “You have to do it for the sake of your family. When you come here you change the chip in your mind.”

Each of our three has a family including children back in Colombia (where all the current Empire girls are from), and although Colombia is a lot better than it was a few years ago in the heyday of the drug cartels, it can still be a dangerous place and the economy is struggling, so many people are obliged to go abroad to work.

Let me introduce you to the other two. Miss Y is petite and apparently unblemished by life, looking a good five years younger than her 32 years. She too is friendly and amiable.

And then there is Miss Z, with wavy brown hair and a pretty, girl-next-door face. She has only been here two weeks and is still adjusting to her new line of work. She’s nervous about doing this interview and doesn’t really feel qualified to talk.

To further complicate matters, only one of these girls – the confident, worldly Miss X - speaks English and my Spanish is hilariously hesitant and clumsy. I prepared questions in advance with the help of my Spanish teacher.

I put basically the same questions to each girl.

At what age did they become sex workers? They all started in their 20s.

They do six months in St. Maarten and then go home for a year or so, doing whatever they can, but not sex work. Their families and friends don’t know about their double life. Miss X says she once stopped doing this for three years, but was driven back to it by the need to provide money for her family.

Is it possible to have a normal life outside work?

“For me, yes,” says Miss X. “But it depends on your personality.”

Misses Y and Z say no, it’s not possible.

Do you have a boyfriend?

“No,” says Miss X, slightly irritated by the question. “For what?”

What is the most difficult part of the job?

Different answers. Miss X says it’s when a client doesn’t want to wear a condom, so she refuses to ‘provide the service’ and he wants his money back.

Miss Y says it’s when clients are disrespectful.

For young Miss Z, it’s simple: “Everything.”

Continued next page
“Until I have bought my house,” says Miss Z, while the others are less specific, but it’s clear they will pack it in as soon as possible.

The Empire Club has been in business for many years and is now in the hands of Pierre “Hypnoz” Charville. Hypnoz has renovated what was a dilapidated property, installing air conditioning in the rooms and the bar and generally upgrading the place.

If prostitution is legal in St. Maarten, I ask him, why is it still so low-key and clandestine?

“Because obviously if a man goes to a brothel his wife won’t be happy about it,” he says. “And St. Maarten is a small place. Our clients are a mix of tourists and locals.”

I ask Hypnoz what attributes make a woman suitable for his club.

“What I look for in a girl is that she’s respectful, doesn’t use drugs and knows what she’s here for,” he replies. “They can’t be too choosy; but as humans, they have their preferences.”

He is keen to emphasize the family-like relationship between the club owners and the girls. “There is no pressure on the girls; we don’t insist they have a certain number of clients. We take them on trips to the beach, and to discos now and then. If they have any problems they can come to us and we’ll help them.”

Back to the workers.

An article made up of interviews needs pictures, so I politely ask each girl if she would mind, maybe a shot taken from the back or with a magazine held in front of her face. They all decline. “People would recognize my body,” Miss X says, although I think the dress might have something to do with it.

Thirty minutes later I put the same request to Miss Z. She laughs bashfully and looks down at her chest, where a small, loosely-laced garment contains as fine a pair of accoutrements as was ever bestowed on a woman, and it’s as if she’s saying, “You expect me to conceal my face but allow you to show the world these?”
Trinkets and Treasures Await You at Good Cards

If you are in the market for a unique gift or souvenir, or something as simple as a greeting card; Good Cards & Other Cool Stuff in Simpson Bay looks forward to welcoming you.

Located at Palapa Marina in Simpson Bay, you can shop in her well-appointed shop with a beautiful view of mega-yachts through the large glass windows.

For the last twenty years, Good Cards has become an established icon in the gift and souvenir business on Sint Maarten. Owner Anne has been in the Caribbean since 1983, spending ten years on St. Barths managing a gourmet kitchen shop followed by 16 years in St. Maarten managing a clothing boutique- all prior to taking over Good Cards in 2009.

A greeting card store first and foremost; there is a plethora of cards to choose from ranging from birthdays to thank yous, from serious to light-hearted. Another pillar of this locale is unusual, high-quality gifts and souvenirs that are different from what other stores might carry. Christmas or New Year’s celebratory items needed? Good Cards has them. SXM or mermaid lover? They have that too. It is actually a challenge to go into Good Cards & Other Cool Stuff and find something that you don’t want.

What sort of gifts are in this one-of-a-kind store? Handbags and wallets for men and women, secondhand paperback beach reads, kitchen gadgets, tabletop décor and even wall art. Thermos and tumblers from prestigious brand, Corkcicle, also grace the shelves of Good Cards. And don’t worry, the kids are not forgotten: let your little one pick out a favorite toy, stuffed animal or book too.

Perhaps you are looking for a candle with a yummy fragrance to reminisce of the island life when back home- this store also carries candles and spa products from Michel Design & Illume.

Of course, no gift is complete without the perfect wrap. Purchase wrapping supplies, helium balloons, paper napkins and party supplies while shopping in Good Cards. And if you are a horrible wrapper- bonus! They’ll even gift wrap your purchase free of charge as part of their stellar customer service.

So, if you are in Simpson Bay, in need of any product related to the gift industry, pop into Good Cards & Other Cool Stuff for an exceptional experience that will astound you that you didn’t find them sooner!

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The Unique St. Maarten/St-Martin Crossword Puzzle

Find out if you are a truly knowledgeable about our region and its culture, history and geography

Careful! This week's crossword puzzle has a couple trick questions. You will notice that all questions are rooted in the Caribbean hemisphere and might take a bit of research to answer if you haven't spent much time here. It also means the answers are valid for St Maarten/St-Martin and the neighboring islands. For example, if we ask for an island directly to the North of our location, it can only be Anguilla.

If we are using compound words in the answer, they do NOT have spaces!

If you try to solve the puzzle as a visitor to our island and you get stuck: don't be shy! Approach a local and ask. You might find they struggle to answer as well. Or strike up an interesting conversation and learn a bit about our very unique region.

Mistakes do happen, even though our puzzle is produced right here on the island. If you detect an error, drop us a line at SXM@EMAIL.COM.

Puzzle Solution on page 18

ACROSS

4 Game at the Jump Up Casino  
5 Month to start hurricane season  
9 Tiny nectar drinker  
10 Fuel brand of new gas station in Simpson Bay  
11 Official language of St-Martin  
15 Dutch national airline  
16 After which city is the fort named?  
19 What do Rastafarians smoke?  
21 Hand tool to cut brush  
22 Island off Orient Beach  
23 On what side of the road do they drive in Anguilla?  
24 Color of Simpson Bay diamond  
25 Lots of sand right on water's edge  

DOWN

1 Sushi at Paradise Mall  
2 Well shielded sea creature  
3 Nature island nation to the South  
6 Plant to make rum  
7 Where to get pleasure toys  
8 Sport in Mullet Bay  
12 Beer of Jamaica  
13 Beach bar in Simpson Bay  
14 Dutch side internet provider  
17 German restaurant in Simpson Bay  
18 Industrial product before tourism  
20 Build by corals
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Sint Rosé Arcade
Shopping right in the heart of Philipsburg, St Maarten
Once a month everyone’s favorite jungle lounge transforms into a party hub for the Treehab Pool Party. These events hosted at Loterie Farm are a night to remember, if you can!

Tickets to Treehab can only be purchased by those that are 21 years and older, and it is best to do so in advance as tickets at the door are a limited number and some people can be turned away depending on capacity.

One way to guarantee your spot is to get a group together to book a cabana or cabanita. These private areas come with bottle service to start the day right, and finish it in a blur. The servers that take care of these private spots do all they can to make sure your group is relaxed and cared for.

Once you are in the door you will find the whole area transformed for the event. The DJ on the platform up in the trees plays from noon until 8PM, keeping the party going all day long. BBQ style buffet food is available for purchase during the event and people can be found throughout the entire nature preserve and sanctuary lounging on towels or sitting with their feet in the water.

One of the main attractions is the pool. If you haven’t already seen the waterfall style pool, it is worth the trip into the hills itself. Right at the top of Loterie Farm is a private cabana with its own hot tub that can be booked for the most luxurious groups. The water from this hot tub trickles down to a smaller pool that can be used for the cabanas closer to the restaurant. From there the water continues down into the main pool area- accessible to all guests throughout the day. Throughout the Treehab events you can jump in and out of the water and later into the evening the shallow most area turns into an extension of the dance floor.

These events are held on the last Saturday of every month, and are the perfect place to celebrate any event!
A selected few children of Sint Maarten have been chosen to be part of a revolutionary experience that will change not only the way the island is portrayed by the world, but the way its inhabitants depict themselves.

At the National Institute of Arts of Sint Maarten, it is believed that music plays the role of a social glue that brings people together. With this in mind, they responded to a call for projects officially launched by the Dutch Disaster Fund in March 2018 and were among the 30 NGOs selected.

In the present moment, history is being written and prepared for the future evolution of our society. Music is among the oldest creations on earth. An article published almost two decades ago on ABC Science illustrates how, “music may pre-date humans.”

US researchers say that “similarities between the music of humans and other animals add weight to the idea that music has been around longer than human language, and maybe even longer than humans.” A more recent publication on this topic was published by the BBC five years ago, along the same lines. “The earliest known musical instruments are just 40,000 years old but music itself is almost certainly significantly older.”

Research have led to believe that it was used by our distant ancestors as a form of communication and has, “helped to provide the social glue needed for the emergence of the first large early and pre-human societies.”

Mrs. Aline Halley, Director of NIA (National Institute of Arts) and Peter D. Lucas, Program Director, created a three-part project that focuses on music, “as a way to repair the social fabric in Sint Maarten”, after the passing of the devastating hurricane Irma, that caused a vast majority of the island’s population to remain in survivor’s mode.

The first part began in December and consisted in the implementation of six neighborhood concerts in twelve districts over the course of the year. Starting off in schools and now on baseball fields, in community centers, parking lots... whatever area available.

Attracting about 3,000 spectators thus far, the band is formed by local musicians and is set up as a participative concert where members of the audience can freely join in on the fun. This component of the project is also a way to help promote these artists who have lost a lot of work after several businesses being shut down after Irma.

The second part, which began in February, is dedicated to seniors. Every first week of the month, a small concert is held in one of the elderly homes or at the Senior Recreational Hall in Hope Estate.

Last but far from least, the music orchestra gathers youth between eight and eighteen years. Initially, 72 scholarships were to be given out but following the audition that was held in January, and facing the unexpected cascade of talents, the board decided to grant scholarships to 108 students.
of St. Maarten is Making Music

Forty-one instruments were ordered already; such as trumpets, trombones, clarinets, flutes, cellos... Divided into 6 groups, the new musicians in the making are now being trained in four categories of instruments: wind, brass, percussion and string.

The students are given two free classes per week and on Saturdays, beginners and advanced children, have theoretical classes and play the section that they learned that week together. It is seen as a form of challenge and a source of inspiration for the beginners.

Having children of different age brackets help stimulate each other is also a way to sew a closer bond in this society’s social fabric and fits directly within the objective of this post-hurricane recovery project.

Having only recently begun truly familiarizing with their new instruments, the Program Director, Mr. P. D. Lucas, considers that the students will require another three months of practice under the care of the Director of the orchestra, Mr. N. James, before making their first performance in June; for which another audition might take place to select 30 to 40 additional students.

Facing the increase in scholarships given, the National Institute of Art is sending out a call for support or donations. Instrument or money for scholarships towards individual students can be donated to the school or musicians can offer guest classes. One and all are welcome to add their thread to the garment of history in the making.
Adventures in Sex and Dating in St. Maarten
A Regular Column by Leslie Hickerson

At least they had some fun in the sun...

A few years ago there was quite the party at Loterie Farm. Not the organized pool party it is today, but just a bunch of people that lived on the island out for a day poolside rather than on the beach.

The group rented a cabana for the day and spent it pretending to be fancy enough to afford rosé and champagne rather than buckets of beer. Since most members of the group were not used to this class of party, the bubbles hit everyone a little harder than beer normally did.

Two members of the group, Louis and Kathryn, were really hitting it off, but with Pic Paradis so far off the beaten path; leaving to spend some time alone was out of the question.

By the time the taxi made it all the way back to Cole Bay, their buzz would have worn off, and most likely their libidos would have calmed. So, they did what anyone surely would have and decided to put the empty cabana to some good use.

For those of you that haven’t spent the day at Loterie, you might not know but the cabanas do have some curtains that can be used for some privacy.

So, it was a good idea in theory, however when the wind blew the curtains moved and the rest of the group had quite a good show to watch!

Luckily Louis and Kathryn were drunk enough to have a good time anyway and they left satisfied and unabashed.
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Crossword Puzzle Solution

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Let’s Build a Boat on a Beach
Self-Taught Boat Builder and Artist: Gregg Buyskes

Continued from Page 1

“The difference was,” Buyskes continues, “the Spray was measured in feet and inches, but I worked in metric.”

In imperial measurements, three feet makes one yard, which is just over 0.9 of a meter, so for simplicity’s sake he rounded that up to one meter, with the result that the Providence ended up as a slightly scaled up version.

While his wife, Susan, worked in an art gallery to provide financial stability, Buyskes had established himself as a wildlife artist, exhibiting in major cities all over the country. Whatever he earned he put towards buying wood and other materials for the boat. To economize, he made his own masts and sewed his own sails on an old Singer machine.

“I used real canvas,” he recalls. “I treated it with fish oil and brick dust. And tannin as a preservative. She was square rigged, with a big square yard. I made the rigging myself from what they call stay wire, which they use for anchoring electricity pylons. It’s very heavily galvanized wire which lasts a long time. It just doesn’t look nice.”

Remarkably, the sails are still more or less intact now.

With this experience to draw on, Buyskes would appear to be ideally qualified to set up the beach-boatbuilding project.

Buyskes’s other main concern is to repair his beloved boat, which has languished on the French side of the causeway bridge since Hurricane Irma wreaked her destruction.

In the mean-time he undertakes a variety of woodwork on boats, and his art career is still on the go too.

Among other things, he currently makes sculptures by the ferrocement method in which a metal shape is covered with wire gauze, filled with foam and sealed with a mortar of colloidal silica.

You can see a Buyskes hawk and a pelican, along with other pieces, at The Art Box gallery in Simpson Bay.

For more information about the boatbuilding project, his email address is:

buyskesgregg@gmail.com

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