

Sunday, October 31. 2010

Better to beg for forgiveness than to ask for permission.

Only five more days to a new moon, and with the clouds it is pitch black at night. Perfect for some night time shots of the industrial harbor. 30sec exposure, aperture 16, 85mm focal length. I like how the cranes and containers look like toys. Otherwise I am waiting for the wheels for the boom so that I can finish installing the outhaul and reefing lines. Meanwhile I am working on additional rope clutches in the cockpit. There are now 10 lines leading from the mast and the boom into the cockpit, but only 2 clutches on the starboard side and 3 on the port side. Yesterday I have removed the paint and epoxied 10mm thick aluminium plates to the deck to reinforce it. The epoxy supports a load of 350 kg/cm², which at 360cm² makes ... 126 tons. Well, theoretically. But even a fraction of that is more than enough for the lines. Tomorrow when the epoxy has dried I can sand the bases down and paint them before installing the spin lock. Tuesday I should get the missing wheels for the boom and then, well, I almost don't dare get my hopes high, but then it looks like finally all necessary work is done to go for a sail. Still a lot more I could do, like install the deck organizers (which haven't arrived yet), but nothing that I have to for a short test sail. I want to sail! But there is another reason why I'm not leaving my berth. As I have mentioned already, I should have left two weeks ago ("No, you can't stay any longer because all places are reserved for the ARC"). However there are a quite a few more empty berths around me, and I figured that while those are empty and I need electricity for the power-tools I am staying without asking for permission. It seems to work. They know I'm here, and I've been talking to the mariners about other stuff, and it seems that as long as I don't ask them 'officially' whether I can stay longer they don't mind me being here. I think it works like this: If the staff at the marina office 'officially' allows me to stay longer, but a boat comes in and they need the space, then they are in trouble. They don't want that. So they ask everybody to move out ahead of time so they don't get into trouble (the fact that for more than a month half the pontoons were empty is of no concern, because it's not their money). But if I don't ask, then it's not their fault. And so they let me stay as long as there is space, but of course not officially. It's another case of "Better to beg for forgiveness than to ask for permission" (or: It is easier to ask for forgiveness than it is to get permission). But I'm afraid that if I sail out, they don't (can't) let me back in. So I don't want to sail out while I still need the berth with electricity for the grinder and Octavio is coming every day to do small stuff to the rigging (which he didn't do right the first time and I'm beginning to find out while I "dry-test" the stuff, sigh). But I expect every day a knock on my boat or a small notice with a request to come to the marina office. Complicated, isn't it. I can tell you, it doesn't make it very easy to be patient with e.g. Octavio when I don't know how much more time I have. But I'm becoming quite good at being patient, and Octavio has become a friend and I don't want to stress him. Well, poca a poca things are working out. I'm sure everything will be done in time. There are still hurricanes forming in the Atlantic and rampaging all over the Caribbean and it's too early to sail anyway.

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 19:31

Saturday, October 30. 2010

No 6 Texel and other time-lapse movies

I am waiting for parts - again. Deck organizers and wheels for the boom. The old reefing lines and outhaul were partially wire, and my new (wire-less) lines don't fit into the old wheels. In the meantime I am working below decks, trying to organize my stuff and find a good place for everything (looks like I have too many clothes). Otherwise then that I've been very busy this week scripting and diving for the diving-school-movie, and making more time-lapse movies. One I am particularly happy about is the movie of setting the sails on the 90 year old Schooner "No 6 Texel". A beautiful boat! That movie literally was a lot of hard work, since I helped Albert hoisting the sails ... and they are heavy! Another time-lapse I always wanted to make was one of the sun setting above the harbor. Since I had to be up most of the night I thought I could as well setup all the cameras with time-lapse features that I have. Same scene, but very different result. Which one do you like better? Personally I am not too happy with either, and I'll probably do it again. I have been waiting for a cloudless night, but now that I see the movie I think it's better to have partial cloud coverage - not too much, but enough to see the clouds moving. It's so much more interesting. But at least I finally see the huge container cranes moving. I've never seen them doing anything when I looked, and began to wonder whether the cranes and the cargo boats are only there for show. But the time-lapse movie clearly shows that there is indeed loading and unloading going on! The final thing that is keeping me busy is answering request for Vespina. Two weeks ago it started that more emails were coming in, and now there is one or two every day. Does this mean I will be able to sell her before I leave for the Caribbean?

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 01:23

Sunday, October 24. 2010

Time-lapse of "Independence of the Seas" leaving the port.

After I woke up this morning I saw that the Independence of the Seas was in port again. Not the prettiest of all ships, but with 339m the second largest passenger vessel ever built (after Oasis of the Seas with 360m). Impressive. And a good opportunity to improve my time-lapse movie skills, because the ship has to turn around 180° inside the harbor when leaving. I'm glad I was there (just) in time to take the pictures. Though next time I have to plan the camera movement and focal length settings in advance to get a smoother movie. I'm not totally happy with that. But it's fun to watch how the boats at anchor move in the changing wind. Well, there's only one way to get better, and that is to do it more often. Technicalities: For this movie I took 2471 pictures (one every second) with the lowest resolution my camera (EOS 5D Mk2) would let me select (which is 5.2MP). After transferring them to my computer I used the "Open Image Sequence"-functionality of Quick Time Pro 7 to create an initial movie at 24 frames per second with a resolution of 2784x1856 pixels. The original is 5GB in size, but after saving it as a QuickTime movie with a reduced resolution of 1280x720 pixels and H.264 encoding it is only a 200MB file. I find that this is the best compromise in quality vs rendering time on my laptop. The final editing was done in Final Cut Pro. The Soundtrack comes from the CD collection "Soundtracks for iMovie". I converted the result for internet upload to MPEG-4 at 720x480 pixels, again with H.264 encoding. That produces a 24MB file at a significantly reduced quality. To which youtube adds funny Moiré patterns at the windows. But the internet connection here at the "Sailor's Bar" is not reliable enough to upload a much bigger file, so there you are.

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 15:44

Saturday, October 23, 2010

Vespina at the anchorage

Yesterday Octavio, Domingo and I installed the reefing lines for Gudrun V ... which of course ended up with a new entry on the to-do list. Sigh. I spare you the details, but after a brief discussion I decided to order two deck organizers in which the lines will run in the future to the cockpit, and new cleats for the cockpit. The only thing that's itching me about it is that I could have seen that in advance. And would have certainly seen it had Gudrun had any reefing lines when I bought her. Well, well, a few more days. PeterSo instead of sailing Gudrun V today, I brought Vespina to the anchorage. The marina staff has now seriously started pushing people out of the marina or moving them around from pontoon to pontoon, and I didn't want to wait until they show up at my boat. So this morning I brought her to the anchorage, kindly assisted by Peter. Considering we are both two headstrong singlehanders and did it without any previous talk it went pretty well. On the first attempt Peter didn't know how to drop the anchor, I was too close to another boat, and at the worst possible moment the wind changed and freshened up. Hehe. But at the second attempt everything went like a charm. Then Peter dropped me off at the beach and I walked to the marina office to give them the good news that there is one boat less to worry about. They looked totally surprised, which made me pretty happy. Hehehe . While they created my bill (takes a while here), a phone call came in. I could only hear the marina guy talking, but what I heard made me decide to better not mention Gudrun at all: "No, you cannot stay here." "Only one day for repairs" "Then you have to go" "Mister, do you here me, you cannot stay, all places are reserved for the ARC". They actually have a saying here that goes like "it's better to ask for forgiveness than for permission". And it looks like it works a lot better here too. So I'm going to stay with Gudrun in the marina without asking for permission (totally un-german!) until I'm done or they come around and ask me to leave. Later, when the tide was up, I took the kayak out again to check the anchor and take some pictures: Vespina at the anchorage. Problem area 1 Problem area 2 Problem area 3 Because of all the work on Gudrun I haven't had the chance to do anything for Vespina for the last four months, and I am actually surprised about her good condition. Thanks to the solar panel the batteries are always fully charged, and the engine started in the morning immediately. Only the tiller was a little heavy, so I had to pull out the grease-gun and give it a goad load. On the pictures you see the three main "problem areas", where some rust developed. Where the anchor chain runs (always a problem), where the windows have small cracks, and at the stern. But considering that it's six months since Vespina has last seen a paint brush (or a water hose) that's pretty good! When I started out I had to paint every two weeks, and I am very glad that all the work with the grinder, primer and rust converter has paid off. Anyway, now that I get an email every day for the advertisement on boatshop24 I will fix those spots too and then she is a real beauty again.

Posted by Axel Busch in Vespina at 07:58

Friday, October 22. 2010

The mainsail is up!

Three months after I took the mast out everything was finally ready to install the mainsail again. After trouble with regular slides because the in-mast track is so small I decided to go for an external track with the Harken Battcar system. Here is a short time-lapse movie, my first btw: Today we will install the reefing lines and sheets, and then Gudrun V should be ready for a test-sail tomorrow!

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 02:09

Thursday, October 21. 2010

1:3 for the dark side.

The new track is mountedThe main-sail track is mounted, yeah! Today Octavio wants to come around to attach the chariots to the main-sail and install all the lines into the boom. After that the rig is ready, fantastic! Can't wait to go out for a test-sail. But of course there are more unpleasant surprises as well. I got the quote for getting Vespina out of the water and into the warehouse - 3000 EUR. Same for the return journey, plus 2000 EUR per year for the place. Ouch. It's not worth it. Hmm, need to make new plans. Liz in the Zodiac 260. Sorry excuse of a dinghy after three days in the sun. Loosing air and leaking water. But back to Gudrun. Saturday I had inflated the dinghy and after Liz paddled it around the harbor a little bit we hung it on the Davids at the back of Gudrun V while I serviced the outboard engine. Full of expectation I let the dinghy into the water yesterday and mounted the outboard engine. Result: outboard won't start, dinghy won't float. Regarding the outboard I think it is an electrical problem, which can be solved. Regarding the dinghy it's a problem of "falling apart at the seams", and can also be solved - by throwing it away. The thing wouldn't last a single day in the Caribbean. After talking to a few people I've decided not to buy a new dinghy here. They are cheaper in the Caribbean, it saves me storing it on deck for the passage, and I still have my kayak for the anchorage. Funny - whenever I touch something on this boat to check it over I have to replace it (except for the water pump and the fridge - toc toc toc). Maybe I should stop checking things, then I wouldn't find any more problems . Until I need the gear of course ...

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 02:01

Tuesday, October 19. 2010

Wiiiiinches!

Unbelievable: The winches have arrived! And the main-sail track too! I still don't understand how it can take two winches four months from the UK, when it takes 17m of mainsail track only seven days from the US. But I guess that's beside the point now that everything is here, and I'm awfully glad that I have the stuff at all. Of course not without more surprises, haha. Like the fact that the new #46 winches are actually smaller in diameter than the old #44 winches they are to replace, whereas the #48 winches I have at the backstay are bigger again. Lewmar must have changed their numbering at one point in the past. Well, the 12mm sheet of the genua fits, and I'll be content with that. Drilling new holes and cutting threads is one of the smaller inconveniences. After the hole has been drilled the thread for the coil is cut. The coil is inserted between the baseplate and the winch I put a nylon disk for electrical insulation. The screws are also electrically insulated (and sealed) using Tef gel. Drum on and done! But not only the winches were a source for more work. The mainsail track is too. It is installed by sliding up a lot of small counter-plates inside the mast-track and then screwing the individual 2m track elements to them. Only problem is that with my mast the counter-plates won't slide (just like the sail didn't). In the end we filed off parts of all the plates and now they fit more or less. But it's worth the effort, I'm sure. With the new track and the roller-bearing chariots for the main-sail the whole thing will go up and down with very little effort, and so I should be able to do the whole thing from the cockpit. Then I only have to go to the mast to trim the foot of the sail and bind the reefing lines. Problems with the track. We had to file off parts of the counter-plates to get them to slide in the mast-track. I hope that we can finish with the track tomorrow. And then we'll what the next surprise is

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 15:33

Thursday, October 14. 2010

The New Plan.

LizThanks Liz for that awesome picture!Liz is here and I like it very much. Sunday and Tuesday we went to the beach together - the first time for me since June that I was at the beach. Unbelievable. Yesterday she started a "Open Water Diver" class, and I came along with my camera to document the whole thing and make a little movie for my friends from Buceo Canarias which they can hopefully use on their website. Very interesting project for me. Today the class is at the pool again for some more exercises before going into the sea tomorrow, when I'll join them once more. Diving classThe camera.Apart from that we are cleaning and moving stuff between the two boats and waiting for the winches and spare parts from Lewmar UK and the mast equipment from Harken USA to arrive. It's four months now that I placed the order at Lewmar, and it was supposed to take three weeks. You can imagine how fond I am of that company by now. I only hope that Harken does a lot better than that. As much as I like Las Palmas and my friends here, I can't wait to sail away again. Talking about sailing away ... I've been asked what my plans are and whether "I will still make it across". Understandably Of course I will make it across. The "when" and "where" depends on when Gudrun V will be ready to sail. After all the gear is installed I still have to take her around the islands for some sea trials before heading off across the Atlantic. If I can leave the canary islands beginning of November I want to sail to Brazil (Fernando de Noronha or Natal) before making my way north to Trinidad. But seeing how slow things are going it is much more likely that I'll be forced to hang around until the end November and then I'll sail straight into the Caribbean. I can't say that I am happy with the situation. I would have very much preferred if I could have crossed the Atlantic in January with Vespina and sail the circuit as planned. Then I'll be home by now again with a lot of miles under my keel and a big sense of achievement. But the weather and my inexperience didn't allow for that. As it is now the sense of achievement is somewhat lacking, even though getting here on my own through the storms and completing all the work on the two boats is not a small feat in itself. I learned - and am still learning - a lot, and for that opportunity I am truly grateful. And I am still enjoying it, although I am getting more restless as each day goes by and the time window for the crossing season arrives. 28.163217 N, 15.441214 WBut there is a lesson in all that: Before the voyage things were either "good" or there was "a problem". On the way I've learned that real problems are actually (fortunately) pretty rare. More often it's just an "inconvenience". It might be a costly or painful inconvenience, but while there is a way or workaround it can hardly be called a problem. A problem means running out of options. And fortunately I haven't encountered a situation yet where I ran out of options. And I'm certain that when the time to cross has come and the winches and mast track still haven't arrived I will find another workaround. In the meantime I stay positive and spent as much time as I can diving and learning about photography and video. And some Spanish

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 03:53

Friday, October 8, 2010

Of thieves and holidays

This week started out very interesting and full of hope for leaving Las Palmas by Sunday. On Monday and Tuesday I stopped a shoplifter (same store, same guy. Unbelievable.), and retrieved my own bicycle from two evil 8-year old villains who tried to walk off with it (with the front-wheel locked, hehe). Apart from that I worked with Domingo on the rigging, and by Wednesday morning everything was ready to get the sails up. Genoa and staysail worked like a charm, and we were just working to bring the mainsail up. In addition I had received word that the winches where in Las Palmas since Monday and should be in the store for pickup any minute. No wonder that in my head I was already counting the minutes until I would cast off and leave Las Palmas. And then the sail got stuck on the way up. To cut a long story short: it won't work the way it was planned (using standard slides) with my crazy 30yr racing mast. Either I go back to no slides (just the sail), or I use an extra track with ball-bearing slides. The first option is ok to operate alone when the weather is not too bad. Haha. So it's the second. And that means another two weeks here waiting for parts, and another big hole in my wallet. Well, at least I could pick up the winches, because (after only a three month wait) I had received word that they had arrived in Las Palmas by ship and were being delivered to the store. Or not. Because to everybody's surprise they couldn't be found on the ship, and two days later the inquiry reveled that they are still in Madrid in customs. Which can take any amount of time. Great. Well, at least I could put Vespina into the warehouse. Or not. Because there is a vacation day next week and that seemed to have stopped all people from responding to calls. No appointment with the crane, the truck, or the warehouse. In the meantime plenty of ARC-boats are arriving and the marina is filling up. I was supposed to leave the marina today, but where should I go with two boats, no winches and no main sail? Will have to talk to the officials tomorrow. But there is good news too: My girlfriend Liz is coming to visit today for a week. Yeah!

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 14:23

Tuesday, October 5, 2010

Diving with Dolphins and getting ready to leave

On the weekend before last I went on a diving trip to Tenerife, and came across a small school of Dolphins. And got very close. After a frustrating week in which the to-do list got ever longer instead of shorter that was exactly what I had needed: Thanks to Ralf we just got all scheduled items for the boatyard done last week (we were still working while the crane started lifting her and the supports dropped out underneath), and now Gudrun V is back in the water. Ralf is back home, and I am finishing the rigging with the help of Octavio and Domingo. Domingo is a Olympic gold medalist and two times Americas Cup sailor, and his tips and advice are invaluable. Welcome the new day! Hola! Cleaned screw with line cutter. Gudrun V, waiting for the anti fouling But not all work is done: Gudrun is still missing her backstays, the sails, and the winches. All of which was supposed to be ready 8 weeks ago. A pain. Reminds me of software projects . On the other hand waiting for the suppliers gave me enough time to thoroughly overhaul the whole boat, especially the deck hardware and the electrical installation: I replaced all batteries and battery-cables, installed new charge controllers, changed the solar panels, fixed the wind generator, and updated the navionics (Depthsounder, Log, Radar, AIS, Chartplotter, Windinstrument). But I was promised that everything will be ready by the end of the week, and so I hope to be able to leave on Sunday. After that I want to put Vespina on land. A couple of people were interested in buying here, but it seems not interested enough. My attempts to find a place for her on the dry in one of the harbors on the Canaries were unsuccessful, since nobody would rent me a space for more than six months. Something with being afraid of being stuck with a boat that nobody is paying for and nobody is picking up. Fortunately Gorka from the diveshop found a friend with a friend who has a big warehouse ... and I can put Vespina there for as long as I want. The only trouble is to get her there, which will require to take out the mast and put everything on a flat-bed trailer. But not here in Las Palmas, because Vespina won't fit through the bridge to the harbor. Should be interesting, let's see how much of it I am able to organize and complete before the end of the week! People have already warned me that there is a holiday next week, and so it's unlikely that much will happen this week. Oookaaaay. Life is definitely slower in the Canaries . The only trouble is: I am supposed to leave Las Palmas with both boats on Friday. The ARC is coming for its 25th anniversary with over 250 boats, and everybody else has to leave the port to make space. Big pain. We'll see how this turns out.

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 04:42