

BOOKREVIEW

*The caribbean
of an
earlier era*

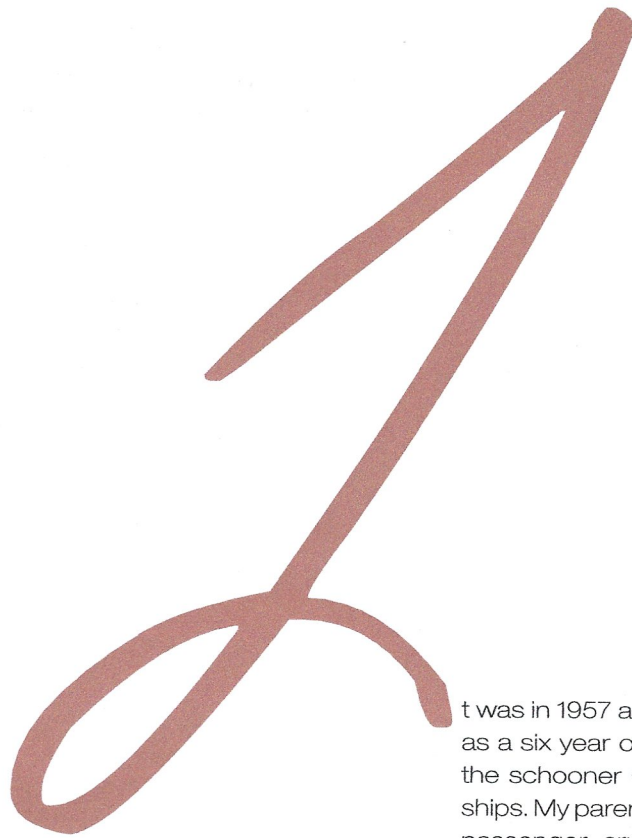
BY LOUBOUDREAU

WHERE THE
TRADE WINDS
BLOW



R. L. Boudreau



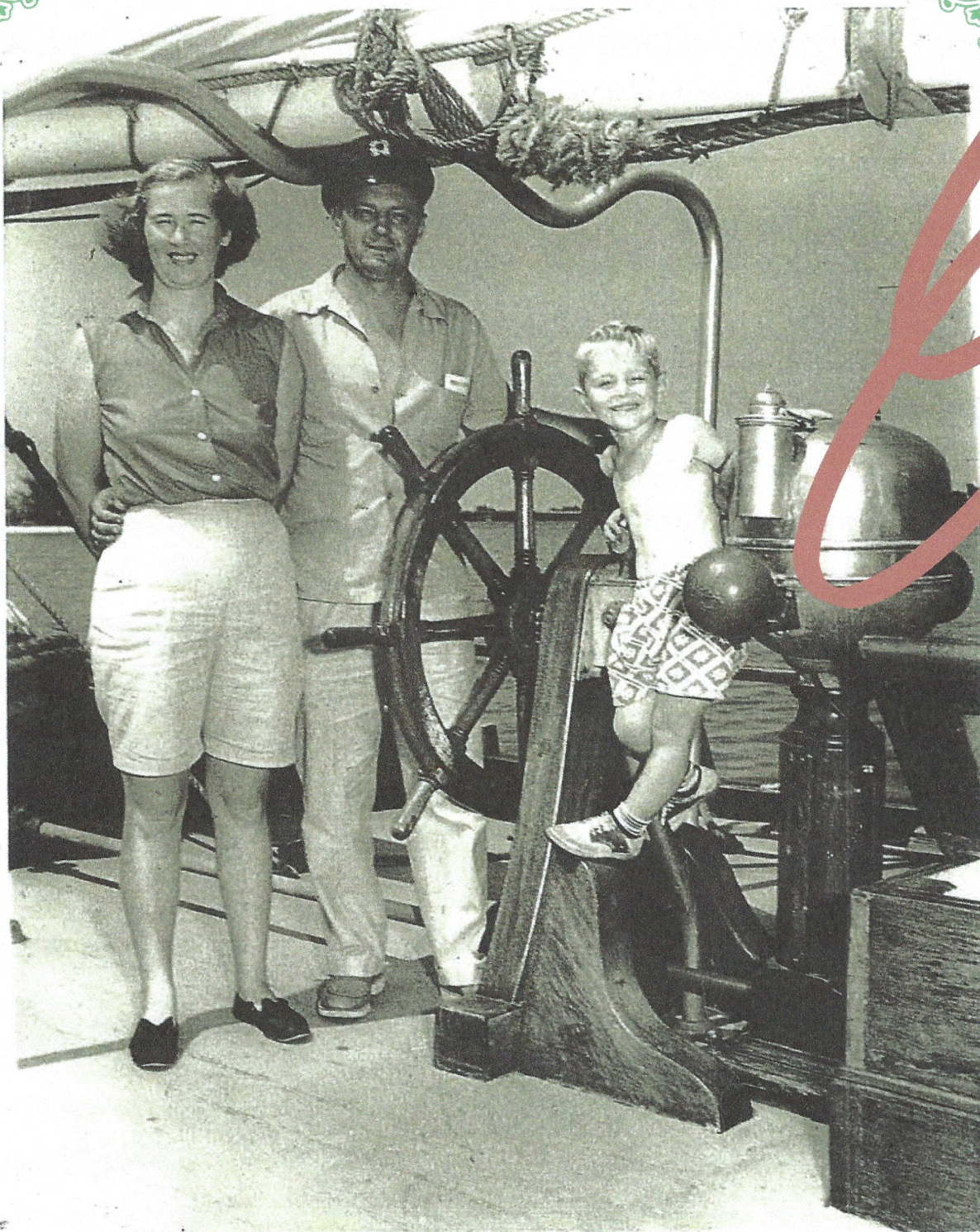


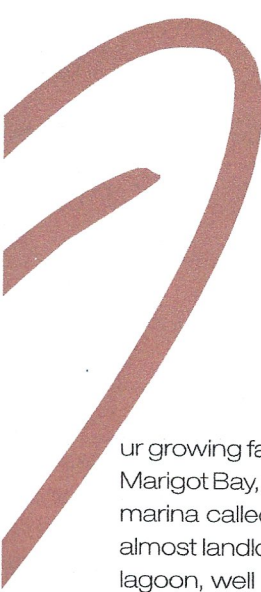
"The collection of coins and a few pieces of jewellery though not a King's ransom, was a true and real treasure."

It was in 1957 and one of my earliest memories was as a six year old boy sailing the Caribbean aboard the schooner Caribbee, one of my father's sailing ships. My parents were pioneers of the windjammer passenger cruise business in the islands and I was living the childhood of dreams. The sights and sounds of the Windward Isles where I grew up are firmly etched upon my mind. Tall green mountainous islands formed a loose chain from South America in the south, to Puerto Rico in the north. Fine natural harbours and bays abounded where ships and boats of all sizes and shapes came and went on their business.

One of my first adventures takes place when I found a small wooden chest of jewels and coins on Norman Island, Robert Louis Stevenson's actual "Treasure Island". Never mind that the treasure was planted for me or that the bandana wearing Benn Gun character coming out from the trees was one of our schooner's crew, it was real enough for me. The collection of coins and a few pieces of jewellery, though not a King's ransom, was a true and real treasure. During the months that followed, the old copper pieces shone as I counted them over and over, before returning them to the brass bound chest.

We sailed under trade wind skies across blue waters to beautiful islands where the coral reefs and white sand beaches beckoned. This book holds descriptions of life on a sailing ship as seen through the eyes of a young boy. Catching a blue marlin, visiting the famous Citadel in Haiti and being kissed by Ava Gardner in Cuba are only a few of my more vivid memories.





ur growing family settled in the enchanted lagoons of Marigot Bay, St Lucia, where we built a small hotel and marina called *Yacht Haven Hotel* (now *Capella*). The almost landlocked bay comprised an inner and outer lagoon, well protected from the summer hurricanes by high surrounding mountains covered in rich green vegetation. It was hard to see from the sea and unless you knew it was there you could easily miss it.

A beautiful sand spit lay to the North side of the bay covered with coconut trees. And then there was the inner lagoon. For me it was like some fairy tale hideaway as indeed it was. Marigot Bay had a secret look. There was a tangible air of mystery on those calm waters, belying events and adventures long past, that waited to be discovered again. Steep verdant hills rose all around and the Caribbee floated in crystal clear water. Green mangrove trees with spider like limbs covered in oysters descended into the clear water providing nurseries for small fish and not a few lobsters. Small red and yellow mangrove crabs wandered the roots while giant land crabs crawled the high tide mark. The bay was pristine, there was nothing there save what nature had put there. My siblings and I were fascinated by the lore of the island and became fluent in patois. Through cock fights and obeah our lives mirrored the rich tapestry of island life as it was then.

It was a different time. There was the dockside dentist who pulled teeth for a few BWI dollars with a pair of pliers after administering a swig of strong white rum. Our wonderful gardener, Simon, showed us how to eat the many wild fruits and vegetables that grew in profusion in the verdant valleys. We saw giant sperm whales harpooned by hand to the lee of St. Vincent, and caught big sharks on the drop off. There were live volcanoes and a magical voyage to the mysterious lost atoll of Aves. The fabled isle is home to thousands of sea birds and abundant sea

life and also the place where female sea turtles go to lay their eggs in the sand.

Sailing on my father's schooners through the islands, there were tales of storms and adventure on the high seas, as well as my perceptions of island, culture and wonderful native people. It has been said by expats living in the islands that they were adopting their island homes. For us it was different. The people of St. Lucia adopted us and although our parents still thought of us as Canadian children, they were mistaken. We were truly children of the isles.

"Where The Trade Winds Blow" chronicles the life of a young boy experiencing the rich tapestry of island life of the era and the wonderful people who lived there. Swift schooners chart adventurous courses through the West Indies of the 1950's and later. Now, more than fifty years past, all I have left of my treasure is a British West Indian copper penny. Sometimes, as I sit by the fire on a cold winter evening, I take it and hold it in my hand. The copper grows warm and as I close my eyes, I see the Caribbee's open quarterdeck. The brass cannon gleams and I see my treasure chest lying in the sand and feel the terror as Ben Gunn comes out from the edge of the trees.

A quote:

"There resides in everyone the spirit of adventure, that small flame that inspires life's quest. All that is required is the kindling and then it will burn brightly. The first sips of freedom's heavy brew are intoxicating and will pull you ever onwards, as it has me. Drink freely of it and you will not be disappointed. May fair winds fill your sails and the lee shore never find you"
Capt. Robert Louis Boudreau

Books by Robert Louis Boudreau are available
www.wherethetradewindsblow.ca