

Our second liberty port was in the Bahamas, one of the islands the tourist chooses after he sees Nassau iguess. It was a haven for sailors and many beautiful pleasure craft moored out there. There was no air strip. It was pirate country in the old days and s hideout for Bluebeard in the days of the privateers. ~~Looking over my map I can't recognize the name of the place.~~ St. Maartens is in the northern Lesser Antilles, maybe in the Virgin Islands. It is practically preserved from it's colonial past though. The postoffice and dock areas have some original buildings. I'd guess the town is two blocks in any direstion from the peir. The French town, maybe five miles away is about the same difference. Quiet. A place to shop with low, or no duties, and a place to put a bank and a casino, and a few hotels. The sailors really went berserk in the casinos. We had an old fat guy in command division who ~~even~~ broke out a earring and really went high rolling. I guess the uniform gets to some after a while. I actually had a liberty day and was bright enough to spend it relaxing. I broke out my suntan oil and beach towel and headed down the beach to the hotel. I took up residence with the tourists, an international lot, and had a couple beers and roasted my hide some. This is not the place to oggle women, but what was there was ogled. A very high class and retired atmosphere. There were calypso shows at midnight, and I was enticed to be a spectator at this ethnic activity, but I was too pooped. I did garner the information that the calypso artists travel quite extensively in these islands; the groups have names after the leade singer and he is named something like The Revelator, The Inciter. Sort of named like our professional wrestlers like, The Crusher, The Mad Dog. To this day I wish I had the steam to have made one of those shows. Heard the music on the street anyway, raucus and shrill and uninhibited to say the least.

The ship passed whatever trials it had and I passed the potatoes or ketchup or whatever. When we got back to Jacksonville I found the paper included a lokal writing group in its Community Events column. Not to be made a party pooper I made a meeting of the local poetry club. I guess I was appreciated, read a couple and stuck my foot in my mouth as usual. Seemed the people were serious and not to aparthied, and I had an invitation to a party, but duty screwed that up. They met irregularly and socially didn't hit it off too well. I took a bus to the Prudentisl officefor the area and read a poem I had called Economics. The rest seemed to be interested in the joys of retirement, but said it was nice to have someone in the Navy stop by.

I found a car at a dealer who caters to the sailors near the base. It was a '68 Caddillac and I paid \$250.00 for it. The darn thing always ran. The old gent wanted \$400. but couldn't make the pwer window to crank. He gave me the right price and the old wreck took me where I needed to go. That beater was a good tool in socializing with the guys. They'd give a couple of bucks gladly to get where they were going, or if we went out I'd get off easy on beers. The farthest it ever went was to the airport. After confinement on the ship, just going to the beach or shopping alone was a relief. Busing around with the squids, sailors, entailed shop talk, and there was always plenty of that while on the ship. Still paying my note I was confined to seeing things like the old fort on the river and night clubbing.