

THE CARRIACOU SLOOPS: SUMMER'S GIRLS SAIL ON

by Lucy Tulloch

They say births and deaths occur in patterns. I believe the same goes for boats with souls — boats like *Summer Cloud* and *Summer Wind*.

The stories of these two lovely Carriacou sloops are certainly intertwined, and even despite traumatic events, they both sail on through it all. Last year, Eddie Baretto commissioned *Summer Cloud* in the Grenadines. After winning the Guadeloupe race with her, he brought her to Antigua — only to have Hurricane Luis pick her up and hurl her into the mangroves. In the same season, *Summer Wind*, which had formerly belonged to Eddie, was sunk in a bizarre accident, then salvaged, and later bought and refitted by Frank Pearce, of *Whirlaway*.

Their tale really began four years ago, when Eddie bought *Summer Wind* in Carriacou. Thirty-seven feet overall, with a beam of nine feet and four-and-a-half feet of draft, she is built simply, of pitch-pine fastened with nails and driftpins. Typical of the sloops found in the Grenadines, she was intended for small-cargo carrying and fishing. Three years ago, Eddie raced her successfully in the Classic Regatta. He subsequently sold her, and began to think about his next boat.

Early last year, *Summer Wind* was sitting quietly on her mooring in Falmouth Harbour when a Swan 65 sailed into her, sinking her immediately. John Bentley and his trusty *Sea Runner* were called in, but when they successfully raised her from the seabed, they found her in a very sorry state. Frank, who knows Carriacou well and has always had a passion for these island sloops, was not daunted. He bought her and set about, in his inimitable style, replacing five planks, some beamshelf, and five floors; refastening and recaulking the forward two thirds of the hull; replacing half the decking, rescarfing the mast, and replacing some bulwarks. Fortunately, the rig and sails were salvaged, and now, with all of Frank's work completed, she is sailing and racing again.

Eddie's new boat, *Summer Cloud*, thirty-nine feet overall with a twelve-foot beam and five-foot draft, was designed and built by Baldwin Deroche in Petit Martinique, a small, beautiful island off Carriacou famous for smuggling and building fast boats. A dozen other engineless Carriacou sloops are used there for carrying cargo and fishing.

When Eddie first went to see him, Baldwin took him down to Windward to look at the other boats lying at anchor

there. They discussed which bow Eddie liked, which sheer appealed to him. Within a couple of hours, with no drawings, Baldwin had not only come up with a price, he had even calculated how many screws and bolts he would use to build her. He kept asking Eddie what size cargo he would be carrying or fishing, not understanding why someone would use a boat purely for pleasure. When Eddie asked how deep she would be, Baldwin replied that that depended on what timbers were found in the hills. "Don't worry," Baldwin assured him. "You'll get a good boat."

And, of course, he did. Relatively light on the helm despite her huge main, she is steady because these boats are designed to have men standing on deck. And she is fast. When they sailed down to Guadeloupe for the race, they averaged eight knots, mak-

ing it there in just five hours, without even touching the helm during the first two hours. *Summer Cloud* handily won the 1996 Guadeloupe race on corrected time.

When Hurricane Luis hit Antigua, and *Summer Cloud* was thrown eight feet into the mangroves, 7200 pounds of ballast had to be removed by hand before she was towed out; and then it all had to be put back in again. Thankfully, very little damage was sustained and she remained bone dry inside.

So both *Summer Wind* and *Summer Cloud* have been saved by the grace of God. And who knows, these two valiant craft may one day race against each other in the Classic Regatta, proudly demonstrating to vessels built all over the world that people create mighty good little boats right here in the Caribbean.



Summer Cloud is typical of the fast and stable craft traditionally built on the island Carriacou.

