

## HOLA CUBA! – Sweet Memories

By Seale George, *SV Flash*

(ed. - Vessels that participated in this epic Rally To Cuba in 2017 are noted in italics.)

It was not clear whether it was a *Flash* of brilliance or our *Destiny* for the Salty Dawgs to visit Cuba this year. After all, it was there, Americans could now visit and marine insurance was available. Leaving from different locations, some would experience great sailing while others had to do some *Windward* work to get there. Excitement and anticipation were at a high level. Some even felt the dizzy effects of *Onapua* as we approached the *Bristol Head* of Marina Hemingway. Shouts of “*Alora*, we have arrived!” could be heard above the radio noise. After going thru the process of checking into the country we were led to our slips in the marina. As we were tying up, the skies grew as dark as a *Raven* but then, as if Chief *Tahawus*, the cloud splitter, had done his sunshine dance, the clouds passed without rain and full sun appeared.



So now we could take a *Salty Pause* and move on to *Chapter Two* of our journey, experiencing the people, culture, food, and architecture and, of course the cars, of Havana. *Aviva*, those classic cars! One day we hailed a taxi, a 1950's American classic, and gave the driver *Free Rein* to take us around Havana. Light traffic allowed for *Runaway* speeds along the Malecon, while at other times we were strolling like a *Terrapin*. We admired the forts and buildings in Old Havana, some dating back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Their architecture is exquisite, but the exteriors are degrading and in need of major renovation. Perhaps being included as a UNESCO Heritage Site is just the *Black Swan* that might save these buildings from further decline.

On another excursion, we were treated to a lively *Salsa* performance from the famous team of *BOB* and *RitaT*, known internationally for their body moves and the *Growltiger* sounds as they danced.

For 13 days we were treated to all that Havana had to offer. Our senses were on overload as we enjoyed every minute. Each cruiser had a different experience, but all were in agreement that it was a truly *YOLO* opportunity. The *Persistence* that was displayed by the fleet in submitting



paperwork and working with the marina and the governments of Cuba and the USA was well worth the effort.

As we left Marina Hemingway and this *Blue Pearl* of an island, and the land became nothing but a *Vanishing Point*, the good memories of the people, the culture, the cars, the architecture and the food will last a very long time.