

# *Caribbean Boating/Newport Sailor*

(Caribbean in winter, Newport in summer)

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## ***A welcome surprise this spring for foreign crews heading to New England from Caribbean (Out Of District Visas available in Bermuda)***

Crewmembers planning to arrive in Bermuda this spring from the Caribbean aboard yachts heading to New England can now start the application process for an Out Of District U.S. Visa while still down south in the islands. Before departing northward, crews - in say, Antigua - can start the process by contacting Phin Sprague ([phin@portlandyacht.com](mailto:phin@portlandyacht.com)), owner of Portland Yacht Services in Maine, with the following: a copy of the clearing crew list; an ETA/Bermuda; the names of the crew wishing to apply for a visa.

### **PHIN'S UNIQUE ROLE**

Phin was able to convince U.S. Senior Senator and Republican Party leader Susan Collins of Maine to head a bipartisan effort to ease the visa application process for foreign crewmembers heading to New England from the Caribbean. In return, he agreed to act as the designated Bermuda visa "gate". But the U.S. Consulate in Hamilton, Bermuda will offer visas only for the limited period of the spring northern migration of yachts. And to obtain a visa, crewmembers must enter Bermuda on the same boat that will eventually take them to New England - i.e. no flying in to meet the boat, and, no boat hopping. Applicants for a visa, of course, will as always need to do research on their own to see if they qualify for a visa.



Portland Yacht Services' 1500-ton drydock.

Phin had listened to a number of crew who felt the U.S. visa policy posed an unreasonable hardship, forcing them to fly home or sail a significant distance off their direct route. And he felt that commerce between the crews and Maine boatyards was being harmed if the former could not obtain Out Of District Visas. Now Phin would like to express his appreciation for Senator Collins' help. The senator was not only receptive, he says, but "truly interested" in resolving the problem.

In April, Phin will once again be in Antigua during the Classic Yacht Regatta to host a gathering (on the menu: Maine lobsters) to promote boatyards in Maine, and will be available at that time to answer questions in person.