

The Discovery Bay Resort and Marina

By Smiljka Bogunovich Fitzgerald

Last week I finally had a beautiful day of sailing on our 22' sloop with my niece Karina (18) and nephew Michael (16) both born in Puerto Rico. Karina had just returned from St. Barth where she worked on a 64' yacht and is now in love with sailing. They call themselves water babies because they also give surf lessons. Karina wants more sailing lessons so that she can work with her uncle on charters perhaps. Only a sailor knows how much it means to get out on the blue ocean, watch for turtles, dolphins, hook up a fish and enjoy the wind, sails and silence of sea world on a nice day. However, on our way back as Michael was hooking the *Cógelo Suave* at the mooring, I could not help but think how much easier and safer it would be if our west coast had a marina. We have quite a few friends here who are waiting for the long promised marina in order to buy their dreamboats. They have the money but do not want the risk of tying their boat to an open mooring.

A few days later, I was asked by my editor to find out what is going on with the Discovery Bay Resort and Marina project. Although we have heard talk about this project for nine years now I finally had the pleasure to meet Thomas Cordero, the manager of the project. He came to see us with his charming wife

and sweet kid and while we were dining at the prestigious Spot restaurant, the subject of this project was slowly revealed. When I asked about permits he bombarded me with a list of all U.S. and Puerto Rican government agencies that they had to obtain permits from. Just to name a few: Army Corps of Engineers, Acueductos, Energía Eléctrica, Institute of Culture, Planning Board, Board of Tourism, Board of Traffic, environmental agencies, Coast Guard, Border Patrol, etc, etc.

However for the first time something unique happened with this project in the making. The Mayors of Aguada and Aguadilla after some dispute finally shook hands and endorsed the project. The planned complex is situated in the Barrio Espinar in Aguada bordering Aguadilla by the river mouth of Río Culebrinas in the so-called flat plain.

After the sugarcane industry collapsed, this area was a fishing and agricultural low-income settlement and was prone to major flooding. I did try to ask what was going to happen to these families and Cordero sincerely offered to take me there and said that there would be jobs for many and a budget for everyone. The people there must be happy to know that the river that flooded shall be held by the construction of dykes. Some people from

Rincón also asked me about the supposed sewage problem but the Major of Aguada is already tackling that problem by connecting it to the main sewage line and Cordero claims that he himself eats the fish from the bay.

The prestigious agencies EDSA and Moffat & Nichols offered to finance the project mainly to fulfill the empty space of the so-called marine ladder which exists all over the world assuming that boats can find a full service marina after every 100 nautical miles. Many years ago we traveled to the Grenadines on a 40' catamaran and we learned how important these marinas were when it came to engine trouble. So far there are six marinas in Fajardo but the northwest coast is neglected and it is important to form a marine ladder to the Dominican Republic and eventually Cuba. Cordero has also had serious complaints about airlines not using the Mayagüez and Aguadilla airports enough and concentrating on San Juan. For this project a helicopter ride from the airports is eventually planned. It is hard to describe how beautiful the project looked on the CD that Cordero sent us: an all around Mediterranean look with dry docks, two marinas, housing, hotels, pools, bars, etc. So far it all looks like a nice dream but Cordero is a very energetic and capable young man and

we believe that he shall pull it through, *si Dios lo permite*.

This is above all a project for sailboats and even mega yachts but will also be open to smaller sailboats and even commercial fishermen. This would be the first marina with complete services and many creature comforts. When I asked about schools, I learned that they are hoping to have a school for training personnel in tourism as well as a school for marine workers and probably sailing instructors. There will be housing for sale aimed at retired sailors and others who can afford to spend their retirement years in such an environment. I tried to ask many more questions but I might write about them at a later stage. I did not ask about the estimated cost of this project or prices but as I already mentioned there should be a budget for everyone and a general boost of economy on this side of the island.

Coincidentally, Cordero is quite familiar with my husband's court battle concerning one of the most valuable treasures of Puerto Rico, the 16th century astrolabe. Perhaps the long planned nautical museum could be added to this plan?

All in all we spent enjoyable and constructive time with one of the partners of this project and he even invited us to participate in a regatta although we rarely get out of Rincón, except to sea. As I am finishing these lines my husband and his best fishing buddy Steve Kaich just returned from an over night stay at Mona Island and we were selling fresh fish once again. Unfortunately I have to complain how inaccurate the weather forecast was. It called for a nice clear day but some freak storm came out of nowhere so that they barely left Mona and returned in the worst weather possible. It got so bad that due to total invisibility and the compass being off the two seamen thought for a while that they were lost. One more reason for a serious marina and let us hope that health shall serve us so that we might enjoy the comforts of the Discovery Bay Resort and Marina at an older age.



Actual view, provided by Google Earth

