

Julie Vargas remembers finding their house in 1974: 300-12, 13

Our house was in the process of being built by Paul Cooper with a friend who was building the house at the entrance of Chocolate Hole. They were helping each other.

Ernie and I and our two girls age 4 and 7 visited St. John and stayed at Serendip on the road left at the top of Jacob's Ladder. It was expensive in 1974. Around \$100 for a week with one bedroom. I realized we'd never return for long at that price, so when my husband went to St. Thomas to shop for liquor, I took the two girls to Forest Fisher's thatched hut to see about buying a house. We'd fallen in love with St. John. The conversation I had went like this:

Forest: Is this your first visit?

Me: Yes

Forrest: How long have you been here?

Me: Three days.

Forrest: Well, what do you want?

Me: We'd like to see houses for sale. They'd have to be at your low price end (I'd looked at a few photos).

Forrest: OK

Obviously he thought we just wanted a free tour. But he took us to what was then the Miles place, and to the eight telephone pole two stories of the three that were to be our house.

Ernie and I decided to buy the telephone pole house. I went back down the next day to give a down payment to Forrest, but he'd gone fishing. Ernie and the kids went home. I gave up the car and moved into Hulda Sewer's Guest home until Forrest got back. We bought the house.

St. John was primitive. We had electricity and a cistern, but no telephone. Great Cruz Bay was flat with prickly trees. There were shells all over the beaches next to the water. The road to Cruz Bay wasn't paved, and wild pigs were often around which discouraged walking near there. I think the only paved road was part of the central road to Coral Bay. There was one house above us we knew as the Wesson place. Maureen (I forget her last name) had (or built soon??) the house next to us. Gun Fisher and her husband lived in (or soon built) the house at the end of the street. No other houses were on Great Bay View Road. I remember only one house on the road around the headline between Great Cruz Bay and Chocolate Hole - the square Puerto Rican style house with porches all around, and one down the hill facing St. Thomas.

We spent 3 months in the house every summer while the kids were growing up.

Hurricane Hugo smashed a window.

Hurricane Marilyn took off our roof. We rebuilt better.

Hurricanes Irma and Maria took gutters and deck slats. A solar panel from a house above hit the back of our house and broke a small window. Amazingly little damage! We were very lucky.