

President: BOB FREEMAN

Bobcat & Catalac

Secretary MARY LACK



Cruising Association



Treasurer: RICK HARVEY
44 Southway Carshalton Beeches.
Surrey. SM5 4HW.

Flagstaff House, Mudeford, Christchurch,
DORSET. BH23 3NP
e-mail: marylack@bccafsnet.co.uk

Tel: 01202 485995

JULY 2001

The splendid weather continues. What have we done to deserve it? What will we have to pay when "summer" holidays prevail? Already two grandchildren have returned home from University and from the grind of A level exams. The first has a holiday job for 9 weeks, teaching football to youngsters in the States. Another is off to South Africa with a school hockey team. A third will be on a school trip exploring in Zimbabwe. Nothing like this was on offer in those distant days when I was at school. My first overseas venture was the year before I married! Times change.

Ownership also changes and I am very happy to be in a position to introduce and welcome several "new" faces this month. Please amend your register and look out for any more whom we may add, during your travels this summer.

Welcome to:

JONATHAN COLE CATMANDU 8.45 BOB
188 Twyford Avenue, Portsmouth, PO1 8JE

CAROLE HARDIE & RAYMOND TAYLOR
130 Castlewood Drive, Eltham, London SE9 1NJ

GALLIVANTER 8.86 CL

NANNE DOUMA TWO OF US 8.22 CL
Lange Wijngaard str.18, 2011 Haarlem, Netherlands

DAVID J. CURTISS
PO Box 1891 Atascadero, CA 93423 U.S.A.

FRESH AIRE 8.104 CL

STUART MONAGHAN ALICAT 8.37 CL
Monaghan the Jewellers, Church Crescent, Dumfries, Scotland.

JOHN CHILDE
9 Lys Modryn, Caernarfon Road, Pwllheli, LL53 5LF

HAGAR 9.137 CL

I have a plea from a Scottish Bobcat owner and I do hope someone among you will be able to help. His mainsail has just about given up the ghost and is certainly hoping to retire to the sail locker. Has anyone an 8m Bobcat mainsail sculling around somewhere? Or something of similar dimensions. If so, please do contact Bill Wilson at Airds Lodge, Port Appin, Argyll, PA38 4DD or phone 01631.730431.

Mid month gave us the Round the Island race and, during a week of near calm, there was some wind with which to sail, which must have answered many prayers, for it is a long way round once the tide turns against you! *Peter Denning* has sent me the results of the multihull division, together with a short account of his involvement with *Redouble*, which I will add to this letter.

Mary,
We finished but were beaten by 2 x 8 meters (Catseye, Peter Turner and Scubacat, Stephen Lymn). The day started OK with the wind a southerly giving a reach down the Solent. As Hurst was approached the wind became a SW'ly and forced all boats to beat down towards the Needles. It was here that we lost site of the 2 x 8 meters. Needles to St Catharine's was again a reach with a 'run' from St Catharine's to Bembridge. Not many boats flew spinnakers, as the seas were lumpy and large and wind SW 22 knots. By now 2 of my crew were not particularly well and this stopped me from flying our spinnaker Bembridge to No Mans Land Fort was a close-hauled job with Redouble holding her own with monohulls. After the fort well ... wind and tide against us allowed every other boat to sail past. The wind (SW) started to drop down to 11 knots so it then took an age to get to Cowes.
It was an enjoyable day though hard work. Redouble never seemed to shine like last year and it is possibly due to the fact that we stayed in the water over the winter and the bottom has not be cleaned since last year.
Congratulations must go to the 8 meters for finishing, the Island Sailing Club for organising the event and the majority of other competitors who entered into the spirit of the event. The 'club racers' who think that it is their right for everything rather than a bit of give and take get no thanks!

Finally, for those based in the U.K. only, I regret, I am including a copy of the Multihull Yearbook for 2001.

Island Sailing Club
HOYA Round the Island Race Results
Multihull - Class 'B' - Saturday 16th June (Last update: Sun Jun 17 12:30)

Sail Name T.C.F.

Finished Elapsed Corrected O/A Pos

GBR537 IMPULSE 1.016
14:08:41 06:08:41 06:14:35 11 1
GBR614M BRIGAND 1.038
14:32:37 06:32:37 06:47:32 20 2
F249M ADONNANTE 1.124 14:05:47
06:05:47 06:51:08 23 3
G40104 VIKTORIA 1.091
14:17:35 06:17:35 06:51:57 24 4
M347 U-PHO 1.165 13:55:31 05:55:31
06:54:11 27 5
M1 BACKLASH 0.978
15:09:03 07:09:03 06:59:37 31 6
34 JORUM 0.877 16:37:05
08:37:05 07:33:29 36 7
7 ELIXIR 0.877
16:49:47 08:49:47 07:44:37 37 8
CL20 SCUBACAT 0.769 18:06:14
10:06:14 07:46:12 38 9
GBR625M PEN-Y-MOR DAU 0.909 16:44:41
08:44:41 07:56:56 39 10
598M FORCE MAJEURE 1.018 15:53:25 07:53:25
08:01:56 40 11
148 SUMELA 0.862
17:37:08 09:37:08 08:17:29 42 12
73 CATSEYE 0.769
18:48:06 10:48:06 08:18:23 43 13
GBR613M SCAMPA 0.952
16:53:51 08:53:51 08:28:14 44 14
720 RIMAKAT 1.101
15:41:55 07:41:55 08:28:34 45 15
144M REDOUBLE 0.769 19:18:12
11:18:12 08:41:32 46 16
103 CATALYST 0.909
18:02:15 10:02:15 09:07:27 47 17
GBR646M BUGS BUNNY 0.833 19:40:24
11:40:24 09:43:26 48 18
12M JOY FELINE 0.909 18:47:29
10:47:29 09:48:34 49 19
86X TRINA 0.909 18:52:50
10:52:50 09:53:26 50 20
294M FREEDOM OF NORWICH 1.020 17:52:09 09:52:09
10:04:00 51 21
71 BIG CAT 1.135 RET
22 KORKULA 0.869 RET
H39 STARLIGHT 0.810 RET

Once again, all good wishes for happy, safe sailing under fair winds and sunshine.



TALES FROM CATMANDU – The Two Week Holiday

By Pete & Judith Boardman

This event had been eagerly anticipated, the plan was simple, turn right out of Lowestoft harbour, head south, exploring every river system on the way until it was time to return.

We still had not fixed the windspeed indicator or the depth sounder, which had not worked since we bought the boat, but we had managed to get the distance and speed log working, if somewhat erratically.

The boatyard had done a good job repairing the split in the bridgedeck and replacing the rudder, so it was all systems go – *what else could possibly go wrong?*

We set sail Saturday afternoon, with a fair easterly wind and the tide going south, towards our first port of call, Southwold, in the river Blyth about 15 miles away.

After about 45 minutes we noticed huge thunderclouds piling up over the land but we were not too worried, as we were upwind of them. Soon we were being treated to an exceptional display of lightning as the storm raged overland and, to our dismay, was re-realised that it was heading our way despite the wind direction.

We rapidly turned tail and with full sail and engine struggled back towards Lowestoft against the tide. Half an hour from the harbour entrance it hit us. Deluges of rain, squally wind, thunder and lightning, the lot. Lowestoft disappeared off the face of the earth!

The previous owner had rigged the VHF inside the saloon so it was protected and the mike could be accessed through the bulkhead window by the steering wheel – handy. I called up harbour control for permission to enter. This was refused as a freighter was about to leave, so we cruised around for 15 mins. in the torrential rain, when we finally got in we had missed our bridge opening and had to tie up to a fishing boat until the 9 pm opening. In the meantime, I discovered that water had trickled down the microphone lead and into the radio, changing the set into a *receiver only model!*

We got up early Sunday morning to beat the low tide on our mooring and spent a couple of hours on a deep water mooring before cruising down to catch the 0730 bridge opening. Several other yachts were circulating also waiting for the bridge.

The warning klaxons sounded on the bridge and the traffic barriers came down. We all surged forward. One bridge span partly lifted, the other stayed closed, and then the first one closed and partly lifted again. The VHF crackled into life “*Sorry chaps, the bridge has broken. Try again later*”. We finally got away just before lunch.

The approach to Southwold proved interesting for first-timers like ourselves with a strong cross tide at the river entrance and a strong flood tide up the river, reducing what little manoeuvrability Catmandu has to an alarming level. On top of that, the moorings were pretty full on a fairly narrow river, with a strong flood tide pushing us towards a bridge we could not fit under!

Somehow we managed to do a six-point turn without hitting anything and now we were stemming the flood, much better. A very helpful harbour master helped us to raft up on the outside of two other yachts and we were safe!

The next morning we visited a chandler to buy a copy of the latest survey of the entrance to the river Ore, our next river system to the south. Apparently the entrance moves each year due to the changing sand and shingle banks, so an up to date survey is essential. On the way back to the boat we called in the harbour master’s office to pay our mooring fee.

“How long is your boat?” he asked. 8 metres I replied. “Then that will be just £10” When asked if that was for the mooring he replied in the affirmative. “Well” I said, “there were four of us rafted together, so it will be £2.50 each, right?” “Wrong” he said, “nice try”.

We set off with a fair tide, westerly wind f.5. Had a good run down. When we arrived the entrance to the river was not at all clear and several apparent entrances presented themselves, but I know only one was OK. Try as I could, the position of the marker buoys did not make sense with the latest survey. I think the buoys have moved, so Judith had a look. “Let’s see, yes, no wonder you are having trouble. This is a survey for the entrance to the river Deben!”

We somehow blundered our way into the right entrance and picked up a mooring for the night, above the village of Orford. In the morning, we decided to land at Orford Quay to pick up petrol, water and provisions. The quay is a high stone construction with metal ladders to reach the top. Waiting is limited to 2 hours.

After fetching the petrol, I made the boat ready to slip whilst Judith went off for some groceries. I knew it was not going to be easy to get off – no steerage from the engine of course, strong ebb tide running with us facing upstream and a strong wind blowing us on to the quay. I came up with the textbook system to impress the many

locals and bystanders on top of the quay. Bow and stern line were rigged for slip, as was a spring from the stern to a bollard forwards on the quay. The plan was then to slip bow and stern lines and motor astern with the tide assisting against the wind, then slip the spring as we motored ahead – easy, peasy.

Judith still had not returned from the shopping so I put the kettle on. When she returned I explained the system for getting off over a coffee. Engine on, bow line slipped, stern line slipped, engine in reverse, bow swings out as the spring tightens, engine in forward, the spring goes slack as we start to motor out, “*Slip the spring*” I shout to Judith” *It won’t come*” she yells back. Looking up at the bollard I see that a young girl has tied a large dog to it, locking my slip in the process. Wind and tide took over. “**Ouch!**” said Catmandu as she hit the quay. Well we really impressed the locals.

About a mile upstream of Orford the river changes its name to the Alde and about 9 miles from the sea makes a sharp left-hand turn. At this point it is only some 100 metres from the sea. One day I suppose it will save itself some mileage! Our destination for the day was Snape Maltings, an old brewery turned into a tourist attraction and, as far upriver as we could go without resorting to the dinghy, due to the low bridge there. The flood tide was just starting as we reached a large, shallow area called Long Reach. Ahead of us was a motor launch. The channel winds about through this reach and I noticed the motor launch had stopped. I bet he has gone aground, I said. Moments later – so had we!

After 15 mins, we floated off again and were the first boat to arrive at Snape. It was at least an hour before the next yacht arrived.

The next day saw us going back downriver to anchor overnight below Orford. In the morning, the wind forecast was not good, f.6 on the nose, but as our next river system, the Deben, was only another 5 miles down the coast, we decided to go. We soon realised that we had a slight problem. In order to go with the south flowing tide to the entrance to the Deben, we were having to suffer a 5-mile battle with the strong flood tide coming up the river Ore. We made it, of course, but we lost a lot of time. When we cleared the entrance to the river Ore, the wind was definitely f.6 and we were making very slow progress tacking down the coast with lots of bridgedeck slamming in the wind over tide conditions. The wind was f.7. We were not making any forward progress and things were looking a bit iffy, so it was down with the sails and on with the engine, head straight into wind. After a half-hour or so we realised that we still were making no forward progress, so it was up with the sails again and, finally, with reefed sails and full engine, we slowly tacked upwind toward the entrance to the Deben. The approach is not good at the best of times but nothing was going to stop us getting into calm waters! We motored about 3 miles upstream and picked up a mooring at Longshott, where there was a pub!

Just prior to our holiday, I had bought a small second-hand Honda outboard engine for our inflatable but only had it running in a dustbin of water to check that it worked. I had found it difficult to start but, once running, seemed OK. I had been impressed with that outboard safety feature - the lanyard, showed Judith how you put it round your wrist and, if you fell overboard, it released the stop button. We were moored about 50 metres out from the shore and about 200-m downstream from the pub, so for our evening trip ashore to the pub, to walk the dog, we launched the inflatable – the engine would not start. This coincided with a visit by the harbour master to collect his £1, yes, £1 mooring fee. He lent me a plug spanner and we got started. 2 pints and a dog walk later, we were ready to go back. Now it was dark, there was an onshore wind and 3 knots of ebb tide. Do you think the engine would start – not a chance. I pulled the starting cord until I was red in the face, then some. We’ll have to row. Now, I have not rowed anything for ages but there seemed little choice if we were going to get back to the boat. We were going in the right direction but I was getting out of breath fast. Judith grabbed hold of another boat’s mooring line while I rested. Catmandu was about 50m downstream and another 20m out. I know that we had only one chance to get to the boat, if we missed it, we should be set downstream. I rowed like a madman and we hit Catmandu amidships. Judith grabbed a cleat and we were home, exhausted, I climbed on board and secured the dinghy. As I turned to enter the cabin, I put my hand in my pocket and froze; a low groan escaped my lips. “*What is the matter*”, Judith asked. I slowly brought my hand from my pocket to reveal the engine-kill lanyard, which I had put there when we went to the pub!

The next day saw us motorsailing up to Woodbridge, where we managed to pick up a free mooring buoy close to a landing jetty and a pleasant few hours were spent ashore exploring the town, which has a tide mill, the pool of which has been converted into a marina. The following day we set off back downriver, finally anchoring up near Felixstowe Ferry, just inside the entrance to the Deben.

Over the next few days we went up the river Orwell, past Felixstowe, picked up a mooring at Pin Mill, went ashore in the dingy for fuel and found out they did not do any so went upstream as far as the Orwell bridge then decided not to go to Ipswich, back down to Harwich and up the river Stour, where we took the tide to Mistley Quay and walked along the river to Manningtree. In the morning we had to walk over 2 miles to find petrol but we were lucky to get a lift back in the car of a local sailing club secretary, as we had brought our main 5 gal. Tank – we were that short of fuel!

After the Stour we spent a night at anchor in Walton Backwaters – a very sheltered location, and then around to the river Colne, past Brightlingsea and up Alresford Creek, where we moored and walked to Alresford village where we bought some groceries and a spare can of petrol. When we got back to the boat we were nearly aground and just got away with inches to spare. A night was spent at anchor in the Pyefleet channel opposite Brightlingsea.

Next it was the turn of the river Blackwater. We motorsailed round and up it until we were about a half mile from Osea Island and picked up a mooring, as the light was fading. I say picked up, what I mean was picked up, dropped and lost the boathook and re-picked it up with the second boathook. It was now time to make our way back towards Lowestoft. We planned to make an early start and anchor for the night in Walton Backwaters. When we got up it was quite foggy and no wind, but we set off optimistically under engine. However, as the river Blackwater widened towards its junction with the sea, the fog increased, blotting out the land. *Not to worry*, I said, as I switched on the GPS.

Now some of you may remember there was a problem with certain Garmin GPS towards the end of August 1999. Well, ours was one of them and would not acquire satellites. So, *we can't see the land, our GPS doesn't work, neither does the depth log. The distance and speed log is unreliable, the radio only receives and I am beginning to suspect the compass! That leaves the mobile phone and the wind direction indicator for navigation – and, of course, we would be near the shipping lanes for Harwich and Felixstowe – no worries!*

We needed to locate the Pye End fairway buoy for the approach to Walton Backwaters. Not easy coming from the south, even in good visibility. In the end we located the next buoy in and cruised in and moored up safely.

In the morning we had bright blue sky, a 5-6 tailwind and fair tide, which took us for a cracking sail all the way back to Lowestoft. A fitting end to our two-week adventure.

NO EXPERIENCE REQUIRED

By LUCIEN CONTESSE

Chapter 35

Sunday 18 June

We are lying at anchor in the bay of Matalas by the village of Gahi. Heinz and I have to walk for 6 km. to the main town Mata Utu. The street is very dusty and we hitch a ride with a lady who takes us to the police station. The police know already that we are in Gahi. The bush telegraph seems to work quickly on this island. The officers are very friendly and even speak German, to our astonishment. After finishing our task with the police, we are taken to the Affaires Economiques, where we go through customs and health. Then we have a small chat with the officers about the land and people. We find out that most of the people are paid with goods for their daily work. Money fines are unknown here, as most the people do not have any. In case of a conviction, the sinner has to work for 2 to 3 days on the road, in front of the King's house, or where work is needed. The cars of the police are serviced once a year and exchanged every three. They have only one mechanic and no spare parts. The law has not changed for 200 years.

At this time, I must write something about the time and date, just to convince myself that I am not going crazy. In navigation, everything goes according to Greenwich time. If it is midnight there, 0 hours, 0 seconds, then here it is 11 hours, 44 minutes and 40 seconds am., just before noon or, for navigation, 23 h. 44m. 40 s., the same date as in my diary. 15 minutes and 20 seconds later, I have to go to the next day and change my date in the middle of the day. Also, the main administration is on the other side of 180 west on Wallis Island, and here they have Monday whilst I still have Sunday. It is very discouraging and confusing. How am I ever going to sort it out? I have cleared in on Monday, even if it is only Sunday. Now, who wouldn't have doubts at one time or another!!

Until I arrive in Suva or in Fiji, I will have to get accustomed to the fact that the sun is 12 hours earlier in the sky and I will not have to subtract my west longitude anymore, I will have to add it. My longitude will then be named east, instead of

west, although I am still sailing west. That means, I am going round and round, like a snake till she bites her own tail. Crazy, is it not!!

19 June

Our excursion on foot around the island has to wait. The weather is very unfriendly. It is raining. We decide to stay home and write letters and cards.

20 June

The weather is even worse than yesterday. A storm is flogging the island. Our boats are tugging at their anchors so hard that we decide to put a second one out. We feel fairly safe behind these reefs, but it is better to be cautious than sorry. Now and then heavy rain is accompanied by strong gusts. It is not a very comfortable day. I read a lot and sleep a little. So the day goes by and not much is done. Not that I would want to do anything anyway.

21 June

The wind has lessened a bit and the sun shines again. We make a round trip through the village of Gahi, to see where we can find water. After that we walk along the beach. As we have low tide at the moment, we also walk around a headland, which is only possible at this time. On our way we pass a little shop, where we buy a lemonade and talk with the proprietor, a lady from Bora Bora. She offers us the use of her shower facility, which we accept with great pleasure. We promise to come again the next day to buy some bread. Besides that, there is not much to report.

22 June

Laundry day in Gahi, the village where we are lying at anchor. There is a small well, from which the inhabitants get their water. Heinz and I are on our way, early in the morning, with everything we want to wash. But soon we are surrounded by many women who want to have a chat. My French has greatly improved since Tahiti and I have many questions to answer. Heinz is a bit out of his depth today, as he does not speak French but, nevertheless, he is busy talking. In the meantime, the ladies are washing our clothes and are very generous with our washing powder. It is foaming so vigorously that they get all excited. Their soap is nothing in comparison. We have a merry conversation in French and native. Our laundry finished, the ladies give us a hair wash and want to do the rest of our bodies too. Here we have to protest and the many girls of marriageable age make jokes about us, which we can't understand, as they speak in their own language. After a time, we are glad to escape from those ladies. The washing is done and has only to be dried. The easiest washday we ever had.

24 June.

Such a day as today, I would not like to have twice a week. As it is already Sunday here, the whole village is afoot to visit the two solitary, unmarried sailors. The children are asking every day for permission to come on board. Then they want to row our rubber dinghies and thus bring gradually the whole village to our boats. There is a coming and going all day long. At times we have up to 20 visitors on each boat. We answer their many questions, which mainly are translated by the children, as most of the old and middle-aged people do not speak French. These people did not go to school, even though the island has been for more than 100 years under French administration. The kids have a field day with our dinghies, which we hope will survive. The natives are very interested in everything we have. But they would never touch anything without asking first. The binoculars are a great sensation and change hands, before anyone has a good look through them. Lucky for us, the people had to go to church at 4 o'clock, so that from 3 o'clock on, we got some air on our boats. It was a hearty entertainment and we laughed a lot. Nevertheless, we are glad that the pack has left. The dinghies are still alive and floating on their strings. What a Sunday or was it Saturday? In fact it was half and half!

I wake up with a start. Spotlights are searching up and down the beach. It is 10.30 pm. Somebody is yelling incomprehensible things. Then someone whistles, "z'basel a mim Rhi" (in Basel am Rhein), a tune from my home town. I answer, and a voice comes back, "Come on land. Here stays a Basler" I dress and row ashore. I meet six people, of whom one person is from Basel with his wife from Wallis Island, and all others are relatives from Wallis Island. The man is Werner Bringold, an old diving friend of mine from Basel and now a second captain of the freighter that arrived yesterday. The police told him that Swiss from Basel was here on a yacht and that was reason enough for him to take me out of bed at this time of the night. We had a chat on in our native Swiss dialect on the beach with cold beer and sandwiches. He provided the food. What a surprise! Of all places on earth, in Wallis Island! We are invited to visit him on board his ship tomorrow. After that, it took me a while to get back to sleep.

25 June

Heinz and I clear out today. The island does not let us go easily. The policeman invites us for aperitifs and an evening meal. He and his wife are from the Alsace, just over the border from my home town. We tell him that we have to see captain Bringold first, as we had promised. He offers spontaneously to bring us there under police escort. Off we go with blaring sirens and arrive shortly after at the harbour and the ship. Werner comes down the gangway to inquire what all the noise is about. As he sees us, his face brightens up and with a wide grin, he says hello! The police officer and Werner are also old friends and the whole party goes on board. We are introduced to his wife, three small children, papa in law and other relatives. Over beer and sandwiches we talk about old times, the sea, our plans for the future and this and that.

Werner Bringold has already lived for seven years in Noumea, where he met his wife. He wouldn't go back to Switzerland at any price. We say our good-byes as his ship leaves at 4.00 pm.

The next two hours we stand around in the village, till it is time for aperitifs in the custom officer's home. So, by and by, more people arrive, another customs officer and the manager of Wallis Airline, who has to look after 3 7-seater aeroplanes a week. These men are also from Alsace. In nice surroundings and with friendly people and good food, we have one of the best evenings we have had for a long time. We speak German all evening and have great fun. The airline manager invites us for a tour by car around the island with dinner to follow. With great pleasure we accept. At midnight the police take us home, but this time without sirens.

26 June

A car's horn is blaring. Our taxi has arrived to take us around the island. We visit the Crater Lake where the Americans sank hundreds of trucks and jeeps, after the World War, as transport to the U.S.A. would have been too costly. The Wallis Islanders had no money to buy them, so they had to be destroyed. From the highest mountain is a beautiful view over the whole island. We drive through plenty of uncultivated land, as the people work only as little as possible to provide food for their own existence. The island is in parts heavily wooded, but has also plenty of shrubs. We return for a phenomenal typical French meal with four different courses, aperitifs and wine. After that we are released to our own fate, with very heavy bellies.

27 June

I have my last freshwater shower. The boat is ready to leave. We wait for the tide to start running out, which should be between 11 and 12 am. Our next stop will be Suva in Fiji. By 12.10 pm. we leave the pass from Wallis Island and are in the open sea. I set sail. As soon as the work is done, down comes the rain. The wind comes from the west for a while, and then turns through 180 to the east. We make good speed. Log 63 miles.

28 June

At 5.00 am. A seam on the mainsail parts with a big bang. I drop it to prevent further damage. I replace the main with jib No.1 in a free-flying configuration and set the genoa as headsail. This solution proves to be not bad at all. I have to remember that for another time. I sew the mainsail from 7.00 am. Till 4.00 pm, with only a small break to have some lunch. The main is up again and we are cruising along nicely. A noon position was not possible, as the sky is continuously overcast and it rains a lot. Log 112 miles.

29 June

The wind has changed to SSE, so that the waves roll onto the boat from the side, then from the front. The noise was again impossible, but is bearable now. Noon position W.178.19, S 15.19 the sea is very restless but we are going fast enough. Tonight I have a very dangerous passage to make. It is the Numuka passage, a stretch of reefs on both sides of a fairly small channel and only three lighthouses on the whole run. Log 120 miles.

30 June

The night is frightful. At 10.00 pm, the first lighthouse sends its signals over the horizon. It is 15 miles away. I have to pass it at a distance of 7 to 8 miles. To judge a light in the night is impossibility; it only leaves knots in the stomach. All night long, I have to steer a very precise course. My run is 16 miles long but only 6 miles wide. Left and right of me are reefs, all barely visible at low tide, approximately 2m. above water, with a few small islands in between. I steer by the compass and make corrections all the time. The drift under these wind conditions can only be an educated guess and my life may depend on it. The sky is completely overcast and, to make things worse, it is also new moon. So visibility is just a big blackness. I use my spotlight now and then, but with no success. It just does not shine far enough. I hate the feeling it causes in my gut, but what can I do? Soon I expect to see the second lighthouse to the starboard side, but it does not come. Question after question goes through my mind, but no answers. Is the light on? Have I drifted too far west? Is the light covered by clouds? Where is the reef, as I cannot hear it? All this is an unsatisfactory situation. It increases my feeling of insecurity. I am sailing in the dark with no points of reference. I am sailing blind! This is the second time; I have taken some tablets to keep me alert. By daybreak my worries are over. I drifted too far to the west. I am passing the last reef with about 500 m. to spare. I cannot hear it yet but I can see it, as the waves break on it. A big load is taken off my shoulders. I am happy that I have made it. All over the place are small islands, all surrounded by reefs. Now that I can see them, I know at least where they are. Position W.179.28, S. 17.00

1 July

Tonight is another gruelling night. It is raining all the time. Island after island is disappearing in the haze. I have to make at least 100 miles in these 24 hours, otherwise I am in trouble. At the moment, the wind is not strong enough to make it. I would need more hours than I have. Then the wind increases steadily and I am going too fast.

How do you stop a boat? I hang two 50 m. anchor ropes in a U-turn into the water. That is not enough to reduce the speed sufficiently. I lower the jib No.1 and hoist a storm headsail of only 3 sq.m. But it is still not enough. I spill as much air from the main as I possibly can. That brings the speed down to 5 kn. I have to pass coral banks and two small islands in the night. Those I do not see. The sky is again overcast and a drizzly rain has set in. I am slowly getting "cold feet" not in

the physical sense. By dawn I am a little early and the island with the lighthouse is just disappearing behind me. The light is not on. Does Suva know about it? I am still going too fast and have too much time on my hands. To lose some of it, I circumnavigate the island in front of me. At 12.00 am I have 24 hours to make 54 miles to Suva. I drop all sails, set the storm headsail and hang the two anchor ropes out again. Pinkle Purr is now making 2 kn. 54 miles are just too much for half a day. To sail into Suva harbour in the night is too dangerous. The entrance is full of coral banks and very narrow. I kill time in a slow trip, till I see the first lighthouse on Viti Levu. Then I drop all sails and let myself drift. Tiredness is overtaking me but I have to stay awake. I take some more of those Wekamine pills and they won't let me sleep. All kinds of thoughts are going through my head; what to do if I get washed onto a reef? Is my survival gear sufficient? Is everything ready to go? Why am I in such a silly situation? Could I have done something different? All very nice in theory, but in a case of emergency, who knows?

I am glad the night is over. I take catnaps every so often. We are still drifting too fast. I take my position from the chart, as I am just passing an island. Position E 179.20, S 18.10. During the night I have crossed the longitude 180 and I am now on east longitude. That means I have to change the date to Monday 3rd. July. Log 78 miles.

3 July

I drift all night with two anchor ropes as a brake. Johann keeps the boat on course. At 3.00 am. The nearest lighthouse to Suva harbour comes in sight. I have another 17 miles to go. I change sail and set the jib No.1 to make more speed. I am running the boat a few degrees more to the south, so as to pass the ring reef around Viti Levu at a safe distance. I sail along the reef, till I can see the marker to the entrance of Suva harbour. Here I drop the main and furl the jib on its stay. Then I start the motor to enter the pass. After about 10 seconds running under power, the motor stops with a jerk as the propeller has entangled itself in a piece of fishnet. Pinkle Purr is caught in the end of a net, which I realise was entangled in the reef, and wind and current are pushing her towards the corals. This will be a close race with time, if I want to save my boat. The surf over the reef is tremendous I rush into the galley and fetch the biggest and sharpest knife I have. Then I jump over the stern into the water and start cutting away in a frenzy, everything around the propeller. The net is tougher than I had thought. It takes all my strength to cut through that nylon mesh. I am swearing when I have time to get a breath of air. A quick glance over the water tells me that there is very little time left, and that makes me even angrier. I can feel by the movement of the boat that we are close to the reef, too close in fact. Finally the boat is free. I climb on board and unfurl the jib, this time without a mishap of the furling line. To unfurl the jib takes only a few seconds. At the last moment I can turn the boat away from the reef and sail to safety. At a safe distance, I furl the jib in again and let the boat drift. Then I lift the motor out of the water and try to cut the entangled propeller free, but the motor is hanging too far over the stern and I cannot reach to the end of the shaft. So I lower the motor back into the water and have to solve the problem there. I go overboard and swim, hanging on with one hand to the motor housing and, with the free hand, nibbling at the net, which is blocking the propeller. It is very hard work. I cannot put much force on the knife. It is incredible how tightly the nylon is wound about the propeller shaft, but, bit by bit, I get it off and my propeller turns again.

When I think back as to why I got caught exactly at that place, I cannot but think an "Angel" was protecting me from going into the wrong entrance. I am not very religious, but I thank God in a short prayer for sparing my life at that horrible place. As I later found out, after the shaking of my body slowly subsided, it was a false inlet, badly marked and according to the South Pacific Pilot, should not be used. But it was definitely my mistake. I should have realised that the entrance to Suva could not be as narrow as that, when I had another look at the chart. Why I thought that was the right pass, I do not know, as the entrance to the right pass is about ten times bigger, although the pass itself is very narrow for big ships. On such an occasion, one is reminded that there is a God and a prayer of thanks is the minimum one can offer.

My only excuse would be that I did read the pilot, but possibly did not comprehend what I was reading, as the Pilot is written in English, of which my knowledge is limited to a few words.

At 10.30 am. I drop anchor in Suva harbour. I can see Heinz nowhere. Hopefully he has been luckier than I was. The officials are in no hurry. A barge comes alongside and an officer promises to send someone soon. They seem to have a long siesta in Suva, and the doctor arrives at 3.00 pm. After that, I row to the jetty to see police and customs. There I am advised to bring my boat to this point. In teeming rain I row back and motor Pinkle Purr to the jetty. Wet as a river rat, I enter the customs and police office to fill out a heap of forms, the worst paper war I have encountered so far. After that I retire to the Suva Yacht Club, where Pinkle Purr finds a professional mooring. The clubhouse is only 200 m. away and very inviting. So I row over and make myself known to the secretary, who gives me a membership card, which allows me to use all the facilities of the club. I immediately make use of the shower, as I have not seen hot water for a long time. Then I have an ice-cold Coca Cola, happy with my day's work.