

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

June 2001

May is proving to be a glorious month weatherise. After all the earlier rain and filthy weather, it has all come as rather a shock and left us unprepared. Far too many boats are still out of the water!

This may be one reason why our AMF and Spring Rally were so badly attended. The committee had decided to move away from the Bank Holiday weekend, to leave a chance for other family activities, but it seems that was not the answer. Do please feed us with some ideas, to get a better turnout next year, while it is still fresh in your mind why you were not able to come.

Anyway, let me here report the Minutes of the meeting held at the Walkford Hotel on Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> May 2001.

1. Bob Freeman took the Chair and welcomed 8 members.
2. Apologies for absence were received from Peter Denning, Alan and Shirley McMahon.
3. The Minutes of the last AGM were read, approved and signed.
4. Arising therefrom: a) Steven Lymn has retired from the Committee  
b) No further news has been heard regarding building of 9m Catalac by David Waller  
c) No up-to-date news from Lucien Contesse
5. Treasurer's Report. Receipts from Subscriptions are slightly down from last year whilst the cost of printing the Newsletter has risen. Postage, despite increased stamp costs, is down slightly too, partly accounted for by not posting out the MOCRA Yearbook.

The Secretary presented figure for MOCRA affiliation this year, which are not shown in the Balance Sheet. Again due to lower membership, this is slightly less, at £48.15

### BOBCAT AND CATALAC CRUISING ASSOCIATION Income and Expenditure Account for Year ending 1 st May 2001

INCOME		£		2000		EXPENDITURE		£		2000	
Subscriptions		1987.75		2195.00		Printing Newsletter	2115.00		1903.50		
Rallies		147.25		220.60		Printing Register	0.00		546.37		
Stock Sales	0.00		0.00		0.00	Postage	316.70		475.55		
Advertising	0.00		0.00		0.00	Stock Purchases	0.00		0.00		
Bank Interest	17.14		17.14			P.M. Embroidery	0.00		82.85		
						Engraving		88.00		60.00	
						Mocra Fee		Pending		48.50	
						Rebates & Presentations	15.00			30.00	
						Miscellaneous	10.14			27.22	
		<u>2152.14</u>		<u>2774.74</u>				<u>2544.84</u>		<u>3173.99</u>	
						Excess Expenditure Over Income.....					392.70

### BALANCE SHEET @ 1<sup>ST</sup> May 2001

ASSETS	£
Cash at Bank Current Account	1028.73
Cash at Bank Business Premium Account	371.88
Stock in hand	186.00
	<u>1586.61</u>

6. Election of Officers was unopposed and Bob Freeman will remain as President for 2 years, as will Rick Harvey hold the position of Treasurer.

The committee remains as Ann Freeman, Peter Denning, Jeremy Bretherton & Tom Lack.

7. Peter Denning will be organising a barbecue rally but the Summer Rally is to be suspended.

8. The Dinner in London during the Boat Show there will be continued. The Spring Rally and AGM are to continue in some form.
9. The President's Cup has this year been awarded to Peter Boardman of the Bobcat CATMANDU. His name is engraved on the Cup and he will receive a special whisky tumbler.  
Whisky tumblers, engraved with the BCCA logo, go to the runners up Dave Thomas, Peter Denning and Paul Thompson. also to the other entrants Jan Ahart, Ray Astle, Jeremy Bretherton, Dave Lyndsay and Martin Minter-Kemp.
10. Any Other Business.  
A letter has been received from Ron Best saying that his printing machine is deemed beyond repair and he will, therefore, no longer be able to print the Newsletter.  
Peter Gimson has stepped into the breach and submitted one or two ideas for a revised letterhead, which he is able to print. He estimates he will be able to print, in black with coloured letterhead, 8 pages of A4 size for £200.  
Thanks were expressed for his efforts towards continuation of this popular feature.

*The next Committee is to be at Flagstaff House on Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> August, so please may we have a feed back from members to discuss then.*

As I am sure you will have realised, last month's Newsletter was short by two items. There is an explanation, for which I can only apologise. I was offered a space in hospital to have a new knee implanted – far too good an opportunity to miss. Notice was short and I could not get the Newsletter out to you in the time. However Ron Best said that, if I got the content to him with the stamped and addressed envelopes, he would fill and post. Great. When I returned, I saw the letter which had been posted – it was short by the chapter from Lucien Contesse and also the up-date to the Register. Of course, I phoned, reaching the answer phone! However, Ron phoned back, explaining that he imagined I had been too short of time. He agreed to complete the printing and get it to me for an extra issue. After a further 10 days, I again reached his answer phone and the response was a letter, as reported to the AGM.

Panic calls to Bob and Peter G. resulted in the latter costing matters out, as far as he can guesstimate and agreeing to print future issues for us. What a relief! I will try to work very closely with him and make as few waves as possible, but I am sure you will bear with us for a while, if there are errors creeping in.

This month, together with the next chapter from Lucien Contesse and the opening chapter of the prize-winning entrant for the President's Cup, we are including the items missing last month, so I hope you have plenty of time for reading in the warm sunshine we can surely expect, now that June is here!

### **TALES FROM CATMANDU** By PETER & JUDITH BOARDMAN

June 1999 – The advert started      *“Bobcat Catamaran for Sale”*

We had been casually looking for our first boat and, rapidly approaching the wrong end of 50, were of missing out on this pastime, unless we did something about it SOON. We both fancied a catamaran and here was one we could afford now. But what on earth was a *Bobcat*?

A quick phone call to the owner and we arranged to see it that weekend despite the long journey from Crewe in Cheshire to Lowestoft on the East coast where the boat was moored.

The weather was bad and we could not go for a sail, but it was obvious that the owner had put a lot of time and money into the boat, although, as nearly always happens, there was still some work that needed to be done. After much discussion with Judith, who is both No.1 wife and Management, we put in an offer which was accepted. 8m Bobcat No.45 was ours, our very first boat, *wow!*

We arranged to take over the existing mooring at Lowestoft, one of our better decisions as it turned out later, the boatyard mooring proving safe and very reasonably priced and the boatyard owner, competent and extremely helpful.

For our first sail a couple of weekends later, we decided to play it safe and take the boat on to the Norfolk Broads, as our mooring is only a half-mile downstream from Oulton Broad.

First, a few notes about *Catmandu*, as the boat is called:

One of the things that the previous owner had proudly shown us was the Yamaha 9.9 hp 4-stroke outboard engine which drives the boat. This he had fitted into a lockable box in line with the stern lockers, halfway between the hulls. He had done this, he said, because a previous outboard engine had been stolen. The whole engine could be lowered into or raised out of the water by an elaborate series of pulleys, rope and sliders – very impressive – until you come to realise, as we did on our first trip, that the engine is fixed and does not steer and, being the middle, does not offer the benefit of prop wash against the rudders. In addition, the friendly boatyard owner had taken me on one side and told me that it was a good boat and it sailed well but low speed manoeuvring was a problem because of its high windage and I would get the best low speed steering with the rudders up, when they would act like barn doors. That is not what he meant but what he said!

*So, like lambs to the slaughter, off we set.*

For those who do not know the area, between our mooring and Oulton Broad is first a swing railway bridge, then a lifting roadbridge and then a lock into Oulton Broad – all with a specific opening time arranged by VHF with the lockkeeper. Our VHF was not working so I had arranged for the 11.00 am. Opening by mobile phone.

We reversed out into mid channel from our mooring, started towards the railway bridge. “*By Jove*” or words to that effect, I said to No.1. This steering is a bit vague, as we slowly zigzagged our way up the channel. On full lock the boat would slowly start to turn, as we reached the require direction, I centred the rudders, it still kept turning. Full opposite lock, it still kept turning, then the turn slowed, it finally started to go the other way and we went through the whole process again.

The railway bridge duly swung away from us as we approached. Having passed through, we made for the roadbridge. The roadbridge was still closed as we approached, so we had to stop – *oh dear!* The barrier came down, stopped the traffic, the bridge started to lift and *Catmandu* started to drift cross channel. The more I shunted her backwards and forwards, the more cross channel she became. I just could not get her lined up for the bridge. All the time, the traffic was building up on the road. A chap from a live-aboard shouted “the bridge is trying to contact you on VHF”. “Mine does not work”, I shouted back. I looked up to see the bridgekeeper outside his hut, staring at me with his hands on his hips. I could read his thoughts at 70 paces! Traffic was stopped on the road as far as the eye could see. Eventually the bridge had to close. I threw a mooring line to someone on the bank and they pulled me to the side. “*Why have you got your rudders up?*” they asked.

Two weeks later, we made it onto the Broads. I am not sure that the hordes of Broads' yachts, racing dinghies appreciated our presence on Oulton Broad but we made it across without incident, we even saw a seal that evening, close to the riverbank where we moored for the night. The weekend passed uneventfully apart from a bit of excitement going into Oulton Broad lock, on the way back, with a strong tail wind and sharing the lock with a Heavenly Twins cat, several other boats and having our mooring ropes and fenders ready on wrong side!

Another two weeks passed by and we were ready for the ***BIG ONE – we were GOING TO SEA.***

As a background to the event, it has to be said that whilst I have a good working knowledge of land based engines, what makes them tick, so to speak, I have never been within a mile of outboard motors. So for this momentous occasion, everything was checked – spark plug OK. Fuel tank filled to the brim and secured. Water cooling flow etc. To get to sea from our mooring we have to negotiate a lifting roadbridge, again at certain times and arranged by VHF (now working)

We left the mooring and headed into a stiff breeze towards the bridge. We arrived about 5 minutes early and joined several other yachts, circulating, waiting for the bridge to open. The road barriers came down and, as the bridge started to open, we put on full throttle as they don't like to be kept waiting. 20 metres to go the engine stops dead.... *Ugh.* I frantically turn the key several times and there's absolutely nothing, zilch, zero, it is totally dead. All the other boats go through, we start drifting back into the stiff breeze. Judith throws out the anchor and the bridge calls us up on VHF to find out what is happening. I'm trying to sort the problem, I reply. A quick check on the battery terminals – they are OK. I've got full fuel tanks, so its not that, apart from which

the starter motor is not working. I pull the engine up out of the water and take off the cover. The traffic is really building up back on the approach roads, the centre of Lowestoft must be at a standstill! Check the fuses for any loose wires – nothing, The bridge closes again. A chap in a powerful RIB offers to tow us back to our mooring. We gratefully accept and, on arrival, some of our alcohol ration jumped ship.

With the aid of the engine handbook, I start to trace the wiring system, following the wiring diagram I come across a device called (oh, no!) A gearbox neutral safety switch! Like a veil lifting from my eyes, all is revealed. Full fuel tanks and vent left closed, stopped the engine with fuel starvation and it would not start because it was in gear. *Damn!*

The next weekend, we finally got to sea. Outside the harbour entrance it was blowing a f.5 against a strong tide. *Catmandu* was nodding like a rocking horse and the engine prop was clearing the water on each nod. As we got further away from the harbour entrance, we got the foresail up. Things quietened a bit, but not before I had given the fish a good feed of my breakfast!

We had a fantastic sail, even though there was a lot of slamming from the bridgedeck. On return, the tide was out, we ran aground on the mud 30 yards from our mooring. It was at this stage that Judith went below to find her bag of clothes and camera and mobile phone under 18” of water in the bow section of the port hull – *PANIC!* No, we’re aground; we won’t sink – just yet. On examination, a split had opened up between the bridgedeck and port hull and we had been taking in water with the slamming. On getting onto our mooring, I raised the rudders and found that one had snapped between the pintles – we had come back in with only one rudder and taking in water! We couldn’t wait to see what happened next!

## NO EXPERIENCE REQUIRED

By Lucien Contesse

Friday 26 – Sunday 28 May

On Friday we did not do much, just sight-seeing in Apia, visiting the market. We bought some fresh vegetables and meat, and we had a look at the library, which revealed nothing new for us.

On Saturday we saw an Australian submarine enter the harbour. This ship was declared open for visitors. Over the radio and loudspeakers in town, we were informed that more warships from different nations would arrive shortly. The nations were America, England, Germany, New Zealand and Australia. They would take part in a sea and land parade, to be held on the 1<sup>st</sup>. 2<sup>nd</sup>. & 3<sup>rd</sup> June, the National Independence days of Samoa. Heinz and I will see some of it before we go to Saval, the other island. It is very hard to get a visa to go there. Tourism is not much appreciated, as the people there still live according to old Samoan traditions

We are reminded, every day that we are again in Samoa, the weather being hot and humid with lots of rain. Just the same as we had in American Samoa. Climate-wise the Tongas were much better, drier and more comfortable.

On Saturday night we were invited by a German family. We had met our host in a supermarket where he heard us speaking German. We were interested to see how the evening would turn out. We were collected by car, which took us out into the country for about 5 miles. We stopped at a beautiful house with plenty of lawn, flowers and trees, where the host, his wife and the children were already expecting us. In friendly surroundings we had a magnificent German meal with all the trimmings we had long forgotten. The Germans are building a brewery here for the Samoan government. They also have the task of educating a managerial staff and workers. They will stay for about another year and then go home.

Later in the evening we were joined by another German couple, friends of our host. They run the inter-island shipping for the Samoans, until they have enough Samoans educated to take over. Apparently the native captains have very little or no experience in navigation. They run the ships by sight only and when the weather is good. Many wrecks on the reefs seem to bear witness to their navigation skills. With all that talking, the evening went on longer and longer but finally, at about 2.00 am, we were safely returned to the harbour. After a short row, we were able to go to bed. An invitation for Tuesday has already been accepted.

29 May

Another rainy day. Nevertheless, I am carrying water and petrol to the boat for the tanks

30 May

The evening meal with the German family is a heavenly change from our boat food.

We have a pork roast with “Kartoffel Knoedel”, a typical German dish made from raw potatoes, filled with liver pate, formed into a ball and boiled in water till cooked. Red cabbage and a French rose wine. As dessert we have ice cream and cream, and of course, freshly ground coffee and different liqueurs. After a long evening, with good food in our bellies and content with the situation, we are chauffeured home to our boats.

31 May

Heinz and I are on a trip today, in an unknown bus to an unknown destination. The bus travels along by the sea. Mangroves grow in abundance in a belt sometimes 200 to 300 metres wide. After a while we leave the sea and turn to inland areas. The part we are passing through is heavily wooded. After a short while and driving steadily uphill, we come to more open spaces with lush green pasture. Now and then we see a farmhouse, where a few cows and goats are grazing. We stop at a farmhouse to deliver some parcels and have a quick look around., we find small-planted areas, a kind of garden, where they plant vegetables. From the size of the planted area, we assume that the vegetables are only for the family living here and not for sale. Later on our journey we find bigger plantations of bananas, mangoes, yams, papayas and pineapples. Along the roads and in the fields we see plenty of wild fruit trees, such as we saw in Tonga. When we pass a village, plenty of children are always waiting for the bus with laughter, clamour and excitement. We don't know how often the bus comes to these way-out places, but everybody seems to expect something from it. The people are very friendly, even to us strangers. On one farm we are all invited for a cup of tea and a sandwich. Nine people marched into the house and we have a rest for half an hour. Most of the talk is Samoan, but some of the people speak to us in English. We have the impression that those country people are happy and content.. Late in the afternoon we are back in Apia, tired from the many potholes.

1 June

Independence Day in West Samoa. Not many natives turn out to listen to the speeches or music. They are more interested in the three free days, probably without loss of pay. There are many food stalls, so-called sausage stalls but, of course, there are no sausages. Samoan food is not bad but our European stomachs are more tuned to nice crunchy tasty sausages of all kinds. These festivities will last till Saturday. Heinz and I are not very interested in the alcoholised bodies and their brawls. We would rather go on an unknown bus to an unknown destination.

4 June

Universal day of laziness.... We read and do as little as possible. In the afternoon we make a visit to a Canadian yacht, which was pretty boring. I cook juicy steaks and spaghetti with cheese.

5 June

Today we pay Mr. Cobbins a visit. He is the only officer who can grant us a permit to visit Sava'i. His secretary brings us to his office where we are received with a friendly smile and a gesture to take a seat. Mr. Cobbins has our letter in front of him and asks a few more questions. We assure him that our intentions are to study the old customs of Samoa, which can only be found in Sava'i. He then gives us permits, already written out, for two weeks' stay in Sava'i. We thank him for his kindness and leave. One thing I must say here; all the officials we met in Western Samoa were unbelievably friendly and polite, right down from the minister's secretary to police, immigration, customs and harbour officers. Nowhere else did we find such helpful officials. Next step is immigration, where clearing out is simply fun. The doctor gives us our certificate of health and the policeman stamps the passports with “have a good trip” as a good-bye. Sava'I is only 60 miles away, so it will be a night trip. We do not leave in the evening, as the wind has taken a nap. Perhaps he was still tired from all the festivities, or had a hangover. After all, he was blowing all the time for the last week!

6 June

Early in the morning, the weather does not exactly show what it has in mind. By 12 o'clock I think it should be alright. At noon a rain squall gives Pinkle Purr a last clean-up, but I leave anyway. I motor for the first 5 miles, just to get out of the reefs. Then a light breeze pushes us along at about 1 knot, but we make some progress. Log 20 miles.

7 June

At 2.00 am. I drop all sails, their ceaseless flapping gets on my nerves. The wind has gone to sleep and I do the same. At dawn I see Heinz close by with hanging sails. Soon a light breeze comes up and I set sail. Sava'I is already visible on the horizon. An almost cloudless sky promises a sunny day. During the afternoon the wind becomes stronger and blows at trade wind strength. This, of course, is too much for my plans. I will have to drop my sails some time during the night, otherwise I will overshoot the island.

8 June.

At midnight I drop all sails. The wind blows at about 20 knots. Pinkle Purr still makes two to three knots under bare poles. The boat stays on course, Johann taking care of that. By morning the wind has died down to practically nothing.

After consulting my chart, I assume I am 3 miles outside the reef entrance to Asan, but I am not at all sure about it. If I believe my log, I should have to go another 12 miles. The end of the island is already visible, so I must have drifted much faster than assumed. I decide to wait for the sun, to get a position line. In the meantime I make breakfast. The shop's menu says "Kaeseschnitten mit Eiern". This is a Swiss speciality and translated means liquid cheese on toast with eggs, sunny side up. I shoot the sun. The calculations says, if my arithmetic is right, that I am at the moment exactly opposite the entrance to Asan which is only 60 metres wide, between coral reefs. I motor slowly towards it and see, just in time, the two marker buoys. At a very slow speed I hop over the sandbank and hope not to get stuck. The tide is high enough and I pass without mishap. After about 15 minutes motoring, I drop anchor in the harbour of Asan, which is only for small fishing vessel and has no facilities for larger ones. My arrival is spotted and soon I have five fishermen on board. We shake hands and I offer cigarettes. In return they provide me with fresh bread and hot tea from their boat. They have a good look around and declare me the craziest palangi, to come here in such a small boat – even smaller than their fishing vessels. After a short while, they leave me but promise to come back with taro and fruits. After they return, each of them wants to have a row in my rubber dinghy. I let them have the fun and they enjoy themselves like small children. They laugh and make jokes about the crazy palangi. About 2 hours later, Heinz arrives, as he has had to wait for the tide to get his keel over the sand barrier. I tell him my adventure with the fishermen. Then we have a shut-eye, as we really need it after last night's watch.

#### Chapter 34

Friday 9 June

Heinz and I pay a visit to Asan and the two nearby villages. We understand now why we need a permit to visit Sava'I. The people here are living according to standards acceptable about one hundred years ago, or even earlier. Colonisation did not change much, or not at all, for these natives. The whole island has no industry, with one exception, a small saw-mill. The people go about their work in a leisurely way, that expresses no hurry and they have all the time in the world. Women wash their clothes in a pond that is separated from the sea. A washing day is very simple. The women stand up to their bellies in the water and take their lava-lavas off. If they are wearing two, one for their bottoms and one for their breasts, they take them off in turn and wash them. After the work is done both lava-lavas are worn around the bottom part and dry on the way home. A lava-lava is a piece of cloth, wrapped around the body and held together by a knot. The lava-lava are worn in different ways, dependent on the mood of the person or the occasion of the day. Older women knot the cloth above their breasts, the younger ones only around their lower parts, or a second piece around their breasts. On Sunday or for church, lava-lavas are hung above their breasts or around the necks. The men wear a shorter lava-lava, only waist high and a T-shirt if the occasion demands it. The only attributes of modern civilisation are T-shirts and blue jeans, which are used for extra heavy work.

The people are very poor by our standards but, by theirs, they are happy and do not want any more. In the lower part of the islands food is scarce, being sparsely provided by nature or grown with difficulty in scoria, fragmented lava rock. The whole island is a huge lava field with abundant vegetation in the higher regions but little at sea level.

The houses are simplicity itself. The floor space is above ground and held there by posts. The walls are only waist high or non-existent and the whole structure is covered by a very steep palm-leaf roof. The floor is covered with braided palm-leaf mats of different sizes, which are used for sitting and sleeping on, or eating from. Very seldom do we see an arrangement that resembles a bed.

A few lava-lavas hang around and the rest consists of small, low tables which can be moved for whatever one requires. The kitchen is in the open comprising a huge stone stove, fired with wood and used by several women at the same time. The kitchen utensils are few, pots of the cast iron type, wooden spoons and different knives. Everything else is done by hand, including the eating.

The people are lovable and friendly. Here we would be married in no time and would have twelve children, before we were aware of it. To-morrow two young girls want to visit us. I am sure it will be fun.

10 June

I clean the boat up a little bit more than usual, as we are expecting a visit from the ladies. We have promised to collect them at 4.00 pm. Anxiously we walk to the village to see what will happen. Unfortunately only one girl turns up. We take her to our boat and put on our best manners. We feed her, laugh a lot and have a swim together. At a decent time, we bring her home and she tells us that the other girl was afraid of us two bearded palangis and stayed home. Well, perhaps next time.

Sunday 11 June

We make another tour through Asan. The whole area is a lava field consisting of black blocks. In the middle of those blocks stand the cottages of the natives. Now and then we see walls made from these blocks, which mark the streets and walk-ways. Otherwise we could imagine ourselves to be walking over an open quarry. Everywhere grow palms,

breadfruit trees and others unknown to us. It is unbelievable that anything grows here at all, as on this lava rubble there is no humus. The island is very green further up the hills, where the Sava'I grow their vegetables, cacao and coffee. They brew their own beer, made from sugar, water and raw potatoes. Brewing takes one day. It tastes not bad, more like tea with a shot of alcohol.

The families are all very big, eight to ten children being the norm. The island has only approximately 20,000 inhabitants, so the next few generations will not overcrowd the living space. Sava'I is the biggest of the Samoan islands.

12 June

Heinz and I make a round trip of the island. What a fatiguing day! My bottom is blue and green, if a colour can be defined at all. The bus is a Japanese truck with solid Samoan hard wood benches. The roads we are rolling on resemble more a riverbed full of lava rocks, potholes and springboards, which remove the bench under your backside only to replace it there in the next second, with the necessary force to said body part. No wonder the Samoans are well upholstered in those regions. They need it. The trucks no longer have springs three months are their delivery. But in today's conditions, everything squeaks and the ride is really a torture to your body's end. The people are thrown from their benches every so often and re-deposited in the hardest way possible. All this is taken with an equanimity I have never experienced anywhere else. We even see people sleeping under this torture. The truck is designed for 30 people but at least 60 are on it, plus the freight they bring along. The buses are constantly overloaded.

The landscape is changing continuously. Hopping and jumping over the lava fields, we see many trees growing but no bush or grass. Later we enter the interior filled with tropical flora. The lava rocks are overgrown with lush vegetation, between 2 and 6 feet high, which can only be penetrated with a machete for every step. Out of this impenetrable roof of leaves stand huge trees and fronds which would cover an area of 6 sq.m. The fronds are 4-6 m long and 1.5-2 m. wide. If this vegetation is too much for the trees, they sometimes die. All the parasites hang over the skeleton tree like tinsel over a Christmas tree, right to the ground.

The landscape changes again into coconut groves, breadfruit trees, bananas and pandanus palms, from which the natives fabricate everything they need for their daily lives – hats, carrying bags, hammocks, wall segments and everything else that is needed in a household.

The villages are as different as the vegetation on the island. We drive through some where the cottages are symmetrically arranged with grass and flower beds separating them, and the lava blocks are piled up, so everything looks neat and tidy. In some villages houses are built into the wilderness, in no order, weed-covered, untidy, uncomfortable, rough, just barely habitable. Generally it is a wild land, where the roads are two deep furrows and where one is happy if the bus does not break down, leaving one patiently waiting for the bus on the next day. This reminds me of a Swiss saying, "God gave us time: hurry, he did not say"

Deadly tired and beaten to bits, we arrive back in Asan, where we had to attend a funeral meal.

A Samoan was killed by a truck last week. He was a member of Asan village. The truck driver was from a different village, so they had to provide reparation for the bereaved family to restore harmony and forgiveness, the Samoan way. The truck driver's village had to supply several pigs, chickens and two sheep plus vegetables for the funeral meal, to which we were invited. The cooking was done during the day, in the ground on hot lava rocks. The rocks were covered with wet palm leaves, after the fire was removed. Then the pigs were put on the palm leaves in one piece, gutted of course, then covered with leaves again and those covered with earth. In these conditions the pigs were steamed for several hours. The chickens and vegetables were done in a similar way, but the two sheep were barbecued on an open fire. We arrived back just in time to see the two chiefs carving up the pigs. The pigs are dissected from the back, where they have most of the fat. The fattest part went to the chiefs and the leaner parts, dependent on the thickness of the fat, down the ladder of hierarchy. The Samoans like fat on pigs, the more the juicier. All the men sit around in rows on the village green and take gracefully what they receive from the chiefs. The women are not allowed to eat yet, as they have to serve and keep the flies away. The fat of the pigs is dribbling down the faces of the chiefs, on to their bellies and the lava-lavas. Nobody pays attention to that. The more you can eat the better. The feast goes on for a long time and we all look like pigs in a pigsty, but who is the judge? That is their custom. Finally the chiefs declare that they have had enough and the women are allowed to eat. But, not to worry, that is not as barbaric as it sounds. The women have cooked enough and there is plenty left over. Kava is flowing in great quantities and everybody is happy. (Kava is a brownish looking liquid, like muddy water. It gradually anaesthetises the brain to a state of hallucination). Heinz and I can feel a slight tingling of the face and tongue and decide it is time to leave. Nobody will be missing us. Deadly tired, we drop into our bunks. What a day!!

13 June

We have rested from yesterday's trip, funeral and pig fiesta. We have a promise to fulfil in the village of Asan. An old sewing machine with a hand crank is in need of our attention. It is the only one on the whole island. As the story goes, a

palangi sailor left it there as a present for a girl he wanted to marry, but he never returned. We get the machine to work and are declared heroes by the whole village.

On returning to our boats we find plenty of fresh fruit, eggs and vegetables, put there in our absence.

14 June

Heinz and I prepare for leaving. We fill up our water tanks and make small repairs. Then we go to the village bath pond and have a last shower and wash, accompanied by about two dozen children and many gaffers. Then we say goodbye to these lovely girls. They do not like us to leave, as they have become so used to those crazy palangis. We receive many small presents and are farewelled with their best wishes. What beautiful people and all without the tools of modern civilisation. No wonder they do not want to change.

15 June

I weigh anchor at 7.00 am. I am leaving Asan under motor power. Along the reefs everything goes well. Through the exit and over the sandbar the motor has a few early morning coughs that get my adrenalin going. We make it without any mishap through the reefs. In the open water, I change a spark plug to be ready for the next time. At the moment there is no wind and we drift slowly towards the end of the island. The weather is so far, good, so no reason for complaints. Soon the trade wind comes up and Pinkle Purr makes good speed. In the northern region the sky starts to turn black. But it may be a while yet before it rains. All afternoon we make between 6 and 8 knots. By nightfall it rains and the wind is gone. For the next two hours I have light breezes from all directions, but too light to do anything about. Then the tradewind returns, but not as strong, which is very comfortable for the night. Log: 100 miles.

16 June

By dawn, I drop the main and then set the genoa and jib No.1 in butterfly fashion. The boat immediately runs very quietly without cork-screwing and Johann has an easy job steering. I take my first sun shot and after that, write my diary. In spite of heavy overcast, I am able to get another shot at the sun. My position is calculated as follows: W. 174.18, S. 13.30. All afternoon we cruise along nicely. By sunset, I drop the genoa, so as not to be too close to the atolls the next day. Log: 115 miles.

17 June

By 4.00 am. I am already up. The adrenalin is flowing and sleep is out of the question. The nearness of the island makes me nervy. Every ten minutes I have a look at the clock. Daybreak just does not come. In the night the sky is overcast for a short while and then swept clean again. The cloudiness of the sky is changing quickly and that does not help my nervousness. Finally the sun rises but there is nothing to see except the vastness of the ocean. My patience is tested to the stress line. I take a shot at the sun and then go back to the bow to my post as lookout. It is now 10.00 am and still nothing. I doubt once more, my navigational skills and take another shot. The calculations state that I have to go for another 20 miles. That puts my mind at rest for a bit. Wallis Island is only 150 m high and that is where I am going. Visibility is somehow impaired by the evaporation of water in the air. I fetch my binoculars, but that makes it even worse. The horizon is shimmering in the heat of the day. Finally I make out a mountain peak, but calling it a mountain at 150 m. is a little exaggerated, but I am relieved I am here. On my way to take the usual noon shot, I change my mind. That can wait, as I have the island in sight. The time to arrive there before nightfall, could be tight. As soon as I am close enough, I can see the ring reef that surrounds the whole island and has only one entrance. The waves are racing with the thunder of an express train over the 300 m. wide reef. It is an indescribable spectacle. I sail about 200 yards away from the reef's edge, exactly where the waves are building up. Now and then, I feel that I am being a little too ambitious and withdraw out of the danger zone. Here, to make an emergency landing, would be the end in seconds. I stay as close as I can, because what I see here is so fascinating that I just have to stay. Finally I reach the entrance. But what I see there is frightful. The water is flowing out through the entrance like a river. The wind is blowing against it and swell and waves are racing through the pass to the inside of the atoll. The whole entrance is a boiling, frightening cauldron. On the side of the entrance, the waves roll against the reef and thunder over it., The water is thrown into the air and a huge rainbow spans the area. I have to get in there, if I do not want to stay outside all night. The entrance is about 150 m. wide and gives me a chance to turn around, if I should not make it. With a prayer, I start the motor and hope it will not let me down. With full sails and motor going at top revs, I aim at a point halfway between the two markers and off we go. I have a knot in my stomach and I am terrified at what I have to do. We shoot into the entrance and come practically to a standstill. The speedo meter races at 9 kn. But we make barely 1 kn. The onslaught of water is incredible. The eddies push Pinkle Purr this way and that, so I have to work hard on the helm to keep the boat in the direction I want to go. After about 15 minutes, I am through and can relax. Only now I realise that I am bathed in sweat and veritably shaking. This passage was a lot worse than the Panama Canal, and there I was at least secured with four anchor ropes. The current slackens inside the reef and we motor along the markers. The channels are very narrow, just wide enough to let the island freighters through. Two-way traffic is not possible. The markers are good but widely spaced and not illuminated. The sun is already low and makes them hard to see, as it shines directly into my eyes. The water reflects the light like a mirror. Visibility in these circumstances is very bad and I navigate more by feel than sight. My stomach turns into a ball again, but everything goes well. Finally I make it. The blind landing is done, the anchor drops, motor off. I take a few deep breaths and I am dead tired. I have a headache. I take a pill and go to sleep. Log: 35 miles.



