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Disclaimer

Neither the BCCA nor Committee will accept any liability for personal injury arising out of participating in any event, rally or race organized by or through the BCCA whether sustained by members, guests, or visitors, or caused by the said members, guests or visitors whether or not such damage or injury could have been attributed to or was occasioned by the neglect, default or negligence of any of the officers, committees or servants of the BCCA.

Boat Owners Third Party Insurance

It is the responsibility of all boat owners to have adequate third party insurance in respect of him/herself, vessel, his/her crew for the time being & his/her visitors.

Hello fellow Bobcat and Catalac sailors everywhere

April 2007

Minutes of The Annual General Meeting held on Saturday 31st.March 2007

After welcoming those present to The Annual General Meeting the Commodore asked everyone to remember Arthur Leeks a member and The Association's examiner who had died on 13th February 2007. He expressed his thanks on behalf of The Association to his widow Barbara for carrying on the arrangements for the meeting at the Chichester Yacht Club. He then proceeded to conduct the formal business as follows:-

1. He explained that the committee had appointed Theo Hargreaves to finish the examination of the Association's accounts after Arthur Leeks death. Theo Hargreaves presented and explained the accounts. Maggie Smith proposed and Roger Smith seconded a proposal that the accounts be adopted. This proposal was carried unanimously.
2. Peter Gimson proposed and Maggie Smith seconded a proposal that Theo Hargreaves be appointed the Honorary Examiner for the year ending 31 st. December 2007. This proposal was carried unanimously.
3. Tony Linford proposed and Roger Smith seconded a proposal that Bob Freeman who retired from the Committee under Rule 3 (c) of the Association's Rules be re-elected. This proposal was carried without dissent.
4. The Commodore presented his report which was accepted.
5. Clutterbuck proposed seconded by Kathy Clutterbuck that the change in the Rules set out in item 5 of The Agenda be adopted. This was adopted without dissent.
6. Peter Gimson proposed seconded by Sue Stacey that Jeremy Bretherton be elected Commodore for the year ending 31 st December 2007. This proposal was carried without

dissent

7. Any Other Business:-

(a) Burgees - Tony Linford explained his researches into their manufacture. After discussion it was agreed that the Association would pay £50 for the art work and Maggie Smith would purchase the material and sew it up ready for printing.

(b) Discussion ensued on the last paragraph of the Commodores Report. After various opinions were aired the Commodore said he had put forward the topic for general debate and expressed the hope that this would occur during the year through the Newsletter.

(c) Maggie Smith raised the question of renewing some of the annual competitions that had been run by the Lacks. The Secretary said he would take note at what had been said for dissemination through the Newsletter. The favourite seemed to be a photographic competition for the most interesting subject.

There being no further business the meeting adjourned for drinks and an excellent lunch in The Chichester Yacht Club.

BOBCAT & CATALAC CRUISING ASSOCIATION
Income & expenditure Account from 1st.January 2006 to 31December 2006

INCOME		EXPENDITURE	
Subscriptions	£1,771.50	Newsletter	£1,500.00
Advertising	£77.50	Register	£0.00
CD. sales	£37.50	Postage	£208.90
Raffle	£20.00	Stock purchases	£0.00
Bank Interest	£3.26	Engraving	£0.00
Donations	£0.00	MOCRA	£0.00
Bank error	£0.00	Rallies	£0.00
		Miscellaneous	
TOTALS	<u>£1,909.76</u>	Surplus for year	<u>£1,708.90</u>
			£200.86
<u>TOTALS</u>	<u>£1,909.76</u>		<u>£1,909.76</u>

Balance sheet as at 31 December 2006

<u>ASSETS</u>		Represented by	
Current ac.	£545.62	Net assets at 31/12/05	£475.50
Premium ac.	£386.74	Add surplus for 2006	£200.86
Total cash at Banks	£932.36		
Less liabilities Creditor	£256.00		
Cash Balance	<u>£676.36</u>		<u>£676.36</u>
Hon. Sec. Peter Gimson		Hon.Commodore. Jeremy Bretherton	

I have examined the financial records of the association. From the explanations received, confirm the accounts as presented are in accordance therein. TH.

Theo Hargreaves Hon. Auditor.

Forthcoming B.C.C.A. Events 2007

4th.May – 6st.May..... Rally at The Folley IOW. on the Mayday Bank Holiday weekend.
Contact Bob Freeman by e.mail;> bobatlongleaze@aol.com or text to 07767 605 631

25th. May –27th.May.....POOLE RALLY 25th - 28th May

Why not join us for a relaxing weekend in Poole Harbour. Meet in Bramble Bush Bay on Friday evening (25th) or during Saturday (26th). Saturday evening bring a plate of food to share and your own tipples and we will either go ashore to eat on the beach or get together on 'Dragonslayer' if the weather isn't kind. Sunday lunch is organised at RNLI (13.00) after which there is a stroll round Brownsea Island for those seeking pleasant views and gentle exercise. Should the weather be as last year (F6/7 winds) why not just join us for Sunday lunch at RNLI anyway. The food is very good and cheap.

Need to know your intentions by Wed 16th May (Email aleck@mq-sales.fsnet.co.uk or text to 07905105596) as we must confirm numbers to RNLI. Anyone wanting ideas for the plate of food can chat to Chris on 01202 661164.

>>> RUSH UPDATE <<<

Last month we left Alan on Rush at Portobelo Panama waiting for Marilyn to arrive and Richard woods heading back to the UK. Richard has written about his journey in PBO.

From Marilyn, March 9th.

Hi,
I have a little more time today. I left Sydney on Feb 21 on my way to start my new adventure after a very rushed almost 12 weeks back home. Work once again, though necessary a very serious inconvenience to my social life!! I have to admit I was impressed by Auckland this time from a totally different viewpoint. I couldn't get over how clean it looked. After having been overseas in some of the poorer countries I really did appreciate the way of life we have. My time at home soon settled back into the usual routine of work and organisation, the busy way of life. I found myself feeling like the 6 months travelling last year was like a dream. It was hard to believe I was actually heading off on another adventure very different to last year. It was even harder saying goodbye to family and friends this time. Getting out of Auckland was the hardest I have found anywhere. They said all the precautions were due to American regulations but I had the same thing traveling between Australia and New Zealand. We were all queued up finally about to get on the plane when there is another baggage search and a scanner run over your body. Getting through customs in LA took 2 hours, a very long winded process. I am now fingerprinted in the states, both my index fingers and a happy smiling photo to go with it. An early morning start the next day to catch a plane to Miami and then onto Panama. Alan met me at the airport in Panama City, it was dark when I arrived and we went straight to the hotel. I am finally here after a very long trip, roughly 43 hours because of the stopover in LA. We still had a fair way to get back to Rush so left around 0900 to catch the bus for approx 2 hour trip almost back to Portobelo, we had to change buses from Sabasteno (spelling, how it sounds) for the last 45 mins. It was a typical Caribbean bus, all coloured, people stacked in and we had to stand for a good part of the trip. They sure know how to race around the bendy roads, one had to make sure you were really hanging on. Portobelo was a particularly busy town in its day with all the gold being collected here for the Spanish to come and collect it. Drake is buried here. Portobelo is just like you see in the movies, the palm trees, the open houses and the car wrecks etc.

The weather is hot and humid, with a good shower of rain overnight.

I started to collect some water as the water in the tanks on the boat are not tasting good!!! There is bleach in the water to kill the germs and tea and bleach is not a good combination. We shared a nice cuppa this morning with the rainwater I caught. I am told it will shower a lot so I am going to keep a container of drinking water separate Alan treated me to a meal out last night in a local restaurant. It was a yummy

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meal of rice and fish with this vegetable that looks so like a green banana but is a vegetable called plantane. It is really nice. We have some more to take with us to the islands.

We are heading off later today about 9 miles to another anchorage, going only a short distance as it will be motoring all the way against the wind. Tomorrow we will hopefully sail the 80 miles to the San Blaas islands for a week or so. Alan says it is really pretty there, there are no shops or internet so will not be able to be contacted for a couple of weeks. We have to make sure we have all the food we need today for a couple of weeks so we are heading off to do a big shop.

The supermarket in Sabasteno has more variety, the bus will be crowded on the way back so it will mean hanging on again with all our groceries. So much for the car and the big supermarkets. Back to lugging it around in our backpacks and bags again. Alan has been here for a while and has been having cold showers, he so kindly offered to make me a shower last night and grrrr. it was cold!! He assures me it is very refreshing when you get used to it. He is kinda right!! It feels so good being back here with Alan and we are going to start to make plans to where we would like to go etc and time frames now we can get all the books out and talk together. We don't have to rush off to work, It is truly relaxing. Sitting on Rush yesterday listening to the waves lapping against the boat. I think I am back home and it feels good.

I won't bore you any longer. I will keep in touch and add some more photos to the alanrush3@hotmail.com, password australia in a couple of weeks.

Bye for now, hope everyone is well, Marilyn

March 20th. We are now back at Portobelo as I write this but heading off shortly to Colon near the Panama canal to sort out and find information for the rest of our trip. I have a blue sky background today as I am feeling on top of the world.

We started to head off towards the San Blaas islands the day after I sent the last email and it poured with rain most of that day. We caught the bus to Sabasteno to get groceries and it bucketed down. We had to stand under a shelter for a while waiting for the rain to ease to try and get to the dinghy. Here we were laden down with bags, backpacks stuffed full of fresh food needed for the trip. We made a dash and managed to get back to Rush a bit wet but not as bad as it could have been. We headed off in the afternoon only to decide to wait another day and anchored across the bay. We then headed off to Isle Le Grande only 10 miles away but with the wind against us we had to tack all the way. The next day we did another 30 odd miles to the San Blaas islands. It was nothing like I could imagine. All these little white sand islands covered in palm trees of all different sizes, some so tiny with only one tree to approx 200 mtrs long with lots of trees and mangroves on some. There were thatched houses built on a lot of the islands, people living on a lot of them. The sand was so white and smooth, the water so clear and turquoise coloured. There are 360 islands in the San Blaas islands, not sure what the area is they spread over. The Kunas all come out in their canoes trying to sell you molas - which is their embroidery, fruit and would you believe to get their mobile phones charged. Here are these islands, people living with only the bare essentials, dirt floors, hammocks to sleep in and they have mobile phones. A lot of the women are in their traditional dress with thick gold rings in their noses. Amazing how they know the word 'caromello'. They would bring out their children and ask for lollies, I think it soon got around we had some on board. The children are so cute. We gave them a bag of clothes we didn't want, they would find some use for them. Some would just come out to have a look and say hello. The spanish dictionary was getting well used. We went to a few different islands and up the river on the mainland near one of the islands. We managed to scrub and scrape the bottom of the boat at one place. There were heaps of barnacles and slimy bits on the hulls. The water was so warm and lovely to swim in. These islands are protected by a reef so it is really quite calm in these waters. We caught a few fish, a change in the menu. We snorkelled out near the reef one day and even though it was very pretty, lots of tropical fish of all sizes, one is truly spoilt by the barrier reef at home. The coral is no where near the pretty colours of home or the fish such a variety of colours. These islands are very much in their natural state, charter boats are not allowed and the Kuna people want to keep it as uneffected as possible. Coming back to Portobelo was much more comfortable than sailing to the islands. We were both not feeling the best on the way out, I thought I imagined a hungry fish down in the depths so fed him once. There were little schools of flying fish just above the water. They looked like dragon flies in flight.

We are now anchored at Colon, the mouth of the Panama canal in sight. It is a rather joggly anchorage here but we have no choice. There are ships anchored inside the breakwater and also a lot outside waiting to go through the canal. A few of the yachts have heaps of fenders on them!! Makes you a bit worried that they need so many. What are we in for? We have a lot of planning and research to do here. We will be spending a bit of time at the internet doing this. Alan is off talking to another yacht to see what the go is around here. We are thinking we would like to leave the boat here on the pacific side of the Panama canal rather than take it to Ecuador. Easier for lots of reasons, the weather is against us at this time of the year, there is more to do here, easier to get flights back home. We will spend a few days here sorting out what we are going to do. When we go through the canal we need 3 extra people plus a pilot so we thought we would see if we can go through on another yacht and see how it all works before we go through. We can get a bus back to Colon from Panama City. Takes a couple of hours. Alan is excited at being here. He has had charts for this area for a good 15 years waiting for the day when he would go through the canal. He says it will feel like he is coming home when we get through the other side. We will be in the Pacific, albeit a long way from Australia, but nevertheless, in the Pacific.

Everything is very cheap over here. We did 2 loads of washing yesterday for 50c a load. The express bus from Colon to Panama City about 2 1/2 hour ride is only \$2.50, regular \$1.80. We will head off into Colon later and have a look around. I believe it isn't one of the nicest places to be in. We need to be very careful with our bags etc. Here comes Alan back now in the dinghy. Rowing away, joggling up and down!! The Kunas were fascinated watching Alan row the dinghy. They only use one oar and so well it is amazing. One bailing out the water is always an advantage in their canoes. Some have sails, bits of sheets and material sewn together. We took the dinghy out sailing between some of the islands. It was a very relaxing time. Didn't take long for the sun to make me really brown. Here I go again, the nose peeling!!

I will close now and email this when we can. No wifi here on the boat, what a shame. Bye for now, Marilyn

Hi,

We have been in Colon a week now. We are sitting in the anchorage along with about 30 other yachts, joggling away, sometimes sunny blue skies, other times grey and overcast and even a good downpour at times. We take the dinghy ashore to the yacht club - for want of a better name!! and do our business, catch up with other boats and do the internet. Colon unfortunately is not a safe place to be in. We are repeatedly told by the locals, not to go anywhere unless by taxi. The crime rate is terrible here. A lot of young people unemployed, not wanting to be employed and on drugs. Just the day we arrived a man was surrounded by 15 guys just outside of the gates of the yacht club. It is a shame as we would dearly love to go for a walk, have a look around the place. I would love to potter and learn about their culture. The taxis are cheap thankfully, their road rules something else, the doors are locked when we are inside the taxi and the one thing that stands out is all the windows have bars on them. As we passed a house the other day a lady was sitting on her balcony relaxing and I thought how sad, she still had bars on the balcony, I guess they get used to it, but I would feel very caged in. We are anchored closer to the yacht club than most of the boats. Alan decided to go in the water again this morning and do some scrubbing on the hulls. Did make me laugh as he looks innocently at me and says 'I hope they have all done their business this morning' 'At least we are at the start of the fleet'. No way was I offering to get in there and help this time!! Besides it was bad enough in the San Blaas islands. I have this phobia about sharks and aligators, these waters are unknown to us. There are aligators in the lake between the locks and they can't say there definitely are not any in the 'flats' as they call it where we are anchored. As it was I think the sea lice have been enjoying my tasty legs since we were in the San Blaas islands. I kept coming up in welts over my legs, like hives. I couldn't work it out, when we were in the San Blaas my legs stung but I thought it was just the salt water. I ended up rubbing a microbial wash over my legs. Oh they felt good straightaway so after a few days of that they have all gone away.

As soon as we arrived here we started sorting out the canal transit. We ended up paying an agent and it certainly was worth it. He took Alan around to all the right places to do the paperwork, helped him fill out the forms, organised the ropes and tyres for us. We can hire tyres to use as fenders for when we go through the canal. He does the ringing for us and I think the best part is we know we haven't missed anything. The measurer comes the next day and measures us and explains it all to us and gives Alan lots of copies of forms he had to sign. We then get a date and ours is for the 31st, next Saturday night our time, Sunday in Australia. We are about 15 hours ahead of Australia I think. Maybe 16 but that would change with daylight saving finishing there in Aus so 15 by the time we go through. For anyone who would like to see us going through the canal you can go to www.pancanal.com and watch the boats go through the second part of the locks on the pacific side. It would be roughly 6.00 am I think though on Monday morning in Aus. We go through the first sets the first night and sleep on the boat tied to a mooring just inside the locks. We then head off the next day across the lake about 20 miles to

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the second set of locks. There they have cameras along the channel leading to the locks and in the locks themselves. It is live as we go through. There is a lot of security around the canal and all the way across. They know where we are at all times. It pays to be in the know when you go through the locks and talk to other people here before doing all the paperwork. A boat is required to do 8 knots or you pay an extra \$800 odd on top of the \$600 US one pays for a boat less than 50ft. Whether you can do it or not, you say yes, you can do 8 knots. If you can't and it is required there is a chance that you will be fined but rarely would you need to do 8 knots. We look like we can do 8 knots, till you look at our little outboard motor. Some of the smaller yachts have had to pay the penalty, they probably can afford it least. There is a 19ft yacht here waiting to go through. You have to have 4 line handlers, the skipper and the pilot on the boat. I think they might all be swinging from the main and where on earth they would try to sleep it near impossible. I think he might need to chat up another boat with more space and share the sleeping arrangements. We did a transit last week on a dutch boat and I think it was worth it. I feel more relaxed about it all, Alan will still stress of course. We will most likely be rafted together maybe 2 or 3 boats, the locks are so wide we have plenty of room each side and we don't have to fit within inches of the big container ships we thought we had too. We have plenty of time to tie up and the guys walk along the sides of the lock with us, as we motor into position. It is less stressful I think than the french locks we went into. I will be busy, preparing the food etc for 24 hours and also doing the line handling when necessary, Alan will be constantly at the wheel so it will be a busy time for us. We have our line handlers organised so now we are just waiting to go. We will do a last minute shop, stock up on food etc necessary for the transit and then start making our plans for South America. I think we will be hoping to sail to Ecuador if the winds are suitable. Here a lot of people are either heading off to South America as well, or heading across the pacific to Galapagos to either New Zealand or Australia. I find it very interesting hearing everyones stories of where they are going, where they have been, how their lives have lent to this life.

We had a day over at the Shelter Bay marina on Sunday. The guy co managing the marina has a sister ship to Rush. Bruce and April bought the boat in America, they have owned it for 15 years. They have sailed all over the place in it, they have 2 daughters who are now 11 and 13 and the boat is getting a little small so they are working on plans to get a bigger yacht. I think I like the way Alan has Rush set out but then he hasn't had to design it for children as well, nor need the space they need. The girls just love their lifestyle, they don't miss all the shopping malls and movies, things that regular kids do, they don't know any different. They are going to a private school this year instead of home schooling, the older girl wanting to go to school, the younger one going under protest. They are a lovely family.

Just so you can have a laugh at my expense, it poured with rain the other night. Me being ever vigilant, up and connected the hose to catch the rain water. I got back into bed, it was only a very short shower. Soundly off to sleep again, I realised it was raining again. We have to be aware as we have to shut the front hatches to stop the rain coming in. Well, I think it rained longer than I had thought as my container was full, overflowing and water everywhere in the front part of the hull!! Here am I mopping up water in the wee hours of the morning!! A sight to be seen for sure. Alan saying don't worry about it, mop it up in the morning, I daren't leave it, he didn't realise how much water there was there!! Next time I might set it going in the shower side, at least it would just run into the reserve tank. I have learnt the hard way, actually we use the galley side as the hose is longer, might be time to swap the hoses over and back to plan B. The good side, there always is a good side, it was fresh water and not salt water!!
Marilyn.....

From Alan...

Hi everyone well were in the pacific. The transit went smoothly the advisors/pilots were really nice we were able to motorsail through the guatum lake touching 7 knots and managed 6 under power alone. At first it seemed we only had tree and a half hours to do the 20 odd miles so it was flat out to get a 10.30 lock then thankfully changed to a better 12 so we made it no problems. Will leave here tomorrow or next day for a few days on Perlas Islands then on down to Equador. All for now Alan

We rejoin **Magic Carpet** on their adventure in the warmer climbs of the Cook Islands off New Zealand after they leave Suwarrow heading to Samoa.

Samoa

We had a stroke of luck with our timing for arriving in Samoa (Pronounced Sah'moa as though it was two words), after our four- day trip from Suwarrow (Cook Islands). Their weeklong annual festival called, "Teuila", after the Samoan national flower, the red Ginger, was due to start on the following Saturday. We had about five days to settle in first. Samoa lays two thirds of the way between Hawaii and

New Zealand. Western Samoa made up of two main islands, Upolu and Savai'i separated from American Samoa by 100 km strait. We anchored in Apia Harbour, which fronts the island's capital, with some enormous government buildings (Australian and NZ aid) overshadowing older churches and trading companies that still line the waterfront, in the traditional Pacific movie-set manner. It is a city of only 35,000 with a cluster of villages. The harbour is an odd assortment of inter-island ferries, container ships, fishing boats and cruising yachts. Teams of men paddling racing canoes around the harbour morning and evening became a common event the closer the festival approached.

Our first project was to repair (re-weld) our autopilot attachment, to the tiller. There was a small fishing club near the dinghy dock, so a good place to start was to go and have a beer with the local boaties and ask around to find a welder for stainless steel. Chris struck gold. "Max is your man and he will be here in half an hour. When he comes, we will introduce you." The following night Chris met Max, again, but this time with the tiller and broken off bracket in hand and a good job was done the following day.

We also got to know the bar lady at this little fishing club, by going their three days in succession, related to the tiller/autopilot repair. She arranged for her husband to rent us a van and he took us on a trip around the island, the following Saturday. It was on this trip that we got to see some of the Samoan culture and its' difference' to our own.

In Samoa, the role of the "Individual" is to support and contribute to the group. In this case the group is the family, then the village, then the country, whereas in our Western Culture, we expect the group (the family, or the Government) to support the individual. Our culture produces a better economy and individual achievements, whereas their culture appears to produce a much greater sense of community. In our culture we talk about an individual's rights, they talk about individual's responsibilities.

Driving into the villages, we are struck by their open Fales. A Fale is a communal house. These buildings remind us of open Greek temples except they are painted in an assortment of very bright colours. There are no walls just wood pillars to hold up the thatch roof and some drop Pandanus curtains, around the outer perimeter to keep out heavy rain. The kitchen and toilet are separate. This is really communal living! When you are ready to go to sleep, you just roll out your mat. We all wondered, how they handled intimacy? There are some more modern Fales that are half walled off with sleeping areas. There are also a few newer western style houses. Every village has a church or two and a cricket pitch. We saw many teams playing, wearing their lava lava (sarongs) uniforms in team colours. The cricket bat is three-sided and much lighter than the traditional British type. The ball is made from a string of natural rubber about the size of a tennis ball. Otherwise the rules are similar. The island is very lush with some impressive waterfalls; some sandy beaches and an abundance of paw paw, breadfruit, banana and mango trees. Little pigs scuttle at our peril across the road and everywhere children wave. Hundreds of small villages circle the island. The villages, whilst obviously not affluent, are very clean and neat, as was the capital city - Apia. The people everywhere are very friendly, helpful and hospitable.

We are surprised to observe the strong link Samoa has with Australia and NZ where almost everyone has family working or studying there and our country is also a source of remittances which help pay for education here in Samoa. The stores are full of familiar childhood food products like Kraft cheddar and Vita-wheat biscuits and the Australian accent amongst tourists and locals is common.

One of our highlights was a visit to Vailima, a stately mansion with beautiful tropical gardens built by the author, Robert Louis Stevenson in 1890. He spent the last five years of his life here, where he wrote a surprisingly number of books, many about the Pacific. He was involved in helping the chiefs maintain their land after European colonialism and was so beloved by the locals that he had the equivalent of a state funeral where hundreds of men passed his coffin hand to hand, two miles up to the summit of Mt Vaea, overlooking his house, as he requested and where his tomb now stands. The house has since been occupied by a German governor, the Samoan head of state and now owned by an American businessman who rebuilt and converted it to a museum. The airy mansion is beautifully decorated and furnished with replicas and has a some fascinating photos of the local people of the time and some first published copies of Stevenson's books including 'Treasure Island.'

During our first week, 50 man 'war canoes' were practicing in the harbour for a big event of the upcoming festival- a race from about 10 miles up the coast, to finish in the harbour. The boats were out practicing, at dawn and about 5pm after work. They would come quite close to our yachts and we got some good photos as well as discussions on who we thought would win. The week-long festival features

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traditional games (climbing a greasy pole and a form of bowls using coconut shells, sports (mainly Kicket- Samoan cricket), canoe and Fautasi races, (war canoes), traditional music and dance competitions and variety shows (which included Samoan rap). There is also a wonderful array of coconut and shell jewellery, beautiful wooden kava bowls, finely woven Pandanus mats, demonstrations of umu (earth oven-food of lobster, taro, pumpkin, banana and yams), as well as the manly demonstration of whole body tattooing. Samoan men proudly wear their lava lavas and the women mu'umu'u style dresses and Puletasi (a more fitted two piece top and long skirt) made from local hand-printed fabrics. The art of wood cut printing was also demonstrated at the festival with some of the young unemployed men being trained in order to give them a source of income. We enjoyed watching all these demonstrations and trying the local food as well as watching numerous parades, which included marching girls, police bands, cultural theme groups and contestants for the Miss Samoa Pageant.

We didn't go to this pageant but we did go to the Miss Tutti Fruiti Pageant, which was a big excuse for a variety performance by the local 'Fa'afafine' (female impersonators). We were entertained in the 'talent' section with variations on Tina Turner, the 'evening wear' with some beautiful local designer gowns and the 'undergarments attire' with little left for the imagination. Nine Fa'afafines competed, supported by numerous fans in the audience, which were for us just as mysterious and entertaining. Ironically the winner was not any of the lithe-like ladies but an outgoing roly-poly fellow who could dance with his/her voluptuous hips. Most Samoans are very large and 'big is beautiful.' Watching the Miss Samoa Pageant on TV the next night was rather sedate with more the American style beauties and body types.

The afternoon before the Fautasi race the Harbour Master asked all the yachts to clear the anchorage and go three deep along the commercial dock. The following morning at 7am we take our dinghies and watch as the first of the boats come flying through the gap in the reef. It is a green and yellow boat ahead not the expected red one who is third then much to everyone's excitement overtakes the orange one for second place. The whole town was watching along the banks and in any kind of watercraft they could find. Twenty thousand Tala (\$10,000 Aus) was first prize, won by the local teacher's college. Most of the money goes into paying for the upkeep of the 50-strong crew and the boat but the prestige is fantastic. We all raced into town for the 9am prize giving and finale to the festival.

Our final cultural experience is a night at the famous Aggie Grey's Hotel which started life as a hamburger stand catering to the U.S. servicemen stationed here in 1942 and went on to become the famous hotel of the rich and famous. Now stands a colonial style hotel, ran by Aggie's grandson and where we attended a Fia Fia (Polynesian dancing) with a buffet dinner of local foods afterwards. The singing and dancing, is performed each Wednesday night, by hotel staff. It seems that all Pacific Islanders like to sing and dance and these people, from accountants to gardeners and housemaids did a very professional job. One of the features of the night was a performance of the Tamori, the Tahitian hip-swaying dance which usually has the girls wearing traditional coconut bras. The hotel was lucky to have, on their staff, the winner of a recent competition, who did a solo performance, complete with grass skirt and coconuts. It was a Faa'afine - a boy/girl. He got a great round of applause.

Traditionally, in the Pacific, families would bring up one of their sons as a girl. He would sit with the women and do all women things- as much as the gender would allow. This was a family defence mechanism, so that the parents always had someone to look after them, in old age, because often the rest of their sons would be killed in battle with neighbouring tribes and their daughters would be married off and looking after someone else. Although that need has essentially passed, Faa'afines (what we may call Transvestites) are an accepted part of the community. You see them around and no one seems to pay any particular derogatory attention.

A circle closed whilst we were in Samoa. Right through the Pacific you see the effects of the missionaries from the 1800's. One of the things that stand out is the "Mother Hubbard's". This is the colloquial name given to the shapeless cover-up dresses that are common with middle to older aged women and younger women in the church groups, right through the Pacific. In Tahiti they have high necks, long sleeves and come down to the ankles, in Samoa they show more consideration to the climate and have shorter sleeves, just above the elbow. Christianity in the Pacific is very conservative. All this came about because the European Missionaries considered "their nakedness sinful" and the wives of the Missionaries supervised the dress code for the native women. However now the European tourists are turning up in skimpy holiday clothes, showing lots of sinful flesh, not to mention bikinis and some topless sunbathing on the beaches and it is the conservative Pacific Islanders who are "Tutt Tutting"! How times change. Not sure what Margaret Mead would have said about that.

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We always try to chat a bit to the local officials, offer them a coke, or a coffee, as they are our first window into this new community. The young man from the Samoa Quarantine and Agriculture Department, was chatting away over a cold Diet Coke, proudly telling us that his parents are embarking on a new career as Missionaries (Methodist Church) and in a month they were going overseas on their first preaching assignment - to Sydney, Australia! So there you go - full circle again.

C&K

To be continued next month. All members who have ordered a 2007 Register will be receiving it next month so please now is the last month for informing me of any last minute changes of address etc. Thank you. ED.