



Log of *S/V High Drama* No.15 Fiji

September 1, 2002

Bula! Bula! Vinaka vakalevu!

Greetings again from the sailing vessel *High Drama*! We are currently in Fiji in some blustery weather waiting for the opportunity to sail on to Vanuatu. More on that later. This Log features Fiji as seen in part through the eyes of our guest Lee Carr. Slight editorial license crept in now and then.

As always, we enjoy hearing from you. Please write to us at WCX7992@sailmail.com which has the best reception now, but we still can access KD7GHW@winlink.org. We receive email by radio, even at sea.

PLEASE DO NOT write to us at HighDrama@xtra.co.nz! We no longer have that email address!

Lee Carr visits *High Drama*

Lee Carr is one of the busiest fellows we know. Late one evening while we worked together on the defense of a lawsuit, long before we came sailing, I told Lee that Ann and I yearned to take a break from careers and spend an extended time sailing. Lee was very positive about the idea and encouraged us. During the course of the conversation he said that if we needed an extra hand in some "particularly exotic place" we should give him a call. In Fiji we did just that. Beverly, Lee's wife, encouraged him to come and somehow he kept the slot free on his calendar. A few weeks ago he showed up with a swimsuit and smile and we set off to explore the Yasawa chain of islands in Western Fiji.

Lee readily volunteered to do all tasks aboard *High Drama* and readily adapted to the arduous lifestyle of living afloat.



Lee on dinghy guard duty.



Lee not sleeping on watch.

Somosomo Bay on Naviti Island

After several days of visiting largely unpopulated anchorages we landed in Somosomo Bay on the island of Naviti in the Yasawa Island Group of Fiji. It was in Somosomo that we first made sevusevu.

Sevusevu and Yaqona (Kava)

Long before the first Europeans landed in Fiji visitors from one area to another would present the turaga ni koro (hereditary chief) with a gift as a symbol of recognition and honor. The recipient was bound to accept the gift. If he rejected it, the rejection was viewed as the equivalent of a declaration of war. Once the gift was accepted, the obligations fell upon the recipient. The chief and his village became responsible for the safety and well being of the guest as long as he stayed in the village. That reciprocity still lives in spirit in Fiji today. The custom is referred to as making sevusevu and visiting yachties are encouraged to participate and thereby acknowledge that the water they are fishing and swimming in is owned by the nearby village.

Visitors to outlying villages in the islands of Fiji present kava as the customary gift of the sevusevu ceremony. Yaqona (kava) is widely available in two forms: one, a bouquet of brown twisted roots wrapped in newspaper and tied with a ribbon (waka); the other, a baggy containing a half kilo of ground light brown powder. The former is regarded as more formal. Kava is the ground root of a type of pepper plant. In the old religion, before the Methodists arrived in force, kava was used ceremonially only by the chiefs and priests. Today, kava consumption is widespread and common among most Fijians, whether Indian or indigenous, whether Hindu or Methodist. See the discussion and pictures on later web site pages.

High Drama arrived at Somosomo Village armed with waka, the bouquet form of the root. Small children scrambled out of the bushes from all sides and escorted us to the home of the chief. To our considerable surprise, we learned that the chief was a woman, something of a rarity in Fiji. Her aide d'camp, Koral, welcomed us to the chief's humble house. Kids, some with quite runny noses squirmed into the room to see the visitors. Koral explained that the chief was busy, perhaps on political business, but we assumed with tending her household. We sat cross-legged on the woven mat floor while waiting to see the chief. Koral took advantage of the delay and promptly spread out shells and carvings on the mat in front of her. These items were for sale. The kids continued to squirm. Ann gave the kids gifts of pads of paper and colored pencils and that quieted them down, temporarily.

When the chief arrived, shortly after we had purchased some items, she sat at the end of the long living room area. Following the custom, of which Ann quietly reminded me, I placed the bouquet of kava roots on the mat in front of the chief. Presumably, the gift is placed on the mat in front of the chief to allow her the opportunity to reject the gift and run us out of the village! The chief picked up the bouquet and carefully examined it, taking a full minute or more. In fact, she took so long we wondered if we bought the wrong plant! The chief then spoke in Fijian for a couple of minutes and Koral translated. The chief accepted our sevusevu. She welcomed us to the village and she gave us permission to walk freely in the village, to take photographs, and to swim and to fish in the bay. Finally, we were invited to make a contribution to their church, which was in the process of renovation, and attend a service if we were going to be in the area long enough. The chief concluded the ceremony and a fellow entered and gave us some dark hairy roots he called "yams.". I didn't really know what to do with them and only accepted one. He said "You eat it like a potato!" suggesting that how to eat these roots ought to be obvious, even to a foreigner. We did, and I apologized later to Lee and Ann for not accepting the full load. They were delicious, much more tasty than potatoes!



The first greeter in Somosomo Village was shy



Kids in the chief's living room in Somosomo

Lee at work aboard *High Drama*

As noted above, Lee readily joined the daily routine of life aboard the boat. We were surprised to learn that Lee can crack eggs one handed with either hand, a trick he learned working as a short order chef at a sorority house while he was in college. He prepared excellent meals for us and applied solid engineering to each boat repair project. And we gave him more of those than he could handle!



Using a Dremel tool to repair a chair...



and catching dinner.

In Pursuit of the Perfect Anchorage

The Yasawa chain of islands is located on the west end of the Fijian Islands. The usually prevailing southeast trade winds hit the far side of the island group first, so the Yasawas get less rain. But the wind tends to venturi in between the major islands producing more wind in the Yasawas. By and large, we have had good weather here in Fiji. While Lee was aboard we moved fast, usually anchoring in a different spot each night.

One evening we anchored off Nanuya-sewa Island. We read up about the island and learned that Brooke Shields swam in the very spot where we were anchored while filming **The Blue Lagoon**. Of course, we looked for her without stopping to think that the movie was filmed in 1980 and that perhaps she may have gone home by now.

Our collective favorite spot in the Yasawas was Champagne Beach. Champagne Beach is in the northern most island, Yasawa Island, and boasts a two mile long uninhabited beach. Also, there is very little coral nearby.



Ann and Lee on Champagne Beach. Yes, those are ATV tracks. We were not alone!

We learned that the motor vessel **Vava** had been at Champagne Beach just a few days before us. Earlier we had met one of the crew and she had been quite discrete in declining to identify the owner of **Vava**. But, the Kiwi proprietress of Champagne Beach Fishing Lodge gave a rather negative report about one of **Vava**'s guests, Mr. Russell Coutts. It seems that Mr. Coutts, famous for being the helmsman of the winning Team New Zealand America's Cup entry in 2000, raised the ire of many Kiwis when he accepted employment (for many millions of dollars) for the 2003 Cup Race with the Swiss syndicate, Team Alinghi. The Kiwi woman at Champagne Beach was not about to forgive a fellow Kiwi for defection! The client of the lodge, it turned out, was the owner of both Team Alinghi and **Vava**, Mr. Coutts' boss.



Vava at Blue Lagoon



High Drama at Champagne Beach

The Bula Festival in Nadi

Each year the City of Nadi hosts a festival for the benefit of local charity. The City rents stalls to families, businesses and villages for \$300 each and provides rides and entertainment, including the selection of a queen. We briefly visited the festival and had a wonderful time. Although Lee applied pressure to ride the Ferris wheels, I was certain that they had not been tested for my weight and the operators had no training in medical trauma treatment. A close inspection of the equipment indicated that the fastenings, both welding and rusted nuts and bolts were not quite up to snuff either. Below are scenes from the Festival.



Large Ferris wheels



Large Ferris wheel driver



Helmets on some ATV riders!



Astronaut



Game of chance



Grilled meat



Bombay Sweets



Fijian police in sulus, Lee in Bermuda shorts



As we passed one stall a large Fijian woman beckoned us in to join the folks seated around the floor. While we were shy at first, we joined in wholeheartedly. They all drank kava, and soon, so did we.

High Drama Crew Drinks Grog

In the old days, before the Methodists, while not permitted to drink kava, women prepared it. They chewed the brown dried root until it grew soft and wet. They then spit it into a cloth. Water was added in a carefully determined amount. These days, we are told, kava is either pounded or ground, then put into a cloth and water added. The whole mixture is squeezed until a lovely brown muddy

liquid emerges. Kava is mixed and served from a bowl called a tanoa and served in a half coconut shell called a bilo. The bilo is communal cup that is passed around the circle and not washed between drinkers.



Tanoa (kava bowl) and bilo (cup)



As the bilo is being offered the recipient claps once, accepts the bilo, and says “Bula!” which means “cheers” or literally “life” in Fijian. The bilo is emptied in one drink and then handed back to the server. The drinker then claps three times in gratification. Lee got the hang of it right away.



Our host



Kava drinking can get pretty tiring!

The bilos is passed around until the tanoa is empty. Then another tanoa is filled and consumed in like fashion. Sometimes kava drinkers stay at it most of the night. The Lonely Planet travel guide for Fiji describes yaqona as a mild narcotic that has been used as a diuretic and stress reliever for pharmaceutical purposes. The lips and tongue supposedly feel tingly after only one or two bilos, but it certainly is mild. Most Fijians we talked to preferred kava to alcohol and advised that drinking many bilos induced lethargy. The Lonely Planet states that excessive use can lead to impotence, but two elderly women whom we interviewed on the subject categorically denied that Fijian men ever experienced that and gave us a belly laugh that could heard two islands away.

Nadi Market

After visiting the Bula Festival we strolled through the Nadi City market. We never tire of the cacophony of sounds, smells, and colors of these open-air markets.



Cucumbers



Breadfruits



Eggplant

Sunday Morning Tradition on High Drama

On his first evening aboard *High Drama*, a Saturday night, I asked Lee Carr if he thought participating in the Sunday tradition of Bloody Mary's and Beethoven would suit his fancy. Jet lag weighed on him mightily and he muttered something about wanting to sleep in. Of course, I was fully

prepared to honor his request, but we forgot to tell other boats in the anchorage. It seems that Fred had given some lessons on how to cook bagels and his students' efforts were due out of the pressure cooker at about 11:00 am, the traditional hour for B&Bs aboard **High Drama**. At 11:00 AM sharp Fred from **Aldebaran**, Peter and Uta from **Phoenix**, Mike and Brett from **Project Mayhem**, Andrea from **Sonsie Lass**, and the professional crew of an 85 foot triple-decker yacht appropriately named **Cosmos** came aboard. They all brought food. And the tradition lived on...



Brett, Uta, Peter and Fred



Mike from **Project Mayhem** and Andrea from **Sonsie Lass**



Jason, the captain of **Cosmos** has a crew of 3 females



Fred from **Aldebaran** and Uta from **Phoenix**.



Jenny, the first Mate on ***Cosmos***

Ann Visits the USA

Connie Charles, one of Ann's friends since grade school, organized an informal Reunion and Slumber Party For the Girls of the Class of 1960 Who Turn 60 This Year. The actual festivities took place at Judy Vig Schacht's home near Zumbro Falls, Minnesota in early August 2002. The twelve women who attended this function were all still married to their first husbands, who were neither invited nor attended. Maybe there is a lesson somewhere in all this.

Ann, of course, contributed some kava to the festivities. The women reported that it tastes like muddy water.



Back row: Charlotte Hagen McManus, Julie Sherman Eckman, Kathy Olson Shrago, Barbara Ives Isaac, Ann Lyon Brooke, Connie Eckhoff Charles
Front row: Judy Johnsrud Langrud, Judy Hansen Moberg, Karen Ingvaldson Hovde, Judy Vig Schacht, Joan Schneider Harstad.

Ann also visited our sons Jason and Jesse and spent a few nights with each of them. Each advised that he had done a considerable amount of cleaning before she arrived and she was quite impressed! In San Diego Ann also squeezed in a visit with friends Gary and Christy Crawford, and in Minneapolis she visited long time friend Julie Bolton.



Julie Bolton



Christy, Carissa, and Gary Crawford

In Los Angeles she visited her brother and sister in law, Clay and Karin Lyon, and in Phoenix she visited Jeff's mother, Lois Bennet.



Ann's brother, Clay Lyon, weeding the hill in his backyard.
(Well, it was the only picture she took of him!)

Miscellaneous

Things don't always go according to plan on a boat. Also, we forget things sometimes. For example, Jeff forgot to open a hatch before exiting through it. The ships' medical personnel flushed the wound and applied dry antibiotic powder. They prescribed quinine water over ice with a strange additive derived from juniper berries to be taken prn. After that potion, the bleeding stopped and the pain and swelling dissipated immediately.



Jeff post op

Conclusion- A Significant Change in Travel Plans

It must be very frustrating for those of you who try to follow our plans. We left New Zealand fully intending to return there and supervise the recapture of the America's Cup by an American syndicate. We also hoped to visit the South Island, which our extended re-fit prevented us from doing last season. However, after arriving in Fiji and starting the discovery trail anew, we realized that traveling to new places and sampling new cultures provide the greatest appeal of this life style. So, we changed our plans and have concluded that we will sail to Vanuatu, New Caledonia, and then drop down to Brisbane, Australia before the beginning of the tropical cyclone season in December 2002.

As we write we are set to leave for Vanuatu, formerly known as the New Hebrides. It is 460 miles west southwest of here and sure enough, the wind just shifted to the southwest. We will wait a few days and head out when the prevailing southeast trade winds return. Also, yesterday we heard on international radio (Radio Australia and the BBC) that an "armed conflict" just broke out in Port Vila, the capital of Vanuatu between the police and a paramilitary group. We made radio contact with cruisers in Port Vila who were surprised to learn the news! They believe that the reports may have been modestly overstated since from their perspective Port Vila was business as usual.

Subsequent news reports revealed that two policemen made statements against the government and were arrested, apparently without offering any resistance. Today Radio Australia described the action as a non-event!

We wish you all the best. Bula vinaka vakalevu!

Thanks for your visit to our website! Be sure and send us an email!

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