



## **Log of *S/V High Drama*** **No.17 New Caledonia to Australia** January, 2003

### **G'Day, Mates! Welcome from Australia! Happy New Year!**

Welcome back to the Log of *High Drama*. We write from the Mooloolaba Yacht Club, about 50 miles north of Brisbane, Australia. After leaving charms of Vanuatu we traveled to New Caledonia and then to Australia. We had a brief trip to the United States in December and have now returned to the cruising life of boat projects and travel.

We extend a warm Happy New Year to you all. The more we travel, the more we miss family, friends, and colleagues from work. We certainly enjoy hearing from you! We welcome news about you and appreciate feedback on our website. We receive email by radio, even at sea. Write to us at [WCX7992@sailmail.com](mailto:WCX7992@sailmail.com) which has the best reception now, but we still access [KD7GHW@winlink.org](mailto:KD7GHW@winlink.org).

### **The Passage from Vanuatu to New Caledonia**

Our year of robust passages continued. We sailed out of Luganville Harbor in Vanuatu on a Saturday morning in mid October headed for Noumea, New Caledonia, directly south about 410 miles. The winds were often blustery, at times up to 30 knots, but mostly in the 20s. On the third day, the sun came out and the wind dropped to a delightful 18-22 knots, and we extended our Genoa sail completely. Winds blew mostly out of the southeast, which meant that we sailed to weather, or put another way, we sailed at about a 45-degree angle to the wind. The seas were not as rough as we expected, but about every 5 minutes the bow crashed into a wave hard enough that it splashed over the top of the dodger (windshield in front of the cockpit, high in the center of the boat). Once in awhile the waves soaked us.

**High Drama** was so caked with salt she looked like she came out of a light snowstorm. We averaged 160 miles a day for three days, which isn't bad since we sailed a double reefed main and stay sail most of the trip. More importantly, we stayed even with our sailing companions on **Aldebaran**, a Swan 43, a faster lighter boat. But we have a longer waterline and that makes the biggest difference.



**Aldebaran**, reefed down off Vanuatu, sailed by Fred & Renee Botta

## **Noumea, New Caledonia**

The capital city of Noumea, New Caledonia, boasts a new and modern marina. French customs, immigration, and quarantine officers stopped by the boat within a few minutes of our arrival. The French made entire operation a pleasant and efficient experience.

New Caledonia produces and exports large amounts of nickel, cobalt, and other minerals. The city of Noumea exhibits all of the trappings of a large modern French city: shopping, restaurants, tall commercial buildings, resorts, and bakeries that produce delectable pastries. Noumea and its richness presented a sharp contrast to the subsistence economy of Vanuatu.

Chuck Dayton, a long time friend from Minneapolis and his wife Sara Evans met us at the dock. After a quick re provisioning grocery run, we took off cruising for Isle des Pins, stopping en route at Baie de Prony.



Chuck and Sara



Red-scarred earth in Baie de Prony evidences earlier mining activity.



Beach at Isle de Pins



Kudo Bay Isle des Pins



Chuck & Sara hiking to *La Piscine Naturelle*



Seawater rushes in at the gap on the left at high tide and carries with it many fish.



The water is crystal clear above the white sand.

### **French Prisons**

English explorer Captain James Cook discovered and named New Caledonia in 1774, on his second expedition. At the time he was actually looking for *Terra Australis*, which was then believed by some to be the Southern Hemisphere continent that provided a counterbalance to the continents of the Northern Hemisphere. He concluded that the pines on Isle des Pins would be suitable for spars on ships although he did not land there, but rather stayed outside of the barrier reef. Later when the French gained control of New Caledonia they used it as a prison colony. France sent almost 20,000 prisoners to New Caledonia, many of whom landed on Isle des Pins.



A few buildings from the prison days are still in use.



Others pay silent homage to previous inhabitants.



*In 1871, Paris was attacked by the Prussians who had been at war with France since July 1870. The Parisians, opposed to the surrender and the armistice signed by the government of Thiers, rebelled and organised the Local Council of Paris. In May, 21st, 1871, the people from Versailles entered in Paris to defeat the rebellion. Repression was tough, and those of the rebels who were not sentenced to death (about 20,000) were deported to New Caledonia.*

*More than 240 political exiles have died at the Isle of Pines out of the 3,000 who used to live there. Most of them rest in peace in the small cemetery of Oulo, originally planned to be larger. Today, 188 tombs have become anonymous, except for those of Ernest Dormoy and Eugène de Verteuil.*

Kanaks, the indigenous people in New Caledonia, currently have access to French schools and education in France. The *Centre Culturel Tjibaou* houses an abundant collection of Kanak cultural items. The Centre is named after a Kanak leader, Jean-Marie Tjibaou who was assassinated while trying to bring peace between fighting Kanack and French.



The architecture of the Tjibaou Center mirrors the shape of Kanack dwellings.



One of three styles of Kanak huts.

## Kanak Dancing



Kanak dancers



Sara & Ann watching Kanak dancers

## The Old Church



One of the older churches in New Caledonia



Kids rush out on the bell.



Class outside the church.

The Christian faith has not completely taken hold in New Caledonia. Architecture with mixed religious messages appears periodically.



The guardian of the statue of Christ



Each stake in the fence is a carved figure

### **Traditional Boat Building**

Kanaks still build and sail outrigger dugouts. Since most of Isle des Pins is surrounded by reef, this design functions quite well.



## The World War II Memorial

In World War II the Kanaks were recruited and fought against German forces. The French on New Caledonia supported the Free French Forces of Charles de Gaulle rather than the Vichy regime. They permitted the United States to establish a military base in Noumea from which Admiral Halsey directed attacks against the Japanese in the Philippines, the Solomon's, and the Coral Sea.



World War II Memorial to the USA in Noumea

## Boating, Sailing and Fishing

After a very long spell of bad karma with the rod and reel, we pulled in a 5'1" Wahoo, or ono as it is called in Hawaii. This mighty beast required the efforts of both Chuck and Jeff to get it onto the boat and then it consumed a pint of Jim Beam before quieting down and going gently into that cold good night, quite happy. Many thanks to Chuck who demonstrated fish carving skills honed during many years in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area near Ely, Minnesota. The fish yielded more meat than we could eat so we traded fillets for fresh baked bread and gave some to other cruisers.



Mr. Wahoo after some medicinal whiskey.



After the fish was really dead.

At sunset the day we caught the Wahoo we saw a green flash just as the sun dropped below the horizon. This phenomenon is quite fun to see, although many people believe that it is a hoax kept alive by rum distilleries to promote sales. Chuck had never seen a green flash before, and this evening was no exception. He does not drink a drop so we were quite surprised that he did not see the second on green that the rest of us saw. Then we learned that Chuck is colorblind and can't see green at all!



Chuck and Sara on dinghy expedition



Dolphin riding the bow wave of the boat

## The Noumea Yacht Club

The Noumea Yacht Club served as a focal point for cruisers heading on to Australia.



Tamara and Jason on *Rainsong* from Seattle



Terry & Mary on *Valkyrie*





Scott on *Quixotic*

## Off to Oz!



Sara returned to Minneapolis after a couple of weeks of sailing in New Caledonia. Jumping into whatever was happening, Sara more than earned her keep! Whether it was galley duty or swabbing decks she pitched right in as if she had been at sea for years. After she left, we set out on a course to Bundaberg, Australia. *High Drama* made the 830-mile passage in 5 days. Thanks to Chuck's assistance standing watches and pitching in on all aspects of the duties at sea, we arrived in Bundaberg rested! We arrived just in time for the Melbourne Cup, a horse race that is celebrated nationwide. People quit work early and women dress to the nines, usually donning wide brim hats. The celebration in Bundaberg included a three-legged race



Ed & Rachael on **Horai** with Ann on Melbourne Cup Day  
in the three-legged race



**Rainsong** demonstrates great form



Peter & Gina on **Talisman** and Fred & Renee on **Aldebaran** at the Bundaberg Rum Distillery

## Bundaberg to Mooloolaba Australia

Although it was only 100 miles south from Bundaberg to Mooloolaba the terrain and amount of urbanization changed radically. Bundaberg is rural and as we traveled south we cruised inside of Fraser Island, the world's largest sandy spit.



Chuck emerging from Lake McKenzie on Fraser Island



Garry's Anchorage on Great Sandy Spit



Dingoes, Australia's wild dogs eat a few children a year.

## Mooloolaba Yacht Club

After traveling south along the coast from Bundaberg, we arrived in Mooloolaba, a beautiful beach development on the Sunshine Coast.



The coast provides great swimming.....  
...And walking



The front of Mooloolaba Yacht Club



Although we are moored at the yacht club, the shrimp fleet moors off our stern. We can buy local fish and shrimp caught fresh daily.

The Sunshine Coast north of Brisbane is a very popular tourist destination for Aussies seeking some sunshine and sunny beaches. For some flavor of the area, see

<http://www.mooloolababeach.com/>. For a live camera view from The Loo With A View, see <http://www.maroochytourism.com/mba1.htm>

## The Australia Zoo by Crikey!



Steve Irwin, the comic Crocodile Hunter runs a zoo 20 miles outside or Brisbane, by crikey! While we anticipated that the place would be highly commercialized, we were pleasantly surprised by the strong conservation message. They even posted signs advocating not ordering kangaroo, crocodile, emu, ostrich, or other native wild critters in restaurants! (Of course, we had not yet done so.)

## Australian Critters from the Australia Zoo



Dingo



Koalas



Tasmanian Devil



A group of kangaroos is referred to as a mob.



Wombat



Cassowary



Kookaburra sitting in the old gum tree

We particularly enjoyed the presentations at the Australian Zoo about saltwater crocodiles. These critters live in sufficient numbers in the tropical north of Australia that cruisers refrain from diving to see whether the anchor is set. Last year a cruiser made that mistake and a hungry croc ate him while his wife watched helplessly.



Some situations broadcast their own warning

## Thanksgiving at Mooloolaba

Fred and Renee organized a cook out on the beach. A sumptuous meal included turkey, dressing, cranberries, pasta and pumpkin pie.



At the dinner table



A friendly game of patanque, or bocce ball.

## In the USA for Christmas

At Christmas we returned to the USA. Ann had arthroscopic surgery in San Diego. We had good visits with old friends in San Diego and Phoenix, as well as with our two sons, Jason and Jesse, Ann's brother Clay and his wife Karin, and Jeff's mother. Unfortunately, our camera broke and only a few moments were captured on film.



Ann said something offensive to the horse



Lee quieting the horse down



Ann whinging about the low level of nursing services provided by her husband

## Conclusion

In the next month we will travel by car in Australia. We hope to see Sydney, Canberra, Melbourne, and Tasmania. In March we will finish preparing *High Drama* for another season of sailing. We may head north along the Great Barrier Reef as far as Cairns, and then sail to Papua New Guinea. After that, Bali, Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia, and Thailand. It should be an interesting year!

Thanks for the visit. As always, feel free to email us at [wcx7992@sailmail.com](mailto:wcx7992@sailmail.com) or [KD7GWH@winlink.org](mailto:KD7GWH@winlink.org). We will write back!



For Dave Auther who says that you can never have too many pictures of sunsets.