
THE OPEN BOAT:
Across the Pacific

by Webb Chiles

W.W. Norton & Company New York London

In reading this for the first time in a quarter century, I am struck by how much the South Pacific has changed in the intervening years. I have returned to most of these places many times since 1979-80, and have been in French Polynesia, Tonga, Fiji and New Zealand within the past three years. Places where I seldom saw another person or automobile are now crowded. Papeete is a disaster; and the problems I mention between native Fijians and Indians have resulted in three military coups. And of course prices which I once thought outlandish now seem laughably low.

The islands are still worth visiting, and some places, such as Opuia, New Zealand, I like even more now than then.

What hasn't changed is the experience of the sea.

I have made only the most minor of changes in the text from the printed version: a few changes of verb tense and the elimination of an excess word here and there.

Webb Chiles
April 29, 2007

Copyright © 1982 by Webb Chiles

Published simultaneously in Canada by George J. McLeod Limited, Toronto.

Printed in the United States of America

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

FIRST EDITION

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Chiles, Webb.

The open boat: Across the Pacific

1. Chiles, Webb.	2. Pacific Ocean.	I. Title.
G530.C4773 1982	910'.09164	81-14014
ISBN O-393-03268-X		AACR2

W. W. Norton & Company, Inc. 500 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY. 10110

W. W. Norton & Company Ltd. 37 Great Russell Street, London WC1B 3NU

12 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0

To Suzanne

Contents



1. Farewell	17	
2. To the Marquesas	18	
3. On the Eve of His Execution		34
4. Typee Revisited	41	
5. The Last Six Miles	48	
6. Papeete	79	61
7. Once More, with Feeling		71
8. Fayaway Found	81	
9. Crazy in Paradise	86	
10. Slow Sail to the Evening Star		97
11. Tonga, Butterflies, and Bats		105
12. An Appointment with Captain Bligh		119
13. Fiji	128	
14. How the Other Half Lives		137
15. Night Watch	147	
16. A Change of Season		156
17. A Single Wave	167	
18. Adrift	176	
19. Over the Reef	185	
20. To Win the Big Sea		194

Charts



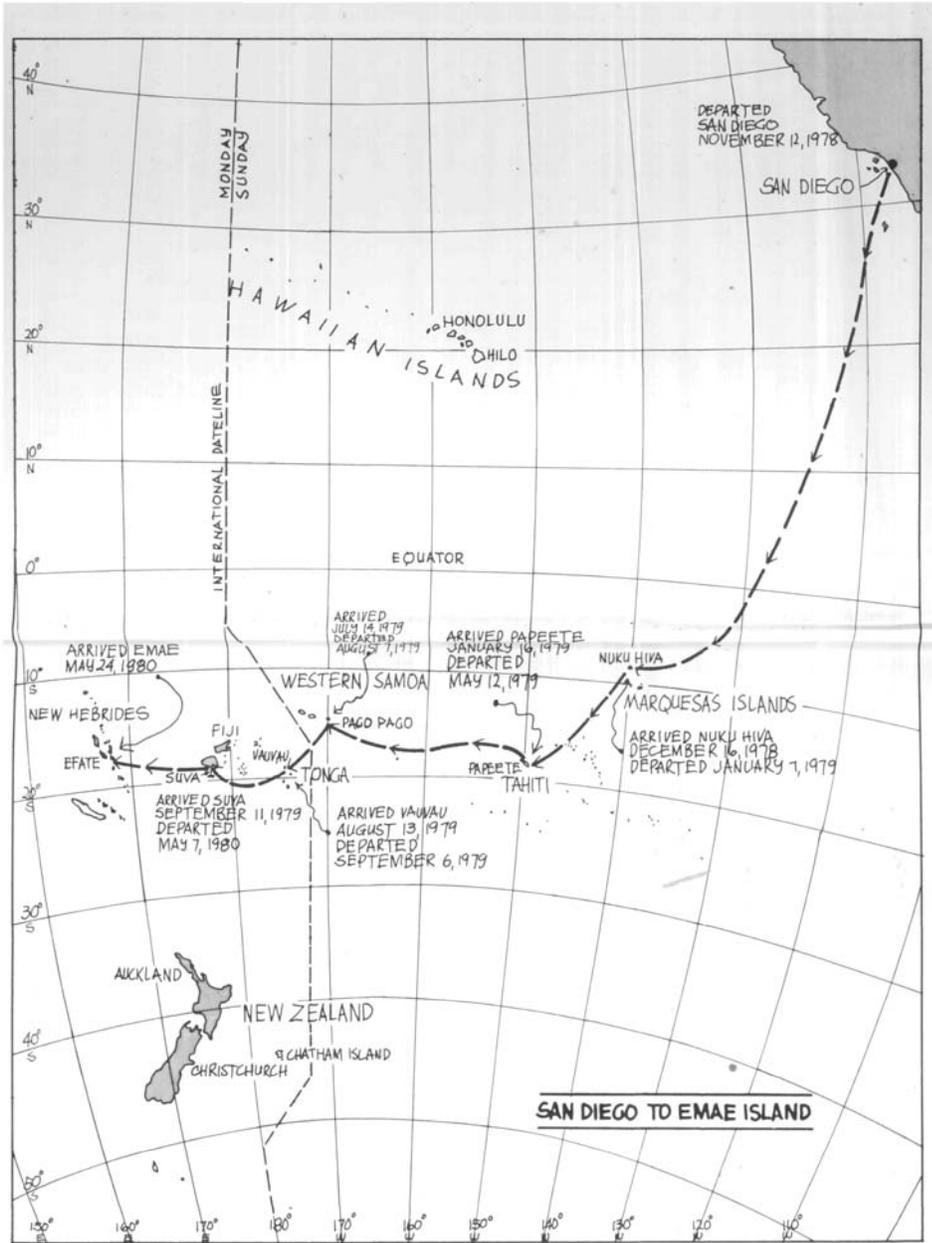
1. San Diego—Emae Island		endpaper
2. Nuku Hiva	32	
3. Through the Tuamotus		50
4. Around Tahiti I	54	
5. Around Tahiti II	69	
6. Huahine to Mapiti	89	
7. Vavau	108	
8. Vavau—Suva	117	
9. Suva—Emae Island		166
10. Emae Island	200	

Line drawing of *Chidiack Tichborne*

Acknowledgements

Many people in many countries have shown me friendship and kindness. Although I cannot mention them all, I thank them all, and particularly the following: Ralph and Martha Saylor; Robert Reed; Howard and Susan Wormsley; Terry Russell; Dave Brewster; A. Barry Jones; Neal Esterly; Alex and Michelle duPrel; Hugo Wehner; Stephan and Jackie Itchner; Trevor and Brenda Dunn; Mel Eden; Gene and Kathy Taatjes; Fred Timakata; Kalo Manaroto; James and Mary McIntosh; Dean and Anna Ellis; Al Jenney of Boston Whaler; Voyageurs; Luke Churchouse and Rich Hufinagle and the men who build Drascombe boats, for their honest workmanship.

Parts of this book have appeared in *Sail; Cruising World; Sea*; the *San Diego Evening Tribune; Voiles* (France); *Yachting World* (England); *Modern Boating* (Australia); and *Sea Spray* (New Zealand).



In San Diego I recited the following to those who came to see me leave:

My prime of youth is but a frost of cares,
My feast of joy is but a dish of pain,
My crop of corn is but a field of tares,
And all my good is but vain hope of gain;
The day is past, and yet I saw no sun,
And now I live, and now my life is done.

My tale was heard and yet it was not told,
My fruit is fallen, yet my leaves are green,
My youth is spent and yet I am not old,
I saw the world and yet I was not seen;
My thread is cut and yet it is not spun,
And now I live, and now my life is done.

I sought my death and found it in my womb,
I looked for life and saw it was a shade,
I trod the earth and knew it was my tomb,
And now I die, and now I was but made;
My glass is full, and now my glass is run,
And now I live, and now my life is done.

—Chidioc Tichbome, 1558?--1586

judge a man, then, by that
against which he must strive
against what
if not this soft night
and the wind and sea
against the myth
he must become
and his own will
the ocean waits
to measure or to slay me
the ocean waits
and I will sail

—Webb Chiles

From my reading since then I would add:

No excellent soul is exempt from a mixture of madness.

—Aristotle

We are plain quiet folk and have no use for adventures. Nasty disturbing uncomfortable things! Make you late for dinner!

—Bilbo Baggins, *Hobbit*



First sail. In San Diego before departure. —s. CHILES

1



Farewell

There was a crowd on the dock: television cameramen, reporters, friends, the curious. Suzanne and I were alone together for only a moment. Her hand started to reach for my arm, hesitated, and dropped back to her side. I turned and climbed aboard the little yawl.

"Will you cast off the bowlines?"

She bent over the cleat quickly. Her face was hidden.

"Ready?" she called, standing now.

"Ready."

She tossed the lines aboard. I backed the oars for a few strokes to swing clear of the neighboring boats and then rowed around the corner of the marina. At the end of the dock, I felt some wind and stopped rowing and set the sails. "Good-bye," she called as the gap between us widened. The water was gurgling past the hull. I waved and shouted, "Good-bye," then added more quietly, "love."

For almost an hour I thought I could see her, a lonely figure at the end of the dock, until finally she was engulfed by the land as I was by the sea.

2



To the Marquesas

You do not belong in port that first night. The habits and rhythms of sea life don't cease abruptly with the setting of the anchor. Only now, as your eyes are repeatedly startled to find the compass bracket empty and the knot meter registering 0, do you realize how many hundreds of times a day they have been making the circuit from those instruments to the masthead telltale to the pattern of the waves to the set of the sails, while your mind continuously calculates whether the boat is doing her best. And only now, with a half dozen other yachts anchored nearby to provide scale, do you realize how tiny is the vessel that has carried you 3,000 miles across the Pacific so quickly. During thirty-four days at sea, her eighteen-foot length and six-foot beam and sixteen inches of freeboard had come to seem normal, as had her lack of a deck. When first you arrive, sailing most of the way up Taiohae Bay, then rowing the last hundred yards when the wind dies, people think you have come in from one of the nearby islands. Then they discover the truth. Two forty-footers that left San Diego about when you did have made the crossing only four and five days faster. A native fisherman waves as he powers past. Even his boat is larger than yours.

All this keeps running through your mind as you try to force yourself to go to sleep. Simultaneously you are exhausted yet restless. At sea you have slept with waves beating the hull like a drum, with wind shrieking and rain blasting down. Now, for a few moments, even the slightest

sounds—an almost inaudible creak from the mizzenmast, the inflatable dinghy gently brushing the hull—are distracting. Then, in an instant, the exhaustion prevails and drowns you in your first deep sleep for more than a month.

And you don't belong in port that next day, when you awaken, stunned, to find yourself surrounded on three sides by 3,000-foot green peaks.

It is a day of plodding formalities, of learning where to exchange currency and where to buy bread, of surveying the stock of the few tiny general stores and learning how to send a telegram, of filling out forms for the gendarmes. They are friendly, but still it is bureaucracy.

There are no great distances involved, not more than a quarter mile along the single rough road running beside the shore, but you walk slowly on creaking legs with an old man's walk—measured, deliberate, almost as though you were learning to walk all over again, which in a way you are, for you have not taken a single normal step or stood without hanging on to a mast since the start of the voyage.

Only that second night, when after dinner you lean back and gaze at the sky, does the passage begin to come to an end. You think about the inventory list you completed for the gendarmes. Your French and their English were equally inadequate to explain that what was significant was what was not listed, all those items you had aboard when you left San Diego and that were either washed overboard or lost in the blue-sky knockdown or surreptitiously destroyed by the sea. A chart board, both radio receivers, the stove, some clothing, both sleeping bags, sea boots, a pair of eyeglasses, a duffel bag full of books, skin lotions, repair materials, sail covers, your complete supply of toilet paper. Three buckets. Two water containers. The sponge that may have saved your life. And almost your good sextant. And almost the *Nautical Almanac*. And, for that matter, almost you yourself. You smile at the stars and try not to scratch the already healing saltwater boils on your elbows and wrists and ankles and face. You felt a certain malicious glee in sending that telegram this afternoon. A friendly reporter confided when you left that a good many people were betting you wouldn't survive, and the thought of their having to pay off pleases you. You even hope they had to give odds.

The stars, of course, are as indifferent to you as is the sea. But you are used to it. You breathe deeply of the flower-scented night. You are glad to be alive. You are glad to be in port. And, at last, the passage is over.



The day I thought the voyage wasn't possible.
—w. CHILES



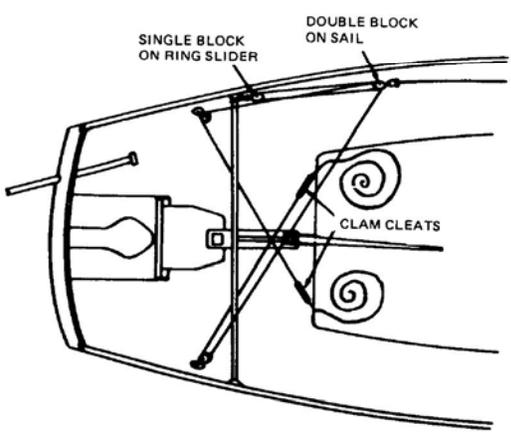
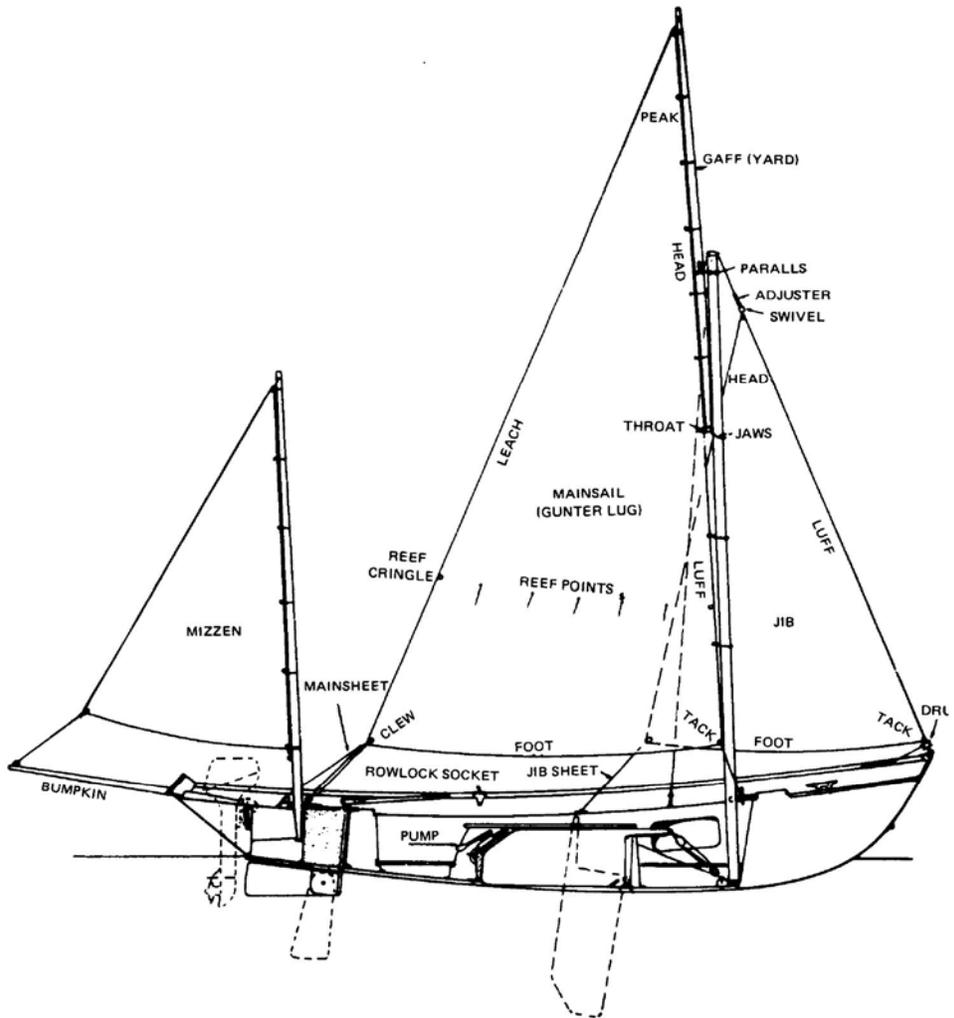
Painting the bottom at Kettenburgs —RALPH SAYLOR



Departure. 1100 hours. November 12, 1978. Islandia Marina, San Diego.
-- RALPH SAYLOR



Entering the open sea. —RALPH SAYLOR



The passage that ended for me with those moments on December 18, 1978, my second night in Taiohae Bay, Nuku Hiva, the Marquesas Islands, began technically five weeks earlier on November 12, when I pushed my undecked eighteen-foot yawl, *Chidiok Tichborne*, away from her space at the Islandia Marina for the first leg of an attempt to make the first circumnavigation of the globe in an open boat, and my own second solo circumnavigation.

San Diego was in the midst of its first real storm in seven months, and the forecast was for thirty-knot winds. But when I drove down to the marina at dawn, the breeze was only five knots and the clouds were clearing. Many people had inconvenienced themselves to see me leave, including one friend who had come all the way from Florida, and my instincts told me that I might wait forever for a clear day and a good forecast, so I decided to go. If the wind blew as predicted, at least it would be behind me.

So, naturally, after all this soul-searching, I rowed around the corner of the marina into light winds. It took more than an hour to cover the mile out past the jetty to the open ocean—and at least another hour after that before we first started to sink.

Despite my best efforts to keep *Chidiok* from being too low in the water, the inclement weather had forced me to make some last-minute additions of heavy clothing, an extra sleeping bag, and other items I had not planned to take. Even when day sailing, *Chidiok* tends to take some water in through the centerboard well. When we left the dock, provisioned for about sixty days, she was riding four inches lower than designed. I considered this satisfactory, until on our first tack to clear the offshore kelp beds, water sloshed over the floorboards.

From my previous voyages I am only too experienced with boats trying to sink from beneath me, and my first thought was "Oh, no. Not again." The problem was simple to diagnose. The normal occasional splash through the opening in the well had become a pretty little waterfall. I moved some stores aft, stuffed a sponge into the opening, and manned the bilge pump. The result was satisfactory, and luckily I left the sponge in place.

The first night aboard was my last pleasant night in the northern hemisphere. I was still trying to live on *Chidiok* as I had on other boats. We were reaching off to the south before a fifteen-knot wind beneath an almost full moon. The temperature was low for the California coast—I would guess in the forty-five-degree range offshore. But I

slept comfortably in my clothes and a sleeping bag. The ocean stayed outside the boat where it belonged. At 11:00 P.M. the Coronado Islands disappeared astern. My hopes and spirits were very high.

Twenty-four hours later, the reality of life aboard an open boat at sea had become somewhat clearer. We were in our first storm, rushing along before thirty-knot winds. Water was everywhere. The sodden sleeping bag had long since been shoved over the side. I had not expected it to last long, but I had hoped for more than one night. *Chidiack* was steering herself with the jib-sheet-to-tiller method I prefer and with some assistance from me during the gusts. From time to time the moon would cast a remote, nacreous glow over the scene. In my foul-weather gear I was reasonably dry and fresh enough so that the wild ride filled me with exhilaration. *Chidiack* handled the seas well, sometimes surfing off the crests with such force that the knot meter pegged at the maximum reading of ten knots. She reminded me of a small dog, dashing among the waves, trying to grab the ocean by the throat and shake it. Sometimes being tumbled about, only to scramble to her feet and chase on, fearless as ever. She is, I thought, a ferocious little boat—if not the Terror, then perhaps the Terrier of the Sea.

In planning the passage, I had expected there to be four distinct parts: a first week of unsettled weather until I reached the northeast trades; two or three weeks of fine sailing; an unpredictable period in the doldrums; and finally another two weeks in the southeast trades, where I feared I would find, as I always had on my three attempts at Cape Horn, a storm or two.

The first week went pretty much as expected, though it was rather cold. Despite my heavy clothing, I usually found myself shivering long before daybreak. And even during the day, the sun imparted no real warmth.

On Saturday the eighteenth, the wind finally veered to the northeast and lightened. The beginnings of the trades, I thought happily, with fond memories of fine sailing for 1,000 sunny miles toward the Equator. But the next night I noticed, when I awakened to check our heading, high clouds forming a halo around the moon. And the morning brought rain; light at first, then much harder.

The distress from a storm at sea in any boat, but particularly an open one, is caused by duration as much as by intensity. Most storms, even in the Roaring Forties, last only three or four days. When the rain

started I told myself, "This will be the full fiasco. Resign yourself to enduring it through Wednesday or Thursday." But it did not last three days or four. It did not last even seven or eight. That rain Monday morning was the first of twelve consecutive days and nights of rain—sometimes continuous, sometimes in squalls, but never with a significant pause.

I have been in stronger storms, but never a longer one. With the exception of two brief episodes, it was not life threatening. But the attrition was terrible. I got wet and I stayed wet. My hands became a variation of a James Bond novel, "Prunefingers." Sleep was shallow to nonexistent. I grew to dread the nights and became depressed with the approach of the early sunsets, after which I would lie down, still wearing my foul-weather gear, on wet cushions and pull a tarp over myself like some dreadful insect retiring into its slimy cocoon.

From where I lay beside the centerboard well, I could reach the tiller and all the sail sheets, see the compass merely by raising my head, and pump the bilge. If I had been careful how I folded myself into the tarp, the water would not reach me for the first hour or two. Waves would land with a dull thud, then splash into the bilge. Rain would batter down, yet not be felt. If I could have remained motionless throughout the night, I might have remained drier. But obviously that was not possible, and as I shifted position the water would begin to find its way to me. My foul-weather gear was good, but even the best eventually becomes vulnerable around the face and collar, and at the wrists and ankles.

Night after night I lay there hour after hour, trying not to look at my watch too frequently, pumping a hundred strokes or so after every few waves, never aware of sleeping—though obviously I must have found some rest—lying there exhausted until the first grayness in the east permitted me to sit upright, still subject to the same battering; but somehow it was easier to endure with the first suggestion of daylight.

The nadir came on the eighth night. After a day when I had thought that at last the storm was ending, an insistent rain resumed at 9:00 P.M. I remember thinking that if someone flew over *Chidiok*, he would see no sign of life. Just bags. In the bow, a yellow plastic bag of clothes, a blue sail bag with the dinghy in it. Aft, a green bag filled with food. Amidships to starboard, two more bags of food, one brown and one blue. And to port, a long green bag, looking very much like a body bag for a corpse, beneath which I lay.

At about 3:00 A.M., I tried to roll from my back to my left side. The

tarp caught around my legs, clung to my face, trapped my arms. I seemed to be suffocating and was close to panic. Flailing about wildly, I managed to free myself and sat up gasping. The rain was torrential, the waves wild. But I found the flashlight and, as *Chidiock* was flung about, fumbled in the food sack in which I kept special treats.

It was an instinctive, irrational act, but I opened a can, unable to see what it was I was opening, and reached in with my fingers and stuffed a handful into my mouth. The flavor was of lemon cake. I could not be bothered with seeking a fork or spoon, and by the time I dug out a second handful, the rain had reduced it to a sodden mess. It did not matter. Somehow that lemon taste was a barrier between me and the relentlessness of the storm. I concentrated on lemon; I savored lemon; and when the cake was gone, I sat there dumbly, unthinking, for hours, just enduring, just surviving. Just.

Most of those twelve days were the same. Low black clouds rushed ever southward as though desperately late for some fateful appointment. The wind blew between twenty and thirty knots. The waves were five to eight feet. Occasionally a break appeared in that low cloud layer, and through it, as though through a porthole, I could see a high blue sky dotted with harmless white puffs. That was what the sky was supposed to be like in those latitudes. A brief vision up from hell to an unattainable paradise before the clouds closed again, and we were overtaken by another squall.

The squalls, too, were similar: five minutes of hard wind and rain forcing us off to the southeast, followed by another fifteen minutes of gradually lessening wind and rain before we could again return to our southwest heading. Just about the time I had begun to accept them as predictable nuisances, one of those squalls almost blew us apart.

It was early afternoon, and I watched the line approach with only minor concern. For a few moments, the pattern was normal, and then the wind increased and held at more than forty knots. Then it increased and held again.

Chidiock's jib sheet was still tied to the tiller, but she could not steer herself without yawing madly, and I was controlling the helm. I wanted to reduce sail but did not dare leave the tiller. A great shrieking gust made the decision for me by laying us over until the starboard gunwale was beneath the water. I leaped for the main halyard and gratefully watched the gaff slide down. Securing the mainsail, I let *Chidiock* rest under backed jib and mizzen. This was my first experience with her in really heavy weather, and she rode the steep seas handsomely. As an experiment, I furled the jib and sheeted the mizzen flat, and

she rode even better.

The wind was blowing at about fifty knots. The raindrops felt like nails against my face. But we were no longer in any danger, so I buried my chin on my chest and thought about Suzanne. Not long before I left San Diego we had been divorced, partially because of my commitment to the voyage, partially for other reasons. But as the rain poured down upon me, I missed her very much and wished there were some way we could see one another again.

The other crisis came during one of the few intervals when conditions had briefly moderated. At noon on November 28, the sky was clearer than it had been for more than a week, and although the wind was blowing hard enough to keep us moving at five to six knots under reefed main and jib alone—about seventy square feet of sail—I decided to try for a sight.

Getting sights on *Chidiok* had proven much more difficult than I expected because of her quick motion and low freeboard. Sitting aft near the mizzen as high as I could safely get, it was still often impossible for me to see over the waves to the horizon.

After several unsuccessful attempts I managed to get a useful observation and fortunately stowed the sextant away in the aft locker. I was sitting to the port side of the tiller working out the position. The *Nautical Almanac* was on my knee, the Sight Reduction Tables and my notebook on the floorboards by my feet. My eyes were on the almanac, so I did not see the freak wave. I did not hear it. There was absolutely no warning before *Chidiok's* stern lifted high and twisted and dropped, and I found myself in the water beyond where the yawl lay, her masts touching the sea, her rail submerged.

Chidiok weighs only 850 pounds and is unballasted. I expected her to come over on top of me, and backed a few awkward strokes away. For a moment she hesitated, seemingly trying to decide which way to go. I started to move closer, thinking I might be able to push her back; but before I could try, she staggered slowly upright, her masts rising about thirty degrees, hanging for a moment, then on again until they pointed skyward.

As soon as she was upright, her sails promptly started to drag her away. She was so full of water, there was no danger of my pulling her over as I flopped over the side. Then I glanced back at the articles that had been washed overboard with me. In preparation for just such an event, I had lashed almost everything in place, and my main concern was for the navigational tables. Some were still floating around the cockpit like colorful toys in a bathtub. But the almanac was overboard.

I made a desperate but successful grab for it, ignoring the RDF floating nearby. Two large bags were beyond reach, so I turned my attention to *Chidiok* herself.

A line from the owner's manual flashed through my mind, something to the effect that although she had sufficient floatation to prevent her from sinking, it would rarely be possible for the crew to pump out a completely swamped boat. Water filled more than half her cockpit well. Like much of life, it became a matter of semantics. If this wasn't a completely swamped boat, it was a very good imitation. As I started bailing I only hoped the British author of the manual had used his language precisely.

It was at this point that the sponge in the centerboard well, untouched for sixteen days, may have saved me. For gradually I was able to lower our inland sea, first with a bucket and then with the bilge pump. Only when, after forty-five minutes of hard labor, the water had receded below the floorboards and I took a break did I see that at its maximum it had reached above the normal level of the opening in the centerboard well almost to the level of the top of the sponge. Could I have bailed out the boat if the opening in the well had been below sea level? I thought not.

Because we had drifted some distance while I was bailing, an attempt to locate anything that might still be floating was pointless. And only gradually did the full extent of my losses become clear. For several days I kept finding something else missing. And there was even one chilling moment after I reached Nuku Hiva when I thought that all my money and my passport had been lost, before I located them safely in a camera case. In addition to the immediate losses, there was some secondary damage that I did not discover until the next day, when my stove would not work and I found my other radio receiver, despite its being sealed in a bag, dead in a rusty puddle.

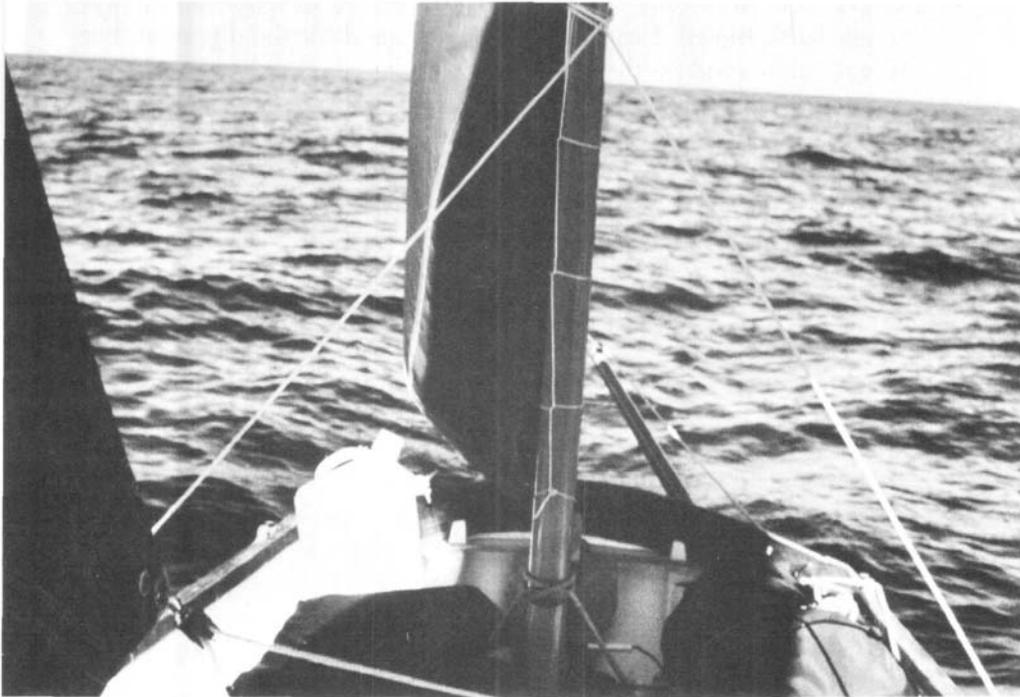
Ultimately I missed my hats and the skin ointments most, particularly the ointments. For despite my exposure, a combination of Desitin and Neosporin had kept my hide essentially intact. Without them, the sea made rapid progress in its campaign to reduce me to my basic elements, particularly during the last week at sea when it was too hot to wear foul-weather gear and yet once every hour or so a wave would frolic into my lap.

The only book to survive was entitled *The Boat* and was about a German submarine during the Second World War. By rationing my reading I stretched it almost to the Equator. It even did my morale some good to read a vivid account of a storm in the North Atlantic that

seemed to bother the submariners almost as much as mine did me.

On the second afternoon after the knockdown, without so much as a warning shout of "timber," but with a mighty splintering of wood, the mizzenmast toppled. I don't count this as significant, because the mast did not break, only the collar that holds it in place. Normally the mizzen is freestanding in that collar, and one of the many virtues of a small boat is that everything is man-sized. Similar damage on a conventional craft would have been a major and possibly dangerous crisis. On *Chidiack*, I simply jury-rigged some lines as shrouds and stays and we lost less than five minutes. The jury rigging proved to be satisfactory, and I did not replace the collar until I arrived in Tahiti.

Another potentially serious loss—that of the toilet paper—I compensated for by a judicious use of the *Nautical Almanac*. I was very grateful both that the episode took place so late in the year and that we made a quick passage. By the time we reached Nuku Hiva on December 16, the almanac had been devoured through late July.



After the knockdown. Jury-rigged mizzen lasted until repairs in Papeete.
—w. CHILES

The storm did not end, but I finally just sailed out of it at about seven degrees north latitude and, with a sigh of relief, reached the doldrums on December 2. I did not have a single day of trade-wind sailing in the northeast trades. Whoever is in charge of the trades should send out an inspector, for they are badly in need of repair. For all I know that storm is raging still. And I would not be at all surprised—or at all happy—to find it waiting for us, brutal as ever, when in 1983 or '84 we are beating our way back up to San Diego to complete the circumnavigation.

For two days in the doldrums we had clear skies, gentle winds, and pleasant sailing. Because the stove was beyond sea repair, I perfected my noncooking diet. Breakfast consisted of two handfuls of dry-roasted peanuts, a vitamin pill, and a cup of instant tea with honey. Lunch was a bowl of cereal with powdered milk. And dinner was either a freeze-dried entree, mixed, of course, with air-temperature water rather than boiling—a process more successful with some items than with others (beef almonidine was a success; lasagna, a disaster). Or I would mix a can of chicken or tuna with a cup of rice soaked in water until it was somewhat softened. I cannot say if this is good for the digestion, but it is certainly good for the jaw muscles. And while they lasted I supplemented these masterpieces with dried fruit and canned cakes. In all I stayed in good health and did not lose more weight than would be expected from the normal toughening at sea.

On our third day of nice weather we had our only experience with a creature from the deep. As we were ghosting along that morning, I was disturbed by a bumping sound in the stern. I checked the locker. Nothing seemed loose, yet the bumping continued. I checked the food bag lashed to the mizzen for a peripatetic can, and the bumping continued. It seemed to be coming from beneath the boat, so I crawled aft and looked over the transom to see if we were dragging anything—and found myself staring into the gaping mouth of a large sea turtle. Despite his hostile appearance, he was merely gulping another breath before diving again. I was curious about his intentions, but somewhat intimidated by his possible reception of a diving companion. The bottom had been antifouled in October, so it should have been clean. And even after going over the side in Nuku Hiva, I could not see what so interested him. Nevertheless he bumped along with us for more than an hour, perhaps under some grandiose amorous delusion, before *Chidiack* caught a bit of wind and left him bobbing ever farther behind, although, when last seen, still in passionate pursuit.

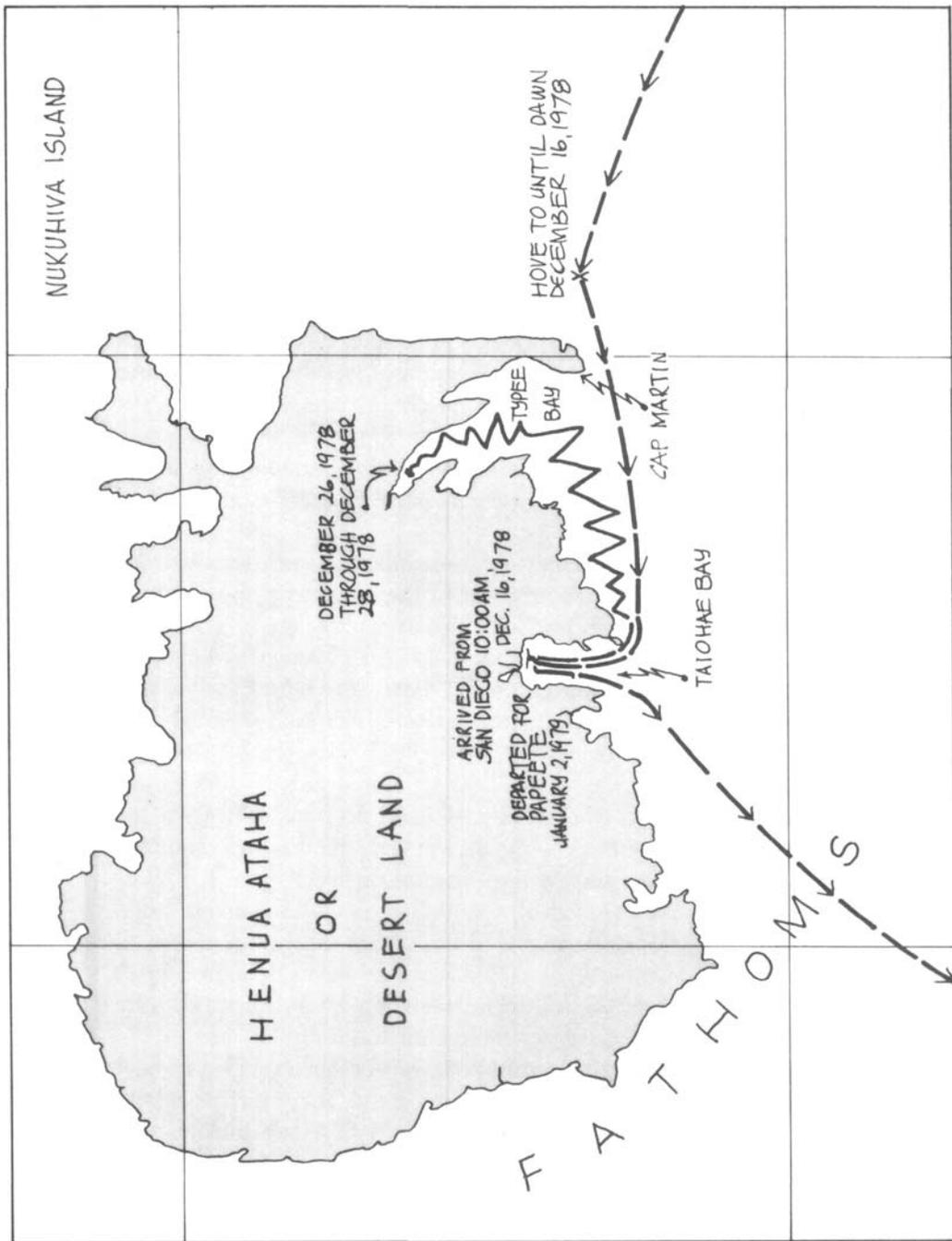
Two more days saw us though the doldrums and into an absolutely incredible week of sailing in the southeast trades. It was not always pleasant sailing. A few days were a bit boisterous, and one day I had to harden up to a close reach because we were being forced west a bit faster than I liked. But it was always productive. During that last week at sea, *Chidiack* covered 850 miles with day's runs of 119, 125, 114, 115, 146, 113, and 118 miles, all verified by good sights, and for that matter by our arrival in port so quickly. Not bad for a boat with a fifteen-foot waterline.

That one great run of 146 miles was as fine a sail as I have ever known. The day was sunny without being too hot. The night was clear and star filled. The wind held steady at about sixteen knots, and the sea remained unusually smooth. *Chidiack* drove for the Marquesas, hissing through the water like an arrow, seldom dropping below five knots or exceeding six—only a moderate pace for a larger craft, but on *Chidiack* it was splendid.

Not long after my noon sight on December 15, an island became distinct to the west, Ua Huka, the first of the Marquesas. By 8:00 P.M. we were far enough south to be clear of its lee and jibed to the northwest for the last twenty-five miles to Nuku Hiva. I had planned my departure from San Diego for a full moon, and here I was making landfall only a little more than a month later under the full moon once again.

From the perspective of three nights' good sleep in Nuku Hiva, my primary impressions of the voyage were already good rather than bad. If I had had to go out and do it all over again right then, I suppose I could have. But I was very glad I did not have to. And I did not mind confessing that if I could have ended the voyage during the misery of the second and third weeks, I probably would have. Perhaps a great many adventures are successfully concluded only because once they are initiated, the adventurer has no choice but to go on.

Perhaps there remained the question as to whether a small open boat is really suitable for such a voyage. In my mind, there was no doubt. The answer was and is clearly affirmative, but with strong qualifications as to the crew's ability to endure. And I would not like to be responsible for inspiring a flotilla of inexperienced sailors setting out to cross oceans in open boats. To anyone contemplating such action, I strongly recommend that they first sail about 500 miles to windward along a coast where refuge is available if needed. At the same time, as must be



evident, I had already developed more affection for *Chidiack Tichborne* than I have felt for any other boat I have owned.

Now that we had completed the longest nonstop passage planned for this circumnavigation and reached the Marquesas, I expected *Chidiack* to come even more into her own. On our way to Taiohae Bay we had passed Melville's valley of the Typee. And Hiva Oa was only a day's sail south. And then perhaps the Tuamotus on our way to Tahiti. We had almost rested enough. A few more days to wash the last of the salt from our pores, and it would be time to let *Chidiack* go bark at the sea again.

3

On the Eve of His Execution

The voyage truly began before November 12, 1978. It began at least as early as 1976, when, as I completed my first solo circumnavigation, I asked myself, What does an obsessed man do when he has fulfilled his obsession? It began back in the early 1950s when as a child I read books alone in my room in a small brick house in a suburb of Saint Louis, Missouri. And it began one July night in 1978 when I thought, This is outrageous. Preposterous. Not to mention absurd. And worst of all, true. I leaned back against the cockpit cushion and took a sip of tea and watched the setting sun lengthen the shadows of the apartment buildings in South Mission Beach and considered how I, lone voyager, conqueror of Cape Horn, and all that rot, had become—quite against my will and contrary to all my intentions—cute and cuddly. The yawl tugged gently at the buoy. Like those of many another disaster, this one's origins were innocent and remote.

Beyond whatever influences shaped my character to prefer simplicity to complexity, my abhorrent state of cuteness could be traced to a Canadian couple aboard a Gladiator 24, one of the early stock fiberglass sloops, in Papeete, when I was there in 1976. They were both large people—she in some rather interesting ways, he merely large—and we were never more than just nodding acquaintances; but often my thoughts had returned to them in the two years now that I had been back in America. And always the thought had been this: While I am here struggling to get enough money together for another voyage, they

are out there. That was the essence of it. For me the "here" was hardly onerous. But after the first six months ashore, the thought returned with ever increasing frequency and intensity. Whether by the swimming pool or at the typewriter or at a party or on an airplane, flying somewhere to give a speech, I was here and they . . . well. . . they were "there." The "there" was vague, romantic, tropical, and probably illusory. I knew that at the time I was preparing to head back to California, their money too was running low and they were making plans to sail on to try to find work in New Zealand or Australia. So while I persisted in imagining them crammed into a tiny cabin without comfortable headroom, but anchored in some paradisiacal lagoon, they may very well have been fighting their way through a traffic jam in Auckland or Sydney. That is the great thing about illusions: if I chose to anchor them off some lovely island, that is where they were. And even if they weren't, I could be—could be very soon. The solution was simply to reaffirm a decision made years ago, a decision setting personal freedom far above all other values. And if money is an unfortunate necessity for those of us to whom "freedom" means "boat," then I could be free again—sooner—not by making more money, but by opting for less boat.

Once planted, that thought flourished. There were places I wanted to visit where a really small boat would be handy: easier maintenance; reduced repair cost; the interest of the challenge in facing the sea with a minimum of protection and life support; my predisposition toward simplicity; certain dissatisfactions with my personal life—all soon combined with the disparity between the rate of increase of my bank balance and that of inflation to make the idea of buying a really small boat overwhelming.

Unwilling to count on the success of my winning smile to see me, penniless, through an emergency in some distant port, I subtracted what I considered to be a prudent sum from what might laughingly be called my "capital," which left a figure of \$8,000. Arbitrarily I divided that into subtotals: \$5,000 for the boat and \$3,000 for outfitting. The numbers looked more than slightly forlorn staring up at me from an otherwise blank sheet of paper. A world cruiser for \$8,000 in 1978? I spent very nearly that much just for sails on my last boat. Ah well, I sighed, I claim to thrive on challenges.

All this can in retrospect be made to seem considerably more inevitable than it was, and it would be quite misleading to leave any impression that I leapt ashore after one voyage and began immediately to plan

another. The truth is that when I reached San Diego in October 1976 after spending over 300 days alone at sea during the preceding two years, I had had enough—for a while. This is a part of the dream of a long voyage that is largely ignored in the literature: the morning after, when the bills—emotional and physical and perhaps financial—all come due, when the so blithely ignored future once again rudely intrudes.

For me the turning point came one afternoon about six weeks after my return when I stood before a mirror and the reflection was wrong. It was not just that the clothes were brand-new—the dark blue vested suit and maroon paisley tie and white dress shirt purchased that morning when the prospective buyer of my boat, even after making a firm offer following a successful sea trial, suddenly backed out of the deal; not just that I had not worn a suit or tie for more than two years. No, there was something more. I examined myself carefully. I could pass again as an executive. And I couldn't. The clothes were right, but they did not match my head, which jutted angrily above the collar like that of some predatory bird. The hair too sun-bleached; the skin too weatherbeaten; the eyes, even behind thick glasses, too filled with remembered storms. In my mind the conservative business suit dissolved into foul-weather gear, and once again the head fit. I smiled at myself more than a trifle ruefully and dropped the resume into the wastebasket. Life was becoming simpler. Either the book I had written about the voyage would sell or the boat would sell or Suzanne and I would starve. But I knew I could not go back.

That morning after is a problem with which I observed several of my friends struggling as they completed their own voyages. The aggravation, frustration, and tension of facing what is called "normal" life are considerable. Probably my own experience was too idiosyncratic to serve as a guide to anyone else, so I could do little but inform others that like other sadnesses, postvoyage *tristesse* disappears with time, and confess that for about a year I did precious little sailing.

The realization came to me as I finished my cup of tea that this was in fact the first night I had spent alone on a boat since my return. It was a surprising thought, and it was instantly followed by a sense of relief, as though despite my efforts to belong equally to land and sea, the sea had won; or, rather, the sea had won a long time ago and only now had I come fully to accept that victory.

The sun was dropping below the horizon and the waters of Mission Bay changing from rose to gold to dull pewter. From behind me came

a rhythmic splashing and I turned, barely able to see the even strokes of a swimmer's arms through the darkness. I shivered at the thought of someone's being in the water. The apartment in which I had been living was ten miles and about fifteen degrees of warmer temperature inland. That was one of the many things I had already discovered that I had forgotten: how much cooler it is along the coast at night. Only at the last minute had I bothered to pack long pants and a heavy shirt.

There came a whisper of wings as two cormorants flew past to settle for the night on the trampoline of a seldom used Hobie Cat. A pelican skimmed low in a final sweep. Along the shore some fifty yards away, two bonfires were lit, and I could hear voices without distinguishing words, or wanting to.

With a little reflection, I sorted my jumbled impressions into three headings: surprise at how much I had forgotten; mild irritation at the awkwardness of every movement; concern—no, something stronger—apprehension about what I planned for the yawl.

The surprise was strongest. Live on boats for more than a decade, sail around the world alone, then leave the sea for a year and it seems you forget everything: the already noted drop in temperature with nightfall; the dew that quickly covers the deck—though that is not precisely the word for *Chidiock's*—with the gathering coastal clouds; the serenity of being away from the shore, if only a few yards; how the evening cup of tea tastes so much better aboard a boat than anywhere else; the clean, cool feel of a night breeze against your face; the way reflected lights ripple across a cove; the sounds of wavelets lapping at the hull; the identity of the evening star—for I had not kept track of such things and having had no reason yet, even though the month was July, to buy the current *Nautical Almanac*, no way to check; even the phase of the moon—three quarters full and already shining in the south; the sounds of a particular boat—on this one, a tugging at the mooring line and a rattling of the centerboard, the latter soon cured by wedging a sponge in the well.

The irritation was divided between myself and the boat and the water, at many of the very things I was at the same time enjoying. Partly it was just that everything is more difficult to do on a boat; partly it was that being accustomed to larger craft, I was finding the restrictions of eighteen feet more than twice as difficult as had been those of thirty-seven feet. And partly it was my disappointment at my own clumsiness, when my memories were of grace and ease. Even more than I expected, every activity had to be planned. Deciding to make a second

cup of tea initiated what became a major project simply because I had not yet assigned everything its own place and had not located the flashlight before dark.

And the apprehension. It is something I have experienced with every new boat. But always in the past it had been a matter of wondering, "Can I really handle all this alone?" as I followed the usual trend of trading up to ever larger boats with ever larger sails. Now it was "Can I really live in this small a space for the next four or five years? Can I really sail this small a boat, an open boat, so far?" Always before, the apprehension had disappeared with the newness, and I trusted that my present concern would too.

By the light of a kerosene lantern, I scrutinized my tiny domain, the cockpit of a Drascombe Lugger, named in my mind the *Chidiock Tichborne*. (Tichborne was an Englishman who found the subject for one of my favorite poems, "On the Eve of His Execution," when he pled guilty to a charge of plotting against Elizabeth I.) How to fit a nineteen-foot name on an eighteen-foot hull remained an unsolved problem.

But basically, despite its size and newness, I had already gained respect for *Chidiock*. Certainly I would have found it easier to forgive defects in a \$5,000 boat than I had in a \$50,000 one, but so far there had been none. Everything fit, everything worked, and best of all for me, nothing leaked. I liked how she sailed, how she balanced under mizzen and jib, how she looked, and how she rowed. And I must admit too that I liked the unexpected attention she attracted.

Under whatever labels one prefers—racer—cruiser, contemporary—traditional, tupperware—wood—sailors tend to divide themselves into two often hostile camps. While actually belonging to no camp, in the past, by virtue of the craft I chose, I had generally been associated with fiberglass racers and was held in some measure of disdain by traditionalists, one of whom even toasted me with the oddly appealing epithet "the first of the fiberglass sea dogs."

With *Chidiock's* launching, past enmity vanished. Her fiberglass construction was apparently forgiven or at least forgotten as the sweet lines of her artificially lapstraked hull were admired and her varnished masts and her tan-barked sails and her sliding gunter rig, complete with belaying pins rather than cleats. Me with belaying pins! It was staggering.

Without bothering to define it, I had sensed that people were friendlier around *Chidiock* than they had been around my previous boats.

Perhaps it was the lack of envy. No longer did I have the bigger boat or the faster. No longer did I sail casually through their lee, feigning lack of interest while actually keeping everything trimmed to the inch. Now I was a somewhat worn, middle-aged man playing about in a small, relatively slow, nonthreatening, pretty boat. Whenever people stopped on the dock to chat, I felt that they were figuratively patting me on the head. And this afternoon as I sailed across from the marina to the greater privacy of a mooring for the night, it all became overt when the light breeze carried a girl's voice from a passing Cal 25. Her words were not intended for my ears, but I heard them clearly as *Chidiok* and I bobbed in their wake: "What a cute little sailboat." No search of the horizon was required to know of whom she spoke. Nevertheless I made one. Unfortunately there could be no mistake. First belying pins (which I secretly have come to like) and now this. Cute? Cuddly? Me? Only too well could I imagine my friends' laughter, Suzanne's amused comments.

I blew out the kerosene lamp and, brooding upon this latest cruel jest of fate, fell asleep.

Fortunately the next day saw the process of adaptation well begun. Dawn found me stiff and sore but glad to be aboard, glad to be baking biscuits over a kerosene stove as the gainfully employed drove along the shore to their jobs.

Chidiok's master stateroom is a sleeping bag plunked down beside the centerboard well. If either the well or my shoulders were two inches narrower, the comfort factor would be greatly enhanced, as I decided it would be if I used a second thickness of Ensolite foam for a mattress. But I was acceptably rested, and by a grand leap of optimism concluded that what I could endure for one night I could learn to enjoy for five years.

Noon found us beating against a locally unusual eighteen-knot southerly with a concomitant nasty chop. In my apartment-dweller's negligence I had failed to bring along foul-weather gear, and as *Chidiok* danced gleefully and wetly over the waves, I began to understand that she was going to require considerable rethinking of sailing strategy in order to survive long passages. I tried to imagine her behavior in the conditions I had found on four previous trips to or from Tahiti and decided that 60 percent of the time I would be comfortable; 20 percent, uncomfortable; and 20 percent, miserable—percentages not all that different from what they would be on any other vessel.

Late afternoon found me inwardly gloating as we managed to beat a Catalina 22 up San Diego Bay and not all that unhappy at our performance as we futilely chased another boat under the Coronado Bridge.

Evening found me savoring the virtues of smallness as after dinner I decided to shift anchor and raised our fifteen-pound CQR with one hand, rowed closer to the shore, and reanchored with ease. Making such a change with the forty-five-pound monster and its two-hundred-foot leash of three-eighths-inch chain on my last boat would have been unthinkable.

And as my second sunset aboard approached, my joy was made complete by the sight of a couple rowing their dog ashore from a green-hulled motorsailer, the one that had caused my move by its anchoring on top of *Chidiack*.

When they were within range the man called to me. "What kind of boat is that?"

I told him and forestalled the obvious next question by adding that she had been built in England.

"Nice boat for the bay," he replied.

It could have been said many ways, but his tone was just a shade offensive, just a shade too superior and patronizing. I started to say, "Yes, it is. But this one is going around the world." Just in time I caught myself and merely smiled. I might as well stay cute and cuddly as long as possible.

4

Typee Revisited

There was a man in Nuku Hiva who had come to find Fayaway. His name was Charlie and he was not a fool. He was very pleasant; middle-aged, say, forty-five—which may be significant; of average height; and a trifle chubby. Although he did not boast, from the quality of his fifty-foot ketch and the way it was outfitted and a few oblique references, I gathered that he was reasonably wealthy—if not a millionaire, then close to it, having taken a small lumber company in Colorado and built it into a chain of retail lumber stores throughout the Rocky Mountain states.

For ten years—he had planned from the beginning to sell out at the end of a decade—he worked seven days a week, fifty-two weeks a year. He was not married and usually slept on a couch in his office. He did not take a single vacation or spend much on personal luxury.

Over sundown drinks in the cockpit of his ketch—drinks chilled with real ice cubes from his freezer, a very rare treat in Taiohae Bay—he told me that while he took some pride in the company's growth, business held no real fascination for him and he was sustained throughout those ten years by the thought that when they were over he would take some of his profits and buy a boat and sail to the Marquesas Islands to find Fayaway, of whom he had first read when only a young boy.

Being in no way inclined to laugh at other men's obsessions, I nevertheless gave him a quick glance. While his voice was matter-of-fact, his eyes were focused somewhere beyond the rim of mountains

encircling the bay, and I tried to imagine this so ordinary-appearing man dreaming his secret dream during a Denver winter's night or at a meeting with bank officials or a business luncheon.

Fayaway, is the native beauty in Herman Melville's novel *Typee*, set in Nuku Hiva in 1842. The story is simple and somewhat autobiographical. The twenty-three-year-old Melville was in fact in Nuku Hiva in July of 1842.

Two sailors, Thomas and Toby, distressed by the brutality of the captain, desert their whaling ship while it is anchored in Taiohae Bay and climb into the mountains. After much hardship, hunger forces them to descend into another valley, not knowing whether it is that of the friendly Happers or the dreaded, cannibalistic Typee. Naturally, it is the latter.

Toby manages to escape, but Thomas, who has injured his leg, is kept for several months as an honored but captive guest, before he too manages a desperate escape aboard a longboat that has ventured into the bay.



Taiohae Bay, Nuku Hiva, Marquesas Islands. Three thousand miles in thirty-four days. December 16, 1978. —w. CHILES

Much of his sojourn among the Typee is described in the most glowing terms and is, I suspect, along with the tales of the early explorers and Jean-Jacques Rousseau's nonsense about the "noble savage," responsible for many of the enduring myths about the South Pacific.

Fayaway herself is described in terms that would make a Hollywood press agent blush. She is a "beauteous nymph." Her face is "as perfectly formed as the heart or imagination of man could desire." Her hair is "the deepest brown." Her hands are "as soft and delicate as those of any countess." Even her feet are "although wholly exposed, diminutive and fairly shaped."

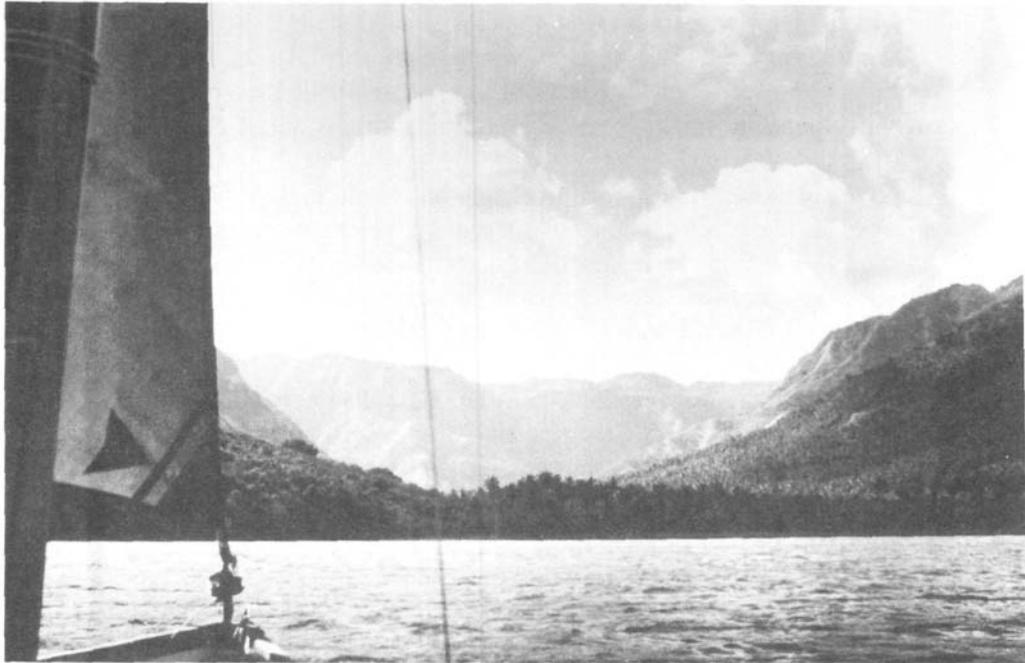
In all respects she is perfect, even her table manners. "Let no one imagine, however, that the lady Fayaway was in the habit of swallowing great vulgar-looking fishes: oh, no; with her beautiful small hand, she would clasp a delicate, little, golden-hued love of a fish and eat it as elegantly and as innocently as though it were a Naples biscuit." And critics complain that Melville had no sense of humor.

But the unforgettable image—literally unforgettable to Charlie—occurred when Fayaway and Thomas were paddling about in a canoe and on a sudden impulse, Fayaway stood, removed her tapa-cloth robe, "and spreading it out like a sail, stood erect with upraised arms in the head of the canoe. We American sailors pride ourselves upon our straight clean spars, but a prettier little mast than Fayaway made was never shipped aboard of any craft."

Charlie's enthusiasm was contagious. I decided I must visit Typee Valley myself.

The sail to Typee was an advanced seminar in the fickleness of the wind. Covering a straight-line distance of eight miles took seven hours. Taipi Bay (as it is presently spelled) is two miles deep and ends in three coves, each curving to the west like a feather bending back in the breeze. Around the various headlands the wind eddies and swirls with a vengeance. Countless times I found myself successively on starboard tack, port tack, a dead run, becalmed, and knocked down by twenty-five-knot gusts, all within five minutes and all while trying to head in one direction.

A single family lives in the easternmost valley; and the westernmost, once that of the poor Happa tribe—Melville's Happers—is a barren, uninhabited cul-de-sac. The central and deepest cove, though, opens up into a great valley of lush beauty, well worth the struggle to reach it.



Sailing into Melville's Valley of the Typee, Nuku Hiva. —w. CHILES

No other vessels were there, so I dropped anchor about one hundred yards off a black-sand beach and about an equal distance between two steep hillsides covered with trees and darting birds. A small stream entered the bay at the north end of the beach, after having run between green mountain walls from a waterfall barely visible miles inland.

Among the trees of a copra plantation, four houses could be seen. But there was no man-made noise from the shore, and the scene was probably much as Melville saw it more than one hundred years earlier. The unexpected length of my sail made it late afternoon by the time *Chidiack* was secure, so I contented myself with a swim over the side and an early dinner.

After nightfall, a single light shone through the trees until about 9:00 P.M., and the headlights of a single car twisting to and fro in the darkness marked what I knew must be the primitive road linking Taipi with Taiohae. The headlights eventually disappeared and left me alone amidst a silence broken only by calling birds and the murmur of low

surf on the beach and against the outer headlands.

The next morning I went ashore. I suppose I too was looking for Fayaway—or a reasonable-facsimile great-great-great-granddaughter—but unlike Charlie I did not really expect to find her and would have gladly settled for just seeing what of Melville's story I could trace in present-day Taipi.

As I rowed to the beach, I noticed some old concrete steps leading up beside the river. After dragging the dinghy well above the high-tide mark on the beach, I climbed those steps and found myself on a dirt road running along the north side of the bay and back up the valley.

Not far along the road I came upon two teenaged boys clearing underbrush from between the coconut trees. They responded in English to my greeting and asked if I came from "the little boat."

One of them was named Luke, and the other, Thomas. As I later learned, all their brothers and sisters have biblical names. They wanted me to visit their house after my walk. Through a mixture of English, French, and sign language, I gathered that it was the one from which I had seen the light shining the previous night, and I said I would.

Beyond a rack on which split coconuts were drying in the sun to make copra, I was pleased to see the river widen into what might generously be called a lake. A horse stood eating grass along one shore, and a native canoe sat on the sand on the other. This might well have been where Fayaway spread her robe for that fateful sail. If so, it had been a very short voyage.

As I continued inland, the number of houses increased. At a bend in the river there was a school, complete with soccer field and a weed-infested concrete slab at either end of which hung forlorn basketball hoops without nets.

The houses were more Western-style bungalows than native huts. Some were constructed of wood, but most were of cement or plaster. Women swept front stoops. Children played. In some yards horses grazed. Chickens ran about. And because it was just after Christmas, many porches were adorned with artificial Christmas trees decked with tinsel and lights.

Except for the foliage—wildflowers grew abundantly, and also fruit trees and the blazing red blossoms of the tree they call the "flamboyant"—and the soft clouds of tiny pastel birds who fluttered off as I approached, the feeling was more of a sleepy small town in rural America than of the South Pacific. There was a Catholic church and a cemetery with crosses. A teenager with his girl friend rode past on

a motor scooter. The music emanating from cassette recorders and radios was mostly disco. Finally, at one house, and just as the road was becoming steeper than my sea legs liked, I heard the strains of "Cast Your Fate to the Wind," which seemed a good enough excuse to turn and retrace my steps.

I had thought to visit with Thomas and Luke later in the afternoon, but they were just ending their work for the day when I passed them and asked that I go with them then.

At their house, which commands a spectacular view of the bay—a view I would not even attempt to translate into Southern California's astronomical property values—I met their mother, a short, smiling lady of indeterminate age, who was dandling a baby on her ample lap. I ate some fruit and signed a guest book labeled "Thomas's Yacht Club." I was shown Thomas's room, in which there were two guitars, several portraits of Christ, and a large Air France calendar depicting snow scenes in the Alps. And I thumbed through the family photograph album.

This last activity is never a chore for me. I am among the best of audiences for pictures of other people's trips and lives, which have often been the source of unexpectedly useful information.

As I looked at the pictures of smiling natives, usually but not always dressed in Western clothes, with several of the men in military uniform, Thomas told me that he was nineteen and eagerly looking forward to traveling to Papeete soon to start his own military service. He said he was one of thirteen children, yet the family was obviously prosperous. His father works in construction in Taiohae Bay, going over by boat on Sunday evening and returning about noon on Saturday. There are seven brothers and six sisters, but only four still live at home. Most of the others have moved to Tahiti or New Caledonia. Several of the girls in what were typical wedding portraits were quite attractive, and near the end of the album there was a picture of a girl in the uniform of a UTA stewardess who by any standard would be called beautiful.

I sat there in the cool breeze that blew through the house, overlooking my tiny yawl anchored in the bay far below, and contemplated for a moment how paradise, like prophets, is never honored in its own country or its own home. New Yorkers fly to Colorado to ski. Charlie endured ten Denver winters to sail to the Marquesas. Thomas hangs Alpine pictures on his wall. And Fayaway has taken off for the bright lights and good times of the city.

Upon my return to Taiohae I learned of one other rather morbid circumstance that might have befallen Fayaway, if she is not in fact Thomas's sister. In three days at Taipi I saw a grand total of two vehicles on the road: the headlights of the car that first night and the motor scooter during my walk. Yet somehow Taipi had just managed to take a giant leap into the twentieth century with its first-ever fatal automobile accident. So if she hasn't moved yet, poor Fayaway stands an increasingly good chance of being run over, an ignoble end to any man's dream.

When over our drinks, I told Charlie of my conclusions he was more than a little glum. He talked about sailing to the other islands, south to Ua Pou and Hiva Oa, but clearly his heart was not in it. He had been there two months and was really quite depressed. It's enough, he said, to make a man go back to work.

Such reasoning escaped me, but then it would. I was soon sailing for Papeete. I promised to send Charlie a telegram if I caught up with Fayaway.

5

The Last Six Miles

As darkness fell on Friday, January 12, 1979, I hove to just east of Venus Point, not more than six miles from Papeete, Tahiti. At 4:00 P.M. on Tuesday, January 16, after countless swampings and a final thirty-five hours continuously at the tiller, I sailed through Papeete Pass.

Until that final—or what I so mistakenly thought would be final—night before making port, the passage from Nuku Hiva had been so uneventful that I had not planned to write about it. The entries in my log from January 2, when I raised anchor and sailed out of Taíohae Bay under blue skies, to January 8, when 420 miles to the southwest I sighted Takaroa in the Tuamotu Archipelago, were almost identical: "Sunny. Hot. Slow." The wind blew steadily at seven knots; our speed hovered around three knots; our daily runs were a predictable sixty to seventy miles. I sailed *Chidiack Tichbome* not just to make good the best course to Tahiti, but also to take advantage of the shade from her sails, jibing at midday from a starboard broad reach to a port one. With the sun more than eighty degrees above the horizon, there was nothing I could do about those scorching noon hours except cover my head with a towel, stretch out on the floorboards, and try to doze though the worst of the heat. The hats that washed overboard between San Diego and Nuku Hiva—and irreplaceable in Nuku Hiva—I sorely missed. It was, in fact, this inability to replace in Nuku Hiva so many of the things I had lost or damaged that caused me to sail so soon for Tahiti. The

Marquesas Islands are lovely if you come fully equipped with wine, women, song, and all the other necessities of life. Should your supplies fail, only wine is available locally—and it is either of inferior quality or very expensive or both.

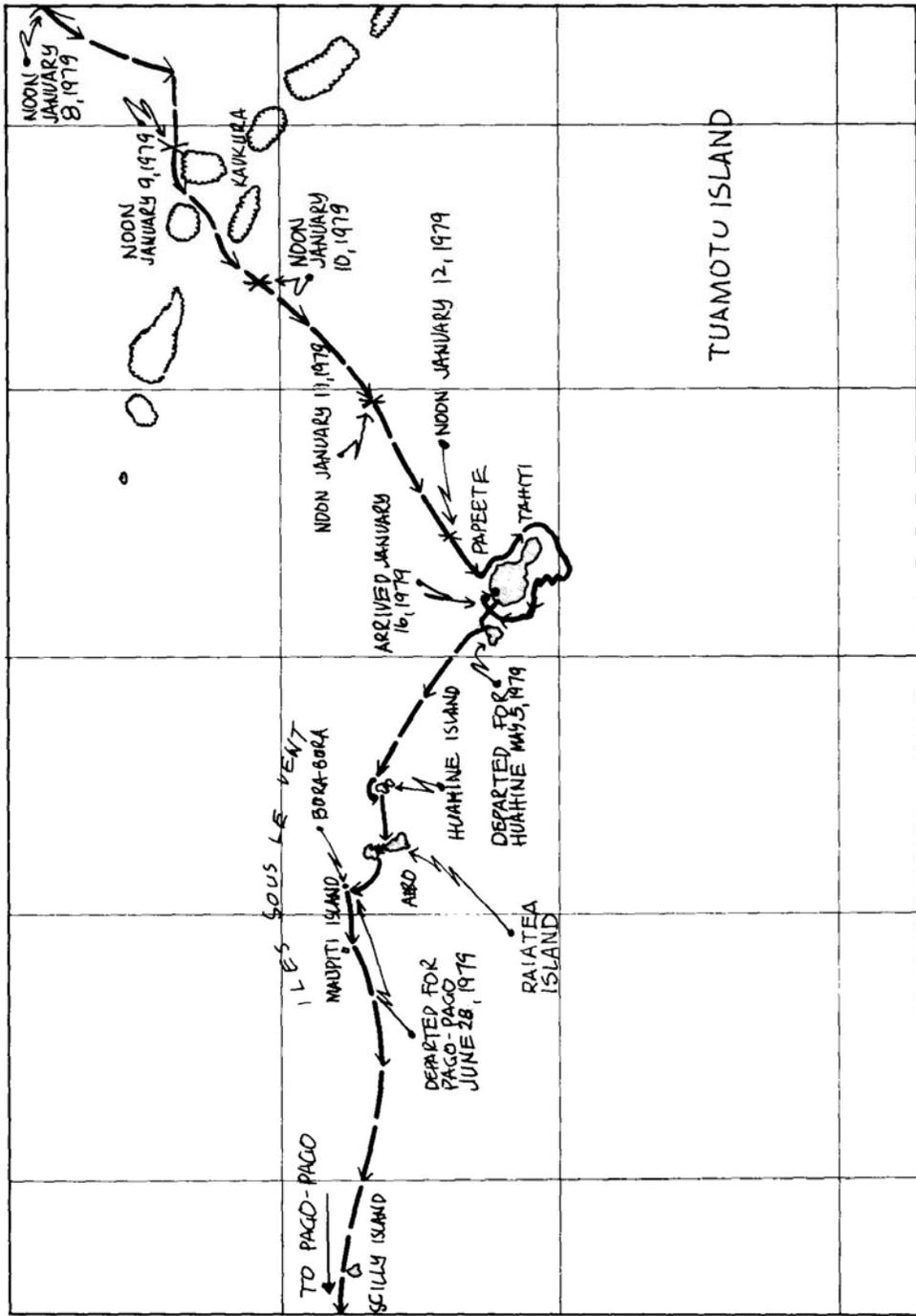
The Tuamotus are known as the Low or Dangerous Archipelago. There are more than eighty islands in the group, covering a northwest-southeast band of ocean two to three hundred miles wide and more than a thousand miles long. They are all coral atolls, barely rising above the surface of the sea, with nothing on them higher than a palm tree, visible under the best of conditions for less than five miles. And the entire region has a reputation for strong, unpredictable currents.

By sailing west until you reach the longitude of Tahiti and then turning due south, you can sail around the end of the archipelago. That is the course I followed on my first visit to Tahiti, when I had to sail there unexpectedly for repairs without a detailed chart. This time, however, I was fully equipped with charts and determined, unless the weather deteriorated, to sail directly through—although the painful story of a sailor I met in Moorea in 1976 who claimed to have plotted a perfect five-star fix one sunset, only to find himself on the reef at Rangiroa before dawn, was vivid in my memory. There was even a remote thought that if everything went perfectly, I might stop at one of the islands for a day or two.

I have come to think of the Tuamotus as a room with several front and back doors. My original plan was to sail toward the islands of Manihi and Ahe; but the wind kept me farther east, and my morning sights on January 8, which indicated I should be near Takaroa, were verified when a tiny irregularity on the horizon satisfactorily became palm trees, around noon.

It was pleasant to have something to look at that afternoon as we sailed a few miles off palm-covered islets, first of Takaroa and then of the neighboring atoll of Takapoto. But as nightfall came, I faced some difficult hours.

We were through the front door, fortunate to have made landfall under such fine conditions and to know by the proximity of land our precise position at sunset. But now we were sailing into a very dangerous watery room. Ahead of us there were more reefs than there were gaps between them. The closest, Aratika, was fifty miles away and, as the wind increased and backed to the north, directly on our course. Without the variable of unknown currents, I would have worried much less. The problem was twofold: avoid running into anything that night,



yet plan a course that would provide a landfall the following day. To sail too far south was to risk hitting Aratika; to turn too soon to the west was to risk hitting other atolls in that direction or not to sight anything the next day and be left stumbling around in the darkness a second night. I decided to continue south for about thirty miles, then jibe to the west on a course that would, I hoped, bring Apataki Island into sight in the morning.

For once the wind cooperated and we had the best—in retrospect, the only good—sailing of the entire passage, making a steady four knots beneath a partially cloud covered sky. I slept fitfully, peering into the darkness every thirty minutes or so, until 2:00 A.M., when I made the turn to the west.

Nothing went crunch for the rest of the night, and dawn brought one of the more noteworthy events in my years at sea: I caught my first fish. This requires some explanation beyond the obvious admission that I am not a fisherman. On previous voyages I had not even bothered to carry fishing gear, but before I left San Diego this time a friend gave me a fishing kit. On the passage from San Diego to Nuku Hiva I was kept sufficiently busy staying alive and did not use it; but on the second slow day out of Nuku Hiva, I set a couple of lures and hand lines over the stern. I was quite astonished that morning of January 9 to find a twenty-pound tuna on one of those lines. This may not be much to a real fisherman, but it was quite a treat to me. And I caught another, smaller fish two days later. It was all almost enough to make one start taking this fishing business seriously.

I navigate on sun sights, common sense, and suspicion—what else can one do when the chart is covered with notes warning that all these islands may not be where they have been drawn, apparently at the whim of some junior clerk in Washington, D.C., and based, all too often it seems, even in this space age, upon the most recent survey of 1879? So, I had my second pleasant experience of the morning when at ten thirty the palm fronds of Apataki appeared just where I wanted them to, off the port bow.

Apataki is shaped roughly like a rectangle and has two passes into the lagoon, one at the northwest corner and one at the southwest corner near the only village. For fourteen miles I sailed along an almost continuous pristine white-sand beach beyond which stood a green band of palms. It was my first sight of what were effectively deserted islands, and the temptation to linger awhile was strong. That I did not was owing to several reasons, among them a thundercloud that made a brief

appearance just as I was off the northwest pass at three thirty that afternoon, my lack of a reliably functioning stove, and, ironically in view of what later happened, my desire to get clear of the Tuamotus and on to Tahiti while the weather remained good. Without a radio to receive any weather warnings, I felt very vulnerable.

Apataki is not one of the back doors to the Tuamotus as much as it is the key to a back door. There were still two more atolls to avoid that night; but with Apataki in sight, plotting a safe course was not difficult. By midnight I knew we were either well beyond the last hazard with Tahiti 180 miles ahead, or we were hopelessly lost. Optimistically I discounted the latter possibility.

On Thursday I finally permitted myself to speculate about how many more nights at sea? With luck we could be in before Friday sunset, but an arrival Saturday morning seemed more likely, particularly when the wind continued to back, the sky grew cloudier, and the seas, rougher.

A single early-morning sun sight on January 11 was to be the last of the passage. Finding an island thirty miles long and 7,000 feet high by dead reckoning from a distance of only 180 miles should not be particularly difficult, but I did wish I still had a radio direction finder, which would have enabled me to home in on Venus Point.

Conditions continued to deteriorate, until by noon Friday we were sailing close-hauled with reefed sails on course 235° against eighteen knots of wind and four-foot waves, and taking a lot of water over the bow. It was unpleasant but not serious, so I kept *Chidiack* to it, while I tried in vain to will more substance to various island-shaped clouds than they were able to sustain.

At last in midafternoon a firm silhouette became and remained distinct on the horizon. Tahiti was safely in view. And as we sailed closer, I recognized Venus Point and hove to a few miles east of it at sunset.

It was the wrong decision made for the right reasons. Although I knew the pass fairly well, having been to Tahiti twice before, I do not like to enter harbors at night. Obviously a storm was approaching, but that provided even more reason to wait until daylight. Once, partially because of an approaching squall, I almost wrecked my last boat at Papeete Pass. Visibility could be reduced to a boat length in seconds, or the reef along the north coast instantly become a lee shore. After all, I told myself, one more night at sea does not matter and you have only six miles to go. Sleep awhile, get started again early, and we'll be in Papeete in time to check for mail before the post office closes at 10:00 A.M.

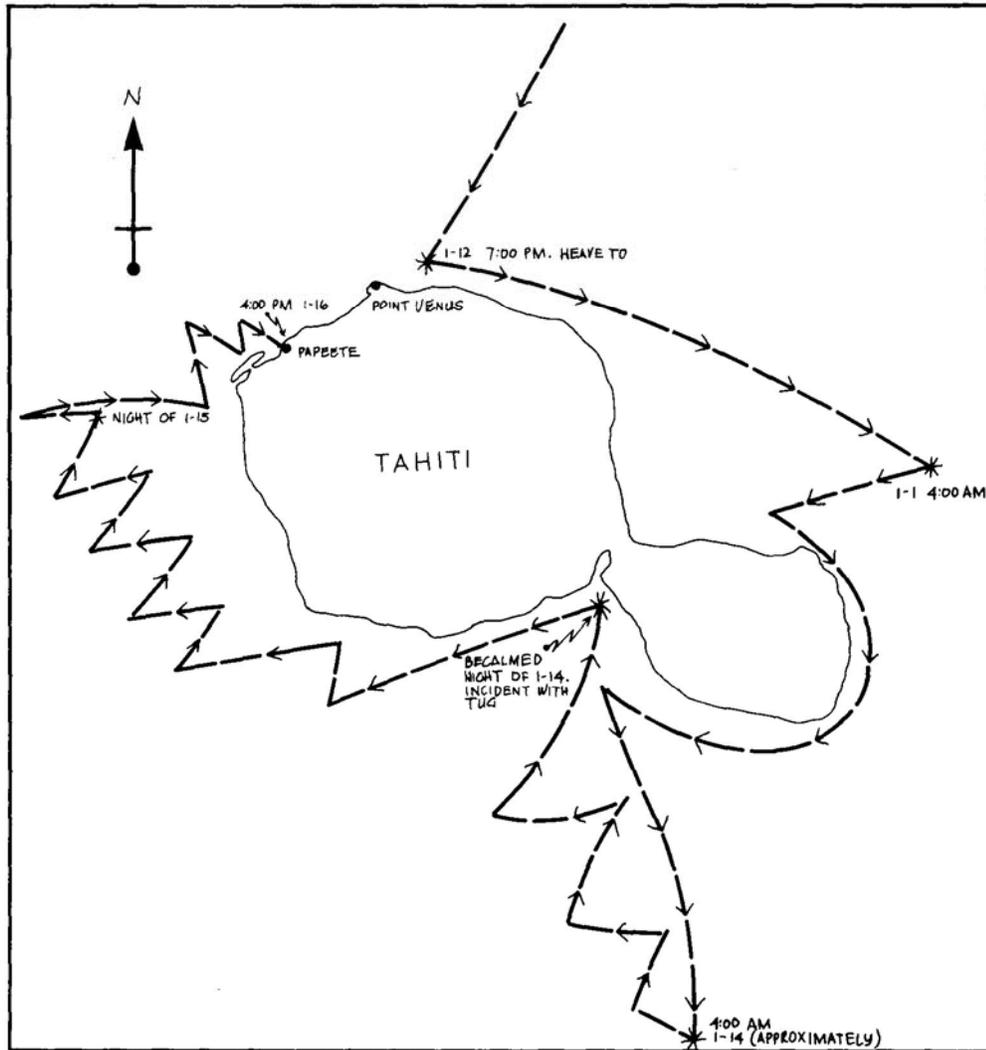
That the universe was once again not to adhere to my plans became evident at eleven o'clock, when I was awakened by a flood. I had hove to by lowering the mainsail, trimming the mizzen flat, and backing the jib: standard procedure. But a gust had come along powerful enough to heel *Chidiock* over so far even under such reduced sail that what should have been a drain on the starboard seat had become instead a treacherous intake. When I located the source of the flow—and one does not have a great deal of time to move from sleep to action, certainly not enough to form a committee to investigate the situation—I furled the jib and pumped *Chidiock* more or less dry.

Venus Point Light still winked at us from the same relative bearing, and other lights upon the shore appeared unchanged. Then, in a moment, all the lights went out, heavy rain fell, and *Chidiock* began going backwards very rapidly.

The little yawl heaves to well under mizzen alone, and we had an ocean of sea room to the east, so there was no immediate danger; and as I expected the squall did not last long. But when it passed, Venus Point was obviously more distant, and the wind, although less strong than in the squall, held at more than twenty knots. Perhaps had I raised sail we could still have made it into Papeete, but I thought then—and still think—it best to wait until dawn. Surely we would make port sometime Saturday, even if the post office had already closed. After all, we had only eight miles to go.

At 4:00 A.M., in pitch darkness, when neither shore lights nor stars were visible, I struggled for half an hour to make myself a cup of coffee. The stove, jury-rigged with tape and waxed string in Nuku Hiva, proved equal to the challenge of preparing what I expected to be my last hot food before making port. In this, at least, I was correct. I had drunk less than a third of the cup, however, before a wave swept over us and destroyed the rest. For some reason, I have found it difficult to maintain aboard *Chidiock* the stoic silence I managed on earlier vessels; and so, in vivid images, I told the ocean just what I thought of it, then raised the jib; and we began pounding northwest toward where Tahiti—now an uncertain distance away in the darkness—must lie.

I had no fear of sailing blindly onto the reef. We would be lucky, I thought, to sight land again by 7:00 A.M., which, as it happened, was exactly when I did see land, or at least a glimpse of it, through the clouds before another squall hit. That glimpse gave me the impression that we had fought back to the same position where we had first hove to. This raised my spirits, until the next break in the clouds revealed a long stretch of coast miles north of us. It was not Venus Point I had



seen but some other point far to the south, probably Point Tautira. Papeete was not six miles away, but twenty-eight, all of them to windward. For the first time I began to doubt that we would be safely at anchor that day. And then the storm began in earnest—apparently everything thus far had only been in the nature of a warmup. And I

proceeded on a reluctant circumnavigation of Tahiti the hard way.

Chidiack could not sail against the forty- to fifty-knot winds of the next squall, so I let her run off under jib and mizzen, thinking—hoping, anyway—that we might find some refuge around the end of the island.

It was the fastest ride I have ever had aboard *Chidiack*, indeed, much the fastest I hope ever to have. The boat-speed indicator has a maximum reading of ten knots, and often the needle held there, not just when we were surfing down waves, but for sustained periods as well. *Chidiack* made a couple of attempts to broach but responded each time to the tiller before matters got seriously out of hand. Finally the 4,000-foot mountains began to block the wind, the sky cleared somewhat, and we sailed into an area of wonderfully smooth water directly off the reef.

As was to happen frequently during the coming days, I found myself an indifferent spectator to a scene of great beauty. Green mountains; waterfalls—on Monday I was to count eleven waterfalls visible at once; misty, mysterious valleys. The picturesque held no charm for me. My only thoughts were of relief that *Chidiack* had somehow once again held together, and of how to muster the energy to pump her out.

When patches of blue sky began to appear, I began to hope that the worst was over. Around noon I ate the last handful of raisins. We had gone from fifty knots of wind to five, which presently lured me into raising the main. Under full canvas *Chidiack* gurgled gently along, swinging wide to avoid the corner of the reef. I hardened up the sheets, and once again we headed northwest for Papeete, this time, however, up the western side of the island.

Until 4:00 P.M. we made good progress, but then with less than fifteen miles to go a sudden gust laid *Chidiack* far over, and before I could release the sheets the little yawl was full of water, fuller even than she had been during the knockdown on the earlier passage.

By the time I had finishing bailing, the wind was shrieking at more than fifty knots and the waves were steep and breaking. I knew there was nothing to do but let *Chidiack* ride them hove to under mizzen, although I did set out a sea anchor to try and reduce our drift. To this end the sea anchor was not noticeably effective. The centerboard was fully lowered, but it did not help much either; and *Chidiack* was blown backwards so fast that her stern developed a bow wave.

With nightfall coming on—a night I had once been certain would find me clean and dry and relaxed in Papeete Harbor—I found myself wet and cold and depressed. I was not hungry, surprisingly, for I had

eaten nothing all day except the few sips of coffee and the handful of raisins. I turned my face once again into the wind just to make certain that it was truly hopeless, before reluctantly wrapping myself in the tarp and lying down. I wondered if *Chidiok* would survive the night and, if she did, how far away the dawn would find us.

One of the many useful facts my voyage has established is that when a man is sufficiently tired he can sleep anywhere, even aboard an eighteen-foot open boat in a full gale; and I fell into a fitful slumber until midnight. The wind continued to shriek, but the blinding rain had stopped by then and most of the eight-foot waves hissed harmlessly beneath us, although *Chidiok* persisted in trying alternately to stand on her bow and on her stern. The clothes beneath my foul-weather gear were soaking wet, and I resolved to try and change them, although this meant a prolonged struggle. Somehow, by a minor miracle, the entire procedure went as planned: and with at least momentarily dry clothes on, I found myself hungry and ate a can of chicken before again managing to sleep.

Sunday was a repetition of Saturday. We would fight our way to the northeast until Tahiti again became visible; then a squall would hit—I was becoming very adept at heaving to—and we would be blown helplessly backwards in the general direction of Rarotonga in the Cook Islands, some 600 miles away. More than once I ruefully thought that I might find it faster to sail there than the twenty or thirty miles to windward to Papeete. But Papeete I had set out to reach and Papeete it would be, if not today, then perhaps tomorrow.

Late Sunday afternoon saw another partial clearing and *Chidiok* was able to make good distance to the north. When the island once again came into view, I was elated to see what I thought was the point of land on which the airport is located. Another silhouette through the clouds, I concluded, was the neighboring island of Moorea. We had not been blown as far off as I had feared. And once again Papeete was less than ten miles away—though now ten miles to the northeast rather than ten miles northwest, as it had been forty-eight hours earlier. And once again I permitted myself to hope we would be in that night.

But as we sailed closer, the compass bearings to various points were wrong, and the Korean fishing boat wrecked on the reef and clearly visible in 1974 and 1976 did not appear. Neither of these omens bothered me particularly. The bearings would be wrong if I were misjudging our distance from the coast, and the fishing boat could have broken up in the past two years. (As I later learned, it had.)

Something was definitely very odd, though, about the channel between Moorea and Tahiti. The islands were continuing to overlap, when from our perspective as we sailed closer they should be moving apart. The explanation appeared from the crest of a high wave. There was no opening between "Moorea" and "Tahiti." They were connected by a low isthmus. For a moment my tired mind could not comprehend how this could be, and then I knew that what I was looking at was not Moorea and Tahiti but the two parts of Tahiti itself, and the point of land was not by the airport but by the isthmus at Taravao. I had made the same mistake twice from different sides of the island in two days. Attribute it to whatever you wish: congenital stupidity is probably most appropriate, but I prefer wishful thinking and exhaustion.

Then the wind died completely, and for the rest of the night we were becalmed. Even this night, though, was not to be without its hazards.

Every hour, as is my custom, good weather or bad, I awakened and looked about. We were in close to the land; the boom of surf on the reef a mile away was clearly audible. At 1:00 A.M. I saw the lights of a ship offshore to the south of us. Having no lights lit myself, I watched him until I was certain he would pass well outside of us, and then closed my eyes. Twenty minutes later they opened to stare up at his running lights. A native smiled down at me from the bridge of a tugboat a few yards away, and simultaneously *Chidiock* bobbed violently in her wake.

My heart beat wildly: much, much too close. Then I wondered, "A *tug* that close?" I turned south and there was her tow, another tug, perhaps a hundred feet long, bearing down on us. And because the lead boat had swung far in to come over to satisfy his curiosity—or, as I assume, to try to grab himself a free boat in the belief that *Chidiock* had blown from the beach during the storm—the tow was swinging even further. There was still no wind and no time to set sail anyway. Fortunately, in my premature preparations to make port I had unlashed one set of oars, which I quickly put to use.

Time is, of course, an uneven medium. Those few seconds seemed infinite. I row. *Chidiock* slowly gathers way. The sinister shape of the towed tug looms ever closer, swings ever further toward us. I row. The cable between the ships jerks taut, droops into the ocean, jerks taut again. I can see individual drops of water being flung aside. I row. Then she is upon us. Even at that last moment I expect to be hit and fatuously consider unshipping the vulnerable bumpkin from the stern—as if *Chidiock* will have any stern left. Silently the tow swings past,

only inches away. I study her rivets one by one. And then she is gone.

Without making any claim to possessing special courage, I can state that at the height of the storm the preceding night I was not frightened. I was able to sleep even though I doubted we would survive, because I viewed such a prospect fatalistically and because I knew that I had done everything that could be done. Now on a glassy sea and beneath a star-filled sky, I slumped over the oars and was frightened enough for a hundred storms. The tugs had disappeared around the point long before my breathing returned to normal.

At 5:00 A.M. a breeze blew out from the land and, munching another handful of nuts—practically my only food the last two days, I settled myself at the helm for "the duration": barring another flat calm, I was going to stay at it until we got in or I was absolutely, totally, completely exhausted.

I have seldom made such a decision in many thousands of miles of sailing. The last time was in a hundred-plus knots of wind south of Australia in February of 1976. Now I was faced with a seemingly much less serious situation, but one that I was determined to bring to an end. I was already very tired and thought I should make my move before the storm slowly ground me down further. Also, the proximity of land was itself a danger. Then, my food supply was low—the swamping on Saturday had ruined all my rice and I was left with only a few rusty cans of chicken and tuna and soup that were at all edible without cooking; I was even down to my last jar of peanuts. I was bothered by a swiftly spreading skin infection on my hands and legs. And finally I had simply had enough of being "tossed and driven on the deep blue sea," as my favorite sea chantey so quaintly puts it.

For the next thirty-five hours I remained at the helm—except when bailing—through countless squalls and swappings that it would be repetitive to describe, and which, for that matter, have become confused in my memory. After the first three or four, the cockpit area was officially renamed "Lake Chidioc," and a lifeguard was posted, who also took data for tide and current studies.

The wind did not reach the fifty-plus-knot fury of Saturday night but regularly gusted above forty knots and regularly knocked *Chidioc* down, even under jib and mizzen. Once when the jib sheet jammed, we reached a new record high-water mark—one from which I feared we could not recover—yet recover we did and I had still to discover what the builders consider to be "a fully swamped boat," though God knows I had tried.

Slowly, very slowly, often at a rate of less than a mile an hour, we

made progress to the north. By noon the point of Maraa was abeam. And an hour later, after one of our knockdowns, a Papeete fishing boat powered over to offer us a tow. Although I very much wanted to accept, I could not bring myself to do so, and watched as they circled, waved, and sped off. My heart fell a little at the knowledge that they would be in before the next squall.

There was no problem in staying awake that night: more rain fell on me than on Noah. Part of the time Moorea—the real Moorea—was in view abeam, and occasionally the lights of Papeete—the real Papeete—were visible to the east. But every time I tried to sail toward them, heavy wind and rain closed in and I had to tack back west.

Tuesday morning found the storm weakening; although it was to resume on Wednesday for another five days. The wind, however, was to give no quarter. Now as we tried to sail due east to Papeete, the wind veered that way too, and we had to beat our way along the reef to Papeete Pass and even to the anchorage, once we were inside the harbor. Headwinds every moment, in every direction we tried to sail from the first sight of Tahiti four days earlier.

Chidiok is easy to anchor, but I botched my first attempt. For so long my only thought had been "Get to Papeete" that when I finally did so, I had nothing left. The rode did not run free, and before I could clear the snarl, my anchor had caught on the chain of a large ketch. Fortunately the owner proved understanding, and I rested there for a while, until with the help of a few people from other yachts I managed to get *Chidiok* temporarily settled. A few minutes later some fellow San Diegans, Dave and Patty Mancini, rowed out and saved my life with a bowl of chili.

That storm was among the worst to hit Tahiti for years. It blew fifty-four knots in Papeete Harbor and, according to the New Zealand skipper of one of the boats that rode it out at Moorea, a maximum of sixty-seven knots in Cook's Bay there. More graphically, it blew away one of the two massive buoys marking the pass through the reef at Papeete—a cause of some concern to me on my entry; washed out a bridge on Moorea; and tossed logs from Papeete Harbor onto the Boulevard Pomare—a distance at normal high tide of fifteen yards. At sea I noticed, too, a tremendous amount of debris—trees, clothing, parts of thatched roofs, coconuts, chairs—which had been blown off-shore.

It was an epochal experience. Everyone in this part of the Pacific

remembers where he was during that storm. One heavily built thirty-two-foot ketch that left Nuku Hiva two days after I did ran in front of it until he was some 200 miles south of Tahiti, and limped in a week and two days after I did. And another single-hander came in from Hawaii and immediately put his boat up for sale, lowering the price \$1,000 a day until he found a buyer.

For myself, I never considered selling out, but I had seen the limits at which *Chidiack* can be driven to windward and could visualize more clearly the conditions that will almost certainly lead to disaster if she is caught on a lee shore by too strong winds. Such a disaster can, of course, come to any sailing craft; it just can come a little sooner for *Chidiack*. One partial solution may be a more efficient sea anchor; perhaps a para-anchor, which opens like a parachute underwater and is said to reduce leeway dramatically.

In the safety, if not tranquility, of the harbor—Papeete Harbor is far from tranquil—I recalled with amusement my distant concern that the passage from Nuku Hiva to Papeete would prove so uneventful that I would have nothing to write about. And I vowed that if I ever did make such a simple, straightforward, uneventful passage aboard *Chidiack Tichborne*, I most certainly would write about it. The novelty would be refreshing. However, I feared that such a feat might prove more difficult than something comparatively easy, like sailing alone around Cape Horn.

6

Papeete 79

While I merely contemplated blowing up the Papeete post office, Charlie Ching actually went ahead and did it, which is perhaps the clearest possible proof that everything is up to date in Papeete. They have everything in paradise—all the modern conveniences, even terrorism. However, Mr. Ching's avowed motivation varied somewhat from my own. He was interested in promoting the Tahitian independence movement and I was simply distressed by inefficiency. To some extent Mr. Ching furthered both our causes, but at a price—a sentence of fifteen years hard labor in France, which seemed to me—and I expect to him—somewhat high. People did talk more about independence; and, even better, the service in the new post office improved. For the time being the post office was quartered in one of the new shopping centers in Papeete. Postal employees had about one-third their former space and were about three times as efficient. Part of this efficiency was due to technology. Papeete is now linked to the rest of the world through satellite communication, which makes the placing of a telephone call to the United States a matter of a few minutes rather than the day-long ordeal it was in the past. But I could not help wondering what the service would be like if they had, say, only one-sixth of their former space.

More than is true of most places I have visited, one's conclusions about Papeete depend upon how one approaches it. The first time I sailed there, I hated it. That was in 1974, when I was forced in for

repairs during my first attempt at sailing alone around Cape Horn. The second time was in 1976, and I loved it. Cape Horn and a solo circumnavigation were behind me. I was in the midst of those idyllic early days of love with Suzanne. And I was working well, writing every morning on a manuscript that was later published as the book *Storm Passage*. This time, my reaction to Papeete fell somewhere between those extremes. I came off the sea after what turned out to be the only severe storm of that entire rainy season, extremely grateful just to be alive. The last entry in my log for that passage is "Almost dying is a hard way to make a living." But since then my attitude had been rather detached. Papeete is convenient in some ways, irritating in many others, generally interesting, almost always terribly expensive, and, most of all, changed, much more changed from 1976 to 1979 than it was between 1974 and 1976.

Papeete is the administrative center for all of French Polynesia, which is composed of about 130 islands in five archipelagoes, covering thousands of square miles of ocean, but with a total land mass of only 1,544 square miles and a total population of only about 150,000. Tahiti, by far the largest island in the territory although only about thirty-five miles long, has one-fourth of the total land mass and more than one-half of the total population. Papeete, located at the northwest corner of the island, itself has 60,000 residents.

Even from the sea, change was evident, when all the new construction on the hillsides behind the harbor—condominiums, of course—confused me about the location of the pass through the reef. And then, ashore, there was the scorched and scaffolded post-office building.

I am in no way qualified to speculate on whether French Polynesia, or, as is more likely, the Society Islands alone, will gain their independence from France in the near future; but unquestionably, with or without Charlie Ching, independence was now talked about throughout all of this part of the Pacific much more than it had been in the past. One often heard "Independence in five to ten years," although no reasons for that particular time frame were ever offered. And even up in Nuku Hiva in the Marquesas Islands, where the French were building an airfield equipped to handle military jets, improving the wharf facilities and the roads, and installing public electricity, the residents speculated that their island was being prepared as a fallback position from which the French could govern the other, more sparsely populated island groups, particularly the Tuamotus (part of which they

use for testing missiles and nuclear weapons), if the Societies do go their own way.

That the post office should have moved into one of the two new shopping centers was probably inevitable. Almost everything else in Papeete seemed to have moved too. Papeete had, in fact, gone Beverly Hills—except that Papeete is the more expensive—and in just the past two and a half years about half the downtown shops had moved from one location to another. Only the side streets and the cluttered Chinese markets catering primarily to the natives remained unchanged. And perhaps that increasing contrast between the high-priced jewelry and clothing stores of the Vaima shopping center and those tiny Chinese stores only a block away was one of Papeete's charms.

Tourists told me that Tahiti is only a little more expensive than other places they have visited. I found that difficult to accept, but then I am not in the habit of spending seventy to a hundred dollars a night for a hotel room anywhere.

To those of us who were there for more than a few days, prices were an unending topic of discussion, awe, and occasional terror. This was nothing new—I had felt the same way in 1974—but given the decline of the dollar and worldwide inflation, it was all now even more so.

When I had nothing better to do, I wandered through the hotels and shops, examining prices. My favorite specimens: a paperback copy of *The Thorn Birds*, \$12.66; a Kodak Instamatic camera, \$120.00; a can of Campbell's Chunky chicken soup, \$3.40; ordinary fingernail clippers, \$20.00. None of the foregoing is a misprint, although subsequently I did see fingernail clippers at a more reasonable price in another shop. And while these are admittedly extremes, I could as easily have listed many other only slightly less outrageous examples from my large collection.

In general most things cost two to three times as much as they do in the U.S., and Tahiti has a well-deserved reputation among sailors as being the most expensive port in the world. The one fortunate exception to the rule was excellent beef flown in from New Zealand. A good steak cost about \$1.30 in the market, less than a can of stew or a dozen eggs, and constituted the primary source of protein in most of our diets. When I got tired of steak, or for special celebrations, I splurged by buying a can of soup.

I have never fully understood the economics of Tahiti, where prices are so high and so many people have so little cash income. A local resident offered a partial explanation by noting the introduction of that



Everything is up-to-date—and expensive—in paradise. Vaima Shopping Center, Papeete, Tahiti. —w. CHILES

cornerstone of modern Western civilization: credit. It was still possible, he said, for a native to live away from Papeete on the fish he could catch in the lagoon and the fruits that fall from the trees. Until 1978 a Tahitian might come into Papeete and see a record player he liked, costing, perhaps, \$1,000. So, he would get a job until he had saved \$1,000, buy the record player, and quit the job. In 1979 when he went into the store, the merchant would tell him that he need not pay the entire \$1,000 at once, that indeed he could keep \$500 in his pocket and take home not just the record player but a color television as well. (Yes, they have television in Tahiti. "The Muppet Show" is very big.) All to be paid for in just eighteen easy monthly payments. And presto, you have another fully employed Tahitian.

There is an ironic contrast between members of a society in this early stage of credit and those of us on boats, who had fought our way into and out of debt and left our credit cards far behind. To most of us, debts were chains to be avoided like the plague.

This influx of credit-financed goods was responsible for some other

changes around Papeete. There were many more cars, motorcycles, and motorbikes. The traffic jams were worse, particularly on rainy Friday afternoons. And there was a new freeway, which gave the locals greater scope to develop their maniacal driving styles, based, it seems, upon each individual's certain belief that he—and he alone—holds the right of way by divine decree. The crunch of sheet metal against sheet metal was almost as common as the boom of surf on the reef, and often louder.

Several other triumphs—if that is the correct word—of modern civilization could be seen. Many Tahitian men, generally clean-shaven before, sported mustaches, sideburns, and beards. They wore short-sleeve shirts more than they did tank tops. Their swim suits were Californian surfer trunks. Their feet were covered with warm-up shoes rather than sandals, which were forbidden at the Rolls Royce Club and at most other local discos. Skateboards were omnipresent. Even the physical-fitness fad had made its sweaty way to paradise. Each morning and evening found the sidewalk along the shore crowded with natives in jogging suits, plodding optimistically along in a doomed attempt to work off that last round of Hinano, the favorite local beer.

The painter Paul Gauguin, totally ignored here in his own lifetime, might be amused to see how well he is remembered now in Papeete. Named after him are a school, a street, a museum, several shops, and a very expensive restaurant—in one of the best hotels, of course—where if he were alive he could never afford to eat.

Several of my favorite places during past visits were no longer the same. My favorite ice-cream parlor did not live up to expectation. My favorite pizza spot had changed its menu. And my favorite swimming beach, Maeva Beach, was no longer so pleasant.

I was surprised to find that there had not been an increase in the number of yachts in port, although the type of boat and crew had changed. For whatever reasons, there were many more single-handers than ever before. And for obvious economic reasons, there was a definite trend to smaller boats. Most of the people who cruise are not rich. They are middle-class and have made sacrifices to fulfill personal dreams. As boat prices have skyrocketed, they have simply decided to buy smaller boats rather than work until they can afford the craft they actually prefer. Only one of us there was: *a.* brave, *b.* foolish, *c.* both of the above (choose one) enough to have sailed across the ocean in an open hull under twenty feet. But many had made good, seamanlike passages in stock boats about twenty-six feet long.

Upon his arrival in Papeete, the sailor is met with official courtesy and by a very unfortunate change—increased regulation. On both my previous visits I knew of several boats that arrived with impoverished crews. No longer. In 1979 you had to post a bond of about \$500 per person, returnable upon your departure from French Polynesia, and have in your possession an additional \$350 per person for each month of your visa. While these regulations varied almost daily, the carefree voyager had better have about \$1,500 in his jeans before he would be allowed to linger in paradise for more than a single month.

Papeete is a land of blossoms. Frangipani, bougainvillaea, fleshy canna, tiare. Red, pink, yellow, white, purple. Flowers cover hillsides, fall on sidewalks, are worn in leis and crushed carelessly beneath feet. Even in the sea, brightly colored fish are flowers to the reef, while on the beach young girls bloom. And everywhere the air is rich with sweet erotic scents.

In 1976 I noticed a tiny old man peddling through this riotous abundance. Almost every morning I would see him on his battered blue bicycle along the waterfront, angrily ringing a bell when anyone strayed into his path. He was French, and I wondered how he had come to be here, how he lived and what he thought. But my solitude and silence were as great as his; and he always seemed afraid, so I never spoke.

Papeete is not a place in which to be alone, and after a while I was not. Yet whenever I saw him, even after Suzanne joined me from New Zealand, I continued to wonder about him and feel that in some way we were alike.

Often during my voyage here this time, I thought of that old man on his blue bicycle and resolved at least to try to make his acquaintance. But he was gone—dead, perhaps, or moved away. Now I would never know.

Another mystery had remained. I visited again the stone memorial to the Tahitian war dead of World War I. It stands on the Avenue Bruat well back from the sidewalk, and almost no tourists ever see it. Each name on an unexpectedly long list is neatly inscribed, though they are now being erased by rain and time. I read some of the names there by that quiet street with its view of the ocean through the trees and Orohena's peak, lost in the clouds. From this, to the mud of Flanders fields? From splashing in a lagoon, to freezing to death in the winter of 1917? Or dying of measles? Or being gassed? Or shelled at Verdun?—which is mentioned on a small metal plaque at the base of the

monument. I tried to imagine the patriotic fervor that must have swept over the island. France was more than just twenty hours away by jet. It was another world, another planet, months away by ship: boys saying their good-byes to families in hundreds of thatched huts; a great celebration as the troop carrier steamed out the pass; expectation, excitement, dreams of glory; and then reality—shocking, incredible, incomprehensible, horrifying reality. What must they have thought when they first disembarked, first saw the front trenches, first heard a machine gun or an artillery barrage, when they were hit, as they died? I have asked several Tahitians what it was like here then, but no one seems to know; and no one else seems to care.

It has been said that everyone since Captain Cook has been too late for Tahiti, and I do not want to seem nostalgic for the "good old days" of only a few years ago. For although my favorite beach was no longer as I remembered, I found another, and a new source of ice cream. And I even learned to live without pizza—although I must confess that there were times when I would have given almost anything for just one



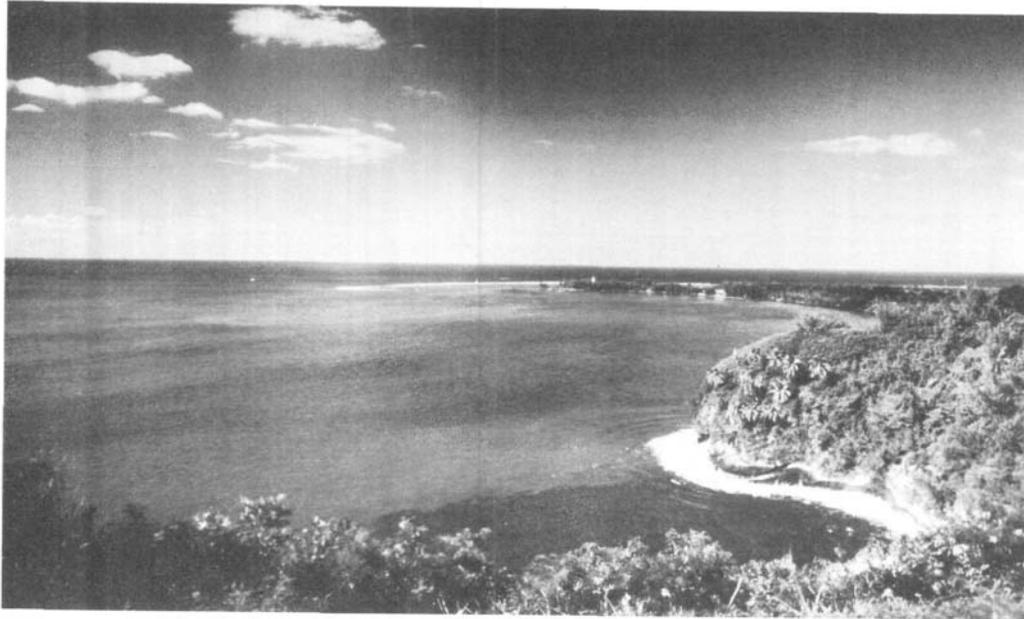
Taharaa Beach, Tahiti. —w. CHILES

Sunday brunch at my favorite Mexican restaurant in San Diego.

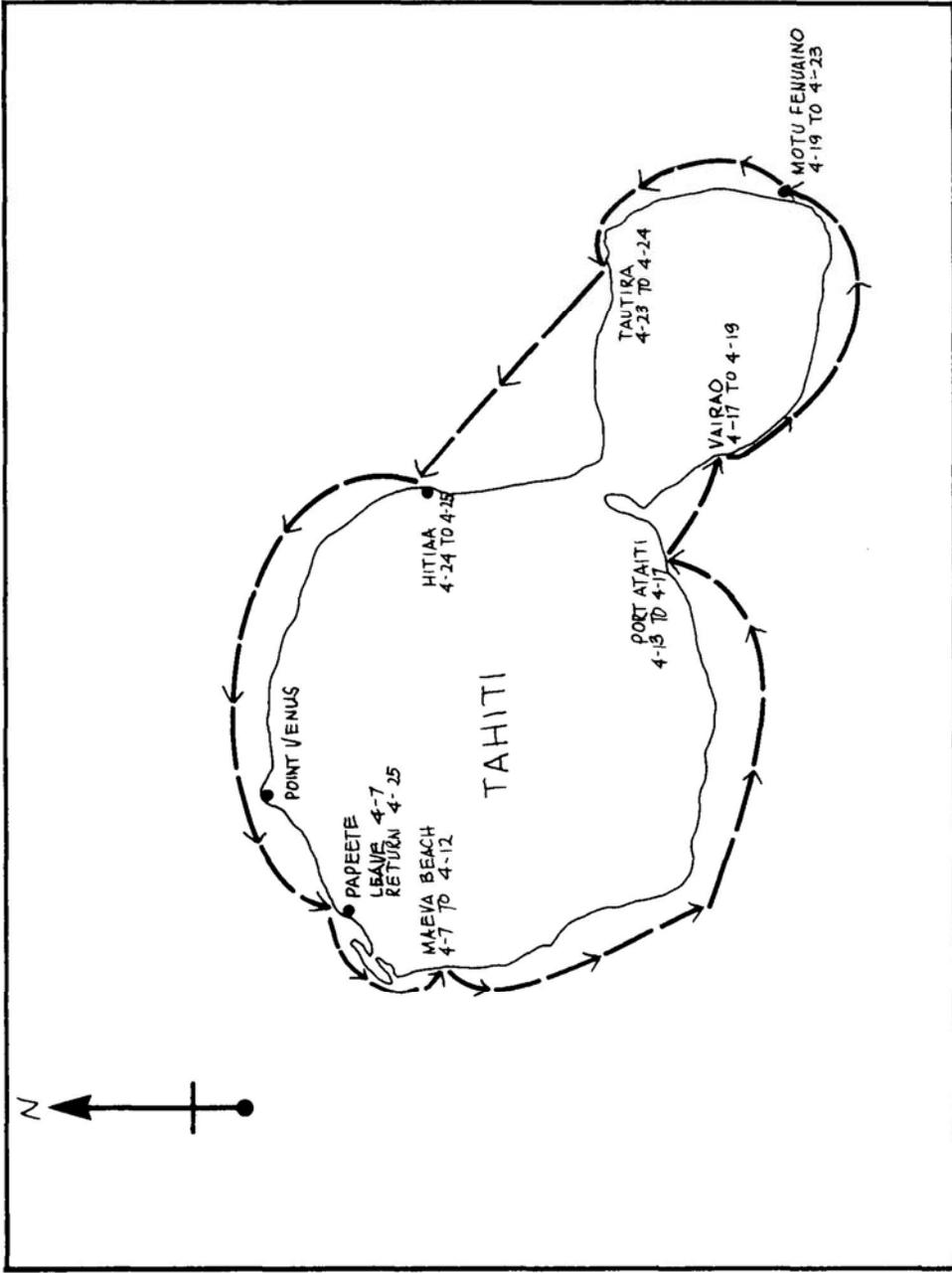
My new favorite beach is a small black-sand cove at the base of the hill upon which is built the Taharaa Hotel. Trees grow almost to the water's edge, and sometimes there is good body surfing. The great thing, of course, about the ocean in the South Pacific is that it is warm. There is no cold shock such as one comes to dread in California, and I swam almost every afternoon.

One week the surf was high at the Taharaa cove and the ocean more alive than I had seen it for a long time. The white foam seemed even whiter against the black sand, and great yellow leaves and brown coconuts rolled in the waves. This—just being there at such moments—is one of the best things about Papeete, and it remains impervious to change, as does the view from Venus Point, from which Tahitians two hundred years ago watched Captain Cook and Captain Bligh round up and anchor in Matavai Bay.

And *les trucks* still jounce along, providing Tahiti with the best public transportation system this side of the Paris subways. And the central marketplace early Sunday morning is still a spectacle where



Matavai Bay and Venus Point. The anchorage of Captains Cook and Bligh.
—W. CHILES



hundreds of natives shove shoulder to shoulder—fat women, children; old men, children; natives in colorful pareus, children; natives in somber church clothes, children; squealing pigs, cooked chicken, live ducks; cake, pastries, coconuts, small palm trees, chunks of coral, roots, berries, fruits, flowers, fish of every size and color, tapa cloth, straw hats, hand-sewn dresses, home brew, children. And everything—including the children, especially the children—called by two or three or more names; shouts and cries and imprecations in French, Tahitian, Chinese, and English.

The water is still unheated in the public showers along the quay. Sometimes it's invigorating, sometimes just plain cold. The sight of the green, cloud-capped mountains inland is the same, when one turns back from a long swim. The trade wind still blows from the east each day and drops to calm in the harbor each night. Craggy Moorea still beckons from beyond the reef.

I said that almost dying is a hard way to make a living, but it does have its compensations.

Once More, with Feeling

It is a mistake to return alone to a place where once you were very much in love. Despite its attractions, Papeete in 1979 was for me a lonely city, filled with memories of Suzanne in 1976. Here was the restaurant where we had dinner the night she joined me; there, the beach where we used to swim. The War Memorial, the marketplace, Venus Point, even the post office, all meant Suzanne, and all increased the longing for her I had felt at sea and in the Marquesas.

There is no simple reason why a man loves a particular woman rather than another, or wants to sail around the world alone, or why we were divorced. But I had come increasingly to recognize that I still loved her and that without her the voyage was not making me happy. I had every intention of continuing the voyage single-handed, but to want to be alone at sea is not necessarily to want to be alone in port. So I wrote inviting her to cruise around Tahiti with me.

She cabled back that of course she couldn't live aboard *Chidiack* even briefly; the whole idea was absurd. That she cabled at all I took as an encouraging sign, and responded that attitudes about size are relative. One has only to look at a coffin to see what little space one really needs: everything beyond that is self-indulgence.

This was enough to permit her to do what we both wanted, and 8:00 A.M., Saturday, April 7, found *Chidiack Tichborne* ghosting on the land breeze across Papeete Harbor on the first leg of our voyage around Tahiti.

Circumnavigating Tahiti is something I had wanted to do since my first visit, in 1974. Tourists tend to equate Tahiti with Papeete and remain in the few miles from the Taharaa Hotel to the east of town and the Maeva Beach Hotel to the west. And one of the intentions I had from the earliest planning of this circumnavigation was to take *Chidiok* all the way around, an intention I almost fulfilled, by coincidence, in January. Now the rainy season was over, the weather more settled, *Chidiok* and myself well rested, Suzanne fresh from the States, and time irrelevant. I told the port captain we would be gone about three weeks, and we raised anchor and headed west on a counterclockwise course, which would give us the best chance of avoiding headwinds.

Our immediate destination was the cove at Maeva Beach, five miles away. Our first headwind came after less than one of those miles, just where the passage inside the reef narrows off the end of the runway at Faa Airport and the current is strongest.

Chidiok may be a challenge to sail across oceans, but for the present coastal journey she was nearly ideal—a boat without anxiety, easily handled, hard to damage, and, with a draft of only ten inches with centerboard and rudder raised, by far the most shoal-draft ocean cruiser around. Yet no boat likes to try to go to windward against a light breeze and a four-knot current, and we tacked back and forth across the ten-yard-wide bottleneck for more than an hour without gaining anything more than an appreciation for a squatter's shack built out on the reef by fishermen. It has a million-dollar view, but during storms that view is submerged too often even for my taste.

I have an unsought reputation as a purist, merely because I guard against my own weakness by not having engines aboard my boats. If I did have an engine, and it worked, I would use it. But I don't have; so after a final frustrated tack, I unshipped the oars, Suzanne took the tiller, and we did *Chidiok's* version of motor sailing for about half a mile until the lagoon widened enough to give us a decent slant on the wind.

Our anchor dropped through ten feet of water off Maeva Beach at 2:00 P.M. We had taken six hours to cover five miles. I had expected our pace to be leisurely, but this was ridiculous.

We stayed at Maeva Beach for five days, partially to wait out an angry sky that threatened but never attacked, and partially because the anchorage provides one of the best combinations of tranquillity and

access to shore facilities on the island.

Chidiok shared the cove with eight other yachts, but with our minuscule draft, we obtained privacy by anchoring to one side where no one else could go. A south wind swung us over a coral head reaching to within a couple of feet of the surface, which gave us our own private aquarium. Morning coffee improves when it is drunk while one is watching myriad tiny blue fish from a cockpit.

Ashore there are showers; reasonably priced washing machines—an unsurpassed luxury; fresh water; and all the facilities of a first-class hotel, including another luxury: an ice machine, from which we made small, surreptitious withdrawals in order to cool our sunset drinks.

I have swum off Maeva Beach scores of times, but not until my second day of snorkeling from *Chidiok* did I learn that there is a wrecked World War I minesweeper sunk near the mouth of the cove. Much of the wreckage is still identifiable as being from a ship: and I was incredulous at the unexpected sight of submerged steel ribs and a part of a bridge deck. Local divers knew of the hulk, but not why it was there or how it had managed to be wrecked.

Finally, on Thursday, we tore ourselves away from the proximity of the ice machine and set sail for Taapuna Pass, two miles south of us.

My chart of Tahiti is a British Admiralty Chart of 1974, based, I swear, on "A French Government Chart of 1903." Of the more than thirty passes around the island, three are marked "dangerous." which tends to be somewhat intimidating, even when you know that the usual reason for the label is some sort of underwater hazard significant to commercial shipping but of no consequence to yachts, especially *Chidiok*. Before leaving Maeva Beach I had sought information from local sailors about currents. The current always flows out the pass, I was told. So, naturally, at noon I was rowing *Chidiok* against an incoming current out onto a glassy, windless sea. When we were finally safely beyond the waves breaking desultorily on the reef, I rested on my oars and gazed back through sweat-streaked glasses and thought, "So much for local knowledge."

This was to be the longest nonstop leg of our trip, all of twenty-five miles around the corner of the main part of the island to the lagoon near the Gauguin Museum, and the flat calm did not bode well for rapid progress, or any progress at all. That night was destined to be the only one of the voyage spent offshore.

A bit of favorable current and a bit of wind enabled us to make our way past another "dangerous" pass the following noon, and at 2:00 P.M.

to head for the Rautirare Pass, noted in the Sailing Directions as being "the best pass on the island." For us this was indeed true, because just as we were abreast the breakers, several porpoise came and played near *Chidiock*, as though showing us the way through. Once inside the reef, we turned to the east and sailed into a large lagoon, called Port Ataiti, and promptly went aground.

As far as I can determine one of the main advantages in having a crew is that you have a scapegoat when things go wrong. Yet the sad truth is that it was all my fault. I was standing in the bow, anchor in hand, directing Suzanne, who was at the helm. I clearly saw the brown shadow of a clump of coral several boat lengths ahead but thought we could safely sail over it. A gentle crunch proved me wrong.

The mainsail had already been furled, so I called aft, "Release the mizzen sheet," while I let go the jib sheet and reached for an oar. "Now, when I tell you, simultaneously trim in on the mizzen, raise the centerboard, and bring the tiller hard to starboard." A plaintive "But —" caused me to turn around. Suzanne stood there in a tangle of lines and tiller. "I only have two hands."

"Hold the tiller with your knee." And as the centerboard came up and I pushed with the oar, *Chidiock* swam free, without anything more serious than a scrape in her antifouling paint.

We sailed on down the lagoon, eventually anchoring one hundred yards from the only other boat there, *Dink's Song*, manned by Jeff, a bagpipe-playing veterinarian, and Judy.

Thirty-one hours to cover twenty-five miles. We were still maintaining our less than one-knot average.

Ashore at Port Ataiti—and "Port" simply means anchorage, for there is nothing along the shore except a few private homes—we were struck by the quiet and by the friendliness of the people. In Papeete one grows accustomed to the constant traffic on the streets. If one wakes up in Papeete Harbor and hears no cars, one knows it is between 2 and 3 A.M. But on the two-mile walk to the nearest market, we usually had the silent road to ourselves and never passed anyone who did not smile and offer a greeting.

The Gauguin Museum, which we had visited in 1976, proved something of a disappointment. But the adjacent botanical garden, developed by an American millionaire in the early part of this century, was a haven of ordered beauty, of secluded lily ponds and stands of giant bamboo through which we wandered for hours.

While Suzanne slept late on Easter Sunday, I rowed across the lagoon to explore in the dinghy a trapezoid of coral growing isolated from the main reef. I was first impressed by how abruptly it rose from the depths. It is one thing to read on a chart a figure of fifty fathoms just off a reef, and another to see coral climbing upward at an eighty-degree angle.

I'm sure an expert would have enjoyed naming every different species of fish and coral, but for me there was a childlike pleasure to be had simply in observing the variety of color and form. The dinghy was small enough to float across the top of the trapezoid. And I was very still and felt as though I were in a balloon floating over a continent, as tiny fish swam unconcerned only inches from my face. The outcroppings of coral were mountains; the level patches of sand, plains; the clusters of fish, cities, while from the shore came the sound of Tahitians singing hymns in a nearby church.

As the chart shows, Tahiti consists of two almost separate land masses connected by an isthmus. The larger part is called Tahiti Nui, or Big Tahiti, and the smaller, Tahiti Iti, Little Tahiti, but also the Taiarapu Peninsula or, my favorite, Presqu'île, which means "almost an island." This area, seldom visited by yachts, was the real destination of the cruise.

From *Dink's Song*, Jeff piped us out the pass one sunny morning with the tune "Scotland the Brave" on the bagpipes, and we crossed to Tahiti Iti, where we anchored for two nights off a picturesque black-sand beach at Vairao before continuing south.

However, no sooner had we raised the anchor at Vairao than the gentle land breeze grew into a twenty-knot monster, with stronger gusts snorting down the valleys. Twice, the channel, which is very well marked (as were almost all the passes and channels we used) makes an abrupt S-turn close to the shore. For us, both of those turns were back to windward into the face of a blow so strong that I had to let the mainsheet go in order to keep from burying the lee rail, while Suzanne played the jib sheet. There was no time to furl the main, so we skittered and flogged our way through, emerging into the open ocean through the Havae Pass, as though being spit out after the lagoon found us undigestible.

The wind now swung to the south, and I decided, instead of heading for the next lagoon, to try for a motu, an islet on the reef, at the very end of Tahiti Iti.

The greenery along the shore was unbroken by any sign of man. During the storm in January I had counted more than a dozen waterfalls dropping down the four-thousand-foot mountainsides, but now only two still carried water.

I found myself thinking back to that storm. With the knowledge gained during our present trip, I knew of several places where I could have put in to wait out the worst of the weather. Yet faced with an identical situation again, my reaction would be the same. One either develops the habit of reaching his destination or he does not; and one looks for safety either at sea or in the harbor.

By 1:00 P.M. we had turned the corner of the island and Motu Fenuaino was visible three miles north. The reef is submerged along that part of the coast; and the Tomotai Pass, just south of the motu, is another marked "dangerous."

Because of the earlier storm, in which I had been constantly wet, I had a secret ambition for this voyage, so secret I had never spoken it aloud, even to Suzanne. It was to sail around the whole bloody island without once being swamped. Such is the relativity of values aboard a small open boat.

That ambition was to receive its strongest test when the perverse wind swung all the way north and we had to beat against choppy seas and a strong blow for several hours. This was the first time I had sailed with a crew in such conditions, and I was interested to observe how much better *Chidiok* behaved with our combined weight on the windward seat than she did when I sailed her alone.

When we finally reached the "dangerous pass," damp from spray but not truly doused, the sun was low and the sea had turned into a beautiful silver shield. Unfortunately this made it impossible to see any potential threats jutting toward us from the depths; so we each took a deep breath and sailed through at a solid six knots, for once experiencing that lovely transition to smooth water inside the lagoon after a fierce chop outside.

The motu, thickly covered with tall palms and other vegetation, provided fine protection from the wind as we sailed slowly back and forth, seeking a way through the coral to the shore. A single channel of green water about five yards wide and fifty yards long seemed the only possibility, until suddenly the rudder caught on an antisocial coral head, growing in solitary splendor.

Getting off was no problem, but raising the rudder was, because the shaft had bent. Small breakers were less than a boat length to either

side, and with the rudder stuck, turning *Chidiock* about while rowing was not easy. Still, I did it and got us back to deep water, where I had time to unscrew a deck plate, enabling me to remove the rudder.

For just such an eventuality, I carry a spare rudder aboard *Chidiock*, but there was no need to ship it then, for the channel would have to be negotiated under oars alone.

After her bow touched on a tiny white-sand beach, we turned the boat around, and Suzanne took stern lines to palm trees ashore, while I walked our anchor out to shoulder-deep water, and in the dying light wedged it in the coral.

Modern science has yet to establish why sounds become louder after dark. We could hardly have been safer, anchored with fifty feet of line and chain in two feet of water on the lee side of an island. That was objective fact. But with waves breaking almost within arm's reach and wind that seemed determined to blow the palm trees inside out, sleep was hard to come by.

For three days the storm continued to blow; yet very little rain reached us, and we had ample time to explore our private desert island.

Colors under the gray sky were rich, if muted. There were jade-green velvet hillsides on the mainland, silver water, brown-sand bottom a foot or two beneath *Chidiock's* hull, and water so clear that it was not until the second day that I noticed how full it was of essentially clear fish that could be seen only by a faint yellow marking on their fins and a tiny black spot near their tails.

Ashore we found three different sizes of crabs: huge coconut crabs that scuttled for the safety of their burrows; an intermediate size that hunted at the water's edge; and everywhere, hundreds of tiny crabs, no larger than a thumbnail, that were totally oblivious of us.

Birds were present but elusive except for the evidence of their calls. Near *Chidiock* a tree grew in foot-deep water.

There was otherwise nothing but surf, wind in trees, bird calls, love, and peace.

One of the reasons I had long wanted to visit Fenuaino is an episode related in *Mutiny on the Bounty*. Two of the English sailors sail down to the motu for a picnic with their Tahitian wives, who tell them of the myth that surrounds the island. Whenever men spend a single night there, they return to the mainland depressed and brooding, and soon waste away and die. This happens because during the night they have been visited by a goddess after whom mortal women are nothing.

I do not recall why the men don't remain on the island, but no doubt the divine experience is not infinitely repeatable.

Well, purely in the spirit of scientific inquiry, I waded ashore one night. But all I got for my trouble were a few scratches and a number of mosquito bites. The mosquito bites raised several extremely practical questions about the myth. But then perhaps Tahitian goddesses came equipped with a can of Raid.

There are only 3,000,000 New Zealanders in the whole world, yet in the years since I met Suzanne, I have come to be amazed at how peripatetic they are.

By Sunday afternoon the storm had blown itself out, and we were sitting aboard *Chidiok* in the sunshine, reading, minding our own business at a deserted island at the far side of Tahiti, without sight or sound of our fellowman, when suddenly a roaring motor, a flash of spray, and a green and white fourteen-foot speedboat blasted up our private channel, lost way inches from *Chidiok's* bow, and spewed out a dozen people: a smiling native gentleman who was the mayor of Tautira, the nearest village, seven miles up the coast; another, distinguished-looking native, wearing a pareu and a necklace of horse teeth, who was an archaeologist just returned from research into Polynesian history in of all places Dallas, Texas ("Oh, they have everything there," he replied to my question, "everything."); several wives and children; and three physicians on the staff of Mamao Hospital, near Papeete, one of whom was, of course, a visiting cardiac surgeon from Dunedin, New Zealand, who, of course, knew Suzanne's uncle, a doctor in Hamilton, New Zealand, and so on. Two hundred twenty million Americans in the world and, for a while, I'm outnumbered. Only for a while, though, because they invited us to join them for lunch on the mayor's farm on the mainland, where we found various other family members and friends, including a Sioux Indian from South Dakota, United States Army (Ret.), now a Tahitian farmer.

"Lunch," eaten at picnic tables under shade trees, was undoubtedly the best meal we had in Tahiti: cold lobster, barbecued chicken, *poisson cm*—marinated raw fish—and a variety of conversation, some in English, some in French, some in sign language, about Tahiti, Guadalcanal, sailing, and heart surgery.

In late afternoon, we all walked up a long valley to a maraa, an ancient place of worship and human sacrifices, in the hills. The archaeologist told us that the low stone walls were 1,200 years old. Whether he had learned this locally or in Dallas, Texas, I do not know.

At sunset, the mayor, who delights in speed, whizzed us back to *Chidiock* in his boat, spinning joyfully in, out, and only occasionally between the markers indicating the safe channel. Thirty knots is rather much to someone accustomed to four.

After I rowed us to the ocean the next morning, thus rowing two out of three of the "dangerous passes" on the island, the trade wind came up from the southeast as it is supposed to, and we had our first really good sailing of the trip, reaching Tautira before noon.

We were now on the windward side of Tahiti Iti and planned to make just three stops all the way back to Papeete, at the anchorages used in the early days of exploration by the English at Matavai Bay, near Venus Point, by the French at Bougainville's Harbor, near Hitiaa, and by the Spanish at what is called Cook's Anchorage, in Tautira.

Of these, we eventually did not stop at Matavai, because of the weather, but I know it well from snorkeling off the reef. It is exposed to the north and northwest and filled with coral heads. The French anchorage near Hitiaa, eleven miles north of Tautira, is deep—the following night our anchor was in twelve fathoms—and uncomfortable with constant swells from water spilling over the narrow reef. But Tautira was outstanding; I do not know why the English stopped using it.

We anchored in fifteen feet of water—more depth was available—off a black-sand beach, beyond which Suzanne found a cold, deep river, during an afternoon stroll. Inland a valley opened to a vista of craggy peaks, and the village itself was clean and prosperous. At the time of Captain Cook this was the richest part of the island, and from here came the kings who eventually gained control over all of Tahiti. Something of that pride is still a part of Tautira, and every year Tautirans dominate the pirogue races held in Papeete on Bastille Day.

The sail to Bougainville's Harbor was uneventful, as were the first two hours of our next leg toward Venus Point. However, several clouds inconsiderately joined forces to become a line squall just as we were sailing over the submerged bank east of Venus Point. I knew we were over the bank not just because the chart said so, not just because the waves were choppy, but because I could look down and see the coral a fathom or two beneath us—disconcerting, even if we were safe aboard *Chidiock*.

My experience is that the strongest wind comes just in front of the

storm line. When the gusts began to touch thirty knots, I thought of Suzanne, who is a good sailor but not as used to this as I, and I thought of my ambition to get all the way around without being swamped; and so we lowered everything but the mizzen and hove to, hoping the squall would blow past.

After a half hour, during which it began to appear that I was destined to sail backwards around Venus Point this time—an improvement on not making it around at all in January—I realized that upon reaching the coast the squall had come to a dead stop, with us sitting in the very worst spot. So, back up went the jib and off we zoomed toward Papeete at seven knots.

A couple of miles past Matavai Bay, we ran out of the wind, literally, and had to play zephyrs in order to reach Papeete Pass at 1:00 P.M.

Rarely have I had a cruise so successful. Eighteen days and six anchorages and one hundred miles of beauty, tranquillity, and challenge. There was even some good sailing. We made it all the way around without a single mutiny and without shipping a single wave. And best of all, Suzanne decided to stay. By copra boat, other yachts, airplane, or whatever, she would parallel my course in *Chidiok Tichborne* on around the world. It really was possible for both of us to live aboard *Chidiok* in port. The age of miracles has not passed.

8



Fayaway Found

Fayaway is alive and well in Papeete. You see her everywhere: walking down the street, wearing high heels and a diaphanous *parisienne* dress; behind the counter of the patisserie; shopping in the *supermarché*; at the bank; riding *le truck*. One of the very best places for Fayaway-watching is the bench outside the new post office on the second level of the Vaima Shopping Center. By actual count she passes by there on long, bare legs 17.36 times per hour. But there are many other almost equally good vantage points. One afternoon at Venus Point, I counted four Fayaways within a few paces from where I strategically placed my towel: a Chinese-Tahitian Fayaway, a French-Tahitian Fayaway, and two Tahitian-Tahitian Fayaways. And the most beautiful woman I saw on the island—perhaps the most beautiful woman I have ever seen, nearly six feet tall, broad-shouldered, full-bodied—was swimming topless off the Taharaa beach. She was nineteen years old, had a lovely, free laugh, was named Tiare—after a Tahitian flower—and, alas, spoke very little English. Which brings me to the hard shoal on which must finally be wrecked the Fayaway myth, a myth perpetuated by practically every writer of the South Pacific from Melville to Michener.

Just a few years ago, Michener could still write about native girls being thrilled by the news that "the Americans are back," that yachts had resumed calling in Papeete after the end of the Second World War. But now, scarcely a generation later, the sailor who sets a course for Tahiti with visions of concupiscent beauties swimming out to his

boat is almost certainly doomed to disappointment. Fayaway is, indeed, in Papeete. But the odds are that she will not speak English, or she will not like "yachties," or, like beautiful women everywhere, she will already be taken. This is not to state categorically that a sailor will not become involved with Fayaway; but in six months spent in Papeete during three visits, I have seen very few such liaisons. The visitor dreaming of dusky beauties is much more likely to end up with a fellow tourist or a Pan Am stewardess or a girl crew member from another boat.

The Fayaway I came to know best was one of those already taken. Her name is Jackie and I met her when an emergency required Suzanne and me to fly back to Papeete from Huahine, one of the Leeward Society Islands about 100 miles west of Tahiti. At the suggestion of the gendarmes I moved *Chidioc* from the exposed anchorage off the Bali Hai Hotel to a more protected cove a half mile further east.

There was little wind that Sunday, so I rowed most of the way, planning to set both anchors in shallow water. But as we passed a private dock, a man waved from the shore and I decided there was no harm in asking for a favor, through which we met Stephan and Jackie, a typical young Tahitian couple. If they lived in California, they would have 2.3 cars and 1.7 children (or is it the other way around?) and a tract house or perhaps a condo; Stephan would go off to work in an office each day, and, if the children were old enough, so would Jackie.

Our first and lasting impression of Stephan and Jackie was of their extreme physical attractiveness. The second was of their overwhelming hospitality. I had sought only a place to tie my boat, but we received that *and* the run of their home and the use of their shower and every meal for the days we were there before and after our trip to Papeete. Other boat people who have been "adopted" by Tahitians have expressed the same feeling, one almost of embarrassment, because even though the hospitality is given openly with no thought of return, still you wish there were some way to reciprocate. Yet beyond some token gesture or gift, there is not.

Stephan is twenty-seven years old, one of eight children of a prosperous farmer, raised near the village of Maeva on the northeast corner of Huahine, and educated at the Lycée Paul Gauguin in Papeete. He has been married once and divorced, and he and Jackie have been together for six months.

Jackie is twenty-six and an only child. I was surprised to learn that only children are not uncommon among present-day Tahitians. She

grew up on Moorea, where her mother works as a waitress at one of the hotels. Initially she was somewhat shy around us, but that changed after the first day.

Stephan built their home in two weeks. There are two buildings in the native style, but certainly not to be called huts. His parents' house is completely Western. It would attract no notice whatsoever if it were situated in any of a dozen subdivisions around San Diego. Stephan returned to the traditional style because he finds it cheaper, more pleasing to the eye, and more suitable for the climate.

The sleeping house has a floor of crushed white coral, walls of two-inch-wide bamboo stakes, and a high thatched roof that must be replaced every three years. Having learned the art from—in his words—"the old women," Stephan does even the thatching himself. With the help of a friend a new roof is installed in two days. And I noticed that the thatching is held in place by the same herringbone knot I use to lace sails to *Chidioc's* spars.

A screen of hanging beads divides the interior into two areas. Pillows and sofalike mattresses are on the floor, handsome tapa cloth on the walls. There is electric lighting—wired by Stephan; Sanyo stereo equipment, complete with huge speakers and tape deck; and on a dressing table, a Gillette Trac II razor and a copy of *Lui*, a French magazine similar to *Playboy*.

A few steps away in a separate structure of similar construction, but completely open on one side, are the cooking and bathroom facilities. That these are together was a requirement of plumbing, and privacy is ensured by half walls of concrete blocks topped with potted plants. There is a shower, a flush toilet—these people live considerably less primitively than I do—a refrigerator, a stainless-steel sink, and a dinette. Sometimes we ate beneath the roof, but more often we moved the table out onto a sun deck built over the lagoon.

The land on which the houses are built has long been in Stephan's family, and one could not help contrasting the construction in two weeks of so livable a home, its location directly on the lagoon, the view of the reef and the mountains, the private dock, and the lack of mortgage payments, with the cost of a similar life-style in California.

Stephan's main avocation is pirogue racing. Each day he works out with a barbell in the shade of the cooking house, and near sunset each afternoon he jumps into his Land Rover and drives five miles over to Maeva to practice with the other members of his six-man crew. Twice they have won their division at the big Bastille Day races in Papeete

and gone on to international competitions in New Zealand and Hawaii—the only times Stephan has left the Society Islands.

During the time we stayed with them, Stephan sometimes worked on a new pirogue for his own use, shaping the log with a power sander. Sometimes he goes fishing, but only for their own table. He does not consider himself a fisherman, although one night after dinner he speared three fish that had been attracted by the light on the deck.

Jackie housecleans in the mornings, a chore of only a few moments; sunbathes; swims in the lagoon; and plays with their kitten, Minouche, and five-week-old German shepherd puppy, Sultan—yes, German shepherd—one can only speculate what he will be like as a full-grown dog in such a climate. Jackie also accompanies Stephan to his pirogue practice and sometimes goes fishing; and she cooks. The food is more Western than Tahitian. In three nights we had barbecued chicken, steak, and *poisson cm*. While Jackie does most of the cooking, for some mysterious reason Stephan, like men everywhere, does the barbecuing. And he helps with the dishes.

They spend money freely. The stereo equipment cost well over \$1,000 at Tahitian prices, as did the fifteen-horsepower outboard, which lives inside the sleeping quarters, and the refrigerator. On an average of once a month they fly to Papeete: round-trip air fare for two, \$120, when they could go by copra boat for \$100 less. Yet, as always, it seems, there is no visible income.

I would have liked to ask exactly how much Stephan's annual income is, but this would clearly have been overstepping the bounds of our friendship. No income taxes, no sales taxes, no mortgage payments, catch a few fish for dinner; and I assumed that perhaps Stephan was helped financially by his father. Eventually I discovered that in a way this is true. A few years ago when the road was being built around the island, his father in effect cosigned a loan so that Stephan could buy two huge modern dump trucks, which hauled most of the rock and coral used in the construction. The trucks quickly paid for themselves and now sit in a palm grove not far from Stephan's home. He does not like Papeete—it is too noisy and bustling—and he has no intention of going there permanently to live, although he acknowledges that there is more work to be had on the big island. Enough hauling jobs turn up on Huahine to meet his needs, and there is no point in doing more.

Ambition is often seen to be a point of divergence between Western and Polynesian cultures, yet the truth is not so simple. Stephan works just enough to maintain his idyllic existence with Jackie, while I am

perhaps an extreme example of ambition even among Westerners. No one takes a pirogue these days from Huahine to Raiatea, twenty-five miles away on the horizon. Yet it was from Raiatea that Stephan's ancestors made great, ambitious colonizing voyages across the Pacific in craft considerably less seaworthy than mine. In my attempt to make the greatest open-boat voyage of all time, those voyagers are my competition every bit as much as Captain Bligh is. And I was pleased when Stephan said that I was a sailor who would have been respected by even the great Polynesian navigators of the past. The present is very pleasant in Polynesia, but it is permeated by a sense of a lost grandeur, much like Rome.

There is a final, to me pleasingly incongruous note. About one hundred years ago a German sailor jumped ship in Huahine. What does that have to do with Stephan and Jackie? The German was Stephan's great-grandfather, and my typical Tahitian couple's last name is, of all things, Itchner. Fayaway Itchner. Perhaps it loses something in the translation. Or perhaps it gains.

9

Crazy in Paradise

"Now that I've met you, I don't think you are crazy."

It is a theme with which I have become only too familiar, an occupational hazard leading to the development of stock replies. "You are mad." "Yes [denial is futile]; anyone can be sane." "You are mad." "Yes, but at least it is an interesting madness." Or if the person is sufficiently offensive, perhaps something a bit stronger. I am amazed at the number of people of limited experience who consider themselves qualified to judge all things nautical.

The charge of masochism—and usually it is presented as a "charge" by someone who has never accomplished anything himself—I generally ignore for the nonsense it is. Such people confuse a willingness to make sacrifices in the pursuit of an ideal with an end, and will never understand that one does not go to sea in order to suffer; one simply accepts that somewhere along the way he is going to be uncomfortable and does not let that stop him.

This time the speaker was Dr. Zumbiehl of the Clinique Cardella in Papeete, to which I had limped with an inexplicably swollen knee and fears of some rare tropical ailment, such as elephantiasis. My nightmare was that I was going to have to continue the circumnavigation in two eighteen-foot boats: one for me and one for my right leg. Now, on my second visit to the clinic, the results of X rays and lab studies revealed nothing so exotic.

"There is no sign of trauma. No infection," said Dr. Zumbiehl in

slightly accented English. "But you should keep the elastic bandage in place and come back next week to have the fluid drained again."

Remembering the spear he had inserted before, I reconfirmed my decision to sail on and asked, "Will the fluid eventually reabsorb by itself?"

"Probably."

"What is the problem?"

"I think you have arthritis, possibly gout."

"So I should live in a warm, dry climate and keep my leg on a velvet cushion."

He smiled. "It might be best."

"I was thinking of sailing for Huahine instead."

He knew I was on a boat, but not which one, or he would never have asked his next question. "Do you move around a lot while sailing or can you stay in one place?"

"*Chicicock* is less than six meters long."

A flash of comprehension came into his eyes. "You are on the little boat anchored off the church!" And his manner became much less professionally impersonal. "Why, two weeks ago I took a photograph of you from the shore and sent it to my brother in France, with a note: 'See what crazy people we get in Papeete.' " Which led after a moment's pause to the inevitable, "Of course, now that I've met you . . ."

Huahine, the closest of the Leeward Society Islands, lay about 100 miles west, a passage that divided itself into three parts: a row out the pass followed by fifteen miles of drifting and a night becalmed off Moorea; seventy miles covered in little more than ten hours of wild sailing, followed by a night hove to off Huahine, which had considerably become visible just before sunset; and a final reach around the north end of the island and a beat back to windward through the pass at the main village of Fare, where I anchored with a half dozen other craft off the Bali Hai Hotel to wait for Suzanne's arrival by copra boat.

Just as I was playing out the anchor rode, the crew of a nearby trimaran began shouting, gesturing, and snapping photographs. *Chidicock* often elicits such behavior, but this was an extreme example, and they were muttering something about "the contrast, the contrast." And I looked up to see the 220-foot-long *Club Med*, the longest boat ever to be single-handed, powering up the channel. A failure at winning the solo transatlantic race, for which she had been built, she now

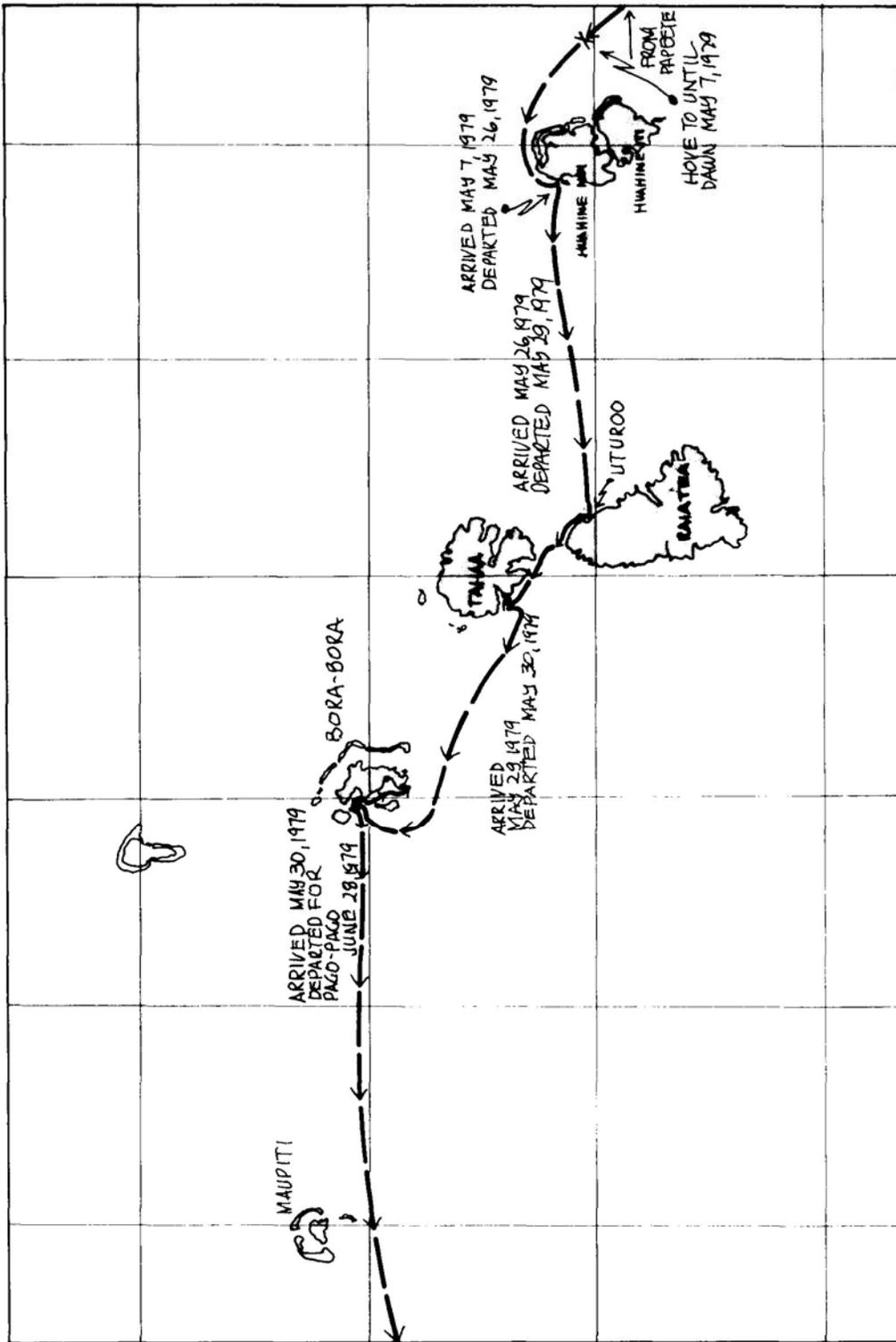
operates as a charter boat, reportedly up for sale since her owner, Alain Colas, was lost in another solo race in the Atlantic in 1978. We had been together before in both Papeete and Moorea, but never in such close proximity. *Club Med* was very, very big; *Chidiack*, very, very small. But size not only is not everything; in this instance it was nothing. *Club Med's* crew have always been pleasant to me, and they handle the huge craft well—as a power boat. Her sails have become little more than decoration. Quite simply she is one of the great turkeys of all time, and I would not trade *Chidiack* for her, even if they threw in the Eiffel Tower and two starlets to be named later.

Huahine is the favorite island of many cruising people, but the reasons are not easy to define. The main thing, really the only thing, about Huahine is just being there. And if you can't live without the pleasures of the city, then being there is going to be rather dull.

Fare has 500 inhabitants and two blocks of shops on one side of the road across from the concrete quay. It is clean, friendly, quiet. At



How many world cruisers can lift their mizzen? —s. CHILES



10:00 A.M. on the day when Suzanne arrived, nothing was moving. Even the dragonflies were taking a nap. A dog lay in a patch of shade in the middle of the street. A jeep came speeding around the corner. The dog raised his head slightly. The jeep veered wide and kept on going. The dog lowered his head and went back to sleep.

Such bucolic charm, however, can become excessive.

With another couple Suzanne and I went ashore at 6:30 one evening to eat dinner. A tiny Chinese restaurant was about to close but generously let us slip in before they locked the doors. We considered ourselves lucky until the wizened proprietress, without offering a menu, dumped on the table four plates covered with some gelatinous brown substance and a lump of rice. This was presumably chicken chow mein, perhaps theoretically edible when warm, but certainly not so in its present frigid state. To our request that the food be heated, she threw her hands in the air and exclaimed, "*Chef parti. Chef parti.*" We agreed among ourselves that had we perpetrated such a crime, we too would have left, and in fact we did leave, wandering down the deserted street toward the Hotel Huahine, a modest establishment of twelve rooms, where we were turned away from the restaurant at 6:58 P.M. The Huahine Chefs' Union is very powerful.

The choices were now limited to the Bali Hai, which at about twenty dollars per person was more than we wanted to spend; the "Snack Bar"; or a return to the boat for canned stew. Once again we made the wrong choice. The girl at the snack bar—really more bar than snack—kept shaking her head as we started at the top of the menu chalked on the wall and worked our way down. "*Poisson cm?*" No. "Hamburger?" No. "Steak?" No. "Omelette?" No. "Ham sandwich?" No. "Fried fish?" No. Apparently this had become an automatic response, for she changed her mind after a while and nodded yes to "fried fish," thus providing a greasy ending to our one and only attempt at dining out in Huahine.

But no one goes to Huahine for haute cuisine, and the beautiful beach just off the anchorage, the clear water, and, for surfers, the good break on the reef all made up for the lack of facilities ashore.

At one time Huahine, which, I was told by natives, means "Little Woman" (but no one knew why), was the center of the ancient religion, and ruins of maraas are found in abundance, particularly near the village of Maeva. Now, however, Huahine is known as the "watermelon capital of the South Pacific," or would be if they had a sufficiently active chamber of commerce.

The watermelon, and cantaloupes as well, are grown in "fields" chopped from coral. A hole about one yard wide and one yard deep is dug; then topsoil is carried down from the inland valleys and a single plant grown in each hole; all watering is done by hand. The long rows of regular circles of dark earth against the white coral look like polka dots on a dress. The labor is hot and back breaking. But the watermelons fetch high prices in Papeete, and the watermelon farmers are very prosperous.

Chidiok rose to the southerly wave, hung for an instant on the crest, then swept happily down and forward. From the bow, glistening spray was flung into the air. Huahine was ten miles behind us; Raiatea and Tahaa, separate islands enclosed by a single reef, ten miles ahead.

As is usual in French Polynesia, the first building recognizable from the sea was a church. Sometimes they have red roofs, sometimes green, sometimes with steeples, sometimes without, but always they are white walled and located in the most dominant position—this one halfway down the east coast of Raiatea, which itself rose from the sea like a great green cathedral.

The sight of that distant church reminded me of the graves in the overgrown cemetery, half-hidden just a few steps from the beach in Huahine. Usually I am not attracted to such places, but in the South Pacific one often finds the tantalizing edges of stories he can wonder about but never know. One of the headstones at Huahine was marked "Andrew Keller, 1814-1858; born White Plains, New York; conchologist." And two others: "Elma Wright Brown, died March 15, 1872; wife of The Reverend Roger L. Brown, London Missionary Society"; and "Their son William, who died on March 21, 1872, aged six days."

Raiatea has a flaw: the wind blows very hard day and night, and harder inside the lagoon than out. Combine this with an honest but uninteresting function as an agricultural center; too deep anchorages—near the Club Nautique, *Chidiok* tied her bow to a palm tree beside three other craft: *Swanhaven*, *Hawk*, and *Flying Eagle* and dropped her stern anchor in ninety feet of water two boat lengths from shore; and the proximity of alluring Bora-Bora, and you have a place where yachts stop briefly but that no one much likes. To remain would be like spending a vacation in Sacramento rather than going on to San Francisco.

At Raiatea I did find time to pursue my hobby of turning boats upside down, when Andrew Wall of *Swanhaven*, a fifty-foot motor

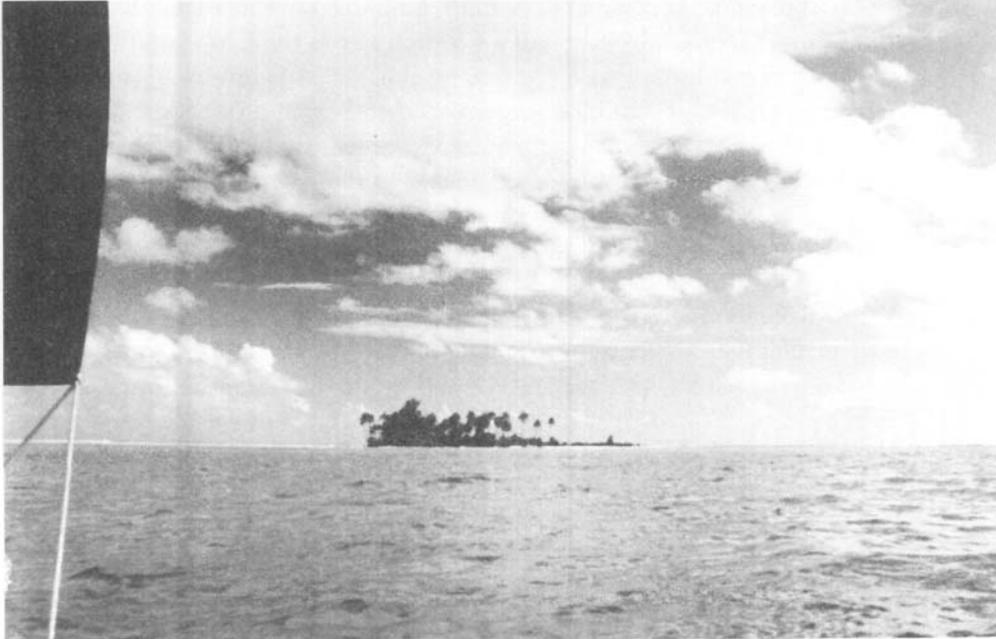
sailer from New Zealand, lent me his Laser. It was the first time I had sailed one. She was so quick that she made *Chidiack* seem like an old lady. Twice I lost her in gusts and now have the dubious distinction of having capsized everything, from a 16,000-pound cutter to a 100-pound day sailer. Perhaps I will have to make my next voyage on a Windsurfer with a knapsack.

The Club Nautique on Raiatea is a government facility to which school children are bused from around the island in order to learn how to sail and swim. Three busloads arrived just as we were preparing to up anchor, and all learning was postponed while teachers and pupils lined the bank to watch *Chidiack*, only marginally larger than the school's training sloops, set sail.

On the five-mile reach across the lagoon to Tahaa, I perfected my most recent contribution to the fine art of seamanship: navigation by postcard. Some enterprising photographer has taken aerial views of the islands and turned them into postcards. Number 103, "Raiatea and Tahaa," proved very useful in circumventing several coral banks inside the lagoon, and as an added bonus shows the western pass from Tahaa. I doubt it is approved practice, but I spent more time consulting the postcard than I did the chart, and it all came out splendidly. At fifteen francs, the postcard must be the cheapest aid to navigation in French Polynesia.

For us Tahaa was only an overnight break on the way to Bora-Bora. Just east of the pass is a notorious anchor-eating cove. With depths ranging upward from ninety feet and abundant coral heads, it distressed every boat that attempted to stay there except *Chidiack*, we were able to tie a bowline to a reef marker and drop a stern hook in one foot of water just off a coconut grove, where a herd of cows grazed. All afternoon they stood at the water's edge and regarded us as solemnly as had the school children in Raiatea that morning.

For days the island had been visible: from Huahine a gray speck forty miles away silhouetted by the setting sun; from Raiatea, a mountain castle above a coastal plain; from Tahaa, still more detail. But even before we had seen it, Bora-Bora had reached us with its mystique. Postcard Number 105, "Bora-Bora," is modestly subtitled "The most beautiful island in the world." Although such boasts make me skeptical, after being there for a month I found myself reluctant to write about the island. To that point Bora-Bora was my favorite place among all I had visited, and I didn't want everyone else to mess it up before I



A motu on the Bora-Bora reef. —s. CHILES

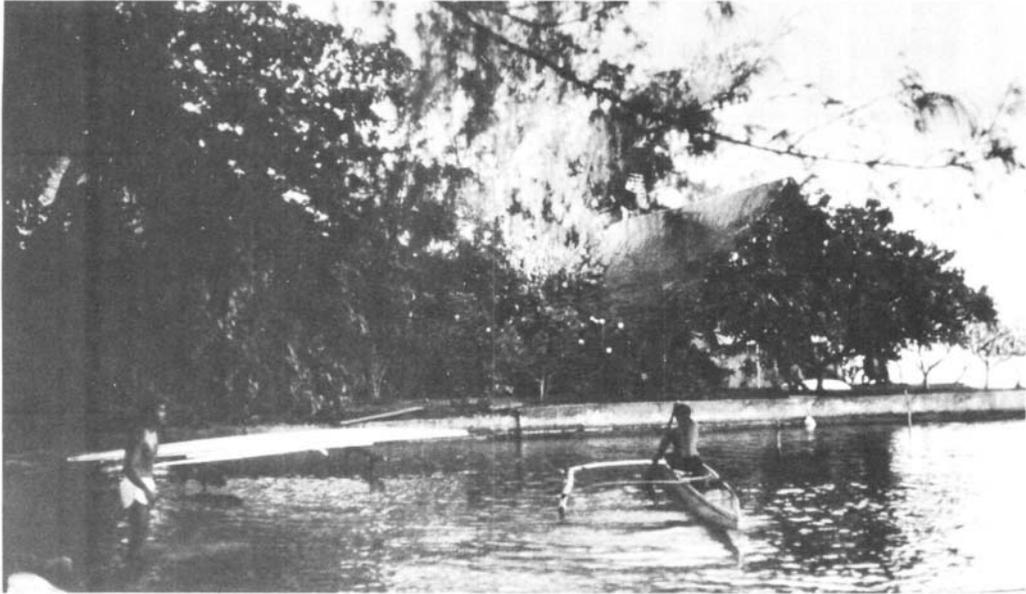
return on my next circumnavigation.

If Bora-Bora is not the most beautiful island in the world, it comes close enough, with its spectacular lagoon and motus with white-sand beaches and a 2,385-foot mountain, Mt. Otemanu, which we never tired of watching change from different perspectives and in different lights. I think I liked it best at dawn, when the sun gradually transforms a featureless shadow into a sparkling green jewel. The view in moonlight is also not to be disparaged. But the incredible, unexpected thing is not that Bora-Bora is beautiful, but that as of June 26, 1979, it was still not tourist infested. At best, I thought, it might be like Moorea; at worst, like Papeete. Instead, Bora-Bora, despite the existence of three hotels and a development of condominiums, is almost as quiet as Huahine.

The main village, really the only village, Vaitape, is smaller than Fare. There are fewer stores, not many more cars, and people generally as friendly. In the evening one can walk a mile along the road near town and never be passed by a single car, while at "rush hour" one might see as many as three or four.

To the sailor, the most important building on the island is the Bora-Bora Yacht Club—also known sometimes as the Club Nautique, but not to be confused with the one on Raiatea. It is run by Alex and Michelle du Prel, themselves experienced sailors, and provides, for a modest fee of 300 francs a month (free to single-handers), those facilities that I, for one, like to have available to me when in port: heads, showers, a paperback-exchange library, water, as well as a small bar-restaurant where you can get the best cheeseburgers in the Society Islands. The du Prels, though foreign-born, are American citizens and know that the way to the heart of a sailor is through his cheeseburger. Not incidentally the cove off the club is the best anchorage—sixty to ninety feet with a good sand bottom—in normal weather and is close to the World War II submarine pen that serves as a hurricane hole in the rare westerly blow, such as Hurricane Diane, which touched the island in February of 1978.

On sailing up to the yacht club, I was hailed by the Walls of *Swanhaven*, who offered me a cold beer. It being a rather hot day, I rounded up with alacrity and tied alongside the larger boat. This later caused some confusion when people wondered why Suzanne and I were



Bora-Bora fishermen commuting to work. —s. CHILES

living on *Swanhaven's* tender.

The great event of our first week at Bora-Bora was the filming by an Italian company of what will undoubtedly be one of the great epics of all time, *The Shark Boy of Bora-Bora*. Some of the shooting was done at the yacht club, and several boat people were able to add a bit to their cruising funds by working as extras. The high standard of this film can be judged by the final scene, in which the script calls for the boy and girl to lead to ride out the pass and into the sunset on the back of the shark. I regret that I do not know if they are wearing cowboy hats.

There are many signs of the American military presence on Bora-Bora during the Second World War. A dispensary still stands, also the submarine pen, and an airport built by the Seabees in 1943. But by far the most dramatic relics are two cannons commanding the pass from a hillside near Vaitape. After climbing up a final slight rise in the bulldozed trail, one is abruptly confronted by the long barrels jutting out against the sky in stark contrast with the lagoon far below. The eye moves from one to the other, but the mind refuses to follow. One recalls the words of Santayana: "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." The human creature is marvelously adaptable, perhaps too adaptable. The cannons were placed there less than forty years ago, but already they seem ancient.

Of all the yachts that called at Bora-Bora while we were there, only *Chidiok* could sail to the most beautiful beach on the island. Just south of the Hotel Bora-Bora a narrow band of coral rises to the surface and effectively blocks passage for "normal" boats. But once across that barrier, which I rowed, *Chidiok* had beautiful sailing in two to three feet of crystal-clear water stretching a mile to the main reef. The little yawl seemed to be floating on air. An occasional clump of coral was easily avoided. The turquoise of the lagoon was so intense that it reflected upward and colored the clouds as they passed overhead.

In midafternoon we dropped anchor about twenty yards from the white sand of Matira Point, ate our lunch, swam, read, and waded ashore for a walk. We did not set up the cockpit tent, and after eating dinner beneath a starry sky, we watched the moon rise through the palm trees to illuminate the lagoon and Mt. Otemanu.

We were asleep when the first wave broke. It was only a foot high, but it sounded huge as it rumbled toward us. *Chidiok* rocked violently, and both Suzanne and I said various things unprintable.

Our hopes that it had been nothing more than an errant freak were dashed, literally, an hour later when three more waves broke, again

about fifty yards outside us, and again tossed the yawl wildly about. Usually there is no break there, but a depression was moving up from the south and forcing enough water over the reef to enable the surf to regroup for an assault on poor *Chidiok*. Unless I wished to row back over the coral at night, which I most definitely did not, I could do nothing but erect the tent, walk out a stern anchor to keep our bow into the break, and spend a very unpleasant night in a very pleasant spot.

Even though there was no real danger, it was somewhat disconcerting to hear the waves, usually a group of three coming every half hour or so, roaring through the night. Only one actually came on board, and it served to reinforce Suzanne's absurd contention that I arrange these things so that she is always on the windy and/or wet side of the boat. I was still protesting my innocence when I moved us back to the yacht club the following morning.

An elegiac sunset. A few orange clouds to the west. Across the glassy lagoon rolled the wake from a native fishing craft already beyond the point. Fewer than a dozen of us were still in the anchorage, so there was plenty of room for the boats to swing idly, some pointing east, some west. Voices carried far in the still air. Mt. Otemanu was gray and green and black, as were the palm-covered motus on the reef. *Chidiok*, as always the first to respond to a puff, turned on her heel and marched out to the end of her 200-foot tether. Bora-Bora is a point of departure. Practically all of us were leaving within the week, scattering across the oceans, driven on by the exigencies of money or career or weather. The hurricane season would not start for another four months, but decisions must be made early. Some were heading north for Hawaii, some, back east to Papeete, some, south to the Cooks, some, west to Samoa.

One of the pleasures of voyaging is the friends you make; and one of the sadnesses is the losing too soon of those friends. I enjoyed those companionable harbor days, but I had not made a real ocean passage in six months. Despite my arthritic leg, the small boy in me was excited. On Thursday I would go to sea.

Slow Sail to the Evening Star

Rain. Shrieking wind. A patch of gray sky visible through the open end of the cockpit tent.

I shivered in the predawn coolness and pulled my blanket tighter around my chin. It was the first week of winter and, for once, it felt like it. But *Chidiok* was not anchored off some stormy, ironbound coast. This was not England or Newfoundland, even though the sky might look as though it were. There were no moors ashore and no Heathcliff to stalk them. This was Bora-Bora, and the first week of winter was late June—the dry season, supposedly. Settled weather. Steady trade winds. Blue skies. Picture-postcard stuff. In the three months I spent in French Polynesia in 1976 we had eighty-eight such lovely days and only two days of brief showers. Something was decidedly wrong. Perhaps I was still asleep. A gust rolled down off Mt. Otemanu and shook the tent. I was not asleep. It was Thursday, June 28, the day I was to sail for Pago-Pago. I crooked my neck and peered back at the triangle of scudding cloud beyond the mizzenmast. The weather had been lousy for three days. I tried to convince myself that the sky didn't look quite as bad as it had. I failed and burrowed back beneath the covers.

Four of us planned to leave Bora-Bora that day—a forty-eight-foot cutter also heading for Pago and a fifty-foot ketch and a thirty-eight foot sloop for Hawaii. And we all left, for the weather had not been

lousy for just three days; it had been unsettled for months, ever since April, which should have been the end of the rainy season. In fact, the seasons were reversed in the eastern South Pacific in 1979, with the usually rainy months of February and March providing the only long period of fine weather. Various crank explanations for this were offered by my fellow sailors, from the imminence of a new ice age to the French nuclear testing in the Tuamotus. Other people know considerably more about the weather than I do, and the more I sail the less I seem to know. They look at the sky and say confidently, "It is going to rain in twelve hours." I look at the same sky and recall three times when it did rain twelve hours later and five when it did not. That morning at Bora-Bora I knew only that there were a few blue patches at 8:30 A.M. and that, as always, if I waited for the "right" time I might be there forever. It was not the worst place to spend forever, but I was ready to move on.

Chidiok was the second boat to leave. The big cutter upped anchor while I was ferrying Suzanne ashore (where she would stay with Alex and Michelle until it was time for her to rejoin me by plane in Pago-Pago), and then it took another hour to get the yawl ready for sea. Although I should expect it by now, still I was amazed at how much loose debris one collects even on an eighteen-foot boat when in harbor.

Finally everything was packed and bagged and stowed and rebagged, and, in special cases, such as the small radio direction finder I bought in Papeete to replace the two that had been destroyed between San Diego and Nuku Hiva, bagged yet a third time. Sailing in any boat, but particularly a small open boat, makes one expert in various arcane fields—such as plastic bags. I use special bags manufactured by a company called Voyageur, while other people have had good, if morbidly accented success with body bags used by hospitals.

Before I lashed all the loose bags in place, I thought for a moment about which side of the boat I wanted to live on. This is a decision that, once made, I seldom alter at sea, although it takes less than ten minutes to rearrange things. For me a kind of inertia sets in once I have left harbor, and I tend to stay put. On some primitive level the port side of the cockpit has become "home," and I am uneasy when trying to sleep a foot away, on the starboard side of the centerboard. I was relieved that the wind should be from the southeast. Port should be to windward. "Home" it would be.

Then I ate a granola bar and took a sip of water, raised *Chidiok's* anchor, and we were off.

From the dock at the Bora-Bora Yacht Club and from other boats, people waved and snapped photographs. Inch for inch *Chidiock* must be the most photographed boat afloat. I sensed that some of those watching did not expect me ever to be seen again. I found this curious, but then I had learned a great deal during the past months. At a certain point a boat does not become just small; it disappears. On four separate occasions at Bora-Bora other craft had entered the anchorage and with all kinds of available room proceeded to anchor right on top of *Chidiock* just as though she were not there at all. It broke my heart to chase one of them, a French sloop with a nubile, topless female crew, away. But chase them I did. Small boats have rights too. And people seemed to think that just because *Chidiock* was small, somehow she would simply disappear at sea, perhaps dissolve amidst the waves as though made of sugar.

This is not to say that I did not leave the harbor with a certain amount of fear; but it was the lazy man's fear of work. On both of my earlier passages in *Chidiock* I had run into survival situations. My fear was not of not making it to Pago-Pago, but of having to work too hard doing so. The odds were that this should be a simple trade-wind passage, a straight dash 1,200 miles before steady southeasterlies. Memories of that splendid last week to Nuku Hiva during which we covered 850 miles filled my mind. It would be fantastic to do even better, yet I knew it was possible with just normal conditions.

Sudden rain blotted out the other boats, then the land, then the reef itself. The pass is wide and straight, so I held our compass course, and by the time the rain cleared enough so that I could see, *Chidiock* had entered the open ocean.

All that afternoon we sailed quickly, if uncomfortably, beneath a sky that continued to improve upon its impersonation of England in December, and with a wind that continued to back to the north and increase in strength. Bora-Bora grew ever smaller behind us and Maupiti, twenty-seven miles west, ever larger. Whoever wrote the Sailing Directions description of Maupiti must have been a frustrated poet, for he described it as appearing "like a large streamlined battleship with high turrets forward and low rakish stern aft." As we neared the island I tried mentally to turn the 1,200-foot peak into a battleship, without success.

As darkness became complete, we were caught in a series of breaking six- to eight-foot waves about a half mile off the only pass through the

reef. My information, gathered from the crew of the only yacht that ventured out to Maupiti during my stay in Bora-Bora, from the Sailing Directions, and, of course, from my old standby, aerial-view postcards, was that the pass is narrow and tortuous and has a constant strong outward current. The wind had forced me closer than I wished, and *Chidiok* had some bad moments as crests toppled until she was free of the area where the current met the waves. Still I recalled those two small white sails I had seen silhouetted against Bora-Bora far behind us in midafternoon. It could be worse. I could be trying to get to Hawaii—now dead upwind.

For thirty-six hours we continued to speed westward. The rhumb-line course was 276°, but *Chidiok* was more comfortable sailing a bit to the south of west—not "comfortable" but "more comfortable." Even if these were far from trade-wind conditions, at least we were making good progress in generally the desired direction.

Naturally, with the wind in the north, my position on the port side of the cockpit was to leeward, but I had learned enough about how to stow *Chidiok* so that it did not seem to matter, and she rode the waves confidently. Nevertheless enough water came aboard from rain and spray so that I could not heat anything to eat. There were two solutions to this problem: first, I have actually come to enjoy cold coffee and cold soup; and second, some friends had given me a pound box of chocolates just before I left. Rationalizing that I should eat them before they were ruined, I managed to finish the entire box before the second night at sea.

At midnight that second night the wind backed all the way to the west, and we began to take heavy water over the bow. At best we were making about two knots fifty degrees to either side of the rhumb-line course. I had mastered the art of treading water in my sleep. So much for my hopes of a fast passage. Feeling glad that I had provisioned for a month, I hove to.

Dawn the next morning was really dawn, not just a graying of blackness. By 9:00 A.M. the sky was blue, the sun shining, the wind back in the north—where it seemed to think it belonged, and *Chidiok* sailing slowly past the next tourist attraction, a wreck at the north tip of Scilly Island, an atoll 180 miles west of Bora-Bora, which, considering our time hove to, confirmed my estimate of 120 miles made good that first day. The wreck was a long way north, at least a mile beyond the nearest motu on the reef, and it was not difficult to understand how the helmsman would have thought himself well clear of the reef up to

the very moment the ship struck, particularly if it had happened at night.

Passages set their own moods and usually divide themselves into distinct phases. The theme of this one was quickly established: inconsistency; and the rhythm: staccato. On what was to become a sixteen-day meander across the Pacific, we had wind shifts of at least 180° on fourteen days. It was impossible to plan ahead. If we were sailing a little south of the rhumb line, I could not decide to jibe in twelve hours, because by then the wind would be blowing from some completely unpredictable direction.

The notes in my log were more laconic than usual. "Wind from the north." "Clouds yesterday afternoon; rain; clear all night." "Front this morning, wind to south; then calm for several hours." "Becalmed since midnight. Rain this morning." "Wind looks to be returning from west."

The end of our first week found us only 480 miles out. During that week we had experienced two days of storm with wind from the north; three days of headwind from the west; one and a half days becalmed; and nine hours of what could have passed as trade winds. That we had averaged even sixty-eight miles a day under such conditions seemed miraculous. But the slow sailing was taking its toll in frustration and tension.

Chidiok paced slowly north beneath a bright blue sky and headed by a light westerly, then turned and paced slowly south again. She seemed to be enjoying herself. I was glad someone was. The knot meter hovered beneath the two-knot mark, but in reality we were going nowhere, because the wind was not strong enough to move us through the swells, coming from both the west and south. It was a beautiful day for doing many things; for lying on a beach, for walking along a shore, for swimming, for snorkeling, for talking to pretty girls, for talking to plain girls, for sipping a long drink in the shade of a cool bar, for sleeping beneath a tree, but most definitely not for trying to sail to Pago-Pago. I felt myself winding up tighter and tighter. I stared at the sky and clenched my fists. I turned to the sea and studied the few bubbles that were the only proof of our insignificant motion. I wanted to do something: to howl in rage; to hit something, anything. An animal at bay, I glared furiously at the razor-sharp horizon. The ocean was a dish of blue; the sky, another dish of blue inverted above it. And I was trapped in the middle. "Relax," I tried to tell myself. "This isn't doing any good. You are amply provisioned, and a few days one way

or the other never makes much difference in the long run." "I'm not concerned with the long run," I replied to myself. "I'm concerned with now, with remaining sane for the next five minutes." I fully expected that if I wound any tighter I would explode like a clock and scatter across the sea in a shower of tiny wheels, gears, cogs, and springs. I imagined the headline: Lone Voyager Meets Untimely End. "The winds from the east and southeast total more than 90 percent; what is going on here?" "You know better than to believe in pilot charts." At least I kept my debate internal.

I did not ultimately explode, of course. I constantly reminded myself that every slow mile was one that would not have to be sailed again—at least not until the next circumnavigation—and I received an unintentional boost from Cook Islands Radio.

At sunset, across a vast expanse of solitary ocean, they played in succession "Bali H'ai" and "The Stripper." Perhaps it is an incongruity whose appeal is limited to those becalmed alone at sea, but I found myself laughing aloud for the first time in days. And along with the laughter my internal springs unwound sufficiently for me to endure until the next wind shift.

Slowly *Chidiok* crawled across the sea, and the X's marking our position crawled slowly across the chart. I did a great deal of reading, swam over the side frequently, and perfected my suntan. The Fourth of July came; Skylab fell; various politicians made various absurd pronouncements—I was able to hear them from New Zealand, Australia, Canada, as well as the United States: a joyless redundancy.

The best part of each day, really the only good part, was just after sunset, when, if we were lucky, *Chidiok's* bow would be pointed toward the west and not one but two evening stars. Side by side, they glowed comfortingly, friends who appeared each evening. The brighter was Jupiter, the other, Mercury. For a few hours, until the moon would rise, they were my companions as *Chidiok* sailed through a sea of darkness, as though sailing not onward but into the depths of a great mirror reflecting a limitless hall in some abandoned castle.

The trouble with islands is that they move too slowly. And no islands have ever moved more slowly than the Manua Islands, a cluster of three, some fifty miles east of Pago-Pago.

My second week at sea ended with them in sight about ten miles to the west. Twenty-four hours later they were still in sight, though now ten miles to the east. And far to the west, two more islands lounged

indolently about the horizon. This was embarrassing, because the chart showed only one island there, Tutuila, on which is located Pago-Pago.

An hour later the two islands had multiplied into four, like some rocky amoeba. I looked forward with interest to further developments. But when the four did not become eight, I concluded, rightly, that what I was seeing were the high peaks of one island, which in the fullness of time would be linked by low land. But before they could be, I was to have visitors.

While I hate to admit it, sailing has almost made me superstitious. I know that there is no logical reason for Fridays the thirteenth to be unlucky; but it is a fact that the strongest wind I have ever encountered, a hundred-plus knots, struck on Friday, February 13, 1976, in an area south of Australia where the ever reliable pilot chart showed a zero probability of gales.

At 11:00 A.M. on this day, Friday, July 13, 1979, I was sitting in *Chidiok*'s cockpit, minding my own business, reading *King Rat*, when someone behind me took a deep breath. This was somewhat disconcerting, particularly when I turned around instantly and saw only a smooth blue sea, broken only by my overabundance of somnolent islands, the closest of which was fifteen miles distant.

I had resumed reading, when a few minutes later someone or something took another deep breath. This time I turned quickly enough to catch sight of two killer whales moving slowly up our wake.

They were beautiful creatures, with their black backs and pure white undersides; but I would have preferred to view them under somewhat different circumstances. A tank in Sea World would have been nice. About a boat length astern, they dove and swam slowly beneath us. As I looked down into the water, they seemed to be looking back up at me with similar interest. They were both about the size of *Chidiok*, who I hoped appeared to a killer whale to be either fierce or inedible, or, preferably, both.

For about an hour the whales swam in our vicinity, diving beneath us several more times, until finally an increase in wind enabled *Chidiok* to increase her speed to three whole knots and sail off.

The normally paranoid Sailing Directions describe Pago-Pago as "the best harbor in the South Seas." They do not also say that it is the dirtiest.

That it is an outstanding harbor I discovered the next afternoon, when I slowly ghosted in and wondered where everybody was. As a plan for designing a safe port, it can hardly be improved upon. Take one

extinct volcano and then break off just enough on the south side for an all-weather entrance, and provide a dogleg to the west once you are well inside. Even though I knew the dogleg was there, I had sailed most of the way to the far shore before I could see around it.

That it is a dirty harbor I had learned hours earlier, when the amount of debris floating offshore reminded me of what I had seen during the storm near Tahiti in January. I wondered how Tutuila could have experienced such a storm when I had been plagued by a lack of wind only a few miles away. The answer, of course, is that it hadn't. What I was seeing was merely the abysmal norm. The largest employer in Pago-Pago, other than the government, is a cannery. Whatever laws regulate such operations in the U.S. are either not in effect or not enforced in Pago. The harbor varies between a rich, dried-blood brown and an impenetrable slime green. And when the wind blows from the cannery, the result is truly breathtaking.

I could go on and on about Pago-Pago, but it would be too depressing. Frank Lloyd Wright, when asked how he would go about improving some American city (I think it was Pittsburgh), replied, "First I would burn it down." No place I have ever been could better benefit from such advice than the scenic capital of American Samoa.

In reviewing the passage, once at anchor, I found that despite the unstable weather, we had averaged seventy-five miles a day, hardly exhilarating, but acceptable under the circumstances. There had been only two hundred-plus-mile days; and it had taken two days to cover the final eighty miles. Other than in the storm near Bora-Bora, we had only brief intervals of twenty-knot winds as line squalls approached, and nothing even close to survival conditions. *Chidiack* showed no signs of dissolving. A 1,200-mile passage in an open boat had become routine.

At one time I had considered laying up *Chidiack* in Pago-Pago for the hurricane season. It was a plan that died simultaneously with my arrival. Everyone told me I would hate it there, and, for a change, everyone was right. But I had to see for myself. Now everyone told me I would love Tonga and Fiji. I only hoped everyone would be right again.

As soon as a check I was waiting for reached the post office—and as soon as the rain diminished to the point where I could find the post office (Pago-Pago is the place about which Somerset Maugham wrote the short story "Rain" and the best hotel is still called the Rainmaker)—I would be off. I would probably not even wait for the wind. Tonga is only 300 miles south. I would start rowing.



Tonga, Butterflies, and Bats

The moon was not due to rise until 10:00 P.M., so I gave some thought before permitting myself to fall asleep at eight o'clock. *Chidiok* was sailing fast on a close reach to the southwest. Three sun sights that day had coincided perfectly with the conclusion of my dead reckoning that Vavau Island in the northern Tongas should now be only fifteen miles away. Yet there was no sign of its 700-foot cliffs. The sights had really been too good, and I was skeptical. Perfection I do not expect in navigation, particularly on such a low and bouncing platform as *Chidiok*, and as always it was difficult to know how far I was seeing. Even big islands can be deceptive. Once 7,000-foot high Tahiti leapt out at me after hiding until I was only two miles away, whereas on another approach I saw it at a distance of sixty miles. Still there did not seem to be anything I could run into within the next hour. The little yawl rushed on. A tiny white speck. A dark sea. A dark sky. A dark unknown island somewhere ahead. If you cannot live with uncertainty, you do not go to sea.

When I awoke at 10:30 the full moon was in place to the east and Vavau Island obediently in place seven miles directly ahead, a silhouette etched on a preternaturally sharp horizon. No photograph could capture such light, in which every detail seems somehow clearer than it ever does in daylight. Probably moonlight reveals by concealing; probably most details are lost, so that those that remain stand out more than they would in the clutter of day. But the very opposite seemed at the time to be true: each wave, each facet of each wave smooth, hard,

as though carved in obsidian; the wind cooler than any I had known since November off the California coast, really more than cool—cold, to my body accustomed to the tropics. Despite my wearing long pants and a long-sleeved shirt beneath my ubiquitous foul-weather gear and being wrapped in a trap, I shivered. The stars were far above me, cold, remote, uncaring. And the island lay ahead. I was acutely aware of being the only bit of warmth, of life, in my private universe. Avoid disaster—and on this passage we had experienced fine weather with light winds since an initial storm upon leaving Pago-Pago August 7, five days before; make the average acceptable; and such moments occur frequently enough to make a voyage worthwhile.

Caution dictated standing off for the rest of the night, but I have found that *Chidiok* must be brought in rather close if I want to make port the following day, so I let her sail on for another hour before heaving to.

At 4:00 A.M. I was very cold as I heated a cup of coffee before closing the coast. Icicles were most definitely not hanging from my ears. Objectively I doubt that the temperature did more than dip into the high fifties, if even that. But the coffee tasted good; and the two hours before dawn, as well as the one afterwards when there was no warmth from the sun, seemed long.

At dawn I was a quarter mile off the cliff at the northwest corner of Vavau Island and about three miles in a straight line from Neiafu Harbor. The trouble was that I couldn't sail that straight line, nor were there any crows to fly me there.

The Kingdom of Tonga consists of more than one hundred islands running for two hundred miles along a northeast-southwest line. The northernmost are known as the Vavau Group. In a square about ten miles on each side are clustered literally countless islands—countless when you are sailing among them; countless, at least by me, even on the chart, where I could never get beyond forty without losing track. Reportedly there are more than fifty bits and pieces of land there, all lying close to or touching one another, as though someone had sorted out but not quite assembled the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. Sheer cliffs, sheltered clear waters, isolated anchorages, friendly people: it was all to be the finest cruising ground I personally have ever known.

But that was still in the future on that dawn when I had to sail six miles south, two miles east, five miles back north, then another mile south, in lieu of picking up *Chidiok* and carrying her over the hills

on my back. Not only was the sail easier, it must also have been more beautiful.

For most of the morning we glided from point to point along Vavau's scalloped western coast before a light northerly. At 11:00 we were able to turn the corner and see for the first time into the midst of the group, at which point began a game that was to continue for my entire stay in Tonga: What island is that? There were so many that even frequent references to the chart and compass did not ensure positive identification. More than once I thought I had everything sorted out, only to be confused when more islands came into view a quarter mile farther on.

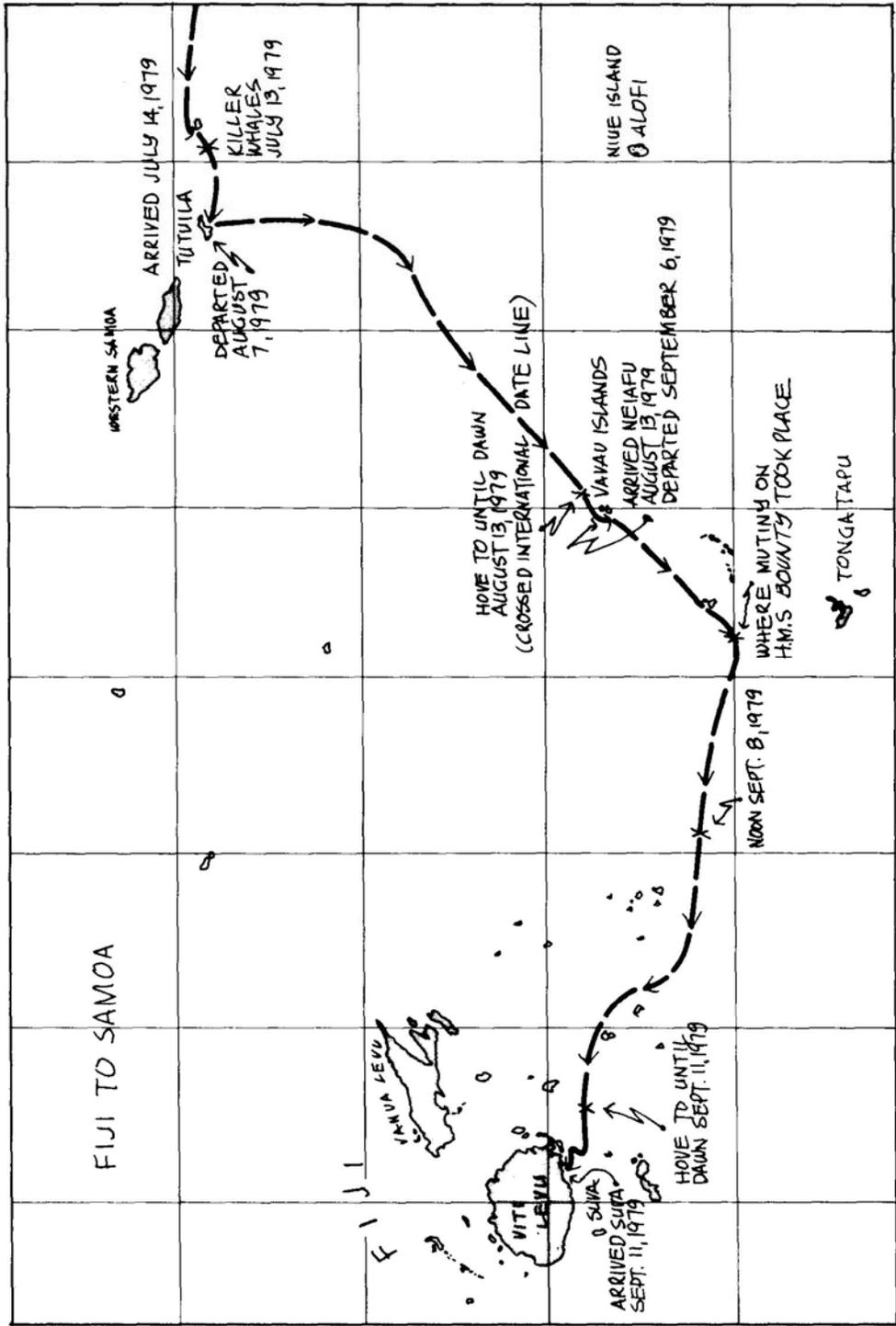
The sailing was delightful. No, more than delightful. Marvelous. *Chidi-ock* has proven herself at sea, but here, as I played the wind shifts off each cliff and point, gentle wavelets lapped at the hull, and the "ordeal" of an open boat circumnavigation became pure joy.

Not long after I entered the group, a fifty-foot ketch motored up and offered me a tow. They meant well, but even if I wouldn't on principle have refused, I would not have wanted to miss those blissful hours approaching Neiafu. And the other boat beat me in by only an hour anyway.

Soon the open ocean was completely lost from view. We were tacking against a light northerly—the true wind was southeast but was deflected by the land—up a channel a mile or so wide between two islands 600 feet high. On one could be seen a neatly laid out village, complete with Mormon church, while on the shore of the other, an eighty-foot ferry was beached for repairs. Later I was told that it had been there for over a year and would probably be there another year before it was again seaworthy. No one seemed much concerned.

Until the very last sharp U-turn, Neiafu was hidden from view. On the chart the pass between a tabletop mountain to port and a low spit of land to starboard looks narrower than it actually is. Coral does extend out from each side, but there is adequate depth in the middle for even the occasional passenger liner to call, and more than enough for *Chidi-ock* to sail against a headwind. This of course we had done all the way around: a northerly when we were going north, an easterly when east, and a southerly when south. It had been such a good day I didn't care.

Neiafu is the biggest town in the Vavau Group. It is the only town, in fact, or it would not be called a town. It has a short concrete wharf, one narrow street, dusty in the sunshine, muddy in the rain; one crossroad; one bar—beer only; one hotel; two general stores; a few other



stores; a police station; and a post office—Tonga has the most spectacular stamps I have seen, most of them showing a proud disdain for anything so dull as a plain square or rectangular shape. There are triangles, diamonds, linked ovals, and my favorite: a lightbulb form depicting a killer whale. One quickly learns in Tonga to write addresses small enough to leave room for the stamps.

Just as I entered the harbor, a large ketch powered past. It was *Wanderer IV*, carrying the most famous of the traditional cruising people, Eric and Susan Hiscock, on their way back to New Zealand from a visit to Canada. We waved and then proceeded separately to the wharf in order to clear with the authorities. A copra boat was taking up most of the space, so I rowed to the shallow water on the inside, but the Hiscocks had to stand off and have the officials brought to them by dinghy. The same set of officials cleared me, with Immigration visiting *Chidiok*, while Agriculture and Customs went out to *Wanderer IV*, then switching over. Later when we spoke, the Hiscocks admitted that at first they could not understand why I had to enter port from what they had assumed was a day sail.

From the beginning everyone in Tonga was very friendly. Neither the Agriculture nor the Customs man actually boarded *Chidiok*. They stood on the wharf and smiled down at me. The Agriculture inspector said, "You don't have any live . . . no, of course you don't. Have a nice time in Tonga." And that was it.

Not only was I sailing an open boat around the world, making (sometimes) routinely passages that had never been made before; I was doing it to an airline schedule. To the frequently asked question "What is the most difficult part of your voyage?" I had come to answer, "Getting to the airport on time." In Pago-Pago I had arrived the day before Suzanne's plane was due. And now in Tonga, I again arrived the day before her flight. But I still would have missed the hotel bus—an old, battered wreck, but the only game in town—had it not been for the church bells. I knew that on the passage from Samoa I had crossed the International Date Line, which has been bent to the east, so that Tonga has the same date as Fiji and New Zealand; and I just naturally assumed that the time zone had changed too, particularly since Tonga falls within the geographic area that should be twelve hours ahead of Greenwich; and I had set my watch accordingly. But the ridiculous church bells kept ringing the wrong hour, or what I thought was the wrong hour. When I finally showed up on *Endeavour*, to which I had

been invited by Doug and Sandy Thompson, whom I had first met at Bora-Bora, I was an hour late. For reasons unknown, Tonga is not twelve hours ahead of Greenwich, it is thirteen hours ahead. This makes no sense whatsoever. Thirteen hours ahead should be eleven hours behind. All the time I was there I was vaguely disoriented by this fact. It is my only real criticism of Tonga. And I guess that if you like almost everything else about a place, you can live with an aberrant time zone.

The ride out to the airport was a ride into the past, on a narrow, bumpy road that twisted among low hills and curved past clusters of wooden houses in unexpected hollows; a ride through the rural America of my youth, of Appalachia or the Ozarks a generation ago. Pigs and dogs and goats and children wandered freely. The only differences were the tropical vegetation beyond the clearings, and the local custom, which we were to find is followed even at the police station, of bordering flowerbeds with a line of half-buried beer bottles.

After 320 miles under sail and 8 under bus—the last were rougher—I arrived at the airport on time. South Pacific Airlines should have done so well. When the small turbo-prop rolled to a stop, an official immediately ran out and sprayed everything and everyone with a fumigation bomb. They treat you better when you arrive by yacht. Suzanne's only complaint was that no carry-on luggage had been permitted and she had had nothing to do for the two-and-a-half-hour flight but look at the ocean. I pointed out that those of us who sailed had looked at the ocean for something more than two and a half hours. She claimed that it is not the same thing.

After I had been in Tonga for a while I found myself thinking that despite the strong influence of the missionaries—Sunday in Tonga is truly a day of rest—it is the most foreign place I had been in the Pacific, and I had to consider what I meant by "foreign." It came down to the fact that Tonga does not have a cash economy. Salaries, for those few who are on them, are not just low, they are infinitesimal. The teller in the bank earns \$650 per year, and tells me that as an employee he gets special loan privileges.

Essentially Tonga is still a simple agricultural, bartering society. Each family is given land by the king, at least eight and a half acres, and on that land grows most of its own food, supplementing the diet with fish. The small surplus is sold in the open-air market in Neiafu or traded with neighbors. There is some copra production and some native

handicraft—the basketwork is reputedly the best in the Pacific. But even with cruising people, Tongans would as soon make a trade as have cash. One boat gave a local family a sweater and then spent several days trying to figure out where to stow all the carvings they received in return, while another had a similar experience after promising to mail back from Fiji a pressure kerosene lantern, useful for night fishing.

One disadvantage to this lack of cash, particularly for those of us who cannot carry provisions for several months, is that very little is available in the stores. The sources of protein are extremely limited. It pretty much comes down to which brand of corned beef you like—not "like," but "can endure." My recipe for making corned beef palatable is as follows: open can of corned beef and immediately throw away half of the contents as being fat; make a cup of rice; fry an onion; slice some cheese. Add onion and cheese to rice. Flavor with soy sauce. Throw away the other half of the can of corned beef. Eat the rice.

While still in Samoa, I had been given some warning about the lack of supplies, but I had received conflicting information. Someone had told me that there was no problem. Later I recalled that this well-intentioned person was one of four paid crew members on an eighty-foot schooner belonging to a millionaire from Ohio. Of course they had no problem: their deep freeze was still full of steaks bought in New Zealand six months earlier. Others had told me that prices were wonderfully low. This was true. But it is not useful to know that lobster costs only forty cents per pound, when there was seldom any lobster for sale when we visited the market.

The evening was clear, so we did not bother to raise the tent, and as the tide rose to cover the anchor I had set on the beach, we watched a heron hunt along the shore and the last light touch the white cliffs on the islands to the west and the stars come out. We were at a tiny uninhabited island, Mala, located in the middle of a mile-wide channel between two larger islands six miles from Neiafu. The water was too shallow for anyone but *Chidiack*, so we had the place to ourselves. It was our first anchorage away from Neiafu and it was to be the best. If I could buy the place, I would.

By the third day at Mala—days of sunbathing on our private beach, uncovered at low tide; of hiking ashore; of rowing through foot-deep shallows above coral forests, in one of which we saw for the first time outside of an aquarium a lion fish, poisonous but beautiful; of starry nights at anchor, comfortably cooler than is usual in the tropics—I was



Going ashore at Mala, Vavau Group, Tonga —s. CHILES

making plans for turning Mala into an impregnable hurricane hole for *Chidiok*. Nature had made it easy. One line through a convenient hole in a rock fifty yards offshore and two more to palm trees beyond the beach, and I think we would have been safe in anything but the most freak conditions. A butterfly fluttered past. We had seen them everywhere in Vavau: on that first fine sail in; on a walk along the road south of Neiafu; here at Mala. Would any other place in the world be this good? I wondered. The temptation to linger was strong—until it came time to cook the corned beef.

After two or three days—or maybe it was four or five—we raised anchor and sailed to another island, Vaka'eitu, seven miles farther west, where I had been told that whale bones could be found on the beach.



At anchor at Mala Island. —w. CHILES



Off Kapa Island, Vavau. —s. CHILES

Vaka'eitu is larger than Mala and L-shaped. Along with four neighboring islands it forms a lagoon sheltered from every direction except the northeast. So for two days we had rain and eighteen-knot winds from the northeast.

Despite the rain we hiked all over Vaka'eitu with Doug and Sandy, who had come in at the same time as *Chidiok*, in search of whale bones and a beach Doug said they had seen on their approach from the south. The single family that lives on the island pointed out a path over the ridge, but it did not lead us to either of our goals.

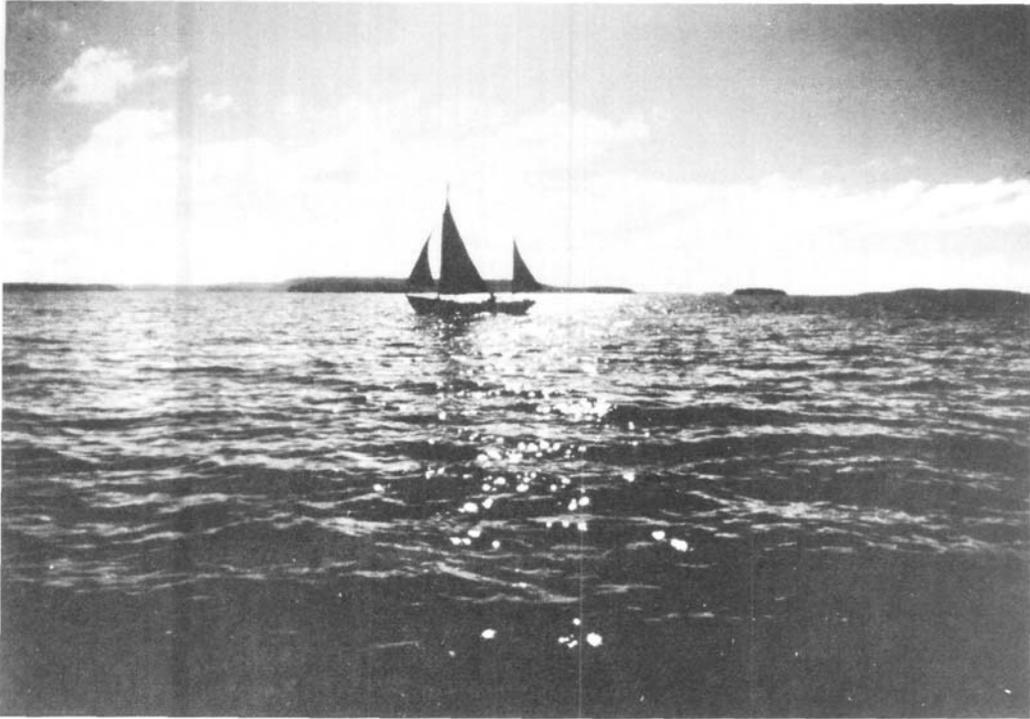
On our second attempt we decided to leave the path and go directly overland. In much of Polynesia this would have been impossible; but the undergrowth on Vaka'eitu is not bad and eventually we did find the beach, though never any bones—whale or otherwise.

One of my favorite poems is by the Greek poet Cavafy, in which he tells Ulysses that he is not to care if when he gets back to Ithaca he finds it to be small, dirty, and dull, because after all Ithaca has given him the beautiful voyage. That is the way I feel about my voyage and about our hikes around Vaka'eitu. Even if we hadn't found the beach, it would have been worthwhile: the subdued light filtered by the trees; the bitter taste of wild lemons; glistening spiderwebs; abstract patterns of fallen leaves; calling birds; even the mewing bats. Bats are supposed to be sinister and I don't believe I would want one living with me on *Chidiok*; but these, though quite large, seemed inoffensive as they flew high overhead and were patently ridiculous when they hung like withered fruit upside down from tree limbs.

The high point of our trek came when we started to return to the anchorage. I was hacking my way through the foliage in best Daniel Boone fashion when Doug tapped me on the shoulder and pointed. Not more than ten yards away swayed the head and shoulders of a teenaged boy, who was staring at us curiously. He seemed to me very tall until I was clever enough to notice that he was riding a horse. Not too terribly long afterwards I realized that if he was riding a horse then there must be . . .

Rather abashed, we made our way to the trail. There was no problem in reading the boy's thoughts: strange people, these Westerners, beating through the bush right beside a nice clear trail. Doug summed it up: "They start construction on the freeway next week."

The following day the sky cleared and the four of us sailed in *Chidiok* for a picnic on Mounu, five miles away. Shoal water, never



Under sail in Vavau. Dream ship, dream islands. —s. CHILES



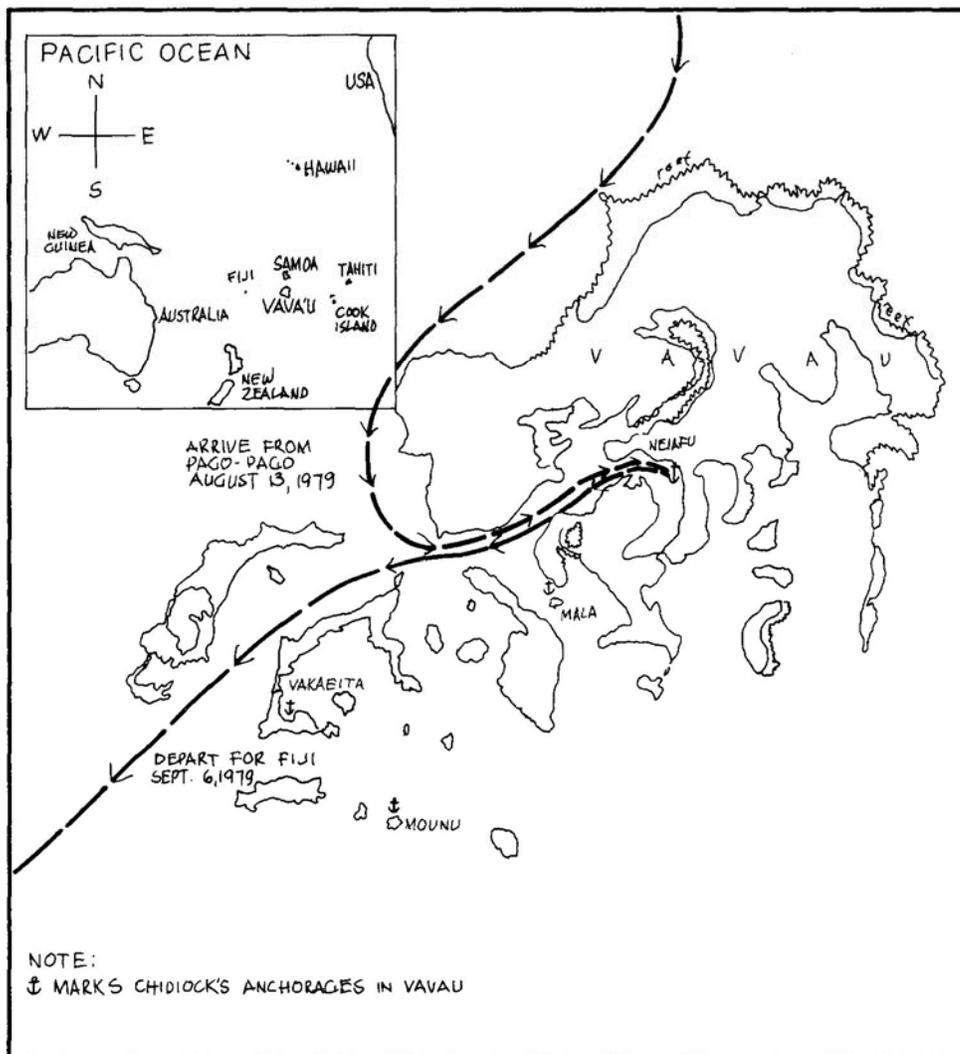
Under sail in Vavau. —s. CHILES

a problem for *Chidicok*, links Mounu with three other islands and creates a turquoise sea whose beauty rivals that of the lagoon at Bora-Bora. Mounu, like Mala, is uninhabited but has the additional advantage of being completely encircled by a pristine white beach. We had a lovely day, only to discover on our return to Vaka'eitu that *Marty's Maid*, the scourge of Tonga, had struck again.

Marty's Maid is a power boat with masts. She has the fine lines of a slightly used bar of soap and presumably sails about as well, which may be why she never sails anywhere. (As an aside I must admit to being disappointed at how few sailboats actually did sail in Vavau. Of the three charter boats working out of Neiafu, I saw only one under sail and then only once. But even the other cruising boats mostly moved under power. Obviously I don't like engines myself, but I can understand using them when one is becalmed or in order to reach an anchorage before nightfall. But if you don't sail in Vavau, I don't know where you ever will sail. It seems that most cruising people consider sails useful only for making ocean passages, and it is certain that just sailing across an ocean does not make one a sailor. *Marty's Maid* is merely an extreme case, rendered even more offensive by her peculiar anchoring habits.)

We had first come across *MM* in Neiafu—or rather she across us—when she powered up and anchored between *Chidiok* and a thirty-six-foot sloop, *Gambit*, which had been nicely spaced from one another. I immediately suggested that she was too close, but *Marty's*'s owner, a young Australian, has a thick skin and assured us that they would not drag. Dragging was the least of my worries. Boats have anchored on top of *Chidiok* before, but never as close as this. She was less than one boat length from us—one of *Chidiok's* boat lengths. When he sneezed, we ducked, but move he would not, not even when Buzz returned to *Gambit* at about 9:00 P.M. and rowed over to ask, with remarkable restraint, "Are you planning to spend the night here?" Naturally, *MM* has a loud stereo and a ham radio, and runs a generator constantly: instant Catalina.

Now, with true genius, the Australian had done it again, but this time to *Endeavour*. Anchoring close is excusable when room is insufficient. If this had not been so in Neiafu, where there had been a maximum of a dozen boats in a space a mile long, it was even more not so at Vaka'eitu, where *Endeavour* was the only boat in an anchorage that could have held hundreds. Yet there she sat, fat and saucy, two boat lengths off *Endeavour's* bow.



I don't know that *Marty's Maid* ever understood. *Chidiock* sailed up to *Endeavour*. Doug and Sandy climbed aboard. *Endeavour* raised anchor. And we all sailed back to Mounu for the night. The only words spoken were when someone called from the Australian boat as Sandy was working the windlass, "Looks like hard work."

Ultimately we moved on from Tonga because the weather turned bad—a normal circumstance that year throughout the South Pacific, where the oft repeated lament when sailors came together was "Where are the trade winds?"; because we couldn't stand any more corned beef; and because of our curiosity about Fiji.

One more great event was to cap our stay. On the day before I was to depart, just as I left the Customs shed, the king's ship docked at Neiafu. We had been told that the king was a massive man, but nothing could have prepared us for the reality of a creature six feet four inches tall, weighing 380 pounds (reportedly reduced from 440), and wearing goggles. Two such kings would displace more space than *Chidiok* though probably not go so well to windward.

Suzanne, with her New Zealand background, likes to think well of royalty, while I prefer people of achievement to those of blood. As the king waddled two steps from the ship, stood for the playing of the Tongan national anthem, and was then hoisted into an army truck, I recalled a documentary film about African termites in which the queen termite is depicted as a great blob many times the size of the others, but who serves only the function of reproduction and is unable even to move by herself.

I liked Tonga very much. I liked the Tongan people very much. But I think that if I were Tongan, I would be a revolutionary. As I fell asleep that night aboard *Chidiok*, two songs ran through my mind, one American, one British. "Papa may have; Momma may have; but God bless the child that's got his own," and "God save the Queen."

12

An Appointment with Captain Bligh

Captain Bligh's ghost haunts the South Pacific. He returned there shortly after the captain's peaceful death in London almost thirty years after the famous mutiny. For once Hollywood got it right: he *does* look like Charles Laughton—at least, he did to me in the predawn light of September 7. I had sailed more than 5,000 miles to see him and during the final hundred managed to sail across an allegedly active volcano and beneath an eclipse of the moon that I did not at the time recognize as such.

Under blue skies and with a fourteen-knot southeast wind, *Chidiok* sped past the last outlying rock of the Vavau Group just after noon and returned to the wet reality of the open sea. I had cleared for Suva, but our course was first south to the only definite mark on our entire circumnavigation: 20°15' south, 175°20' west, a point not on land but at sea, ten leagues—thirty miles—southwest of Tofua Island in the Haapai Group of the Tonga Islands, where on April 28, 1789, the *Bounty* mutiny took place.

It was a fine day, one of the few perfect days for sailing that I experienced that year. Visibility was excellent, with 1,800-foot-high Late Island clearly defined some thirty-five miles to the west. The sun was hot; the ocean spray, comfortable. I stripped to the bare essentials

of sunglasses and sunscreen lotion, and steered *Chidiok* myself.

We made good progress, and by the time I relinquished the helm to the jib sheet for self-steering at dusk, we were only about ten miles from the Metis Shoal, where every decade or so a volcano erupts and forms an island that is soon reclaimed by the sea. Reportedly an eruption had occurred only a few months earlier. The crew of a yacht that had sailed to Vavau from the south claimed to have seen a red glow on the horizon as recently as mid August. But I saw nothing—no glow, no island, no shoal, nothing. In view of the bearing of Late Island at dusk and those of Kao and Tofua Islands the following morning, I must have sailed directly across the Metis Shoal. Visibility continued to be excellent. The night was starry and cloudless, with a full moon rising just as the sun set. Perhaps that was the problem; a dark night would have provided more contrast. But I rather think that the volcano had already resumed its slumber and that an inexpensive lot on the new island is not much of a bargain, no matter what the salesman might claim. By 11:00 P.M. I was confident that whatever the present state of the Metis Shoal, above water or below, it was behind us, and I took off my glasses and went to sleep.

As is my habit I awoke every hour and looked around. On my last boat this entailed actually rising from my bunk, stumbling groggily up the companionway, and swaying there long enough to check the horizon a full 360° before returning to bed. On *Chidiok* I need only raise my head a few inches, which has led under good conditions to the hazardous procedure of not bothering to put on my eyeglasses.

My uncorrected vision is worse than that required for legal blindness. Not only can I not read the big *E* at the top of the optometrist's chart; I have to be pointed toward the wall the chart is on. Without my glasses I can miss entire continents at a distance of five paces, and to gaze blindly about without them is a masterpiece of self-deception.

Either the second or third time I awoke that night everything had gone dark. I was aware that something was wrong but not sufficiently alarmed to wake fully. Had the moon set? No, the moon was dimly visible high overhead. Was something, a cloud, in front of the moon? There were no other clouds in the sky. I squinted upward. Smoke from the volcano? Nonsense. I went back to sleep, not to learn of the eclipse until someone asked me about it in Suva.

Just before dawn, I awoke for good and noticed a short, stocky figure pacing across the waves. In reality *Chidiok* had not yet sailed far enough, but ghosts are notoriously shy, and Captain Bligh's did not

promise to be especially hospitable at any time, so I let my imagination run ahead.

Hands clasped behind his back, feet apart, he walked with a rolling gait ten paces across the waves, then turned and came ten paces back. As I sailed nearer, racing the light growing in the east, I could hear him muttering to himself, but the words were mostly lost in the wind until he turned and I caught a few. "My ship . . . MY ship . . . at dawn . . . still in a nightshirt . . . thought they had seen the last . . . hung . . . died . . . of his own vices." And then a pause before, quite clearly and with great satisfaction, "But I outlived him. I became a rear admiral. I was praised by Nelson himself . . . Yet what they always remembered, what they always talked about behind my back, was that he took my ship." Before I could come closer, the dawn was full, and with a final "my ship," the ghost disappeared. There were many questions I would have liked to ask him, among them how out there in the middle of the sea he managed to have a dab of orange marmalade on his chin and breadcrumbs on his vest.

A few hours later I sailed over the exact spot where the mutiny took place. When I was first planning the voyage, I had dreamed of this moment. I recall thinking of an opening sentence while swimming laps in the pool of the apartment where I then lived. "The island shimmered on the horizon as it had for so long shimmered in my mind." And yet, now that I was there, as it usually happens, it was not that way. The island Tofua did not shimmer. At 1,600 feet and flat-topped, it was, in fact, dwarfed by the pure cone of its 3,380-foot neighbor, Kao Island, two miles farther north. From the location of the mutiny, the islands overlapped and seemed to be one; and it is quite likely that with anything less than perfect visibility, the island in sight when Captain Bligh and eighteen men were put over the *Bounty's* side into a twenty-three-foot open boat was not Tofua but Kao.

I glanced about and tried to imagine those men's feelings as they rowed slowly toward that speck of land. As much as anything else the words in the forward to Nordhoff and Hall's *Men against the Sea* had inspired me. Bligh's journey in the *Bounty's* launch was "the most remarkable open-boat voyage recorded in the annuals of the sea." So, I resolved to make a greater one. If Captain Bligh could do 3,600 miles in an open boat, I would go all the way around and do 30,000. But now I knew that in many ways our voyages were too dissimilar to be compared. Just in getting to the starting line I had sailed 5,400 miles and already exceeded the good captain in every category: a best-day's run

of 146 miles; a longer nonstop passage of 3,000 miles; and a higher daily average. But I was not sailing into the unknown as he had. Increasingly I feel born out of time, trapped by the accident of birth in a declining age where ambition is viewed cynically and pride is mistaken for arrogance, when being "mellow" and complacent are exalted, and mediocrity, or the appearance of it, requisite to holding public office. Put Captain Bligh or any other sailor who has ever lived and me into identical small open boats, let us sail over the horizon, and see who quits first. But it cannot be. What does one do when he is born at the end of a tradition and longs for greatness? I stared at the short, steep waves, at the islands to the northwest. The wind was fair for Fiji. I would not waste it.

But as the yawl reached west my thoughts remained with Captain Bligh. Even though our voyages are different, still I could imagine him and the others rowing a craft only five feet longer than *Chidiack* to Tofua, where they stayed for a few days and where one of them, John Norton, was killed. At one time I had thought of landing there myself, but there is no real landing at Tofua. The *Bounty's* launch anchored off with someone constantly on watch to man the oars, while a few of the crew struggled through the surf.

A Peace Corps teacher who visited Tofua last year told me a local myth. After Norton's head was bashed in, the natives dragged his body to a grave site, and to this day no flowers will grow along that path. Very pretty. But I am rather skeptical, not only of the myth but even that the Tofuans of 1789 would have buried Norton rather than eat him. Missionary influence is very strong in Tonga and may be retroactive.

After four days at Tofua and in face of increasing hostility from the natives, Captain Bligh made the great mental leap and decided to save himself by sailing for Kupang on Timor, then in the Dutch East Indies, the closest outpost of Western civilization although 3,600 miles away. He had been with Captain Cook on one of his voyages and knew the location of the Torres Strait, but did not know what lay between Tofua and the tip of Australia, except that the Tofuans spoke of a great group of islands, the "Feejees," two days' sail to the west. In an overladen open boat, his course was dictated by the southeast wind, and so, unwittingly, Captain Bligh sailed right through one of the most reef-strewn ocean areas on the planet.

Even with the advantages of modern navigation and charts, these are still treacherous seas, particularly for a solo sailor. Depending on what rocks one counts, there are three to five hundred Fijian islands, only

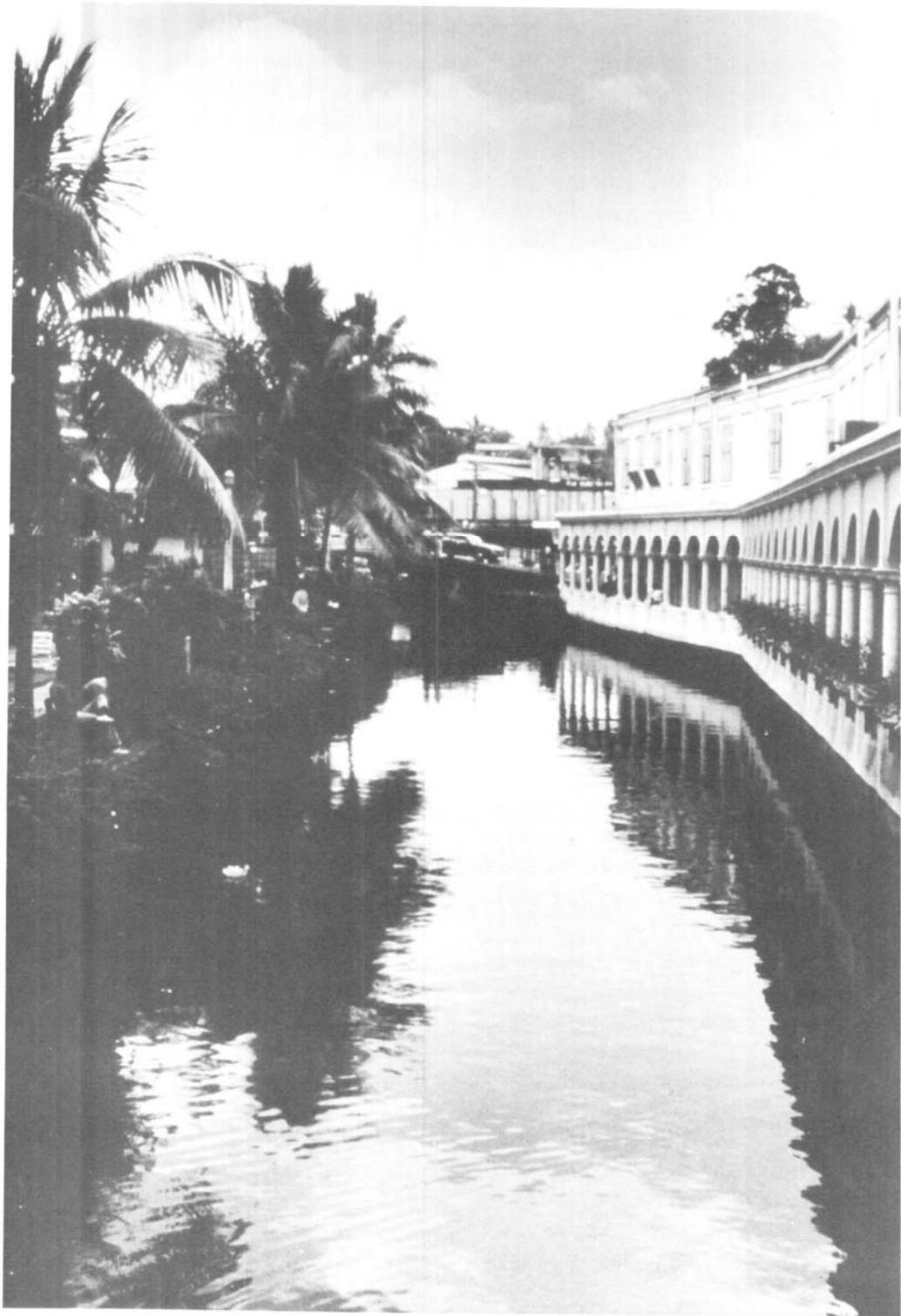
a hundred of which are inhabited, and people continue to run into them with monotonous regularity. In just a few weeks, in September, a Dutchman who had successfully rounded Cape Horn lost his thirty-foot sloop in the eastern Fijis; another yacht went aground but luckily got off without fatal damage; a third came so close to a reef that she was swept by breaking seas before turning away; and a fourth went onto the reef while leaving Suva Harbor. And all these incidents occurred in fine weather. The owners of two of those boats were honest and admitted that their problems were entirely due to human error. Whatever his faults in dealing with men, Captain Bligh did not make mistakes as a sailor.

The wind held—for both Captain Bligh and myself. His day's runs for the 400 miles from Tofua to Viti Levu, the main island of Fiji, were 86, 95, 94, and 84 miles. Mine were 112, 118, and 110, and on the fourth night I hove to off Suva. Yet mentally there was a huge difference between us. When first one goes to sea in a small open boat, or in any boat, for that matter, he must inevitably be apprehensive about how well she will sail and especially how well she will handle bad weather. What Captain Bligh and his crew learned in those first days out of Tofua, I had discovered the previous November out of San Diego. The confidence they developed in the *Bounty's* launch—the captain is reported to have said, "Were she decked and reasonably laden, I could take her round the world"—I had developed in *Chidiok Tichborne* several thousand miles back and could only add, "Reasonably laden, yes; but decked, unnecessary."

Just as foretold by the Tofuans, the second day out gave the *Bounty's* people a sight of land, three small islands in the Lau or Eastern Group; while on my second day I sailed through a passage between islands at the south end of the group without sighting land at all.

That night and the next day the wind blew at about fifteen knots from the southeast. What was this: a resumption of the trade winds? I wondered if it was possible that it would hold all the way to Suva.

Visibility in a small boat is restricted. One is too low and the sails block too much. For a solo sailor particularly, it is dangerous to have no one safe direction in which to find sea room at night. Not since I had sailed through the Tuamotus in January had I been without such an escape route, and I grew increasingly concerned as the following dusk approached without my being certain of my position. The day's sights had not been good; *Chidiok* had been dancing about too much



Suva, Fiji. —s. CHILES

as she made five knots before moderate waves. If my dead reckoning could be trusted, we might pass as many as six islands during the night.

Just before sunset an island did become visible beneath the foot of the jib, but I could not decide if it was 1,262-foot Matuku or 1,164-foot Totoya. The only way to be certain was to continue to the north and see where the next island, Moala, appeared. If to starboard, the first island was Matuku; if to port, then Totoya.

Midnight. A wave broke across *Chidiack* and landed on me with a cold thud. I pulled the tarp tighter over my head and tried to pretend it had not happened. But another wave dropped in for a visit, and *Chidiack* began to spin across the waves in a manner that demanded instant reduction of sail.

The boat-speed indicator had not been accurate since Papeete. By the light of the flashlight, I found it to be reading an alarming five knots, alarming because a reading of five indicates a speed in excess of seven. The wind did not seem all that strong, yet the waves were cresting at six feet, the moon was hidden by cloud, no land was visible anywhere, and *Chidiack's* quarter wave was immense.

My rule has been not to complain if we are making five knots in the right direction; but as waves continued to break over us the rest of the night, I might have accepted a deal for less wind and only four knots made good.

Moala was in sight to the south at dawn—presumably the first island had been Totoya, although it no longer mattered—and we turned to run the final sixty miles west to Suva under low gray clouds.

Our course was too directly downwind for self-steering, so I kept the helm, letting the jib take over on a broad reach only when I ate a can of cold spaghetti for lunch. Several big islands, Ngau, 2,345 feet high; Kandavu, 2,750 feet; and Viti Levu, more than 4,000 feet high, should have been in view but weren't. Above all else, except for actually going aground, I wanted to avoid going too far west. The sailing was quite wet enough downwind, and the prospect of overshooting and then having to beat back to Suva was not attractive.

Sunset came and went. I grew colder and wetter and hungrier. No welcoming loom of lights from the city appeared. If I was too far south I could run onto the Great Astrolabe Reef; if too far north, onto the wide reef extending several miles into the sea at the east end of Viti Levu; if too far west, the reef at Beqa. At 9:00 P.M. I had, by my reckoning, gone far enough and turned *Chidiack* into the wind and hove to. A quick check with my RDF, exposed to the spray for only

an instant before being returned to its cocoon of plastic bags, seemed to indicate that Suva was northwest. After another can of cold spaghetti I tried to sleep for a few hours, while *Chidiock* should have been making sternway toward Suva, a technique I have perfected so well that I may just do the entire next circumnavigation backwards.

But when I took another quick bearing at 2:00 A.M., something had gone wrong. The course to Suva was northeast. It did not seem possible we had drifted so far in only five hours. I checked the bearing again, and again came up with the same sorry conclusion. Instead of a beam reach north, we had a close reach northeast. I raised the sails and, with a sigh, began dutifully pounding into the waves.

The night was long—at least a year, maybe more. My diet of canned spaghetti, imposed by the limited supplies available in Tonga, was doing little for my spirits. And while I had been cold and wet and hungry at sunset, I was even colder and wetter and hungrier at dawn. It was one of those nights when, as the spray finds its way into the cuffs and collar of your foul-weather gear, you think how good it would be to own a little bookstore somewhere, nothing big, just enough to support a modest life, and lock up every evening at 5:00 and go home to the pipe and the slippers and the little woman. And I don't even like pipes or slippers.

I still do not know what was wrong with those bearings. In general I do not put too much trust in electronic aids to navigation, and certainly I took my readings quickly to try to keep the radio dry. Probably I read the dial incorrectly. But another boat that sailed into Suva about then had the same experience. We both thought we were south of the city, both took radio bearings that said Suva was northeast, both sailed northeast, and both came upon Viti Levu well to the east of where we wanted to be. For whatever reasons, our dead reckoning had been right and the bearings wrong.

My first inkling that this was so came at 7:00 A.M., when I saw what looked to be a broom handle sticking out of a wave about a quarter mile ahead. Closer scrutiny revealed it to be an unlighted marker on the submerged reef east of Viti Levu. My thoughts, somewhat bowdlerized, were "Oh, my. Oh, my. Oh, my. How easy it would have been to sail onto that reef in the dark."

An hour later Viti Levu deigned to make an appearance through the clouds. Captain Bligh sailed around it, but the mutiny had conveniently taken place after the cyclone season. *Chidiock* can probably survive a modest cyclone, but I am not excessively eager to find out,

and ever since Pago-Pago we had been looking for a satisfactory port in which to stop.

As we sailed along the reef toward the green hills around Suva, I pulled back the hood of my foul-weather gear in lieu of doffing my cap. Captain Bligh's ghost might still be pacing around Tofua, but I envisioned him splitting tacks with me and then sailing north, to the other side of the great island he thought to be a continent.

"Until next year, then, captain," I called.

He shifted his cramped position over the tiller, and I thought he glanced back over his shoulder and gave me a wave. Grudgingly.



Fiji

Brown hills rise from the sea. They are covered with dry brush, and a dry wind blows down from the inland mountains. It could be the beginning of a Santa Ana in California, but it isn't.

Women in colorful saris, the most feminine and forgiving of garments, shop in the open produce market. Many wear gold rings or jewels in their noses, countless gold bands around fine-boned wrists and ankles, and a red dot on their foreheads and in the part of their shining black hair to indicate they are married, or a blue one as a beauty mark if they are not.

A small man, Dravidian dark, plows a field. The turned earth is black and rich. The plow is pulled by two bullocks. Their yoke is crudely fashioned from a tree limb.

On a narrow street, shop after cluttered shop is filled with watches and cameras and stereo equipment. Men with flowing mustaches implore you to enter, to buy from them. "Bargains. No place better. Guaranteed." The air is filled with the smell of curry being cooked at a sidewalk stall.

It could be India, but it isn't.

Fields of sugarcane reach back as far as the eye can see, until they are lost somewhere in the mountains on the horizon.

Men sweat in the fields, burning away the leaves, cutting the cane, and stacking it on trucks. The sky is thick with bittersweet smoke.

A tiny, narrow-gauge locomotive pulls a train a hundred cars long,

each car loaded with cane, slowly toward the mill.

It could be Hawaii, but it isn't.

A typical pastoral scene. Neat farms, cows grazing sedately, a gentle stream meandering among meadows.

Signs at a nearby fork in the road point in one direction toward "London" and in the other toward "The King's Road."

But it isn't England.

A sea of islands, many of them uninhabited. Pristine beaches on which there are no footsteps. Countless anchorages. Warm, clear water.

It could be Tonga again, but it isn't.

A rutted dirt track winds in impossible curves to a windswept mesa on which stands a small stone church. A few one-story frame buildings are nearby, but no one comes out of them. The only sound is of the wind in the trees. There is a school at the foot of the bluff, but the nearest village is a fair walk away and the nearest town, with probably all of 100 inhabitants, thirty miles north. The outside of the church needs repairs. A pane of glass is missing from one of the windows. A step is broken and the main entrance boarded up.

But you find a side door open and go inside to encounter starkness—almost no furnishings, no pews, to one side a few mats, and, sitting on the floor, a half-full bottle of wine and a mural of exquisite refinement, *The Black Christ*, painted by Jean Chariot. The colors are delicate, the drawing elegant. You are not religious, but you are transfixed by the solitary sorrow of the Christ figure, dramatized by the isolation of the setting.

On your way out you see an old leather guest book. Turning back the yellowed pages, you discover that the entries began in 1963, the year the mural was completed. Assuming that a high proportion of those who have gone to the trouble of finding their way to the church have signed the book, *The Black Christ* is one of the world's least-viewed masterpieces. Yet it would lose much in a crowded museum.

Back in your car, you inch your way down the hillside and onto the rough, unsealed "main" road. Part of you has remained behind on that windswept plateau, and part of the church at Nanukulua has remained inside you. *The Black Christ* has taken you out of time, and you could be anywhere. For the moment it does not matter.

By profession and inclination I am a wanderer. I like to move on. But if I had to choose one place in the South Pacific, and perhaps in the world (now that California is so crowded), in which to live more

or less permanently, it would be the country I have been describing. It would be Fiji. Part of the reason is the diversity implicit in the scenes above. Part of it is the Fijian people, part the low prices, and part the climate—or part of the climate. But mostly it is the combination of all of these in one place at one time.

Other countries may exceed Fiji in some way. Tahiti is more spectacularly beautiful, both its scenery and its people. But it is absurdly expensive, and when you are there long enough, it seems to you tainted by the Tahitians' dissatisfaction with their colonial status.

Fiji has its own political problems, but this is not one of them. The Fijians were never conquered by England. They gave themselves to her, and, when they were ready, in 1970, they took themselves back. Tonga has beaches as spectacular and uninhabited islands, and it is cheaper, but there is not much to buy and the missionary influence is too strong.

There have been and are still missionaries in Fiji; but, significantly, the first building you see when approaching Fiji, at least from the east as I did, is not a church but a hospital. And Suva's waterfront is dominated not by churches, but by office buildings. Christianity is often only a thin veneer. Witchcraft is still practiced in the hill country. And if you scratch a Fijian, you will find not far beneath the surface a proud, unreformed savage. That is perhaps one key to my admiration for them: the missionaries have never really succeeded in convincing the Fijian that he should be ashamed of himself.

You see Fijian pride in many ways. The Fiji Museum has a fine collection of war clubs and special implements used in the art of cannibalism, including different forks for different parts of the body. While viewing this display I enjoyed imagining a Fijian Emily Post dispensing advice as to which fork to use with which course. Or corpse. And along a roadside near Raki Raki is a stone monument that marks the burial place of Udre Udre, who is remembered because he was the greatest cannibal of them all, having devoured, presumably with some assistance from friends and neighbors, 900 men—that is, if he had any friends and neighbors left. And there is a story, true, I hope, of the Fijian chief who sent a letter to Queen Victoria, requesting that in the future she send out fatter missionaries because the last lot had hardly been worth the trouble of preparation.

One should always be suspicious of generalizations about Fiji, even mine. First, there are more than 300 islands in Fiji, and most visitors, including myself, see only a handful of them. When I write about Fiji, I am writing basically from experience on the main island of Viti Levu,

which is about ninety miles long and sixty miles wide. A Fijian friend does not even like Viti Levu, "Here," she scoffs, encompassing the entire island with a gesture of her arm from a Suva sidewalk, "This is nothing. I was born on Vanua Levu [the other major island] and that is really paradise." And second, statistically, the average Fijian is not a Fijian; he is an Indian.

About 100 years ago the English began importing natives of India into Fiji as indentured servants. As these people gained their freedom, they sent for their relatives and now outnumber the native Fijians. The 1976 census listed 292,896 Indians; 259,932 Fijians; 4,652 Chinese; 4,929 Europeans; and about 25,000 others, mostly "part-Europeans" and those from other Pacific islands. (Westerners are not the only ones to use racial terms imprecisely. I was advised that if an American Indian, say an Apache, became a permanent resident of Fiji, he would probably be counted as a "European.")

In *Return to Paradise* James Michener wrote that no one could possibly like the Indians in Fiji. While I cannot agree, it is a common attitude that has some foundation in fact. At present the native Fijian population and the Indian population are increasing at identical rates. But Michener's fear, shared by many Fijians, is that the Indian majority will pass legislation permitting free immigration from India, causing the Fijians to become a lost people in their own land. So far this has not happened; so far there are safeguards. There are laws that make it difficult for Indians to own land, 85 percent of which remains in the hands of Fijians. A visitor can see both sides of the problem: the Fijian does not want to be engulfed by a flood of immigrants; and the Indian, whose parents and grandparents may all have been born on Fijian soil, does not want to be a second-class citizen in what is to him his native land.

There are many differences between the Fijians and the Indians. The Fijians are friendlier, bigger, stronger. They are in fact the most vital people I have seen in the Pacific. The Indians are small—the men seemingly more so than the women—and quick and shrewd. The roles of the two peoples are reversed in city and country. In the city the Indian is the shopowner, the manager; and the Fijian the laborer. In the country, the Fijian is the absentee landlord who leases his land to the Indian who works it. The clearest examples we saw of the differences between them came when we were driving on rural roads. These roads are not heavily traveled. Often ours was the only car to pass in an hour. And upon hearing us rattle along, the Fijian would stop

whatever he was doing and smile and wave until we were out of sight. Usually the Indian did not even look up. It is obvious which makes for a reputation for friendliness and which for more profitable farming—and where each people's values lie.

Of the two yacht anchorages in Suva I preferred the one at the Royal Suva Yacht Club, even though the cove at the Tradewinds Hotel was prettier and more sheltered. It was also too crowded, too much of a tourist trap, and too far from town. The bus ride costs only eighteen cents, but I would rather walk, and the Yacht Club is only a mile from the center of the city and conveniently situated just across the street from the brewery and the prison.

Lamentably, Suva lacks some of those attributes I have come to consider essential for a satisfactory harbor life. The true necessities are there: inexpensive food and good water, and, if you avoid the rush hour at the Yacht Club, even the joy of a hot shower ashore. But the climate does leave something to be desired—if I remember correctly that something is called sunshine; and the harbor is not clean.

The best that can be said for Suva's climate is that it is not as bad as Pago-Pago's. But it does rain in Suva. It rains quite a lot—about 105 inches per year, which at times seems like 105 inches per day. Like Pago, Suva is on the south side of a high island, which catches the clouds being carried by the southeast wind. Unlike in Pago, the rain in Suva is usually only intermittent, and you form the habit of carrying an umbrella constantly, even if when you set out for town there is not a cloud in the sky—a rare but not impossible occurrence. Someday when I am bored on a slow passage I will write a song about the city, called "Suva's Lament, or, Where, Oh Where Has My Suntan Gone?"

Even if umbrellas and the rationalization that too much sun is not good for the skin enabled us to adapt to Suva's climate, the harbor was definitely distressing. By no means is Suva as dirty as Pago-Pago. There is no cannery in Suva, just bilge oil from freighters, shallow, unattractive olive-green water over a muddy bottom, and sea snakes.

For the uninformed, I note that sea snakes are the most poisonous snakes on the planet. They are a common sight in Suva, swimming about or sunning themselves on shore. One even lived for several days wrapped around the rudder post of another yacht. In time the owner began to take a proprietary interest in him. "Come on over and have a drink and see my sea snake" was an invitation that somehow Suzanne still wanted to refuse. The good news about sea snakes is that they are

docile, have small fangs, and are slow to inject their venom. Theoretically you have two or three seconds in which to pull a sea snake off your hand if you do not panic as he clamps down. A notice in the Fiji Aquarium cheerfully advises that if you do not remove the snake in time, you should immediately take a bus to the nearest treatment center, which seems to be located in Australia.

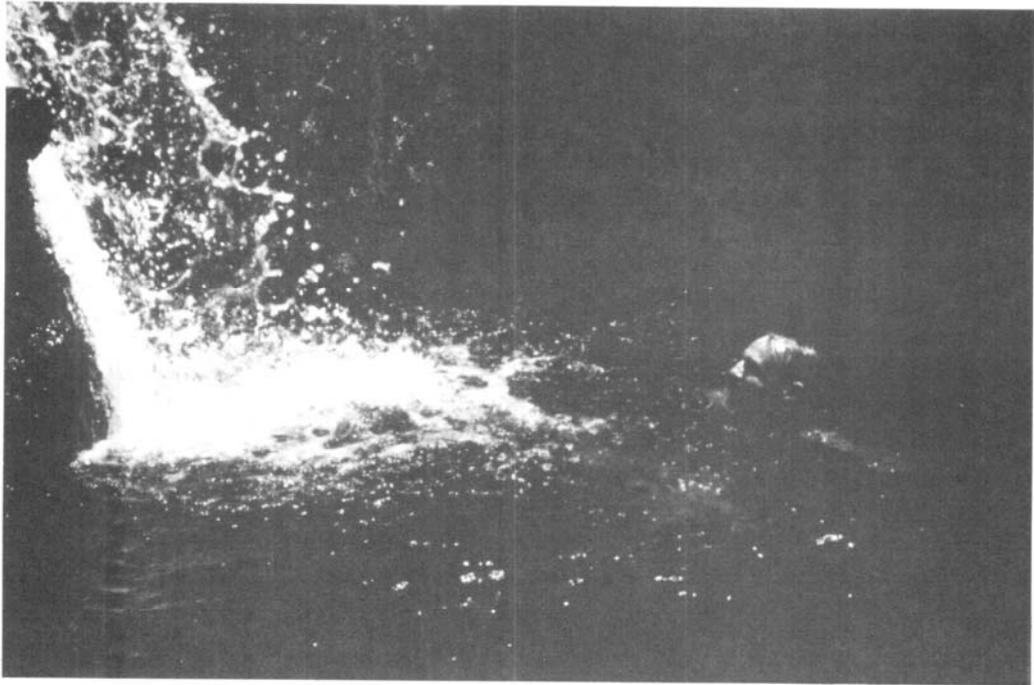
Perhaps needless to say, I seldom went swimming in Suva Harbor. Twice I had to clean *Chidiok*'s bottom, and once I had to chase the dinghy, which had mysteriously come adrift—a subject of some subsequent tension between Suzanne and myself. At low tide *Chidiok* was anchored in only three feet of water. The last time I went in I brushed something with my foot. That is why it was the last time I went in. Probably what I brushed was mud, but "probably" is just not good enough.

Lack of clean water in an anchorage makes living aboard *Chidiok* especially difficult, because we cannot rinse dishes over the side and because we enjoy getting off the boat to swim. In port you do not live on *Chidiok* as much as "from" her. And although we accepted the need to ferry water from shore almost daily in Suva, it was not until we discovered the municipal swimming pool that we really became happy there.

To use a swimming pool when you can swim in the sea has always seemed absurd to me. In three visits to Papeete I have never used the Papeete swimming pool; but in Suva, after my brush with death, or the harbor bottom, I certainly wasn't going to go swimming anywhere else. I even checked the swimming pool rather carefully before I dove in. There was no need. The pool is clean, warm but not too warm, Olympic-sized, almost never occupied by more than a handful of other swimmers, and costs the vast sum of thirty cents. Consequently it is off limits to sea snakes, who have no pockets in which to carry small change.

Apart from sea snakes and being run over by a bus—Fijians drive on what is to Americans the wrong side of the road—the only real danger is that you will bargain yourself to death.

I remember Suva as pastel colors in the rain. I remember Suva as a picnic in the woods of Coli-o-Suva with our friends Doug and Sandy Thompson of *Endeavour*, with whom Suzanne stayed while I sailed from Vavau and the four of us swimming in the cold water of a mountain stream. I remember Suva as fireworks in the night sky on Diwali, the Hindu New Year. I remember Suva as a curry so hot it



Compensation of a lone voyage. At Coli-O-Suva. —s. CHILES



Suzanne at Coli-O-Suva. —w. CHILES

brought tears to my eyes. But most of all I remember Suva as a place to shop in, where we could replenish what could laughingly be called our wardrobes and make some of the other purchases we had been deferring for the past year.

Suzanne had a dress made for eight dollars, half for material, half for the seamstress, and bought another ready-made for eleven dollars. Milkshakes cost forty cents. Dinner at any of a number of good Chinese or Indian restaurants: one to two dollars per person. Steak in a butcher shop: less than two dollars for enough for the two of us. Watches: the digital quartz I bought in San Diego in 1978 for \$150 routinely goes for less than fifty dollars in Suva.

After a week of shopping, we paused and found that we had annihilated our budget, yet we had bought nothing but "bargains." And, taking a deep breath, we returned to crowded Cummings Street and shopped some more.

A word of warning, however, should be given to those who visit Fiji only briefly. Prices are doubled on any day a cruise ship is in port. And once, when we were taking a break from *Chidiock* and staying in a hotel ashore, we had the worst and most expensive breakfast it has ever been my misfortune to endure, from rotten fruit to watery scrambled eggs and bitter coffee. Overall the hotel was rather pleasant, but its three restaurants were disasters. It is the only hotel I have ever stayed at where the only decent food—and the least expensive—came from room service.

Ultimately we saw Fiji from three different yachts, countless buses, and two rental cars. And as much as I like Suva I would not recommend that anyone vacationing in Fiji stay there long. For if there are diverse Fijis in culture and landscape, by far the greatest difference is in climate. Viti Levu is one of the biggest islands in the South Pacific, and while Suva was having floods, the second city, Lautoka, in the west and beyond the mountains, was on water rationing because of drought.

Not until our final bus ride from Suva to Nadi did we fully experience the demarcation between the two ends of the island. About forty miles west of Suva we swayed around a hill and went instantly from rain to sunshine. To the east of that hill: low clouds, tropical jungle, mud. To the west: sunshine, brown hills, dust.

Most of Fiji's resorts are in the dry zone, and I don't want to misrepresent it as being a desert. There are still palm trees and good beaches and all those isolated little islands that reminded us of Tonga. Almost simultaneously Suzanne and I had the same thought: if only

Suva were here in the sunshine. But then we reconsidered. We like Fiji pretty much the way it is, and it is impossible to think of Suva without rain.

I am not going to live permanently in Fiji. As soon as the cyclone season was over I would be a good wanderer and wander on. But as I make my second solo circumnavigation, I am already planning my third. And on my third, Fiji definitely gets more time. My ghostly acquaintance Captain Bligh is said to have wanted a small boat and five years in which to explore the "Feejees." That sounds about right.

How the Other Half Lives

At 10:00 A.M. the computer decided we could leave for New Zealand, and that night I slept with a motorcycle—a new way to begin a passage, and an appropriate one, for this was to be a passage of new experiences.

The cyclone season had come. The date was November 3 and though the greatest danger lies between December 1 and March 31, an early storm is not unknown. Over in Suva Harbor hysteria had followed every slight dip in the barometer since September. On no fewer than three separate occasions had someone nervously asked me if I had heard of the "cyclone" on its way. Part of this fear could be attributed to cyclone Millie, which passed forty miles south of the city in March 1979, killing more than twenty people and destroying two yachts on the Great Astrolabe Reef. But so far this season the rumors had been unfounded, irresponsible, and unseamanlike.

Still, the problem of what to do during the cyclone season must be faced. If you are as far east as Tahiti, you are probably safe—although cyclone Diane hit Bora-Bora in February of 1978. But in Fiji, cyclones are no longer a possibility, they are a certainty. At least two a year will touch the group somewhere, and storm tracks cover the main island of Viti Levu.

Even more than Bora-Bora is in June, Suva in October is an ending. American yachts were in a minority, with as many New Zealand, Australian, and even one week as many German boats in port. (One of the Germans, Hugo, who admittedly was sailing a very rundown

ketch, was advised by the other Germans that he was failing to uphold the national honor. They gave him a new German flag and some paint to spruce up his topsides.)

The proportion of boats circumnavigating is still small. Of the dozen or so other craft I had known in the Marquesas a year ago, only one boat other than *Chidiok* had not turned back. Americans make the circle down to the Societies and then up to Hawaii and back home. New Zealanders and Australians swing up to Fiji and perhaps Tonga before returning home. Only a few Americans continue on to New Zealand, and even fewer sail west to the Indian Ocean. I sat on the Yacht Club lawn and looked out at the thirty boats in the anchorage and thought of the similar number over at the Tradewinds Hotel. For months many of us had been crossing one another's paths, but next year I would expect to see only one or two again.

What people do about the cyclone season usually depends upon their finances. In Suva most were running out of money, some critically. I know of three boats, ranging in value from \$50,000 to more than \$200,000, whose owners had only a few hundred dollars to their names. It is a desperate feeling I know only too well, having experienced it myself at the end of my first circumnavigation: the nautical equivalent of being land poor. And you can't eat fiberglass any more than you can eat dirt.

Very few cruising people are rich. A few more are middle-class independent, usually retired with a pension, sometimes owners of businesses that no longer require their active management or real estate. A few have enough savings to sail for several years. A few work wherever they are—one talented girl makes \$1,000 per month with scrimshaw. But most had planned from the beginning of their cruises to seek work during the cyclone season; and for almost all of us the priorities had temporarily changed.

What I am about to say will doubtless seem heretical to those still dreaming of their voyages, but the fact is that one can simply get too much of paradise; one can even get too much of sailing—for a while anyway. And what is even more heretical is that most of us had. Doug and Sandy Thompson summed it up in a card they sent back from New Caledonia, "Sailing into Noumea is a lot like sailing into Tonga. Spectacular scenery, beautiful mountains, warm clear water, colorful reefs—you know, the same old thing." Many of us loved the life—a significant minority hated it—but we were becoming satiated. All palm trees, islands, reefs, sunsets, had begun to look alike. And unexpectedly I

became an object of envy.

Jobs can be found in Australia and New Zealand—even without work permits—more easily than mooring space can. Boats are a mixed blessing. They are homes, but they are also cumbersome responsibilities. And countless people told me they wished that for the cyclone season they could do with their boat what I did with *Chidiock*—fold it up, put it in my pocket, and walk away. My priorities were clear: until I could follow Captain Bligh to Indonesia in May, I wanted a large bed and a table at which to write, both preferably covered by a roof.

My first plan was to leave *Chidiock* in dry storage at the Royal Suva Yacht Club, which generously made room for her. But then Trevor Dunn, the nicest tax assessor I ever expect to meet, offered the use of his backyard, where *Chidiock* would be even more secure. And so the last Saturday in October found the tiny yawl out for her final sail of the year, a five-mile beat around Suva Point to the launching ramp near the University of the South Pacific.

Chidiock had a full crew—Trevor, his son Stuart, their neighbor Jeff Eden, and myself. The wind came up, blowing twenty to twenty-five knots, and although we stayed inside the main reef, we encountered four-foot breaking waves when we ventured beyond the shelter of the point. By playing the sheets and shifting our weight to keep her on her feet, we were able to handle *Chidiock* even when short tacking against twenty-five-plus-knot gusts at the spot where the inside channel narrows to less than 100 feet between coral heads.

In the last mile I heard a fluttering aloft and saw that the lacing securing the mainsail to the gaff had chaffed through. A few feet of the luff had pulled loose, but the rest would hold until we got to the ramp. It almost seemed that the little boat sensed that her season was over. In the past year she had sailed on 106 days, including daysails, covered 6,370 miles, and survived two fifty-knot storms.

Although she had earned her rest, she seemed a bit forlorn as we stripped her of her masts, and I was sad as her bare hull rocked at anchor just before we loaded her onto the trailer. She was very small, not a world cruiser anymore, but a rowboat. I find it difficult to be dispassionate about her. "Don't love anything that can't love you back" has long been one of my convictions. But I come close to loving *Chidiock*. She is a noble craft.

An hour later it was a sense of the absurd, not the solemn, that was fulfilled. No matter how vulnerable she might look, *Chidiock* is a world cruiser. And we had taken this "world cruiser" and put her on a trailer

and towed her a mile inland to a quiet suburban enclave of expatriate Englishmen and planted her behind a flowerbed. We scrubbed her and put in place her cockpit cover (which is never used at sea because it interferes with the jib sheets) and then sat on the back porch with a cool drink and admired our labor and her fine lines. She seemed quite happy there among the frangipani.

I thought about her as *Cyclone* powered for the pass off Nadi. I do not understand this affinity people have for naming their boats after storms. One friend, Ralph Saylor, sails *Chubasco*, another cruises in *Typhoon*, and now we were sailing to New Zealand with still other friends aboard *Cyclone*. What else is a sailor to do during an enforced off-season but go sailing?

Cyclone differs somewhat from *Chidiack*. For one thing she is bigger. In fact, her dinghy is bigger, as I discovered when we cranked it aboard with the main halyard winch. *Cyclone* is a Swan 48, a forty-eight-foot sloop, that under a previous owner and the name *Whirlwind* was a top ocean racer in the mid seventies. She displaces



The cyclone season in Trevor Dunn's backyard, Suva, Fiji. —s. CHILES

44,000 pounds to *Chidiock's* 850 and often sets more than 2,000 square feet of sail to *Chidiock's* 132.

The list of amenities aboard *Cyclone* not to be found on *Chidiock* is long. Deep freeze, refrigerator, hot and cold pressure water, shower (other than rain), heads (although even on *Cyclone* there is a bucket in case she is heeled over so far that the through-hulls are out of the water), ham radio, computer, weather-facsimile machine, Telex, main-hatchway dodger, gimble stove with oven, power windlass (praise be that it works, for *Cyclone* anchors with a ninety-pound CQR and half-inch chain, which for some reason comes up less easily than *Chidiock's* fifteen-pound CQR), autopilot, wind-vane self-steering, barometer (*Chidiock's* died a week out of San Diego), full instrumentation—including three boat-speed indicators, two close-hauled wind indicators, one 360° wind-direction indicator, anemometer, log, and fathometer, various large sheet and halyard winches, lifelines and pulpits, two dinghies, two outboard motors, one inboard diesel engine, wheel steering, cassette player, thirteen bags of sails, a teak dining table, a cockpit table, bunks with cushions, curtains, a motorcycle (lowered for the duration into the main cabin, where it was wedged between my bunk and the table, covered with three sleeping bags for padding—the motorcycle was the warmest thing aboard—and nicknamed by me after our first night in one another's arms the unicorn), and some miscellaneous items, such as a deck, keel, ballast, and crew.

Many of these were luxuries I had never before sailed with, and as we cleared the pass and *Cyclone* settled down under reefed main and jib topsail against a twenty-five-knot wind similar to that *Chidiock* experienced on her last sail the preceding Saturday, I observed that there are certain advantages, in terms of dryness, in putting the bow a long way from the stern.

Two things *Chidiock* and *Cyclone* have in common. Within their respective size ranges, they are both expensive boats, and both have full standing head room.

At dinner that first night I learned that *Cyclone* carried something else not to be found aboard *Chidiock*—seasickness. I have been surprised to learn during this past year how many experienced cruisers still get seasick at the beginning of each long passage. The proportion is large, including perhaps even a majority of those I know well. To keep returning to the sea in the face of such discomfort demands remarkable tenacity. My poor body has been tossed about so much, it just thinks sea life is normal.

With the exception of Suzanne, who was born and raised in Auckland, we were a crew of inland sailors. Gene and Kathy Taatjes, the owners, come from Minnesota and South Dakota; Bob Stevenson, the other crew member, is from Calgary, Canada. All were experienced sailors, and at age thirty-seven—thirty-eight by the time we reached New Zealand—I was the oldest on board.

For four days *Cyclone* carried the bodies south. The wind stayed mostly in the twenty- to thirty-knot range, and the crew's only labor consisted of changing the main from the second reef to the third and back again. The autopilot steered. The boat speed hovered around seven knots, the close-hauled wind indicator, between forty and forty-five degrees; the log, 160 to 170 miles a day.

As the wind continued to blow, the waves grew higher until they averaged six to eight feet, but *Cyclone* kept on chugging south. Under such conditions it could not be said that she was comfortable or completely dry, but she was less uncomfortable than any other boat I have sailed on, and drier. What little water found its way below was negligible, and the cabin remained a refuge, a true haven from the furious world on deck. I had forgotten what cabins are all about.

During the day only loose watches were kept, but the night was divided into four-hour watches, with Suzanne and me on deck from 2:00 to 6:00 A.M. It was then, as each night grew colder, that I came to revere that marvelous invention the dodger. In Fiji we had joked about putting on long underwear and posing for a group portrait on the beach, holding a sign "Bound for New Zealand." Now the joke became reality. Peeking forward from the shelter of the dodger was decidedly warmer than being in the exposed cockpit, and Suzanne and I both found ourselves eagerly looking forward to the first sign of dawn.

As always when sailing aboard a crewed vessel I was impressed by how much more tiring it is to stand watches than to sail alone and wake up briefly every hour or so. People don't believe it, but solo sailing actually is quite restful.

I enjoyed those night watches. They were times of contemplation, of observing the stars and the sea, of thinking about sailing. Aboard *Chidiock* the experience of the sea is so immediate as to be overwhelming, and usually all my energy is taken just in staying alive. I have not found it possible to write more than a few notes during a passage aboard the little yawl, usually no more than a single scribbled word I hope to be able to decipher once I reach port. But *Cyclone* is a step removed, just enough insulated so that one can have some perspective on the

experience. And it was pleasant, too, for a change not to be responsible for everything. For me this voyage was a vacation. All I had to do was stand my watches and consume Kathy's good cooking. By choice I didn't even have to navigate, although here I must admit old habits proved impossible to break. My vow not to look at the chart did not last a single day, and I found myself maintaining a rough dead reckoning in my head.

On the third night the autopilot went berserk. Instead of steering *Cyclone* with a gentle nudge here and a soft whirring there, "Auto" abruptly put the rudder hard over to starboard, then swung hard to port, before attempting to return to our course of 188° with an endless series of spastic twitches. By profession Gene is a designer of computer systems, and he was raised on a farm where he early learned the art of improvising repairs. *Cyclone* is one of those rare complicated boats on which everything works. Gene quickly diagnosed the autopilot's problem—something to do with solenoids or relays or something else I don't understand—and said that he thought he could fix it in the morning. In the meantime we hooked up the wind-vane self-steering. For a terrible moment there, I almost thought I was going to have to leave the protection of the dodger and steer.

Phase Two of the passage began the next day. We were through the convergence zone and into the New Zealand weather pattern. My experience of New Zealand is that it is a very nice country with a very bad climate. In 1976 I was in a cyclone when I approached from the west and a fifty-five- to sixty-knot storm when I left to the east. All along, these last few hundred miles had promised to be the roughest part of the trip. Gene kept a radio watch for information about possible lows coming east from the Tasman, although now there wasn't much we could do to avoid them. Predictably, two were reported near New Zealand's North Cape. So, the wind died, the sun came out, the sky cleared, and we were becalmed.

This was not the calm before the storm. It was the calm before the calm, the beginning of the most gorgeous "low" I have ever seen at sea, one of those inverted Southern Hemisphere lows that cause the barometer to climb.

Off came parkas, sweaters, and long underwear. On came bikinis and shorts and smiles. By day we set the spinnaker and ghosted slowly over glassy seas. At night we lowered sail and powered slowly over glassy seas. *Cyclone's* engine is run a half hour morning and evening to charge batteries, but she is basically a sailboat. There was enough fuel left to

power 200 miles. We were 300 miles out.

The food, which even during the rough weather was the best I have had at sea, became even better, culminating in a full Thanksgiving dinner, eaten early because we knew the New Zealand agriculture inspectors would not allow the turkey, kept in *Cyclone's* freezer since she left San Diego in December 1978, into the country. Kathy cooked turkey, stuffing, gravy, mashed potatoes, yams, green beans, salad, and fresh pumpkin pie—with whipped cream, of course. The one essential that had somehow been forgotten when *Cyclone* was provisioned, we provided. What more can you ask of a crew than that when you decide to cook a turkey, they reach into their duffel bag and pull out a can of cranberry sauce? (Suzanne had been planning for Thanksgiving herself and had bought cranberry sauce in Fiji, where, oddly, it is available, to take to New Zealand, where it is not.)

Between feasts, Gene made telephone calls through a ham operator in San Francisco, and Bob worked on his black coral carvings. We read, sunbathed, listened to the cassette player, had a backgammon tournament, and played Scrabble. I tell you, these people are decadent.

One evening dolphins came alongside. Someone had heard that they are attracted by music, so Bob, who travels with both guitar and flute, began playing the flute for them. The response of the dolphin was inconclusive.

And one afternoon we saw a white streak on the sea. As we sailed closer the streak revealed itself as being composed of millions of tiny jellyfish. Packed densely into a band only a few feet wide, they stretched in a meandering path from horizon to horizon, like the yellow brick road to Oz. For the remainder of that afternoon and all that night and well into the next morning, we traveled beside a living ribbon. The number of jellyfish was staggering, inconceivable, as was their purpose, congregated out there in the middle of the sea.

At 1:00 A.M. on our ninth night out came the call for "All hands." I awoke to feel *Cyclone* sailing fast. Finally the wind had returned, and Gene wanted to get the drifter down before it stretched out of shape.

Suzanne and I remained on deck and kept the boat moving toward a flashing light, which we assumed was Cape Brett at New Zealand's Bay of Islands, even though it was not flashing at the listed interval.

Suzanne was quiet, but I knew she was becoming increasingly excited. And with the dawn, gray hills appeared about ten miles to the west, then turned purple, then green and white, as the sun rose to shine on fields and cliffs. I was glad for her that landfall had come during our watch.

Even as we powered up to the wharf at Opuia for clearance, *Cyclone* had one last "first" for me—there was enough fresh water for hot showers for each of us. If you're going to be decadent, I decided, you might as well do so completely. The shower was fine.

While we were waiting for the officials to come aboard, I had time to consider the voyage. First came the realization that this was the first passage I had made in a year in a boat with a lid, and the first on which it hadn't rained.

All of the amenities aboard *Cyclone* were enjoyable because Gene has the ability to keep them working. Not having that ability, I would not want to have most of them aboard a boat I owned. Obviously those I liked best were the power windlass, the dodger, and Kathy's cooking.

Two of the "extras," the engine and the ham radio, fundamentally change sailing. I see some purpose for engines and am always planning to have one on my next boat, even though it seems I never do. And I am very glad Gene used *Cyclone's* diesel judiciously those last 300 miles. As someone aboard said, "The purpose of this exercise is to get there, and style doesn't count." But for me on my own voyages, style does count. Sailboats are a slow, inefficient, and expensive mode of transportation. Style is everything. And had I been by myself or with only Suzanne I would have preferred to wait for the wind, however frustratingly and however long.

For ham radios I can muster no enthusiasm. Not long after we reached New Zealand the crew of another yacht were rescued, undeniably because of a distress call sent by ham radio when a whale sank their ship. I am willing to take my chances radioless. When I go to sea I do not want to be part of a community. I do not want to talk to people. I do not want to engage in idle gossip. Gene was not guilty of this habit, but many people are.

Ultimately, as could be expected, I admired *Cyclone*, but I would not want to own her. Both Suzanne and I were surprised that she did not seem enormous to us after *Chidiack*. She did not, perhaps because for a big boat she is well balanced and easy on the helm. Still I believe that if a boat is too big to steer with a tiller, it is too big. And, confidentially, I couldn't lift the sail bags alone. That's the way it should be with sailors: Gene happy with his boat, I happy with mine.

We huddled miserably under the eaves of the Opuia General Store. Just after the officials finished with us, the sky clouded over and it began to rain, a cold, relentless drizzle. For a year we had been tropical birds, and we looked unnatural to one another and to ourselves in long pants

and shoes and sweaters. "What have you done to us?" my feet complained from their unaccustomed confinement. "What have we ever done to deserve being cooped up in here?" Probably in time they would adapt; probably we all would. Probably. But at the moment it did not seem likely, particularly to Suzanne, that creature of the sun, who could not possibly imagine how she had endured New Zealand's climate for twenty-nine years.

Our cab came and we said our last good-byes to Gene and Kathy and Bob. It had been a good passage. We were all still friends.

As we rode toward our hotel room in Pahia, I said, "Egad."

Suzanne said, "What?"

I said, "Egad."

"No one says 'egad/' " she said.

"I always feel the British influence in New Zealand," I replied.

"So 'egad' what?"

"Egad, I just realized: I've been 'yachting.' "

"And how was it?"

"Not bad. Not bad at all."

The cab driver looked at us strangely, but he didn't say anything.

Night Watch

For a number of reasons, chief among them the necessity, known to all good admirals, of sorting out my lines of communication and supply before venturing into the East, we decided to spend the last part of the cyclone season in California.

Flying across the Pacific on a 747 is somewhat faster than sailing across in a small boat—one hour of flying equals one week of sailing—but it is less stimulating. Inside a cylinder hurtling through the night at 500 miles per hour and 35,000 feet, you are cargo.

The jet lifted off from Auckland at 5:33 P.M., and I sat and ate the food and drank the wine and watched a movie about H. G. Wells chasing Jack the Ripper through time, and tried to imagine the ocean below us. Somewhere down there people were sailing. Somewhere there were storms. Somewhere a solo sailor was dozing as his boat ran down the trades toward a high, dark island. Somewhere someone was heading toward a reef and I wondered if he would see the breakers in time. I knew they were there. I knew it was all happening at that very moment. But it did not seem real. I could not quite succeed in putting myself in their places. The ocean did not seem real. Nor my voyage. Nor, perhaps, I myself.

Walls. I was trapped by walls. The walls of the fuselage of the airplane. The walls of the apartment we had rented for two months in Auckland, from which I would look up from my typewriter and watch sailboats on the harbor a mile away. Between me and the ocean were

the typewriter, a formica table, floral wallpaper, a window, steps, side-walks, houses, street lamps, cars, a lawn-bowling club, people, dogs, a beach. And then, finally, way off in the distance, a tiny triangle of blue, where the boats glided silently for a second or two through a gap from behind one tree to behind another. This was quite different from reaching over the side of *Chidiok* and touching the ocean with my fingers, or having it reach in uninvited and touch me. Walls of mundane detail: of getting shots and papers and supplies for the next passage, of dunning some publications and people, of filing taxes. (Yes, even adventurers must file income taxes. And I probably have the most complicated taxes of any poor man in the world. How does one figure the depreciation on an eighteen-foot open boat making a voyage never before attempted?) I sighed. The cyclone season was not half over, and already I longed for the simplicity of life at sea.

The movie ended and other passengers tried to sleep. The cabin was dark and quiet but for the hiss of the engines. Beside me Suzanne's breathing was slow and regular. I have slept under worse conditions at sea, but I could not get to sleep on the plane that night. It was January 16, 1980, the date when, a year earlier, I had finally staggered into Papeete Harbor. We might be flying over Tahiti at that very moment. My mind was too active. For even if walls are barriers, even if they isolate and filter, walls also provide perspective, a perspective that cannot be achieved in the immediacy of making a passage. Walls and time. And so I thought about the voyage, of the days and the miles and the people and the islands passing unseen below.

There were four of us who have accomplished something as single-handers in Papeete in March of 1979: Bernard Moitessier, Kenichi Horie, Tom Blackwell, and myself. A Frenchman, a Japanese, an Englishman, and an American. All except Tom were listed in *Guinness*, and he is one of only four men to have made two solo circumnavigations; Moitessier, the longest nonstop passage, nearly 38,000 miles; Horie, the fastest westabout circumnavigation, 275 days, and I, the fastest monohull, 202 days. As an ad in the *Wall Street Journal* once said, "Eagles don't flock," so we did not all sit down together and have a chat, though it might have been interesting. This is not to support the myth that single-handers are antisocial. Moitessier was with his wife, Helene, and son, Stephan; Horie, with his wife; and, after a while, I, with Suzanne. Only Tom lives alone always.

I had known Tom—as much as I was ever to know him—in 1974, when on my first entry to Papeete I anchored my thirty-seven-foot

cutter, *Egregious*, next to his fifty-eight-foot ketch, *Islander*. Now I anchored the eighteen-foot *Chidiok Tichborne* next to *Islander* again in almost exactly the same spot in the same harbor. In the intervening years both of us had circumnavigated; he through Suez and Panama; I around the Horn.

Islander, though built of wood, is meticulously maintained and has withstood time better than has Tom, who admits that at his age—he is about seventy—she is too big for him to sail efficiently. Even in the best weather, he sets only reduced sail and makes slow passages. In port he keeps very much to himself and to a strict routine: ashore at sunup to shop; back to the boat by 9:00 A.M.; in the cabin until sundown, when punctually and punctiliously he furls the Union Jack and scrubs *Islander's* teak decks with a long broom. Below again, presumably to prepare and eat dinner while the deck dries. Then back to pace *Islander* from stem to stern for about half an hour. I did not ever count, but I assume there is a prescribed number of laps. Tom is not unfriendly. He is more than willing to help others. He took *Chidiok's* stern lines ashore and adjusted someone else's sextant, and repaired yet another boat's engine. He is just more of a loner than most.

Horie was with his wife and a cameraman from Japanese television on *Mermaid IV*, a fine flush-decked aluminum thirty-five-footer. I did not get a chance to speak to him, because *Mermaid* was in port only briefly before attempting a counterclockwise circumnavigation around South and North America, Cape Horn to the Northwest Passage, and back to Japan.

I saw Moitessier more frequently, both in Papeete and on Moorea, where I had dinner with him and his family in their shack at the head of Cook's Bay. I admire Moitessier for dropping out of the nonstop-around-the-world race and making the long voyage. But meeting him was a sad experience. He caused me to recall Housman's poem "To an Athlete Dying Young," which suggests that it is more fortunate to die immediately after a grand achievement than to live long years with only remembered glory.

In early 1979 Bernard Moitessier was a very unhappy man. Of moderate height, lean, apparently fit, he had not done much real sailing for a decade, not since the long voyage ended in Papeete in 1969. His ulcer was bothering him again. On the shelf above his mattress stood a carton of Gelusil. And I do not believe it is a betrayal of any confidence to state that he is married to a woman who hates boats and who prefers to live in squalor ashore, rather than aboard the thirty-nine-foot

steel ketch *Joshua* at her mooring in the bay.

Bernard was unhappy in that resigned way of a man who knows he has lived beyond his time and can see no way out of his unhappiness, not because there is no way, but because he has no will to take it. That was his judgment of himself. "I have no will anymore," he said to me several times. And once, almost enviously, "But you, you are still young and strong." I was thirty-seven.

Neither he nor Helene liked French Polynesia: not Moorea, which some consider to be the most beautiful of islands; certainly not Tahiti. And they loathed Papeete, which they visited only for medical treatment. They did not even speak well of the Tuamotus, where they had lived for years on the island of Ahe.

As a group of us sat on mats at Moitessier's, eating spaghetti he had cooked, one young Frenchman told me, "God must certainly look after you in that little boat at sea." To which I replied, "God does not bail." And then I turned to Bernard. "Did you expect God to take care of you during a voyage?" He thought for a moment before replying, "No. But sometimes a little god entered in and made everything go well for a while."

He also said that initially he had given to the pope the royalties to the book about the long voyage. He subscribes to the "Money is the root of all evil" oversimplification and did not want to taint the voyage. Although he is not a practicing Catholic, a decade ago the pope seemed to him to be the symbol of the last vestiges of the spiritual in the world. If I understood him correctly, he now keeps the royalties himself.

Every morning before the wind came up, the hills around Cook's Bay echoed the sound of Bernard chipping rust from *Joshua*. But his work was desultory, just something to fill time. There was the boat, still sound. There was the pass to the open sea. And there was the unhappy, burnt-out man.

On the morning I was to sail back to Papeete, Bernard rowed past *Chidiock* on his way to *Joshua*. We wished one another well. I looked at him and wondered whether if I were still alive at age fifty-four, I would be like him. Better that the flame has burned once than not at all. But better still, as Housman said, that one dies before it flickers out.

The one place Moitessier still liked in the world is the one place I most regret missing in the Pacific: tiny Suvorov Atoll, one of the Cook Islands, located 400 miles east-northeast of Pago-Pago. It is the favorite place in the Pacific of almost all who visit it, except for Hugo's kinkajou.

Suvorov is uninhabited now; but for many years Tom Neal lived

there alone, an experience he wrote about in *An Island to Myself*. Until Neal died of stomach cancer a few years ago in Rarotonga, Moitessier used to sail supplies to him once a year.

By the accounts of those who have seen Suvorov, the pass is good and the islets beautiful. The only problem, apart from the minor nuisance of aggressive sharks, is that the fresh-water supply comes from rain caught in the runoff from Tom Neal's house and toolshed, and despite efforts at maintenance by visiting sailors, these are in need of major repair and may soon fall down.

Hugo is German, but he looks like a Viking—not one of your fine, shining, blond Norse gods, but like a real Viking just back from the wars. This is a great injustice, for Hugo is truly one of nature's gentlemen, and one of two single-handers I have met who have boats with aft cabins. What could a solo sailor possibly want with an aft cabin? I wondered. A place to get away from himself? The answer was simple: neither had started off alone, and neither was a single-hander by choice.

Hugo had in fact left Europe five years earlier as part of a floating commune-menagerie: five people, a giant German shepherd, and a kinkajou, all crammed into a thirty-foot ketch. By the time I met him in Papeete, all but his girl friend, Patricia, and the animals were gone. And Patricia and the dog jumped ship there. As much as I like Hugo, I cannot say I blame them.

When I first saw his boat, the *Tagedieb*, she was so covered with rust that I thought she was made of steel. But she is of wood, and the rust comes from bad fastenings. Her teak deck is rotten and springy as a trampoline. She is slow and cranky and impossible to self-steer.

Hugo has a sister living in Australia, and he was on his way to, in a heavy accent, "leave the sea and work with the moo cows." Patricia said that if he actually reached Australia, she might join him, but she was not going to sail another mile in that boat. It was suicide. It was madness. It was . . . This went on at great length in both French and German, leaving the inescapable conclusion that whatever it was, it was not for her.

A "For Sale" sign appeared on *Tagedieb*—the first of many with ever decreasing prices I was to see on her in successive ports across the Pacific—but naturally no one was interested. Hugo spent almost all of his money trying to fix the engine, but to no avail. Finally his visa ran out, and the only way he could get to Australia was to sail. So he went to sea in a rotten boat that would not steer itself and with a kinkajou that would not stand watches.

Kinkajous are something similar to a cross between a raccoon and a monkey, with a long prehensile tail, large lustrous eyes, and soft brown fur. They are intelligent, curious, and nocturnal. This one had been aboard *Tagedieb* since it was only a few weeks old and had a German name I was told meant "clown," but which I do not use on the suspicion that it actually means something obscene.

Kinkajous manage rather well on boats, where they can run around in the rigging and startle people. Suzanne stayed with Hugo in Pago-Pago while I was making the passage to Tonga. At about 1:00 A.M. she awoke from a deep sleep because she felt she was being strangled. Her fingers moved to her throat and encountered something thick and furry. Her eyes opened to stare into other eyes—great, shining eyes— inches from her own. She freaked out. And the resultant scream so frightened the poor kinkajou that he did not come down from the mast until the following noon.

On another evening, they locked the creature on deck because he persisted in turning the pages of their books faster than they could read. For a while there was peace, broken only by some angry chattering from overhead. Then silence. Then, one by one, battery caps dropped through a vent and fell onto the chart table. A tiny furry face appeared smirking at one of the ports. His expression clearly said, "If you don't let me back in, this is just the beginning."

I like animals, but they present considerable problems on boats, particularly with regulations upon entering various ports, and Hugo knew that even if he managed to nurse *Tagedieb* to Australia, he could not keep his pet. So he was always looking for a place where he could set the kinkajou free. That was one of the main reasons he sailed to Suvorov.

Hugo makes no pretense of liking the sea, and at Suvorov he moved ashore and lived in Tom Neal's house. He took the kinkajou with him in the hope that it would learn to fend for itself. But the kinkajou was most definitely not interested. The only home it had known was a boat, where meals of fresh fruit were provided regularly and could be washed down with a sip of beer or wine. He was as adept at opening bottles as he was at unscrewing battery caps.

For three days he did not venture from the house, and when Hugo carried him outside and set him down beneath a palm tree, he ran back inside and hid in a corner. This place wasn't moving the way his home always had, and he didn't like it at all.

Finally his natural curiosity caused him to explore, and in time he

began to play happily enough in the nearby bush. But always he returned to be fed and to sleep during the day and cadge a drink whenever the grog supply was unguarded. Perhaps he knew that when all the boats left, there would be no more beer.

For seven weeks Hugo debated whether to leave the kinkajou behind. But when the *Tagedieb* upped anchor, her full complement was back aboard.

In Fiji several months later Hugo told me that he was beginning to fear that he was doomed to sail ever westward in a boat he could not sell and that would not sink and with a beast he could not keep and would not abandon. The cyclone season was near. The "moo cows" were still waiting in Australia. Patricia had written and said that she was still ready to join him when—or if—he got there. He would have no problem sailing as crew on one of the other yachts making for Brisbane or Sydney. But there remained his personal ball and chain: the *Tagedieb* and the kinkajou.

Unexpected solutions to both problems appeared on the same afternoon. We left Hugo around lunch time, brooding over a glass of Fiji Bitter at the yacht club, and returned a few hours later from our shopping in Suva to find him celebrating. The Fiji Cultural Center at Orchid Island had agreed to bend their rules and take the kinkajou, although it is native to Ecuador, not Fiji. And Hugo had found a crew member to help him sail *Tagedieb* to Australia, when a former member of the Hell's Angels who now owns a forty-foot trimaran decided to replace his girl friend with a \$2,000 Omega navigation system. (And there is a very long and very good story, which I cannot relate.)

Suzanne stirred. "Are you still awake?"

"Yes."

"Is something bothering you?"

"No. Just thinking."

"About what?"

"Wondering when we will hear from Hugo's sister."

"I hope he made it."

"I do too." I started to say more, but her eyes had closed again.

I looked at my watch. We should be over the Marquesas by now.

The rumors of change a year earlier had gained substance. Construction had started on the first hotel to be built on Nuku Hiva. And I wondered if Thomas, the boy I met in Typee Valley, had left to join the French Army as he dreamed.

It was on my third night at Taiohae Bay, after making the 3,000-mile

passage from San Diego, that I was sitting on the floorboards of *Chidi-ock's* cockpit, trying to complete a magazine article in time for the weekly mail. The typewriter was balanced precariously on the center-board trunk; a kerosene lantern was balanced even more precariously on the corner of the typewriter. There was no other place for it, but each time I came to the end of a line I had to shift the carriage very, very gently. From all around us came splashes as big fish chased little fish, some of which bounced off *Chidi-ock* like artillery shells in their terrified attempts to escape. A gust of wind blew down off the mountains and shook loose the cockpit tent, which knocked over the lantern, which immediately spewed kerosene all over what had almost been a final manuscript. It must be easier, I thought, to be a war correspondent.

The next day, the *Queen Isabella* steamed into port.

The *Queen Isabella* is another ninety-foot power boat with masts. That is to say, her owner calls her a ketch, but the crew never unfurl her sails.

The owner, Jules, is a nice man, a naturalized American born in Argentina. He is precisely one week and ten years older than I am, and modestly related that he had been "lucky enough to make a little money importing cheap quinine from Panama into the United States."

He has a very beautiful wife, Isabella—the yacht is named after her, not the Spanish queen—who is in her mid forties, tall, and elegant. I was often to see her later in Papeete, where her namesake was anchored at the quay. I would pass by toward sunset on my way back to *Chidi-ock Tichborne* from my favorite beach. Wearing one of the latest Paris creations, she would be sitting by herself on the fantail high above me, her eyes focused somewhere just beyond the tops of the trees along the Avenue Pomare. It was obvious that she was compiling a mental list of the 500 places she most wanted to be in the world, and that on a boat was not among them.

Jules has five sons, ranging in age from thirteen to twenty. He told me he was making the voyage around the world—he planned to take a year and a half—for them, so that they could see what he never had as a poor youth in Buenos Aires, so that the sea could make men of them. "The sea is a stern mistress; but if you love her, she will always take care of you." These are Jules's words, not mine.

The sons were all likable, handsome, and well-mannered. They sped over to *Chidi-ock* in one of *Queen Isabella's* several

launches, which of course dwarfed my tiny yawl. They wanted to know all about my voyage: how did I manage in bad weather, how did I sleep, how did I cook? One of them said, "It must be like being in prison to be in so small a boat at sea."

I replied, "No. Not at all. Prisoners might have more room in a cell than I do aboard *Chidiok*, but I am free and my world stretches to the horizon and the heavens. Did you ever read *Papillon*?" My intention was to contrast the horror of Charriere's years of solitary confinement with my own much less arduous trials, but I was nonplussed when Teddy, the eldest, said, "Oh yes. We have the movie on board."

"Movie?"

"Yes. We carry more than 200 with us and show one in the main salon every evening after dinner. After all, what else is there to do at night at sea?"

What else indeed? I thought as I considered sea life at this far end of the continuum. Or on an airplane. Surely not study the waves or the stars. Surely not revel in the wind against your face or the dance of a small boat into the unknown.

The islands were all behind us; we had open ocean to California. The pilot would have to manage this leg by himself. And I called an end to my night watch and fell asleep.

A Change of Season

At 8:00 P.M. on my first night in 1980 back aboard *Chidiok Tichborne* in Suva Harbor, I leapt overboard and started swimming hard for the shore. This was not the crackup long and avidly awaited by that minority of narrow souls who are somehow personally offended that I have challenged the sea in a small boat, and, what is worse, made a success of it. No, it was something a bit more mundane. The lone voyager had neglected to secure the dinghy painter. Perhaps I thought the dinghy would just hang around like a faithful dog. If so, I was soon proven wrong. The breeze was light, but it was enough. The gap between *Chidiok* and dinghy, dubbed the *QEI* in a reversal of their historical roles, increased inexorably. The last time this happened I had someone else to blame, but Suzanne had chosen to stay in New Zealand for a couple of months while I sailed on to Indonesia. I looked around. One of the great virtues of solo sailing cuts both ways. There was no escaping that I and I alone had done it. And I and I alone was going to have to undo it. I removed my glasses and watch and joined the sea snakes.

Leaving *Chidiok* in Trevor Dunn's backyard for the cyclone season worked out well. I enjoyed the break, seeing New Zealand and America again; I caught up with my writing, and my arthritic knee finally deflated. However, the interval reconfirmed that both Suzanne and I prefer boat life. After about six weeks in each country we were ready to move on, and we saw enough of the early political campaigning to want to spend the remainder of this election year at least 5,000 miles from America.

A fine moment came on April 1, Census Day. We were living temporarily in a small apartment and were the recipients of the twenty-page questionnaire. Fortunately I noticed a small box on page 1 to be checked if all the occupants of that address permanently resided elsewhere. I checked the box and wrote that I permanently resided aboard an eighteen-foot sailboat, located on April 1 in Suva, Fiji. I am still waiting for the computer to digest that one. Living in a one-room structure without indoor plumbing or a roof, I am probably entitled to federal aid.

While in America I was saved from cyclone Wally by airline regulations. My intention to return to Fiji in mid March ran afoul of high-season air fares, so having as always more time than money I waited until the low season began on April 6. The Sunday before I was to leave California, a friend called to ask if I had heard from *Chidiok*. By some odd chance, for it was hardly reported in the U.S. he had heard a news broadcast of "torrential rains, thousands homeless in Fiji." In the newspaper the next morning I finally found a small item at the bottom of the fourteenth page, which added no new information. Only when I reached Fiji did I learn how fortunate I had been, for although there had been no strong winds in Suva, the rains had indeed been torrential, with more than nine inches in a few hours and thirty inches in three days; and the resultant floods and landslides had indeed left thousands homeless. Aboard *Chidiok* it would not have been life threatening, but I was very glad not to have been huddled beneath the cockpit tent during the deluge.

Like all experienced travelers I like to travel light, which is why on my final leg back to Suva via Air Pacific I paid \$101 for excess baggage. Air Pacific advertise themselves as "a nice little airline," and it was no reflection of a lack of confidence in them on my part that I carried my own inflatable dinghy. The stewardesses could give their little demonstrations of how to use the emergency equipment if we went down at sea, but if we survived the crash, I was home: I had my own freeze-dried food, *Nautical Almanac*, and sextant, as well as a personal life raft.

In the event, the flight was uneventful, and Trevor and his family met me at the airport and I was reunited with *Chidiok*, who had weathered the cyclone season without mishap. And once again I knew the virtues of smallness and fiberglass. *Chidiok* had been sailed for more than 6,000 miles and then left for five months ashore with no maintenance. On Sunday I went sailing with Trevor and his son, Stuart, on their day sailer. On Monday I bought some paint, sandpaper, and wood preservative and put a coat of antifouling paint on

Chidiok's bottom and some preservative on the masts. Lying on a piece of paper in the mud in an awkward position while painting, I felt the ground beneath me tremble and thump. This local earthquake continued until I crawled out and lifted the paper and discovered half a dozen toads blinking lugubriously at my rude intrusion on their home.

On Tuesday I applied second coats and tried not to disturb the toads. On Wednesday Trevor took off from work and we evicted the toads, who learned, as all toads eventually must, that security is an illusion. We returned *Chidiok* to the sea and sailed her back around to the anchorage at the Royal Suva Yacht Club. There were a few minor details still to be tended to, but had it been necessary I could have set sail on my next passage that day. I think in retrospect I should have. Indeed, small *is* beautiful, particularly when one considers that the average cruising budget for a couple now seems to be about \$5,000 per year, half of which is spent on boat maintenance. For that amount, I could buy a new *Chidiok* every other year or so.

As I noted during my first circumnavigation, a return to the shore is a return to lists, and perhaps by examining mine for recommissioning *Chidiok* one can learn something about living on and maintaining a small boat that may also apply to larger vessels.

When I first prepared for this voyage I placed items under the headings of Living, Sailing, Navigation, Harbor, and the ever popular Miscellaneous. This time I organized them according to place where they were to be performed. And I included an addendum of objects disposed of when recommissioning *Chidiok*.

New Zealand	U.S.A.	Fiji
sextant	sails	antifouling
flashlight	furling gear	sail repair
	bags	varnish
	dinghy	wood preservative
	charts	check rigging
	tarp	watch
	cushions	stove
	eyeglasses and guards	name
	foul-weather gear	compass bracket
	split rings	paint locker boards
	water containers	wax hull
	freeze-dried food	locker-cover grommets
	dividers	tea kettle
	locker covers	blanket

protractor	pillow
tape measure	small water jug
Indonesia	lamp
shots	Clorox
film and mailers	
vitamin pills	
camera	
back pack	
space blanket	
books	

Discards

whisker pole
spare gaff

sails
rusty tools
clothes
old dinghy
sea boot

NEW ZEALAND

Sextant. Inevitably exposed to spray aboard *Chidioc*, my sextant required new mirrors and adjustment each year. In 1976 this cost twelve dollars in Auckland. In December 1979 it was up to twenty dollars, but still a bargain compared to America.

Flashlight. New Zealand makes the only truly waterproof flashlights I have found in which you can still easily change batteries.

U.S.A.

Often in the Pacific one longs for just one hour in a really good supermarket and another in a good chandlery. And, despite inflation, prices are generally lower in the U.S. than elsewhere, which is why I did most of my shopping there.

Sails. Increasingly I have come to favor bulletproof sails for voyaging. What little is lost in light air performance is more than compensated for by added sail life and reliability in heavy weather. With five-ounce cloth and eighteen-inch-wide chaffing patches running from the head to the foot of the main, *Chidioc's* were about as strong as any sails could be, and, though somewhat faded by the sun, remained

in good condition after more than a year in the tropics. Still, if repairs become necessary at sea, I preferred to make them while continuing sailing, and I asked the builder to supply a spare suit, which he kindly did.

Furling gear. I wanted spare furling gear for the jib not because the original equipment had failed but for the exact opposite reason, because it performed so well.

Before beginning the voyage I was suspicious of the gear and had a second jib made with proper hanks. Perhaps the very smallness of the jib is to its advantage. I have found the sail to set well and furl well. This was particularly useful in the storm around Tahiti, where I could reduce sail almost instantly, though not always instantly enough. I came to prefer the furling sail and disposed of the hanked jib.

Bags. The only waterproof bags that really remain waterproof are made by Voyageur Ltd., in Gardner, Kansas. Long pants and shoes that I did not wear for a year and that lived in a Voyageur bag lashed to the foredeck survived perfectly, as did camera equipment, a book manuscript, and a typewriter. So I obtained more, as well as a couple of inflatable camera bags they make, to be used for navigation tables and ship's papers.

Dinghy. I left San Diego in 1978 with a cheap inflatable. It was a false economy that died in Papeete a few months later, where I had no choice but to buy another dinghy of similar quality, though at Papeete prices—no longer cheap. This one lasted until one week before we were to put *Chidiack* ashore in October. Halfway from *Chidiack* to the Yacht Club dock came a small pop followed by a large hiss. Frantically Suzanne sought the leak and frantically I rowed for the dock. We made it—just, and spent the rest of the week making ineffective repairs, pumping the dinghy up as hard as possible, then rowing like hell while it merrily deflated around our ears. Going through two dinghies a year was becoming unacceptably hard on my finances and my nerves.

My new inflatable from Boston Whaler was solid, well-built, and easy to row; had good attention to detail, including pins to keep the oars from being lost overboard; and took all the adventure out of going ashore. Now I knew I was going to make it. The new dinghy also gave me the distinction of being the only world cruiser to have a dinghy half as long as his yacht. Good inflatables are expensive, but this is one of the items where you get what you pay for.

Charts. I carried about twenty charts at a time on *Chidiack*, stored in three plastic chart tubes, so I cannot keep detailed charts of every

harbor I plan to enter, which is not so critical in a boat that can safely be put on the beach. I have had good service in getting charts from Southwest Instruments in San Pedro and The Map Center in San Diego, and brought back with me enough to last as far as Singapore.

Tarp. *Chidiok*'s cockpit tent is an ordinary eight-by-ten-foot plastic tarp made of ten-ounce fabric to which I have added extra grommets and to which I clothespin shower-curtain material in order to block off the forward end in heavy rain. Like the cockpit cover, it is erected only in port, because at sea it would interfere with sails, sheets, halyards, and the general working of the boat. Unfortunately it is dark green, because when I went to buy it dark green was the only color available. This is not a good color for the tropics. It is in fact very nearly the worst possible color. So, I had planned to have a new tarp made in white. I don't know why I didn't get around to doing this, but I didn't. Maybe in Singapore.

Cushions. Obviously one cannot sleep aboard an open boat on open-cell foam cushions, and I for one cannot sleep on bare floorboards. The solution is provided by Ensolite, a closed-cell foam used by backpackers. Suzanne and I had been sleeping on two three-eighth-inch layers of this, and I brought back two more each. At last this seemed about right.

Eyeglasses and guards. The prospect of being without my glasses at sea is appalling. I bought another spare pair, and the total on board was back up to four. Elastic bands to keep glasses from falling off seem to be unknown in the Pacific, even in New Zealand, so I restocked on those too.

Freeze-dried food. By choice this is what I would always use at sea. Some is available in New Zealand, but none in the other parts of the Pacific I have visited. Because of lack of space in my luggage I brought only twenty meals back with me from America.

Dividers. I had cleverly dropped my last pair overboard while at anchor in Tonga. These are about twice as expensive in Fiji as in America, as is the *Nautical Almanac*.

Locker covers. *Chidiok* has two bins beneath each seat coaming. The canvas covers I had made to keep objects from falling out of these had badly mildewed. Unfortunately I waited until returning to Fiji to put the grommets in the new covers, but the grommet tool fell to bits of rusty powder in my hands, and the old covers remained in place.

Protractor. I keep my protractor with the current chart in a bag in the cockpit. This ensures a very high fatality rate for plastic protractors, a five-dollar item in the U.S. and a thirty-dollar item in Papeete. I

brought back two and vowed to stow them more carefully.

Tape measure. Just offhand I can't think of why I need a tape measure, but I know I do. They don't seem to adjust well to life in an open boat. I now carry one advertising the company of a friend who sells life insurance, who undoubtedly wouldn't insure my life.

Indonesia. To enter Indonesia, a yacht permit is required in addition to a visa. My first communication from Indonesia stated that the yacht permit must be issued four weeks prior to the yacht's arrival at its first Indonesian port, but it can be applied for not earlier than two weeks prior to arrival at the first Indonesian port. I began to understand what is meant by the phrase "the mysterious East." I was also advised that I would not be permitted to land at Kupang, where Captain Bligh ended his open-boat voyage. No reason was given for this, though presumably it was due to political unrest in the area since Indonesia took over the east end of Timor from the Portuguese. I filed the necessary papers with the American Embassy in Jakarta and was advised that the permit would be issued to me at the end of May in Port Moresby—perhaps.

Shots. Except for dengue fever, more common than the tourist offices would like travelers to know, the sea routes of the Pacific are healthy and inoculations are not needed east of New Guinea. I planned to start taking antimalarial medication one week out of Port Moresby; and in order to go to Asia, we were given shots for yellow fever, cholera, tetanus, diphtheria, typhoid, and paratyphoid. It seemed like more at the time, possibly because cholera and typhoid require two shots each. Smallpox vaccination is no longer necessary in most countries because the disease has been declared eradicated.

Camera. Cameras at discount prices in America are cheaper than they are in any other place I have visited, including Fiji. My camera had survived the voyage to this point, but only by being so wrapped up as to be inaccessible. Thus I bought a Nikonos while in California.

Backpack. The only indispensable item I forgot when planning the voyage was a day pack, an omission I corrected in Tahiti for twenty-nine dollars. Most sailors, including myself, routinely wear their packs ashore. Many stores in the Pacific don't bag purchases. And packs are useful for carrying towels, swim gear, books, papers, mail, whatever. I prefer one with plastic zippers. Objects fall out of those that only tie shut, particularly when one is climbing into or out of a dinghy. Our new ones cost nine dollars each.

Space blanket. I got one of these light aluminized blankets for possible use at sea. Now instead of returning the corpse to the morgue,

as I had come to think of my sleeping wrapped in the bulkier tarp, I would be putting the turkey in the oven—perhaps a marginal improvement.

FIJI

Sail repair. The only sail repair needed, apart from replacement of part of the chaffing patch on the main, was to one tiny hole in the main and another in the mizzen. These were so small that stitching them would have weakened the material more than the holes did, so I glued patches in place with a glue called Grip, sold by Standard Brands paint stores.

Watch. For navigation I use a digital quartz watch. With analog watches I have no problem with the seconds, but often with the minute, which can mean an error of fifteen miles at the Equator. Recently Seiko had come out with a digital diving watch tested to 100 meters, which I bought for ninety-one dollars in Fiji. If *Chidiok* gets more than 100 meters below the surface, ruining the watch will not be one of my major worries.

Stove. Having started the voyage with a top-of-the-line self-priming kerosene stove, costing well over \$200 in 1978, which died two weeks out of San Diego, I switched to a small International Camping Gaz butane stove in Tahiti, costing \$15. In Fiji I bought a larger version, standing about fourteen inches high and with a refillable cylinder that should easily last me a couple of months. Cost: thirty-eight dollars.

Name. One problem with having a long name on a small boat is that I had painted it only on *Chidiok's* starboard side. I vowed to get it on the other side in Suva. Maybe in Port Moresby. Or Singapore. Or Madras.

Compass bracket The compass is mounted on the after end of the teak cover of the centerboard trunk, a convenient but vulnerable location. By Fiji I had six sets of holes where I had knocked the bracket askew. It was time to fill them all with plastic wood and start over again.

Tea kettle. Although watches are cheap in Fiji, good tea kettles are not, as I learned when the handle fell off my old one. The only stainless-steel whistling tea kettle in Suva cost me thirty dollars. A high price, but I like the sound of a whistling tea kettle, and sea life is hard enough so that I felt entitled to this indulgence.

Small water jug. I transfer water from the five-gallon containers to a one-gallon jug, which is easier to handle and gives a ready measure of water consumption.

Lamp. In port I read by a cheap kerosene lantern. These emit good light but rust quickly. At a cost of four to five dollars they are available throughout the Pacific and are cheap enough to be replaced every few months.

DISCARDS

One of the essential personality traits for a small-boat sailor is that he find satisfaction in throwing things away. A hoarder could not survive aboard *Chidiack*.

Whisker pole, spare gaff, sails. These are all related because my single biggest wasted expenditure was in fitting *Chidiack* with twin running sails. In theory it sounded fine, but in practice *Chidiack* rolled abominably and didn't steer well. Sometimes the only way to learn is to pay your money and see. In Fiji I cheerfully cleared out the whole mess, with the exception of one whisker pole, which served as ridge pole for the cockpit tent. After some thought, I even tossed away the spare gaff. I expected that if anything broke, I could effect a jury rig or fish a spar with the four ten-foot oars and remaining whisker pole.

Rusty tools. WD 40 works wonders and had kept most of my tools usable, but a saw and a hammer and various bolts and screws were beyond redemption and had to go.

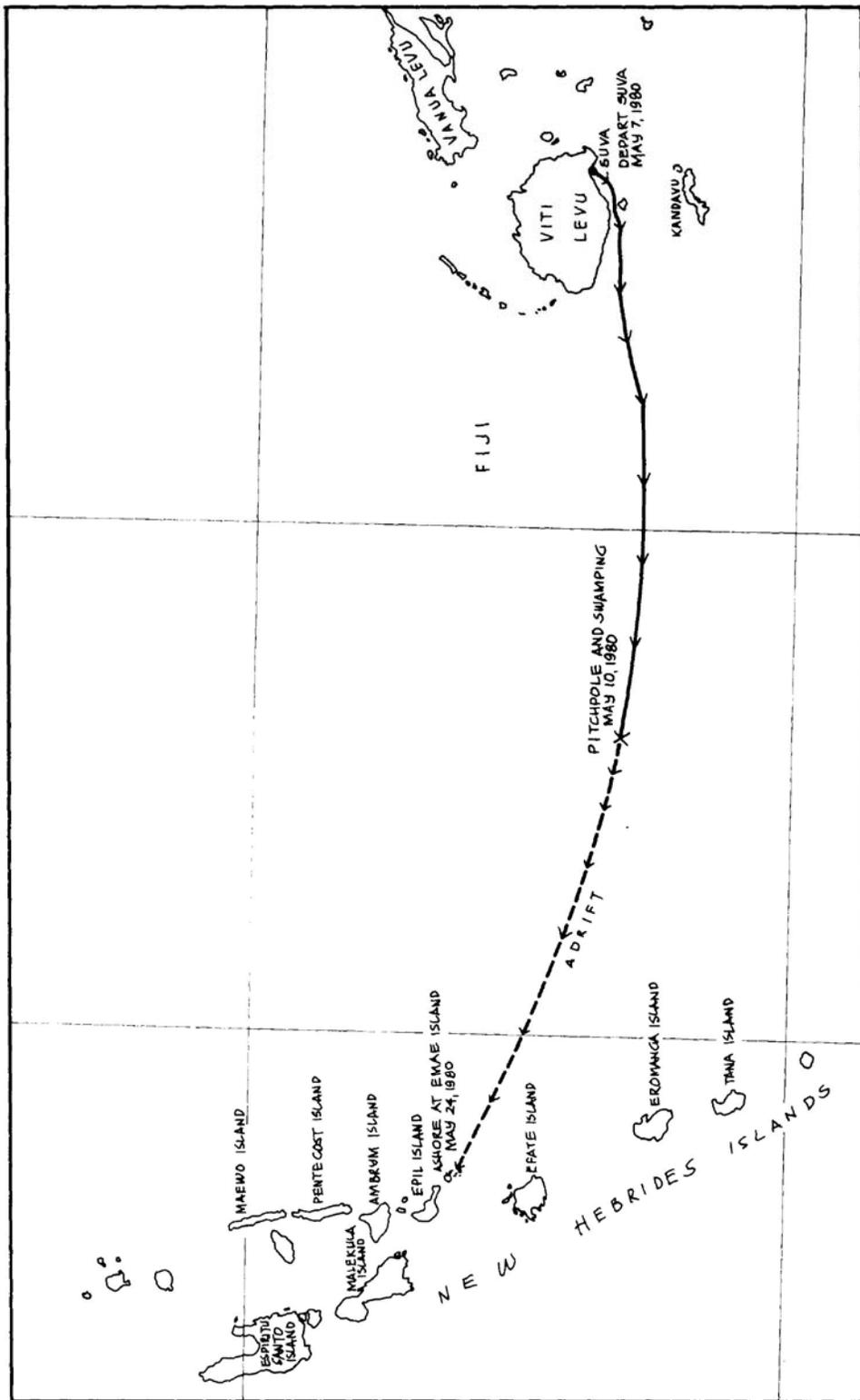
Clothes. It seems unlikely but is true that I had too many clothes on board *Chidiack*. Reasoning that if I had not worn something for a year I could continue not to wear it, I gave away a medium-sized sail bag full.

Sea boot. I lost one sea boot in the knockdown in November 1978 and thought I had long ago disposed of the other. But when I repacked *Chidiack*, I found it lurking in a side bin beneath the spare anchor rode. Now I know that I have disposed of it. There can be few things more useless than one sea boot. But I carried it 5,000 miles on an eighteen-foot boat.

One day I shall compile another list, entitled "What Other World Cruiser . . . ?" In addition to the size of dinghy, it will include such items as "can sit out the cyclone season in a tax assessor's back yard?" "has full standing head room for giraffes?" "can lift his mizzen with one hand?" and "can take care of annual maintenance in two mornings?" For my main impression on seeing *Chidiack* again was of how well she had stood up to the sea so far. Clearly it is better to have a well-built small boat than an indifferently built larger one.

When I was ready to leave Fiji, I unexpectedly won the award for

posing the hard question of the day when I went to the office of the high commissioner of Papua New Guinea and told him that I was sailing for Port Moresby and inquired if I needed a visa. The small man behind the counter looked downhearted (for all I know he was the high commissioner himself) and replied, "I don't know." Then he brightened and announced importantly, "I will radio headquarters." At least I think he said "headquarters," though it may have been "headhunters." There were no bureaucrats out here 200 years ago. Sometimes I envy Captain Bligh.



A Single Wave

Each night I lost something. On the night before I was to leave Suva, I misplaced my copy of *War and Remembrance* with 300 pages unread. Presumably I knew how World War II turned out, but I was less certain about the lives of the Henrys and Jastrows. And once underway: two buckets, six gallons of water, the moon, and then, in effect, *Chidi-ock* herself. It seemed almost as though fate and the sea were methodically reducing me to the minimum for survival.

I left the Royal Suva Yacht Club dock at 11:00 A.M. on Wednesday, May 7, 1980. The packing and plastic bagging and stowing had taken longer than usual, although *Chidi-ock* was carrying less than the load to which she had been accustomed the previous year. What had become routine when we were moving on every month or so now had to be thought through and planned; but by 10:30 everything was in place. I had cleared Customs the preceding day, and Immigration had come by that morning—both special courtesies so that *Chidi-ock* would not have to go alongside the main Customs dock, which was scaled for oceangoing shipping. I still had a dollar of Fijian small change, so I walked up the dock to the Yacht Club bar and ordered a pitcher of Chapman's, a soft-drink mixture of ginger ale and bitters. Although I had worked up a thirst in the morning sun, a full pitcher was too much and no one was around to share it with. Quickly I downed three or four glasses, but I was eager to be off and left the half-full pitcher on the table. Within a week I would be dreaming of it: bubbles rising through

amber liquid, ice cubes tinkling, beads of condensation forming along the rim.

During her layover for the cyclone season, *Chidiok* had become a wildlife refuge. Toads croaked from the moist darkness beneath her hull; a colony of ants had built a nest in the centerboard well; birds found her gunwale a convenient perch; and a gecko had moved into the cockpit. Surprisingly, but perhaps because of the gecko, there were no cockroaches aboard.

I did not see the gecko until after I had returned *Chidiok* to the water and was living aboard her at the Yacht Club anchorage again myself. Then, sometimes in the evening when I was reading by the kerosene lamp, I would catch a glimpse of the little lizard scurrying across the periphery of light. For his own good I tried to catch him and return him to the safety of the shore. Even the best of passages aboard *Chidiok* is something I would not wish on a gecko; but he easily evaded pursuit. So as we sailed out Suva Pass into the predicted rough southeast swells, I half expected to see a poor seasick lizard, greener than usual, climb groggily onto the seat, stand on tiptoe, and peer longingly back at the receding hills. It did not happen. In fact I did not see the gecko again. I would like to think that he got off before it was too late.

I had cleared for Port Moresby 2,000 miles west and north, where I hoped to obtain the necessary yacht permit from the Indonesian embassy so that I could continue quickly on to Bali. On the chart it was a straightforward passage, the only tactical decision being whether to make the move north before or after passing the New Hebrides. First we had to get clear of the reefs immediately around Viti Levu.

Although I had twice sailed along the coast in other boats, still several times I almost found myself embayed by long projections of the main reef reaching far offshore to the south, particularly through the passage between Viti Levu and Beqa. The wind was steady at twenty knots, but the waves were disproportionately high. The forecast had been for up to twenty-five-knot winds and twelve-foot waves off the west end of the island, but conditions approached that near Suva, with cresting ten-foot waves in the narrowest part of the passage, through which I had to steer by hand.

By late afternoon we were past Beqa and I was able to get *Chidiok* to balance long enough so that I could eat a can of cold ravioli. A ketch appeared in the west, tacked, then came about and headed toward us. As she came closer at sunset, I could see that despite being fifty feet

long, she was working hard going to windward. She crossed ahead of us, tacked again, and fell off to reach alongside on a parallel course. Strips of molding hung down from her rub rail. A jib dangled from the bow. The three crew on deck were haggard.

"What island is that?" a bearded man in foul-weather gear called from the shrouds. He was pointing south.

"Beqa," I shouted above the wind.

He relayed the word to someone in the cabin. Then, "Can you spell it?"

I did, adding that there is an alternate spelling beginning with an *M*.

The larger boat was passing *Chidiok* and he yelled to the cockpit crew to let the jib slat. "And where is Suva?"

This was more than I expected. I pointed back to the northeast. "About thirty miles. But there is a good anchorage on this side of the small island to the west of Beqa."

"Our engine is broken," he cried, as the big ketch surged beyond shouting distance.

They turned into the wind and hardened up on their sheets. When they were close enough, I yelled a warning about the reefs. They waved and disappeared into the gloomy night.

A few hours later the light marking the island of Vatu Leile, about twenty miles south of the west end of Viti Levu, and the last obstacle before we had open ocean to the New Hebrides, appeared off the port bow. The wind and waves had increased. *Chidiok* was sliding down waterfalls, constantly on the verge of either broaching or jibing. Despite having the jib sheeted to the tiller and balanced by four shock cords, I had to keep my hand on the tiller. But sometimes we still jibed, when despite my putting the helm hard over, the stern was carried through the wind by a wave. The force of the wind was so great that when this happened I had to use both arms to bring us back on course. Some return to the sea, I thought. Or is this just normal and I've forgotten? Several waves swept *Chidiok*, but I did not discover the consequences until morning.

By midnight the light on Vatu Leile was well astern, and I knew that we had made more than sixty miles since noon. I was tired, and there was no reason for me to exhaust myself by steering through the night, so I hove to for a few hours' sleep.

At dawn the wind and waves were still high, the waves higher than those in the fifty-knot storm we had been in around Tahiti, perhaps as

high as fifteen feet, though the wind was only thirty knots. I reached for the small water jug I keep lashed to the mizzen for daily use. It was not there. More irritated than alarmed, I crawled back to see if it had fallen beneath the inflatable dinghy lashed to the afterdeck. But it was gone. The passage to Port Moresby would probably take three or four weeks and I had debated carrying three or four of the five-gallon water containers, in addition to the small, one-gallon jug. Because *Chidiok* was a bit stern-heavy when loaded, I did fill a fourth container and lashed it to the bow cleat. Now as I glanced forward, I saw that it too was gone, leaving behind only its nicely secured handle. Overnight, twenty-one gallons of water had turned into fifteen—more than ample, but still distressing.

After eating a granola bar and drinking a cup of cold coffee, I tried to get us underway again. A wave caught *Chidiok* just as I was turning her and threw us sideways a couple of boat lengths; but once we completed the turn and the wind steadied on the port quarter, I was able to get her to steer herself as we sped westward at six knots.

Steadily throughout a day of fast if wet sailing, we made our way through the worst of the band of rough water off Viti Levu. The odd wave continued to break over us, but now they were in the six- to ten-foot range, and the wind had dropped to twenty to twenty-five knots. That second night I was able to let *Chidiok* continue sailing, although I slept very lightly, a part of my mind ever alert to an accidental jibe, which threatened every half hour or so. Usually I awakened in time, but twice I was too late and we were hammered by the waves. I knew I was pushing *Chidiok* too hard, that it would be safer to heave to, but I also knew that every mile we made was carrying us out of the rough seas.

The next morning I found that the two buckets, one inside the other, that I use as the head, had washed away, leaving—as had the water container—their handles neatly lashed behind. I had one bucket left, but I began to wonder what would be next.

All that day, Friday, conditions improved, although I could not use the stove or get a sun sight, and that night we lost nothing except the last sliver of the dying moon, hidden by clouds.

Saturday, wind and waves dropped further to about eighteen knots and four to six feet respectively, and Saturday night I fell asleep at 8:00 P.M. in the belief that I would have my first real sleep since leaving Suva.

Just before 10:30—when I looked at my watch a few minutes later

it read 10:33—*Chidiack* slid down a wave, hit something, and pitched. It is difficult to separate what I have concluded upon reflection must have happened from my sensations at the time. One moment I was sleeping wrapped in the tarp on the port side of *Chidiack*'s cockpit, and the next I was flying through the air, catapulted like a pebble, as *Chidiack*'s stern came up. Dimly I recall a kind of clank, seemingly metal to metal, and then the stern rising behind me. In flight I was afraid it would come down on me, that I would be impaled on the mizzen. Then I was in the water. I struggled free from the tarp, choked as a wave passed, and swam the five yards back to *Chidiack*. I believe that given time she would have righted herself, but when I reached her, she was on her starboard side, her masts thirty degrees below the water. Worse than last time, I thought as I swam around the bow. But when I put my weight on the centerboard, she quickly came upright.

I flopped over the side, which was not too difficult. The gunwale was even with the sea: much worse than last time. I fumbled beneath the water for my glasses and found them still wedged in place by the bilge pump.

Chidiack felt as though she were sinking. Except for a few inches at the bow, she was completely below the water. With each wave, she dropped from beneath me and I thought that despite her flotation, she was gone. But each time she came back. The sails cracked in the wind. The pitchpole had been an explosive movement and the jib and main were ripped along their leach tapes. The mizzen support was broken, and the mizzen floated along the stern. I pulled it back inside the hull, though I don't know why I bothered. Inside, outside, the sea was the same.

Food bags, clothing bags, the bag with navigation tables, all were secured to a long line tied to the mainmast, and all were bobbing around the surface. An oar floated away, as did a bag I recognized as one containing books. It was still within arm's reach and I could have saved it—later I was to regret very much that I did not—but it did not seem important at the time. Among the books were several bought in California, including *Little Dorrit*, the only major Dickens novel I have never read and apparently am meant never to read: I had also lost a copy in the first capsizes between San Diego and the Marquesas.

A huge number of lines writhed like a nest of snakes. Where had they all come from? I wondered as I searched beneath the sea for the jib-furling line. We were lying beam on to the waves, the sails were trimmed for a broad reach, and by the time I had furled the jib and

found and released the main halyard, both sails were seriously damaged. The main particularly so, with a tear from the chaffing patch at the head down to and then along the reef points.

Another oar floated into the darkness. The cloud cover was complete, broken by not even a single star. Beneath the black sea *Chidiock* was unfamiliar. Already everything had been tumbled about, and I could only reach into the depths blindly, catch something, and pull it to my face for identification. So far surprisingly little seemed to have been lost. But I could not find the last bucket. The biggest thing left with which to bail was a plastic bowl.

Gradually I began to gain confidence that *Chidiock* was not going to sink. She is, as an aerospace-engineer friend of mine likes to say, an object for going out, rather than an object for going down. And had I been able to clear the water from her within those first hours, we could have resumed sailing not much the worse for wear. That I was not able to do so was partially bad luck, but mostly bad management. I had swamped her before and recovered, but never quite this badly. I had swamped her before, but during daylight. I had swamped her before, but I had had a bucket.

I had contemplated such a swamping and made preparations, but despite my experience I had not foreseen the situation as being as chaotic as was the reality. The problem was the centerboard slot. When *Chidiock* is so swamped that this is below the water, it must be blocked before the cockpit can be bailed out. For such an eventuality I had cut two pieces of wood to screw into place to close the slot, one for the top, one for the forward edge. In more than 6,000 miles I had not used them. When last seen they were in the forward starboard bin with the spare anchor rode, now hopelessly twisted with the mainsheet, bags, oars, and pieces of sail, if they had not already floated away. I waded forward gingerly—with each movement *Chidiock* dropped away like an express elevator—but I could not find them. The screwdriver would have been in the tool kit in the flooded aft locker, the screws in another box. With the clarity of hindsight the solution was simple, and I cursed myself for not fixing the centerboard fully extended and blocking off the slot before leaving port. That was so obvious—now. With a sense of futility I gave up the search and returned aft and sat down in the waist-deep water and took my little bowl and began to bail. I did not think it would do any good, but I did not have any better way to spend the night.

Chidiock almost seemed to help me, to try and ride higher, though

probably it was only that the waves decreased a bit without my noticing, and gradually I made some progress. Her gunwales were now, more often than not, an inch or two above the sea. I stopped bailing. I needed a break. I tore up one of my foam sleeping pads and stuffed it around the centerboard. It did not remain in place, so I tried some shirts. They too were carried away. The turbulence was too great, as though we were within a surf line, and I resumed bailing.

After another hour I permitted myself some hope. We had several inches of freeboard, the seats were usually clear, and the water was mostly confined to the cockpit well. Only four more inches and I would reach the top of the centerboard trunk. But it was not to be. For two more hours I struggled without gaining even a fraction of a fraction of an inch. The ocean and I had reached a point of equilibrium. Sometimes I would think I was gaining, but *Chidiok* was now able to heel a few degrees. In the next moment she would roll back and I would see that nothing had really changed. It may well have been that what gain we had made had come from her rolling the water out rather than from my bailing.

At 3:30 A.M. my back cramped. I was very tired. Perhaps the answer was to wait until dawn, jettison everything not absolutely essential, and try again.

Chidiok was too awash to permit any useful rest, so I managed to inflate the Boston Whaler dinghy, pumping largely by hand. When it was rigid, I secured it to *Chidiok* by two lines and fell inside, where, soaked to the skin beneath my foul-weather gear and no longer warmed by exertion, I lay shivering through the remaining hours of the night.

Six o'clock A.M. found me back aboard *Chidiok*, who was deeper in the water than when I left her, but not gunwale deep. I transferred the food bag and the two remaining water containers to the dinghy. One container held about a gallon and a half of slightly brackish but drinkable water; the other, a gallon. The third container had been punctured during the night. I also moved the navigation bag, the document bag, a Nikonos camera, two of *Chidiok's* three compasses, the sextant, the solar still, the big tarp, and two bags of clothing. The clothes were not important in themselves, but I had already learned that even a small amount of water in the inflatable makes rest difficult, and I wanted the bags to lie upon.

Almost everything else I threw away: the spare rudder; a box of screws and bolts; my first new typewriter in fifteen years, bought just before I left Suva; the two new stoves; some camera equipment, which

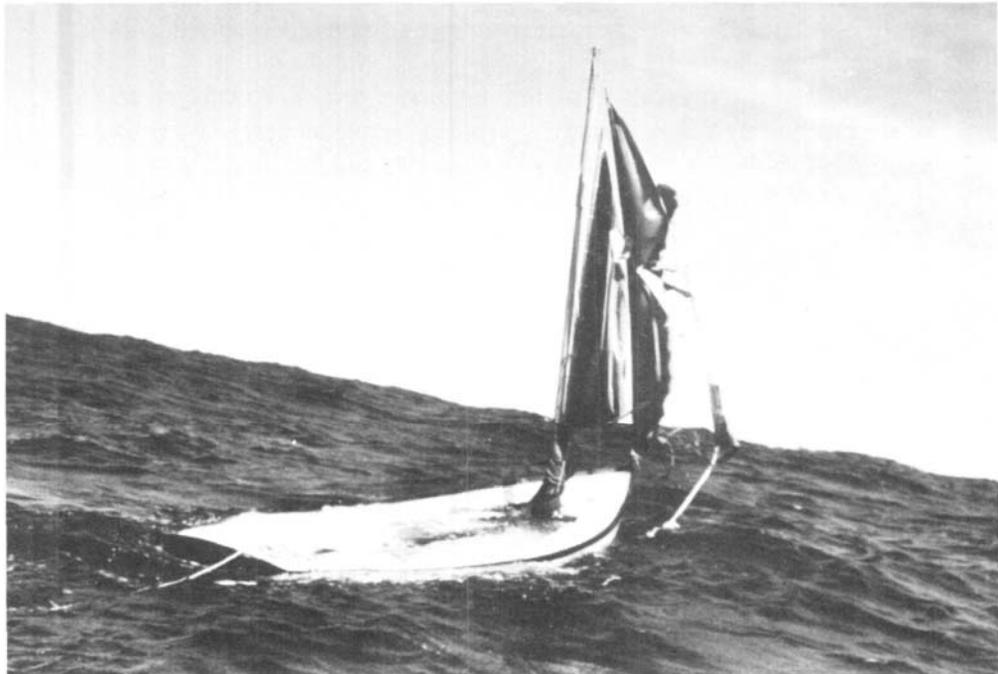
I had not kept in the safe Voyageur bags but had trusted to an allegedly watertight aluminum case; the RDF, the third since San Diego; one anchor; and the kerosene lamps. Once I had untied the main securing lines and opened the aft locker, other things I would have liked to keep, such as the medicine kit, a suit of brand-new sails, and an underwater flashlight, were washed away. I was like a cat holding down four mice, one with each paw, while a dozen more played around my nose.

Finally, one way or the other, *Chidiack* was stripped of all but her main anchor and rode, which I thought might be useful if we ever reached land.

Once again I settled in with my bowl and once again I made progress to the same level of four inches of water over the centerboard trunk, and once again, no matter how furiously I scooped, that, once again, was all.

Every hour my back cramp returned and I had to flop into the dinghy to rest. With such breaks I continued on throughout the day.

In late afternoon I accepted the inevitable and climbed into the



Chidiack adrift, taken from the Whaler dinghy. —w. CHILES

Whaler, this time to stay. I sprawled on the clothes bags. Something hard dug into my leg. Too exhausted to sit up, I squirmed until it slipped to one side. I noticed that the sextant case was missing, but I did not care. The Voyageur navigation bag was beneath my head. I tried to envision the chart. Navigation had been by dead reckoning all the way from Suva. We were probably halfway between Fiji and the New Hebrides, 18 or 19 degrees south, 172 or 173 degrees East. Not very precise, but what did it matter? Three hundred miles from the nearest land.

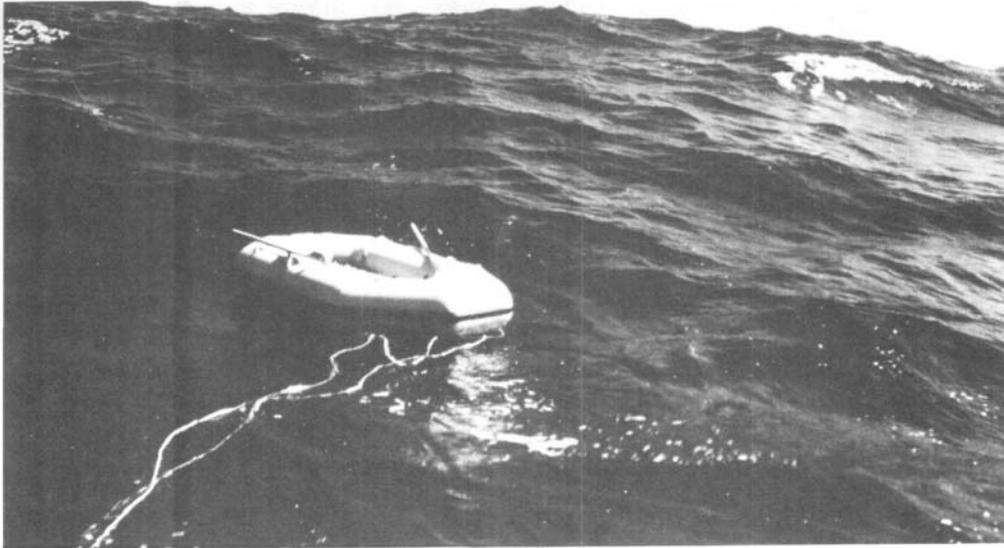
The dinghy spun so that I could see *Chidiack*. Corners of torn sails snapped. The mizzen floated off the stern again. I should do something, I thought, but I did not move. I just lay there, thinking, as do all wounded, how much had changed and how quickly, in the passing of a single wave.



Adrift

At dawn and dusk I looked for land, even though no land could be near. And during the day I looked for ships, even though we were far from shipping lanes. I do not pretend that I would not have welcomed rescue, but I was forced to live up to my admonition to save myself, to rely on no one. Yet for the present the wisest action was no action. Enforced passivity is one of the great facts of being adrift. Uncertainty about duration is another. At any moment a ship could appear; or I could drift for months, slowly dying.

On this morning, Tuesday, May 20, the tenth day of living in the nine foot Boston Whaler inflatable after *Chidiok*'s swamping, there were not even any good imitation cloud islands in sight. For more than an hour I sat on the side of the dinghy, more comfortable than when I was lying on the now saturated and rock-hard clothes bags in the bottom, which still was better than lying directly in the permanent pool of water beneath them. I had nothing new to look at, nothing new to think, nothing to read. The sun rose steadily; waves slopped over *Chidiok* 100 feet to windward; the wind blew at fifteen knots from the east-southeast; we continued to drift west-northwest at about one knot. Everything was as it had been the day before, and the day before that. Ironically, good weather had settled in two days after the swamping, and we were missing fine sailing. I knew that if this wind carried all the way to Port Moresby, *Chidiok* would have made her fastest passage ever, a succession of hundred-mile days. Two thousand miles



The Whaler dinghy, taken from *Chidiack* awash and adrift. —w. CHILES

in less than twenty days had been my ambition in the unreliable trade winds last year, and now we could have done it but for the accident of hitting something—and my faulty preparations.

I had had more than ample time to consider what we had struck and was reasonably certain that it was inanimate rather than animate. Great flukes towering above us would be a good but untrue story. No, it had been a log or a tree or, as I was inclined to believe, a container washed from a ship. *Chidiack's* hull was unmarked, but with a draft of only ten inches that was to be expected. Only the centerboard had hit, and it had not sustained serious damage.

I glanced at my watch. Seven past nine. I could not wait any longer. Time for the big event of the day.

Sitting down on the yellow-plastic clothes bags, I studied the waves. They were only three feet high and rarely coming aboard, but I was acutely aware that whenever I opened the three layers of plastic bags protecting the ship's biscuits, I was risking a month of life. Quickly I grabbed a handful of crackers and the jar of raspberry jam, the joy of my existence.

Long ago the sea imposed on me the habit of eating too fast—a habit I only partially succeed in breaking when I am ashore. But drifting had effected a cure. Each crumb I chewed slowly, completely, and those big

enough to dip into the jam, even more slowly and more completely. I loved that jam so much that I could not bring myself to ration it. When it was gone, it was gone—probably in ten more days.

The last biscuit crumbs had been eaten, but I could not resist one last finger full of jam. I licked my finger clean before reluctantly returning the jar to the food bag. I waited a few more minutes before lifting the water container for my two morning sips. Sips, not mouthfuls, though occasionally the dinghy would be jostled when the container was to my lips and I would swallow more than intended. I was angry when this happened. I did not want to cheat. Jam was one thing, water quite another. As never before, I realized that the problem with the world's resources is distribution. I had more than \$1,000 in traveler's checks and couldn't buy a glass of water. A few too large sips meant a lost day of my exquisitely measured life. I might reach land in a few more days or weeks. A ship might appear at any minute. But even if not, I fully intended to be alive for a long, if miserable, time. A minimum of sixty days, ninety or a hundred or more if I was able to catch rain. On May 17, the first day I made any notes after the pitchpole, I wrote, "I will be alive in July. But June is going to be a long month." No. Two sips of water and two sips only. Each held in the mouth, savored indecently, swished about, swallowed.

They were gone. The long day loomed before me.

I tied the water container down and covered it with the corner of the tarp. There were three quarts of water left in that container, rainwater I had caught by spreading the tarp between my feet and shoulders during a brief squall—a lovely few minutes.

We had not had much rain, and only that one squall was catchable, combining heavy rainfall with an absence of breaking waves that would spoil the water before I could scoop it up with the lid from an empty jar. In that squall I had caught almost a full gallon of fresh water, in addition to drinking my fill. Another change: when sailing, I used to dodge squalls; now I dreamed of them. I also dreamed of fountains and running-water faucets and iced tea and drinking from a hose on a hot summer's day, and worst of all, of the half-full pitcher of Chapman's I had left at the Royal Suva Yacht Club at my departure. I found that incredible. How could I possibly have committed such folly? I vowed I would never leave a drink undrunk again. And then I realized that I might never have the opportunity again.

When I left Suva on May 7, I had twenty-one gallons of water aboard *Chidiack*; when I settled into life aboard the inflatable on May 11, I

had little more than two gallons of water. Six gallons had been lost the first night out, five gallons, on the night of the pitchpole. At a generous estimate, I drank a gallon and a half between the seventh and the eleventh. I could not help wondering at this extravagance: had I ever really used a half a gallon of water a day? That should have left eight and a half gallons of water. I did not even bother to calculate how long I could live with eight and a half gallons of water: for practical purposes, forever.

Despite my meager diet, food had not been a problem. I had not even been bothered much by hunger. I recalled a story by Franz Kafka entitled "The Hunger Artist," in which the main character performs fasts as a sideshow at a carnival. He too did not experience hunger pangs after the first few days. But water was life, and I did not have eight and a half gallons on May 11, I had two and a half gallons. With the rain, ten days later I still had two and a half gallons. But what had happened to the missing six gallons? Leakage? Evaporation? I did not know.

The solar still had been a disappointment. Out of curiosity I once successfully used such a still on my last boat, but I could not get this one to work. And when I finally caught rain, I threw the still away.

The sun was warm enough for me to strip off my clothes and air my body. I was wearing the foul-weather gear and the same shorts and shirt I had on at the time of the pitchpole. Digging into the clothes bags for a change was pointless. Everything was wet and never really dried, but my skin felt better for having been exposed to the sun.

I had a very uneven tan. Hands, feet, and, I suppose, my face were dark brown; but most of the rest of my body was fish white—where it was not red with the saltwater boils covering my forearms, buttocks, calves, and feet. A couple of spots on my buttocks, both elbows, my left wrist where my watch had rubbed, and both feet were ulcerated, despite application of Desitin. The ointment helped, but I needed the miracle of being dry.

I looked over the side and tried to judge our speed: a knot? a half knot? The difference was significant: 168 miles a week or only 84. I no longer needed to check the two compasses I had brought over from *Chidiack* to know our course: 280° true, just north of the sun's path, and unvarying for ten days. I feared any wind shift. I realized that in some ways we had been lucky—if unlucky to have hit whatever we hit, then lucky to have done so 300 miles east of the New Hebrides rather than west. And lucky to have had steady wind blowing us in the

right direction, even though such a wind should be expected. And most of all, lucky to have had it all happen this year when I had a good dinghy. I could have stayed alive aboard *Chidiack*, but the effects of exposure would have been much worse.

A wave halfheartedly splashed aboard and soaked me, and I shifted to the other side of the dinghy to face the sun. From its height I knew it was nearly noon. I leaned over and opened the Voyageur navigation bag, took a vitamin pill from the bottle, and closed the bag. Of all the things lost, I most regretted losing my sextant. It had been nothing special, one of the World War II U.S. Navy models made by David White and only two years younger than I, but it had taken me around the world and I was fond of it. And everything else I needed to find our position was still safe in the navigation bag. In this, as in many other ways, the transition from yacht to dinghy had been easier for me than it would have been for someone aboard a conventional craft. I put the pill in my mouth, lifted the water container for a single sip, and swallowed. Lunch.

Tomorrow there would be more. The cans were rusting and would have to be used. The labels had come off all the cans, but by shaking them I could tell which were which. A half a can of fruit cocktail for lunch, with the other half for dinner, which meant the only water I would use would be the two sips in the morning.

My liquid supplies came from various sources.

2½ gallons of water

7 cans of fruit

3 cans of vegetables

10 small bottles of Coca-Cola

My liquid ration was less than one cup a day, six sips, or only five, depending on my self-discipline at noon. I considered the prospect of kidney damage, but so far my kidneys functioned. I remembered Bombard's book about his drinking seawater on his drift across the Atlantic, but I was not tempted to do so myself.

Each can of fruit or vegetables would provide liquid for a full day: ten days total. The water on hand would last at least forty days, and surely in these latitudes it would rain often. But I did not permit myself to count rain in my calculations. Rain was a gift. The Coca-Cola, which I considered more secure in bottles than the water in plastic containers, was to be used last. Ten bottles for seventeen days, two days each for

the first eight bottles. And, I had decided, then I would drink the last two bottles in quick succession. Once before I died, if only for a few minutes, I was not going to be thirsty. My food supply consisted of:

5 cans ravioli
 4 cans beans
 1 can hot dogs
 3 cans tuna
 4½ packages ship's biscuits
 3 boxes breakfast cereal
 ½ jar jam
 1 jar Marmite
 10 packages freeze-dried dinners
 4 packets powdered milk
 1 jar dry-roasted unsalted peanuts
 1 can peanut brittle
 1 bottle vitamin pills

Each can made two dinners, and the hot dogs would make three. I could stay alive a long time just on the crackers and the cereal. The peanuts and peanut brittle would keep me going for weeks. And with caught rain, each freeze-dried dinner would last three days and each packet of milk, a week. Without rain, of course, the freeze-dried provisions were worthless. I have eaten freeze-dried food without cooking, and I tried to eat some without water. It simply cannot be done. You just pucker away. And probably it is counterproductive; liquid must be drawn from the body somehow.

At times I wondered if I was being too hard on myself, particularly toward the end of the first week, when my body most strongly protested the new regime. The odds were very good that I would come upon land within a month. And for a drift of only a month I would not have to ration much of anything. But if we did not come upon land, if the wind changed, or if we did see land but were unable to get ashore and had to continue to Australia, I was determined to last the course. I felt stronger today than I had a few days earlier. In fact, I felt that for each of the past three days I had made some gain, however small; that I had managed to reverse the inexorable slide toward death.

To escape the blinding heat Saturday afternoon, I had swum from the Whaler to *Chidiack*. Already I had lost weight and strength, particularly in my legs. Once aboard *Chidiack*, in boredom I made

another search of her flooded interior and found treasure: two bottles of Coca-Cola, a knife, a tube of Desitin and one of Eclipse—a sun-screen ointment, a pair of shorts, a mismatched pair of thongs, a hammer, and a plate.

The knife had a bottle opener, and I immediately drank one of the Cokes. The other still put me two days of life ahead, and the warm, sweet liquid did me a world of good. I pulled the Whaler to *Chidiock* and transferred everything except the hammer and the plate.

Small fish, some bright blue, some almost transparent, swam inside *Chidiock*. Someday, I thought, I may have to come back and eat you.

The next day I again returned to *Chidiock*, this time to attempt to bail her out after fothering the tarp beneath the hull. The seas were calmer than they had been at any time since she had been swamped, but it took me most of the morning to tie the tarp securely in place, and my social secretary had to cancel several important appointments. The problem continued to be that of not having anything suitable for bailing. First I tried a plastic bag, which was worthless. I looked around, and my eye settled on the plate. As a scoop it proved very effective. I was able to move a considerable amount of water with it, but unfortunately not considerable enough.

Before untying the tarp and returning to the dinghy, I inserted *Chidiock's* rudder and then sorted out the tangled mainsheet and halyard. When I raised the torn sail, *Chidiock* responded by gracefully rolling onto her side and sailing for the depths. Less gracefully, I jumped clear. She righted herself and I scrambled back aboard and was able to turn her downwind before she could repeat her new trick.

Grossly, very, very grossly, I was able to steer with great sweeping movements of the tiller. In an hour I might change our position by a hundred yards. But if we sighted land, even such limited control might make the difference. Inordinately pleased, I furled the sail and dropped the rudder back into *Chidiock's* gaping aft locker before returning home.

From the beginning of the drift I had held on to the hope that I could save *Chidiock* as well as myself, though I knew the odds against her were very long. That was one of the reasons I kept the boats tied together, even though the dinghy would drift faster by herself. I also thought that both boats together were more likely to be seen than either alone; and that however unpleasant, the swamped *Chidiock* was somewhere to go if the dinghy deflated, which, thankfully, it showed no signs of doing. Now the odds against *Chidiock* seemed slightly reduced.

By midafternoon the sun was hot, and I took the spare pair of shorts and dipped them in the sea and then put them on top of my head. I had already draped my foul-weather gear loosely about my shoulders for shade. Unwashed, unshaven, uncombed, covered with more boils than Job, and with a pair of shorts as a turban, unquestionably I looked absurd; but this was not a beauty contest.

I found myself speculating about other solo sailors who have been lost at sea: Slocum, Willis, Riving, Colas, Piver. The list could go on. I wondered if they had died quickly or slowly. There have been other times when I thought I was going to die at sea, but always death would be quick. Now I was on the edge not for a few minutes or hours, but weeks, months. Already my tongue was thick, my lips pasty, and I wondered what it would feel like to be thirsty and know not that there was water that should not be drunk, but that there was no water. It was not death I feared, but the suffering along the way.

My initial reaction to being adrift was one of apathy laced with depression. I did not care about the voyage or the challenge or the sea. Sailing had brought more pain than pleasure, and if I survived, I would go ashore and find a life with a little comfort—the old chimera: peace, rest, ease. Surely I had earned them.

But after a few days of this, I knew that if the sea did not kill me—and it had missed some pretty good opportunities in the past few years; perhaps it would again—and if it were possible, I would sail on. If *Chidiack* were lost, I would try to replace her. I would not, however, sail indefinitely from shipwreck to shipwreck, disposing of open boats like used tissues. At a certain point, and I would know when, such a voyage would become ludicrous rather than honorable.

There seemed to me to be two quite different yet equally valid attitudes toward death: Socrates' "Why should I fear death, for when I am, death is not; and when death is, I am not" and Dylan Thomas's "Rage, rage against the dying of the light." By temperament I favor Thomas, but while I was adrift Socrates prevailed. The sea is immune to curses.

The terrible thing about the sea is that it is not alive. All our pathetic adjectives are false. The sea is not cruel or angry or kind. The sea is insensate, a blind fragment of the universe, and kills us not in rage, but with indifference, as casual byproducts of its own unknowable harmony. Rage would be easier to understand and to accept.

Whenever I thought of death, and obviously I thought of it often, I also thought of Suzanne—not really an unflattering association. I was thirty-eight years old. No man in my family had lived to so ripe an age

for several generations. I had accomplished some of what I wanted with my life—not all, but probably more than most men. And for me dying at sea had long been accepted as an occupational hazard. Of all that the shore offers—the places I had not seen, the friends with whom I would like to share some conversation and a bottle, the music, the books, the paintings—most of all, I would miss Suzanne. I had never loved her more than during these last days, when the contrast between the happiness we had shared and the bleak reality of the present was so great.

When I left Suva I had not realized that it was the very day on which four years earlier I had left Auckland to sail for Tahiti. I had not known then whether I would ever see Suzanne again, and now, for quite different reasons, I did not know if I would ever see her again. I was glad that I was not yet overdue, that she would have no reason yet to be worried.

Something on a nearby wave caught my eye, something brown and round now hidden in a trough. Then, there it was. It was going to drift past. Terribly excited, I drove over the side and started swimming.

When I had the coconut safely in the dinghy and held it to my ear, I heard the glorious sound of liquid. With the blade of my rigging knife, I cut away the husk, and with the fid, I punctured two of the eyes. Normally I am not fond of coconut, but the slightly sour liquid was ambrosia. I took two big swallows before draining the rest into a jar, almost two cups. And there would be more moisture in the meat. But how to get to it? I recalled the hammer on *Chidiok* and pulled us over. With three blows, the shell cracked apart: days and days of life.

A half hour before sunset, I ate my dinner consisting of the last half of a can of tuna, washed down with coconut milk. Despite the can's having been open for twenty-four hours, the fish did not smell bad. And of course I would have eaten it even if it had.

In the last light, I searched for land. There was none. I wrapped myself in the tarp and tried to settle in for the long night of broken sleep. My thoughts were the same as they had been the last night and the night before that. How many more long days and nights: four? forty? a hundred and four? And what was at the end: an island? a ship? death?

We drifted on.

Over the Reef

The blackness was a cliff. I lost it for a moment behind the tattered remnant of mainsail. The time must be nearing 3:00 A.M. and I was sitting in chest-deep water, trying to steer the swamped *Chidiack Tichborne* clear of the island, which, after promising life when I first spotted it the preceding morning, had become just another face of death.

Death at sea is protean. I had known it as water slopping about *Egregious's* bilge on my third attempt at Cape Horn; as the innocent-appearing crack at the trailing edge of the keel when I dove overboard in the horse latitudes; as disorientation when *Egregious* capsized in the Roaring Forties; as the sound of breaking waves when in the Southern Ocean I lay in my bunk and *Egregious* lay ahull, helplessly awaiting the wave that would finish us; as the incomparable force of a more than hundred-knot wind south of Australia, ripping the surface from the sea, filling the air with water, making breathing all but impossible, as it drove *Egregious* beyond hull speed under bare poles; as the suddenly flooded cabin in the cyclone in the Tasman; as the slab side of the tug, so close I could have reached out and touched the rivets as it almost ran *Chidiack* down that night off Tahiti. And now as this shadow, barely discernible against black sky and black sea.

Through rain-streaked glasses, I caught a glimpse of the ghostly line of surf at the base of the cliff, less than a quarter mile away. If we drifted much closer, I would have to abandon *Chidiack* and take my

chances in the Boston Whaler. But I did not know if I could row the dinghy in such waves, now more than ten feet high and growing steeper as the long swell from the open ocean touched the rising seabed below. Perhaps I had already waited too long.

My body was filled with numbness and pain. I had been trying to steer *Chidiock* for twelve of the past eighteen hours and for the last five hours continuously. The tiller and all of *Chidiock* but the mast were below the water. There was an illusion of great speed caused by the waves rolling over us. One of them had crashed through the jib and torn it into worthless ribbons. We were "sailing" on the twenty or so square feet of chaffing patch on the mainsail. We were not truly sailing at all. I only hoped that by keeping *Chidiock's* bow pointed generally in the direction of a broad reach, we might clear this first island.

From the waist down I had lost sensation, except for the agony I experienced when I bumped the ulcers on my feet and ankles against *Chidiock's* fiberglass floor. Moving the tiller through the exaggerated sculling movements necessary to control the swamped yawl took both hands, which had also lost feeling. I smiled inwardly when I recalled steering *Chidiock* with a single finger. My back and neck, though, were on fire. Always the fire smoldered and at intervals it flared into a spasm of white-hot pain. There was nothing to do at such moments but hang on to the tiller and wait for the pain to pass. Don't fail me, body. Don't fail before the sky begins to lighten.

A wave loomed high above us, the highest wave I had ever seen from *Chidiock*, a wall of water as high as the yawl was long. Here we go, I thought. This one is going to break. *Chidiock* started up the steep rise. The wave lifted me from her. I clung to the tiller, no longer steering, just hanging on until the tiller pointed straight up and I was floating at arm's length above the sluggish hull. I was afraid not for *Chidiock* but for the dinghy. Where was it? Downwind where it would be squashed beneath *Chidiock*? Its cream-color fabric was more visible than the gray that is customary for such craft, but the night was so dark that I could not find it. I was nearly at the soaring crest. I hesitated before letting go of the tiller. *Chidiock* turned beneath me, riding sideways up the curl. If only the Whaler didn't lose its oars. Then I was through, sliding down the foaming back of the wave. Somehow it did not break, and an instant later *Chidiock* and the Whaler came through unscathed.

I floated back aboard *Chidiock*. Within a few yards the comber had

disappeared into the darkness, but I heard its roar as it slammed into the cliff.

We were not going to clear this end of the island. There was so much noise—sails, waves, surf, wind—that it was impossible to know whether my efforts were doing any good.

Under her scrap of sail I could not tack the yawl. I could not point any higher than a beam reach, which was not pointing at all, but merely *Chidiock's* natural drifting position. Presumably I could jibe. I had not tried, for the wind was at right angles to the cliff and I had been trying to clear the closer end. There seemed to be no advantage in jibing, and a clear disadvantage in that we would be in jeopardy for a mile before reaching the far end of the island, rather than the two hundred yards to this end. But, as I hardly needed remind myself, we were not going to reach this end, and when what you are doing is not working, you might as well try something else, however unlikely.

I pushed the tiller over and held it there and waited. Another wave came and actually pushed *Chidiock* in the opposite direction from the one in which I was trying to turn her. I kept the tiller over and kept waiting. And with the next wave, the rudder gripped and her bow swung slowly off the wind. The motion, once begun, was assisted by a third wave; and with a fourth, the chaffing patch jibed and, from force of habit, I shifted to the other side of the tiller. I doubt that there is any significant advantage to steering from "windward" when sailing a submersible.

The maneuver had cost us distance. The cliff was now less than three hundred yards away and the waves becoming ever steeper. I wondered, though, if we had even a safe three hundred yards, if rocks or coral did not lie hidden beneath the breakers. *Chidiock* was too low to provide an unobstructed view to the shore. I debated again whether I should abandon her and try to row free in the dinghy, particularly since on this apparent course I was apparently lengthening the distance to safety. Everything was "apparent" because I simply did not know. Only after long minutes could I form any impression of our true movement. Part of me screamed to get into the Whaler before it was too late, and part remained calm and said to wait a little longer until it was certain we could not clear the island this way either.

Without warning a wave broke. Since she was already beneath the sea, *Chidiock* could not really capsize, but she rolled ponderously onto her side and I was washed away.

My legs were useless, my circulation so impaired that commands to

swim brought no response. They trailed like vestigial appendages on whatever form of life I had evolved into, as I fought first to keep myself afloat inside cumbersome foul-weather gear and then to swim back to *Chidiock* using only my arms.

Chidiock remained on her side. The sight of her thus no longer seemed unusual. If anything, in the thirteen days since the pitchpole, I had come to have unlimited confidence in her. The sea could strip everything movable from her, toss her around like a toy, fill her with water; and she would patiently survive.

My legs persisted in their refusal to function, so I could not stand on the centerboard, but the weight of my upper body was enough to right the yawl. She actually had less water in her when I managed to get back aboard than she had before.

Clearly we had drifted closer to the island, but we also seemed to have drifted along. What was the direction? Days earlier I had taken the compass bracket to the dinghy in order to preserve it for my next Drascombe Lugger. My exhausted mind worked slowly. With the coming of the first line squall last night—or rather, this night, but long ago, when I was resting in the dinghy—the wind had backed east, which meant that on a starboard reach we had been trying to clear the north end of the island, and now on port, the south end. I had thought that the current would likely follow the trend of the trade wind we had experienced for most of the two weeks adrift and tend north. But perhaps it divided. Perhaps there was a tidal variation. Perhaps all my struggling had been for naught. Perhaps if I had simply let us drift, we would have been saved by blind chance. For it was now obvious that we were being carried along the coast faster than we were being carried in. I could not yet be certain if we were being carried along fast enough, and so I remained at the tiller, more or less holding *Chidiock's* bow in the right direction. Even if it did no good, at least it did no harm.

Riding sideways up great curling waves and just beyond a line of thunderous surf, I started to fall asleep. My eyes closed and my head fell forward. Reflex action snapped it back, which reignited the flames along my spine. Each spasm had been worse than the one preceding, and this one was a culmination of all that had gone before. I began to wonder if it would ever end. I had done nothing to herniate a disk. Had my awkward sleeping position among the bags on the Whaler pinched a nerve? Could so much pain come from a mere muscle spasm? Whatever the cause, the pain served to keep me awake until we sailed,

drifted, and were carried safely past the island, and I was able to collapse into the dinghy and rest.

Dawn was delayed by a squall, but when it passed I saw that we were drifting down a great corridor of sea, bounded on the north by a line of four islands, and to the south by a large island in the far distance and several closer rocks, one of which was so white with guano that I mistook it for a sail. Six or seven miles directly ahead of us lay two more islands: one, a small, sheer peak jutting from the sea; but the other, five miles long and with three 2,000-foot peaks, about which the squall line lingered. An even larger island was visible to the northwest. In the pallid light all the land was gray and showed no sign of habitation.

I pushed myself up and ate a breakfast of half a dozen crackers, raspberry jam, a can of pears, and a handful of peanuts, washed down with unlimited water. Since the first sight of land, rationing had been suspended. The need for energy far outweighed the possibility that we might not be able to get ashore and have to drift on. I had even drunk two of my precious bottles of Coca-Cola.

When I had completed this feast, I opened the navigation bag and examined the chart. There were only two groups of small islands, such as those surrounding us, shown in the New Hebrides. One was too far north for us to have reached so quickly, so we must be among the other group, just fifty miles north of Port Vila, the capital.

I found some small satisfaction in having my dead reckoning proven correct. I had predicted landfall in two weeks from the pitchpole, and here we were on Saturday, May 24, two weeks later to the day. My self-satisfaction was short-lived when I recalled the past night. We might be here, but we still had one small problem: reaching shore alive.

I stared back at the islands behind us. With the coming of day, I was not certain which cliff had almost been our nemesis. I turned to the island ahead. Rain was still falling on the peaks. People must live there, I told myself.

Throughout the morning, waves marched forward regally and carried *Chidiock* with them. I felt as though we were being escorted along a marble corridor in a great palace. The waves had not diminished, but now in deeper water, they were no longer breaking. The motion was stately; the mood, solemn, as I lay resting in the inflatable and watched the nameless land come nearer.

The size of the waves worried me, as did the nature of the shore. I knew nothing about the New Hebrides, except that it was under joint English and French rule. A few things were certain, how-

ever: beyond the island ahead of us lay only the open sea. Landing would be safer on the leeward side of the island. I must be on land before night. And I dreaded returning to *Chidiok*. At 11:00 A.M. I did so anyway.

The ocean felt cold as I settled myself beside the tiller, perhaps because I was running a fever from the infection in my feet. With movement, circulation and sensation were restored. A necessity, I suppose, but a mixed blessing. Who would expect that the part of the body to suffer most in sailing an open boat is the feet? The familiar needle-and-pin pains shot through them. They were swollen with edema. And the ulcers, particularly on both ankles, where they were easily bumped, were filled with pus. The first moment of reimmersion was almost unbearable, but then the ulcers obligingly went numb and I forgot them.

As I tried to sail *Chidiok*, the sun broke through the clouds and turned the small island bright green. For another hour the larger island remained shrouded, but then the sky cleared and it too turned emerald. And I saw a house. I could not take my eyes from it, the first outpost of man, which during the days adrift I had thought I might never see again—just a small house in a clearing on the side of the northernmost peak, and yet proof that someone actually did live on the island; and where they could live, I could live. A while later, a column of smoke rose from farther up the mountainside, where someone was clearing brush.

By then, though, our circumstances had changed. Once again, no matter how I tried to sail, *Chidiok* was carried sideways by the current. If in the night the current had saved us, now the scales balanced, for we were being carried too far south, away from the land, which now meant life, not death.

When there were only three hours of daylight remaining, I knew that I could not get *Chidiok* ashore before dark, if ever. Sadly I returned to the inflatable and cast her off and began to row. The gap between the boats widened. The dinghy rowed well as I quartered wind and wave. I was still too far off to determine anything of the shore, except that midway along the island, mist filled the air as though from heavy surf. There was no question of rowing around to the leeward side. I had neither the time nor the strength, though I was buoyed by the certainty that an end would come before sunset.

As I rowed I gazed back at *Chidiok*. Perhaps her loss had been inevitable since the pitchpole. If I had been rescued by a ship, she

would probably have had to be abandoned. And even if I had managed to maneuver her to land, if there were a reef, I would have had to let her go. But we had been through so much: 7,000 miles since San Diego. And at this very moment she was still sound. Despite everything, with a few replacements and a few repairs, she could continue the voyage. From only a short distance away, she was mostly hidden in the troughs, and I realized how unlikely had been the possibility of our ever being spotted by a ship. Already she seemed well to the south on a course that would carry her outside the offshore peak. I waited for one last glimpse of her. There she was on a crest, torn sails fluttering, awash, valiant. I engraved this image in my mind and then deliberately turned away.

For an hour I rowed hard, managing to get across wind and current. Then I rested and drank a Coke as we drifted closer. Individual coconut trees became distinguishable, and a second house on the hillside not far from the first, but no other signs of man: no fishing boats, no village that might mark a pass or a landing.

The waves had started to build before I saw the beach and the reef. I was almost directly below the house, which stood perhaps a half mile back from the shore and a few hundred feet up the mountainside. The beach ran from the northern point, was obscured by brush, then appeared again for two hundred yards of pure white sand, before being lost in a jumble of rocks. For a quarter mile out from the beach lay the smooth turquoise waters of a lagoon. Life. And between me and the lagoon lay the reef.

When I was as close to the surf line as I dared to be, I turned the Whaler and began rowing along the shore, searching for a pass. There was none. Soon we were around the rocks, and the shore and reef fell away to the west. From the corner I could see an unbroken line of surf, between three and five breakers deep, increasing in vehemence in the distance.

I turned and tried to row back; but though I rowed hard, we were caught in the sweep of the seas. Suddenly the ocean changed color and I saw the coral reaching toward us. Any place was as good as any other. The coral might slice me up, but if I could protect my head, I should survive. I turned in.

At first I went slowly, trying to get a feel for the rhythm of the waves. I backed water as we trembled on a crest that almost broke beneath us; then I rowed as hard as I could. The next wave rose. Still rowing I noted the lovely translucent blue of the water as it climbed to the sky. I even had time to think that this might be the last thing I ever saw.

The wave toppled and threw us out, up, and forward. The dinghy's bow was dropping, and I dove toward the stern in an attempt to balance it. Everything was roiling water. It passed and I came up for a breath, surprised to find myself still inside the Whaler, the oars still gripped in my hands. Another wave was coming and I resumed rowing.

The second wave was worse than the first. My sense of direction was lost, and I really do not know what it did with us. I only recall falling backwards and lying stretched full-length, as the dinghy more or less stood on its head while the wave swept us along. I must have forgotten my intention to protect my head with my arms, because I arose once again with oars in hand, rowing.

Under other circumstances the third wave would have been good fun, smaller than the first two and less dangerous. I was able to keep my head above water, though neck deep in foam. Then it too passed and instinctively I was again rowing for my life. The instant when I realized that there was no need, that we were through, that we had made it without even a scratch, came abruptly. It was one of the most ecstatic moments of my life. The wild ride over the reef, the days of



Self-portrait—in the first minutes ashore, Ernae Island. —w. CHILES

doubt adrift, the solitary struggle, and now I was going to live. I was really going to live.

Once again I found myself chest deep in a swamped ship. Kneeling in the bottom of the Boston Whaler, I rowed slowly across the lagoon. I was amazed that we had not capsized in the surf and that the oars had stayed in the oarlocks. I owed much to that dinghy, perhaps my life and certainly my safe passage over the reef. If only I could have saved *Chidiock*.

A bit of color caught my eye. Several huts stood among the palm trees at the point, and from one of them hung a line of drying clothes. Those pink and blue and white bits of cloth were a symbol of normality that filled me with comfort.

I let us drift the last few yards. Sand grated beneath the dinghy. I stepped ashore and my dead legs collapsed and I fell. I lay there laughing.



To Win the Big Sea

The voyage had shattered like a vase, and the pieces were scattered around the world. As I limped along Cook's Beach on New Zealand's Coromandel Peninsula, I wondered if I would ever be able to put it back together again. I was no longer free to sail on. At times I was no longer certain I even wanted to. I was dependent on boat builders, business men, editors, publishers, shipping agents, dock workers, crewmen on freighters and copra boats, customs officials, tribal chiefs, and revolutionaries. Adrift, life had simply been water. Ashore it quickly became more complicated. As I told the official at the British Residency at Port Vila who expressed surprise that I had managed to save my passport and traveler's checks, "I did not know if I would survive. But I knew that if I did, I would need little bits of paper."

I had been ashore for two weeks now, the same length of time I was adrift, but vastly different. My feet and body were almost healed, my spirit less so. Perhaps as was only natural, when survival became certain, my will lapsed. And it was both fortunate and unfortunate that Suzanne and I had been lent the use of a beach house by her friends Dean and Anna Ellis.

It was fortunate because it is a beautiful place on the shore of Mercury Bay, with scenery and climate similar to Northern California's, but with considerably fewer people. We almost never saw another soul when we were collecting driftwood for the fireplace, and seldom more than a few cars during our walks two miles to the nearest store,

or on our big once-a-week trek to catch the ferry to Whitianga, the nearest town. It was a fine, quiet place for me to recuperate and write and think.

But it was unfortunate because I liked it so much that I wanted to stay. I found myself studying the smooth waters of Mercury Bay and thinking what a perfect place it was for a boat like *Chidiok*. There were coves and rocks and islands to explore for years, a home ashore, the comfort of Suzanne, and, undeniably, the avoidance of more pain. I had been at war with the sea for most of the last six years, and I was tired. Moitessier had said to me, "Ah, but you are young and strong." A little more than a year later, I felt very old. When I had been struggling on my first voyage to reach Cape Horn, I told myself that nothing else would ever matter so much in my life, and so I made the commitment absolute. Now, did this voyage too have to become a matter of victory or death? Was it that important to me? Would any lesser commitment enable me to continue? Was it worthwhile, or was I nothing more than a casual amusement, a sideshow freak like the hunger artist in Kafka's short story? Would I come this close to dying three times every 7,000 miles? And when would I have done enough? I hold a world record for my first voyage and with *Chidiok* I had already sailed farther than any other man alone in an open boat. To paraphrase the great black baseball pitcher Satchel Page, I looked back and I didn't see anyone gaining on me. I didn't even see anyone following. It is a measure of my distress that I briefly cared.

As I continued along Cook's Beach, my mind turned from these unprofitable thoughts to that other, warmer beach a thousand miles north, and to my first moments ashore.

By the time I unloaded the dinghy, the sun had gone behind the mountain and the air was cooler. This was the tropics, so the temperature was still in the eighties. But because of my fever, I felt chilled.

Looking for a change of clothes, I opened the bags and spread their contents on the sand. In addition to moldy clothing, navigation tables, documents, and food, I found that I had also shared the precious space aboard the dinghy with such essential items as a road map of Tahiti and a hot-water bottle.

Apparently no one had seen me come over the reef, and I did not feel like walking the short distance to the village that night, meeting people, talking, explaining. I wanted a last night alone. It was enough



Dinghy and contents ashore at Emae. —w. CHILES

to know that the village was there. Morning would be soon enough to rejoin the human race.

And so, when I found myself shivering over a dinner of a can of tuna fish, I wrapped myself in my old friend the tarp, at various times a tent, a roof, a blanket, a rain catcher, a fothering sheet, and now a ground cloth; and fell immediately asleep.

Dimly, through fathoms of fatigue, the murmur of the wind in the trees sounded like Elvis Presley; but even while sleeping this seemed an odd association for me to make, so odd that I knew something must be wrong. Suddenly I threw off the tarp and sat bolt upright. I do not know who was more frightened, I or the fifty Melanesians standing around me in a silent circle. One of them held a portable cassette player, from which did indeed come Elvis's voice. As I was later to learn, they had thought I was dead but were hesitant about approaching the corpse.

"So, you are alive, then." Most of my discoverers were children—the boys dressed in shorts and shirts, the girls, in dresses—but the speaker was a tall man about thirty, whose English had a British accent.

"Yes. And very glad to be. I hit something with my sailboat and drifted for two weeks in that." I pointed at the Boston Whaler, and my audience responded with a chorus of "Ohh"s and gratifyingly amazed looks. "Where am I?"

"On Emae Island."

"Can you show me on a chart?"

"Oh yes. I should think so." And when I handed him the chart, he pointed to a small island about forty miles north of Port Vila. Then it was his turn to ask questions. "How did you come ashore? You did not come over the reef?"

"I couldn't find a pass."

"No. There is none on this side. You must have injured yourself."

"I was lucky. My feet are a bit bad, but that was from before."

They all looked down at my puffy feet and gave another chorus of "Ohh"s.

"We must get you up to the chief's house." Now that I had been "found," I knew there was no possibility of my spending the night on the beach, so I made no objection. "Can you walk just as far as the trees? We have a truck."

"Slowly."

"Of course. Take your time." He said something in another language, and everyone smiled. Many picked up pieces of my gear, and we made our way across the beach and through a line of brush to where a pickup truck stood on a trail cut through the jungle. My tattered possessions and I were bundled into the truck and bounced up to the house I had seen from offshore. During all this, and for the next several days, I functioned behind thick curtains of exhaustion and fever, and I did not think to ask the first man's name or how he and the others happened to discover me.

At the house I was left in the care of Kalo Manaroto, his wife, Nellie, and their children. I never knew just how many children they had, for dozens were in and out of the place, and when I asked Kalo, he said, "Oh, I have about five."

Kalo offered me dinner, but I was too tired to eat and had just a cup of tea, while water for a bath was heated on a bucket on the kerosene stove. When it was ready, Kalo carried it around the house and showed me the washtub, next to a faucet from a catchment tank.

After rinsing off the worst of the saltwater, I returned to the house and was given a room where a cot had been made up with real sheets. In such unaccustomed luxury, I lay for a few moments unable to sleep. Kalo and I had not talked very much, but I had learned that he was

headmaster of the main school on the island, and that he did not own the house but watched it for the chief, Fred Timakata, who was also speaker of the representative assembly and resided mostly in Port Vila. As it happened, the chief was visiting the island and would be home later that night. For my part I told Kalo of *Chidiok's* pitchpoling and my time adrift. I fell asleep reflecting on the warm hospitality that I, a stranger and the only Caucasian on Emae, had been given.

A little after 7.00 the next morning there was a knock at my door, and a bearded man of about my age, wearing black-rimmed glasses, jeans, and a short-sleeved shirt, came in.

"I hope I am not disturbing you." He held out his hand, both to shake mine and to motion for me to remain in bed. "I am Fred Timakata. I am sorry I was not home when you arrived, but I was meeting with the chiefs of the other villages. How are you feeling?"

"Better; though still tired."

"I troubled you so early because we have a radio schedule with Vila at 8:00 and I am going to ask if they have a plane free. Are there any messages you want to send?"

This was unexpected and welcome news. "You have an airfield?"

"For the past two years. Just a clearing in the bush, but enough for small planes. We have saved many lives by being able to fly people out rather than having to wait for a ship."

"I'm not that ill. I don't want to be a bother."

"Oh, no. They will want to know in Vila. There may not be a plane available, in which case I will arrange space for you on the one I am leaving on tomorrow."

While we were talking, I wrote out a telegram for Suzanne. "*Chidiok* lost. I fine. At Emae Island, New Hebrides. Will telephone from Port Vila within week."

Fred took the message and started to leave for the school, where the radio transmitter was located. Just before he closed the door, he said, "Oh yes. I have asked the dresser to come by."

To anyone familiar with British usage, his meaning would have been clear, but my speculation as to who or what the "dresser" might be ended only when a shy young man, carrying a large black bag, knocked on my door and announced, "I am the dresser."

To this I ventured a neutral "Yes."

"Yes." He held up the bag as a badge of office. "I have come to give you injections."

"For what?"

"To make you well."

"What kind of injections?"

He displayed a bottle of clear fluid.

"And what is that?"

He was surprised I did not recognize it. "Medicine."

"But what kind of medicine?"

"To make you well."

"No."

"But it will make you well."

"No injections."

Losing such an opportunity was an obvious disappointment to him and, after a pause, he made another offer. "I will take your blood pressure."

To this I agreed. But when he took out the instrument, he found it broken. Desperately he rummaged through the black bag before exclaiming, "I will get you some calamine lotion."

Believing this would cause no harm and seeing how eager he was to be of service, I again agreed. Seldom have I made anyone so happy, and he sped from the room to fetch the calamine.

Half an hour later he returned and began dabbing the pink stuff on my hands and feet. I was more than capable of doing this myself, but that was not part of the drill. As he worked, we made small talk. I learned that his name is James and that he was born on Emae but trained to be a dresser at a hospital on the big island of Espiritu Santo.

When he had almost finished painting me, he mentioned quite offhandedly, "Oh, yes. They found your boat."

My words came all at once. "What? Who? Where?"

Before he could reply, Fred Timakata appeared at the door. "Yes. Your boat was floating upside down in the lagoon at the other end of the island."

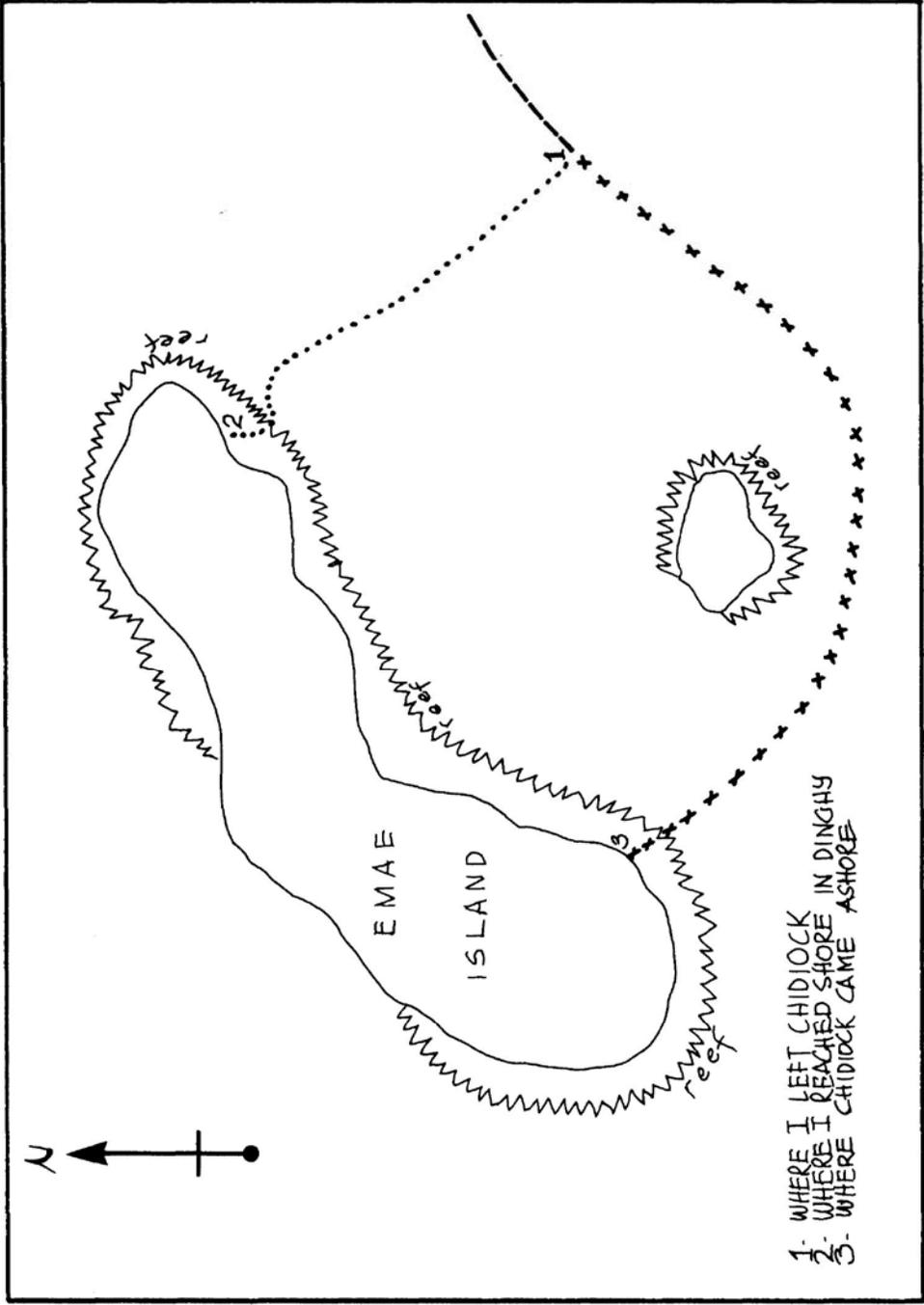
This was incredible. When last seen *Chidiok* was far to the south of Emae and I had accepted that she was lost. I finally managed to ask, "Is she badly damaged?"

"Probably so, I'm afraid. After the men from Sangava village saw the boat, they searched the beach for bodies, thinking that whoever was aboard had been killed. When they went up to the school to report, I told them you had come ashore yesterday afternoon."

My excitement was difficult to contain. "Is the boat still afloat?"

"They said they had dragged it ashore."

"Can we get there?"



"It would be necessary to walk some, but my driver could take us most of the way. When you feel well enough, that is."

"I am well enough now."

"But your feet," he protested.

I was truly a mess, made doubly absurd by my pink calamine stockings and gloves. "I must see the boat."

So I gathered my mismatched shoes, salvaged from the swamping, one green rubber thong with a strap that cut between my toes, and one brown-plastic sandal, and we climbed into the truck and rolled down the hill and along the jungle track.

After stopping in Sangava as a courtesy to the village chief, and in order to pick up the men who knew the boat's exact location, we left the trail and dodged between trees until the truck was stopped by an impenetrable thicket. "We have to walk from here," Fred told me. "They say it is not far."

The Sangava men led us through dense vegetation. I could hear the sound of surf, but I did not catch a glimpse of the beach until we actually stepped onto it. My shipwreck was the biggest news on Emae Island since World War II, and in their excitement the men took off down the beach at a pace that soon left me limping far behind. In the distance they joined a group clustered at the edge of the jungle. As I neared, the men quietly stepped aside and there was *Chidiock*, not only safe but sound. Her hull was intact. From the gunwale down it was not even scratched. And for the first time since the pitchpole, she was empty of water.

When I was to study a detailed chart of Emae Island, I would find it marked with a current running counterclockwise around the offshore rock. *Chidiock* had first been carried south by this current, and then she had been brought circuitously back until she went over the reef on the change of tide during the night. Swamped and low in the water as she was, she could not have been expected to flip in the surf. But fortunately that is what she must have done. Her mast and gaff were shattered, the heavy bronze stem fitting bent, and the teak gunwale cap splintered near the bow and along the stern.

Exhilaration swept over me. The moment was as joyful as had been my surfing uninjured over the reef in the dinghy and made up for much of what I had endured while adrift. Steadfastly I deny most of the myths of the sea. But I find ever increasing difficulty in not endowing the yawl *Chidiock Tichbome* with the attribute of character. If she is a thing, she is a wonderful thing, one of the finest creations of man.



Chidiok under thatched shelter built by friends. —w. CHILES

She seemed to have followed me ashore. I could almost sense her smugness as she waited for me, and I half expected her to ask what had taken me so long.

After noting what would be needed to make *Chidiok* seaworthy again, there was nothing more for me to do that morning. I shook the hands of all the men from Sangava, and then Fred and his driver and I started back to the truck.

While I was remembering those days, I had continued walking and now found myself at the cliff at: the end of Cook's Beach.

Other memories returned as I retraced my steps, incidents on the journey from Emae Island to Port Vila to New Zealand. The meal at Fred's home that Sunday evening: turtle stew, supplied by the islanders, and the treat—for them—of their first freeze-dried food, chicken chow mein, supplied by me. The old woman who smiled and gently touched my swollen feet and gave me in broken English the ultimate accolade: "You win the big sea." Our almost regal progress by truck to the airstrip on Monday, during which everyone we passed waved or

saluted. The efficient British Base Hospital in Port Vila, where I was told by the Australian doctor that coming from a civilized country, I had the dubious advantage of having civilized staph, which were more resistant to antibiotics than those usually found in the New Hebrides; and where one night I awoke from a feverish nightmare, reaching up, trying to strike out at the wave towering over me, only to discover that it was a frightened nurse with my 2:00 A.M. medicine. The moment when I was through the barrier at the Auckland Airport and held Suzanne.

There are disadvantages to reading too much and thinking too much and analyzing too much. Everyone must have times when he is tired and discouraged and doubts the worth of what he is doing with his life. What matters are not the doubts or even the opposing justifications. What matters is action. Not to think about writing, but to write. Not to think about sailing, but to sail. Not to think about loving, but to love.

I was strengthened by this belief, and by the knowledge that if the voyage had been going to be easy, someone else would have already made it; and by my own words "Judge a man by that against which he



Under tow, Emae to Port Vila. —w. CHILES

must strive"; and by the prompt shipping of the needed replacement parts by Luke Churchouse of Honnor Marine, *Chidiock's* builder; and by the image of *Chidiock the Indomitable* waiting on Emae Island; and by a letter from my friend and fellow sailor Bob Reed which put the whole experience in the proper perspective. He wrote: "Here I am going to the office every day and you are having all the fun, lolling around in the nice warm sun in a rubber dinghy for two weeks and not even having to cook."

How could I even consider giving up such a good life?

Resurgam.

