



# LOG of the ROMANCE

Reprinted from 1976  
Logs #3 and 4

## THRU THE SOUTH SEAS

*Ja ona na! Greetings from the South Pacific. Romance's circumnavigation got off to a fast start October 1st from Grenada, reeling off the first thousand miles in 6 days of classic trade wind sailing. (At this point, we had only 39,000 more to go!) The San Blas Islands of Panama gave the crew their first dramatic sojourn into a primitive world, the ship surrounded by one-time headhunters in dugout canoes, rings in their noses and brandishing spears. The Cuna Indians, second smallest tribe on earth, are known for their many layered blouses, called "molas," sewn in reverse appliques of inspired designs and brilliant colors, much prized by collectors. We added to our own collections, and this year 'discovered' a picture perfect new group of islets, the Coco Banderos. Best bargain: a bamboo flute dance performed by the women of Wichuh Huala for \$2.50--no audience limit, and all the pictures you can take.*

*A quick Panama Canal transit, 11 days of incredible fishing for dorado and tuna, then Cocos Island, somber guardian of ancient Peruvian treasures, including the lifesize Golden Madonna of Lima. Before you visit Cocos, you wonder why the treasures have never been found. One look, and you realize only a fool would try. Lonely, uninhabited Cocos is impenetrable jungle 10 feet from high water, icy streams, lovely ribbon waterfalls and dark green bays patrolled by sharks and rays in great numbers. The whalers watered here, carving their ship's names in the rocks, a priceless record dating from the late 1600's. Mate Dan Moreland carved "Brigantine Romance, 1975," and a handsome profile of the ship, on a stream-polished boulder already bearing the legend, "Ship Susan P. Howland, 1851" One hundred twenty four years separate the two carvings.*

*A year ago, Ecuador closed the Galapagos to all but their own tourist ships, a serious deprivation to sailors and scientists alike. Like many others we feel a visit to the Enchanted Wonderland is one of the world's richest experiences, important enough to justify an unofficial stop "for necessary ship's work, and to refresh the crew." We chose two very remote areas, where the wild life is unusually abundant and tame, giving the crew at least a small taste of the special magic of this Lost World. Then followed a 3,000 mile tradewind passage to Pitcairn Island, one of the longest passages of the world cruise. Romance worked her way through 5 days of Equatorial calms before picking up the*

SE trades, which brought us to Bounty Bay in just under 24 days, all on the same tack. A beautiful passage which included a 640 mile stuns'l run.

Its hard to imagine any port topping Pitcairn for this Romance crew. For two weeks, they became Pitcairners themselves, living and working with their adoptive families, in the gardens, preparing pandanus for baskets, chopping wood, grating coconut, baking bread sticks and learning the secrets of hearty Pitcairn open hearth cooking. Pitcairn homes are so lived-in-comfortable, one could never feel like a guest. We were happy just to share in the daily life of these very hard working, proud and kindly "Men of the Mutiny"--descendents of Bounty's band. In an effort to repay their hospitality, Romance went to Henderson Island, 100 miles to windward, to cut carving wood with the Pitcairn men. Our crew worked side by side with the Islanders, felling trees, dragging logs literally miles over soft sand and through the surf, and pulling oars with the world's best surfboatmen, on no less than 35 runs over the reef and through crashing, keel-jarring breakers. On the next to last run, the longboat broached, was thrown on the beach and nearly wrecked.

Piled high with miro and tou logs, Romance was back 'home,' and anchored off Bounty Bay for Christmas, a Christmas we'll long remember. Twenty freshly cut trees decorated the square, hung to collapsing with presents for every man, woman and child, including the Romance crew. Mostly simple homemade or home-grown gifts in keeping with the true spirit of Christmas, red ripe watermellons, strings of sunshine-sweet pineapples, woven baskets--and for us, the finest carvings the Islanders could produce--Romance and Bounty models, vases, birds, flying fish, turtles, and sharks with real teeth, so lifelike they seem to swim across the bulkhead. (You can order these exquisit baskets and carvings by writing Pitcairn Island, South Pacific Ocean. Baskets run \$3-5, carvings \$15 a foot, plus \$5 postage. The average 8 month delivery time is well worth the wait for mementos prized around the world.)

The Community Christmas dinner covered a 40 foot table with an eye-popping buffet, chicken baked in coconut cream, lamb, tender roast goat, crisp little fish, fresh greens, tropical fruit salads, sweet corn-on-the-cob, steamed puddings, moist banana cakes, fresh made strawberry ice cream--to name but a few of nearly a hundred mouth watering delights! We were intoxicated with typical Pitcairn feasting. Hymns, blessings and the tolling of Bounty's bell, marked our tearful parting.

Fair winds and fine weather, with New Years at sea, brought us to the Marquesas, new islands for Romance, Hiva Oa, Nuku Hiva, Ua Pou. Melville's TYPEE, Taipi Vai, in Marquesian, spills out of the mountains lush and green, with singing streams and almost inaccessible waterfalls, into a fjord-like finger of the sea. Here, in a stillness broken only by song birds, we anchored Romance. There are few visitors. The people pressed pound-sized mangos, 10 inch grapefruit and whole stalks of bananas into our hands. A small, neat village, full of flowers. Copra plantations, children riding the small, chestnut Marquesian horses. There are not many Marquesians, survivors of thousands. One comes upon silent villages, sunlight dappling on fine black stone foundations of homes and temples,

on cobblestone roads through the jungle of palms, breadfruit and bamboo. An imposing stone temple in a sudden clearing, guarded by 13 stolid red tikis, tall as a man and twice as broad.

Between the Marquesas and Tuamotus, Romance hit a whale. We hardly felt the bump, but the poor whale bled all over the ocean. Happier was our encounter with at least a thousand Risso dolphins, 6 to 10 feet long, with blunt heads, and "lips" rather than long noses. They surfed by us in ranks of 25 to 30 in every wave, for 3 solid hours. A like encounter with 30 to 40 fin whales blowing all around the ship--these have been the highlights of our mammal study for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

The greatest personal thrill for Skipper, is the "discovery" of the wreck of the 4 mast full rigged iron ship, County of Roxburgh, on the beach at Takarua in the Tuamotus, or Dangerous Archipelago. The Roxburgh was wrecked in the 1905 killer hurricane which devastated the South Pacific, and inspired Nordhoff & Hall's great novel, "Hurricane." The ship was carried over the reef by a sea estimated at 75 feet high, and deposited high and dry on the beach, as if in drydock. She is 285 feet long, 43 foot beam, 24 foot depth, and with masts a full 8 feet around. We gained entrance to her cathedral-like hold through torn bottom plates, and climbed her tweendecks to after cabins and main deck. There the full significance of this important historical find staggered us. Here is a ship built in 1895, with deck houses, winches, boiler, capstans, steering gear, windlass, etc. in place; masts, yards and rigging rolling in the surf at her side. A priceless treasure for shiplovers and marine historians to study, measure and photograph. We spent two full days on the ship, Skipper preparing a full report available to shiplovers.

Takarua is a pearling atoll. The divers train 5 years, gradually descending to 120 feet, and staying under 2 to 3 minutes. Shells are harvested mostly for mother-of-pearl. Few natural pearls are found, but cultured pearls are grown by implanting full or half seeds. It takes 2 to 3 years to form a pearl. Oh, yes, and the lagoon is full of sharks--and copra is a better cash crop anyway. We were given pearls on-the-half-shell, and entertained by lively Tuamotuan songs--and our scuba enthusiasts pronounced Takarua the ultimate in diving, in spite of (or because of) the sharks.

Rangiroa was next, said to be the world's largest lagoon, 7 knots of tide and awesome "opape" (overfalls) in the pass. And on to Tahiti, rising majestic from the sea, rainbows in the mountains, and a lacy skirt of reefs curling about her feet. Papeete, yachts tethered to old cannon along a shady boulevard, noisy motor bikes, sidewalk cafes, Chinese shops, shell vendors, the sweet-heavy scent of Tiara-Tahiti in the moonlight, Hinano beer, French croissants and the early morning market filled with dew-fresh fruits and flowers, and identical silvery tuna all in a row. The shore road winding past black sand beaches, white surf and blow holes; waterfalls in the mountains. Fishtraps and nets and outriggers and flowers and children and bamboo bungalows with bright curtains fluttering in open windows.

Polynesia--soft lands of luminous lagoons, blue mountains rising from a cobalt sea, sun dappled palms against a brilliant trade wind sky. The pure

magic of Moorea's deep, misty fjords, little wisps of cloud spilling through the fingers of her peaks. Long walks along the shore road under the palms, or up in the mountains among pines and coffee and waxy cashew trees. Sudden squalls in the night to send us racing on deck to put out a second anchor. Huahini--exploring miles of coral lagoon in the longboat, copra and vanilla loading on the dock, pigs and kids and bicycles. The Marae of Lac Maeva, ancient open air temples of human sacrifice, somber and brooding.

The firewalkers of Raiatea: A pit 20' x 50' filled with sizzling volcanic rocks is first swept with palm fronds to remove live coals. Prayers are chanted to ancient gods; then a very old woman, the widow of a chief, steps into the pit carrying a torch. She crosses with measured steps, unscathed by fires still burning beneath the rocks. Then the whole troop marches across--rather quickly--several times. The ceremony is completed by traditional singing and dancing. After it was over, in about an hour, we braved the pit. I walked across barefoot--rather quickly. The rocks were HOT all night, but no longer scorching. Hot decks are good training for amateur firewalkers. In Raiatea, Tahitian friends gave Romance a traditional "Tama Ara A", a sumptuous earth-oven feast of tuna baked with hot rocks, poi, pawpaw and pamplemus, that huge perfumed Polynesian grapefruit; elegant raw fish in lime juice and coconut cream, yams, taro, baked bananas, sugary pineapple and hearts of palm, that millionaire's salad which sacrifices the tree--all eaten with the fingers like Adam and Eve. Tahitians and hospitality are synonymous.

Bora Bora was a milestone for Romance. Here in 1972, we reluctantly turned homeward to a busy season in the Virgins, with a promise to ourselves to return, a promise now kept. Bora Bora vies with Moorea as the most beautiful island in all the Pacific; a brooding peak, cloud-crowned home of the gods; we climbed its flanks. And a halo of tiny emerald motus (islets) embracing the loveliest of lagoons. Ten pretty young vahinis in a log war canoe, upsetting near the ship--and very enthusiastically rescued by the brave Romance crew. A last luau, the deck festooned with rustling palm fronds, and everyone in their best bright paraus and shell leis--to mark our departure from French Polynesia, as Romance once more turned her questing jibboom Westward Around the World.

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