

# Log Of The Romance

2ND WORLD VOYAGE A.

EXTRA !  
SPECIAL DOUBLE ISSUE!  
# 9 & 10 - Sept. 1980



## 100,000 MILES ! OF DEEPSEA VOYAGING

Dear Friends,

With her arrival in Singapore Roads Sept. 8th, 1980, the Brigantine Romance has completed 100,449 nautical miles of deepwater voyaging -- a distance equal to 4 times around the world at the Equator. This includes Caribbean, Galapagos and South Pacific Expeditions, the 1975-77 Circumnavigation, and the first half of this present world voyage, (but not 200 Virgin Island cruises;) a lot of water boiling into her wake in 14 years! It is a solid tribute to a fine ship, and to each and every one of her deepsea tars, many of whom have been shipmates together on several voyages, sharing gales and calms with equal grace. To whom a spanking tradewind day is among life's finest joys, a sea of blue diamonds, a keen salt-wind, and a lone brigantine scudding under a canvas cloud a thousand miles from land.

Romance's Second World Voyage began with an imminent 125mph hurricane threat in our very first port of call, Puerto Vallarta, Mexico. Skipper, Mate Tom Mignano and a green crew sent down sails, yards and rigging by 10 AM, a first rate job. Thus foiled, Hurricane Ignacio whirled

away harmlessly at sea. But other hurricanes, prolonged calms and strange weather were to dog us for many months, down the Mexican Coast and out across the South Pacific. We liked Zihuatanejo, a pretty little land-locked cove in the mountains, with its white beaches, donkeys and cobblestones and cantinas under a canopy of scarlet bouganvillea, a bit of Old Mexico.

The divers of La Quebrada are the most exciting thing about Acapulco. A bronzed young man begins the long climb, like a human fly, up the face of the cliff opposite us. He kneels and prays, then draws himself up, standing in the wind 118 feet above the sea. He studies the sequence of the breakers filling and emptying the narrow chasm far below. Satisfied at last, he poises, arms outstretched; leans into the wind, arches, soars like a bird. His brown body hangs a moment, then plunges. He hits like a bullet, a geyser of spray shot straight up. The tourists applaud briefly and leave, having contributed 10 pesos, 40¢, to the divers. We linger. The young Mexican dives twice more just for himself. It is a beautiful thing.

Romance sailed off her anchor in Acapulco, against a cathedral window sunset, perhaps the first vessel ever to clear that port for Pitcairn Island, 3,378 nautical miles away. Unseasonably light winds made this passage the longest in Romance history! Thanksgiving Day was an eternity of electrical storms, the watch huddled aft, clear of the rigging, and Skipper at the helm, dodging blinding bolts, which shook us to the keel. For the second time in 14 years, the lofty mastheads and tip of the gaff were bathed in the eerie glow of St. Elmo's fire. When it was over, we were thankful for more than turkey and pumpkin pie. Equator crossing shenanigans; and an 82 lb shark, the biggest ever. Great steaks, 'scallops' and chowder. And at 7 AM Dec. 23rd, Romance came to anchor off Bounty Bay. Home to Pitcairn for Christmas.

After 5 visits, stepping ashore in Bounty Bay remains one of the biggest thrills of my life. Each time the sense of homecoming is stronger, the bonds of kinship warmer. Can any place on earth match a Pitcairn Christmas? Skipper kept ship alone for 3 days, while the entire crew feasted. The community Christmas dinner filled a 40 foot table with marvelous food from every bolt and stone oven on the Island, meats and chicken, corn-on-the-cob and strawberries and banana cakes--no matter how often we filled our plates we could not begin to sample them all! A hilarious Christmas concert, and a dozen trees in the square, heavily laden with gifts for all, each family generous beyond belief to the Romance crew. The magic of Christmas Eve; helping Father Christmas on his rounds, filling the children's baskets with sweets, and caroling in the warm twilight, sweet with the scent of snowy blooms of the Queen of the Night.

Our Pitcairn stay passed all too quickly, without a chance to take our hosts to Henderson Island for badly needed carving wood. It was a time of high winds and spectacular surf. Seas burst over St. Paul's Rock, a 200 ft. granite pinnacle at the embattled eastern end of the island, and spume floated in the air like cotton-wool. On the night of Dec. 30th,

a near tidal wave hurled boulders across the jetty and through a new building in Bounty Bay. By New Year's Eve, the wind and sea were down, though a big surf remained. If the longboats could be gotten out safely, conditions were right for an attempt at Henderson. There are few ships now who will make this woodcutting expedition, and though it meant a delay, we had to try!

The 100 mile passage was accomplished in reasonable weather, but once the camp had been established ashore, the surf began to build dangerously again. By Jan. 2nd, great green combers were rolling against the beach, and the woodcutters were marooned. With no anchorage possible, Romance patrolled offshore like a mother hen. We could hear chain saws in the bush, and saw piles of timber growing on the beach. We knew the struggle going on. Each year the men must go farther to find the miro. The interior is a honeycomb of razor sharp coral overgrown with vines and bush, and the logs must be lugged end for end through that tangle to the beach. There men and women, many in their 60's, drag bundles of timber 2 miles through chest-high surf, men and logs tumbling head over heels among the rocks, bruised and torn.

Jan. 3rd dawns squally, a full force 5 on the beach. The surf is tremendous, greenbacks running high up the beach. At 5 PM, there are swimmers in the surf, fighting their way out to the endangered longboats anchored just outside the breakers. The boats come out to us. We pass them food for the night, and they drift off. At 2 AM, the surf came right up into the palms and washed out the camp and hard won timber. The weary men salvaged everything. By 6 AM, Romance and the longboats were back off the beach. Steve swam out to tell us Len was prepared to abandon the wood and break camp if we could delay no longer. Skipper told him we came for the wood, and we'll get it!

Conference: They would try to drag the timber out through the surf on a long floating line, to a depot longboat anchored well outside the breakers. We transferred our 150 lb. Danforth to the boats, a chancy operation itself in heavy seas. It took fully 3 hours to swim the line ashore through magnificently terrible greenbacks. We could see heads bobbing in the curling, luminous seas, and lines of Pitcairners manning the shore end. In the end, contact was established, and one load of that scraggly precious timber delivered aboard. We passed the towing hawser, and dropped the boats astern for the night.

Meanwhile, a new drama is developing. On Pitcairn radio we learn that a Norwegian container ship has a medical emergency. Is there a doctor on the Island? No, they reply, but the Romance has one at Henderson. The ship is diverted--and so it is that a modern computerized merchant ship rendezvous with an 1800 brigantine and two Pitcairn longboats off an uninhabited island in the loneliest reaches of the Pacific Ocean. The nature of the emergency? A crewman had gotten fiberglass in his eye repairing the Captain's swimming pool. Believe it or not.

It is not until the 6th that the surf is down enough to load the wood and break camp. The sea is still dangerous, and only the consummate skill of the Pitcairners makes it possible to cross the reef. The boats crunch on coral spikes, and are thrown back up the beach. Len, the burly coxswain is washed overboard right at the brink of the reef, which would have been a "very bad" thing, if the boat were not already hard aground. The men at the oars see Len's great paws come up over the stern as he heaves himself back aboard. A sea fills the pass, and the men pull for life, and the boat surges free! This has been, the men agree, the worst surf in memory, and many have made 15 Henderson trips.

What price a Pitcairn carving?

It is axiomatic that our return to Pitcairn should be in a flat calm. Again, we anchor off Bounty Bay, unloading the largest pile of Miro ever. We are persuaded to stay one last night, for a celebration dinner that far outshines Christmas. Later, as I walk home, the sky is a blaze of stars, the palms for once are still, and only the soft sigh of the surf in Bounty Bay intrudes on my thoughts. Is this my last night ever with these, my people, on Pitcairn Island?

I will not attempt to chronicle French Polynesia; that has been done in previous Logs. I'll only mention the beautiful Valley of Typee, and Melanie and Jacob, our gentle Marquesian friends. This year, they presented us with a golden tiki of rare and fragrant sandalwood, a treasure! Early Pacific traders killed for sandalwood, so rare because it is not known how the tree reproduces. It does not seed, nor will it grow from shoots. One day, Melanie took two of our girls on horseback to the maraes, their colossal red stone tikis choked with jungle growth. When the girls asked if there were other such sites, Melanie hesitated, then led them far up the mountain, to an altar of "ringing rocks." "Only three outsiders have ever seen these rocks," Melanie told them, "and you are two of them!" Then she showed them a pit filled with ancient human bones, she herself had seen only twice before. Coming down, this good friend cooked the girls a meal of freshwater shrimp from a mountain stream at her back door.

The Tuamotus, Tahiti, Moorea, Bora Bora -- it is the fragrance of the Islands one remembers, the scent of Tiara Tahiti, a pink snowfall on the boulevard, and strings of sweet pineapple in the markets. Vanilla entwined around palms against a backdrop of purple mountains. The sharp tang of seaweed and salt where a blue lagoon laps gently on a hot coral beach. The scent of the sea itself around islands, cool and refreshing.

We loaded a cargo for Palmerston Atoll, sugar, flour and rice. Ships are rare, and Romance was the first to call in 3 months. Like Pitcairn, Palmerston is a mixed Polynesian-English race, founded by a Londoner William Marsters, and 3 Maori wives. Today, the population is much the same as Pitcairn, about 60 persons, all of whom have the same Grandfather.

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