

# Log of the *HILDE M<sup>2</sup>*



Vol. 3, No. 5

Issued by the Admiralty, Accokeek, Maryland

December 9, 1988

THIS POST-FINAL LOG of the HM<sup>2</sup> (the Epi-Log?) is being happily written at Edelhorst II, our home in the woods of Southern Maryland overlooking the Potomac... half the globe away from where the notes were made and worlds away from the cruising lifestyle.

\* \* \* \* \*

THE TWENTIETH (count them!) LETTER FROM THE CAPTAIN picks up the story on his way up the Australian East Coast:

“The Whitsunday Islands were certainly the most attractive cruising area I'd seen on the Queensland coast. Even so, the strong tidal currents gave constant reminder that Australian coastal sailing is nothing to be taken lightly.

"I spent some time at Cyd Harbour enjoying the calm secure anchorage, the lovely scenery, and the antics of charter sailors who anchored nearby for a night or two of their vacation. There are dozens of anchorages in the Whitsundays but I doubt that there's a finer one, at least in the prevailing easterly winds.

“On July 20, I sailed the short distance from Sawmill Bay in Cyd Harbour to the famous underwater Observatory at Hook Island where I picked up a mooring and rowed ashore for a visit.



HM<sup>2</sup> at the Hook Island Observatory

“The Observatory consists of two large connected caissons sunk into the seabed with small viewports around the walls right at the level of the reef, perhaps ten feet or so below the surface. Clouds of brilliantly colored fish maneuvered in close order formation above the interesting coral formations, attracted by chum thrown out by the staff. The water was not crystal clear but the number and variety of marine life more than made up for that.



One of the views, down below

“It was sure a lot easier than getting into SCUBA gear. (I didn’t know it at the time, but a perforated left eardrum had already put an end to my SCUBA adventures, so this was my only real glimpse of the underwater life along the Great Barrier Reef. My increasing problem with diving was a disappointment and another factor in my decision to end the sailing adventure in Australia.)

“After a couple of hours watching the watery scene from the comfort of the observatory, I rowed back to the HM<sup>2</sup> and sailed to the S end of Book Island where I entered its fjord-like Nara Inlet. One of the finest aboriginal shelter caves in NE Australia is located near the head of that narrow bay. After anchoring there I shared a short steep trail with a Darwin couple, David and Ruth, who had just bought an 18' trailerable sailboat in Brisbane and were driving back home, trying out their boat along the way.



Ancient Aboriginal drawings on Book Island

"We were impressed by the quite visible ochre and white drawings. One of them looked kind of like a tennis racket, or maybe a snowshoe, and another could have represented a jellyfish with its tentacles hanging down. In any case, the owners of the cave had had a fine view down the inlet from the broad rock ledge at their doorstep and a good platform for a fire near the entrance. A large shell midden gave evidence of many fine feasts. We explored beyond the cave and found a small stream with a series of pools and waterfalls. These Abos, at least, had lived pretty well.

"A mild surge worked its way into the inlet and we decided to join several other boats anchored in Refuge Bay, a smallish indent on the shore where the swell couldn't find us. There in a calm setting, with only the lights of a half dozen cruising boats to be seen, I prepared for the final passage of my cruise, about 130 miles NW along the coast to Townsville.

"The next morning it took 20 minutes to scrub a sticky gray coating of mud from my anchor and chain before I motored slowly down the inlet. It was a pretty place, with green boulder-strewn sides, marred only by multicolored boat names painted on the rocks near the shore. Still, it was a peaceful spot, and one I'd like to return to some day.

"Once outside, I was able to pick up a bit of a sea breeze, and soon was clipping along at 4.5 K with all sails drawing. I was almost able to 'hold my own' against the huge gray HMAS *JERVIS BAY*, an Australian naval utility ship that slowly steamed along in the same direction. The day was partly cloudy, but visibility was good and there was never a problem in getting fixes using prominent islands and mountains along the shore. During the night the wind lightened up and shifted into the W. I continued on my 290-degree magnetic course, motor-sailing now, with easily spotted navigational lights to keep me on track.

'I didn't experience any of the magnetic anomalies' that plagued James Cook on the *ENDEAVOR* as he cruised the coast in 1770, and I was thankful, since I was anxious to avoid the extensive shoals E of Bowling Green, a broad low-lying section of coastline. Even so, I was glad that the lighthouse there was brightly illuminated. At 4:30 Friday morning I was clear of the shoals and altered my course to the W, continuing on in light winds and calm seas past Cape Cleveland at mid morning.

\* \* \* \* \*

"The rocky red peak of Castle Hill served as a beacon for the Harbor of Townsville. To my right, Magnetic Island dominated the horizon. The good Captain Cook suspected the Island was responsible for his compass problems and named it thus. Nowadays we know that it was not the island, but massive deposits of nickel ore close inland, that turned his needles.



A recent view of Townsville, dominated by Castle Hill

In fact, Townsville depends on nickel mining and ore shipment for most of its jobs, and has never become quite the tourism and sports fishing mecca that Cairns, further up the coast, did. Perhaps that saved the city. It seems to me that Townsville, though larger (110K pop) is far less tacky-tacky, and is certainly less expensive a place in which to live.

I made my way, with a certain amount of confusion, to the new Breakwater Marina. It was not yet shown on the charts and cruising guide. Through trial and error I found that the approach was to the right, around the outside of the harbor breakwater rather than through the harbor itself. Once inside its dog-legged entrance channel, I found myself in a broad dredged basin with a number of floating docks. There was no sign of how to check in and no answer on my call on the marine VHF radio, so I sidled up to the deserted fuel dock, tied up, and went looking for the dockmaster. Life here was pleasantly "laid-back".

In short order I had a comfortable berth on one of the docks. It was just about the nicest place I've ever tied up the boat. The cockpit of the HM<sup>2</sup> had a grand view of Anzak Park, with its flower-bordered lawns, bandstand, war monuments, and huge Banyon trees. Just across the boulevard from the marina was a rocky cliff where a 40' waterfall had been devised to complete the scene, and a towering above it all was Castle Hill.

The people on the dock were friendly as most Aussies are. Geoff, the young live-aboard on *NAVAJO* in the next berth, helped me tie up and offered the loan of a spare 10-speed bike. His generosity made my stay in Townsville a delight, since the city area is North Queensland's largest and public transportation is a bit limited.

I lost no time, but checked in with the local Customs office which was located in picturesque colonial style brick building just across the park from the marina basin, and continued on to the City Post Office where I found an armful of letters and packages waiting. Joyce Knight, the poste restante clerk, soon came to recognize me and seemed

to take a personal interest in my stay. I was able to cement the relationship by giving her the cancelled US stamps from some of my letters. She especially liked the 'Love' stamps with pink roses, and I got B to send some mint copies for her. Joyce was another of the local people who made my stay a great pleasure.

"The news in the mail was good. Lynn and Henry, the couple from Walden, NY, were definitely interested in the HM<sup>2</sup> and wanted me to stay in Townsville until they could come out to inspect the boat in September. If they liked the boat and we liked them, we would transfer the boat and then sail together locally for a week or so before I returned home. In the meanwhile, I had more than a month in which to enjoy Australia's 'tropical north'.

Back in New Zealand some of the cruisers had planned an August rendezvous in Townsville for the 5th festival of Pacific Arts. I was the first on the scene during the last week of July, but already banners were flying around the town and facilities were being constructed for the event. It looked like there would be no time for boredom.

Between working on boat projects I explored the local area on Geoff's bike, and soon had found some nice parks, an arboretum and zoo, and some very American-looking shopping centers. The center of town was located only five blocks from the marina. It was graced by a three-block-long pedestrian mall along Flinders Street where I was able to find nearly everything a yachtie might want. On Sunday mornings a flea market magically appeared among the palms and flowerbeds between the closed shops, and I enjoyed shopping for small gifts to take home.

"I took a week off from the pleasures of civilization in early August for a sailing trip to Magnetic Island, where I anchored for several nights at deserted Maud Bay on the N side, reliving some of the many nights I'd spent in secluded coves on the HM<sup>2</sup>. Then I sailed around to Horseshoe Bay, a magnificent U-shaped harbor bordered with white sand, beaches backed by boulder strewn hills with a small settlement nestling near its head. A dozen or more sailboats and a couple of trawlers swung at anchor. I joined them for a few nights, remembering very similar stays at places like Tortola and Nuku Hiva. One pleasant day was spent exploring the island using a convenient \$5 one-day bus ticket that took me everywhere I wanted to go (and a few places I didn't).



Overlooking Alma Bay on Magnetic Island

“Magnetic Island is an interesting place, a distinctive granite based island of 5200 hectares rising to nearly 500 metres, partly a National Park and nature reserve and partly a suburb of Townsville, with many people who commute via passenger ferry into the city each workday. The place is quite delightful, which no doubt accounts for the fact that a deluxe hotel and several backpacker hostels are located there. I wouldn't mind living there, myself, if southern Maryland weren't so much closer to my wife and kids.

“I returned to the marina in Townsville a few days before the opening of the festival of Pacific Arts. George Galbraith on *SUNDEE* was already there, having just arrived from the Whitsundays. Peter Sutter on *WILD SPIRIT*, and Mike and Ardyce (never knew their last name) on *SANCTUARY* soon arrived, followed by Lynn and Larry Pardey on *TALESIN*. They were all friends from Opuia and before.

“Comparing notes on our Tasman crossings, it seemed that all of us had been roughed up a bit. Lynn P. said that if it had been her first offshore trip it would probably have been her last. Ardyce felt about the same. Somehow, it hadn't seemed quite that bad to me, although the HM<sup>2</sup> was knocked down once and had her tiller smashed. I deduced that I had been quite lucky, because each of those women had far more experience than I and it would have taken some pretty big wind and waves to impress them.

\* \* \* \* \*

“The Festival opened on Monday, August 15, with a parade of nearly 2000 delegates: dancers, singers, musicians, storytellers, and artisans from 23 island countries of the Pacific. There were long boring speeches by politicians and indigenous rights leaders in Queen's Park that afternoon and evening, but all eyes and ears were turned to the colorful costumes and syncopated drums of the participants.

“The crowds of spectators were so dense that it was difficult to see or hear the main program. Instead, many of us sought out some of the visiting groups, who were patiently waiting their turn to perform, and talked to them. I was able to hear part of the main ceremony on my Walkman radio, as it was broadcast by TAIMA, the local indigenous radio station.

“The festival was started 16 years ago in Fiji under the auspices of the South Pacific Commission, and has since been held every four years, successively in New Zealand, Papua, New Guinea, and Tahiti. This year it was hosted by the indigenous aboriginal and islander people of Australia and served to reinforce a growing sense of identity, solidarity, and purpose of these 'original Australians' during the nation's bicentennial year.

“It was made clear to everyone that though the government helped out, this was not a part of the national bicentennial celebration but something much closer to the hearts of the participants. Most of them have had (and continue to have) their own struggles for identity and independence with the waves of colonizers from Europe and elsewhere. In

1992, the festival will be held on Rarotonga in the Cook Islands. I hope to be there! (Ed. Note: me, too!)

The various activities of the festival were held in more than a dozen venues throughout the city, and all programs were free. I divided my time with mornings in the 'craft village', a specially constructed group of thatched fales along the bank of Ross Creek in Dean Park, for demonstrations. Afternoons I was at the open earth platform in Queen's Park a few blocks from the marina for informal dance exhibitions and evenings at the new Townsville Civic Theater, where there were pageants and plays. Other locations around town had films, storytelling, chanting and other activities. I wished mightily for a portable video camera but did the best I could with my little 35-mm and a Radio Shack tape recorder. The biggest problem was that there was not enough of me to go around.

“If I sound excited about all of this, it's because I was out of my gourd. The festival was like a chance to revisit all the Islands I'd seen over the past year and a half, plus quite a few more. But this was better in a way, because normally these things can only be seen if a local celebration is in progress - or perhaps less authentically if you go to a big tourist hotel for a dinner and a show.

“I have been interested in folk arts since my early teens. It was something my mother shared with me. But until recently my attention had always been focused on Europe and I hadn't thought much about the Pacific Islands except as a kind of simple, vague homogenous culture. By this time, of course, I know better, but I was still unprepared for the reality, diversity, and sophistication of it all.



One of the hundreds of participants

“There were people from the Solomon Islands playing the Pan Pipes; virile men from Fiji and New Guinea doing war games thinly disguised as dances; old people from the Marshalls whose passed-on chants were actually precisely coded directions for sailing between island groups; Chamorro singers from Guam who must have sounded like the Spaniards who came there in the sixteenth century; and Tahitians with a French flavor in their designs and their modern Polynesian lifestyles.

“A sort of astringent accent ran through the whole festival, provided by the simple foot stamping, atonal singing, clicking sticks, and droning of the aboriginal digiri-doo: products of 40,000 years of culture that Australians are just now are beginning to realize is far more complex than they dreamed.

“The two weeks passed like a flash, and then all the island people went home, shopping bags filled with the dozens of 'necessities' of modern Western Civilization that are so plentiful and cheap in Australia and so hard to find in most of the smaller poorer places. I wondered what else they took with them.

“Will the shy young men from New Britain try to slick up their presentation four years from now? It seemed to me that they looked with awe at the polished routines of some of the others. Will the festival tend gradually to destroy (or, perhaps homogenize) the local cultures it is supposed to preserve? Can anything preserve the old ways now that the demon of VCR television is loose on the Pacific?

“I think that if you're interested in such things you'd better make plans to visit the area in the next few years. The 1982 festival in Rarotonga may be one of your last best chances to see the really good old stuff. It's already long gone from places like Tahiti.

\* \* \* \* \*

Life in Townsville seemed a bit dull after the excitement of the festival, but it did feel good to relax. My cruising friends left, all except George, who was waiting for money and mail from the states. I gave away or threw out eight years' worth of accumulated odds and ends on the boat, some of which I hadn't seen since they'd been tucked away. George inherited a lot of them since he's at least as bad a packrat as I am and his boat is bigger. The HM<sup>2</sup> immediately seemed to expand.

“I rubbed and scrubbed and I must say I was proud of the way she looked when I was finished with the soap and the teak sealer. People have always come up and remarked on our pretty boat. Her lines are good and when her decks are spotless and her wood trim is nicely dressed, the total effect is quite striking. I'm not generally a fastidious housekeeper, but with things slicked up below decks, the boat can look quite nice inside as well.

“With most of the hard work done, I joined George in sampling a few of the local restaurants, and we treated ourselves to visits on several tall ships that put into Townsville during a joint bicentennial cruise up the coast. They tied up at the dock near the Townsville Marine Museum, and I went on three of them: the *BOUNTY*, the *AMORINA*, and the *SOREN LARSEN*. The last named was built in Denmark in 1949. She is a beautiful wooden brigantine, and has starred in the television series 'Onedin Line' and 'Shackleton' as well as other movies.

“The *BOUNTY* is a full scale replica of the 1789 original, built in New Zealand for the most recent 'Mutiny on the Bounty' movie. Authentic on the outside, she's all modern

below decks. The *AMORINA* is a steel brigantine, originally commissioned as a lightship; she served her time and was later remodeled as a sailing vessel. Also there were the *ANNA KRISTINA*, a 110' Norwegian topsail ketch, and *TRADEWIND*, a 125' Dutch topsail schooner. All of the ships were taking paying passengers on their coast-wise sailing passages, and I was tempted to sign up for their trip up inside the Great Barrier Reef to Torres Strait.

“I rented a car on Friday, September 16 to haul five cartons of personal gear from the boat to a shipping company and moved my effects to a backpackers' hostel near the marina. Along the way I helped George fetch a large load of provisions to *SUNDEE* as he prepared to depart for Papua New Guinea and onward to the Philippines.

“Lynn and Henry arrived as scheduled on Saturday and I was on hand at the airport in the car to meet them. Fortunately, Lynn recognized me from pictures B had sent; and we were on our way to the marina in short order, driving by a longer route than usual to avoid a huge brush fire on the N flank of Castle Hill. The weather had been hot and dry for several weeks and spontaneous fires like this seemed to spring up everywhere in those conditions, probably created by sun refraction in broken bits of glass. I just hoped all the ash and soot wouldn't find its way to the sparkling HM<sup>2</sup> in her berth on the other side of the peak.

“At the marina we left their luggage in the car and walked out the dock to look at the boat. Lynn recognized her at once and asked if she could go aboard. Henry and I talked on the dock while she went below and I mentally held my breath while she looked around. A few moments later Lynn's head popped out the companion and she shouted 'I love her'. Breathing again, I followed Henry aboard and gave them a brief tour, saving all the technical details for another day. Later, after we had put their bags aboard and had returned the car, we walked down to my favorite Greek restaurant and sealed our agreement with supper together, followed by celebratory ice cream cones at a dairy shop.

"And, so, the *HILDE M<sup>2</sup>* changed owners and became *ALTERNATIVES*. We spent several days going over her equipment together and I tried to explain routines that had become familiar to me over the years. I scraped and cleaned her old name and hailing port from the stern and the new ones were applied with computer designed and cut vinyl letters from a nearby graphics shop.

“We went together to the Customs Office where I surrendered my Master's papers and cruising permit, had my passport stamped, and became a normal tourist. L&H were noted as the new owner & Master, and the changeover was done in fifteen minutes, more quickly than I could have believed. Of course tons of work had gone on back home to make this possible. It had taken many long distance phone calls and a day-long trip by B to our regional Coast Guard Office in Norfolk, in order to straighten out matters on our side of the proposed transfer, and much persistence by Lynn with her CG office in New York to get the new document. In fact, they had left the States with fingers crossed and a document promised to follow within 'a few days! The amazing thing is that it did - and now all was done.

“We went sailing the next morning. It was great being captain with an eager crew, and I began to consider the advantages of being master of someone else's boat. Both Lynn and Henry are good sailors, so it was just a matter of letting them get acquainted with the boat and her ways. During the following days, we went out as much as we could, Henry and Lynn taking turns being the captain with me as an AB.

“One evening I joined George aboard *SUNDEE* for a sendoff supper. I was sorry to see him go after our good times together along the Queensland coast, but he was behind schedule and needed to be on his way, and I would be leaving soon, myself, for home. I think each of us, in a way, would have liked to trade places with the other. The following afternoon I cast off his dock line and he motored down Ross Creek out of sight, headed for his next single-handed adventure.

“At the end of the week I took a leave of absence and joined a small group of youth hostellers on a three day adventure trip while L&H did some sailing on their own. Along with our wildlife biologist guide, my group explored some of the tropical rain forest along the spectacular edge of the Atherton Tablelands; eating 'bush tucker', and camping in national parks; white water rafting on the Tully River, rock climbing, abseiling, wildlife spotlighting in the evenings, and enjoying several great swimming holes along the way up the coast to Cairns. It was a great way to see another bit and to say farewell, for now, to Australia. I took a Greyhound bus back to Townsville, where I spent a final few days and had another sail with L&H before my October first flight to the States on Qantas.

“And now I'm home again - with a head cold for the first time in two years -- and loving it (home, not the cold), doing lots of backed-up projects and trying not to leave the house any more than I have to, at least for awhile.

“We've heard from Lynn and Henry. They're back in Walden, finishing up Lynn's job and getting ready for their sailing adventure next gear. *ALTERNATIVES* is sitting 'on the hard' at South Townsylvlle's Ross Haven Marina, all tucked into a new custom boat cover. She misses her watery world but says she can wait for her new friends to return. In the meanwhile, I think of her often.

Karl Edler

December 1988 Accokeek, MD



#### ON HIS COMING HOME

As it is now my turn, I guess I can use the above title for my essay. Actually, I could write a book but will try to use only a few paragraphs.



Springtime at Edelhorst II

Sometimes, people ask if I'm "glad that he's got it out of his system". The answer is an emphatic no such thing!! The Voyage wasn't something that Karl had "in his system" -- if it was in anybody's system, it was in OUR system...from day one, it was a mutual project of both of us.

And we both got a lot out of it. He, of course, may have gotten the most; certainly, he was the one who did the sailing and saw all the places and had all the on-site adventures. But don't forget that I had some growth experiences, too; the exciting ones like the two tremendous trips to the South Pacific which most likely I would never have taken otherwise, and the not-so-exciting one (which I sure don't want to repeat) of living alone for the first time in my life.

Keep in mind, too, that Karl wasn't having fun and games all the time, any more than I was. Going on an extended cruise while your partner stays home, or being the stay-at-home while your partner goes on the cruise, both have their ups and downs, their goods and bads as it were. Like anything in life, you can't have it all, you make your choices.

In our case, we feel so fortunate that we could "do" The Voyage -- and bring it to a successful conclusion. I think we're both just a little bit proud of what we've done! As you can tell from the Log, an unexpected delightful touch was the Festival of Pacific Arts in Townsville which added a sort of triumphant conclusion for Karl and, vicariously, for me too.

To summarize, being back together is Super. You know the story about how the best part of banging your head is that it feels so good when you stop? Well, here's a secret -- the best part of taking a cruise alone, or staying at home alone, is when you stop! We're busy adjusting to one another again, and have signed up for another 36 years. It feels great!

Barbara Edler

December 1988

Back to [Main Page](#)