



AKAMA REPORT 2

15 May 20002

Tuesday, 7-5-2002: As we said in our last report, we were forced by the marine police to leave our anchorage in Tekek bay, under what we consider to be strange circumstances; they claimed it was a submarine area (there's nothing on the charts and we and others had been anchored there for days). But, left we did, continuing a circumnavigation of Pulau Tioman, proceeding clockwise. There are several delightful bays with sand beaches and no people on the North West corner of the island, but for one small settlement. We would have anchored there and done some snorkelling but for the high winds from the southwest putting heavy swell onto the beaches. As we went around we saw little but rocky crags until we were on the east side. There, on the middle of the east side is Teluk Juara. What a lovely bay! With the wind from the SW there was hardly any wave or swell action at all--paradise! The bay has a huge expanse of shallow sand beach, funky little cottages and shops, and hardly any people. Apparently, two years ago a freak storm came in and ruined all the coral. We went snorkelling and sure enough, there is lots of dead coral. On the other hand, it is coming back, we saw a few nice fishes and corals; it should be nice again in a few years.

Of course, no day is complete without a repair or two. Today's project was the windlass, which packed in when we left Tekek, fortunately the anchor was nearly all the way up when the breaker popped and could not be reset. I carefully extracted the breaker from and examined it closely; of course it was a totally sealed unit, not user serviceable. So, with no other option I gave it a good smack with my fist...Pop! It reset. Note to self: remember to give things a good bash before going to the trouble of taking them apart. And no day is complete without at least one screw-up. Today I turned off the electricity while LA was running the bread maker. I "saved" the batch by restarting the thing manually, but the result was less than sterling...each slice weighed like a loaf. LA would not eat it...I'm three pounds heavier {grin}.

Wednesday 8 May and Thursday 9 May 2002: We hung around Tk. Juara snorkelling and strolling the beach. There is a "paved road" that is little more than a sidewalk; it serves both purposes. We used our first Internet Cafe at Juara, receiving thirty or so emails and sending our first report. I really must get airmail working on the ham radio.

More maintenance in paradise. AKAMA is fitted with four Gulf Coast Filters, three for oil and one for diesel. The filter on the main engine has been keeping the lube oil so clean that on the portable oil analyzer meter it registers like new, and it does not have the usually sooty colour that diesel gets after even a short run time. On the generator set, the oil was becoming quite dark and the meter climbed to 3, which is still good according to the instructions. But I changed the filter anyway. Well, it was black! Note to self: change the filter on the generator more often, maybe even weekly until the oil runs clear.

The component failure for the day was the West Marine battery combiner. This little black box senses the start battery and the house battery voltages and if one is low and the other is charging, it charges the low one too. Fortunately, we have a spare, as other cruisers have told us that these things mysteriously stop working...and so they do.

Before we left Tk. Juara we had another encounter with the Malaysian Navy, this one minor. Two war ships steamed into port and monopolized the town dock for a day. They looked a lot like the one that gave us a hard time south of Aur (see report 1). Sure enough, as they went by, LA spotted several people on the bridge of one of the ships pointing in our direction. After the second one arrived they dispatched a Zodiac, which proceeded hell bent for election right for us, veering off before getting to us. They gave us the once-over and went away. That night they were partying ashore; the Malaysian Navy cannot carry a tune in a bucket!

Friday, 10 May 2002: we left Juara in the morning to complete our circumnavigation of Tioman. There are a few nice beaches among the rocks, but mostly rugged coastline. The seas are quite heavy and the hydraulic stabilizers are getting their first good workout since the refit in Singapore. Already we have a problem; the starboard stabilizer is squeaking when it travels to its maximum rotation. Just finding where the squeak was coming from was a problem; finding the actual source will be even harder...one more thing for the maintenance list!

We anchored off Genting Kampung (village), which by local standards is a major centre. We should explain that by "major centre" we are talking wooden buildings, often on stilts, with no insulation (none needed) and open windows under eaves (we still cannot figure out why bug screens are not used in the tropics). What sets one Kampung off from another is the maintenance. Genting is much more up scale than Jurara, as its road cum sidewalk and bridges is better maintained and there is a fresh coat of paint on most of the buildings. Of the three major Kampung, Tekek, Jurara and Genting, Jurara is the most remote and down scale (but also in some ways the most charming to us), Genting is a hangout for Southeast Asia locals from Malaysia and Singapore (we saw only one other non-local there), and Tekek, the biggest, attracts both locals and Europeans. But, as the local rock band was tuning up in the mid afternoon (and none too good we might add), we upped anchor and continued our exploration, arriving back at Tekek by late afternoon for a peaceful night's sleep.

Saturday, 11 May 2002: We were rudely awakened by what LA calls the Red Eye Ferry, which rocked us violently. Red Eye, because it comes first thing in the morning and we imagine that people on it must have arisen very early in the morning to catch it. Normally, it would not have bothered us, as we have "roll stoppers" on AKAMA, but in our haste to catch some sleep I forgot to deploy them. Needless to say they are now deployed!

Our roll stoppers are composed of two 14-foot booms that extend slightly upward from horizontally out to each side of AKAMA and, suspended deep in the water from the ends of each boom, a 3-foot by 2-foot stainless steel plate with a hinge down the centre of the long dimension. When a passing boat sends out a large wake in our direction, and our boat heels over, the plate on the heeling side folds up and descends easily. Then, as the boat rolls back, the plate opens up and provides a resistance to the rolling. It's a kind of shock absorber system. The combination of the commercial plates and the booms (that we designed) stops about 90-percent of the roll from passing boats and it stops about 40-percent of the persistent roll caused by incoming sea swells. This is one of the best things we have added to AKAMA.

Major decision for the day: We are abandoning our trip to Bangkok and instead are joining some friends who are going to the Anambas Islands (Indonesia). The Anambas Islands are about 100 miles east of here, farther out in the South China Sea. The decision was initially made at the suggestion of our friend Warren, who spoke glowingly of some of his favourite spots there. The decision to change was finalized when we found out that some of the gang from Raffles Marina would be going there.

Another factor was reports that everyone gave us as to the dull and uninteresting trip north towards Bangkok. Apparently, there is a long stretch of nothing much for cruisers and, once past that, the water is not nearly as nice. We spent the day on the phone, Internet and ashore lining up our ducks for this trip, the most important duck being the necessary permit from Indonesia. Thankfully, the Dockmaster at Raffles, Capt. Peruz, has connections and can get this done faster than mere mortals.

Sunday, 12 May to Wednesday, 15 May 2002: We want to move on and explore some of the surrounding area, but dare not stray far from the Internet Cafe here until we are sure that the arrangements for the Anambas cruise will be properly concluded. So, we spend each day doing a few chores, exploring Kg. Tekek and generally enjoying paradise. Typically we wake to either the sun or the Red Eye, fire up the generator and the water maker, make coffee, then do whatever the heck we want in what ever order we want for the rest of the day...beats working!

Some highlights for these few days are:

- We spoke to Warren about "critters", as we are worried that we will get rats or roaches. His response, "Don't worry, you'll get them. Just bomb the boat and carry on. Anyway, it can't be as bad as what I've got." He then regaled us with the tale of his pest, which they cannot find...a monitor lizard that came aboard in one of the canoes used for the student excursions!
- Awoke one morning to see a fish, several feet long with a long bill "tail-walking" alongside our boat. We think it was a Marlin. Note to self: learn the names of the various fishes.
- Awoke one morning to notice that the Italian boat anchored nearby featured its owners nearly naked...he in bikini briefs and she in her bikini bottom. The log features an unabashed description by LA as to the relative merits of ugly people not wearing clothes, also the decorum generally accepted in predominantly Muslim countries. We dare not print it here as it is rather graphic!
- Went to the doctor to have a cut on my leg attended to that was not healing. I injured it getting aboard about 10-days previously when retrieving our errant dinghy. She has me on antibiotics and a bunch of other stuff, as the cut was getting bigger, turning red and possibly becoming ulcerous. Tropical ulcers are a major problem. A simple cut, because of the heat, sweat, salt water and so on can easily become badly infected. The doctor's fee, including medicines, was 1 Ringitt (about 50-cents); we left a \$20 donation to the clinic).
- Went snorkelling several times, once at Rengis I. and several times around AKAMA. Amazing!!! The reef fish here are so plentiful and varied that it is like being in an aquarium. They come right up to our face masks and peer inside. Unfortunately, they like to strike at things, like pimples and other blemishes. One of the bigger fish took a liking to the scab on my now-healing leg and bit two sizeable chunks out of the wound! I believe it was a parrot fish (Note to self: get a book on fishes).
- Weather here has turned hot (37 -38 C) and sultry. We have to time our activities to avoid dehydration. However, hot as it is, this beats the hell out of shovelling snow.
- We now have a guest stateroom available. All the free time and hot WX prompted us to muck it out. It was loaded with supplies and other tings that we just never got around to stowing. Also, the crew room is neat and orderly too; we can actually move about inside. It was so full of junk that we at times walked in and backed out!
- A typical evening for us is having dinner on the boat deck and watching the stars. Shortly after dark hundreds of bats fly across the bay in search of insects, possibly attracted by the lights of the kampung. Thankfully, there has been nearly no breakdowns of equipment, although both heads (toilets) are threatening to go on strike unless we do some preventive maintenance very soon.

