



## AKAMA REPORT 25

### Report 25 – Peava to Honiara

After leaving the sheltered waters of Marovo Lagoon we went south to the village of Peava (8-46S x 158-14E), anchoring inside a reef through which a hole had been blasted. None of this went well. First, on the way, the seas were whipped up by the wind, resulting in LA being seasick for the first time ever. The generator set broke down (again); this time it was a broken bolt holding the alternator adjustment bracket, easily fixed. Then, during the night, the shelter of the reef evaporated when the wind swung around to the west and NW and blew like stink; with the coming of high tide the waves crashed over the reef rolling AKAMA all night long. Nevertheless, we received a few hours of sleep. We ventured out the next day but returned to the relative shelter of the reef at Peava, as the sea state was not good. That night the wind died and we got some badly needed sleep.

The next day went not much better. We started with nicer sailing conditions, but they deteriorated as the day wore on. LA got a little seasick again. Moreover, nothing went right as far as destinations. The cruising guide showed anchorages in West Bay on the Russell Islands where none reasonable were to be found. We tried to find some on our own, but the only one shallow enough for the amount of chain we carry was near a village, copra factory and a drunk in a canoe who jumped aboard AKAMA before we had finished anchoring. So we left there and found another spot, rather nice really, nearby in Kilmolent Bay (9-02S x 159-06E), a bit further inland than we had intended. In the morning a big banana boat came out with 8 to 10 stern looking men aboard, demanding a \$250 anchorage fee as their “kastom right” (kind of like tribal rights in North America or aboriginal rights in Australia). It is a common scam and we had already been warned about this. The government officials said that we did not have to pay such fees. Somehow we managed to get away without bloodshed and without paying. As we left, for the next ten miles we were constantly looking over our shoulder, worried that they might change their mind and pursue us.

They say trouble comes in threes, so our third day, 25 May 04, was not much better either. Our planned stop on Lolohan Island (9-07S x 159-21E), heralded in the cruising guide as a logical jumping off point turned out to be an untenable day anchorage at best, let alone one for overnight; so we pushed on to Guadalcanal, 20-miles further east. At Guadalcanal, near the village of Esperance (9-16S x 159-40E) there was supposed to be a fantastic resort. We made our plans for cold beers and shore meals, only to find out upon arrival that the place had been burnt down during “The Tension”, which is what the locals call their interracial riots between 1998 and 2000. Well, at least the bay was a nice overnight anchorage, apart from a pesky little swell that we controlled with our roll stopper rig. We also had a turtle guide us to our anchorage; it just swam along with us until we let the anchor down. More interesting, we saw our first dugongs in this bay. Dugongs are the Asian version of three species of sea cow or manatee; the other two are the Amazonian and the West African. This huge (weighing up to and 300 kg and 3 metres long) but harmless sea mammal was hunted for its meat, blubber, oil, and hide, and today dugongs are classified as an endangered species.

On Wednesday, 26 May, we went to Honiara, the capital of the Solomon Islands. Anchoring took us nearly three hours! On our first try we managed to snag not one but two abandoned mooring chains. Apparently the Point Cruz Yacht Club had laid a bunch of moorings for a major yacht race, and then for

reasons we cannot fathom, simply abandoned them rather than pull them out. Lucky for us, David, the owner of FLAMINGO BAY, anchored nearby had a SCUBA tank and he was able to dive down the 20-metres and free the anchor. Next we tried to squeeze into a spot near a reef and a bunch of other boats, but there was not enough swing room. We were about to give up and look elsewhere when Ken and Chris from ARCTURUS, a Nordhaven 46, came along in their dinghy; they knew of a yacht club mooring buoy that had been used by a large sailboat. We took that only to be told that it was a private buoy (owned by the commodore of the yacht club) and we would have to move off as soon as the owner's friend showed up in a day or two (he never showed up and we stayed on the mooring). We went ashore and shouted David to drinks and gave him a bottle of wine, as he would take no payment for his dive. Later we went to a hotel adjoining the yacht club for a buffet dinner and local entertainment (more ethnic dancing).

The days pass quickly when in a larger port. We went shopping nearly every day and managed to find lots of things that we could not get elsewhere. We were getting low on vee-belts, as AKAMA uses seven of them. We were also able to get our alternator repaired (bad bearing) and now we have it back on the wing engine, effectively making it back into a DC-generator set for battery charging. The redundancy gives good peace of mind.

Honiara has a wonderful wet market, especially on Saturday mornings. We were able to score cucumbers and tomatoes, two things that are hard to find out here. It is amazing how much is available there compared to some of the markets on other islands, which sometimes have little more than betel nut and yams.

We left Honiara on 30 May, to cruise the Florida Islands. We'll tell you about that in the next report.

One of our friends asked us some questions in a recent email (hint, hint, if you have not yet emailed us please do so!). We thought the questions and answers might be of general interest.

Q1. Do you have to file a sail plan of any kind with some authority or can you drift off on the slightest whim whenever you want?

A1. There is no sail plan of any kind. After we check into a country, we just up anchor and go where we want until we check out. In a few countries they ask for a sail plan upon arrival. We always tell them that we are just wandering around aimlessly and have no idea where we will actually go, except that we know the general direction of travel and that we will be sure to be out of the country before the visa expires. Some still insist on a plan and we fabricate something general. In a few countries we have to check in and out at every port.

Q2. How do your sailing companions find you?

A2. Usually it is by VHF or HF radio. If we see another yacht nearby we usually hail it on VHF. Also, there are organized and not-so-organized nets on both ham radio and marine HF frequencies. Sometimes we meet people in anchorages or at marinas and in comparing plans find that we are going the same way. We expected to be alone most of the time, and that was the case for the first year up and down the East and West coasts of Thailand and Malaysia. When we started southeast from Singapore we met up with HARMONY-88 by radio (now back in Oz) and then SAMPAGUITA, MUSCAT and SELKIE at our first anchorage in Borneo. We have crisscrossed paths with them for the past year and have been mostly together with the latter two.

Q3. Do you have a sail plan with waypoints, turn points and defined times (That does NOT sound too relaxing)?

A3. Everyone does it differently. We are rather more organized than most; it's the nature of the beast. When planning, we use electronic charts and start by setting a waypoint at each end of the trip. This might span an entire country. The line between them goes straight through land and lots of bad places for a boat. Then we research the places along and on either side of the route in books and by talking to other yachties, to decide where we will actually go. We add waypoints to the places we are interested in, resulting in the line now zigzagging from place to place, but still going through un-navigable places between them. We usually put in the fine detail, such as waypoints around reefs, every day or two, for the upcoming day or two. We never set a time schedule, other than a long-range plan to avoid bad weather and a plan to make the night's anchorage before dark.

Once we head out to follow a route, we often don't follow it exactly. Sometimes there are unmarked reefs, other vessels, and so on that we have to dodge. To keep a record of where we went, we usually move the waypoints on the plan as we pass them so that they coincide with where we actually went, especially if we make major changes in the route. With the computer this is easy to do.