



AKAMA REPORT 4 15 June 2002

As we write this AKAMA is in a slip at Sevana Cove Marina in southern Malaysia, very near Singapore. The first and "shakedown" leg of our retirement cruise is over.

Thursday, 23 and Friday, 24 May 2002: When we last wrote, from Pulau Tioman, we hoped to receive our Indonesian cruising permit that day, 23 May. It did not arrive, but we cleared AKAMA out of Malaysia with the Port Authority anyway; the next morning we cleared with Marine Customs. Positive thinking works, as we received our CAIT via the internet that morning. As it was too late to leave for Pulau-Pulau Anambas (repeating a word in the Bahasa language of Malaysia and Indonesia is how they make a plural; so this reads "Anambas Islands"), so we spent the time getting things ready.

We loaded the tender onto the boat deck. Normally, we tow it behind AKAMA; but we don't like to do that when we make longer passages. To ship the dinghy, we winch it up from the sea to the boat deck (about 10-feet) using the derrick (mast and boom like on a sailboat, but with no sail). This used to be a big chore, as the dinghy, motor and fuel weighs about 300 pounds and we used a manual sailboat winch for the hoisting line and topping lift. To make it worse, we had no sheet on the boom with which to control its lateral movement. We removed all this manual stuff and installed two 3500-pound-pull, electric boat-trailer winches, one for the topping lift and one for the hoisting line. We also added a line to control the boom, using a sailboat boom vang (block and tackle with a built in cam cleat). The dinghy now goes up and down with little effort.

Once we got the tender up and into its cradle, not having anything in particular to do, we spent the day cleaning the tender. These inflatable boats seem to attract black stains like a picnic attracts ants; and they are bloody hard to remove. We only got half of it done before we broke out the rum and coke; and so it remains until our next moment of insanity.

Saturday, 25 May 2002: The alarm rang at what seemed an ungodly hour; actually it was 04:30. In no time we were ready, and had started the main engine and raised the anchor. We started our new adventure at exactly 04:56, with an almost full moon on a breezy and cool night. At the last minute, we changed our plans to rendezvous with some boats from Raffles Marina at the 7-skies wreck, a wrecked ship that some of the others wanted to dive on. The passage was uneventful. The moon and stars gave plenty of light and the night 'scope made it child's play to check out anything in the water that looked suspicious. The stabilized 14x40 Fujinon binoculars complemented the 'scope, bringing distant and vague lights close enough to recognize not only if they are shore or ship, but if the latter, in which direction she is headed. We highly recommend a night 'scope and stabilized binoculars. We also have a pair of standard 7x50 binoculars, which are nowhere near as useful as the Fujis.

This passage was the first time that we had been out of sight of land for an extended period, not counting running at night. This bears a little explanation for those who have not been to sea. The distance to the horizon is a function of the height of eye above the surface of the water; the formula is $D = 1.17 \times \text{Sqrt}(h)$, where D is distance in miles and h is height in feet. Up in AKAMA's pilothouse

helm seat, our eye is about 14-feet above the water, giving us a distance to horizon of only about 4.4-miles, a little farther if we stand up. If we were to climb the mast to the top (not a good idea!) we could see about 7-miles. So, once we are well away from land, our visible world is a circle of about 9-miles diameter with us in the centre.

An interesting thing about seeing to the horizon is that when something comes along, it "rises" out of the sea. For example, on AKAMA you can see for 4.4-miles, but if you were on top of a 300-foot tall hill, your horizon would be about 20 miles. So, when approaching an island with a mountain that is 300-feet tall, the first thing one sees, at about 24.4-miles away (our horizon plus the mountain's horizon) is the very tip of the peak. As we approach, the mountain gradually rises out of the water until we are within 4.4 miles, at which time we can see the actual shore line. This provides the most bizarre sense of not moving, especially at night. One sees an island in the distance, it keeps getting bigger yet seems no nearer for hours, until finally it is within our horizon (4.4 miles), then everything seems normal again. The same thing happens with ships and navigational lights. At first we just see a single light at the top of a mast, then the superstructure, and eventually the whole ship or light structure. Knowing how this works is essential for non-electronic navigation. Far before the RADAR gives us a range and bearing, on an island, we can work out our distance off, knowing the height of the island.

You would think that there is nothing much to see in a 9-mile circle in the middle of nowhere. Not so. There are always flotsam and jetsam, such as coconuts, plastic bottles, bits of trees and so on; we saw a flip-flop sandal floating a hundred miles from nowhere. Once in a while, things get more interesting. On this passage we had a school of dolphins playing in our bow wave. What a fantastic sight! We also saw a huge yellow and black banded sea snake. These are very poisonous; but they have very small heads, making it difficult for them to bite people. But, they can get you on the ear lobe, or the webs between your fingers. We are told that they are curious about people and will not generally bite unless they feel threatened. We'd rather not find out first hand! We've also seen flying fish and schools of fish tail walking their way out of our path.

At the 7-Skies Wreck, we met up with FEELING (a Nordhavn 62), LADY OLIVIA (a Grand Banks about 36-feet long) and LITTLE DARLING (a Defever 44). As the seas were a little rough, many of the folks aboard those boats were seasick. We weren't, not at all, which dispels another myth about boats. AKAMA is a round-bilge, full displacement boat; they are said to roll a lot and some people won't have one because of that. LADY O' and LITTLE DARLING are hard-chined, semi-displacement boats that are purportedly more stable; at least so says their proponents. The fact is that they pitch and roll mercilessly in a sea, while AKAMA rolls gently and more slowly; nobody has ever been seasick on AKAMA at least since we've owned her. With our stabilizers on we barely roll at all, except in very heavy seas. We offered to take aboard the seasick passengers, but due to the heavy seas the other skippers could not find a way to safely transfer them.

After the group dove on the wreck, we continued on in company of the other three boats, leading the way until we got nearly to the Anambus Islands, when FEELING took over, as she has a base there and the skipper has local knowledge of uncharted reefs and the like. We arrived at 02:30 and turned in for some much-needed sleep.

Sunday, 26 May 2002: Forgetting that there is a 1-hour "backwards" time zone change, we inadvertently arose at 07:30. The Anambus Islands, although far enough east to be almost a time zone later than Singapore, are in fact on Jakarta time, which is an hour earlier than Singapore. It's a bit off putting, as it begins to get light about 05:00 and is dark by about 18:00. Since we retired, we have not worn watches, except for the odd "ceremonial occasion"; so we got up according to habit. Also, we

needed to be up with the others to clear immigration, customs and the port authority "first thing" in the morning. First thing turned out to be well past ten AM.

The Anambus Islands, despite their beautiful water, peaceful people and thousands of bays and inlets receives only about five cruising boats a year. Having four cruising boats in port at one time was cause for a celebration. So, the city fathers invited us to their meeting house, where speeches and makan (eating) followed. Everyone waxed poetic about how this should be "the" cruising destination of the area, which, indeed, it should.

After the reception, we toured the town of Terempah, a most interesting place. The first thing that hits you is the smell; there are cloves drying in the sun everywhere. It is too bad that the major purpose of all this is for flavouring in the local cigarettes. The second thing is also the smell; this time it's the market: spices, fish and so on intermingled, changing from wonderful to disgusting as one walks along. Another interesting aspect of Terempah, and other Indonesian villages, is that part of it is built on stilts, over the water. Parts of it are somewhat reminiscent of Venice, with boatmen propelling their craft with long poles, at least until they get out of the congestion of the canal, at which time they start up their one-cylinder put-put diesels, sans mufflers.

Back aboard AKAMA, we went for a swim on a reef literally right off our stern. We saw a lot of interesting fishes, including some very large bat fish, which resemble angel fishes. Little did we know that while we were swimming, AKAMA was filling up with water! Taking advantage of the free spring water from the dock we were filling our tanks. Forgetting about that, they overfilled. The now-pressurized water made its way past a manual foot pump in the galley, filled the sink, and the counter top, and was running all over the floor by the time we came back aboard. Note to self: let's not do that again!

We ended the day with a BBQ on David's (owner of FEELING) jetty. Delicious!

Monday, 27 May 2002: Taking aboard some of the other boaters, we proceeded to Pulau Lagol, a small island north of Terempah (actually, on the charts we had it was too small to have a name). Francis Lee, the President of Raffles Marina, who was with the group from Raffles, owns this island, comprising 44 palm trees, a small sand beach and a large reef. What a beautiful spot. We snorkelled while the others dove. The reef at P. Lagol is the most beautiful we have seen so far, alive and replete with fishes. We saw a school of very large hump headed parrot fish, resembling napoleon wrasse. Because they feed on the reef their guts are full of coral sand; boy can they crap! We ended the day with a meal of delicious local food at the small restaurant where we and the others were docked.

Tuesday, 28 May 2002: We were invited aboard FEELING, the 62-foot Nordhavn, and travelled to a waterfall east of Terempah. Some of the others went there in a small speed boat. Once anchored in the bay near the falls, we motored to the base of the falls in the speed boat. Climbing the rocks and hills to the first and second levels of the falls was no big deal. However, we chickened out when a few of the others pushed on to the third level. After playing for hours in the pools we descended the hill to the village below. This was fascinating, as there are long sluices resembling small eaves troughs, made from bamboo, carrying water to the village.

Later in the day, back at the dock, we were invited to try the Jet Ski from FEELING. Thinking that I would drive, and Louise-Ann would be the only passenger, we hopped on with little preparation. Unfortunately, Elton, David's 12 year son drove. He took great delight in getting Louise-Ann to scream by doing doughnuts and wake jumping. Finally, pushing things a bit too hard, the Jet Ski rolled over

and we all fell into the water. Maurice and Elton both lost their eye glasses and LA received a large bruise on her elbow. Note to self: dummy, wear contacts or put a floating strap on the glasses in the future.

That evening, we discovered that our generator set was sick, not a good thing, as the dock we were tied to had no electricity available. Maurice was able to haywire it back to life, but it needs major surgery, which means returning to land to get parts.

Wednesday, 29 May 2002: Tired of being tied to the dock, we decided to leave the group to do a little exploring of the more remote islands on our own. So, we "set sail" for Pulau Durai, a.k.a., Turtle Island. LITTLE DARLING accompanied us. True to its name, before we even set the hook we sighted two huge turtles, mating. Now that is a sight! They jump on each other, dive until they run out of air, surface (it brings a new meaning to heavy breathing), and dive again. When not doing that, they beat each other silly with their massive flippers (Turtles are very heavy into S&M it would appear). Later, on the beach by dinghy, we saw turtle tracks leading to their nests. Unfortunately, the "warden" charged with preserving the turtles, the only resident of the island, apparently was harvesting and selling the eggs. The crew of LITTLE DARLING went to his house and were told that he had a box of 1500 eggs for sale. This was disgusting, but somewhat understandable, as most people in these islands exist on nearly nothing. We anchored at P. Durai for the night and LITTLE DARLING returned to the dock near Terempah.

Wednesday was the (sad) day we decided to end this trip a bit early. With our generator limping along, we were concerned that some of our appliances might burn out due to low voltage or frequency. Also, David of FEELING and many of the others decided to return early, some by air (including most of those who got seasick on the way out) and some aboard FEELING. This left the crew of LITTLE DARLING in a fix. They desperately wanted to stay and dive, but they had no charts and as new boaters were not sure of their ability to get back to Singapore safely. They only got to P-P Anambus by following the other boats. So, we offered to lead them back.

Thursday, 30 May 2002: After snorkelling in morning, we circumnavigated P. Durai and then proceeded towards P. Lagol, where we had agreed to rendezvous with the other boats. We poked along most of the way on our emergency engine, just to give it some exercise, circumnavigating P. Pahi. Near P. Phai we saw a school of dolphins, but despite LA's repeated pleadings and attempts to speak dolphin, they did not come to swim in our bow wave. Our approach to Lagol was less than perfect. The chart showed a deep water channel to the north and reefs around the other three sides; since we were coming from the north that seemed the logical approach. In less than a boat length, the depth changed from over 20-metres to less than six. We went hard astern immediately, and thankfully did not ground. Much of the Anambus Islands is like that; one needs to proceed with extreme caution, or follow someone with local knowledge, as this is a place where the reefs are still growing. We were surprised to see both LITTLE DARLING and LADY O' at anchor, as LADY O' was going to accompany FEELING back to Singapore. We were tempted to renege on our offer to accompany LITTLE DARLING back, but did not when we learned that LADY O was experiencing some technical difficulties with her autopilot.

At Lagol, we did some snorkelling and Maurice dove (SCUBA), with Chris from LITTLE DARLING. There are lots of fish around Lagol, both near the surface and deeper down. Maurice was pleased when Chris told everyone that he would dive with Maurice any time. He said that he could not believe that Maurice had only been down on SCUBA twice, as his buoyancy control and use of air was excellent. Maurice had a hard time getting his newly inflated ego back aboard AKAMA. Sadly, before noon we had to head back to the dock at Terempah to clear out of Indonesia and settle our bill with the marina.

Saturday, 01 and Sunday 02 June 2000: We arose at 04:00 and departed in the company of LADY O' and LITTLE DARLING, with LADY O' in the lead. We had not gone more than a few miles when LADY O' requested that we take the lead, due to their technical problems, which we did. After about 7-hours running, we arrived at Pulau Bawah, a planned rest stop. Actually, had we not decided to return early, we would have spent at least several days here, and then we would have returned via the Pulau-Pulau Tambelan, which is an island group farther south. Anchoring at P. Bawah was a real problem, as the water is very deep and then it rises up, nearly a wall, to the point where it is too shallow. After three tries we were hooked and LADY OLIVIA rafted along side. LITTLE DARLING anchored nearby.

P. Bawah is lovely. It has everything one would expect of an island in a tropical sea. It has rocky crags, a barrier reef around most of it, beautiful turquoise and emerald pools, an inside passage with a coral garden (not as good as the one at P. Lagol though), and a few tiny out-islands with sand beaches. LA and I went skinny-dipping at Shirley Wouldn't Island, named with tongue in cheek by Warren Blake after the only young lady who refused to swim there in the buff. After about four hours of playing around P. Bawah we raised the anchor, or at least tried to. The anchor chain was caught on something, probably a bommie (coral head) or two and simply would not budge no matter what we tried. Chris offered to go down with his SCUBA gear, but just as he was suiting up the chain finally pulled free and we were on our way.

After P. Bawah, it was a straight run to Sevana Cove for us and Nongsa Point for the other two boats. We left at about 16:00 hours, taking 3-hour watches each. LA had a hairy moment during her 04:00 to 07:00 watch when she heard an alarm beeping while she was plotting a fix. She looked at the radar and saw a blip about a half mile from Akama. She got out the binoculars and searched for the blip. It was pitch black, no ships light could be seen when all of a sudden a ship's lights came on and the ship took off in the opposite direction than us. We think that it could have been a military vessel or drug runners rendezvousing in the middle of the ocean. We split from the other two boats about ten miles out of Singapore, and arrived at Sevana Cove Marina about 14:30 Sunday afternoon. Under the terms of our insurance, we are not allowed to run continuously more than 24-hours without stopping for a rest, unless we engage crew; we were only an hour and a half off that point. Boating around coastal areas provides ample opportunity to anchor in the lee of an island or in a bay along a coastline. Running in the open ocean is another matter; so what do we do? We carry a sea anchor, which in our case is a 30-foot parachute. This can be deployed in place of a regular anchor; it all but stops the boat from drifting and it keeps the bow pointed into the weather. Our insurers allow us to stop for a rest using a sea anchor.

Now we are at Sevana Cove Marina in Malaysia, only an hour's ferry trip to Singapore. Other than taking on a load of relatively cheap fuel and some water near Terempah, we were away from land-based services such as fuel, water and electricity for one month and fourteen days, during which time we travelled about 700 miles. This included two overnight passages, one of which lasted nearly 24-hours. We could have stayed out longer, although the ailing generator would have made that a bit difficult. As you will recall from our little treatise on the electrical system, even with no generator the batteries will remain charged if we run the main engine; so we could easily make passage and stop now and again, at least until the potable water ran out. We are confident that AKAMA has proven herself as a passagemaker. Interestingly, at Sevana Cove we ran into a gentleman who knew the original owner of AKAMA and who had been on board for a passage from Hong Kong to Subic Bay in the Philippines. He was also aboard a sister ship named RECLAIM, which went on her own bottom from Asia to Spain, and then to Florida. Such news about the suitability of the Krogen Whaleback for sea travel makes us very happy!

Our time at Sebana Cove Marina will be filled with repairing and improving AKAMA for her next voyage; we won't bore you with the details. Our next trip, hopefully, will be to Bali and on to Australia via the Lesser Sunda Islands, a chain of islands running east from Bali. That is about eight times as far as this last trip and should take about a year. We'll write about it.

AKAMA REPORT 4a

We have been delayed in undertaking our voyages due to some small problems. So, we thought that we should send out this interim report to keep you all informed as to our situation. Besides, we have received emails asking what's up, and a few admonishing us for not keeping in touch.

You will recall from our last report, in June, that we left AKAMA at Sebana Cove Marina in southern Peninsular Malaysia, so that we could go to Canada for a few months. (BTW, we've added a few email addresses to the list so if you did not get the earlier 6-reports and want them just say so.)

We had a great time in Canada, arriving on 4 July and leaving on 7 September. In between these two dates, we motored from Vancouver to nearly Montreal in a rented car, putting on nearly 15,000 km. The purpose of the trip was predominantly to renew our links with our friends and relatives. This was greatly needed, as over the nearly 9-years of living in Asia these had become very thin. In this regard, the trip was a huge success; indeed, in all regards it was a huge success. We had fantastic weather the whole time. About the only down-side was that we did not allot enough time to visit everyone, and in a few cases people we tried to see were not home.

Back at the boat, disaster was a-brewing. Despite our precautions on board and our written instructions to the marina, while we were away the shore power went out, apparently many times and for long periods. So, all the food in our freezers (fridge and freezer) spoiled rotten...what a stinky mess!

The fridge and freezer cleaned up, we re-stocked and headed off to Sabah and Sarawak (Borneo) in the company of our friends John and Petra (S/Y EXCESS LINE). Unfortunately, we had to turn back after the first night, as our inverter/charger quit working. Readers of our earlier reports will recall that this unit is the heart of providing our electricity needs when our generator set is not running. Undoubtedly the strain of the repeated electrical outages, together with a reported very high voltage on the shore power while we were away did the poor thing in. While we could have carried on without it, we would have had no redundancy of electrical supply and would have had to run the main engine (for its alternator) and the generator set much more often and for longer periods than we would have wanted.

So, we are back at Sebana Cove awaiting the delivery of the replacement inverter. Somewhere near the end of October, we will go to Singapore to take delivery of it and to install it. Then, we plan to head to Phuket (Thailand) for the NE monsoon season, along with hundreds of other boats that go there at that time of year. The world cruisers will leave there for Galle (Sri Lanka) in January and we will stay on, returning to Singapore in late March.

The new plan after that is to go to Broome (Australia) via Bali, probably in late April, taking advantage of the lulls between the NE and SW monsoon winds for the passage. We've been planning and re-planning the trip to Oz, with various dates and arrival ports. Broome is considerably west of Darwin, where we earlier reported that we would head. We plan to explore the little-cruised northern coast; few cruising boats go there and the few that have report some lovely sights. We'll work our way eastward, making the tip of Cape York (the northeast corner of Oz) by October, just in time for favourable

conditions for the trip down the eastern seaboard and also in time to miss the cyclone season in Northern Australia.