



## AKAMA REPORT 5

16 December 2002

For those of you following our journey from the beginning, the receipt of this report no doubt makes you think, "Well they finally got the boat fixed". If so, right you are! While we enjoyed our stay in Sevana cove, it was way too long. We're happy to be back "on the road" as it were. AKAMA now has a new inverter and everything seems to be working fine (knock on wood). Our current tribulation is boat insurance. Anyway, on to the news...

First, here are the things we've done to AKAMA, in addition to fixing the inverter, while laid up in Sevana Cove:

--We've added a new navigation computer in the pilothouse. This is a fantastic bit of kit! It is a regular desk top PC (2.4 GHz CPU, 80 MB HD, 512 MB RAM, 15" flat LCD screen, wireless keyboard and mouse, with a database of the world's oceans). It is connected to the GPS; so we can actually see our little boat right on the chart. So far, AKAMA's been right where it is supposed to be. But, not trusting of new fangled technical things, even if they are our latest toy, we still keep track of our position on the paper charts.

--The laptop has been relegated to the guest stateroom and is networked to the pilothouse computer (golly gee!). Also installed in the guest stateroom is the ham radio station (VE0MN). Mostly, we use the laptop/radio combination for urgent and personal emails, using a ham radio network called Winlink2K and a program called Airmail. It is very slow and not terribly reliable, but until we get a satellite radio station installed (no kidding) it will have to do.

--Speaking of satellite, we bought a satellite broadcast radio receiver and hooked it up to the sound system in the saloon. Now we can listen to the BBC, CNN, jazz, C&W and so on in full stereo, with no interference. It is on the WorldSpace Network, which you can look up on the Internet if you are curious. The WorldSpace Network was to be a global satellite radio system with hundreds of channels including short wave broadcasters, pay radio channels, data and specialty channels. Unfortunately, the USA reneged on the ITU agreement and set out their satellite radio in a different band (they have a habit of doing that). Consequently neither has taken off as big as it should have. There is no coverage of the USA and Canada, but, I'm told, with the right antenna you can receive it. The problem would be finding a receiver.

--Also in the guest stateroom, accessible from the pilothouse on the ship's LAN (we just had to say that), we have a new 40 GB disk drive that is already 3/4 full of MP3 music. We now have nearly as much music available as a small radio station, most useful during those late night watches. We pipe it through the pilothouse stereo system (a car radio). If we tire of WorldSpace, we just play our own selections.

--Finally there is a flat bed scanner and three printers on the network, one printer on the pilothouse (which is also connected to the weather fax), and the scanner and the other two printers in the guest stateroom (where else) for general printing. It sure is nice to be at sea where life is simple {vbg}. Yes, we still have room for guests in the guest state room...but if you are interested you'd better hurry...there's no telling what we'll install in there next!

Our planned itinerary was, as we announced in report 4a (our interim report), to go to Phuket on Thailand's east coast, in short hops, and then head back south in April. This entails going from Seban Cove Malaysia (up a river opposite the NE corner of Singapore), around Singapore (without stopping there) and up the west coast of West (peninsular) Malaysia. Unfortunately, while the boat is working fine, we have an insurance problem; so we have stopped in Rebak Marina near Langkawi Island (Malaysia). We're less than one day's steaming short of our goal to reach Phuket before Christmas and will not make it.

On this trip, each day we made about 50 to 70 miles and anchored well before dark. Here is where we anchored (in order):

- Pisang Island (try to find that on your grocery store atlas). We were with four sailboats just south of the island in very shallow water but good holding in sand/mud.
- The Water Islands (near Malacca). The sailboats anchored where the cruising guide indicated, but we judged them to be too close to rocks and shallows if the wind shifted. We anchored east of Pulau Besar in firm mud; the price we paid was a little more swell, but we slept soundly knowing that we could drag quite a distance in any direction with impunity.
- In Port Dickson, we were alone, just off the marina (good holding but bad swell). Two of the sailboats anchored very near the shore, for a bit more protection from the swell, but way too close for our liking.
- On the pontoon at the Royal Selangor Yacht Club (RSYC) in Port Klang (the major port west of Kuala Lumpur).
- Near shore on the west side of the shipping channel running north out of Port Klang (good holding among work boats, surprisingly quiet).
- Pangkor Island (Lumut), just off a resort (good holding and again surprisingly quiet). This was a lovely place that we will visit for at least several days on the return trip.
- On the east shore of Pulau Kendi, which is just SW of Penang Malaysia. A thunder storm blew up while we were there and after the wind shifted we did not have much shelter; but the anchor held well in mud.

This takes us to Rebak Marina, where we are docked and will remain until we sort out our insurance woes.

Highlights of the trip thus far are:

- We had a brief encounter with the Singapore Coast Guard, who shooed us away from their live firing range; in actual fact, we were outside the designated zone by at least a quarter mile (our RADAR and the aforementioned navigation computer tell us that).
- In Port Klang the Royal Selangor Yacht Club is Royal in name only. While they have a nice building, they are surrounded by the weirdest assortment of industrial buildings, boats and ships in various states of repair, and by smelly mud and floating garbage...and lots of the latter! They tell us that their plan is to move to a new location on Pulau Lumut, which is an Island in the Port Klang delta. Good thing, as their docks are beginning to disintegrate from lack of maintenance. A rat came aboard, left his calling card, and, thankfully, left (at least so we fervently hope).
- Port Klang is anything but uninteresting; just imagine a scene from a Popeye comic, with derelict buildings and ships and you've about got it. There was even one old sailboat on a mooring that had the mast and top deck torn away, and get this, trees and vines growing in the hull!
- LA saw some small blue flying fish (Michelle, what might they have been?). These were actual flyers, not tail walkers like we've seen lots of before (and on this trip too).
- We saw the backs of some very large black things that repeatedly barely surfaced and sounded in the Port Klang delta, big dolphins?

--The tides have been good to us, despite virtually no planning on our part; what luck. Each morning, we start out on slack or the tide a slight bit against us) and then for most of the day we have a knot or two with us, giving us the breakneck speed of over 9-knots much of the time, whilst only burning diesel to make 6 or 7 knots. (Har, Billy, m'boy we sails with the tide!)

--On the way to Lumut we saw some HUGE jelly fish. The largest ones had to be at least 18" to two feet in diameter.

--We steamed through an interesting bit of water about a mile off the shore near Lumut. There was a clear but irregular line in the ocean on one side of which the water was a beautiful dark blue; on the other side of the line it was the color of coffee with milk and full of crap (dead trees, bottles...you name it). The demarcation line was very sharp, only inches wide, and it did not seem to be related to any shallows directly below.

--We saw the sailboats again after several days of being on our own. They were sailing in very shallow water near shore...what's with these guys? We generally run well off shore; if we break down, we have hours to fix things or anchor, not mere minutes before going aground.

--The Rebak Marina is very cruiser friendly and there is a large live-aboard population here, compared to Punggol, Raffles and Seban Cove marinas where we have lived over the years. To our great surprise there are a lot of Canadian boats here, something very scarce in all the other places we've been. We've already met up with old friends and made new ones.

If you are wondering what the boat insurance problem is, then read on, otherwise, that's if for now. Boat insurance is the biggest single expense we have, and the biggest headache! When we bought AKAMA we simply renewed the insurance that the previous owner had. But, that was really only suitable for living aboard in a marina or for short trips. So, we moved to a UK insurer that specialized in cruisers; but the year after we signed on they went out of the yacht business. So, we had a broker friend in the US find us a replacement company and guess what...that company have just gone out of the yacht business too! Anyway, about 6-months ago we asked our broker to find us a new insurer; until very recently he was unable. Can you believe that? Finally, at the last minute (our insurance expires at the end of the year) he found a broker who wants not only more money, but a very detailed out-of-the-water survey of AKAMA. We're still dickering over that. Anyway, this marina does not require us to have insurance (most do), so here we sit until we can find suitable insurance.

Well, that's all for now. We'll send out another status report once we have something interesting to say and get some more miles under the hull. Hopefully we will be under way early in January.