

Bonaire Information Center

One of the fascinations of strange ports is examining native craft. Janet, above, standing by an Arab Dhow at Aden. The picturesque port of Bonaire, N.W.I. (top right). "Adios," (right) against the dramatic contour of the island of Moorea





TWICE AROUND IN "ADIOS"

Part II: Again departing California for the South Seas,
"Adios" makes another westabout voyage around the world

By THOMAS STEELE

(Winner of the Blue Water Medal in 1962 for "meritorious example of seamanship" over a period of 12 years, Tom Steele had made two around-the-world voyages in his 32' Tahiti ketch "Adios." The first lasted over five years and was summarized in last month's issue.

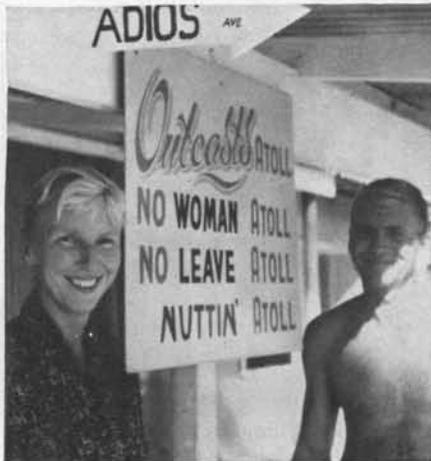
Mr. Steele was accompanied by his wife Janet, on his second circumnavigation, which lasted approximately six-and-a-half years. Here he describes some of the many impressions and adventures of the latter voyage.—EDS.)

AFTER LEAVING CALIFORNIA in August, 1957, we encountered two hurricanes off the coast of Baja California, although it was reputedly too late in the season (mid-October) to expect them, and in both storms we experienced winds of 80 knots or more. Our procedure in a tempest, where there is sea room, is to run before the wind and sea under bare poles and drag 300 feet of one-inch nylon line with an anchor on the end. This has proved very effective in keeping an even, powerful strain at all times so that she lies stern-to. The one-and-one-half to two-knot headway gives steerage way so as to take the oncoming sea properly. I find this method far superior to using a warp, which usually skips when the boat surges ahead and the total strain is needed most. Full advantage of the line's length and resistance is gained by the single weighted length, yet the strain is never excessive as is the case with a sea anchor. I am totally afraid to lie ahull in a great sea. A small craft lying ahull or hove-to in such conditions, even though well ballasted, presents a greater area to the sea with danger of being stove in, or capsizing due to beam on conditions minus a stabilizing drag.

But the storms were soon to be over, and as if to ease our wind-frayed nerves, we headed for the South Seas. Although we have always enjoyed every place we have visited for one or another of its qualities, the South Sea islands rate highest with us. With their exceptionally beautiful topography and their generally storm-free Trade wind weather, we consider the French-administered islands our favorites, though they are virtually the same kind of islands as the British- or American-controlled ones. Yet somehow the appealing atmosphere in the French islands remains uppermost in our memories.

We spent over a year in the group and enjoyed it immensely. It was in Tahiti that I bought a motorcycle which we have carried on deck ever since. With the handlebars off and covered with a waterproof cover, it presents a small unobtrusive profile lashed alongside the trunk cabin. Usually there has been no problem in obtaining permission to put it ashore in foreign ports, and the added convenience for getting around on land has not only broadened our sightseeing horizons but has afforded me necessary transportation on shoreside jobs, compensating for its cost and the trouble of carrying it.

On both voyages I had planned to cruise extensively through Indonesia, although at both times political strife made it seem a calculated risk. Yachts do cruise the islands but the reception is often touchy until the authorities finally are convinced of the validity and sincerity of their intentions. On the first voyage, while sailing from Darwin, Australia, to Christmas Island, the going was slow so, when off the southern end of Timor, we decided it would be



Solid line on the chart shows the route of "Adios" first voyage; the dotted line follows the track of the second. Janet and Tom Steele (left) at the Outcast Club on Cocos Island in the Indian Ocean. Members of the club are Australian government employees who man the air-sea rescue base there

wise to put into Koepang for water.

My Australian crew assured me it was a Dutch settlement, but when we entered the harbor there were warships and a strange flag flying that neither of us could recognize. As we sailed by one of the warships with the American flag flying from our mast we were surprised by the cheering and thumbs-up signs from the crew. The anchor down, soldiers boarded us, and for the first time we learned that Koepang was now a part of the independent nation of Indonesia and that the town had only recently been wrested from the Dutch, with martial law prevailing. The authorities of the newly independent colony assumed we could only be spies, so we were politely detained for five days until a release was obtained from Djakarta. They then supplied us with fresh food, water and fuel at no charge and allowed us to proceed on our way.

While in Darwin on the second voyage I built two 18-foot inboard fishing boats for the Portuguese government, which controls the eastern half of the island of Timor, of which Dili is the principal port. The completed boats were shipped to Dili via a small freighter, where they were consigned to the army garrison. Having built the boats with a fair share of banged fin-

gers, I felt a twinge of sentiment, and on leaving Darwin, we decided to sail to Dili on our way west. We had never been there, and felt it would be interesting to see the boats at work. Upon entering Dili roadstead and dropping the anchor, our searching eyes sighted one of the boats up on the beach and the other at anchor. First came a surprisingly chilly reception from the Portuguese Port Captain who, although an enthusiastic yachtsman, coolly told me that though we had a right to be in Dili we need not expect any civility from him or others. This came as a complete shock and I couldn't understand his attitude until the Australian Consul informed me that Americans were *persona non grata* because of the American vote in the United Nations against the Portuguese in Angola.

After the difficult digestion of the facts of our welcome we walked down the beach to one of "my" boats and I was amazed to see a considerable hole in the bow just at the waterline. It didn't look as though it had hit a rock, since the boats weren't really fast enough to do that much damage. I consulted an army officer and queried the origin of the hole and was told that the two boats were at anchor when a visiting Portuguese naval vessel called at the port and a 21-gun salute was fired from the shore batteries. One of the fishing boats promptly sank.

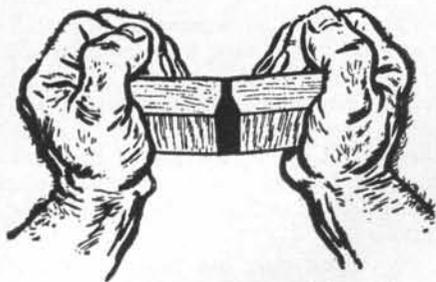
In Dili we met the Indonesian Consul, who was extremely friendly and insisted that we visit his country. Armed with a basketful of official documents, letters of introduction and permits, we set sail for Bali, a magic name whether tattooed on a sailor's arm or entered in a log book. We

coasted the chain of Indonesian islands heading toward Bali, where we intended to make the port of Benoa. Night was setting in as we sailed slowly along the south shore of Lombok Island within sight of the beach. Lombok is the first large island east of Bali and separated from it by the 20-mile-wide channel of the Lombok Strait. At dark, with no lights visible or anchorage available, we took our departure from Lombok toward Bali, expecting to be within easy sight of Bali's 10,000-foot peak by daylight. The state of the sea indicated currents were at work, but with hazy weather and no shore lights it was impossible to check their speed and direction.

Commencing at daylight, with no land visible, we sailed and powered at at five knots due north all morning, knowing we must have been set to the southward. Still not sighting Bali by noon, a meridian altitude showed us to be 35 miles south of the island, which meant that since 8 o'clock the previous night and including the 30 miles sailed due north since 6 a.m. we had been set 65 miles south in 16 hours, an average southwesterly set of four knots. Limited on fuel and with the wind and current against us we reluctantly changed course for Christmas Island, where we arrived 12 days later, after an unseasonable five-day period of calms and westerlies. Being in Bali is still a dream, and it is pleasant to anticipate.

West across the Indian Ocean via Cocos Keeling, Diego Garcia and the Seychelles gave us some of our best square-sail sailing. Cocos to Diego Garcia—1,500 miles, average speed 4.8 knots; Diego Garcia to Mahe, Seychelles

(Continued on page 350)



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TWICE AROUND IN "ADIOS"

(Continued from page 100)

—1,020 miles, average speed 5.2 knots; fine going for a sail of only 256 square feet. During the passage we hardly touched the tiller.

The Seychelles, as advertised, were almost as spectacularly beautiful as Tahiti but the islands are overcrowded and the economy so poor that the mixed population of Indian, Chinese, East African and French (with the British as administrators) seems apathetic and a bit sad as compared to the carefree Polynesians.

As I had rounded Africa via the Cape of Good Hope on the first voyage, we decided to try the Red Sea-Mediterranean route and, bracing ourselves for pirates, slave traders and uncharted reefs, we entered the Gulf of Aden. An extremely pleasant and interesting three-months' stay in Aden started us out with nothing but a good opinion of the general area, and the Red Sea, in spite of its bad reputation among yachtsmen, was one of the most enjoyable parts of our voyage. Perhaps we were lucky, but I attribute it mostly to the fact that we had time at our disposal. We followed along the western shore, taking advantage of its many anchorages rather than going out to sea and beating relentlessly north against the prevailing winds, constantly having to cross and recross the steamer lane. During the winter months the northeast Monsoon of the Indian Ocean causes prevailing southeasterly winds in the Red Sea almost as far north as Port Sudan, or about half its length. Thus we experienced fine sailing with a steady fair wind at the start. We did the 700-odd miles from Aden to Port Sudan in three weeks, spending every night but two at anchor.

We found the Massawa Channel, a big ship passage, to be well-charted and with many fine anchorages, mostly tiny uninhabited islands, lovely—that is if, like us, you happen to like the dry, desert-type of scenery reminiscent of Arizona, Baja California, or perhaps the moon. From Port Sudan north to Suez the winds prevail from the north for the entire year. But we found that by waiting at anchor (and in this area the anchorages are quite a bit farther apart) we would eventually hit a period of calm lasting perhaps as much as 24 to 48 hours. By taking advantage of these calm spells to proceed northward under power we had a comparatively easy passage, taking 35 days but spending only about nine days at sea.

The small ports south of Suez were hospitable and the Egyptians generally friendly and helpful, but once in Suez we were engulfed with paper work, red tape and restrictions. We transited the Canal at the cost of \$10 compared to \$5.70 for the Panama Canal.

We spent the summer cruising the Mediterranean, the only season that a

sensible person leaves harbor there. We had had a taste of what late winter storms are like while en route in March from Port Said to Rhodes, Greece. This seemed to us at the time to be the worst storm of the trip. It was the most uncomfortable one with the short, steep, gale-generated seas and the disconcerting lack of sea room.

Mediterranean cruising is pleasant primarily for the sights ashore and not because of the sailing. The winds seem to blow too hard when they do blow, and invariably they come from the wrong direction. Between blows there is seldom enough wind, resulting in almost constant motoring. If one had unlimited time to sail in whatever direction the wind might blow, with no itinerary, then the Mediterranean would be an ideal cruising area. Seeing some of the sights of Europe from the cockpit of your own yacht is delightful, but with only six or seven months of good weather to cover the entire area from Port Said to Gibraltar, you are apt to feel constantly rushed. Fortunately, we had two months to spend in what was to us the most enjoyable part—the southern coast of Spain. Not only are the anchorages and ports good, the people friendly, the officials helpful, but when the budget was in a sad state, after a stay at the French Riviera, it was nice to be in a country where modern haulout slips cost a mere \$9 for a three-day stay, where excellent dinners in good restaurants were less than \$1 with wine, and fine dry champagne was \$10 a case.

From the Strait of Gibraltar we made the run down to the Canary Islands and then across to Barbados, taking 40 days. There was an almost complete absence of the Trades for most of a three-week period of calms and light southwesterlies. But in the Caribbean the Trades were not disappointing and we averaged just under five knots on the 1,160-mile run from Grenada to Panama, under the square sail alone. This was not a non-stop passage. We usually tried to avoid long runs and if there was an anchorage along the way, we took advantage of it.

After leaving Grenada we anchored first at Islas de Aves, a group of small islets enclosing a beautiful lagoon, and then at Bonaire in the Netherlands Antilles, both places seldom visited by yachts. The people we met and the general atmosphere of hospitality in such spots (where a visit from a yacht is a local event) often made these less well-known places the most memorable. Brief stops at Curacao, Aruba and Cartagena brought us to the Panama Canal. The total distance covered on the second voyage to date was 26,005 miles at an average of 3.3 knots with 327 days (14% of our time) spent at sea over a period of six years and four months.

Life on the sea is always varied, leaving memories of many experiences.

We think back on the flying fish that actually *did* come through the hatch and *did* land in the frying pan on the stove, which unfortunately wasn't lit . . . sailing at five knots past a lighthouse in the Clarence Straits, in northern Australia, and watching it disappear astern, then, although still sailing at five knots, watching it reappear on the horizon, come closer until almost abeam and then disappear astern again as the tide turned . . . small squid jumping out of the sea by the hundreds and covering the boat with their inky stains . . . the shark that attacked the rudder so violently that it knocked the tiller out of the helmsman's hands . . . rainbows by full moon . . . gigantic whales that swam in such close company we closed the hatches and portholes in case of a possible capsize . . . suddenly heading right toward what appeared to be a solid line of breakers off Cape Wessel, in Australia, during the night and heaving-to although we felt sure of our position: daylight proving it to be merely extremely heavy phosphorescence in the disturbed water of a tide rip . . . yet, while at sea we have seen only one small waterspout and have never seen St. Elmo's fire.

We think cruising is a good way of life, but then, as I said before, everything in life is a compromise.

Since this article was written *Adios* has returned to Newport Beach, Calif., making the trip from May to July. At Acapulco, Mexico, the second circumnavigation was completed with a total distance of 55,472 nautical miles, spending 680 days at sea with an average speed of 3.45 knots and visiting 286 ports and/or anchorages.

Since my return I find it notable that I am often asked why I think a Tahiti or equivalent is the perfect small boat, and I am quick to correct this misinterpretation of my views on this subject. Quite to the contrary, if I were to re-rig the boat completely, I feel I would find a cutter rig with a high aspect Marconi rig with roller reefing more satisfactory. This statement is made with consideration of the fact that the mainmast would have to be moved further aft and allowances would be made for a staysail. I find it almost ridiculous to carry so much extra windage and top hamper, such as is the case of the mizzen, just for the sake of hanging a 90-odd-foot sail.

Another common misconception is that a vessel of this type will lay into a storm under mizzen alone. This is quite contrary to the facts, and though we can heave-to nicely under jib and mizzen, a triple-reefed mainsail or 80-foot trysail on the main makes the vessel lay closer and steadier into the wind, with less fight on the ends of the vessel.

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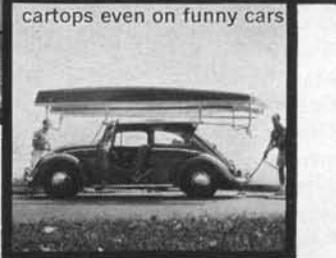
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