

There were fish in profusion, which came close to nuzzle us as we swam. Presumably the operators feed them to put on a good show. There is great sensitivity to potential impact on the reef. Tour boats are forbidden to anchor and must lie to moorings. Holding tanks are required for sewage. Activities at the outer reefs are restricted, although so far nothing has been done about cruising yachts.

The overwhelming impression was of the emptiness and beauty of the coast. The Ulletts found it a great contrast to the crowded islands of Indonesia. The Aborigines, of course, are determined to keep it that way. They claim not only the land but also the sea and allegedly the air. Another matter is the extent of some of the

potential resources. The eco-activists are trying to prevent sand mining at Shelburne Bay and to close the existing plant at Cape Flattery. We passed mile after mile after mile of sand dunes, some of which are shown on the charts as reaching far inland. I cannot see the justification for locking this up without any access, on grounds that it must *all* be wilderness for ever. Here are concentrated the world's greatest stocks of rare earths. By what right do we deprive other countries of such resources, especially as our overseas debt grows at the rate of over a billion dollars each and every month? Those who complain so stridently are people living in the southern cities. Virtually none of them will have seen Shelburne Bay or have any concept of the extent of the sand system. 

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Arcoorie from Darwin to Singapore

Ken White

Ken White continues the story of his journey, which has again been reduced from the original. In the last issue we left him at Darwin, having sailed alone from Port Moresby.—Ed.

On 11 September, 1991 my son Joshua and his friend Mitch arrived in Darwin to join me for the journey through Indonesia to Singapore. What a luxury that was after 2,500 miles of single-handed sailing! The journey from Darwin to Tenau Harbor, Kupang in Timor took three days, which being calm was mostly motoring. What wind we had was SW at no more than 8 knots. The days passed effortlessly, and I had the privilege of sleeping in the evenings. Mitch had not sailed before, so he took care of the housekeeping while he learned the ropes. Josh caught more Spanish mackerel than we could eat, and kept the log neater and more accurately than a Jewish book-keeper.

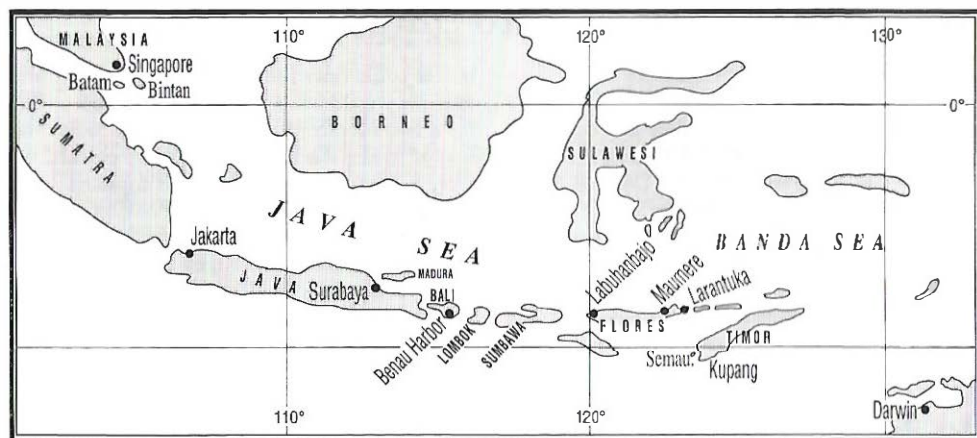
At the wharf in Tenau Harbor there were Makassar sailing boats with cargoes of timber from Sulawesi. Watching them unload showed us how things work in Indonesia. Twenty men took long lengths of sawn timber one by one from the hold to place them in a rope sling floating in the water. When there was a large enough bundle the sling was tightened, and several men swam it ashore. Here a team of boys waded into the water to take single planks to load on to a truck. By the end of the day they had completed one. It was a time consuming activity, which provided a daily income for forty people of maybe two dollars a person.

As Kupang was our first port of call in Indonesia the paperwork was horrendous. First the harbour master wanted a sheaf of photocopies of all our papers, then the port police, customs and finally quarantine. Each asked for *Playboy* magazines and whisky, which are the local currency for officials. The rather slimy and overhelpful quarantine officer told us that there were "No problems" and that he would get Immigration to come to the port. Then we would have to have a security clearance from the Navy. Things seemed to be going well, until Mr "No problems" said that the Immigration

officer could only issue a visa for five days, and that we would have to proceed directly to Bali for a two month visa. Having paid US\$500 and waited three weeks for a cruising permit, we were not very pleased. Joshua completed some of the formalities with Mr "No problems" because I was beginning to lose my patience. That evening we were obliged to meet him with Benny and Jimmy the Customs men at Teddy's bar to have my Darwin port clearance signed, and then they said, "No problems." What rubbish! Mr "No problems" had already extracted \$25 from Joshua as a health tax. What was coming next? Jimmy said he could arrange fuel for us next day. After several beers and the offer of a woman for the night, our petty officials left. Next day Mr Jimmy waited on the beach to get us fuel at Rp500 (about 30 cents) per litre. Joshua declined, and bought diesel from a store at Rp350 per litre. We took on 146 litres, the consumption for our Perkins 4.107 being 3.4 litres/hour. Fuel capacity is 300 litres.

Later I discovered that a group of Customs officials at Kupang Airport were removed and sent to obscurity to Tenau port, where they operated scams like those of the British comedy actors Arthur Daly and Terry. When I obtained my clearance from the Immigration Department I had a pleasant surprise. The distinguished official in charge wanted a conversation in English. He invited me to visit his house to meet his wife and six children, and to stay there on my next visit. We chatted openly about our respective governments, and he told me about some of the less desirable Australians he has to deal with. The Australian Government imprisons Indonesian fishermen caught in our waters, and burns their boats to boot. He said that Indonesia would not do that.

While I was at Immigration a New Zealander from a scruffy looking boat was waiting his turn. Earlier he had anchored not twenty feet from me, and had picked up a crazy (mentally defective) Indonesian prostitute to spend the night on his boat. Next morning I heard him abusing the woman as one would scold a dog. He got into a fight in a bar, was arrested and sent to Immigration. There it was discovered



that he had neither passport nor visa. Apparently this modern day pirate had smuggled a boatload of Australian wine to Timor. One of the hazards of coming into foreign ports is that you don't know what kind of scoundrels have come before you.

I was glad to leave Kupang and explore the rest of Indonesia. We spent a night at Semua only six miles away, and next day went on to Flores. The passage to Lantuka at the beginning of Flores Strait is 145 miles. By leaving at midday we planned to arrive in daylight next morning. Luckily there was a fresh southerly blowing, which made the overnight sail pleasant. By daybreak we were in Solor Strait, with a tide carrying us north amongst tall volcanic mountains. At this time of the year the countryside was very dry, and the sky was clear of clouds, but hazy. Lantuka is a port with a wharf which lies at the SE tip of Flores Island. Josh and Mitch went ashore for supplies while I feasted on the activity taking place before me. Hordes of people queued to board the five or six ferries which kept coming in and leaving. They looked as if their ancestors came from India. As the current favoured us at 6 knots through a passage 700 metres wide, we got going as soon as the boys returned with fresh bread and cold beer.

At Maumere we picked up four Germans — three young women and a man. They wanted to go to Komodo, but couldn't get a ferry and

didn't like travelling for two days over twisting dusty roads. The crew agreed to take them for \$20 per day. It was a bit cramped with seven aboard, and at night they slept on deck. We saw two whales on our first morning out. By the time we arrived at Labuanbaja they were as sad to leave as we were to bid them farewell. The bay there looked more like a lake, with many mountainous islands rising from the mirrored surface of the water. Labuanbaja is a cluster of houses and shops for those travelling west to Komodo and Sumbawa. The people were happy and friendly. All along the coast we saw sailing prahus carrying people and cargo, and they travel silently at night without lights. One night when Josh was at the helm, we were deeply into a philosophical discussion when he asked, "Can you smell clove cigarettes?" The torch disclosed one of these invisible boats not fifty feet away. We had to swerve to avoid a collision.

This cruising life tends to slow you down. We could spend our time just sitting round and reading, only to feel in the evening that we'd had a busy day. With all the tensions in so many parts of the world, I marvelled at the way Indonesian life works. There seems to be a sense of peace, a harmony and a feeling of community. They don't have many material goods, and most activities involve as many people as possible, with very little money changing hands. Why would anyone want to change this way of life, and risk a complete breakdown in the quest for efficiency and personal wealth? In

our quick-fix society we have forgotten that pain and struggle produce noble qualities, with a caring for other people.

We left Labuanbaja with a Dutch couple, Dick and Dianne, for Lombok. Travellers here are mainly backpackers from Europe, who take all kinds of devious routes by bus, ferry, and even horse and cart. They all have guide books, such as *The Lonely Planet*, and seem to stop at the same places. They keep thick diaries, no doubt with the hope of publishing their experiences when they get home. Sitting chatting in these places is like having endless tutorials. Discussions continue about world problems, science and whatever skills or professions are common. There were two English girls, health workers, who had come to sort out their goals and themselves. The more they talked the more they seemed to be trapped in their British systems. I began to explore the notion that strong and intelligent people with moral convictions are the easiest to be manipulated by the hidden persuaders of politics, business and unions.

Komodo Island is swept by violent tide rips, which are as fierce as the celebrated dragons — giant lizards left over from the dinosaur age. The Indonesian Government made the island a nature reserve in 1980. Tourists come to see the daily ritual of killing a goat and feeding it to the dragons. It's not my cup of tea, but in Darwin bus loads of little old ladies visit tourist parks to watch live chickens being fed to crocodiles. Josh and Mitch carried oars when they went ashore. Last year all that they found of a Swiss tourist were his Leica camera and his spectacles. From there we headed west along the north coast of Sumbawa, at first pushing 4 knots of tide. On a pitch black night we passed through a passage two miles wide between a small volcanic island 9,000 feet high and Sumbawa Island. The monolith was only three miles away before we could pick it out in the dark.

After leaving Sengiggi Beach, Lombok we entered Benau Harbor, Bali at first light. What a surprise! Three years ago it was an isolated place with only a few boats at anchor. We found hundreds of fishing boats, many of which appeared to be Chinese or Taiwanese.

They were identically stacked against the available wharfs on both sides of the harbour, with still more at anchor or high and dry on the mudflats. Their once white hulls were badly stained and unattractive. Then there were the yachts. Forty of the *Europa* cruising convoy neatly lined a section of the harbour undergoing upgrading. I counted 31 more at anchor in the small space north of the main wharf. The water was so dirty that I mistook garbage for the reef. And this was the entrance to Bali, one of the most exotic places in the world! The toll of tourists, population pressure and development seems to be turning this last vestige of the exotic east into yet another slum. I am thankful that I came to Bali before it all ran rampant.

The port entry requirements involved a procession from the harbourmaster to quarantine to customs to navy to immigration in order to collect signatures and stamps. I encountered a problem. The visa issued at Kupang was for five days, and that was nineteen days ago. The enterprising immigration official seized the opportunity to make some money. Two days later, after much bluff and counterbluff, we settled for US\$10, and then became firm friends. This is the Indonesian way. We took a bemo (minibus) to Kuta Beach, the shopping centre and tourist hub for young Australians and Europeans. There we saw the ugly Australian stereotypes, conspicuous with plaited hair and graffiti singlets blatantly displaying statements which would shock our grandmothers.

In Vanuatu I met a Belgian named Pierre. Now he joined the crew for the trip to Singapore. We left Benau Harbor on 23 October, 1991, and had a delightful sail in clear air along the west coast of Bali. By midmorning the following day we were speeding north at 8 knots under spinnaker past the eastern tip of Madura. At 2100 I switched the engine on to clear a ship coming up fast astern. I noticed smoke coming from the engine room. To my horror flames were licking the engine from somewhere near the bottom of the boat. Josh sprang from his bunk, switched the engine off, and sprayed a fire extinguisher over the fire and me. What occurred was that the starter switch jammed in the on position, and sent current through the thick wire of the starter motor. While this drama was in full

swing I could feel a fever coming on, with violent headache.

Next morning, while I was delirious with fever, Joshua dismantled the wiring, cleaned the starter motor and whatever else he could, and put it back with spare battery wires. We could not get the engine to start. We had to decide whether to carry on to Singapore 700 miles away without an engine, or to call into either Jakarta or Surabaya for repairs. As I was so sick I put Joshua in charge, and he decided to sail to Surabaya. The channel was narrow and the current strong as *Arcoorie* made her way into the port of Gresik a few miles north of Surabaya. We came in at night and anchored near a group of fishing boats. My fever was wearing off after several days of agonising headaches. Later I discovered that I had most probably contracted dengue fever. A Chinese "Repairsi Dynamo" sat on his doorstep to dismantle the starter motor. Within two hours he had completely rebuilt it and supplied a second-hand solenoid, all for A\$50. Within an hour of leaving this filthy little port I noticed that the alternator was not charging. Our solar panel was the only source, so we drastically reduced our power consumption. That required use of kerosene cabin lamps, which were unpleasant in steamy tropical conditions.

For the next week we headed north-east, with a gentle wind mostly from the north or veering west. I was worried that by now fuel must be low. We set the spinnaker quite often in these fluky conditions, and motor-sailed as little as possible. Josh had plotted a course between Batam and Bintan Islands, with a myriad of reefs and small islands in our path. When we were 80 miles from Singapore a storm with winds of 50 knots and driving rains hit us. These local storms are called Sumatras, blowing from the NW of that island. As the gusts increased there was a large crack as the main-sail split in halves. We left it flapping, as I thought that safest in these terrible conditions. After an hour the wind eased enough for us to hand the sail and replace it with the Number 2 mainsail. From the *Pilot* we knew that fuel was available at Tanjung Udang on the NW point of Bintan Island. Within fifteen minutes of lowering the dinghy the crew were back with two jerry cans, and we were under way again.

About five miles north of Bintan island we could not identify the lights from the photocopied chart obtained in Darwin. As we came close to a white light we touched bottom, but managed to bump our way off by reversing, sending the crew forward and easing the main-sail. Josh was devastated by his error, but we all forgot the incident as we headed on.

The night was pitch black, and there were hundreds of ships at anchor, with many others travelling back and forth in the channel south of Singapore Island. We slowly picked our way into Johore Strait, round Changi Point to tie up to a mooring at Changi Sailing Club. It happened to be a public holiday, so it was difficult to make contact with the various government departments. When we did so there was no fuss, which was a delight after the hassles of Indonesia. Changi Sailing Club has a restaurant, showers, a pontoon for the dinghy, and is a great place to sit and talk to other sailors while sipping a beer. We set about reconstructing our CVs and looking for work. Within three weeks Josh became caretaker-skipper of a luxurious 60' Dutch Van Dam ketch. I had two months of painstaking search before joining Boyden International, a worldwide company of head hunters (Executive Search Consultants). I had never actually worked as a head hunter, but what the heck! After sailing in unknown waters I'm prepared to try anything. I convinced the owner of the Singapore branch to open an office in Indonesia.

In September, 1992 Joshua and I sailed *Arcoorie* to Jakarta. He then sailed to Kupang, where I rejoined *Arcoorie* to sail directly to Thursday Island and then on to Cairns. She is now (early 1993) at the Cairns Cruising Yacht Club on hard standing and waiting to go to sea again. Josh is back at Adelaide University; Mitch is working in a pub in Scotland; and Pierre is back in Belgium, wanting to return to the exotic east.

Notes on Cruising to Indonesia

1. A cruising permit is required, obtainable by fax from a registered agent with the transfer of US\$200. This is valid for three months from the date of issue, and you must specify the arrival date in Indonesia. It is best to

begin communication well in advance, but only make application weeks before you leave Australia. You can get the approval faxed to Darwin.

- Contact Kus Prodjalito PT Kartasa Jaya Jalan Probolinggo No 18 Jakarta 10305 Indonesia Fax No 62-21-3107734. He is good. Tell him Ken White (*Arcoorie*) referred you, and you will pay only \$200 instead of US\$500. He can also arrange a cruising permit for 12 months.
2. You will need a visa for all crew if you enter any place other than Jakarta or Bali. This is obtained by writing to the Indonesian Embassy in Canberra.
 3. Charts are not always easy to get. Darwin Sailing Club has a good selection. Otherwise you need to contact a chart agent well in advance of your cruise.
 4. An increasing number of boats join the annual Darwin-Ambon race in July, and then cruise to Singapore and Phuket in Thailand; or return to Darwin in November before the cyclone season.
 5. Make sure you have an accurate record of make and model numbers of all equipment, so you can get parts air-freighted in case of failure.

6. Carry spares, such as oil filters, thermostats, shaft bearings, rudder bearings and many tins of CRC.
7. Carry a fuel funnel with a fine gauze filter. Some fuel can have considerable quantities of dirt.
8. Fit an additional sediment bowl in the fuel line, and check regularly.
9. If you have an inflatable dinghy, make up vinyl covers to reduce sun damage.
10. Buy a new outboard and have plenty of shear pins.
11. Disposal of rubbish is a problem in some ports, especially Singapore.
12. A sun awning is a must, along with buckets to keep the decks cool.
13. Carry several canisters of silicone sealant for the electrics and external lamp covers, and to seal the main anchor chain pipe on deck for long passages.
14. Learn some Bahasa Indonesia and practice negotiating in foreseeable situations. The best tools of negotiation are a smile, pictures of your family, *Playboy* magazines (don't get them mixed up), whisky, kangaroo and koala stick pins or dolls, and, most important — money. SQ



Rafted up on Opening Day