

COMMITTEE NOTES ...

HALF TON YACHT ASSOCIATION ...

decisions made this year on I.O.R. Rule penalties affecting these boats.

Unfortunately the Spencer 30 mould was lost in the fire at Binks Yachts, which could impair the growth of the Half Ton fleet.

It is disappointing that there are only 5 starters in this year's State Championships, considering the number of boats that could compete if rated.

The Australian Half Ton Championships are to be held in January 1980 so we hope our numbers increase and the racing maintains its present high standard.

CHARLES WALL-SMITH

STRICTLY FOR THE BIRDS

The timing of the 3/4 Ton series during the Festival of Arts was rather fortunate in a way the organisers probably never anticipated. The overnight races with their attendant freedom from family chores provided the ideal opportunity for wives to join in the festival activities. Together with the social gatherings which formed part of the series it made for a fairly hectic fortnight. Thank you very much to those associates who helped so readily with refreshments during the Australian titles.

The Club's social calendar is rather busy for the next few weeks. Legacy Day is the week before the migration to Port Vincent at Easter, and Ladies' Race and Inkster

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Memorial occur in the ensuing month. These dinner dances are very happy gatherings, so if you have never been to one yet, make up a party and come along. I understand the House and Social Committee has some novel ideas in store for the next one, so keep your eye on the notice board.

Happy sailing at Easter.

PAT TEDMANSON

CONTRIBUTIONS

RAMBLINGS IN THE SOUTH SEAS WITH MOONGARA

I had long wanted to sail my own boat across the Tasman to New Zealand, to experience for myself this yachtsman's paradise. But 31 feet is not very much boat and I waited until I had tested Moongara on several shorter cruises before I embarked on all the extensive preparations for such a passage. She subsequently vindicated my confidence, in her ability in all conditions and in her ease of handling with small crews. In this era of larger yachts we were, with one exception, the smallest vessel in any congregation of voyagers in the Pacific; but we witnessed many larger vessels held up awaiting crew arrivals from all over. We were also able to make better passages than some of the larger, heavier, boats; and I refer of course to cruising yachts, and not to heavily manned racing yachts returning from ocean events and being pushed hard all the time.

After New Zealand we thought it a good idea to take the opportunity and to sail further into the Pacific for the winter, visiting places inaccessible to all but small craft. In this we could arrange a passage to take as much advantage as possible of favourable winds and currents, to give us

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time to explore these places extensively and at leisure, rather than sailing vast distances under great pressure to see fewer places. This meant confining our activities to a circle formed by N.Z., Tonga, the Hebrides, and the Queensland coast. We did in fact carry free sheets and enjoy favourable sets for the greater part of the long passages around this perimeter.

Our greatest disappointment was our inability to land on Raoul Isd. in the Kermadec group, some 600 nautical miles N.E. of New Zealand. This impressive volcanic rampart, steep to and very rugged, is seldom visited; it is manned by a small group of N.Z. meteorologists, who welcome yachts enthusiastically. On our arrival there the residual seas from a S.E. gale, and the current seas from a strong westerly, were crashing all around the island and made anchoring impossible, let alone landing; this is done by derrick and basket from the cliff overlooking the small boat landing. So we had to be content with a brief circumnavigation before continuing on our way to Tongatapu.

From New Zealand to the Tonga group is a route used by very few ships. A submarine ridge extending between the two causes great variation in depths; this ranges from as deep as 2,700 fathoms to only 12 or 20 fathoms where pinnacles rise towards the surface. The ship would be bowling along quite comfortably in the regular swell for a day or two, and then be thrown about quite startlingly for an hour or so, obviously when passing over or near one of these irregularities. One is also warned of submarine volcanic activity to the southwest of the Tongan group; an island here emerged suddenly from the sea a few years ago, and has the peculiar habit of disappearing and reappearing at odd intervals. I must confess we were a little thoughtful when sailing through this area, and in fact some very severe disturbances took place soon after we had passed through.

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We approached Tongatapu through the reefs from the eastern side and entered ship at Nuku'alofa. The process of entering ship - obtaining port clearance for Health, Customs, Immigration, and Dept. of Agriculture - in foreign ports when coming in by yacht had exercised me for some time. The procedures for commercial shipping, while cumbersome in the amount of paper involved, are routine shipmaster's business; the arrangements are made by agents by radio before the ship arrives, and officialdom usually comes aboard from the pilot vessel. But you don't appoint an agent when cruising a small yacht, so what do you do? The answer is, you fly a large yellow 'Q' flag near the port captain's office until something happens. Sometimes it takes a while; in Nuku'alofa it was two days. We learned we had to break all the rules of pratique by berthing at the main wharf and walking to the Customs Office to report, so that the officer could contact the rest of the brigade; it was then simply a matter of waiting - a popular island pastime - for them to arrive.

In most other places, however, a harbor launch will come alongside upon sighting the yellow flag and give directions. You have to remember that the penalties can be quite severe for not complying with entry procedures, and can even include confiscation of the ship so it pays to be careful even if, after the event, everybody seemed pleasant and helpful. And it is worth trying to arrive in a new port in regular office hours, too, or you will find yourself up for all sorts of overtime payments. Also, don't land at any inhabited islands before entering formally at the major port of entry, no matter how attractive these islands may appear; the inhabitants have a habit of radioing in ahead of you to report these things and we heard of several yachts ordered out of the territory permanently for doing just this. Most of the Pacific island countries now require entry and clearance at all ports within the group, as well as permission to visit any off-lying island. This is a nuisance and wastes a lot of time.

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We encountered only one really bad official, however, at Nieafu in northern Tonga, and that is a story in itself. With tact and a little experience we found we could soon reduce this inconvenience to a minimum and on the whole we had no real trouble. You require the ship's register, passports, and crew lists for initial entry, and Customs declarations and Immigration procedures are carried out on board with the relevant forms supplied by the boarding officers. In Fiji we had to sign a bond for the ship declaring her value and undertaking to have her out of the country within a year or else pay full duty; we had to undertake to participate in no commercial ventures whatsoever; and bond, or affirm sufficient funds for, all hands while in the territory or full fares out if anyone disembarked. All of this is the owner/skipper's responsibility, and yachts take some risks if they pick up casual hands along the way when these hands might decide to skip ship without warning. A declaration by the master that he has access to adequate funds to cover all these contingencies is generally sufficient.

In Tonga it is an offence to work, fish, or swim on Sunday, which is why we were surprised to find we had the whole reef to ourselves on the Sunday after our arrival, when the same reef swarmed with people the day before. It is also an offence to appear in public without a shirt. We thought how there has been in one century a complete reversal of custom; here last century the native people were naked heathens and the Christian interlopers overdressed, particularly for that climate, today the locals seem overdressed but devout Christians while the Europeans bar their skins to the sun and swim on Sundays instead of singing hymns.

Navigation aids are few and far between here and seldom as the charts show them, as they are often altered without notice after repair. When asked about this the locals would

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look surprised and say, 'So what? You can see the light just the same, can't you?'

PEP

A FLASH IN THE PAN

(and thought in the pool)

Cruising brings us together as does no other pastime. Camping or touring by caravan, even in dismal rain, there is always an escape from others. But in a cruising yacht, especially when sitting out a strong wind, we are all in it together, in enforced and, for some of us, at times unlooked for intimacy. Close up, warts and all, the sights can be disconcerting, of stubbly faces or ungroomed femininity. So much more though do the fastidious amongst us find the intimate aromas of close living an uncongenial olfactory confrontation. Charles Gould, a Vancouver neurologist, who made a circumnavigation in a big sloop like "Seevogel" called "Astroyte", gave us this simple hint on how to clear the ship's head of residual smells. All that you need is a box of matches and co-operation from the users. Once you have finished what King Charles the Second called "loving, relaxing letting go" strike a match over the pan and the volatile but unpleasing smells are abolished. Very simple, and much easier and less ostentatious than spraying synthetic roses or pine forests about your boat. And if you are lucky you may see that most rewarding of results - the blue flash - which signals a truly exotic response.

In the Squadron pool, however, keep your head securely closed and send your crew ashore. In all fairness it must be admitted that urine is sterile and there is probably nothing more than an aesthetic objection to urinating in