



Geoff Steer, Jack Dekker and Sovica
Albany to Cyprus
June 14th - October 30th, 1990

OR

Albany to Cyprus, 1990



Albany To Fremantle
17th - 23rd April, 1990

Sovica is all ready for our planned sail to Geraldton. To take advantage of the most favourable time of the year for this voyage it was planned to sail around the Leeuwin in summer and leave the boat in Geraldton until June - a good departure point and hopefully the right time to leave to catch the S.E. Trades.

So, at 6pm on April 17th Jack Dekker, Terry Bridge, David Booth and I left PRSC and motor sailed to Bald Head close hauled. Our first anchorage was at Flinders Bay on the 19th, before rounding the Leeuwin the next morning. This was Terry's 40th rounding of the Leeuwin - and his last! No wind that afternoon so motored, but forecast is gale force N-NW winds.

In fact we finished up 'hove to' in appalling conditions well to the west of Rottnest on the evening of the 22nd, and then headed for Fremantle and the RPYC Annexe.

Arriving at 4am on Monday 23rd.



Sovica about to leave PRSC, April 17th, 1990.



Geoff and Jack Dekker at Boat Lifter's Yard, Fremantle, June 14th, 1990.

This was a terrible trip and we never reached our destination of Geraldton. However, the one redeeming feature was that I gained confidence in Sovica's ability to survive in bad weather. She was then left in a pen at the Boat Lifters (\$30 per week) until June as I had decided to go on with the trip, and Jack Dekker was keen to accompany me.

Fremantle to Cocos
14th - 28th June, 1990

I returned to Fremantle on June 6th and spent the next week getting Sovica ready for the big voyage. Many jobs and many people helping with the necessities - setting up the GPS, swinging the compass, spare belts/filters etc for the engine, stores, fuel etc. Very comfortable in harbour but very bad weather outside. Now feeling quite anxious as departure is getting closer!

Eventually forecast improved, and after customs clearance on 14th June we said our farewells and set sail into freshening S. Westerly - 2 reefs, no:5 jib.

Both Jack and I gradually got accustomed to sea travel, started eating and settled our routine aboard. The weather got warmer and some days mostly motored. 4 days and we were west of Carnarvon, then a bit further north and into the S.E. Trade winds with radio contact with Carnarvon lost as we got 700 N.M. further away from there. No ships, very few birds - just sleep, eat and read.

Saw Cocos airport beacon (lucky for us as they only turn it on when a plane is expected) on June 27th but had to sail under triple reefed main until we could approach in daylight. Both the Navstar and JRC gave accurate readings - a great relief, as so often sun sights are impossible.



Leaving Fremantle 14th June



Early days out of Fremantle -
the ship's stores!

13 ½ days from Fremantle to Direction Island at Cocos. Lovely anchorage, easy access and celebratory drinks. Sleep.

Cocos Island

We anchored 1400 at Direction Island. Contacted quarantine and had celebratory drinks. Next day were granted pratique and made enquiries about water, fuel and stores. Quite a difficult process as no-one lives on Direction Island. However, the officials were all very obliging.

We finished up by spending a week at Cocos - a day (when it rained) washing, cleaning etc with a walk around the island. Very interesting rubble from where the cable station was leveled and the rubble bulldozed to the edge of the reef. Looked rather timorously into the Rip.

We were able to get transport to West Island the next day with John Smith, the Q fellow. Arriving there we went to the Cocos Club, showered and had dinner in the canteen with Yanks from Diego. Slept in a bed in the quarters - delightful. Very leisurely start the next day - shower, breakfast, phoned home reverse charges and spoke to Alison and Lorna. Went on a tour of the island by bicycle, had lunch at canteen and met Al Lynn from Diego. No show of provisioning there. However, he said he'd fly over the Chagos Archipelago about the 16th and look for us and talk on Channel 16. Frantic 2 hours shopping, fuel and water to catch the 3.30 ferry to Home Island. Cash is very difficult, had to use Travellers Cheques. Had to use handcart to get stores etc up to Oceania House. Dinner with Edward and Tracy Clunies Ross visiting from U.K. Very civilized. Played billiards - dead rat on the floor put me off a little. Slept in out back shed.



Getting the stores - from West Island via Home Island to Direction Island



Bike riding on Cocos Island

Breakfast next morning, visited museum and loaded stores onto John Clunies Ross's boat and were taken to Direction Island where we had to dinghy our stores out to Sovica. Edward and Tracy had a cup of tea and we snorkeled in the Rip with the rubber dinghy. More adventurous this time! The coral was all dead, but the fish were magnificent. Only a few days left so varnished, bogged up stanchion and repaired no:3 jib which all had to be done. Jack beach bummed and seemed entirely happy. Plan to leave tomorrow for Salomon Islands 1400 or so miles—? 12 days.



Ho hum on Direction Island



Home Island - Cocos

Cocos Islands have been a delightful stopover but I'm ready to leave. 2 fat maggots on deck but can't find where they came from. Our last day and we prepared for sea. The Port Officer came and cleared us for Seychelles.

A lovely sunny day with light S.E. winds. A leak in a water jerry can was discovered before much water lost, fortunately, as water availability is questionable at Salomon Islands - 1524 N.M. away.

Cocos to Salomons

6th -17th July, 1990

July 6th - Hot sunny weather with light S.E. winds, warm nights and full moon. Settled quickly into routine. Jack does 3 hour watches at night - me 2 hours. Jack sleeps well during the day - me, not so much.

Ditto as for yesterday. Weather very pleasant, decks dry, no oilies and fore hatch open. No:3 poled out and triple reefed main (very neatly reefed at Cocos anchorage). Could carry more main but loathe to disturb reefs. Boat balanced well with this rig, windvane coping well and covering 140 N.M. noon to noon. Fry up for tea - the last sausages, cabbage and potatoes.

The next 4 days very much the same. Covering good distances - 136 to 140 N.M. Marvellous travelling - no:3 jib has been up since Cocos. We tend to be under-canvassed at night as there's nothing worse than foredeck work at night. Routine doesn't change much - finished "Lonesome Dove". Reading fills in the day, but night watches I find difficult - absolutely nothing to see but water and sky.

Although I have seen a thong floating by!

The sixth day saw a big drop in distance travelled - down to 107 N.M., but we seemed to be travelling well. Maybe the current has slacked. Twin headsails no:3 and 4. Saw 3 fishing floats adrift.

Next day much sail adjustment as wind light and fiddley. Saw the starboard light of a ship - the first seen since Geraldton - and the bearing stayed constant. No reply on Channel 16 so - panic, panic, gybed to avoid him.

More ships after this as we are crossing the steamer route Capetown - Sunda Straits. A Japanese ore carrier from Brazil to Japan confirmed our position. Some ships contacted on VHF are quite unaware of us.

On 15th July had a 118 N.M. run, leaving 251 to go. Many mental calculations as to possible arrival times. Much studying of charts, approaches and anchorages. I am very much looking forward to a few days at anchor. I suppose I'm really only a day sailor. Night-watches are a pain, although it's surprising that you can be dozing in the cockpit battling like mad to stay conscious, but as soon as a ship's light appears you

become wide awake. If you contact them on Channel 16 VHF and tell them you are there it's a lot more comfortable.

16th July - A very light wind so motored a lot to keep a schedule that will avoid 'heaving to' to await daylight. To enter the Salomons there is a bank about 90x60 miles where the water goes from 2500 metres to about 11 metres and we have to approach along the edge of this bank. I imagine there could be some very peculiar sets here and in the course of a few hours 'hove to' you could be pushed anywhere.

However, the current must be setting us West as we have to consistently sail about 10° higher than the course to make it. The GPS gives a lot of information.

Sighted Salomon Island on bow 12 N.M. away at 1415 on 17th July and anchored on sandspit between Takamaka and Touquet Islands. 5 other yachts in the lagoon - a beautiful tropical lagoon.



Approaches to Salomon Island
Chagos Archipelago

The Salomons

Spent 8 days here. Coconut palms, yellow sandy beaches, warm wind, hot sun and clear still water. Lorna and Alison would love this, but not the journey to get here! Quite a lot of social activity among the yachts - Garry and Sandra on Lysistrata recognized Sovica from when they were in Albany and we had a great day with them, catching crayfish on the reef (Geoff none, Garry 1 and Francois 9). Francois and Dominique off Oumâ gave us lots of information about anchorages and towns along the Red Sea, but were very gloomy about the Horn of Africa. The RSAYS yawl Ruthean arrived. Terry Bridge, John Brown and I spent a memorable night on this boat in Memory Cove in 1979. The new owner is Craig. We had lessons in surviving on coconuts from Dominique and Francois! Lousie and Chris from Harmony called over to look at the GPS and were very impressed. Lots of communal meals - crayfish and fish mornay, a large coral trout, a fleet dinner aboard Mamelegra. Took chilli and kidney beans. A very interesting night where everyone had to explain themselves and why and how they were at Chagos. During a heavy rain storm we caught about 3 gallons but must get more from Boddam.



Salomon Island



Garry and Sharon from Lysistrata, Tally Ho (Michelle), Richard's boat, Ruthean and Harmony (Chris and Louise) in background.



Yet another day at the Salomons!

Our last day - a great day! A U.S. naval vessel anchored outside the passage and launched Z boats. British I.O.T. (Indian Ocean Territory) customs checked ship's papers and passports etc and left a large box of goodies on beach to be divided amongst the yachts - fresh fruit, vegetables, cheese, butter, eggs and milk.

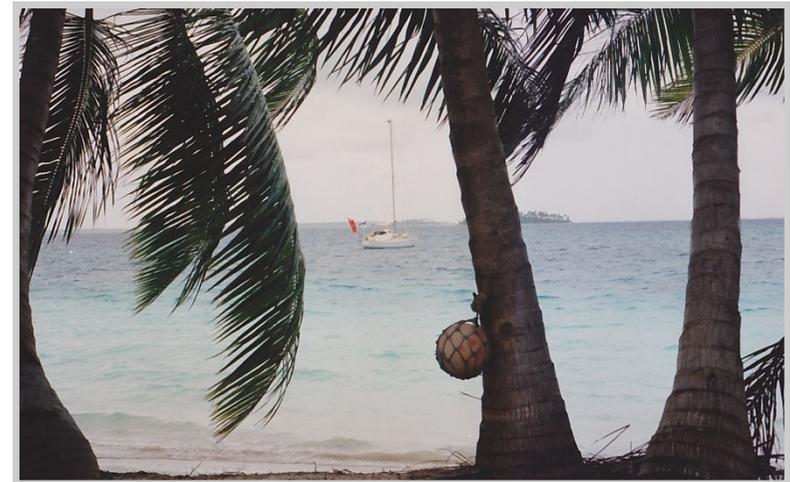


French ruins on Boddam

We went to Boddam Island to get water - very interesting. Quite a lot of old buildings - French style - shingled roofs, old church (1935). Union Jack flying. Back to anchorage where Dominique gave us our share of the goodies - 7 eggs, 1 rockmelon, ½ pineapple, 2 oranges, 2 onions, some butter and cheese, celery and fruit juice. It was very nice to get some fresh fruit.



British Indian Ocean Territories
(B.I.O.T.) troops



Sovica at anchor -
Boddam

Salomons to Seychelles
26th July - 4th August, 1990

26th July - Left Salomons at 1100 with Seychelles bearing 272° 1011N.M. Good weather and hoping for an 8 day passage. Sailed North of Peros Banhos, which is an atoll about 20m in diameter.

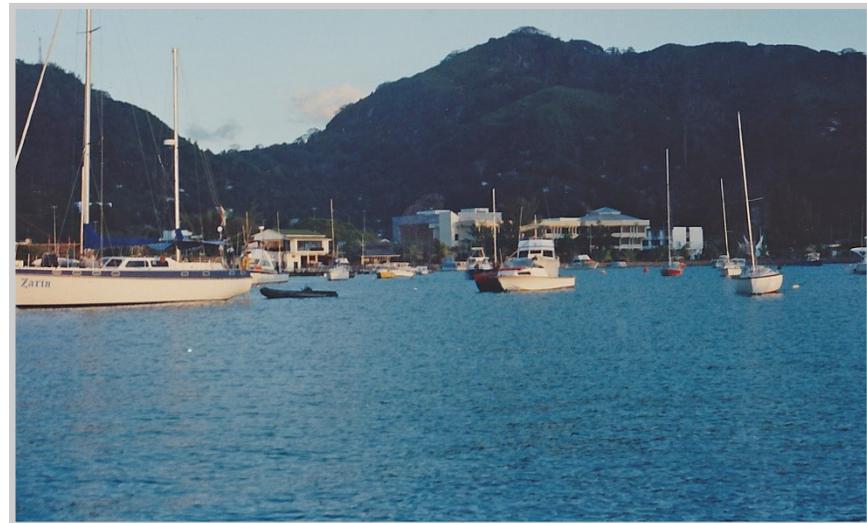
Log reads 'rain squalls rough and rotten', not high winds but very rough sea and continuous black rain squalls coming through. Very wet with everything soggy and am very uneasy. To me, black clouds like that mean wind, but not here. As each black cloud approaches we drop the jib, put the cabin door on and prepare for rough weather. But really, all that happens is that it rains. The Navstar has packed up.

Three more days with rain - everything soggy. Wind variable, so motored a bit and the stern gland is leaking badly. I'm bad tempered and frustrated. There are at least a million things I'd rather be doing than this, but maybe cruising the Mediterranean will make it worthwhile. Maybe through the French Canals to Rotterdam and into a container?

Weather then improved. Good Trade Wind sailing - hot, sunny and light following winds, and everything drying out. It looks like a 'heave to' on Saturday night. A 10 day passage is far too long, and our beer is finished and the potatoes rotten. Sextant sights to check on G.P.S.

August 4th - eventually sighted Mahe Island (3000 feet high) 20 N.M. off at 1600. Too late to get in before dark, so 'hove to' all night in light wind. A northerly set of 1-2 knots. Spaghetti and frankfurts for tea and a bottle of Taylors. A special occasion so Jack cooked 3 tins - as much as we could eat with the leftovers thrown out. Very attractive landfall despite poor visibility. High green islands.

The next day - August 5th - contacted Port Control on V.H.F. and anchored at Victoria light tower. Visited by police re guns and ammunition. Allowed to anchor at Yacht Basin, but not to go ashore until granted pratique, which won't be until tomorrow. At least the boat is still and it's a good anchorage. Many yachts and much coming and going.



Yacht Basin, Port Victoria, Seychelles
Early AM

The Seychelles

Eventually granted pratique - immigration, customs, health - much signing of forms, then went ashore to Yacht Club for cold beers and showers. Collected mail at P.O. - very exciting. Certainly arriving is much better than travelling. A lovely little town - touristy but very unsophisticated. Ate at the Yacht Club and drank some French red. Very pleasant. Phoned home and spoke to Alison - everything fine.



Port Victoria

While here there are plenty of yacht jobs - the outboard, Satnav, stern gland and echo sounder to be fixed. There is talk of it being the wrong time to travel from here - the Horn of Africa being the 4th most dreaded cape - so I thought that maybe a bit more time here wouldn't hurt and suggested to Jack it might be opportune for him to fly to Mauritius/Reunion now instead of from Cyprus. He has now booked, and for 3 weeks, so we can't leave here until 3-4th September. What the Iraqi/Kuwait/Saudi Arabia affair will have to do with the Red Sea will have to be seen.

Jack left on 12th August and I managed to repack the stern gland with much difficulty and high hopes and checked the Navstar - no problems, so must have been connections. However, the outboard continues to give trouble and the dinghy goes flat. This all sounds gloomy but it isn't like that. It is great to be here and socialize with other people.

The Yacht Club crowd are very friendly. Ruthean arrived and we all had dinner at the Chinese Restaurant. Very pleasant.



Seychelles Yacht Club



Jack and Geoff with crew of Ruthean waiting outside the Chinese Restaurant

Did some varnishing - boat is in good nick except for the stern gland.

A visit to La Digue involved first getting a clearance (R 50) from the PO and reporting to the Police Station at La Digue, who keep it until we leave. The Government interference in day to day affairs is preposterous. Andrew from Ruthean sailed with me to hold the tiller whilst I pulled anchor and rigged no:4 and 2 reefs etc for the 5 hour trip to La Digue. Quite rough and a dreadfully roilly anchorage. We went ashore with the Ruthean crowd and Dorothee and her 2 daughters, and hired bikes for a ride around the island - another paradise.

Andrew and I had beers and lunch at La Digue Lodge while the rest are vegos or teetotalers, and we felt quite sinful!

The following day was a Grand Fiesta day - something to do with the celebration of the Immaculate Conception, which apparently happened on a Wednesday some years ago. There were religious ceremonies (R.C.) in the morning and a fête in the afternoon. Reminded me a bit of a Bremer Bay fête. We had lunch at La Digue Lodge and a few games of pool - yes, pool, in paradise.

After collecting clearance from Police Station, Andrew and I sailed to Côte Dor on Praslin Island. Very nice anchorage with classy tourist hotels ashore, but such a contrast with the tiny, limited stocked shops where the locals buy. Had to catch a bus to Police Station at Bay St. Anne to present our clearance from La Digue and will have to repeat this when we leave.

I spent a couple of days here. On one of them I sailed on Ruthean to "the most beautiful beach in the world". A very nice beach, but we have as good around Albany. Very hot, and walked back to Côte Dor through very attractive rain forest with cottages scattered everywhere.



Geoff and crowd from Ruthean cycling on La Digue



La Digue Island

Another day yachts from Victoria Harbour arrived and we had a plan to walk to Coco de Mer forest, but this never eventuated - Ruthean crowd disorganized. We had a grand bash ashore instead. Bus to the other side of the island, with smorgasbord and music. Terrific. Stopping off at a disco on the way home and rather late back on board. Dorothee is a very nice person.

On my last day I had to collect the clearance papers, and Craig and Dorothee coming to collect me, caught me at a very embarrassing moment!

Bus back to Bay St. Anne and return bus was hours later so we walked back to Victoria, where I found Lysistrata had arrived. Craig, Garry, Sharon and I went to P.O. for clearance rubbish and mail. Lorna not happy about trip to Seychelles or Europe, and with a phone call home, Cyprus seemed the best option. A big query over the Byass visit.



Dorothee



Andrew, Garry and Sharon waiting for bus to go bushwalking

Back at Victoria enjoyed the company of Garry and Sharon (good Yanks!) and one day they came with Andrew, Dorothee and I when we climbed Trois Freres to the Cross and over the rainforest to Beau Vallon. Lunch at a pizzeria and bus back to Victoria. A good walk and pretty stuffed afterwards.

Janette and Andrew came on board for tea one night - Janette is vegetarian so stir fried veges, and Andrew and I had pork chops with it. Beautiful sitting in cockpit with a French red.

A big day on the 28th, Ruthean leaves - all crew twittery, Lysistrata leaves - very laid back, Rainbow leaves - very competent. Seemed to spend all day saying goodbye to Ruthean crew! Letters from Lorna and Ian, and phoned home. Spaghetti Bolognese on Encounter - Steve, George, Brian, Rod and Bernie (all S. Africans) and had to work hard to keep up with the conversation.

Spent a housekeeping day, cleaning Sovica and shopping. Still no onions. All Mahe is crying out for onions. A few beers with Steve and Brian on Encounter. Curried pork sausages for tea - no:1, and S. African red - no:1. Have I done the right thing sailing off like this? Most emphatically yes. New experiences/people/places/situations are very interesting and I feel fit and am enjoying it. I do miss home though. Could it be combined? Maybe in the Med.

Harbour is very lonely with Ruthean, Intermezzo, Rainbow and Lysistrata all gone, and I am looking forward to leaving also, especially to get this Horn of Africa thing done.

Spent one day walking the Trois Frere walk with Dorothee - both delightful, and another taking she and her two daughters, Lynn and Anne sailing. A good sail to windward - no:4 jib with 2 reefs - around St. Anne and sheltered behind Cerf Island as Anne was feeling sick. Swam, had lunch, rowed ashore and walked and swam, then drifted downwind with jib only to get back to Pt. Victoria. Tea at Yacht Club. A beautiful day in Paradise. Cruising is really something different. Thanks Alison, thanks Lorna.



McNaughtons sailing on Sovica



Land tortoise Cerf Island - a relative from the Galapagos?

Started preparing for sea. Still no onions. Metho was R20.80 in one shop and R7.50 in another for 500 mls. Letter from Jack - back on Sept. 2nd so shall leave on the 4th. This Iraqi/Saudi business seems to be becoming a war of words.

Steve, Brian and George came for curried sausage stew. S. Africans are a funny lot - very generous but crude.

Preparations continued. Bought more meths and fuel - a long walk with 25 litres of diesel - and a new grease gun. I fixed up the stern gland grease point to at least make it easier to fill with grease if I can't stop it leaking.

Said goodbye to Dorothee, who is off home. More shopping in the following days, enough for the next leg and a great day when the onions and potatoes came. I got in there and pushed and shoved with the rest and managed to obtain enough.

Got information on the Red Sea from Gerhard and Rona, who came south through it this time last year. Most importantly, they thought the Horn of Africa was a very unremarkable bit of water.

After my last creole meal aboard - which seems to be whatever vegetables are cheap curried and tipped over rice, potatoes or fish, I have decided to have a night ashore - my first since Cocos. George drove me to Beau Vallon in Steve's mini and sat around the pool watching the tourists, then dinner before going back to Victoria to see a very violent American film. George drove me back to Beau Vallon, and I went to bed in this famous resort. Very ordinary, about Dog Rock Motel standard for R980 B&B. George afterwards told me that when he got back to his boat it had been ransacked.

Jack arrived back on Sept 2nd and had to organize immigration - a day's wait - water, and last minute fresh vegetables. Dinner at Yacht Club, phoned home and talked to bloody Leo - time to leave!



Geoff and Leo - Seychelles Yacht Club

Seychelles to Aden
4th - 21st September, 1990

September 4th - a day of forms, forms, forms. Immigration, Port Control, Customs. A telegram from Lorna to phone home arrived just before returning to boat - false alarm. It was 3 weeks old. Had to go to inter-island schooner dock for security check, a bloody waste of time, and managed to leave Victoria at 1400. A good S.E., 3 reefs and no:5 jib. Horn of Africa way point 5, 5°·42 East, 12°·05 North, 1024 N.M. Jack cooked tea, 2 tins of anything tipped over far too much spaghetti. After leaving Pt. Victoria we had good runs - 130, 145, 142 N.M., with 20 knot S. Easterly gradually changing to S. Westerly. Crossed the Equator on third night at 0330 and we were both up to watch the G.P.S., but it couldn't handle it! Showed speed at 30 knots and could only get 4 zeros. However, it eventually changed to the Northern latitude.



Crossing the Equator
Latitude 00°00'.000



At sea

We can get the BBC and VOA on short wave in the evenings so we can keep up with the news. Had a day of strong winds, storm jib and 3 reefs and can't make anything other than E. of North - Socotra here we come! At 10.45 decided to go east about Socotra. A black, black day but feel this was the only reasoned decision I could make. The next day there was no wind at all so had to motor. This brought on doubts as to whether our supplies would last, with 569 N.M. from the east end of Socotra to Aden, when 2 days ago we were only 140 N.M. from the Horn. Very gloomy.

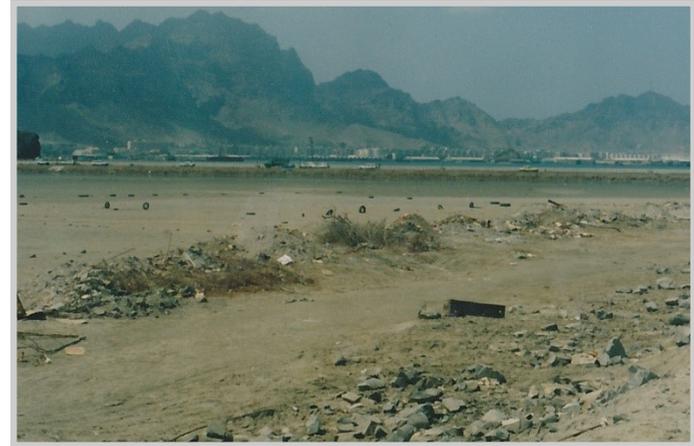
Rounded East end of Socotra into strong S.W. and making a rhumb line course. Sovica is handling the conditions well and it's too rough for pirates. Have 3 reefs and no:5 jib. Passed the longitude of the Horn of Africa. Hot and dry and everything out in the sun to dry. The sun rising and setting is really a merciless disc of burnished copper (?Kipling). Relayed a telegram through a Japanese tanker to Lorna about ETA - had to be by phonetics. Four days of hell - unbearably hot and light flukey winds. 34 N.M. from Aden motoring on last of fuel. The stern gland leak requires 32 pumps every quarter hour. Permanently soaked in sweat day and night. Straw hats a must. At least we don't need oilies. Not enough water for another 24 hours.

However, everything lasted out (with 2 gallons fuel to spare) and we arrived 10 N.M. off Aden about 0100 Friday Sept 21st. No detailed chart but straight forward approach. Customs, Immigration etc were rather hilarious but brief - I was given a chair with 3 legs to sit on. Showers at Seaman's Institute, beer and lunch at Crescent Hotel—faded Colonial grandeur. Phoned home. As we left the hotel the intense heat drove us back inside where we slept in the air-conditioned lounge until about 5 pm before going back to the boat.

Omer A Hamza (a specialist in marine visitors) drove us around the next day to get all our bits and pieces at a very good deal! Aden is a dump - bare rocky hills with rectangular concrete houses stuck here and there. No trees or greenery anywhere. Walking through town is an experience with the women mostly in all black with yashmaks. Because Friday is their religious day not many shops were open but there is a busy business-like air about the place. It seems most things are available.

Omer is going to take our clothes to a laundry. So with clean dry clothes and a freshwater shower our very painful cases of 'gunwhale bum' improved. I had been feeling as if I had been sailing on Tearooms for a week! Managed to get fuel, water and gland packing. So packed the stern gland and think we have the problem solved.

After formalities, we gladly left on Monday, September 24th.



Aden



Aden to Cyprus
24th Sept - 30th Oct, 1990

Sailed and motor sailed from Aden in very light winds for Djibouti. Crossed the Red Sea shipping lane which kept us busy for an hour or two and then no more ships.

Arrived Djibouti 1730 the next day, September 25th. Showers and marvellous dinner at Club Nautique. Immigration and Port clearance, but - disaster. Cash not available on credit card at any bank. May have enough for essentials only. We do what we have to do before midday as everything stops between 12 and 4 because of the heat. We sleep in the club every afternoon, then into town to the markets. All products ever made are here, in contrast to Aden. The boat boys all want to come to Australia. Dinner with the Spaniards. Not a penny left and settled club account with Australian and Seychelles money. Rumour of a terrorist attack on a restaurant and people are very tense about the Middle East crisis.

Left Djibouti 0900 on Friday 28th September - flat broke. As much fuel and water as we can carry 660 N.M. to Port Sudan. A Frenchman has painted us a very gloomy picture of Port Sudan - everything in short supply, no international phone calls.



Djibouti



Motor sailed all day, but good sailing overnight with a good S. Easterly. Entered the Straits of Bab el Mandeb and had to cross the South bound lane. Finally sailed through the Straits, passed Perim Island at 1200 hrs. In the separation zone with the South bound to port and North bound to starboard. Probably highly illegal, but very comfortable.

The next 5 days were windless and suffocatingly hot and humid. Motored during the day with an occasional evening breeze - up to 10 knots from East of North. One day we anchored about midday at Zubair Island. An absolutely desolate ex volcanic island, but clear water and good coral. Almost too warm to swim. Another day we called up a passing ship - the MV Merion Star and they stopped and dropped off 4x20 litre cans which relieved our fuel situation, until we found out 2 days later it was crude oil!

We keep on getting passengers - small birds - joining us for a few hours before they take off again. They seem completely indifferent to us and fly around the cabin and land in my hair.

The G.P.S. is really fantastic as there was an Australian yacht wrecked here recently due to a strong westerly set? Or a lack of G.P.S!

Just made the reefs around Hindi Gidir light but never actually saw the light.

Celebrated with Lorna's 20 year port.



Red Sea



Zubair Island, Red Sea



The lone traveller - mid ocean

After 8 days we anchored at 1000 hrs Friday, October 5th in Port Sudan harbour. No charts for approaches and all the light towers and minarets are confusing from a distance, but we are here.

Absolutely no money and immigration want \$10US per person. Found the bank where Lorna had money sent, but can't get it yet. They want to give it to me in local money. Horrendous bureaucracy getting cleared out of harbour gate. Taken to Police Station - terrifying. Given a chair with 4 legs, but no seat! "Shore Pass" "Shore Pass". Couldn't get back through port gate - no pass. The guards at the gate are young teenagers with big guns, but seemed to like cigarettes, fortunately. One even asked me whether the comic he was reading was in Arabic or English.

No Post Restante, no telegrams or International phone calls and a curfew of the evenings. Police and army everywhere. I was given 10 Sudanese pounds to get across the harbour and back, but it turned out to be £7 to get over and £3 + ½ packet of fags to get back.

We got fuel from Abdul Halim, and eventually I was allowed to have my money in \$US - Port dues in cash, Immigration in a bank cheque and the remainder in Travellers Cheques. A Mr Yousef drove me around to unfindable offices and I gave him a lot of the money! The Port Captain took me around to obtain clearances and we left on Tues, October 9th at 1200. Food very short but will have to do as long as we get away from this horrible country. There are 30,000 Ethiopian refugees slowly starving to death in Port Sudan - women sieving dirt beside the railway line for spilt grain.



Port Sudan

We have light N.W. winds and plenty of shipping and we have to cross the shipping lane on every tack. Weather getting cooler in the evenings and I'm even wearing a jumper at night. Can definitely feel we have the Red Sea mostly behind us and with any luck will get to Suez before the strong N.W. wind settles in.

4 days later and we are anchored at Hurghada. The officialdom is very civilized - not intimidating as in Sudan. Off to the Sheraton for the night. A marvellous shower, meal and relax. The most horrible countryside - just bare hills. Dozens of half built tourist hotels. Spent 3 days touring, provisioning etc. We caught a taxi to Luxor - the first one broke down but another took us for the same price, £13E. Stayed at the Horis Hotel for \$25 B&B for twin room (\$100US = £275E). Did an interesting tour of the Valley of the Kings, and of the Queens and a temple. Then an excellent lunch at Etap before going back to Horis Hotel. Back at Hurghada where we cleaned Sovica's hull of barnacles and slime and with the aid of Mr Handi, got provisioned with diesel, water, food etc. Having an agent makes life much easier and is worth the money.

So Sunday 21st October we started the last leg of the Red Sea to Suez - about 200 N.M. Very light winds so we motored. Shipping everywhere. We hope to avoid the fate of the Frenchman we met in Hurghada, who had such strong N. Westerly winds he had to return to Hurghada.

It fortunately only took us 3 days, mostly motor sailing with one night of strong N. Westerly wind when we had to tack through oil fields. Some of the bright lights turned out to be shipping so we were constantly on the alert. Thank heavens for the G.P.S.



Sheraton Hurghada



Temple at Luxor



Luxor

We motored direct to Pt. Suez on the third day and were met by Mr Ibrahim, a ship's agent, who arranged everything. Anchored next to a floating dock and could watch all the ships streaming out of the canal. A great feeling to be nearing the end.

The next day we moored at the Yacht Club, had showers, shopped and had lunch in town. No mail - only letters addressed in Arabic, are the rest in the bin?! The Canal engineers inspected the boat quite comprehensively.

Another day we went to Cairo by taxi (\$40US for 6am to 6pm). Cairo has 16 million people and they seem to all have cars - absolute bedlam. Went to the museum and saw Tutankhamen Exhibition which was great. Saw the pyramids and sphinx then after lunch back to the boat. A lovely peaceful evening on board. Our last day in Suez was relaxed, with lunch at Red Sea Hotel with Ibrahim as our guest, before we readied ourselves for the pilot at 2am.



Suez Gulf



Cairo



Port Suez

Saturday October 27th found us tagging along behind a slow North bound convoy with the Yanmar flat strap and with a 6-6½ knot speed. The pilot is happy - good speed, good engine. We just hug the port side markers and proceed regardless of North or South bound traffic - very interesting travelling.

Anchored at 1130 at Ishmalia for a change of pilot after giving a present! “£20E very small present, captain, for a no:1 pilot”, so I gave him another £20E. With our new pilot on board we left at 1330 but were left at El Baleah and told to tie up alongside this boat and be ready at 0700 tomorrow.

It has been lovely Autumn weather - cool and foggy with hot dry sun during the day. I have planned to go straight through to Limassol and not stop at Pt. Said because of immigration etc. We'll see!

When we got to Port Said, another present to the second pilot plus cold softdrinks for the boatmen. Pursued out of harbour by police launch complete with siren. They wanted two more crew lists.

Our last leg to Cyprus was motoring until the S.E. set in and gradually freshened. 3 reefs in main was comfortable (6 knots on course) then changed to no:5 jib, and with lighter wind, we entered Sheraton Marina at Limassol at 10am October 30th.



Suez Canal



Sovica sporting Egyptian flag



Cyprus - MADE IT!

Geoff steers a course for his Mediterranean dream

Cruising a yacht around the Mediterranean is unlikely to be a dream peculiar to local optometrist Geoff Steer.

However few fellow dreamers would have an opportunity to turn their fantasies into reality like Mr Steer and local sailor Jack Decker did in June last year.

The pair recently sailed the 32 foot carmen class Sovica from the Princess Royal Sailing Club to Cyprus and will use her to explore the watery heart of Europe next year in the northern summer and spring months.

The skippers who returned to Albany last month, will wait out the European winter in our warmer climate while Sovica waits patiently at her Mediterranean mooring for their return in April.

The pair sailed from Fremantle, the Cocos Keeling, Salaman and Seychelles Islands and finally through the Red Sea to Cyprus in the middle of the Mediterranean sounds very much like something lifted from Homer's Odyssey.

Certainly the two parties were adventuring in similar parts of the world.

However the modern day adventurers were spared many of the terrors contained in the ancient tale and, according to Mr Steer, tackled the four and a half month trek across the Indian Ocean free of any major hitches.

They weathered the uncertain waters through a troubled Middle East, food and fuel shortages and idyllic tropical islands with equal ease.

Being such a small boat the need to stop for fuel and supplies frequently arose, giving adequate excuse to explore the islands, towns and cities which dotted their 7000 nautical mile (14,964 kilometre) route.

On a world map the ocean seems clear but closer inspection reveals numerous beachy outcrops, marking a trail across the ocean from Fremantle to Aden on the tip of South Yemen.

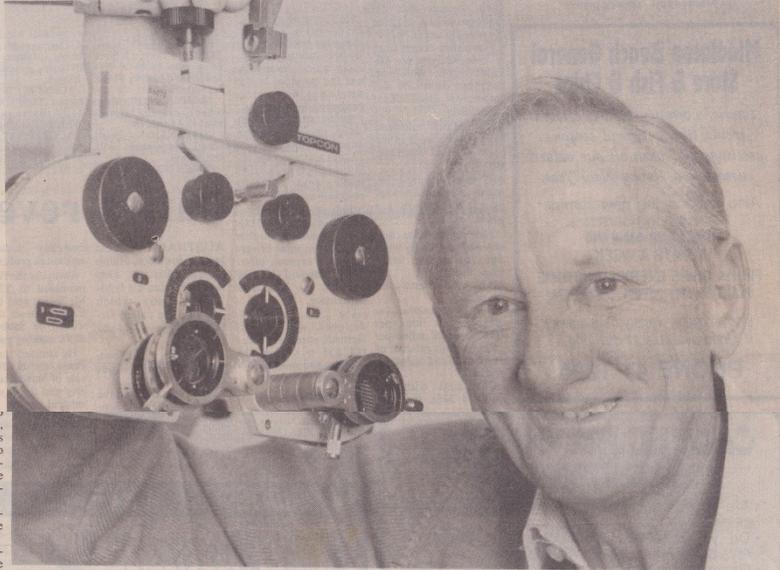
"We visited some beautiful coral atolls in the Indian Ocean," Mr Steer said.

He described several days spent snorkeling on the isolated Cocos Keeling Islands which see few visitors before continuing past the Chagos Archipelago, an American base and not open to touring yachts, and stopping at the Salaman Islands.

"They are the most beautiful, uninhabited tropical islands imaginable."

He said there were five other yachts ashore at the same time but no-one was actually living on the islands.

Like many other islands in the region, this group once housed a copra, or coconut, plantation but the crop is no longer viable and the cultivators have all gone.



Geoff Steer — in Albany to wait out the European winter before returning to Cyprus and a Mediterranean cruise. Picture by BRAD BARBER.



By Eliza Compton

The island was Mauritian settled, something that was evident in the French style ruins dotted about its area.

Sovica moored in the Salamans for 10 days but rapidly encroaching supply shortages pushed her onward once more.

"At one stage when we were very short of fuel we called to a passing ship for fuel. They dropped five 20 litre drums into the water which we picked up."

"We thought our troubles were over until we opened them and found they contained crude oil which was no good to us," he said.

"But it was very kind of them."

Mr Steer and Mr Decker were docked at the much more inhabited Seychelles further north when the Gulf crisis looked like hotting up and cast some doubt as to whether they would continue with their plans to sail through the Red Sea.

After some consideration they decided it seemed as if it was all just talk and carried on.



JACK Decker (left) and Mr Steer aboard Sovica.

One problem was that the steady breezes which had followed them for most of the passage across the Indian Ocean dropped off sharply when they entered the Gulf of Aden, just below Saudi Arabia, making motoring necessary.

The extra use of the engine used up more fuel than they had expected.

Their first contact with mainland since leaving Fremantle saw them dock at Aden, which was 'incredibly hot', for fuel, food and water.

Mr Steer said the opening to the Red Sea was full of Iraqi tankers but none appeared to be unloading.

He said it was hard to find any information locally about the state of play in Kuwait but they were

able to pick up Voice of America and the BBC broadcasts on the radio late at night.

They then crossed the mouth to Djibouti, a small African province surrounded by Ethiopia but also subject to a strong French influence not yet shaken off by its new-found independence.

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Mr Steer said the double standards they found there were hard to take.

"We had a great French dinner at the yacht club but you walk out the door to see people sleeping in the streets."

Challenged

Upon entering the Red Sea Sovica was challenged by war ships who were checking every vessel to make sure none were breaking the embargo on Iraq.

"I think they were convinced we were too

small to be supplying Iraq," Mr Steer said.

They continued up the Red Sea past Port Sudan and a short supply stop and then on to Hurgada, where they left the boat, and further to Cairo.

"We had been looking forward to Egypt because it's a bit more civilised. Aden and Djibouti are poorly run and going backwards."

Their route to Cairo included a stop at the tourist swamped Valley of the Kings and passage through the rich country around The Nile.

He said the Gulf of Su-

ez where they left the boat was 'cramped full' of oil rigs and supply vessels which made navigation quite difficult.

Navigation

Navigation in the Egyptian capital also proved a test.

Cairo was ghastly. There are about 16 million people and I think every one had a car," he said.

However they managed to take in the 'marvellous' Cairo Museum which houses artifacts such as mummies left

from an ancient past and overshadowed sights like the pyramids and The Sphinx.

"(They) look just like they do in pictures," he said without much enthusiasm.

This left them with just the final leg of the narrow Suez Canal to be negotiated before reaching the wider waters of the Mediterranean Sea.

The yacht was provided with a pilot to aid it through the thoroughfare and ensure it didn't interfere with larger shipping during the two-day passage.

Once at Limassol in

Cyprus Sovica, now slightly worse for wear, and covered in weeds and barnacle growth was slipped and painted having performed the first part of her job with aplomb.

Weather

"We never had any very anxious moments. There were times when we wished we had different weather but there was never anything that caused us real problems," Mr Steer said.

"We never felt we would have been better in a bigger boat."