

**A L D E B A R A N**  
**Marquises, French Polynesia** (26<sup>th</sup> report)

**After sailing 2,971 miles in 22 days 50 minutes it was with a great sense of achievement when we dropped anchor at Fatu-Hiva in French Polynesia on Friday 27<sup>th</sup> April 2001.**

**Fatu Hiva**, the most southern of the Marqueses group of islands, is not a place of entry to French Polynesia and boats should officially check in at Atuona on Hiva-Oa before visiting this island. However the passage back from Hiva-Oa to Fatu-Hiva a distance of 35 miles is normally upwind and can be very rough and so most cruisers take a chance by visiting Fatu-Hiva first. The gendarmerie do not seem to mind you stopping there for 3 or four days before checking in at Atuona. It was 10 days after our arrival that we eventually checked in, without any problem, having visited a second island Tahuata on route to Hiva-Oa.

Baie Hanavave, “strong surf bay” in Marquesan, was where we anchored off the village of Hanavave, (posn. 10-28’ south & 138-40’ west). Another name for the bay is Baie de Vierges meaning the Bay of Virgins. It is said that the bay was originally called “Bay des Verges” translated as “Bay of the Phalli” by early explorers because of the penile shape of the island’s rocky pillar peaks. However the missionaries disapproved, and inserted an “i” making it “Bay des Vierges” or “Bay of the Virgins”. Landing at the rough stone slipway called for good timing between the some times large waves. Getting wet was par for the course. Once ashore, and from the beginning, the warm welcome from the inhabitants was most evident. The village is small with a small store and bakery. Bread has to be ordered the day before, make sure he writes your boat name down otherwise he could (does) forget. On entering the store we experienced our first taste of Marquesan hospitality when we were given gifts of fruit. This form of hospitality we were to experience throughout the islands. Trading with jewellery, lipstick, etc was the main means of purchasing local products. The downside of the village was the fact that it was “dry”, no alcohol, unlike the main village Omoa, about four miles south. Anyway, as they say “tis an ill wind that does not blow some good” and so alcohol became a very good bargaining currency. We traded a IR£3 (US\$3.50) bottle of rum for a IR£30 beautiful carved wooden “tiki. Rifle shells (.22) were much in demand for hunting the many wild pigs on the island; the French authorities only allow a licensed rifle holder one box of shells per year. An American boat we knew, having been here a few years earlier, brought a good supply of shells with him and had great trading success. Throughout French Polynesia we found the French held all the important positions and thus had complete control over the native population.

**Captain Cook** visited the islands in 1774 when they had a population of 100,000. By 1901 as a result of disease, and disasters brought by the early European and American sailors and missionaries the native population was reduced to 3,500 confused, hostile and apathetic people. Reading the many vile historical accounts of these 100 or so years is very sad and the American and European nations involved should hang their heads in shame. The natives were forbidden to use their language (where have we heard that before), practice their customs, engage in traditional crafts and were forced to conform to western customs and civilisation, shame, shame ,shame.

Our recuperation after the 3,000-mile crossing was greatly speeded up by the much socialising among the other trans-ocean yachts, and having our first experience of a traditional meal. The meal, costing about IR£10 in a local house, consisted of pork, chicken, fish, a large variety of local vegetables and fruit including breadfruit, mangos, coconuts, cashew nut, bananas etc and washed down with local fruit juices.

We hiked for about two hours through lush valleys covered with all the local fruits to a spectacular 200 ft. waterfall. Of course on the way we got lost and spent an additional hour in a neighbouring valley, which gave us an even better appreciation of the beauty of the island.

### **A terrifying sea journey:**

Our most memorable visit to Fati Hiva was the day six of us “yachties” took a trip to the neighbouring village of OMOA with a local couple in their outrigger canoe. The canoe, with its outboard engine, was totally overloaded leaving very little freeboard, bailing was a continuous activity. I was far more terrified on that short four-mile voyage than at any time on the 3,000-mile ocean crossing. The route chosen by Bruno, our skipper, was close to shore rather than staying offshore a little. High steep cliffs, producing a backwash, eliminated any possibility of a safe landing in the event of an emergency. Safety equipment aboard was non-existent, no radio, no flares and no lifejackets and to crown it all, the engine developed a “bad cough” and at times seemed to want to rest. Arriving at OMOA the surf was too big to attempt a beach landing with the loaded canoe. Nearby was a stone jetty, again with a big swell pushing along it, and it was here that our skipper decided to land us. Of course the canoe was far too overloaded for safe manoeuvring and so Olivia together with Roger and Pam from “Cap D’Or” were offloaded to a nearby small moored boat. Bruno then brought the canoe as close as was possible to the jetty, remember the outrigger was on the port side with its two supporting crossbeams extending about three feet out on the starboard side and so bringing the main body of the canoe alongside the jetty was impossible, the closest it could get of course was three feet. Being selected, I do not know how, as the guinea pig I was instructed to jump for the jetty on command. Bruno watching the wave pattern eventually brought the canoe as close as he dared and gave me the command to jump. There was no time for hesitation and so jump I did landing on all fours as planned, not knowing if the jetty was slippery I felt a four point landing was perhaps the safest, the touchdown was perfect. On Bruno’s next approach and with me able to give a helping hand Ken and Wendy from “Someday is Here” landed safely. The canoe then collected Olivia, Roger and Pam and they in turn eventually landed safely, although a hesitation by one resulted in an extra approach. Bruno and his wife then made a successful beach landing.

The three hours spent walking the village was most rewarding for the beautiful way it was kept. Houses were very neat and tidy with flowerpots everywhere and the streets adorned with a magnificent array of flowering bushes and trees. AND YES FOR LUNCH WE WERE ABLE TO BUY A BEER. The embarking for the return journey was completed in the reverse order to the disembarking, but made easier by a reduction in the swell. Before embarking we watched Bruno and his wife with the help of locals re-launch their canoe from the beach. Bruno and his wife sat in the canoe, with the outboard in neutral, and three locals holding it on either side. At the correct moment they pushed it out and Bruno engaged the outboard. It was a difficult task carried out with perfect timing. Our journey back along the coast was no more comforting. If you ever go to Fatu Hiva the canoe used will be easily identified by the indents in the gunwales (top edges) made by my fingernails.

### **Hive Oa and checking into French Polynesia:**

From Fatu Hiva we sailed 43 miles to the island of Tahuata and anchored in Baie Hanatefau, (09-58’S & 139-07’W) on our own. Yes, believe it or not, this was the first time in over six months that we had no other boat near us. Olivia prepared a lovely meal, which we washed down with a bottle of wine under a star-studded sky. It was a truly romantic setting. After another two nights in Baie Hanamoena, 4 miles north, we motor sailed eastwards against the prevailing winds through the Canal du Bordelais to Baie Tahauku on Hiva Oa, a distance of 9 miles. The anchorage behind the breakwater and off the small dock and fuel station is subject to swell and as such is not the most comfortable. In addition the head of the small bay is reported to be home to a large shark population and thus swimming is off the daily exercise curriculum. Other negative points are that dinghy landing at the dock is not the easiest and the town, Atuona population 1,500, is about 3 miles away. However a positive aspect is the showering and cloth washing (d.i.y.) facility on the dockside. As the fuel station on the dock is the only one on the island there is always a steady flow of traffic to and from the town and hitching a lift is not a problem. There are also some nice walks to various sights of interest in the area.

The checking in with the gendarmerie, for citizens of the European Union, was very straightforward with no charge, however other nationalities had to take out a bond costing about US\$800 each which

entailed a lot of bank work. Our passports were stamped for the allowable 3-month stay, which at the time seemed more than adequate, more about this later. The gendarmerie did not even request to see our clearance paper from the Galapagos and to avoid any problems we said we had only just arrived in French Polynesia although we had arrived ten days earlier. Off the many boats we know, nobody has had a problem checking in.

**Irish Melody**, an American boat, with Dave & Linda Allen proposed a musical evening on the dockside. The ten or so boats in the anchorage were invited to participate and contribute. The result was an excellent evening's entertainment centred round Dave with his fiddle. Additional instruments included mandolin, violin, guitar, flute and bodhran. Songs, mostly out of tune, jokes and recitations etc from the many nationalities present resulted in a most memorable evening.

We stayed in Hiva Oa for four days returning to our previous anchorage on Tahuata on Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> May.

**Ua Pou** a diamond shaped island 66 miles to the northwest was our next destination and so at 0340 hours on Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> May we set sail and at 1615 we anchored fore and aft behind the breakwater in Baie D'Hakanau, (09-21.54'S & 140-02.83'W). The island is about 10 miles long and 7 miles wide with a spectacular serrated skyline. It has countless soaring mountain spires, the highest being Oave, a volcanic peak reaching 1,200 metres (4,000ft). With it's many small stores, two bakeries, and snack bars we fell in love with the village of Hakahau. The locals plied us with fruit and hospitality. With showering, open air, washing facilities and easy dinghy landing on the very excellent pier we would rate it a must if cruising in the area. The members of the canoe club on the beach are very friendly and put on a traditional meal for us. We watched them practising for hours in their single and six man canoes for the big forthcoming regatta in Tahiti during the Bastille Day celebrations round the 14<sup>th</sup> July. We liked this island so much that we returned later after our visit to the main island of Nuka Hiva.

**Nuka Hiva** the principal island of the Marqueses lies 27 miles north of Ua Pou and on anchoring in Baie Taiohae on 15<sup>th</sup> May we met up with our long time cruising companions, Malcolm, Helen and Laura Shaft in their 33ft steel boat MUNA, we first met back in Bayona, Northern Spain in September 1999. We had not seen them since departing the Galapagos together on 5<sup>th</sup> April. On their second day out they lost the use of their engine due to a leaking water pump and on arrival in the Marqueses headed directly here, because it is an easy anchorage to enter under sail and where they met another boat who had procured a new pump for them. Needless to say a celebration drink was called for. Together we spent 16 days circumnavigating the island and visiting many beautiful bays on route. Taiohae the main town is the largest in the Marqueses. It lies in the open remains of a volcanic crater with the caldera walls surrounding the town. There are good stores, a hardware store where you can get butane/propane gas, and a fuel dock. Taiohae Bay is where in 1842 23-year old Herman Melville jumped a whaling ship and spent a number of years living with the natives. He married Fayaway, the chief's daughter and partook in the tribe's religious and cultural ceremonies. He was not however allowed to partake in cannibal feasts. His book "Typee" is essential reading for anybody interested in the history of the area. He warned of the inevitable extinction of the harmonious society of the area at the oppressive hands of European and American political and religious interests.

"They will turn this Valley of Life into a Valley of Death". "Among the islands of Polynesia, no sooner are the images overturned, the temples demolished, and the idolaters converted into *nominal* Christians, then disease, vice and premature death make their appearance. The depopulated land is then recruited from the rapacious hordes of enlightened individuals who settle themselves within its borders and clamorously announce the progress of the Truth".

**From Baie Taiohae** we sailed in an anti-clockwise direction to Baie du Controleur where we attended mass in the village of Hooumi together with the Muna crew. Going ashore in the dinghy we were totally soaked when caught by large waves on beaching. We were so wet that we stood under a hosepipe and showered fully clothed. It was five very wet looking *churchgoers* that arrived for mass. The church was a small wooden structure with seating for about 60, all of which were occupied by the time mass started. After a few standing and sitting sessions I observed a large pool of water at my feet. Luckily I was seated at a window and by using and wringing my socks out the window managed to clean and dry the floor. The singing during the ceremony was superb, even though we could not understand a word, it was all in a mixture of French and Marquesan.

### A friendly piglet:

After mass we were warmly welcomed by the congregation and invited by one family to visit their home and “view” their selection of traditional crafts. The homes are of an open plan design, very clean with flimsy partitions. While sitting on the doorstep about six very small piglets came to me and one in particular enjoyed the attention I gave him. He rolled on his back and enjoyed much scratching of his belly. Every time I stopped he would nudge my hand indicating he wanted more. I hope he was unaware of his eventual fate. While I was playing with the piglets and of course with the dogs and cats the remainder of the party were perusing the craft ware. Some small items were bought and both parties were satisfied. Before leaving we were given gifts of fruit including breadfruit, bananas, limes and mangos etc. They really are a very friendly people.

Moving into the neighbouring Baie Hakahaa we went ashore at Taipivai village and walked for about 15 minutes along the road and a further 30 minutes through the forest to an important archaeological site, Paeke, which has the best large tikis, stone carvings, we have seen and a large maeae measuring 170m by 25m, (ceremonial platform made from huge basalt blocks which were used only by priests and chieftains for worship, burials and sometimes human sacrifices). On the way to the site it started raining and continued for the remainder of the day and so it was five very wet sailors, we were wearing shorts and tee shirt, that arrived back at their boats, and so the day ended with hot whiskeys, made from Jameson of course.

**Baie d’Anaho** on Nuka Hiva’s north coast was our next anchorage and without doubt our nicest on the island. It had all the ingredients required, good shelter, palm trees, a good beach, good snorkelling with sharks, isolation save for a few natives, and fresh water on the shore. The nearest village was Hatiheu about a two-hour hike across Teavaimaoaoa Pass (try pronouncing that) taking in magnificent views on route. Arriving in the village with Malcolm and Helen, Olivia wisely decided to stay on the boat, we sought directions to the three “*nearby*” archaeological sites. Getting the directions wrong we walked for about 3 miles under a blazing sun before stopping a truck, the only vehicle we met on the road, and discovering our mistake, exactly who’s mistake is open to argument. The truck very kindly gave us a lift back and up to the site about ½ mile from the village. At this point I decided I had seen enough such relics and vowed not to waste energy visiting any more. We stayed a week in Baie d’Anaho before continuing in the anti-clockwise direction along the north coast, past the airport and down the west coast to Baie Taioa on the southwest corner.

Daniel’s Bay (Ansa Hakatea on the charts) is one of the two inlets in Baie Taioa and is famous because of the hospitality shown to sailors by Daniel and his wife over the past fifty years. Due to age and ill health they no longer provide meals. When we visited, his wife had a “very very” bad leg infection which coloured the leg black and was badly swollen. We gave her antibiotics, which were very much appreciated and in return were given an abundance of pamplemousse a large and very nice grapefruit like fruit. They also claim to have the best drinking water on the island and supply it willingly. Huge sheer cliffs surround the bay, which after heavy rain produces a multitude of waterfalls. A very short dinghy ride round the small rocky headland to the west, still within the bay, and by continuing

along the rocks on your starboard side you can enter the river which takes you to the village of Hakau, there are no facilities or provisions here. The river entrance is not for the faint hearted and neither is landing on the beach which is even more froth with danger. Once ashore the 2 1/2-hour walk through the valley, passing many ancient sites and tikis, to Vaipo waterfall, with its 610m (2,000 ft) narrow cascade to the valley floor is well worth the effort. Good footwear, because it can be very slippery, and lots of water are essential. For the adventurous, on reaching the adjacent pool, a climb over and through holes in the rocks allows you to swim to the base of the waterfall passing a large cavern on the right, but be warned the water is very cold and deep. This is the only way you can reach the base of the waterfall.

Our circumnavigation of Nuka Hiva was complete when we returned to Taiohae on Wed. 30<sup>th</sup> May. After purchasing more fresh produce and provisions we sailed back to Ua Poo on Friday 1<sup>st</sup> June.

### **Found lost oar:**

On anchoring Olivia noticed what looked like the dinghy oar we lost here two weeks ago being used by some children in an inflatable. I went over and they immediately gave it to me, it had been found washed up on the beach two days previously. As a reward we gave the children cokes and sweets and a wallet to the one who gave me the oar. Everybody was happy with the outcome, especially us as obtaining a suitable replacement out here would be nigh too impossible.

### **A terrifying welcome dance:**

Shortly after this our second landing in Ua Poo we were invited with about ten other “sea travellers” to a dance exhibition in a local school. The 12 boys performing were from about age 14 up. This was just a spur of the moment performance especially for us. Since arriving in the Marqueses we have seen dance troops of varying standards but the effort and feeling these boys put into their performance was truly outstanding. They would ask three of us our names and then proceed to perform what they called “a welcome dance”. Well, if I had arrived here maybe 150 years ago and was welcomed by this particular dance I would begin to wonder whether the welcome was for my arrival or the arrival of the ingredients for a feast. The shouting, erotic arm and leg movements in unison with the drums would certainly have unnerved me then. After all twelve of us had our names included in the “welcome” dance they moved on to other routines. The teacher explained the boys were one of the best traditional dance troops in the islands, this we can believe. The 45-minute performance cost us the price of a bottle of coke for each of the boys, truly worth it.

The following day, Saturday, I, together with Malcolm, Laura and Terry from STELLA assisted Julius on ARGONAUTA to fit a new forestay. You may remember the saga when it broke as described in our Pacific Crossing report. Being able to come alongside the pier in Uo Poo provided a good working platform for the task. That evening, together with Malcolm and Helen, we had a nice simple meal at Juliette’s Snack Bar. With a beer each and a bottle of water between us the total bill, for the four of us, came to 5,300 polynesian francs or about IR£35 (US\$40).

**Sun 3<sup>rd</sup> June** saw us up early, as usual. We went to the 0800 hours mass together with Malcolm from MUNA and Sally from ARGONAUTA. It was a packed congregation with great choir singing. Most of the ladies wore flower garlands on their heads. It was also first communion and confirmation day resulting in a two-hour ceremony. The complete mass was conducted in a mixture of French and Polynesian.

The remainder of the day was spent completing the forestay replacement and re-hoisting the furling unit on ARGONAUTA.

We discovered a problem with our vhf radio it has a very short range. The problem may be at the masthead. We may have to use our emergency aerial.

**Olivia sick:**

Olivia suddenly got very sick, shivering, with pains in all her joints especially round the groin, I had to give her a blanket to keep warm despite the temperature being 30 degrees.

**Mon 4<sup>th</sup>:**

Olivia had a very bad night and vomited a lot. Mosquito and “NoNo” bites on her legs and body have been festering badly for the past few days.

I went ashore to the dock and bought some fruit and arranged a lift for Olivia to the doctor. All the symptoms pointed to Dengue fever, she has a fever and still with pains in her joints. We saw a Nurse at the Medical Centre who diagnosed the problem as coming from the infected bites. He was very nice, gave her antibiotics and additional pills for the fever assuring her that she would be all right in a few days.

On arrival back on the boat at 0830 hrs she went to bed and slept until 1345 hrs.

I worked again on the vhf radio without success. For three hours in the afternoon I sorted out the charts for the next phase of our journey to the Tuamotos and Tahiti

Olivia, I am pleased to say is much improved and insisted on cooking omletes for dinner.

**Tue 5<sup>th</sup> :**

Olivia had another bad night. We had lots of wind blowing through the anchorage during the night. A catamaran without an engine dragged her anchor just after daybreak and everybody helped in re-anchoring her. I went ashore with Malcolm and got some groceries, fishing lures and hooks. Olivia was feeling better although her left leg/ankle is very red and swollen. I brought her ashore for a shower in the afternoon.

**Wed 6<sup>th</sup>:**

Olivia had yet another bad night, her left ankle is badly swollen and very inflamed. We went back to the clinic and saw the doctor who confirmed that it was as a result of the infected bites. He gave her a course of three different tablets and requested her to come back on Friday. If there was no improvement she would have to have an injection and blood test. In the meantime she was to rest and keep the leg up. Having walked to the clinic they organised a lift back and agreed to collect her at 0800 hrs on Friday.

**Thur. 7<sup>th</sup>:**

Olivia had a better night's sleep and the swelling and inflammation on her ankle appears to have subsided.

The anchorage here is very full with 15 boats, a boat came in yesterday, could not get room and left.

**Friday 8<sup>th</sup> :**

A third visit to the clinic confirmed that the inflammation was going down but Olivia was to continue the course of tablets. The three visits to the clinic, the various tablets and dressings were all FREE. So to the VHI (Voluntary Health Insurance) relax we will not be claiming, but we much appreciate and indeed are comforted in having you on standby in the event of a serious ailment or accident.

**Sad to leave:**

Sun 10<sup>th</sup> June being our last day in Ua Poo, and the Marqueses, was celebrated at the canoe club with a traditional feast complete with all the trimmings inc. a pig cooked in the traditional earthen oven.

The following morning we readied ALDEBARAN for sea and at 0750 hours, together with MUNA, we lifted our anchor and began the 500-mile passage to the Tuamotus. Our next report will include details of the passage and our cruising among the Tuamotus, a group of coral atolls.

**Keep up your e-mails to, we love to get even the smallest bit of news or better still “gossip”.**

**Pat and Olivia Murphy,  
yacht ALDEBARAN,  
July 2001, Pacific Ocean**