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SECOND CHANCE



Maurice and Maralyn Bailey

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*To Bill Tilman,
who first inspired us and
then actively encouraged us*

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sustained variety on an ocean voyage. *Auralyn* was provisioned on the basis of frugal sufficiency. Our meals, though far from large, seemed adequate, since no one starved or suffered any dietary deficiency, and we had a long way to go before we reached the abysmal level at which millions in the "third world" subsist. No one had reason for complaint, except possibly the monotony of the menus, even with the variety of Marks & Spencer canned foods, and the lack of fresh produce. As it was, we met the necessary requirements and resigned ourselves to the philosophy that at sea it was better to "eat to live" rather than to "live to eat." Certainly the combined effect of our outdoor life and our diet improved our appearance; unwanted fat and protuberant paunches disappeared. To compensate for the lack of variety and to help boost our morale on bad days, we organized periodic galley stratagems where we cooked "treats." In addition to her suet dumplings, June baked delicious spongecakes. Maralyn also made cakes, but she used the pressure cooker. Substitute bread, which Maralyn called "scone bread," with jam was extremely popular in the afternoon. Another substitute for bread, or at least fried bread, which enlivened many of our fried meals was *beignets*. Sometimes when curry was prepared we cooked *chapattis*, or unleavened bread, in the frying pan. Fritters, pancakes, and drop scones were all popular whenever they took our fancy. We had a great success with American doughnuts, but because of the boat's motion, they had to be cooked in shallow fat. The prize for our overall favorite treat goes to *empanadas*, both sweet and savory. Again we fried the pastry in shallow fat, and instead of basting, we turned them frequently.

A healthy 10-knot wind remained with us for three days, then became light and variable. Our daily runs decreased steadily as we approached the doldrums. On April 12 we saw oil rigs off the coast of Ecuador and two days later sighted the precipitous Isla La Plata, lying 13 miles off the shore about 70 miles south of the Equator. The island, 20 miles long and a mile wide, pointed out to sea like a knarled brown finger, its 600-foot pointed summit the knuckle. Because of the light winds Isla La Plata stayed with us for a long time, and late in the afternoon we caught a faint glimpse of the mainland coast beyond. After dark we saw noth-



The Bosun on her daily inspection of sails and rigging at sea. Colin Foshett

ing of the island's flashing light, and by morning it had disappeared. Our general course was north, and even in variable winds we sailed with eased sheets under fore-and-aft rig.

Our crossing of the Equator the following day was marked by the malfunction of the electronic log. It began to underread again as it had done in the Atlantic. After we checked over all the electrical connections, we began to think about the effect of the weed growing on the bottom of the boat. No weed built up on the impeller since we extracted it regularly for cleaning, but later, after we scrubbed the bottom in Panamá, we checked the log's readings over a measured distance in the canal and found that it recorded accurately. Apparently our foul bottom had affected the accuracy of the instrument.

We were ghosting along in light air with the mainsail, mizzen, and largest genoa when we crossed the Equator at 1100 hours in

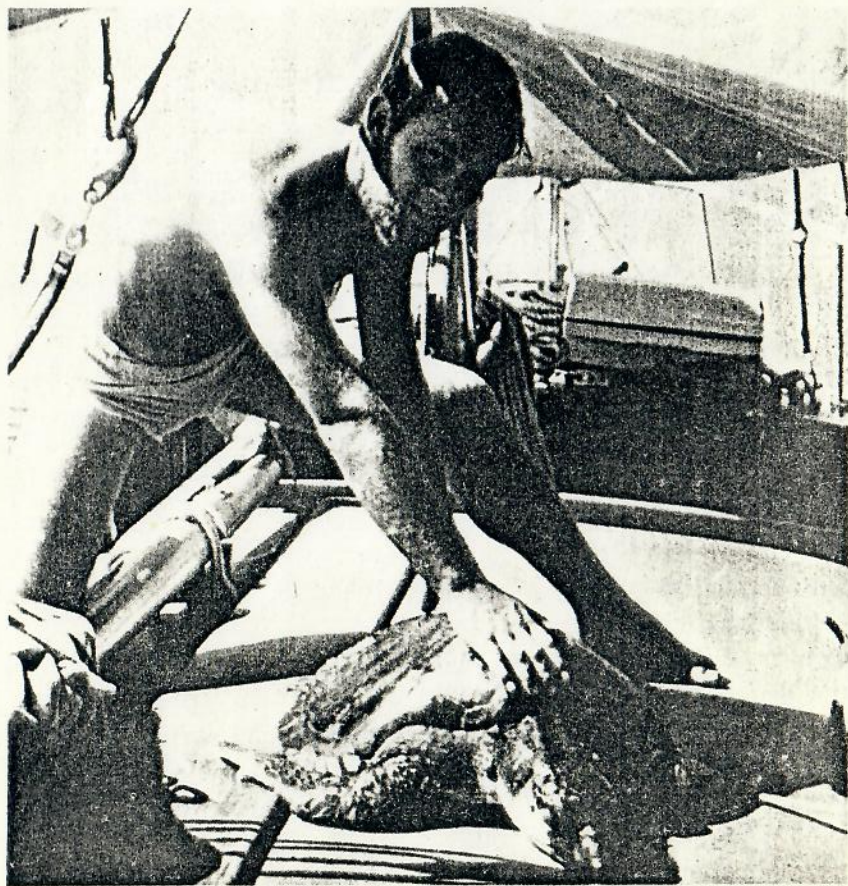
81°00' west. The only thing to mark the occasion was the passing of a large ship, the *Ahrensburg*, a Dôle fruit carrier, close by on a reciprocal course to our own. Twenty-four hours later we were on the same latitude, 01°30' north, as we had been when we lost the first *Auralyn* a little more than three years ago, but now we were 240 miles farther east of the disaster spot. For Maralyn and me it was a sad nostalgic moment. Yet, in a way, we could never regret the experience. Arduous and terrifying as it was, our 117 days in a life raft, living at a subsistence level more like creatures of the sea than human beings, had been a unique awakening.

At this time there were, as we had anticipated, long frustrating periods of absolute calm. As the *Auralyn* sat motionless, hardly affected by the slight swell, we sweltered in the oppressive tropical heat. Frequently we swilled the decks with sea water to keep them cool, and the rapid evaporation of the water left a thick rimelike crust of salt everywhere. The cabin temperature soared to 31 degrees Celsius at noon, and during the hot, close night hours it never dropped below 25 degrees. We began to use the engine each day to help us out of the calms.

In the flat, glassy sea we saw the stationary bulbous hummocks of large turtles all around us, their dark shells looking like rounded above-water rocks. During one hour of his watch Colin counted twenty-two turtles in his immediate vicinity. Booby birds sometimes resting on the backs of the turtles presented an amusing picture of absurd equanimity. We felt pity for the turtle, so vulnerable to all kinds of predators. It has always amazed me that the turtles (and other testudines, for that matter) have survived the evolutionary process. They have changed little in form or habit since the Cretaceous period, yet at every stage in their life cycle, from eggs to hatchlings to adults, the turtle is assailable and perishes in great numbers. Nevertheless, they endure their predators and the species continue. Such is the natural balance of life—until man disturbs it. Some species of turtle are now endangered because of man, who steals the eggs in prodigious quantities, decimates vast numbers of turtles at sea, and, probably the most alarming of all, turns the nesting beaches into concrete jungles.

Although she had seen many turtles of different species during

her time adrift—indeed, the turtles we caught had been one of our main sources of food—Maralyn suggested we take the opportunity to examine them closely. We inflated the Redseal and I rowed Maralyn and June over to the nearest turtle. The reptile was oblivious to our presence, and as we paused alongside Maralyn reached down and caught hold of one of its front flippers. The turtles' hearing is not well developed, as they possess no external ear to collect auditory stimuli, but they are sensitive to the touch. Maralyn's action brought an instant response from the frightened creature. Its frenzied efforts to escape created a violent upheaval

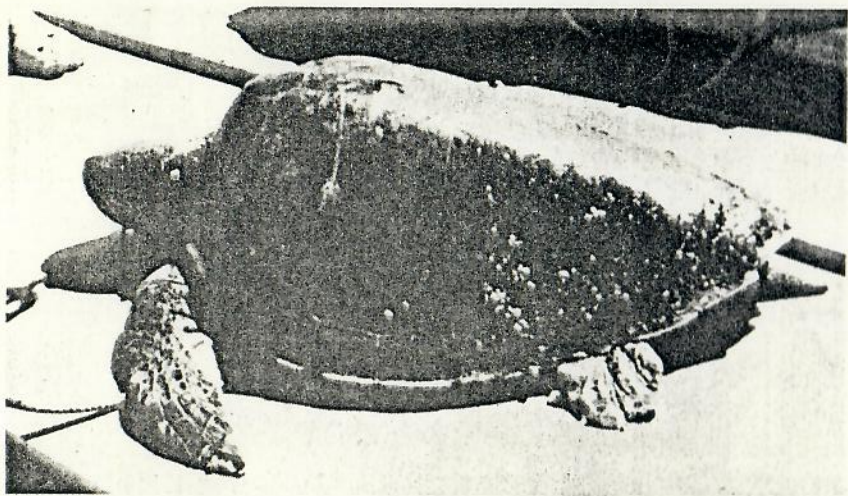


Colin with our loggerhead turtle.

June Foskett

as its three unrestrained limbs thrashed the surface of the sea. I went forward to help Maralyn and caught one of its hind flippers. Together we lifted the turtle, weighing possibly 200 pounds, with relative ease over the side tube of the dinghy. The little effort we had expended showed just how weak we must have been during some of our time in the life raft.

In the place of teeth, turtles have a horny beak, like birds, on the upper and lower jaws, and we had to keep our legs and feet out of reach of our captive's vicious snapping jaws. The reptile's jaws found the rubber plug of the valve on the center thwart and,



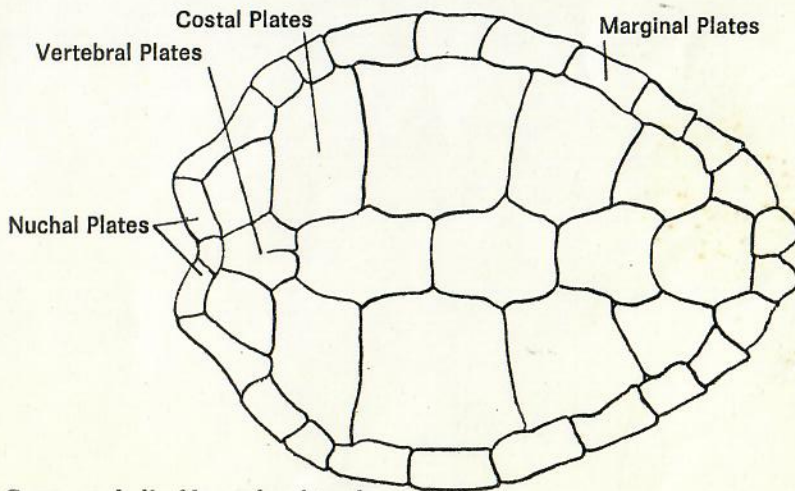
Loggerhead turtle.

with a small movement of its powerful neck, tore it off. While it held on to the plug, it was at least prevented from doing any more damage. As we struggled to lift it on board the yacht, it released the plug and fastened on to the cockpit coaming to remove a piece of the timber. Then suddenly, as though it wanted to be cooperative, it quieted and allowed us to examine it on the coach-roof deck. Unlike tortoises it was unable to retract its head or flippers fully. Its short tail identified it as a female. The sexual characteristics of the male include a long caudal appendage, larger thumb claws on the front flippers, and a concave plastron shell. Like all reptiles, the sea turtle is an exothermic air-breathing

vertebrate. It possesses a protective shell that consists of two parts, an upper, or carapace, and a lower, or plastron, connected by bridges behind the four limbs.

The class Reptilia comprises four separate orders—Rhynchocephalia (the New Zealand tuatara is the only example), Squamata (lizards and snakes), Crocodylia (crocodiles, alligators, caiman and gharial) and Testudines (tortoises, turtles and terrapins). I conveniently categorize the Testudines as follows: tortoises are terrestrial, turtles are marine, and terrapins are freshwater habitants. In fact the order is subdivided into two sub-orders, Pleurodira and Cryptodira and the latter into seven families of which, to us, four are important. The Chelydridae (snappers, mud and musk terrapins), the Dermochelyidae (the only example is the leathery turtle), the Testudinidae (tortoises, pond and box terrapins), and the Cheloniidae (sea turtles). This last family has four genera: Eretmochelys (hawksbills), Chelonia (green and flatbacks), Caretta (loggerheads) and Lepidochelys (ridleys).

We were determined to place our specimen in one of these genetic groups. We examined its carapace shell for a clue. It was more rounded than oval. The regular pattern of the shell consisted of a row of five vertebral horny plates, or laminae, and on each side of this was a row of five larger costal laminae, and then, around the outside, a series of twenty-two marginal laminae. Its



Carapace shell of loggerhead turtle.

head pattern also gave clues for recognition. On top of its head between the eyes was a group of five prefrontal plates. We were certain this turtle, and, as far as we knew, its neighbors as well, was a loggerhead (*Caretta caretta*). Before releasing the turtle, we measured its carapace, 24 inches from front to rear; its plastron, 22 inches across the broadest part; and the length of a front flipper, 13 inches from tip to knuckle. As soon as we had put the reptile back into the water, it swam strongly away from us.

On April 19 our run would have reached an all-time low if we had not run the engine for much of the day. Despite the noise, smell, and high cost of fuel, using the engine became a regular procedure for the remainder of the passage to Panama. In the early morning and evening when there was a breath of wind we sailed, and during the middle of the day when the wind was absent we motored. Even when the wind went into the north in the Golfo de Panamá and blew a little stronger and more regularly, our increased daily runs did not gain much distance on our course line because of the inevitable tacking.

"I would think," I said to June in answer to her query when we were alone on deck, "that we should arrive in Panamá by April twenty-third at the very latest."

"That's good, because I'm going to make a special cake when we get in for Maralyn's birthday on the twenty-fourth," June said. "We have just enough flour and margarine left without having to go ashore."

As it turned out, because of the contrary winds, we were still at sea on the twenty-fourth. Maralyn overlooked my miscalculation with forbearance and postponed her birthday until the day following our arrival—"whenever that was to be." Maralyn celebrated her actual birthday with a terrible fright. During her night watch she encountered an unidentified whale and wrote in the log: "2300: Halfway through the watch. Saw a regular-shaped patch of phosphorescence on the bow. It had a distinct shape, and I thought it might be a piece of floating debris—a floating log, maybe? Altered course to clear it and passed two boat lengths away. Then I heard *the thing* blow! It turned and followed our log line at a boat's length for a few minutes before disappearing."

We sailed due north with the Archipiélago de las Perlas well to starboard during the night so that we saw nothing of it, or its lights. The first flashing light we found was to port on the small Isla Bona and, almost immediately, the loom of the city lights of Panamá dead ahead. To port there was a continuous passing procession of ships' lights, moving to and from Panamá. At daybreak the Islas Taboga and Taboguilla were abeam to the west and the city of Panamá could be distinguished to the north. By 1030 we had anchored in the lee of three islands, Flamenco, Perico, and Naos, and their causeways, to await our clearance. In a short time a launch came alongside and deposited the admeasurer, who was to measure us for computing our Panama Canal tonnage and give us health and immigration clearance, on board. The multitude of forms were efficiently dealt with, and our clearance for the Panama Canal Zone was quickly accomplished. (It was interesting to note that the mass of clearance papers we had received in Callao were not even asked for by the Americans in Panamá. The charges for our transit are levied on the basis of our computed tonnage, which is not weight but an assessment of the boat's cargo-carrying capacity. Since we were classified as a cargo boat in ballast, we qualified for a lower toll. The only formality that remained



Maralyn and June with Cuna Indian woman in Old Panamá. Colin Foshett

was to visit the port captain a few days before we were ready for our passage to fix the date and pay our dues.

It was a Sunday and no visiting yacht was permitted to go to the Balboa Yacht Club, where we would have access ashore, so we spent our time at anchor stowing ship for harbor. When we arrived at the yacht-club moorings, adjacent to the canal and a little south of the magnificent span of the Thatcher Ferry Bridge, or, as the Panamanians prefer, Puente de las Americas, we were directed to a buoy that seemed a long way from the clubhouse, but the club provided a free twenty-four hour launch service to and from the club's jetty. It was not always easy to obtain the launch, as we were warned in the club's handout to visitors, which stated launches may be summoned "by sounding a whistle, horn, or siren or by flashing lights at night (or screaming, frantic waving of arms, hoisting colored balloons, and when all else fails, patiently waiting)."

The Balboa Yacht Club, whose members are for the most part employees of the Canal Company, looked after us well and generously allowed us time on their railway slip to scrub our bottom, antifoul, and repaint the topsides. We were grateful and felt a little guilty, since our work interrupted the demanding schedule of their own members, who should have had priority.

We had the good fortune to meet Jill and Dick Stone, who became our mentors for our stay in Panamá and helped us in every way possible. We were given transport to complete our provisioning and were introduced to the English community, and finally Jill and Dick came along to help us with our lines during our transit of the canal.

The Panamá Canal is 50 miles long, and from the Pacific it trends in a northwesterly direction. The American Canal Zone is a strip of land 10 miles wide with its center line approximately down the middle of the waterway. There are three principal towns in the Canal Zone—Balboa in the Pacific, Gamboa in the center, and Cristóbal in the Caribbean. The cities of Colón and Panamá are in the Republic of Panamá. The waterway is a lock-system canal with three uplocks that raise a vessel 85 feet and, correspondingly, three downlocks at the other end. All the locks

are identical and each measures 1,000 feet long and 110 feet wide. For each ship going through the canal 40 million U.K. gallons—somewhat more in U.S. gallons—of fresh water are drawn from Gatun Lake and spilled into the ocean.

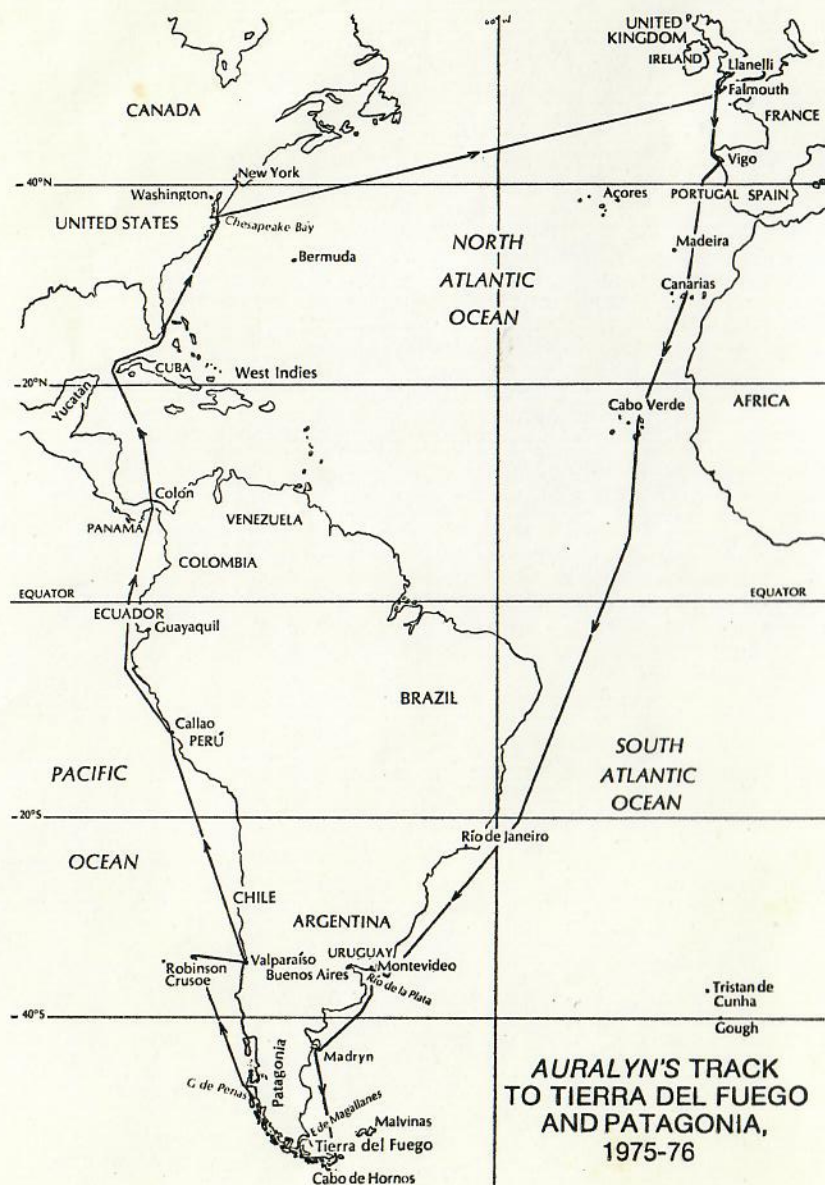
The isthmus of Panamá is made up of three territories: Veragua to the west, Panamá in the center, and Darién to the east. Darién was first sighted by a European during Christopher Columbus' fourth voyage in 1502, yet it was not until 1509 that an expedition of three ships from Spain established the first colony there. Never again was Panamá free of the Spanish *conquistadores*. Among this first shipment of colonists was a stowaway named Vasco Núñez de Balboa, who was escaping his creditors in Spain. Balboa turned out to be a remarkable, able, and, for his time, humane man.

With the devastating profligacy typical of colonization and much cruelty, the Spaniards exploited the Indians for their gold. The precious metal was shipped back to Spain and often used to adorn churches in which Spaniards worshiped their benign and charitable God. The colonists very soon became a disunited rabble, but under the influence of Balboa they began working in concert. In 1513 Balboa, with information received from the Indians, took a party across the isthmus and saw the Pacific. For the first time, men's minds began to contemplate the feasibility of a canal to connect the two oceans. In 1519 the Spaniard Pedrarias founded a trail across the isthmus and established the city of Panamá, but in 1573 an Anglo-French gang of desperadoes led by Francis Drake attacked the Spanish Trail. It was on this predatory incursion that Drake first saw the Pacific and became determined to sail it.

In Panamá the Spaniards amassed the wealth of their South American empire, since little of their spoils was sent to Spain by way of Cabo de Hornos or Estrecho de Magallanes. The colony, and Panamá City in particular, became an increasingly rewarding target for pillaging pirates and buccaneers. Drake attempted another attack in 1596 but was repulsed by the guns of Portobello. He died of fever and was buried at sea in the locale of one of his more notable failures.

Perhaps the most famous and yet, paradoxically, the most out-

SECOND CHANCE



APPENDIX 1 SUMMARY OF PASSAGES

	Distance (nautical miles)		Days on passage	Arrived	Days stay	Left
	Direct	Log				
Llanelli, Dyfed, South Wales						July 15, 1975
Bayona, Ría de Vigo, Spain	650	820	8.5	July 24	6.5	July 30
Santa Cruz de Tenerife, Isla de Tenerife, Islas Canarias	900	1040	12.0	August 11	13.25	August 24
Porto da Praia, Ilha São Tiago, Arquipélago de Cabo Verde	915	970	8.25	September 1	4.5	September 6
Puerto del Buceo, Montevideo, Uruguay	3600	4045	45.25	October 21	40.0	November 30
Puerto Madryn, Chubut, Argentina	680	925	9.0	December 9	7.0	December 16
Caleta Lennox, Isla Lennox, Chile	835	956	8.5	December 25		
Tierra del Fuego and Patagonia	896	1054	54.0			