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## CHAPTER FOUR PIRATES AND BUCCANEERS

*They have sown the wind,  
and they shall reap the whirlwind . . .*  
— Hosea (Holy Bible)

TREASURE CHESTS REMOVED three centuries ago from wrecked ships by white men with black beards; gold pieces tossed on the counters of island stores, and stories of pitched battles with cutlass, dagger and pistol were commonly told in the islands right up till the turn of the century.

From the 16th to the 18th centuries "new world" waters were haunted by deserters from ships, runaway slaves and fugitives, who pooled their talents in reaping havoc on merchant vessels in the Caribbean, the Atlantic and far out into the Pacific.

Spanish treasure fleets laden with gold doubloons, pieces of eight and other objects of fantastic value made tempting targets for the ravenous searovers, rogues, whose only god was the thirst for spoils. Their sinful carefree existence was always fraught with the possibility that death might be theirs before the sun set. As Shakespeare stated: "a plague upon it when thieves cannot be true one to another."

The pirate captain enjoyed no special respect or prestige. He was elected by his band of cutthroats and on many occasions ate and slept with the crew and took his trick at the wheel. Hasty ships' articles drawn before each voyage had little if any legal value, but did assign each man his respective duties and assured him his share of wealth in the buccaneering forays. If any mercy was shown by these rough, tough individuals it was in giving extra shares of loot to one of their number injured in battle; this rule however, was vague and most reasoned the fewer among them the better the distribution. Foremost in their minds was the slogan, "no prey, no pay," which created an innate lust to plunder and pillage with wanton abandon, even when the target outmanned and outgunned them.

Though modern man has elected to eulogize these lusty savages as adventuresome, colorful rogues who gave spice and excitement to the nautical past, they were little better than disciples of the Devil. If any today had been victims of such violent attacks and brutality, that accepted image would quickly tarnish and fall into dust. Where there is no law, every man makes a law onto himself—the outcome—anarchy. It has been said that the fiendish pirate L'Olonnois, in attempting to pry secret treasure trove information from some captives, suddenly slashed the chest of one, ripped out his heart and literally "began to bite and gnaw it with his teeth, like a ravenous wolf."

When men turn their souls over to Satan they usually reap what they sow, as did the famous, or should we say infamous Edward Teach, the feared "Blackbeard," who plundered and murdered along the southwest Atlantic coast. Decapitated, by his own breed, his head was lashed to a bowsprit.

Though the Hawaiian Islands were involved in several piratical acts, the remoteness of its shores and the absence of recorded history left only shreds of evidence, offering some fascinating but unsolved puzzles. And



who knows, there may still be treasure stashed away in underwater caves or in secreted lava tubes known only to long deceased buccaneers and tribal chiefs. Under the old feudal system any not of the alii, who had knowledge of buried treasure, kept their lips sealed because of the tabu.

In recent decades a treasure cave was found not many miles from Honolulu. Its existence had been rumored for many years alleging carved symbols cut in the rock floor, the entrance only visible at extreme low tide. When the place was discovered by a group of young scuba divers, they reasoned the sea cave must indeed hold something of great value. But alas, they found nothing. Maybe somebody had been there long before.

As do the early Hawaiian legends, the stories of pirates and treasure had differing versions depending on who was telling the story. One of the most frequently told in the islands had three versions, all of which are presented here.

In the year 1818, a mysterious vessel named *Victory* arrived in the islands, commanded by a swarthy character who gave his name as Captain Turner. A cloak of suspicion surrounded the crew as they came ashore. Proceeding to get drunk and boisterous, they boasted of capturing their ship and changing her name. They further told of items aboard of solid silver and gold.

When the king learned that the *Victory* was for sale he was anxious to add her to his fleet. After negotiations were finalized, the ship was renamed *Liholiho* and fitted out for a voyage to China with a cargo of sandalwood.

Meanwhile the questionable Captain Turner and his erstwhile polyglot crew continued to act like a band of cutthroats, and proved to be just that. After raising considerable mayhem around Honolulu, they went their separate ways evidently to avoid detection, some signing on other ships, and others settling in various parts of the islands.

In September of the same year, a formidable man-of-war dropped her anchor in Honolulu Harbor. Identified as Spanish, it was soon learned she was the *Argentina*, on the trail of pirates who had plundered the sloop-of-war *Santa Rosa*, belonging to the Province of La Plata. Captain Bouchard, master of the warship, interviewed the Hawaiian king and told him of the buccaneers commandeering a ship and sailing it around Cape Horn to Chile where they sacked a church and then sailed out into the Pacific. There was virtually no doubt, that the *Liholiho*, ex *Victory* was indeed the *Santa Rosa*; Turner and his motely crew, the pirates.

According to the account, Kamehameha returned what church property he was able to recover. A large segment of the pirates were tracked down and duely punished, but the king retained the ship. The buccaneers were rumored to have hidden their share of the loot in secret hiding places throughout the islands.

A slightly different version of the same episode has been related by John Papa Ii (1800-1870) high chief, known among Hawaiians as a "teacher, preacher and judge." According to his account, a Spanish (Argentinean) ship arrived in the year 1817, and the captain and mate looked like Englishmen and spoke both Spanish and English. The captain, on seeing the king and was granted an audience. The king opening a barrel of strong drink (okolihaio) and toasting the event. The ship and her cargo were eventually sold to the king for an unknown sum, while her former crew scattered to several sectors of the islands.

Ii insisted there were two (pirate) ships that had come from Argentina. The second, a two-master, "with double prow," arrived at Kailua-Kona after the larger ship was already in the hands of the king. She did not remain long, but appeared several days later off Kauai. After the man-of-war arrived, seeking the two ships, the king was convinced he had purchased stolen property from buccaneers.

The "unusual ships" had created much excitement among the Hawaiians for they were unlike any they had ever seen. Because the *Victory's* crew had vanished into the mountains, armed forces from the man-of-war were dispatched to find and bring them to justice; their search proved futile. The *Victory*, Ii recorded, was eventually taken from the king, but some of her goods remained with the Hawaiian ruler.

A month later, after the recovered vessel had been restored to her rightful owners, she departed Kailua-Kona on rumor that the displaced two-masted vessel had been sighted at Waimea, Kauai. The rumor proved correct and after her shipmaster was found in the house of an islander, he was taken to a suitable place and shot to death for treason and piracy.

The third and more detailed account necessitates occasional reference to the journal kept by Marin, who was a witness to several of the proceedings.

It appears that Hipolite Bouchard was a privateer captain from Buenos Aires, a Frenchman, an adventurer and one set on becoming a celebrated naval commander with the armed frigate *Argentina*, (34 guns) commissioned as a privateer by the revolutionary government of the United Provinces of the Rio de la Plata. He had earlier joined the naval forces of patriots of the Rio de la Plata in their wars for independence from Spain. His superiors placed only one restriction on Bouchard, and that was to limit his operations to the South Atlantic as far as the Cape of Good Hope. The headstrong commander, however, visioned great fame for himself. With some 450 sailors and 150 soldiers packed aboard his 671 ton vessel, he defied orders, and without the aid of a consort vessel sailed on through the Indian Ocean to the Pacific where he intended to blockade Manila and plunder Spanish ships. In a way of speaking, he virtually took the role of a pirate



leader, his effrontery prompting him to seek rich prizes for self aggrandizement.

The *Argentina*, was actually privately-owned by a wealthy and influential resident of Buenos Aires, an avowed enemy of Spain. Bouchard's crew consisted of many nationalities among with several English and Yankee adventurers and deserters.

The commander's foolhardy venture was to cost him dearly, for on the voyage to Manila many of his men died of scurvy. Nor did his blockade of Manila meet with any great success. He finally did manage to capture a large schooner off northern Luzon. A prize crew was put aboard and both ships sailed to China where the new addition was refitted as a consort and fighting ship. Returning to the Philippines to resume naval operations, the schooner suddenly sailed off on an independent course. Bouchard never caught up with the errant ship.

Meeting with one setback after another, including sickness and desertion, along with battle damage inflicted by enemy ships, Bouchard finally decided to sail across the Pacific to the Hawaiian Islands. On arrival at Kealahou, his ship was in a deplorable condition, but he was determined to make a triumphant entry, not revealing that he had a dire need for food and supplies. On shore, he learned that a "Spanish" vessel anchored nearby had been purchased by the Hawaiian king. On rowing over to inspect, Bouchard recognized her as the corvette *Santa Rosa de Chacabuco*, not Spanish, but a ship that had once sailed for the same cause he represented. It had been hijacked and brought to the islands by a pirate crew that had mutinied off the coast of Chile. After arrival in the islands, the leader, a man name Griffiths, sold her to Kamehameha for 6,000 piculs of sandalwood.

A quick thinker and fast talker, Bouchard visioned a new consort of 18 guns and a victory of sorts in recapturing the missing ship. By forging a document granting him power to seize the *Santa Rosa*, he tricked the king into releasing her for costs incurred, and was further granted permission to seek out and to punish the mutineers.

Following a severe reprimand and limited punishment, Bouchard pardoned the mutinous crew members from the *Santa Rosa*, mostly because he needed additional hands.

Displaying further effrontery, which would have even made Blackbeard blush, Bouchard demanded through the king's secretary Elliot d'Castro, vegetable and food staples to fill the depleted supplies aboard his ship. Both vessels then sailed to Honolulu for refitting and crash lessons in discipline for the respective crews.

Marin records that on September 11, (1818) when Bouchard disembarked at Honolulu, he was accorded the pomp and ceremony befitting a dignitary. Bouchard enlisted the services of Marin, through flattery, for the



Built for the triangle run — Pacific Northwest lumber to Australia; back to Hawaii with coal and from Hawaii to the West Coast with sugar, the 696 ton bark HESPER dating from 1882, once logged a passage from Cape Flattery to Honolulu in 9½ days (1886). In 1893, the vessel was the scene of a barbarous mutiny on a voyage from Newcastle N.S.W. to Honolulu. Captain Sodergren and his first officer were able to bring the culprits under control and eventually to trial.

latter had much influence on the king and among other things collected harbor fees. No record exists of Bouchard having paid any dues, and in maintaining his bold diplomatic front "officially" commissioned Marin as a captain in the Patriotic Armies of the Buenos Aires government and as a representative of King Kamehameha and the Hawaiian Kingdom. This, Bouchard reasoned would insure lasting relations on a prestige basis.

While the ships were still in port, the mutinous crewmen of the *Santa Rosa*, still missing, were actively sought by Bouchard's armed forces. On Kauai, the pirate captain was located and after a quick trail was condemned to death by a firing squad. Several other mutineers were rounded up, but being still greatly in need of men, Bouchard re-enlisted them, after doling out punishment.

Finally on October 25, Bouchard sailed from Honolulu, both ships fully manned and ready for action. The *Santa Rosa de Chacabuco*, (her original name restored) was placed in command of Marin's friend Peter Corney, and carried a crew of 100 men, including 30 recruited Hawaiians. The *Argentina's* complement consisted of 260 men, including 50 Hawaiians. Their mission was to sail to the West Coast and assist the Californians in throwing off allegiance to Fernando. But perhaps



Bouchard had done too much talking, for the brig *Clarion*, commanded by Captain Henry Gyzelaar, departed Honolulu on September 10 and passed the word while on the California coast about the plans of what he termed, "the *Argentina* pirates." While at Santa Barbara, he spoke with Commandant Jose de la Guerra, who in turn sent a dispatch to Monterey. When the *Argentina* and her consort finally arrived, Bouchard's mission met with virtually no success and eventually he retired the side.

Still, the privateer commander refused to give up, for at a later date when the brigantine *Crucero* fled from Chile to Hawaii, Bouchard sent word to Marin through Don Felipe Solar of Valparaiso to have the monarch seize her as a prize belonging to Chile. Apparently the letter was ignored.

And here the story ends. The reader can draw his own conclusion, perhaps drawing from each version, for in the long run it was hard to tell the bad guys from the good, the pirates from the heroes, or just who if any came out a winner. Maybe the Hawaiian king had the last laugh on Bouchard after all.

Two mutinies that had reflections on Hawaii, even though they occurred in the vicinity of Fanning Island, more than 1,000 miles southwest of Honolulu, were those of the whaling ship *Globe* of Nantucket and the British sloop *William Little* of Liverpool. Both have received considerable space in published works about the sea.

In the bloody *Globe* mutiny of 1823, Captain Thomas Worth of Nantucket and his officers became the victims of a heinous crime, masterminded by a pawn of the Devil, known as Sam Comstock. He and his misguided lot put their plan into action on January 26 when the ship was two years out from her homeport, having had only limited success in catching leviathans. By brutally killing the captain and the officers, the mutineers became pirates of the most detestable sort.

Comstock later died from a taste of his own medicine when murdered by one of his own breed.

Master of the *William Little*, Captain Carter, was attacked from behind by night by a band of mutineers. Struck over the head and assumed dead, his body was thrown overboard, but being of tough fiber he regained his senses and managed to grasp the main chains and drag himself back aboard, blood gushing from a wound in his head. Before he could call for assistance, the rebels brutally attacked again until their victim slumped to the deck, dead.

Ransacking the master's cabin they found but \$20 in gold. To cover their crime they elected to scuttle the ship, evacuating in well-stocked boats, masquerading as castaways. The leaders of the mutinous plot, Napalac and Kaheniau, eventually showed up in Honolulu but it took the authority of a British warship to get their release

from the Hawaiian government. Both were hanged on a yardarm of the king's brig *Nui* in 1834.

A plot by ship deserters and rebellious Hawaiians to seize the royal Hawaiian yacht *Kamehameha III* was thwarted in 1846. The buccaneers planned to turn her into a pirate ship and prey on Pacific commerce. Only because of the presence of the HMS *Juno* in Honolulu Harbor, whose commander had threatened just punishment for any such treacherous act, was the plot foiled.

Another bloody affair, this in the year 1848, involved the schooner *Amelia*, commanded by Captain Robert McNally. In the month of October, the vessel sailed for Hong Kong from Mazatlan, Mexico carrying among other cargo, 60,000 pounds of sterling (Mexican silver) plus a chest of coins. According to one account, while the ship was in mid-Pacific, three scoundrels among the crew, Jose Torres, Andres Baldibege and Jose Calero murdered the second mate Juan Gaetano in the still of the night and then proceeded to stab to death the first officer, Ramon Alva.

Laying seige to the schooner, they held Captain McNally prisoner in his cabin, the only thing preventing his death being a gun in his possession. The renegades offered the shipmaster a well-stocked boat in which he, his supercargo named Cook, Cook's wife and her maid, would be permitted to escape unharmed, if he surrendered. The terms were agreed to, but the mutineers reneged and violently murdered the captain and threw his body overboard. Destroying the ship's papers and dividing the treasure of silver and gold, they entered into drunken debauchery sporting about in women's garments.

Those of the crew who had remained loyal but passive, now saw their chance. By gaining control of the weapons they cut down the mutineers in a bloody coup. The treasure was replaced and the *Amelia* sailed into Honolulu where the consul general held a hearing on the afterdeck. The verdict justified the crew's actions: a new shipmaster was assigned and the interrupted voyage was resumed.

And who hasn't heard of the latter day pirate Bully Hayes? He first appeared in Honolulu in 1858 and left a trail of sin, vice and corruption about the Pacific until the mid 1870's. A double-minded individual he had the ability to win public approval or to woo the ladies with his masculinity, but he could also turn into a tiger with fangs bared.

On a voyage from Honolulu to the Marquesas in 1873-74, in command of the *Leonora*, Hayes was wrecked at Kusaie Island. After allegedly burying a quarter million dollars in gold, he drifted about from island to island, and in a knife fight to the death with one of his piratical henchmen, is believed to have died somewhere in the Carolines.



No shipwreck of the late 19th century was more discussed in the dingy haunts along the Honolulu waterfront than that of the British bark *Wandering Minstrel*. Overtones of barratry, mutiny, murder, opium smuggling and mystery all ran their courses.

The vessel in question put out from Hong Kong in 1887 after being purchased by a syndicate ownership headed by Captain Frederick Dunbar Walker, who served as master of the vessel. The mission was to catch shark and gather beche-de-mer\* off Hawaii's Bird Islands, northwest of Honolulu.

When the *Wandering Minstrel* reached Honolulu late in the year, crew troubles were reported to the British consulate which immediately dispatched a representative to examine the complaints. As a result, two ship officers were dismissed for unwarranted acts of cruelty against the fo'c'sle gang. John Cameron was then appointed as first officer and later was overheard commenting that the crew was still mutinous and "as choice a lot of cutthroats as I ever laid eyes on." He likened them onto a pack of buccaneers, a polyglot mixture of Filipinos, Chinese blacks and caucasians, scrapings of humanity found in Oriental dives. The first officer's assumption was not exaggerated, for a few days later, authorities were summoned aboard to put down a strike and a brawl amongst the crew.

Accompanying Captain Walker on the voyage were his wife and three sons. Cameron, we have already been introduced to, but the second officer was a man named Hanker, plus a Yankee cook, two Chinese stewards and a mixed assemblage of seamen and fishermen.

When the ship finally departed Honolulu late in December, several of her crew were in irons because of misdeeds and it was common knowledge that several weapons were hidden away in the recesses of the crew's quarters. On reaching French Frigate Shoals and finding poor fishing, the *Minstrel* sailed among the other atolls of the archipelago seeking more lucrative areas. Suddenly, a storm threatened on the horizon and moved in with such fury that Captain Walker set a course for Midway in hopes of finding a sheltered anchorage.

Reaching her destination, the *Wandering Minstrel* dropped her hook outside the reef and was obliged to remain there for three days until the storm-aroused surf calmed. Meanwhile the crew noticed a decrepit appearing figure on the beach frantically waving rags removed from his person. Captain Walker attempted to take his ship through a break in the reef but the wind subsided and the currents carried the vessel into dangerous waters. Three boats were lowered and manned. With backs and arms straining, the oarsmen literally towed the *Minstrel* to Welles Harbor where an uneasy anchorage was found.

\*Beche or trepang, is a sea slug much craved for a basis in Chinese soups and shark was used by the Orientals for a type of leather and also for its oils.

With great excitement, the island castaway greeted the strangers. Gaunt, tall and blond, his name was Adolph Jorgensen, and he claimed to have been the ship's carpenter on the schooner *General Seigel* which lay a wreck astride a reef inside Welles Harbor, lost during a shark hunting expedition out of Honolulu. The *Seigel* had enjoyed good fishing at Necker, Maro, Laysan and French Frigate Shoals and had arrived at Midway with her holds full. Shortly thereafter, a violent squall caused the schooner to slip both anchor chains and drive hard on the reef. After salvaging some clothing, food and gear, the eight survivors took up quarters in an old redwood house, built 30 years earlier, allegedly by some American scientists who had come to Midway to observe the transit of Venus. The men from the *Seigel* sustained life on a diet of fish and birds' eggs.

Jorgensen further told of a survivor named Peter Larkin, who he claimed had died of an overdose of pain killer administered by the ship's captain, (Jacobson). The victim earlier had his hand blown off by a stick of dynamite while blasting fish out of the island lagoon and that was why the pain medicine was given. Just before Larkin died, he complained that his stomach felt as if it was on fire. One of the party named William Brown, accused the shipmaster of "doing Larkin in," but Jacobson paid no heed to the charge. However, according to Jorgensen's account, Jacobson and Brown several days later rowed from Sand to nearby Eastern Island seeking food: only the captain returned. When quizzed, he claimed Brown had accidentally shot himself and that he, Jacobson, buried the body.

Later still, Jorgensen, suspicious of the story, asked Jacobson and a young German crewman to accompany him to Eastern. The captain showed the others the grave, but Jorgensen insisted on disinterring the corpse. In scraping the dirt from the skull he discovered a bullet hole through the back side. Fearing possible retribution from the captain, he said nothing more.

Jorgensen continued his account, telling how he and Jacobson returned to Eastern a few week's later to collect birds' eggs. This time, however, only Jorgensen returned alleging that his partner had vanished. The others immediately accused him of murder. Refusing to believe his story, they isolated him on Eastern and commenced rebuilding (for escape) an abandoned 21 foot sampan left behind when the fishing schooner *Kaulilua* had visited Midway several months earlier. (Also on the island was an abandoned lifeboat from the wreck of the British ship *Dunnotter Castle*, lost on Kure (Ocean) Island in June of 1886.)

We pause here to render some pertinent facts about the voyage of the *General Seigel*: She had sailed from Honolulu on September 1, 1886, to fish for sharks off the northwest islands of the Hawaiian archipelago, and to also recover metal from any shipwrecks encountered



along the way. An agreement was made that each of the eight-man crew was to receive 25 cents a month and a share of the net profits. Perhaps this arrangement had a serious effect on discipline, for in essence, all were equal partners. Somewhat mysteriously, the captain was listed as Frank Asberline, a Russian-Finn, who also went by the name of Jacobson; Jorgensen (the island castaway) sailed as first mate. The others were a rare assortment of German, French-Canadian, Russian and Norwegian seafarers. After spending several weeks at Midway, as has been told, the *Seigel* was cast ashore and wrecked on November 16, 1886.

Now returning to Jorgensen's account; while his shipmates rebuilt their escape craft he was not idle. Unable to swim, he commenced building a crude raft in which to get back to Sand Island. On launching out, however, it broke up. Struggling to near exhaustion, he finally managed to reach the island on a half-submerged log. Immediately, he found a rifle he had hidden and willingly surrendered the weapon to the others to show he meant no harm.\* When the rebuilt boat was completed and stocked, despite Jorgensen's insistence, he was left behind in isolation as the others sailed for the Marshalls. By utilizing the tradewinds and subsisting on a scant diet of dried fish the castaways reached their destination in an amazing 20 days. There, they were rescued and taken back to Honolulu.

If many of the pieces failed to fit together in the *General Seigel* incident, they were even more confusing in the case of the *Wandering Minstrel*. While she remained at anchor in Welles Harbor, the ship's officers became quarrelsome after a beche-de-mer discovery proved to be a common sea slug of no value. Walker and his second officer Hanker had an altercation and the latter ended up in irons. Then Walker and Cameron, who had failed to get along from the start of the voyage, became involved in a serious misunderstanding. It took a typhoon to soothe tempers. All hands were summoned to the needs of the ship, exposed as it was from the northwest. The howling winds created giant seas and the anchor began to drag. Despite Cameron's insistence that the captain either seek a new anchorage or cut the masts and run the ship aground on a sandy beach, the shipmaster elected to ride out the storm. It proved a wrong decision for the vessel was driven hopelessly aground on an unrelenting reef the 8th day of February 1888.

The *Minstrel's* boats were lowered on the lee side but the turbulence almost caused the craft containing the captain's wife to capsize. It was she, however, who insisted they go back and rescue the ship's canine mascot, Jessie. Whining in despair, the tail virtually wagged the dog

when the hands of a seaman reached out, snatched the animal and threw it into the open arms of Mrs. Walker.

Several seabags were tossed into one of the boats, but when an overload was apparent, the captain pitched them into the water, one unfortunately containing sea biscuits, about the only stores that had been removed from the galley.

Once on the beach, it was decided that the Walker family would take up residence in the house inhabited by Jorgensen, while the others made out as best they could with makeshift shelters. Subsisting on birds' eggs and fish, and by using brackish well water, the marooned party foraged the island for additives to their diet. Cameron and Jorgensen joined forces, striking up a good friendship. They perhaps fared the best, as the latter had collected and preserved thousands of bird eggs during his privation.

On the island were three usable small boats, the one from the *Dunotter Castle* having been used by Jorgensen to travel between Sand and Eastern. Enlisting the services of Jorgensen, Cameron set about to build a small schooner from wreckage and drift, as a means of escaping. While the work was proceeding Frank Lord, the ship's cook, secretly provisioned the best of the existing boats, and secretly selecting five members of the crew put out to sea without the knowledge of the others. Intending to reach the Marshalls, they unfortunately lacked a navigator, thus sailing out over the horizon and into oblivion.

When the schooner was nearly completed an argument broke out between Cameron and Walker as to who would command the craft. The disagreement was settled when a subsequent storm dashed the vessel to pieces as it lay on the beach.

Several weeks later, Cameron and Jorgensen were busy working on one of the remaining boats, sheathing the bottom with planks held together by wire, and also erecting a portable shelter for protection from the weather. When the craft was made as seaworthy as possible it was decided to take along a Chinese lad, nicknamed Moses, and with Cameron as the navigator the trio launched out into the deep in search of another island.

Meanwhile, the Walkers and the others continued to subsist on the island's limited food supply. Storm after storm buffeted Midway creating hardship and miserable living conditions. One squall caught a fishing party in the lagoon. Jostled about by huge waves, the oars were snatched away from their craft which in turn was hurled up on the reef, dumping its occupants overboard. Mrs. Walker, standing on the beach in front of her dwelling in a driving rain, could see the party was in jeopardy. To keep their hopes alive she kindled a fire, (fed by bird fat) which glowed throughout the night. For nearly three

\*According to another account, it was wrested away from him by another of the castaways — Edvard Olsen.



days and nights the party remained marooned. When the seas finally moderated, the Walker boys who had remained behind, swam across the lagoon with another pair of oars. Temporary patches were put in the damaged boat and the nearly exhausted party returned.

Problems of diet deficiency and despondency persisted. One of the more greedy castaways who had refused to share his bird catch, was first to die. Another succumbed while sleeping in a large cask. Hanker, the second mate, had been despondent ever since his run-in with the captain. At times he was virtually insane. Meanwhile some of the other members of the group took up residence on Eastern Island, where the brackish water source seemingly provided a few more minerals. In the interim a bag of fermented rice and a crate of soggy potatoes washed in from the bowels of the wreck and were devoured with great delight. An occasional shark and a few sea slugs were also added to the menu.

During the long internment, one of the Walker boys fell ill with scurvy, but his mother's prayers were answered in a most unusual way. While the ill lad's brother was swimming in the lagoon, he saw on the bottom, a shiny object that attracted his attention. Diving, he soon surfaced clutching a bottle of limejuice which had evidently been washed out of the wreck of the *Wandering Minstrel*. It was just what the doctor ordered, for limejuice was known to seafaring men the world over as a deterrent to scurvy, and it was responsible for restoring the youth's health.

It was now 14 months since the ship had been wrecked, and no vessels had come to Midway in all that time. One or two had been sighted on the horizon but signal fires had gone unheeded. Back in Honolulu, the *Wandering Minstrel* had been posted as "missing with all hands." The Walkers, however, never gave up hope, and finally on March 17, 1889, a vessel was sighted and signaled with success. Out of Honolulu on a shark hunting expedition, she proved to be the schooner *Norma*. Rescue at last!

On the voyage back to Honolulu a week later, one of the weakened castaways breathed his last, adding more sadness to an already regrettable venture.

In addition, during the long imprisonment, six had succumbed to beri beri, scurvy or starvation. Two had mysteriously died, one had drowned while fishing, and six were lost in the first boat to set out for the Marshalls.

The escape craft that departed Midway October 13, 1888, containing Cameron, Jorgensen and Moses, set a course for Kure Island, 50 miles to the northwestward seeking additional food and perhaps extract something of utility from the wreck of the *Dunotter Castle*. By using a small pocket compass and a broken sextant they should have raised the island in a few days, but fearing an erroneous course they instead followed the direction of a

flock of seabirds and ended up steering for Oahu. Fate intervened, however, when a severe storm bore down on them. For three perilous days the craft was in jeopardy. To keep from swamping, they ran free with the wind in the opposite direction, heading for the Marshalls. Much suffering and near starvation followed, Jorgensen showing signs of insanity, the others watching him day and night. Bailing continued around the clock. After 43 days of rigorous, erratic sailing, covering what Cameron guessed to be 2,700 miles, the craft put into Mili Island in the Marshalls. There they were treated kindly by the natives and afforded rest and recuperation. The islands were then under the protectorate of Germany. Sometime later Cameron bade Jorgensen and Moses farewell and got passage to nearby Jaluit in the schooner *Ehukai*. There he met a Mr. Morgan, United States consular agent, and manager for Crawford & Co., who in turn introduced him to a Mr. Sonnenschein, the German commissioner.

Cameron claimed that while on Jaluit he was told of the schooner *Norma*, (commanded by Captain "Swedish" Johnson) having rescued the castaways on Midway. Walker, however, later reaching Honolulu laid charges against Cameron, claiming he had purposely abandoned his former shipmates by neglecting to send a rescue craft. The long standing differences between the two ship's officers worsened in the aftermath of the provocative incident.

At Jaluit, Morgan was responsible for getting Cameron command of a swift, 50 ton, two-masted trading schooner named *Ebon*, in which he island-hopped about the South Pacific. The vessel was owned by a San Francisco trading firm for which Morgan was agent.

Many months later, the *Ebon*, while on a shark hunting expedition put in at Kure Island and salvaged some sheets of iron, and then moved on to Welles Harbor on Midway, where the schooner remained for several weeks. Cameron and his family took up residence in the old beach dwelling formerly occupied by the Walkers; the other crewmen were housed in makeshift shelters. While seeking shark, the crew located the wreck of the *Seigel* and salvaged hull sheathing and the copper bolts in her keelson. Cameron also searched, but to no avail, for the anchors and chain of the *Wandering Minstrel*. (This was somewhat surprising inasmuch as Captain Walker on his return to the island a few months later (1891) claimed the anchors and chain from the wreck were still there.) The *Ebon* left the harbor after six weeks, her holds containing casks of shark liver oil, dried fins, tails and salvaged materials.

The tangled events of the two controversial shipwrecks at Midway, and the return to the wreck scene by both Cameron and Walker several months later, became the theme for two best selling books — one fiction and



the other, non-fiction. The novel, was Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Wrecker*, which drew heavily on the irregularities of the actual circumstances. The other, entitled *John Cameron's Odyssey*, edited by Andrew Farrell, was inspired by the erstwhile first officer of the *Wandering Minstrel*. Cameron's long and colorful maritime career ended in 1925 while the manuscript was still in preparation. The book came out three years later, telling of Cameron's dramatic sea roving, and in one sense refuting the long standing charges lodged against him by Captain Walker. At the time of his death, Cameron was residing in Japan, having last been employed by the Standard Oil Company. Both Cameron and Walker, though at direct odds, had reason and purpose to what they did in the wake of the *Wandering Minstrel* incident. There are always two sides to every story. Cameron had been considered pretty much the villain until his odyssey was published in 1928.

In the immediate aftermath of the two wrecks, discrepancies brought on claims and counterclaims by interested parties. Controversy over dates, the problem of marine insurance and the true purposes of both missions, were questioned. Rumors insisted that caches of opium and other items not on the ship manifests were involved. Additionally, there remained unexplained deaths and the fact that the master of the *General Seigel* was listed as both Asberline and Jacobson.

Jorgensen later stated that he had caught a shark after Jacobson's disappearance, stripped it open and found the missing man's boot inside the creature's belly, the foot bone still intact.

It must be assumed that a full disclosure of all the facts was never made; many questions remained unanswered. The marine underwriters doubted the validity of the entire affair and held up payment on the loss of the *Minstrel*. Captain Walker took quite a roasting at the British consular inquiry, held at Honolulu, in the aftermath of the rescue. Rumors persisted that an opium smuggling conspiracy was involved, mostly due to the fact that the rescue ship *Norma*, skippered by Captain C. Johnson, had formerly been a notorious opium runner. Theories were even advanced that the *Minstrel* was not actually wrecked at Midway, but was taken elsewhere and blood money paid out to hush up some illicit smuggling operation, that also involved the wreck of the *General Seigel*. Such a theory, however, appeared to hold little water, for when the USS *Iroquois* visited Midway in 1900 she brought back one of the *Minstrel's* anchors.

The exact number of the *Wandering Minstrel's* party was never fully ascertained, but as close as could be pieced together it comprised of 29 or 30, 16 of whom returned to Honolulu at one time or another. Six drowned; one or two were murdered; three died of beri beri, two from starvation and one from scurvy.

As for Jorgensen, he later got into more trouble in the Marshalls when convicted of murdering a native woman. The commander of a visiting British man-o-war favored a trial and heard the penalty pronounced, "death by a firing squad!" Just after the warship departed, before the execution could be carried out, the blackbird *Montserrat* arrived and rescued Jorgensen. He was later said to have been killed in a brawl in Guatemala.

To the very end, a decided hatred existed between Captains Walker and Cameron. As far as this earthly venture is concerned, hatred is frequently and unfortunately more profoundly lasting than love.

A puzzling mystery reached its climax at Honolulu harbor in October 1974. Despite months of investigation which was to follow by the FBI and the U.S. Coast Guard, no conclusion was established.

It involved Mr. and Mrs. Malcolm Graham Jr., avid yachtsmen and adventurers, who disappeared from Palmyra Island while they and one other couple were alone on that small piece of Pacific Ocean real estate, one thousand miles south of Honolulu. The remaining couple arrived at Honolulu several weeks later aboard the Graham's racy 38 foot ketch *Seawind* — Buck Duane Walker, (using the alias Roy A. Allen) and his companion, Stephanie K. Stearns. Failing to report the incident to the authorities, the two had the vessel repainted and the name blotted out. Later it was recognized as belonging to the Grahams. Authorities were alerted and closed in, charging the couple with theft of the vessel and \$400 in cash found aboard. Miss Stearns was promptly arrested and placed in Halawa Jail, being unable to post \$20,000 bail. Walker, on the other hand, skipped, and was the object of an FBI manhunt.

The apprehended Miss Stearns insisted the Grahams had disappeared while on Palmyra, and after an unsuccessful search, she and her companion concluded they had drowned.

Miss Stearns detailed her story to the authorities, even as a government party was formed to investigate Palmyra for clues leading to the disappearance of the Grahams.

"Mac's last words to us were, 'Make yourselves at home until we get back'. I'm sure he didn't expect to go out and die. But that's what he did," insisted the 28 year old Stephanie Stearns. "We made the boat our home."

"We love the boat," the woman sailor continued, "We've taken care of it and I'm sure that's what Mac would have wanted. I'm certain he wouldn't have wanted it sold and sitting in a slip somewhere for the rest of its life. It's a sailing boat, and I'm sure he would have wanted it sailed," she insisted.

The Grahams from San Diego, had owned the craft for 14 years, and were capable, experienced navigators. Nor was Stephanie Stearns a novice to navigation, for she, and not Walker charted the *Seawind's* course back



to Honolulu. Arriving at the Ala Wai Boat Harbor on Monday, October 28, the ketch got a new paint job at a local boatyard during which her name and numbers were obliterated.

Asked why she and her companion did not notify authorities concerning the mysterious circumstances, Miss Stearns answered:

"They would have confiscated it—they would have taken the boat. We didn't have anything to prove that it was ours. He didn't really give us the boat," she confessed. "He just said make yourselves at home. I realize that's a rationalization on my part, to keep something that I love."

Quizzed further by authorities about the evening of the Graham's disappearance, she recalled:

"We'd been invited over for dinner that night. Malcolm told us he and his wife were going to go fishing, and that we should make ourselves at home until they got back. It got dark, and they still didn't come back.

"There wasn't much to do at night. I just put on the spreader lights so they could see where the boat was. The next morning we started looking — and we found the dinghy overturned."

Continuing her story, Miss Stearns exclaimed, "I cared for the couple very much! There is no way I would hurt them or wish any harm to come to them! Mac had a specially vibrant personality and loved life very much."

Of his wife, the accused confessed, "Well, she was more closed than he, I didn't know her as well. They had gone down there to be alone, and we had gone down there to be alone. This was to have been the first dinner we would have on their boat. Roy, (Buck) Mac and I had been together on the boat before, though. We played chess."

The next day she and her companion allegedly found the Graham's dinghy about a half mile down the beach, in a westerly direction from where the *Seawind* was anchored.

"It was overturned as if it had been flipped," Miss Stearns continued. "I thought there were two alternatives: Either they had gone outside the lagoon, to where there was surf, and it flipped out there; or they hit these things that protrude in the lagoon while they were going fast in the dinghy. The wind was from the Southeast. We figured it probably happened around Paradise Island.

"We walked all around there, and the other islands, walking . . . calling . . . we found no sight nor any sign at all of them. We were on Palmyra 11 days after that before we left. It happened on the last Friday in August. We left on September 11. I always had my eyes on other islands."

While the couple were taking both their boat and the *Seawind* out to sea, the former got hung up on the reef and there it remained. "We couldn't get both of them,"

she said, "so we unloaded things from there onto the *Seawind*."

The investigating party that flew to Palmyra Island to seek the whereabouts of Malcolm Graham 43, and his 40 year old wife LaVerne, included officials from the FBI, the Justice Department, and Department of the Interior. The Coast Guard, in addition to transporting them also sent divers to search the lagoon. The party said they would spend several days in the Palmyra group searching out every lead.

Friends who knew the Grahams described them as warm-hearted people who had made the *Seawind* their home and had sailed her to many parts of the world.

Honolulu acquaintances of Stephanie Stearns and Buck Walker, (Roy Allen) described them as somewhat unsettled people, ex residents of a commune on the Big Island.

Miss Stearns actually helped her companion escape before authorities moved in, rowing him to a Honolulu dock from where he disappeared. The reason was obvious after his true identity was learned. Blurred police photos of the man were uncovered, one showing him in religious clothing. Roy Allen, (alias Buck Duance Walker) was not a preacher, but a convicted robber, also wanted on drug charges.

The plot thickened when the ten man search party departed Palmyra within 24 hours of their arrival. It was surmised in Honolulu they had found some trace of the Grahams, but apparently they had not and were adamant about discussing the case further. The press (not allowed to accompany the party) prodded for answers but all they got was double talk, nothing conclusive. To this day, no trace of the missing couple has been uncovered, and the unanswered questions remain legion. Was there something the government did not want revealed?

Walker was later found in Hilo by the authorities and gave up without a struggle. His story paralleled that of his woman companion. Once he agreed to take a lie detector test but later withdrew his offer claiming he did not trust the FBI. At this writing, he remains in custody on several charges. Both were later convicted of theft.

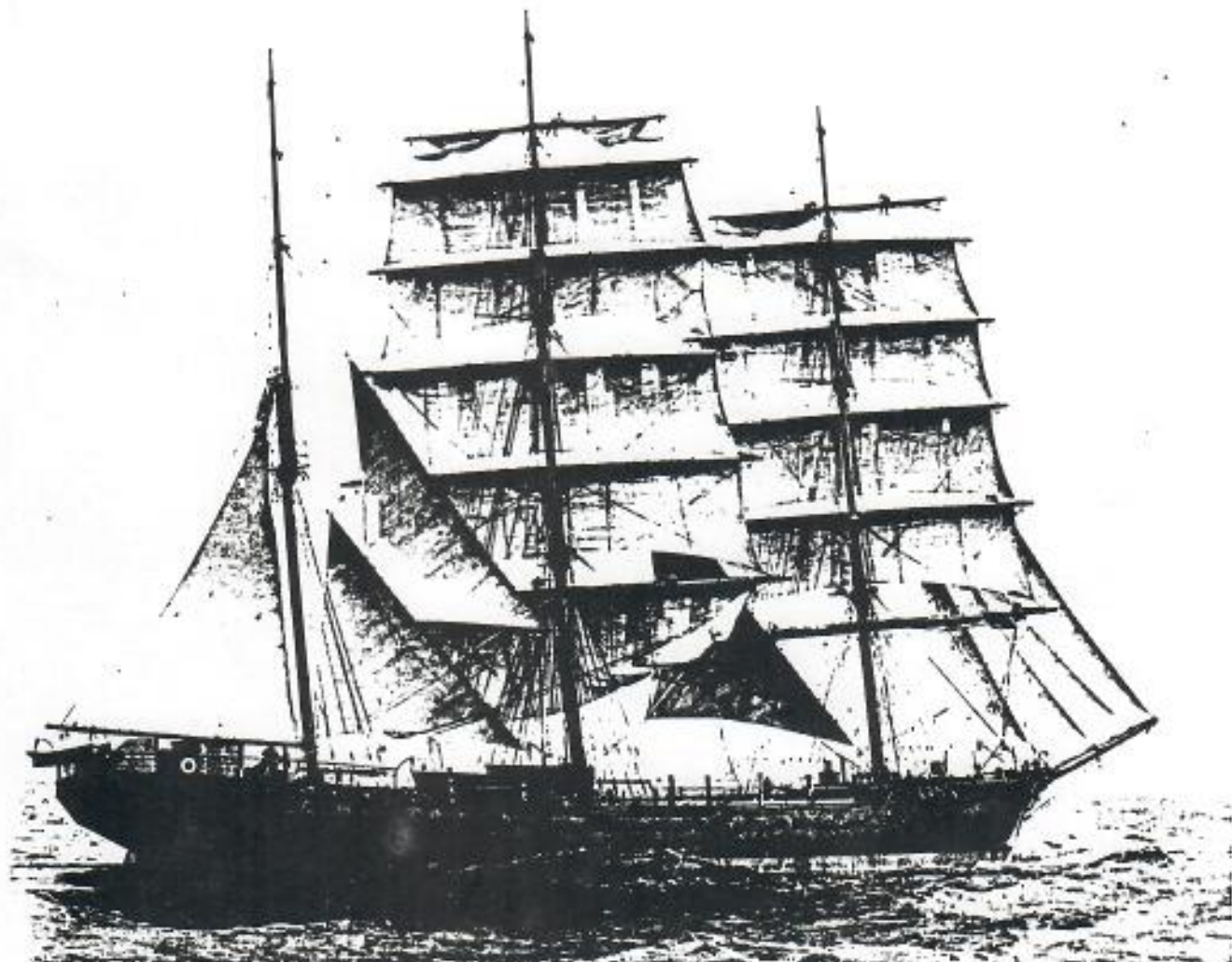
Though nobody was on the Palmyra Islands except the four persons involved in the mystery, yachtsmen who had visited there the previous summer and who met Miss Stearns and her friend Walker, released some interesting bits of information: First, the vessel which they sailed to Palmyra was in a rather decrepit state. On arrival, it struck the reef and small boats belonging to others at the island were used to pull it into a safe anchorage. The couple had very few provisions, and those who made their acquaintance wondered how they would survive when left alone at Palmyra.

Though Miss Stearns claimed she and her friend carried no illicit drugs, the Coast Guard, while doing an



inventory on the *Seavind* at Honolulu, came up with two pounds of marijuana seeds, plus fertilizer, as if someone had hoped to grow the plant somewhere. Before the *Seavind* was impounded, Walker attempted to re-register the craft under his alias name, apparently without success.

With more ingredients for a mystery novel than could be afforded by the most profound writer of fiction, the entire case must unfortunately go down in the books without a conclusive ending.



The fine old steel bark KAILANI, one of the largest of her rig ever built in the United States. Built in 1899, she operated for H. Hackfeld of Honolulu for several years. On a voyage to the Islands with coal from Seattle on October 31, 1902, her skipper, died aboard ship when only six days at sea. Captain T. H. Griffiths, was well known in Hawaii, having formerly been master of the bark ALBERT. The KAILANI'S hull is still afloat, being rebuilt and re-rigged for the nation's 200th birthday. The above photo was taken in 1913, before she joined the Alaska Packers as the STAR OF FINLAND. Orison Beaton Photo.



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An informal marine history  
of the Hawaiian Islands

# SHIPWRECKS IN PARADISE

BY JIM GIBBS

HMS DISCOVERY, commanded by Captain Charles Clerke, sailed in company with Captain James Cook's flagship RESOLUTION when the Hawaiian Islands were discovered in 1778. She is reproduced here from a well known painting.

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