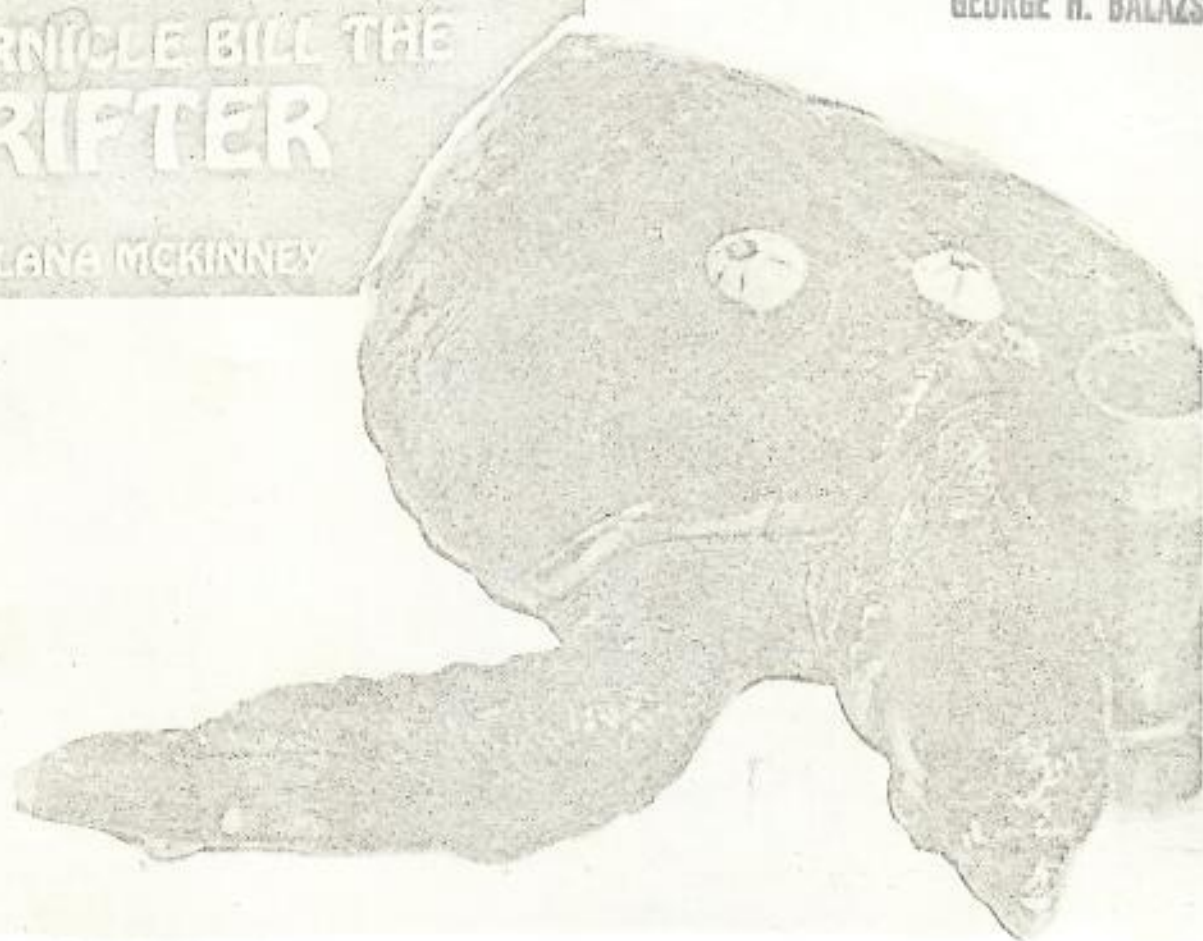


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# BARNACLE BILL THE DRIFTER

BY BLANE MCKINNEY



Nora and Dis



About eight miles out, where the waters of the Kolohi and Kaiwi Channels meet, we spotted a large round object floating in the mirrowlike sea. We immediately thought there might be mahimahi under it. As we draw closer, it started moving towards us, and we realized it was a huge turtle of about two hundred pounds!

We stopped the "Kamalii Kai Too" and drifted. Instead of swimming away, this turtle kept coming, heading steadily in our direction. He would duck his head from time to time, but only go down when he came right up to the stern of the boat. Each time he went under, we would pull away for a few feet and stop again. Up he would come, swimming back to the stern again.

Finally we realized that he was tired and simply looking for a ledge to rest on. As he was miles away from shore, it had probably been a long time between meals. Then we saw what was bothering him . . . he only had one front flipper! No wonder he was looking for a home base. A shark must have attacked him!

Sam and Jim tried to play cowboy and rope the slippery beast. Finally they had him snug, but it took Doc, Sam and Jim to raise him up. As soon as they had him set, they all lifted together and hauled the big sea creature up over the side onto the backdeck. He hung onto one of the ropes with his beak until we had him situated comfortably in a corner, where he settled down and made himself at home.

Upon closer inspection, he was missing not only one flipper, but also his tail. He even had a bite along the side of his jaw. All of the wounds looked as if they were several days old. Upon his rought domed back perched two pointed white barnacles shaped like little volcanoes. The animals within kept sticking out their noses. We set up a salt water hose to keep him cool while we were traveling as we were still some eight hours from Pokai Bay.

This turtle must really have been exhausted. Diana and Nora took turns running water over burlap bags,

covering him up and wiping out his eyes. He never put up any kind of a fuss. Sam even scrubbed his back with a brush. Although he moved around a bit, he appeared quite tame. We named him Barnacle Bill after his two hitchhikers.

It was well past dark when we came around the breakwall at Pokai Bay. Barnacle Bill was going to have to spend a night in Sam's front yard, while Doc phoned around to find a home for him. He peacefully spent the time on the grass with Sam's granddaughters, Roxanne and Gina, caring for him, keeping him cool and damp.

Doc finally reached Dr. Ed Schallenberger of Sea Life Park who said they would be delighted to take Barnacle Bill. So Bill started off on another ride, this time in the back of a pickup across the island with many watering stops along the way. Can you imagine what passing motorists must have thought when they looked down into the back of that pickup and found a big burlap-covered turtle staring back at them?

Once at Sea Life Park, Dr. Schallenberger checked Bill over and pronounced him fairly healthy, although thin, in spite of all he had been through. he was lifted into an isolation tank containing copper sulfate in the water to kill any parasites he might have. When George H. Balazs, the turtle authority and biologist from the University of Hawaii, looked him over, it was discovered that Bill was an Atlantic loggerhead turtle! How he ever negotiated his way through the Panama Canal is anybody's guess. However, these loggerheads are occasionally seen near Baja, California and may have drifted off course. The only other loggerhead found here visited us 27 years ago.

Bill is being fed squid by hand and is so tame, scientists are wondering if he might have escaped from another facility. He is eating great amounts of food and is putting on weight. As soon as he is in shape, he will be put into the Turtle Lagoon with others of his kind. Bill must think he has taken a ride to Turtle Heaven.



Sam Kapoi on back.





Nora and Diana keep turtle watered down during trip back.



Sam Kapoi scrubbing turtles shell. Note two large barnacles on back.

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Veterinarian Doc McKinney examining turtle. Note missing left flipper.



Untying "Barnacle Bill" after being lowered into isolation tank at Sea Life Park.