

THE CIRCUMNAVIGATION OF S/V KAMAL

A journey by Greg and Lauren Henry aboard their Pearson 365

Excerpted from e-mail correspondence between Randy Powers and Lauren Henry in December, 2003. It is presented on this website with the permission of Greg and Lauren Henry.

PART IV

New Zealand • Australia

New Zealand 11/01

(Written by Laurens father Bruce)

Dear all,

New Zealand is a long, long way from anywhere. Once you get over that fact, it's a very pleasant agricultural society. The North Island has rolling green evocative of Ireland while the South Island features very rugged mountains as well as grassy uplands. And yes, lots and lots of sheep. There are 4.5 million New Zealanders and 45 million or so sheep.

The houses in NZ are mostly pretty small. But they as well as the highways have wonderful gardens of wildflowers that are truly colorful and breathtaking. The people are extremely friendly and cannot do enough for you. This feeling of warmth and caring starts from the time you go through customs and continues throughout the country.

We flew into Auckland where Lauren and Greg, who we had not seen for 9 months, met us at the airport with extensive hugging and kissing. The kids looked great-suntanned, healthy and happy. And to all of you who asked, yes, they are still talking, very much so.

We rented a car and for rest of the trip and Lauren and Reva were truly backseat drivers. Most of the roads are narrow and curvy and driving on the left side of the road with the steering wheel on the right did not help. All kept reminding Greg or Bruce to keep left and to center the car, as many times we seemed very close to the edge.

We spent the first two days in Auckland, which has many old fashioned looking buildings. The seaport and museum and restaurants were nice and we enjoyed the holiday Christmas Parade (two days after our Thanksgiving) where it seemed the entire town turned out. The weather was alternately cool and warm so we spend a lot of time pulling on a sweater one minute and taking it off the next. One of the highlights in Auckland was

dinner at a friend's house that Lauren and Greg met while sailing. Tracy along with her parents, Barbara and Bruce prepared a wonderful dinner of leg-of-lamb and the national dessert Pavlova. Of course, just mention it to someone from Australia and see the controversy of whose national dish it is. Unfortunately, Bruce was sick and could not attend.

From Auckland we drove south to Waitoma where we toured a 'glow worm' cave. It was pretty impressive seeing the cave ceiling covered with green dots of light in the dark. That same day we continued on to Rotorua, a thermal and geyser area. It looks a little like Yellowstone with the geysers spouting periodically and the fumaroles and mud holes smoking and belching sulphurous vapor. The best part is the hot springs where we rented a private pool for a soak. And speaking of sulfur, the entire town and I mean the entire town reeks of rotten eggs. Ugh.

From Rotorua, we drove straight through to Wellington, the capital that is about six hours south and located on the southern coastline of the North Island. We planned to stop at Lake Taupo but it didn't look too auspicious with rain coming down and no motel or hotel room available (the only time this happened on the entire trip). Our first day dawned with a clear blue sky and, in fact, that was the last rain we saw on the trip. We had a great time on the revitalized waterfront with their new restaurants and shops. The highlight was eating gelato at a small shop playing Mozart for the assembled crowd. Reva and Lauren began their assault on the shops while Greg and Bruce toured the new National Museum located right at the harbor side.

We reached the South Island after a three-hour boat trip across the straight separating the North and South Islands. It was very pleasant and we landed at Picton where we picked up a new rental car and took off for the wine country at Blenheim, about an hour and a half south. As many of you know, New Zealand produces very good wine, particularly sauvignon blanc. We tried quite a few at the winery and then took off for the seaside town of Kaikoura located on a half moon bay backed by beautiful mountains. As luck would have it, the motel on the bay was full so we stayed at our second choice, a bed and breakfast called Donegal House. The proprietor, Murray Boyd, is descended from a family of Irish immigrants who arrived in the area from Donegal in the 1880's. He owns a dairy farm but his passion is gardening (he created an artificial lake populated by black swans and ducks and beautiful flowers) and is building an Irish pub by recreating the ancestral cottage in Donegal. We enjoyed a wonderful afternoon with Murray and then watched as the locals filed in to down a Guinness and pass the time of day. After dinner, we retired but the fun went on and on and on until about 3am someone played Auld Lang Sine and the party finally ended. The next day we hiked several miles on a cliff overlooking the bay and after avoiding a

few flocks of sheep, we had the chance to enjoy a beautiful view of the mountains and the sea.

From Kaikoura, we drove down the eastern coast to Christchurch, the most British of the cities in New Zealand. Like its namesake in England, the river running through it is the Avon. The city is situated between two harbors and there is an exciting summit drive where you can see both. Perhaps the highlight of our stay was "punting" or being poled in the slowly moving water in a shallow boat by a very knowledgeable guide. The city also has a beautiful botanical garden featuring an amazing rose garden.

Our last stop was across the island in the Southern Alps. It was an interesting drive. Queenstown is a little like Disneyland. It's not a real town but a collection of tourist shops (including a pedestrian mall) and travel agents to arrange for the many outdoors adventures available in the area. Because Queenstown is located on a deep lake surrounded by high mountains, hang gliding and bungee jumping are the order of the day. We passed on both but did enjoy a jet boat trip in the Shotover Canyon. It features a 50mph ride through a narrow gorge with the twenty something driver taking the twelve passengers to within a foot or so of the canyon walls and then guiding the boat to the middle of the river for a 360 degree turn 'on a dime'. Very exciting. We also took a day to see Milford Sound. The closest comparison is a Norwegian fiord. The glacier created arm of the sea is very deep and the mountains drop right into the water. To get there, we took a four-hour bus ride around the lake from Queenstown. The bus then climbed over part of the Southern Alps range through alpine climate zones containing several national parks. The final destination was the small port also called Milford Sound. There, we boarded a boat to cruise the fiord for several hours listening to a naturalist and taking pictures like crazy. The trip back to Queenstown was quite a bit quicker on a six seat light airplane. It only took twenty-five minutes.

We left Lauren and Greg in Queenstown when we began our return flights to the States. They continued up the western coast to hike the glaciers that I'm sure Lauren will describe in a forthcoming report.

Travel around Australia 1/02

Dear all,

Its cold and outside snow is falling...wait! What am I doing in New York City in the middle of winter? Greg and I came home for a month to work a bit and attend Greg's brother's wedding. All good fun, but I've spent the last few nights dreaming about balmy nights...

We arrived in Bundaberg, Australia in November - one year after pulling away from the dock in Mamaroneck. After all the rumors about how strict the Australian authorities are we were thrilled to find them affable, funny and welcoming. And it wasn't just them. Everywhere we went we were greeted by smiling, laughing faces. We started saying things like "g'day" and "good on ya!" And we still spend half our time trying to figure out what they mean when they talk - do we really speak the same language? We worked our way down to Mooloolaba, which is just north of Brisbane, where we planned to berth the boat for the duration of our stay. Mooloolaba is the Florida of Australia, destination for many Aussie vacationers looking for surf and sun. We were there just long enough to settle in before flying out to meet Bruce and Reva in New Zealand.

After two weeks with them Greg and I traveled to the west coast of NZ's south island to visit the Franz Josef Glacier, one of just two in the country. We set off on an ambitious all-day hike to the top of the ice, but the weather refused to cooperate and we found ourselves scampering down in carefully placed crampons while rain continued to pound relentlessly on us. Before the exodus our guide had taken us up through several layers - from the dirty, gritty lower level, over vertigo-inducing crevasses, to wonderful ice tunnels formed by dripping water and melting ice.

After a short visit with friends just outside Sydney we traveled to the island of Tasmania, the oft-overlooked chunk of land that sits just below mainland Australia. Greg was rewarded with a two-hour tour of INCAT, the first and one of the most successful builders of commercial fast ferries in the world. During the course of our stay we also visited many of the old penal colonies, some well preserved, others reduced to nothing but their foundations, but all stirring and haunting. In Hobart's Port Arthur, I stood in the room where convicts were placed for solitary punishment and understood why so many prisoners went insane - even with the door open and light streaming in it made my chest constrict in fear. If I spun around with my arms out I could almost touch the walls.

From "Tassie" we went to Melbourne to spend Christmas with Don and Jeannette from White Rose III and their family. We had a

wonderful few days and when it was time to leave found the only form of transportation available was by bus. Greg was so happy to have found two seats open he neglected to ask how long the trip would take. Needless to say, SEVENTEEN AND A HALF HOURS painful hours later we arrived in Sydney.

We spent less than one week there and I could have stayed much longer. The harbor is an impressive sight. From it's opening to the sea it twists and turns into large and small bays and nooks, finally ending in the heart of the city. We took a ferry that gave us a short tour on the water and brought us to the city's Taronga Zoo, perched high on a hill overlooking the scene below. A tram takes you to the top and we wound our way back down visiting birds, koalas and all sorts of other animals along the way. There are so many things to see and do, from the Chinese friendship garden, to touring the area known as The Rocks, to a walk across the Sydney Harbor Bridge. (If you want to actually climb to the top of the bridge you have to book months in advance, and that's sending groups up every 15 minutes!)

Our visit culminated with New Year's, which we spend on board our friend's boat 'Good Eye Deer' anchored just off Taronga Zoo. In keeping with the evening's "disposable" theme we dressed in garbage bag skirts and cellophane tops and rang in the new year to an absolutely stunning display of fireworks. Streams of sparks shot up from the city's tallest rooftops, while at several points along the harbor traditional fireworks exploded in a choreographed display of color. To culminate the evening the harbor bridge was the focus of yet more pyrotechnics, with some exploding above while a waterfall of sparkles simultaneously shimmered down from the footbridge in a cascading waterfall. Of course my photographs pale in comparison to the reality, so it's better left to the imagination...

The festivities left us feeling a bit knackered (tired) but in the short time we had left we still managed to visit the maritime museum, walk along the cliffs at Watson's Bay, ogle the sun-worshippers through a heat-induced haze rising above the sand at Bondi Beach, and watch the surfers as they rode the waves all along the city's coastline of beaches, amazed that they never once hit each other or the many swimmers darting among them.

On the drive back to Mooloolaba we stopped at Port Macquarie to meet up with Jay and Carol from Gandalf who were on their way down the coast in their newly purchased camper van. They told us to be sure to visit Byron Bay, and once there through a fog of incense we could just make out where all the hippies from the '60s ended up. It was also along this stretch of road that we noticed the Aussie penchant for "big things". There's the Big Banana, the Big Prawn, Big Ayers Rock, and just a short drive from Mooloolaba, the Big Pineapple. I'm not sure what the draw is since we

somehow managed to avoid stopping at any of them, but I am looking forward to visiting the Big Bull, whose balls swing when the wind picks up...

Upon our return to Kamal we were welcomed back by a plastic cockroach taped to our galley counter with a note letting us know how much we were missed. (thanks, Gene). Our last few weeks before flying home were a blur of activity, from taking the mast out to stripping wood and generally attaching the never-shrinking "to do" list. Our one respite was crossing the street to jump in the ocean surf and cool down after a day of work. Towards the end the water got so warm it wasn't even refreshing anymore, but the bodysurfing was still fun!

The area around Mooloolaba boasts a few attractions, but the best loved is Steve Irwin's Australia Zoo. (You know, the Crocodile Hunter?) If you don't know what I'm referring to you can catch his show on Animal Planet or periodically on the networks. He's not always there but we were lucky, because the day we visited we were graced with the hunter himself. He's just as bizarre in person. The main event at the zoo is the daily croc feeding - Steve gets into a fenced in area where three crocs reside, and draws them out of the water by enticing them with dead rats and birds. Very dramatic, as working around the perimeter yell out the whereabouts of the other crocs. At one point to demonstrate the protective nature of a new mother he taunted one of the crocs by approaching her nest and was comically chased around until he stepped a respectful distance away. A few days after our visit we heard on the radio he'd been bitten while moving one of the crocodiles among pens. He was quoted as saying it was just a "love bite", albeit one that requires stitches in the emergency room!

Now we're just a day and about thirty hours of travel time away from escaping bitter cold winds, icy sidewalks and blizzards (or non-blizzards, whichever the case may be). This time we'll be welcomed back to the carcasses of dead ants, the result of a mass extermination conducted in our absence on our behalf. Just as long as there are no cockroaches or crocodiles I'll be happy. (Have I mentioned the gargantuan size of all living creatures in Australia, from gnats to frogs? Not to mention the flies...imagine shooing flies away from your face and you will have just performed the Australian national salute!)

We'll be in Mooloolaba about three more weeks continuing to attack the to-do list, then will begin moving north all the way to Darwin on Australia's "top end". By then it will be July and we'll hop across to Indonesia for a completely different experience.

We actually do look on the site and read all your messages, so please keep 'em coming.

Mooloolaba to Port Douglas 5/01

Mooloolaba was Kamals home for many months, but when we were finally ready to leave, we found ourselves trapped in the harbor by strong weather. After weeks of waiting the winds finally subsided, and all the boats who'd sat it out with us took advantage of the lull to begin the migration north. Australia is a huge country, so we've moved fairly quickly up its Queensland coast, stopping in most places no more than a day or two. Once again we stayed at the marina in Bundaberg where we first pulled in to Australia all those months ago, and had a great reunion with the staff and several boats who never managed to make it any further south.

We saw the spot where Captain Cook first stepped foot in Australia (in honor of the year that event took place the town is named 1770, wreaking havoc with automatic sorters trying to distinguish between the towns name and its postal code!), took a tour of the port of Gladstone, with its smelting plant, huge coal terminal, bauxite plant, concrete plant, wood ship terminal and container terminal (think Elizabeth, New Jersey) and met up with friends we first met way back in the pacific. Further along we anchored off the island of Middle Percy, where some time ago the islands sole inhabitant erected an A-frame structure for sailors to eat and sleep in, should the rolling on board their vessel get the better of them. Since then visitors have left mementos, often elaborately carved and painted signs with their names, giving the building the crowded feeling of familiarity and history we saw the sign our friends on Manu Kai II left at least 20 years before! We put money in an old tin in exchange for a huge tub of honey made by the islands current residents.

All along we weren't having much luck catching fish, but our friends on Argonauta seemed to be pulling in something or another every time they threw out their line, and taking pity on us they graciously shared their catch! Inspired by Terry and Andreas haul, Greg took out his rod and tried fishing in one of the anchorages in the famed Whitsunday group of islands. It was a mighty battle of wills, with the bait vanishing mysteriously time and again, and Greg in turn using successively smaller pieces of bacon to lure the fish back. He finally felt a pull on the line, and after skillfully reeling it in found a wee little fish. Terry later confirmed it was a yellow sweetlip. But he was so tiny we let him go and had pasta for dinner!

The Whitsundays are a concentrated group of islands so beautiful they are protected national parks. Because the anchorages are so close to one another its possible to reach a new site after just a few hours sail. We visited Nara Inlet, which is shaped like a finger and with high walls on either side, feels much like a fjord from

some faraway place. We hiked to a small cave where you can still see Aboriginal paintings adorning its walls. We went snorkeling, and although there was plenty of room, we had to linger near the numerous tour boats, since they were keeping all the fish in that area by feeding them. On the way back to the boat we felt the sting of little jellies, luckily not the highly poisonous box jellyfish.

After lounging in the Whitsundays for a while it was time to get serious again, and we did an overnight to Townsville. We saw the most incredible moon-rise that night, and the sky transformed itself into an amazing array of colors. In general we've seen the most wondrous sunsets and sunrises in this area, and our friend Brian on Millennium C wondered if its the result of refraction off particles in the air from all the industry here. We arrived the next morning just in time to watch the U.S.S. Essex steam into port. The U.S. and Australia are engaging in joint exercises off the coast, code-named Tandem Thrust. (Incredibly some bureaucrat came up with that, and even more astounding, some other bureaucrat approved it!) With over 3,000 people on board, they effectively took over the small town. The servicemen and women were thrilled to have shore leave, and local residents were ecstatic with the money they brought in, so the atmosphere in town was friendly with a touch of the festive.

The highlight of our time there was a dive on the wreck of the S.S. Yongala, which went down in a cyclone in 1911 with the loss of all 120 persons on board. Their remains lie untouched, although the only reminder we could see that people once walked those decks was the eerie sight of toilets still bolted to the floor. The wreck lies on a barren piece of the ocean floor with nothing but sand for miles around, and as a result the hulk acts as an oasis for marine life who converge on it. The ship is literally covered with soft and hard coral, and the schools of fish were often so dense it was periodically difficult to see beyond them. We saw large turtles, and even larger grouper one has been dubbed the Volkswagen, and was bigger than me! My favorite are the clownfish, generally red or orange and black with white stripes along their middle which appear to glow. They live among the anemone, organisms which seem themselves to be lit from within like thick fiber-optic cables. We made two dives and both were incredible. We swam against the tide from the stern up to the bow, then relaxed as we allowed ourselves to be pulled back with the strong flow to our starting point. The ride to the dive site and back was a long three hours each way, during which we became friendly with our fellow divers (all of whom were either navy, marine, or air force off the Essex). Greg spent much of the time in conversation with Randy, a C-53 helicopter pilot stationed out of Florida. We told him we'd be sailing out in a few days and he said he'd try to fly out and see us along the way. We looked for him all that day, but it wasn't until sunset, as we lay at anchor with four other boats, that we heard ourselves being hailed over the vhf by Nomad. We gave

him our coordinates and not long after heard the rhythmic whoosh of his rotors as he appeared over the nearby hills. He did a few circles around us, snapped a photo and took off. I suspect the other boats wondered what was going on! Our friends on Transit later admitted they couldn't figure out what boat Nomad was, and were even more confused when they hailed us and were told by Greg that he'd call them back after a friend arrived!

We decided to bypass Cairns and stop instead at Port Douglas, just an hour further north by car (a days sail for us). Here we went on another dive, this time to the real thing the Great Barrier Reef. We were accompanied by four other cruisers, and our package took us on three dives at three different sites. Although our expectations were high, compared to the Yongala it was a bit disappointing; the reef appeared almost colorless, and it was COLD! The dives got progressively shallower, and despite our collective disenchantment we found that each dive was an improvement upon the previous one. The last dive was the best, with the most vibrant coral, and greatest variety of fish. There were other highlights, such as our sightings during the course of the day of manta rays, a small shark, a green eel and more of my clown fish.

This weekend is Carnival, a celebration without any apparent theme other than enjoyment for enjoyments sake in the true Aussie style. There was The Longest Lunch here at the marina; tables were set up the length of the wharf and ticket holders enjoyed hours upon hours of food and drink, an outrageous evening parade and street party with fireworks, and yet to come is the food and wine festival, followed by a seafood fair to close the weekend out. We've heard the towns population will soar this weekend from 3,000 to somewhere between 25 and 40 thousand, depending upon who's doing the counting.

Moving north from here well stop at Cooktown, but beyond that what we might call towns become scarce, in fact the sail up the top end of Queensland is referred to as the horror stretch for its scenic banality and lack of good anchorages. By the third week in June well be in Gove, preparing to depart on the Over the Top rally, a two week trip from there to Darwin which will take us through Aboriginal lands normally off limits to visitors.

I know some of you might have had difficulty leaving messages on the site, but webmaster Bruce has assured me the problem is all taken care of, so please try again we look forward to hearing from you after those last few hundred painful miles!

Gove, Australia 6/01

Hi everyone. I'm beginning this update with a shameless endorsement for our first and only sponsor, Globalstar. Globalstar has lent us a Qualcomm satellite phone to test out while we travel from Cooktown to Darwin, and so far it's worked great. (Its pretty cool making a phone call in the middle of the ocean!) So those of you who are planning on visiting the nether-regions of the planet, we recommend you check it out.

I'm writing from Gove in the Northern Territory (NT). I know some people have tried looking that up in their atlas and been unable to locate it. If you want to find it, try looking under Nhulunbuy instead. This whole region is a jumble of Aboriginal and European place names and spellings, making geography seem like a game of hide and seek.

We left the shiny resort atmosphere of Port Douglas and found an instant demarcation; not only did civilization practically disappear, but all of the sudden the wind began to blow and didn't abate until we reached the tip of Cape York. In the two weeks it took us to get there I don't think the wind got below 20Kts EVER. (Sailing was mostly in Force 6-7, luckily all downwind, which made for fast trips!) We stopped at Lizard Island, a beautiful, remote island with a luxury resort and reef research station. The resort wanted nothing to do with us, but the researchers were more than welcoming, hosting a bbq and giving us tours of their facility. Lizard is where Captain Cook climbed the highest hill he could find hoping to locate a way out of the reef which had trapped him inside dangerously close to shore. We hiked up the same hill, but strong winds at the summit didn't encourage loitering.

The extreme northern Queensland coast is relatively desolate, so we were eager to move quickly. Along the way several of us made an excursion at the Flinders Group to harvest oysters off the rocks exposed during low tide. We followed the experts from South Carolina off Skimmer who came well prepared, equipped with buckets, chisel, hammer, knife, protective gloves, and lemon wedges! The oysters were salty and crunchy but we had fun.

On the fishing front our luck is much improved, having caught a 75cm Spanish Mackerel and a (large for us) 19lb bluefin tuna which fed 4 boats that night and still left enough for four of us to enjoy sushi a night later. The experience has given me a renewed respect for professional sushi chefs. My tekka maki looked, well, frankly bizarre, but luckily it still tasted good!

We were making our way up the coast when an unfortunate incident marred our progress. As they were entering the Escape River Transit, a boat from Virginia, drifted too close to shore and got stuck on a rock. They were there over an hour before a local

powerboat helped to drop their anchor astern, allowing them to winch themselves off. Remarkably they appear to have suffered no damage, but sadly Skimmer did when they tried to help and got too close, putting themselves on another rock nearby. They were able to quickly power themselves off, but something pierced their keel, leaving a conical-shaped hole and a 10gallon/hour leak. The next day we all raced up to Thursday Island where Heyward plugged up the hole using underwater epoxy collected from us and several other boats in the anchorage. While he was in the water his wife Charlotte rapped on the hull with a hammer to scare away the crocs. I was inclined to think the noise might attract them, but he escaped unscathed and reduced the flow of water, so who's to argue?

Luckily the rest of the trip passed uneventfully. One day after the repair we left for the two day trip to Gove across the Gulf of Carpentaria. It was a windy, bumpy ride and we were all happy to get in. We are traveling to Darwin in a rally of 32 boats called the Over The Top which is organized through the Gove Yacht Club. Gove is a small town built around the huge bauxite mine, so for the next week the club has scheduled events and bbqs organized to keep us busy, then we leave for the two week trip across, stopping in Aboriginal villages and areas usually inaccessible to visitors.

Finding internet access has become progressively more difficult, but when we do we love reading your messages. Thanks for taking the time to write us.

Gove to Darwin Australia 7/01

We'd been looking forward to the Gove to Darwin Over the Top rally ever since hearing about it months earlier while cruising the South Pacific. 33 boats (overwhelmingly Australian, English and American) would spend two weeks sailing in the remote Northern Territory, specifically in an area known as Arnhem Land, owned by Aboriginals and practically inaccessible to the normal traveler. In the week leading up to departure the Gove Yacht Club, the events organizer, hosted several bbqs and outings which kept us occupied and entertained.

Our sendoff began inauspiciously with dark clouds gathering overhead, but they cleared by the time we pulled into our first anchorage that afternoon. The next day we sailed through the Gugari Rip, known as the Hole in the Wall because its like traversing a long stretch of water with canyon walls on either side just 90 feet across from one another. There were bottlenecks and a lot of jostling but no mishaps. At various anchorages we fished, hunted for oysters, squid, lobsters and mud crabs, took hikes, but generally didn't go swimming because after all this is the NT,

where you might get stung by a box jellyfish or chomped by a gator, just two of the many unpleasant ways to die in Australia.

We'd been told one highlight would be our two day stay in Refuge Bay, Banthula homeland. Before leaving Gove the Commodore of the yacht club informed us we'd been invited to participate in a ceremony there in addition to regularly scheduled events. But we were disappointed to find our interaction with the community restricted to one beach bbq (we did organize a game of baseball, and the British and Australian cruisers retaliated by setting up a cricket pitch further up the beach) which was cut short by persistent rain showers.

There were some wonderful moments; sailing under spinnaker, main and mizzen staysail and beating the entire fleet (including Capers, a Sundeer 56), cruising in company with a group of dolphins and minkie whales, witnessing a manta ray do an aerial back flip, watching the sun set as we cooked dinner on the beach, and meeting a diverse group of people, a good many of whom will be continuing on to Asia with us. But unfortunately the experience was marred by friction and miscommunication among the yacht clubs representatives. We also found sailing with so many boats stressful, requiring constant and diligent watchkeeping while underway.

Our arrival in Darwin set the stage for a comedy of errors. After an overnight sail many of the boats arrived early, several of whom were required to get hauled out for a bottom inspection; the authorities are looking for an insidious mussel which reproduces out of control and can wreak havoc on the local waters. Not having previously hauled in Australia, we were one of those boats. There were only a few moorings available, so we tied up to Cinnabars stern, a drama in itself when the tide changed and we almost T-boned them. Meanwhile, we were bumped to the back of the line since we were one of the smallest boats to get hauled and the whole operation depended on the state of the tide, which can be as large as 7m (over 21 feet).

We finally pulled in at 4:00, only to find that the yards equipment was not capable of accommodating our keel arrangement. That meant they would have to send a diver down to check us out. Another boat had been dived on at 1:00 that afternoon, but at that time we were still expecting to get pulled out of the water. We motored over to Cullen Bay, where we had a slip reserved. Every marina has a set of locks which must be negotiated to gain entrance, like mini Panama Canals. We tied up outside and finally got our clearance from the diver. After having arrived in Darwin harbor at 7:00am, we pulled into our slip at 7:00 that night. We were exhausted, but happy to be there!

Two days after our arrival in Darwin Greg's brother and sister in

law arrived for a ten day visit. They'll give you their own impressions, (and no, we never did go out for a day sail which Im sure I'll be paying for the rest of my life) but I think the NT is properly and accurately summed up in this local saying: In the Northern Territory NT stands for: not today, not tomorrow, never Thursday, nor Tuesday, not before ten and not after two, and whatever it is your'e looking for, well mate, its on the next truck.

Now were preparing for the passage to Indonesia, getting visas & permits and stocking up on provisions. We recently acquired a stowaway, a tiny gecko we've imaginatively named Darwin. Were hoping he (or she) wont jump ship, because I strongly support any animal that eats bugs for a living. (Spiders are also allowed free reign on Kamal, although it means we find webs hanging everywhere!)

We'd hoped to leave Darwin July 24th, but par for the course we have a new and unexpected problem with the engine which might delay our departure. However, there are so many boats leaving in the next few weeks that whenever we do manage to throw the lines were guaranteed to have company.

The Northern Territory, Australia 7/01

(Written by Greg's brother Geoff)

Dear all,

Jennifer and I flew into Darwin International Airport to meet up with our world travelers, Greg & Lauren. Darwin would be our final stop on our Australian tour. During the prior 2 weeks, we had made our way up the East Coast of Australia visiting Sydney, Cairns, the Great Barrier Reef, and Port Douglas.

After hopping into a cab, to which we were greeted with a friendly Gday from our driver, we took a short ride to the Cullen Bay Marina. There we were met by two tanned YACHTIES (slang for those who live the good life) who we almost didn't recognize. After a welcoming drink, Greg and Lauren showed us to our luxury accommodations aboard the Kamal. The boat was pristine; clearly they had spent a considerable amount of time cleaning for us landlovers. Jennifer, who had never seen the boat, was amazed by all the modern conveniences they had squeezed into the compact space tv, microwave, coffee pot, laptop computer and even (now) email access from the boat via radio!

Over a celebratory dinner (belated birthday for Greg and a welcome for us) we talked about how we would spend our time in Darwin. We had arrived without a specific agenda, but quickly planned the next seven days. . .

July 10th

We eased into the Northern Territory with a day exploring Darwin. We spent a good bit of time at the Smith Street Mall, ambling through the local stores filled with hats, digeradoos, and boomerangs. Then, at the harbor, we learned a little Darwin history.

At one time, Darwin was one of Australia's most important cities due to its large harbor and proximity to South East Asia. It is still one of the largest cities in Australia (and certainly in the Northern Territory), but much of the city was destroyed by Japanese bombers in WWII and then again by Cyclone Tracy on Christmas Eve, 1974.

We walked until we could stand the heat and humidity no more (95°F and over 70% humidity) and sought refuge in the shade with ice creams in our hands (one of Greg's strongest cravings when he is in port!). Our late afternoon adventures took place in . . . the grocery store. We learned that grocery shopping is often a yachties favorite activity since they like to stock up on fresh food prior to those long stretches of canned and dry goods at sea.

July 11th

We quickly realized how large the country of Australia is when the four of us left Darwin by car to explore the Northern Territory. While we limited the number of sites and parks we were going to see, the time spent in the car getting from place to place was significant. Litchfield National Park was our first stop and will forever be remembered as the land of termites. The park has hundreds of thousands of termite mounds that can rise to over 10 feet tall. Little did we know that of the hundreds of different termite species that exist, less than 5% of the species eat wood. In addition to examining the termite mounds in Litchfield, Greg and I also cooled off with a swim in one of the many waterfall swimming holes.

July 12th-14th

Over the next three days, we explored two of the more popular parks in the NT, Katherine Gorge and Kakadu National Parks. The climate of the NT is extreme; it rains over 130cm on average between October and February (the Wet Season) and typically not a drop from May through September (the Dry Season). Because of the climate the lands of the NT are covered with endless shrubs and low-lying trees. But, hidden in all of this Outback is some truly amazing wildlife. During our walks, car rides, and river boat cruises in the region we came across wallabies (very similar to a kangaroo but smaller), bats, poisonous snakes, sand lizards,

dozens of magnificent looking birds (including many eagles) and of course crocodiles! In Australia there are two types of Crocs, fresh water (known as freshies) and saltwater (salties). The freshies grow to only 6 or 7 feet in length and will not attack humans unless provoked, while the salties can grow to over 20 feet long and will not hesitate to bite ya head off! Dozens of people are killed by Crocs in Australia every year and just knowing that they exist in most parts of Australia leads one to be cautious whenever venturing near bodies of water in the Outback. Of course the Australian coastal waters are also littered with sharks and killer box jellyfish - so there really is no place where one can feel totally safe.

July15th-17th

We returned to Darwin to relax with Greg and Lauren for several days and had the opportunity to meet many of their fellow globe trotters. The yachties welcomed us land dwellers enthusiastically and we were fortunate to dine with many of them during our final three days in Darwin.

And of course, I cant leave out the fact that Jennifer and I were quite excited about a day sail on the Kamal. However, Greg and Lauren were not as psyched (as it can take a couple of hours to prepare the boat for any type of sailing trip, day or overnight due to the amount of gear they have up on deck) and because, as we learned, REAL globe trotter's don't do day sails. So, they slyly pushed the trip back each day until they finally agreed to go out on our last day in Darwin and, sure enough, it rained that day!!! Now it may not seem like an odd occurrence that it precipitated on our last day in the land Down Under, but let me just say that it rains in Darwin in July as often as my beloved Boston Red Sox win the World Series (not since 1918). Needless to say, we did not go on a sail on the Kamal and we will never let G&L forget it unless they invite us back!

We had a wonderful time with Greg and Lauren and truly enjoyed seeing first-hand how they really live while they are in port during their incredible voyage. Many thanks for an unforgettable adventure! We miss you! Enjoy the pics.