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12/20/73

Dear Bob,

Tore is hopefully in Honolulu by now, and we are looking forward to seeing him ~~to~~ now. Thank you for all your help in arranging his trip.

We are still sitting on our luggage waiting for the Militobi to take us to Rongelap. For a while we were concerned that we should not be back to receive Tore, and we made arrangements for his support and welfare. Then we were worried we would have to leave just as he arrived or shortly before. Thanks to the marvels of marshallese shipping we shall probably have both Christmas and New Years together.

I was so disgusted when we arrived from our last trip I decided to cool off before I wrote you. Then we got dysentery, probably acquired on board and we shrivelled up like peeled oranges. I thought we should have to be admitted for parenteral fluids but fortunately the tetracycline took effect when the outlook was at its grimmest. Last weekend we finally recovered. Jon Schaefer took me out for a diver's check-out and he found a golden cowrie. Sometimes charity is justly rewarded.

You may jump the next paragraphs. I am not filing complaints, and you know already about this wretched system. But I have promised Liv to have one of our trips on record while it is fresh in the memory. Although the details differ it may serve as a prototype.

The ship arrived ^{11/16} ~~12/29~~; but it was Friday, and Kitco had not arranged for money, so although we loaded Saturday as planned, we were sitting on board till Monday waiting for a bank to open before we sailed. Well, Liv and I went home of course when we finally learned about the delay. Other passengers were not quite that lucky. ^{11/19} ~~12/22~~ at 3 pm we sailed. In the meantime our schedule was changed. The agreement was that they should ship me to Rongelap on the homeward trip from Utirik, but Militobi is not able to stay away from home base that long (see below), so the captain told me he would return to Kwajalein and then go to Rongelap. Consequently we left our equipment for Rongelap behind; I saw no point in having it tossed around for 10 days amid copra bags and bugs.

The captain and chief steward were nice people; we got ^{/were} the cabin we promised. The ship is straight out of dry dock, and was painted. But the cabins were stripped of fixtures, except for the ceiling light. Bare wires were jutting out of the wall where reading lights and fan should have been. I brought a fan of ours and mounted on the wall. The engines were bad news. They run only on half speed ahead. At full speed they overheat, and also at low speed

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so he has to hit it right the first time when he docks, and not fool around too much in the neighborhood of coral heads.

The other facilities were as before, except that the cockroaches have to grow a little more to reach their previous eminence (It is a sight I shall never forget when the Rongelap kids were chasing our roaches with sticks when we are unpacked.) The showers were leaking everywhere but for the showerheads proper. Therefore water could be turned on only for an hour in the evening, or they would lose their supplies in a few days. Even so, 10 days was the estimated maximum they could stay away without running dry. The Johns were jammed: instead of draining they regurgitated when we flushed, and you had to enter in rubber boots. Fortunately the thresholds are high and the sea was calm, so we had none of it sloshing around in the corridor, as I have seen it happen.

One thing had improved. They were restricting the number of passengers to 120. When you add the crew the ratio of people to life preservers is now 2:1 instead of the previous norm of 3:1. Also there are 6 life rafts each with a maximum capacity of 25, so if they all get out there is half a chance of some relief from the sharks.

Back to the schedule. Wotje was first stop and uneventful. I saw Karmen there. (#2171) She was examined in 1972, so I just spoke to her. She was in good shape and had no complaints. We were in Wotje atoll from Ek Tuesday till Friday night. On one of the islets we visited Lijatrik and Eksen live. (# 2107; 2106) I examined them. Eksen was in excellent shape. Lijatrik had no complaints but I found a borderline hypertension, and the right lobe of her thyroid was slightly enlarged. Ezra was also on the trip and helped me. He found a thyroid nodule in one of his patients (1-2 cm diam. in lower left lobe) It felt just like Menuwe's neck before her operation - this was in a woman not on our lists.

Saturday (their Sunday) at 3 pm we arrived at Ailuk. There was a team there trying to blast a channel ashore (Ailuk has a beach so shallow they can load copra only at high tide) but with moderate success. They made a lot of big holes in a row and killed not a few fish. Now they have to train their boats to jump like a salmon.

I saw Biba (# 2140). She had some complaints. Most remarkable was some tumors in the tendons of right leg. They were hard like bone. Her BP was 150/95 and she was bleeding from the gums. She had the worst case of periodontal disease and I recommended she go to Majuro or Ebeye for extraction and fitting of dentures which she did.

On Ailuk the trader ran out of sugar and rice, and had no more copra bags (Wotje had 7 months production of copra to deliver) Consequently trading all but stopped, but they still had their passengers to deliver, so the trip must go on. After having dragged their feet day after day on Wotje it was now decided to make a fast finish. Some of the passengers had been on board this ship for nearly 3 weeks since they left Majuro. Consequently we had just a few hours on Utirik. We arrived at dusk on Monday night, and left for the pass at midday on Tuesday. There we had to wait till 9 pm for a proper timing of the arrival at Mejit. We had good fishing there. Ezra, Jeton another passenger and I took 2 large barracuda, some rainbow runners and 6 yellowfin tunas. It was the one bright spot on the trip.

Menuwe went on the ship and is now at Utirik. She is in good shape, but the hut she had to stay in was leaking everywhere and she was rather depressed when she saw it. I may be wrong, but I have the notion that she is sister of our landlord Lamor.

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Chugi Chutaro's father is the new reverend. He was on the ship with wife and daughter. Jakob Anjain is on Ujae. Rev. Naphtali from Rongelap was also on board. He will be on Wotje for some years. They ship them around. Maybe they use their sermons over again at the new place.

I visited Melih. She was in good shape, but had not nursed the baby. She was fed jackaroo and rice water. We had some canned milk, and I gave her baby vitamins. The kid was normal and developing normally as far as I could see. She was pale, but I had given my pediatric $FeSO_4$ away at Ailuk, and of course there there was no such thing in the dispensary. What they don't have would make up an excellent first aid kit. Melih was well supplied with synthroid and claimed she was taking it religiously.

Our houses were alright. Dan lives in one of them. They had brought in lumber for a new school house, so Andy now has supplies without stripping more of our walls.

Wednesday morning we got out early to greet Mejit, only to learn that the ship had been ordered on a medical evacuation to (you guessed it) Rongelap. Now we had a double race with time - thought the patient was in extremis - it was one of Jabwe's granddaughters who had dysentery, but also we had to make it to Kwajalein with her early Thursday morning before they closed the area for a mission. It was a calm day. Ezra and I took the boston whaler ashore from way out, and met the ship again at the passage. I bought the last four bags of Rice on board (they had been destined for Mejit) and took along for shore. On the way in we met the community boat with Bella et al. They had been to Bikini shopping and knew nothing about the whole excitement.

It was Nobe's baby. She had not been nursed, Nobe had weaned her in the puerperium and taken the first boat to Ebye. Tanira's old mother was in charge and the kid was starved more than sick; although she had watery stools. Liv and I fed her 1100 ml of milk during the next 12 hours. That place of Jabwe's is a sight! If I had to come back to that each night I wouldn't feel like working either. I crawled under that hut and 1007 kids in all ages were crawling with me and there Tanira and Jonita were sitting and nursing their babies (if only they could have spread it around and let Nobe's kid share we could have been spared the trip), and the grandgrandmother was sitting there with unseeing eyes and fanning the baby. It was a sight of udder profusion. We grabbed the kid and some butterfly needles and transfusion units from the dispensary and headed back for the ship. As it happened we didn't have to give the transfusions. It is my shortest visit to Rongelap so far.

At Kwajalein it was decided the ship had to go back to Majuro and pick up copra bags. Then it would repeat the interrupted field trip before going west and to Rongelap. I heard on the radio that they reached Mejit today. It means that those passengers have been on that deck for 6 ~~XXXX~~ weeks. And here I am sitting in an airconditioned room and complaining.

As I have said before, it is not that I cannot take it for a while, but I cannot base a lifetime program on wasting nine days out of ten.

If you have an attentive ear somewhere in the Interior Dept. hammer it home to him that these field trip operations are a travesty of service, and so devoid of safety considerations it is outright criminal. When disaster strikes United States will be blamed for it. I know the spiel about not interfering in

the internal affairs of Micronesia; but in this case I would rather be damned for doing something about it than for not doing it. I don't know the conditions in Fiji but they can't possibly be worse and you see what happened there.

But for all the frustrations it could have been a nice trip. The weather was unusually calm for the season, and we had good company. Revs. Naphtali and Chutare were on board, as were Ezra, Jeton and Matan. Matan's mother had died and he went to Wotje to visit the grave. Also we became acquainted with the weatherman from Majuro who did maintenance on the stations at Wotje and Utirik.

I have one more piece out of Joseph Conrad before I turn to business. After all this is a christmas letter, and I have to tell about the silver linings. Monday we had a call from Roi Namur. 8 people from Rongelap had showed up in their small boat to do christmas shopping. As they they did the last time, Global people leaned over backwards to help them. They flew them down from Roi, even changed their plane schedule a little to allow for loading of all their goods. Also, Murph was extremely helpful. They wanted so much (e.g 150 breads) that I could not go out and buy it all and pretend it was for me. So Murph called around and twisted arms and arranged for all they asked for. Still I think it was nice of KMR. They could have told them to go shopping on Ebeye. I got them a new chart. They must have had a thousand pounds on board. On their way back they ran out of fuel. The sea is very rough (the trade winds are steady at about 20 knots) and they had some engine trouble. Thank God they brought a walkie talkie (this is the first time they have done that) and Ebeye picked up their message, and Yap Islander was shipped off to refuel them. They expect to make contact in the morning.

Bill: They were found and traced home.

I have talked to Jim Pualua. You can have his LCU but you must write Distad about it. I think it will be cheaper than Militobi, and if not better, at least cleaner. If you charter Militobi, please set an upper limit on the number of passengers they may book. 150 men, women and children using the same clogged toilet makes it rather unpleasant in the cabin section. Considering that they carry 70 life vests you could probably agree to take some 20 people in addition to the team and the crew. Of course, on the LCU you won't have that problem. On the other hand there are many people on Ebeye who count on going north with us. For them it will be a disappointment if we go on our own on the LCU.

KMR would rather not charter us their LCU. The schedule is tight and the fuel allocation tighter. But if we get desperate they will do their best. So it was not a flat no.

They promised me at the TT office to let me know if a plane should go to Bikini. Two days later, they sent one to evacuate a patient. No word to me. I could even have been of some help. Of course the Rongelap people were here, so it would have been awkward, but they did not even tell me. Due to the fuel squeeze it takes an emergency for them to send a plane up there now.

The squeeze is noticeable. They have reduced the water taxi to Ebeye. I send the

new schedule for your information. We shall find a driver so we can use our Boston whaler. But if you plan to draw any fuel here on Kwaj. it would be considerate to make the arrangement in advance. What little I need they let me have, but in March we may be closer to the bottom of the jug. TT has a little more leverage than the Army, so I am considering buying my gasoline on Ebeye. The Kerosene for Rongelap we did buy there.

I have made arrangement with Kwaj. hosp. to do my blood sugars. But after the September survey they talked as if they were going to move the trailers each day, and I was needed at the hospital so I worked there instead and figured on doing the blood sugars from the trailer when we had moved them. Well, nobody here rides on the day they talk about saddling the horse. I shall get it done in January when I have peace of mind about Rongelap. Jonni is on Ebeye still. By word of mouth I have heard that the operation specimen was clean, so what the Pap smears were about I know not. The one they took in Majuro came back with an unequivocal diagnosis of carcinoma. I wonder if somebody on Hawaii is walking around with a spurious clean bill of health? Naiko went to Majuro hospital also

I think I have all the drugs I need for the survey. We must bring Tibas his supplies. I have brought dressing material and sneakers for him each time. I think he is better, but even if he is not, he is emotionally a different person just because we bother.

I shall reread all of your letters and make sure that I follow up on your requests. I read the the one with the good news that John Bateman was coming and the one with the bad news that he was not coming on the same day . .

Thanks for all your letters, Bob. They help me keep the faith when the spirit is weak and the flesh is unwilling.

Merry Christmas to you and your family.

All the best from


Liv and Knud.