

# *Sailing Faith:* THE LONG WAY HOME

GREGG A. GRANGER

“You’re going to a lot of places where they don’t value human life like we do.” That was the reaction Gregg A. Granger received when sharing with other friends and relatives, his plans to sail around the world with his wife, two teenage daughters, and five-year-old son.

Prior to their departure, the Grangers’ sailing experience was limited to one week aboard a charter in Florida, and a sixteen-foot Hobie Cat at their Gun Lake, Michigan, home.

The journey was about travel and culture, but more about relationships. Relationships with their creator, with each other, with people on similar journeys, and with others in the thirty-eight countries the Grangers visited during their four and a half years abroad.

Learning to sail was the least of the obstacles they faced as they travelled headlong into places where they struggled through preconceptions and prejudices to discover how strong and how wrong their preconceptions were.

Time abroad also afforded the Grangers a view of America from a different and not always popular perspective.

The impact of malaria, broken bones, storms and other struggles was a small price to pay for the personal and family growth they experienced; that same impact was dwarfed by the Created world and goodness the Granger family witnessed.

Cover Photo: Anzac Bridge, Sydney, Australia

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In the hour it takes me to drive home – Lorrie and the girls are driving separately because of their special wedding jobs – I have two inspirations from God. The first is to stop taking myself away from my family, pretending to provide for them. I am not good at it and am not getting ahead. The second is that it isn't socially acceptable to drop out to take care of my family, so why not buy a boat and sail around the world? That isn't socially acceptable either, but the reminders won't be so constant.

Arriving home, I carry Greggii to bed – parents know the debate – do you wake him or carry him? Sleeping babies are easy, sleeping toddlers are manageable, but sleeping preschoolers are like a big bag of water. Depending on how long they've been sleeping, chances are good that they *are* a big bag of water so the trip detours to the bathroom, and with a sleeping little boy, I'm just glad he hit the room; putting the seat up isn't going to make a difference.

Having spent the past thirty minutes on this life-dream, I can't wait to tell Lorrie. When she gets home, we stand in the kitchen, and I say, "I had a revelation. I think we should sell everything and sail around the world." She gently strokes my forehead for fever, maybe from the drugs or surgery earlier in the week. I share everything I feel with Lorrie, *except* the excitement which she seems reluctant to grasp. She thinks we should sleep on it.

Good strategy! We pray about it, and soon, she starts believing that what was first attributed to drugs is God's plan for this point in our lives.

We now have direction. It's no longer a maybe. Within weeks, we watch people's eyes roll when we tell them our plan. The drugs and self-pity and frustration and rolling eyes need to take a seat on the sidelines, as God reveals what we are about.

I don't need to know too much about sailing because God blows the winds, creates the currents, and makes the seas behave. He's brought us this far, and He won't abandon us now.

But, I don't have a clue when it comes to buying a boat. I need help, and one day I walk into Anchorage Yacht Sales in Holland, Michigan. I hear a warm baritone voice, "Hi there. What can I do for you?" while soaking in my first yacht brokerage: two nautical charts hanging on the wall, two desks, two windows, a door, and the smell of burning coffee. The only difference from any other kind of brokerage is the listings taped on the windows and the magazines on the desks.

My eyes find the source of the voice, Tom Rodenhouse, and I say, "Hi. My wife and I want a boat to take our family sailing – around the world."

“Ho, ho, ho, ho, ho.” He turns into jolly old Saint Nick, “Who put you up to this?”

“N-n-nobody. What are you talking about?”

“You’re serious? Nobody told you to come in here and say you’re going to go sailing around the world?”

“No. What’s so funny?”

“Oh man, I’m sorry! I just got back from circumnavigating two years ago, and thought you, that someone told you to come in here and, come on now, tell the truth – are you sure nobody told you to come talk to me?”

“I just saw your sign, and here I am.”

“So, you’re going to sail around the world. How many of you are there?”

“Five.”

In Tom, I find someone to help locate the right boat, and someone with knowledge of what we’re getting into.

The few boats we view in Michigan grow in me an awareness of my ignorance, but I do learn a few things. From the magazines, I see the lines and looks, but now I hear the creaks and groans, feel the joinery, and realize that every boat has a smell. The smell of new boats is chemical – paint, fiberglass, woodshop, or cleaning solutions. The smell of other boats can be anything: sewage, rotting wood, mildew, cooking grease, or just the stale smell of old air in a closed space.

I also learn that the Great Lakes don’t have the boat we need.

Tom lines up an agent in Annapolis, Maryland, to show a boat there. This agent first shows me one at the dock, *Antipodes of Sydney*, before driving to the specific boat I came to see. Once I see the layout, I know *Antipodes* is perfect. I look at a number of others, but now have *Antipodes* from which to draw less than favorable comparisons.

Later, I learn the interior paneling isn’t teak, but nyatoh, another rich Asian wood. The floor creaks, but less than the others. The smell, not unpleasant, is of stale cooking grease, especially in the galley that serves as the corridor to the aft stateroom with its own head and a separate, stand-up shower. A bow cabin with a single bunk is accessed through the starboard cabin that holds two bunks, one above the other; a private port cabin has a double bunk; a large salon wraps around the companionway, with a navigation desk and bunk on the port side, opposite the galley (page ix).

I return the next weekend with Lorrie and Greggii. While we make the decision to purchase *Antipodes*, a pep rally across the river for the opening home football game of the United States Naval Academy sends a fireworks show overhead.

As a family, we need to choose a name so she can be documented. Though *Antipodes* is a good name, it's not ours. We don't hash around too many before settling on *Faith*. *Faith* satisfies several criteria: it's one syllable, easily pronounced and phonetically spelled for radio transmissions – Foxtrot-Alpha-India-Tango-Hotel – easy on the eyes, and we don't know any other boats by that name. Most of all, it reveals how God brought us to this point and is a constant reminder of our approach to this adventure. *Faith* says it all.

We have a plan to depart in about a year and to sail around the world in two. All we must do now is prepare ourselves and *Faith* for the trip.

There aren't many people saying, "Wow, that's really something, go for it!" There aren't many people who think we'll be going too far at all.

The most telling story comes five years later, while sitting at anchor in St. Lucia after our Atlantic crossing, the final passage that marks our circumnavigation. Rich and Samantha approach in their dinghy and ask, "Did *Faith* used to be *Antipodes*? Do you recognize us?"

"Hi. Yeah, you were the captain and mate on *Antipodes* when we bought her."

"People asked us whatever became of her. What have you been doing with her?"

"Our stop here marks the completion of our circumnavigation of the world, just like we said we were going to do when we bought her."

Sam says, "Nobody ever believes that. People always say they're going to sail around the world, but nobody ever does."

While preparing for our voyage in Hampton, Virginia, we find a number of folks planning voyages of their own and a few who have actually left the dock. The planners are dreamers, conjuring obstacles to maintain the dream: As soon as the boat is all ready (boats are boats, and will never be *all* ready). As soon as they have accumulated enough money (there will *never* be enough). As soon as the kids are older, or the kids have moved out, or ...

I recall a man I worked with years earlier who refused a sizeable Christmas bonus. "I always wanted a Cadillac," he said, "but as soon as I get my Cadillac, the dream is gone. I just think the car can't be as good as the dream."

People know when they leave the dock, the dream is gone.

Regarding our lack of experience, even we admit it's a valid concern. Not many

people upgrade from a sixteen-foot Hobie Cat on Gun Lake, Michigan, to a fifty-six-foot monohull on the blue waters of three oceans. For us, though, the prize is making this journey as a family, and precludes any *normal* progression toward that level of competence.

I always ask, “So, how do you think we should go about getting experience?”

“You’ve got to sail,” comes the reply, and I shrug that off the list of concerns. If nothing else happens, we *are* going to sail.

The other concern that people express is about our itinerary. A recurring theme surfaces:

*“You’re going to a lot of places where they don’t value human life like we do.”*

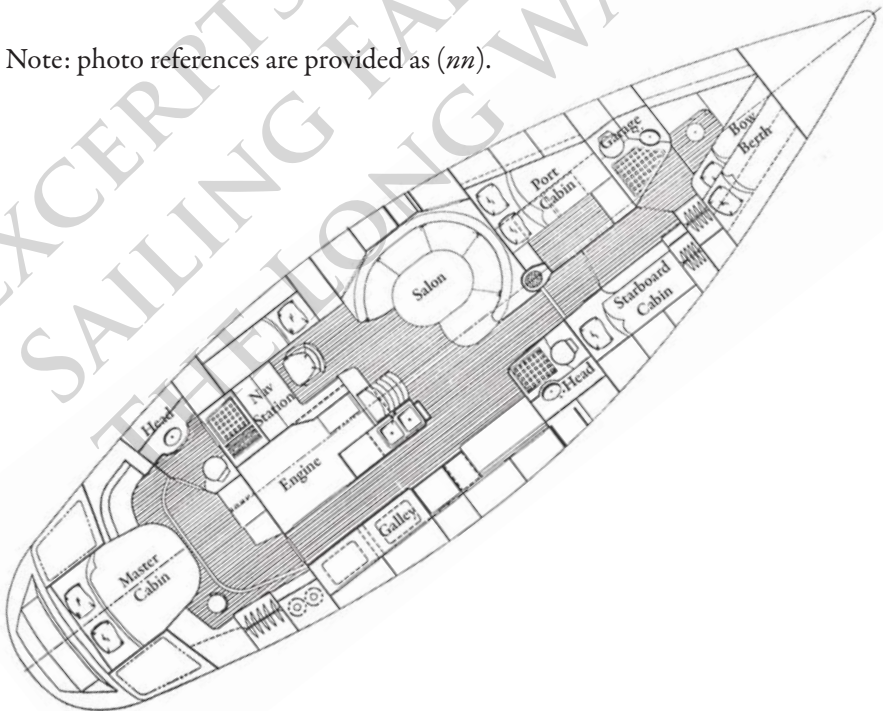
Nobody, least of all me, with my conservative Republican roots, my Reformed religion, and my resistance to change, could foresee the unintended truth of that statement.

We will learn that, where joy is concerned, less is more. The farther we travel into worlds where less stuff drives people’s lives, the more joy there is.

We will also learn that fear of the world makes us prisoners of our borders, and we will grow a healthy suspicion of the proponents of that fear.

This is our story.

Note: photo references are provided as (*nn*).



call *Magic Dragon*.

"*Magic Dragon, Magic Dragon*, this is *Faith*."

"Faith, this is Magic Dragon. How wonderful to hear you," sings Linda.

"Um, yes...where are you?"

"We just got to Tortola last week. Where are you now?"

"Um," he looks at me, "Where are we, Dad?"

"St. Lucia."

He keys the microphone and says, "Magic Dragon, this is Faith, We're in St Lucia."

Linda says, "Faith stand by," then a moment later, "John and I will be there in three or four days. We want to see you again. We'll come to Rodney Bay and call when we get close."

"Um, OK, Faith out."

"Magic Dragon, out."

After dropping off Jacob and Loraine at the airport in Vieux Fort, we return to Rodney Bay to visit John and Linda. Their arrival is the best thing possible for Lorrie at this time, and they tell her what we're doing is great. John, sensing I'm too close to be a good teacher, schools the three girls in sailing basics for two hours on each of the two days we're with them. My insecurity creeps out, and I ask what they're learning and what John does different than I do. John instead uses this time to build Lorrie's confidence in my abilities and in our plans.

The Caribbean is a difficult place to start, but by necessity, it's our place. Maybe it's not the Caribbean at all, but the start of our journey that's difficult. We're fortunate for the friends we *are* meeting, but they're fleeting because of the paths chosen.

## The Dangling Goober

After we flounder around in the Caribbean for a couple months and continue south to St. Vincent, Bequia, Tobago Cays, and Union Island, it's time to move.

We're finally free of Caribbean tourism. Though we think about breaking up the passage to Panama with a stop, the honeymoon memories Lorrie and I have of Aruba, nineteen years ago, don't offer compelling reasons. I recall the green space on Aruba being in low-lying areas, especially the drainage ditches along the roads where Heineken bottles proliferate.

There's no warning until we're downwind of Aruba enough to not turn back. Then the wind starts blowing. A lot of life comes without warning and that's a good thing. Too much warning might mean not moving at all. Maybe that's why some boats never leave the dock.

As the sun sets, the wind builds to forty knots and holds all night and through the day.

The seas are big. I have no way of telling how big a wave is, except that my eyes, when I stand in the cockpit, are eight feet above the water line. If a wave goes above the horizon, I know it's over eight feet. On this passage, I can only guess we're in waves around thirty feet. They *are* over eight feet.

I can't shake the word *knockdown* from my head. From the little knowledge I have, a knockdown can occur when a boat is parallel to the waves. *Faith* isn't. The breeze and the seas are following. It doesn't help that this weather develops as dusk



deepens. Sleep blankets those who are able to with security; my own sleep, when I take the opportunity, is like that of a nervous cat.

Before dawn on the second morning, the wind tapers to ten knots, eliminating the pressure against our sails that held us in balance. Now the high seas toss us like a cork. *Faith's* radar displays an echo in the distance. Later, the ship is in a different position. I finally make a visual sighting on the ship in yet another position in the colorless light before the sun rises. I go to the mast to fiddle with the sails. When I return to the cockpit, Lorrie tells me that a ship is hailing us. I contact the calm voice of someone who hasn't been thrown around as we have for the past thirty-six hours. "This is the aircraft carrier *USS Enterprise*, and we cannot determine your intentions. We changed our course three times, and request that you now change yours to maintain a five-mile separation."

He is correct; we are sailing all over the place. I agree to maintain our separation as best I can. I think it's pretty cool, though, that our little boat can make an aircraft carrier work around us as much as it did. (It would be fun to see that in a movie sometime.)

Following six days at sea, we arrive in the north-facing bay of Puerto Obaldia, Panama, and anchor in four-foot swells. While we prepare to go to Customs, six men pointing to official patches on their shoulders paddle a canoe out to us. They board *Faith* to look around. We use few words of each other's language, but determine four things: 1) the transom will be fumigated for something, 2) the police will board us soon, 3) after the police visit, we are to go to immigration, and 4) after that, we must go to another office.

We use papers and pencils and pictures and gestures to communicate.

The police, thirteen men and one dog, board *Faith*. Their covered launch scratches through *Faith's* finish while they board us, and Duke scratches through the varnish on Emily's floor while he sniffs it. Both Customs and the police are interested in where we came from. They ask several times, "Did you go to Colombia?" whose border is less than a mile away.

We say, "No," every time.

The scratches aside, they're all friendly in a professional manner and appreciate the chance in this sleepy village to conduct official business. We enjoy the experience too.

We take two trips in the dinghy to get to shore in the rough water, with Emily and Amanda greeted on our first trip by a man wearing a machine gun. When I

return with Lorrie and Greggii, one Customs officer escorts us past other soldiers in the streets to the police station, where a young woman completes some paperwork. While we sit in silence, she occasionally, without moving her head, aims her eyes at us in a blank look that betrays nothing. After a five-minute hour, she hands us a piece of paper. We're then escorted to the immigration office.

Lorrie, Emily, Amanda, and Greggii abandon me to walk to a lonely playground.

The immigration official clears us in and points me to another office for our cruising permit. On the way back to *Faith*, a man waves us over to sign a document that I believe has something to do with the fumigating, or turtles, or our first born. Language is a slight barrier.

Everyone says, "Welcome to Panama!" Asking about the soldiers, I learn we're in a war zone. I don't know what war it is, but they take it seriously. One soldier suggests, not because of the war zone stuff, but for a calm anchorage, that we move an hour away, to Puerto Perme. That anchorage is in a lagoon near the *Kuna Yali* – an indigenous population – village of Anachucuna.

At Puerto Perme, two ten-year-old boys bring us bananas, lemons, and a sugar cane. They speak as much English as we do Kuna. We show them our atlas – where we started, where we've been, and how we got here. They ask how to say things in English, and we learn a little Spanish and Kuna.

Beaching the dinghy in the village, we're greeted by a hundred children under ten years old. After several misspoken or misunderstood requests, we're taken to the *Sila* – village principal – for permission to anchor and visit.

The dwellings have thatched roofs, cane or bamboo walls, and dirt floors. The store is stocked with rice, soaps, fabrics, and other necessities, most in bulk without the packaging we've learned to pay extra for in America.

The children show us to a house where the Sila lies in a hammock. He doesn't get up, but asks, through an interpreter, our names, how we got here, and about our boat. He motions us to sit, and we sit and look at each other uncomfortably until he rises and motions us to follow.

It's quite a parade – the Sila, the interpreter, the hundred children, and us – as we wind our way through the pedestrian streets and between the houses.

We arrive at the Sila's house to enter a large porch with dirt for the floor. The Sila's age commands respect. The interpreter, almost as old, spits a big rolling goober into the dust as he settles into his seat. Moments later, while the Sila pontificates for the benefit of the assembled children, the interpreter tries to let go of another one, but it hangs up on his lower lip, does a cartwheel off his chin, and lands half-on and half-off the seat of his chair between his legs. He uses the straw of grass

he is chewing on to try to flick it away, without success. It just dangles. Being the only non-white guy who speaks any English in the room, he knows all of the English-speaking white folks are looking at him, and he knows we're distracted by his dangling goober, so he moves his legs around on the chair to make the problem disappear.

While he struggles to regain his composure, several of the children who can't fit inside the porch or get a spot outside of the screenless windows are climbing on the roof to look in from the ventilation holes. Generally, roofs are not designed for humans, and this is especially true for thatched roofs. One kid makes a rapid entry into the room from above along with several palm fronds that give way. He isn't hurt, but redirects the interpreter's embarrassment to himself.

Now we can get down to business.

The Sila grumbles a few things, and then looks to the interpreter who holds up his hand, fingers and thumb spread and says, "Dollar." I give him a \$5.00 bill, and then he says what I think is, "No, All." Leading me to believe it is \$5.00 for each of the five of us.

I give him another \$20.00, and he gives me my \$5.00 back and leaves. Now I *am* getting confused. We sit for a minor eternity with children pressing on our backs because they're being pushed against us by the children behind them who also want to see the action.

We sit and stare at each other: the Sila, the children, and us. It's hot, it's crowded, it's sweaty, and we don't know what we're waiting for. I know for a fact that at least one of the white guys in the room is growing uncomfortable.

After twenty minutes, the interpreter returns and hands me a \$5.00 bill and a receipt for \$15.00. My guess is it took that long to find somebody to make change. I don't know what that transaction is for, but we have a receipt.

The Sila then waves his arms around in a broad gesture to indicate that the village is ours to roam, which we do with children following us at every point.

Five minutes later, Greggii falls down and comes to me with a small cut on his finger. He's crying and says that when he fell down, all the children laughed. We learn much later that in many cultures, laughter is meant to offer comfort to somebody in an embarrassing or painful situation. That knowledge came too late; it nearly killed me to not laugh at that dangling goober.

Women approach Lorrie, Emily, and Amanda to offer *molas* – beautifully colored blouses, or fabrics.

In the morning, we wake late. Puerto Perme is full of *ubus* – dugout canoes – each with a father and his children fishing. Vergilio de Leon Diaz, the most

inquisitive of the boys that welcomed us yesterday, brings two of his three sisters, Bertalicia and Fidelecia, two and five years old; Vergilio De Leon is ten (32 & 17).

We invite them in for a movie and popcorn. *Scooby Doo*. After that, a man with six granddaughters comes, then three boys. Amanda suggests we give them pictures of themselves. We take and print photographs and cut them out for them, to their great excitement.

After Anachakuna, we want to see more of the San Blas, but the weather doesn't let us. Our confidence has not yet developed sufficiently to enter the reefs in the eight-foot seas we're encountering. It's one thing to bump into something slowly in calm water, but quite another to be thrown onto rocks or reefs by waves. We sail overnight to Portobelo, twenty miles from the entrance to the Panama Canal.

Portobelo is an old Spanish port where men would carry Peruvian gold over the isthmus to ship to Spain. We try to get information on the canal here, as it seems a nice place to wait, but are told only to bring *Faith* to Limon Bay or to the Panama Canal Yacht Club for assignment of a transit date.

*Faith's* lines suggest movement. The marina in Hampton gave us waves and tides, but keeping *Faith* at the dock felt like trying to hold a thoroughbred in the gate. *Faith* possesses sufficient adrenaline to keep us all doped up, waiting for the start. Waiting becomes a recurring frustration. In Hampton, it was for the end of hurricane season; in Panama, it's to transit the canal, then on the Pacific side to obtain visas for French Polynesia; in the Galapagos, it's the wait for fuel; in Malaysia, it's the ten months' wait to complete the forty-five day contract for work; and in Gran Canaria, it's a wait for the end of hurricane season again, to make the Atlantic crossing.

Panama is special to us because of the people congregated here with plans similar to our own – plans to sail to the western horizons of the Pacific.

On arrival in Panama we know we managed to leave the dock.

### Part III. Worlds Apart



Indonesia  
22 July to 14 October 2005

EXCERPTS FROM  
SAILING FAITH:  
THE LONG WAY HOME



## Prejudice

*The exact contrary of what is generally believed is often the truth.*

Jean de la Bruyere

Landfall is not marked by a negative element, so much as we experience a leveling of the pleasanter aspects of bluewater sailing. The air loses a degree of crispness, the tone of the water a degree of its brilliance, either of its own, or as it reflects the sky. Land emerges through the haze of a horizon in which we are no longer alone.

Today's landfall is the island of Jamdena or Yamdena, depending on whose charts are looked at. Our preconceptions of the otherness or nothingness of Indonesia cast their own shadows on the water.

Two days after leaving Darwin, the anchor settles, and the Port City of Saumlaki becomes our home. Both words, *port* and *city*, are overstatements. Saumlaki is a large village that becomes a port of entry only while officials are here for the annual Darwin to Saumlaki Rally for Cruisers. We pretend participation.

Because *Faith* is the first boat to arrive, the people of Saumlaki think we're the winners and congratulate us all around. Although we enjoy the attention, we tell them the winners are yet to arrive and that *Faith* is not part of the rally. We learned of it two weeks ago in Darwin and made Saumlaki our destination then.

As we work the wobbles out of our legs on the restaurant deck of Harapan Indah Hotel that doubles as our dinghy dock, we meet Dani, the hotel's owner, who

directs me to the port office.

I walk out onto the sidewalk and along the narrow street in Saumlaki's main business district to find the officials for clearance. The sidewalk is maintained differently or not at all by the individual shopkeepers; it's rarely level, often broken, crowded with people, and radiates the anger of the midday sun. As I enter the immigration office, a young man there, mute from the language barrier, escorts me to the side of the building, points to a canoe paddling toward *Faith*, and indicates I must go back. I return to find a boy in a small canoe and a man aboard *Faith*, speaking with Lorrie. He's pleasant, in the pleasant manner of someone who wants something, which becomes more apparent during his cursory search, asking, "Is that for me?" or, "Do you have gift for me?" I tire of saying no, and when he points to a ball-cap and asks again, I say, "Yes."

Some officials in Indonesia spend considerable energy in their quest for rewards, but aside from the mid-level annoyance, our experience suggests if your papers are in order and you respond to their questions honestly, or at least believably, you can refuse a bribe.

While we are in Indonesia, a story unfolds in the *New York Times* about the American corporation Freeport McMoRan Copper and Gold, Inc. The company made US\$20 million in payments to police generals, colonels, majors, captains, and entire military units.

Freeport said in a written response to The Times that it had "taken appropriate steps"... "There is no alternative to our reliance on the Indonesian military and police in this regard," the company said. "The need for this security, the support provided for such security, and the procedures governing such support, as well as decisions regarding our relationships with the Indonesian government and its security institutions, are ordinary business activities."

*Below a Mountain of Wealth, a River of Waste*, Jane Perlez and Raymond Bonner, December 27, 2005, New York Times

The influence of western businessmen, who far outnumber other western visitors, might partially explain Indonesian officials' expectation of gifts; after all, they are *ordinary business activities*.

Indonesia spans an area of the globe two-thirds the size of the United States; most is ocean. Comprising over 13,600 islands and over 700 languages, Indonesia,



I assume, is the most difficult country in the world to govern. That they have a national government of all the disparate pieces is remarkable, and the idea of entities from financially blessed parts of the world dictating their terms of exploitation becomes less unbelievable.

In Indonesia, people must declare their religion on their identification card; atheism is not a religion. With 88% of its population of 240 million professing such, Indonesia is the world's largest Muslim country. This is often a matter of birth, not choice. The remaining population claim Hindu, Buddhist, Christian Catholic, and Christian Protestant as their religion. Many continue to practice animism in addition to their professed faith.

Indonesia has Bali, with a recipe to attract Australian, European, and American tourists, and that recipe is our reason for a different route. We have our whole lives for places catering to white-guys, but we'll probably never return to Saumlaki, or Babar, or Damar, or Romang, or Makassar, or Banjarmasin, or Kumai.

We struggle to draft a concept of Indonesian culture, and realize the futility of it. The one element that spans all areas of Indonesia is the government, though the more populated areas share a common tongue: Bahasa Indonesia. Indonesia has no dominant culture, but instead attempts to unite hundreds, maybe thousands of disparate cultures – cultures with less in common than all western nations have with each other.

We find an enchanting land struggling for identity between ancient and modern cultures – ancient cultures with individual identities on each island group, or on larger islands, identities separated by terrain, and a modern culture with some elements attempting to maintain tradition, some attempting to maintain a cohesive nation, and some attempting to move the nation towards production on a global scale, all overlaid with outside influences extracting Indonesia's profits.

Television is recent in Saumlaki, and American television is part of it. In addition to the unifying element of language, Indonesia has the struggle of this cultural leveler. *We never knew what we didn't have* is an emerging theme. While transportation and communications have homogenized the United States into a cultural marshmallow, the export of American programming is expanding the marshmallow and dramatically changing the world.

As Americans, we live in invisible test tubes of about an arm's length called *our space*. We feel uncomfortable when someone violates it. In Indonesia, and in all the non-western cultures we visit, personal space does not exist, and we learn not

to miss it.

Wherever possible, we use local transportation. Sitting in a van full of people different from us, who speak differently, act differently, dress differently, and smell different may not sound like a picnic, but it does offer a hint of the flavor of humanity. When we finish this journey, that will be something we miss – the closeness of people. On our return, everybody will respect our space, and the world will be lonelier on that account.

While we are dining on deck at Harapan Indah, Nelis introduces himself and sits with us. He teaches English at the Catholic school and wants to practice his English with us. Here we are, shocked by the otherness, uncomfortable with our loss of space, and annoyed that the restaurant lets people in to pitch all sorts of things, when Nelis asks us to help teach English at his school. That's all it takes and an instant bond is forged with this timid, yet determined, young man (3).

The school brings excitement, anxiety, and apprehension. After the welcome, all we can do is begin teaching. I recognize the dumb looks the students give me as the same dumb looks I gave my teachers when I was clueless. At seven years old, Greggii is better than I am. He doesn't see teaching as a task, an accomplishment, or an obstacle as I do. He simply tries to communicate and succeeds. So do Emily and Amanda.

In the days that follow, the *real* Darwin to Saumlaki Rally boats filter into the harbor. One of the rally events is to go to the same school and teach, and we again go as a family with the new arrivals. This visit begins with the headmaster giving a warm, forty-five-minute welcome speech to the volunteers. The students hold welcome banners and sing songs to greet us.

Saumlaki has two groups of people: normal folks like us and politicians. The officials mark events with ceremony, and we join the Darwin to Saumlaki boats for the political shenanigans. The week is spent in ceremonial one-upmanship.

One morning, we take a tour bus to a village where a special welcome is planned. Along the way is a village, the streets lined on both sides with smiling, waving school children crying "welcome" and "hello!" They're spaced two meters apart for a half-kilometer, each waving a plastic Indonesian flag on a stick. The next village is where the event is planned. The people here brought all their crafts to the community center for display and are preparing for a parade as we motor past. Then, the bus abruptly turns onto a sandy side street and deposits us on a beach some distance from the village. We determine that our bus was hijacked so one of the muckety-mucks can hold his own ceremony.

We're entertained by long speeches and a short demonstration of traditional

dance by boys and girls in costume.

The best part of the afternoon is when we steal away to the community center for the crafts show, where we buy a beautiful, intricately carved, wooden sailing boat model made out of ebony (page 91). We've been warned not to use water to clean it just in case the ebony is stained onto it. The villagers here were not allowed to attend the ceremony, and are hurt by the officials having taken the reception from them and cancelling their parade.

We each experience a degree of digestive discomfort from the newness of Indonesian cuisine, and Greggii's peak discomfort coincides with one ceremony that we attend. After dinner and before the speeches, he has a violent bout of diarrhea. Indonesia is in the process of adopting the sit-down style toilets we're familiar with, but they're not universally available. The restrooms for tonight's ceremony are the squat-over-a-hole-in-the-floor-and-hope-you-don't-hit-your-shoes style. I hold Greggii's hands to balance his squat. Toilet paper is also gaining acceptance, but again, this facility is traditional, fitted with a tub of water and a *gayung* – a hand-dipper. Too timid to ask, I assume you simply splash yourself clean. I leave Greggii, scared, sick, and crying, and go to the serving table for napkins. Greggii and I work together on the cleanup and return to the hall. When our hosts hear of his malady, an ambulance is called. Neither Greggii nor I am too hot on the idea of going to the hospital, so I ask the ambulance guys to take us back to Harapan Indah, where Dani lets Greggii sleep in a quiet room until the girls return.

Another event is hosted by the most prestigious of all, a governor of sorts, who after the ceremony, dances with many of the women. Emily dances with him a couple times. Later we learn he's in trouble for spending US\$2 million of government money to purchase the *MTB Express*, a ferry boat to service the islands between here and Ambon. It doesn't seem a bad price until you see the rusty hunk of scrap iron by that name. We learn later that this man has his housing and food provided in a medium security facility. It's unfortunate that a simple phone call to any number of foreign firms would provide the name of the right palm to grease to make his troubles disappear.

An emotional undercurrent develops in our lives, urging us to scratch deeper into our beliefs about who we are and why we're here. We can't know it now, but our struggles are social, and will haunt us for two years until we reemerge in the West, a place that so masterfully created our distorted perception of the world.

Cruising guides speak of the bribes for the officials. The Western press thrives

## Southeast Asia: Vietnam

*... We have been too often disappointed by the optimism of the American leaders, both in Vietnam and Washington, to have faith any longer in the silver linings they find in the darkest clouds...*

Walter Cronkite, CBS Evening News, February 27, 1968

**I**n Phnom Penh, we keep Greggii occupied and away from the two places we wish to see: The Killing Fields and the Toel Slang Genocide Museum – a secondary school turned into a torture prison and death camp during the reign of the Khmer Rouge. Emily summed our emotions that day in a college term paper, “Dehumanization: War Weapon and Justification for Genocide,” (November 24, 2008):

The day was hot and dry. It was impossible not to inhale the dust. I was in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, visiting The Killing Fields. The ground was ridden with teeth, broken bones, and shreds of clothing. I had to walk carefully to avoid stepping on these remains of the victims of the Khmer Rouge genocide. I came to a large tree with a sign next to it that read, “KILLING TREE AGAINST WHICH EXECUTIONERS BEAT CHILDREN.” Then I walked over to a large stupa--a Buddhist shrine--that contained layers upon layers of skulls that had been unearthed from an excavation. Questions were flashing through my mind such as: “How did this happen?” “Where could the evil behind something like this

come from?" I left Phnom Penh and life continued. The shock of what I saw and the questions I had were still with me, but faded over time.

After Phnom Penh, we board a bus bound for Ho Chi Minh City, the old Saigon (64).

I was born two years too late to participate in America's conflict in Southeast Asia, but I grew up with Walter Cronkite providing nightly coverage. By age thirteen, I knew I didn't want anything to do with what was going on here; this conflict grew up my generation; to some degree, it grew up our parents' generation.

The begging is not as pronounced as in Cambodia, but many people make ends meet by selling lighters, books, and other items we don't need. The prices are quoted in dollars, Vietnam being one of the few places we visit in the world where US Dollars are preferred over the local currency, *đồng*.

We go to the War Remnants Museum that was previously called the War Crimes Museum until American diplomatic pressure caused the name change. The exhibits did not change with the name, however, and four themes are apparent: massacres, especially My Lai, the outcomes of Dow Chemical's Napalm and Monsanto's Agent Orange on people (Monsanto claimed then that Agent Orange was safe, just as they claim now their pesticides and genetically modified foods are safe), paintings by children of how the world *should* be, and the American photo-journalists who put the war's atrocities into American living rooms in an era when atrocities on *both* sides were the responsibility of journalism.

I think we finally found one of the *places in the world where they didn't value human life*, but that was at a time when their values were imposed by outsiders.

The Cu Chi Tunnels are one of the places the Viet Cong and guerillas lived during the war. Cu Chi is just outside of Ho Chi Minh City, where over 240 kilometers of tunnels were maintained with health clinics, war rooms, sleeping quarters, and cooking facilities. There are also several primitive but effective booby traps on display, many made from unexploded U. S. bomb casings and other abandoned hardware.

While the U. S. put people on the moon, had the most sophisticated weaponry in the world, and the talent to abuse it as effectively as anyone anywhere, the war was won with primitive methods used by a determined people.

A taxi is our first experience in Hanoi. We ask to go to the Viet Anh Hotel. The driver gets on his cell phone as soon as we're out of the airport, chatters in Viet-

namese, and then takes us to an area where the main racket is hotel rooms. A man in a maitre de or bell hop uniform runs out of a building with a business card from the Viet Anh Hotel.

“So sorry, Viet Ahn no room.”

“Is this the Viet Anh?” I ask.

“Yes, Viet Ahn, sorry, no room.”

“The Viet Anh is on Ma Mai Street, all these signs say “Heng Buam Street.”

“Signs bad. Viet Ahn, no room.”

Our driver then takes us to a second place, and I refuse to let him take the bags out of the taxi. We’ve been had, and I tell the driver to take us to the Viet Anh Hotel. We pile back in, and drive around a little longer, before arriving at our original destination on Ma Mai Street.

Too tired to do much else, we try going to the Water Puppet show. It’s sold out, so we buy tickets for tomorrow afternoon.

In the morning, we take a walking tour. Emily and I go one way, and Lorrie, Jacob and Ardi go another. Emily and I complete the walking tour of Hanoi’s Old Quarter in mid-afternoon by sampling a couple traditional Vietnamese coffee shops. Vietnam has great coffee, and we’re both a little wired before long. On the way home, we stop and sample Bin Hoi, the cheapest beer in the world. A one-pint mug costs fourteen cents.

As a family, we walk to the Water Puppets Theatre for a fun show. The reflection of lights off the surface of the shallow pool hides the underwater mechanical apparatus that brings the puppets to life. When we exit the theatre, we find a woman squatting on the sidewalk over a small kettle of boiling water. We’re curious and after watching her boil an egg, we try it. The egg is already opened when she hands it to us, revealing an almost developed duck. Jacob and Lorrie abstain, but the rest of us find it palatable. Like everything in the exotic food world, it tastes like turtle.

On 20 July, we fly from Hanoi to Bangkok, then from Bangkok to Hat Yai, then taxi to Satun for the return ferry to Langkawi.

about 600BC, and has worn it since.

After two days in Aden, a bus takes us to the capital city of Sana'a, a preserved city dating back 2,500 years. We leave on a Friday, Islam's holy day, and don't stop for four and a half hours because the driver wants to get to a certain Mosque for prayers. While milling around between the washrooms, a restaurant, and the Mosque, we note that most of the men, in addition to their traditional attire including the dagger in the belt, carry some sort of firearm, from a sidearm next to the dagger to an automatic rifle slung over the shoulder.

"Why do they take their guns to church, dad?"

"Greggii, when I was a little boy and when we went to the Methodist Church, all the men wore neckties. Even me. They were for dress up, but nobody ever used them. I don't remember anybody ever being hanged by one."

"Okay."

Old Sana'a is a trading center, the streets lined with stalls of vendors selling dates, nuts, knives, guns, frankincense, clothing from around the world, and souvenirs, in addition to money changers, and shops where camels turn mills to produce sesame oil (37 & 44). Many of the buildings are housing units of six to eight floors. We sleep on the fifth floor of one of these on mattresses covering the floor, the Taj Talha Hotel. We never thought to ask about accommodations with real beds because we live on a boat and haven't seen real beds for quite some time.

The tourist industry has not overlaid Yemen with fabrications.

There are one hundred and three mosques inside the walls of Old Sana'a. It's not a big city in area, and when this many mosques begin the muezzin's call, it's either chaotic or beautiful, depending on your perspective. In the late afternoon, after walking and visiting vendors in the heat of the day, we sit on the rooftop of the hotel, and watch the sky redden over the ancient city. Then a single crystalline tenor breaks, followed within seconds by all the other muezzins, each independent in their mosque's call, but collectively creating a symphony for us.

Back in Aden, Amanda and I are invited to the Coast Guard station where Colonel al Hammedi, the head of the Marine Security Division of the Yemen Coast Guard asks for a letter of recommendation about security in Yemen.

After returning to *Faith* to compose it, Amanda and I carry the letter to his office across the street from our anchorage. Colonel al Hammadi comments on how much Amanda's attire is appreciated. He presents Amanda with a Qur'an that has English text facing the Arabic, and several booklets explaining what it means to be Muslim. He has a small model ship and gives that to her as well. Before presenting each gift, he asks permission. I tell him we're Christian, and ask permission



to present him with a Bible. He consents. I return to *Faith* to get a Bible, several pamphlets for adults and children explaining God's promise through Christ, and a picture of our family. Then we say a prayer that God will use us as He wishes, and return to give him our gifts.

A strange and wonderful event takes place when perceptions collide with reality. I suppose American economic interests must vilify certain peoples, whole nations of peoples, around the globe to justify the treatment of those peoples. How else could we sleep at night? But those perceptions that allow sleep are shattered every time the opportunity of reality is introduced in our journey.

In Yemen, and elsewhere, the result is a portrait of God's created beauty in mankind, and we cannot think of much else this early morning as we pull up anchor.

Halfway out of the harbor, we're reminded by Harbor Control that we need to radio them before moving. Later in the day, another Coalition Warship, this time with an Australian or British accent, contacts us to ask a few questions: ship's name, ship's number, port of registry, number on board, citizenship, last port, etc.

When he asks, "Date and time of departure?" I have the microphone keyed while Emily and I discuss it. She says she thinks it's the twenty-first.

"No," I say, "It's mom's birthday." In my fake-serious radio voice, "two-two March, zero-six-zero-zero."

With several accompanying snickers, he asks, "Next Port?"

I picture four or five bored kids in the radio room of the warship, amused to be talking to some guy who doesn't even know what day it is and reply, "Massawa, Eritrea."

He then asks, "Do you have any information regarding the maritime community in this area that you wish to offer?"

"Do you want information on other cruisers? Or local fishing boats? Or what?"

"Do you have any knowledge of smuggling activity, the Yemen Coast Guard, or other vessel activity since departing Aden?"

I'm relieved he doesn't ask about while *in* Aden, forcing me to relate the story of Colonel al Hammadi, and Amanda, and I, and Qu'rans, and Bibles, and model ships and things.

I feel sorry for him, and want to put him onto something to give them purpose and direction, but without the time to prepare a believable story, I tell the truth:

"No."





## Malaria

*The best way to prevent malarial infection is to take measures to avoid being bitten by mosquitos.*

*International Medical Guide for Ships, World  
Health Organization, Geneva, 1988*

We steer for the Red Sea, trying to grasp the information in the cruising guides about anchorages and safety in this area. Cruising guides encourage boats to use the main shipping channel of Bab el Mandeb to enter the Red Sea, but we think the Small Strait, east of Perrim Island is better because it *isn't* the main shipping channel. Sailing in shipping lanes is like riding a bicycle on the freeway. We take the road less travelled, close to Yemen's mainland to stay out of the prohibited military area surrounding Perrim Island. We hear stories to inspire fear in travelers – stories like the navy will approach in their patrol boats, just to scare us and shake us down a little, or the navy will fire on yachts in this or that anchorage, to chase them out of sensitive areas rather than to sink them, or my personal favorite, that the whole area is so darn infested with pirates that you must keep diligent watch to not bump into them.

Sailing the Small Strait, we see a patrol boat working the perimeter of the prohibited area. There are several small boats, fifteen to twenty feet long, violently bobbing in the choppy seas where they're anchored. In each, we see two large figures and one small, or one large with two or three small. All but the smallest

hold fishing poles or nets. When the face is covered in black, we know that's the mother. The only thing we can think of, confronted with such a threatening sight, is to wave to each other. I hold my hands two feet apart, asking in Universal Fisherman's Signal, how big the fish are. The reply, again in UFS, is them holding their hands about four inches apart.

The next day, we sail on the east side of the shipping lanes, waiting late into the night to cross. Ships in the Red Sea and anywhere in our travels don't just appear. On rare occasions, we'll see a speck on the horizon, but that's the exception. The rule is that an object on the horizon slowly transforms from the nothingness of haze into a hallucination or ghost, followed by reality as a ship is born into focus. A time element exists in the formation of ships on the horizon. When a choice is available, we cross shipping lanes in the dark of night. Navigation lights eliminate guesswork. So does radar.

We complete sixty hours of sailing and would continue to Massawa if we knew we could enter the harbor in daylight. Massawa is another thirty miles – more than four hours away – and it's too late. We enter the narrow pass at the small island of Port Smyth to anchor for the night, and see a friend in the water cleaning his hull. Greggii thinks it looks like a good place to swim, and since I'm not keen on his going alone, we swim over together to bob around and watch Jorgen scrape the last six months growth from his waterline. I'm more tired than I think I should be, so we swim back. I also have this tendency, since Australia, where every creature is marketed as deadly to attract tourists, to get the willies swimming in new waters, thinking Greggii will be the appetizer and I'll be the entrée.

After our swim, we explore the reddish-golden island. I assume what little grows here is dormant because it doesn't contrast with the color of the place. There are signs, including the moniker, Port Smyth, that Port Smyth was occupied at one time; today, the island's population is us.

After dinner, the fever sets in. It doesn't sneak up as fevers do, but grabs me in a powerful way, running up to 104° in the time it takes to light a burner on the stove. There's no time for subtly reflecting on how I feel, none of that *gee, I don't think I feel very well* stuff. I'm sick, overcome with chills, and go to bed with every blanket I can find. I take some ibuprofen to help the fever. Lorrie displays great medical wisdom in suggesting a cold shower, but I like my method better, and think we should give the ibuprofen time. She does steal my blankets – an act in which I find great insult. Two hours later, the fever leaves. Bad food, I think.

In the morning, we leave for Massawa. While dragging up the anchor and navigating out of the reef, I get sick again, but pretend otherwise. This is a neat trick dad taught me when I felt too sick for school as a kid; pretend you're not sick and often you won't be. We get out of the reef, but not out of the fever. Again ibuprofen, again stolen blankets, again a discussion about a cold shower, and again, the fever leaves after a few hours. We enter the harbor.

A responsibility of mine, as captain of the good ship *Faith*, is to clear in with the port authority, immigration, and Customs; I usually take somebody, Emily in this case, with me. We arrive during tea time, or lunch, or a card game, or something, so we have to round up the guys in each office to proceed with our business.

Next, we take a quick walk outside the port facility. Massawa has the same reddish-golden glow as Port Smyth, with no vegetation but a larger population. Following years of civil war and with few natural resources to spark an outside interest in exploiting them, Eritrea is financially strapped. Official payment for anything has to be made in US Dollars, but the only source of cash is the Eritrean Nakfa. Massawa is dry and dusty, and no money is available for rebuilding or even cleaning up after the wars. When we enter the harbor, we see a building with a golden dome that has a hole in it. From the anchorage, on the other side of it, we see that the whole back side of the dome is blown out. Massawa frames the story that is unfolding.

When I return to *Faith*, the fever returns to me, lingering longer than before, and Lorrie is again rewarded with a real issue to concern herself with. Two boats, *Snowgoose* and *Legend II*, offer support. Cathy from *Legend II* suggests I go to a local clinic to be tested for malaria. When we get there, I feel better. I'm sure I'm the only person required to pay in US Dollars, but that's the way it goes. In fact, that's the way all of our US Dollars are going. The clinic takes blood and money, and says to return in a half-hour to see if it's malaria. We do and it isn't.

Though I am relieved at not having malaria, the fever returns to torture me through the night. Lorrie and Cathy seek another opinion. They go to the wharf where a cruise ship is berthed and return to *Faith* with the captain and medical officer of *Topaz*. After much hemming and hawing, and since all their medical doohickeys are on *Topaz*, and since they don't have much to do – all their clients are on an excursion to the capital city of Asmara – they invite us to the ship's hospital. The doctor makes a fine project out of me, and I know I'm in the best place I can be, lying there on the gurney with needles in my arms and bottles of libations hanging from cold little trees on wheels, surrounded by stainless steel cabinets and odors and echoes of sterilization.

Believing last night's test, the doctor doesn't think I have malaria so he doesn't test me, though he does give me one or two of just about everything else in his arsenal. A shot of this, a pill of that, and all the while, the back of my hand drinks bags of fluid. He sends me home with Lorrie, Cathy, and Greggii, who's had the captain's permission to raid the ship's kitchen for whatever he wants all afternoon.

They get me home and put me to bed in time for the fever. This time it doesn't depart, and in the morning, Lorrie and Cathy talk again to *Topaz's* doctor, who tells them to get me to a hospital. He's done all he knows how with the resources he has.

While they're on shore, all the vans are returning with *Topaz's* cruisers from Asmara. Lorrie and Cathy, with help from the U.S. Consulate in Eritrea, decide the best place for me is the UN Hospital in Asmara. All the vans are heading back there anyway, so they hire one to take us. They come to retrieve me and the rest of the family for our own excursion to that wonderful city. I try to get comfortable lying down in the back, which is bad, then sitting in front, which is no improvement, then near the middle before I realize how sick I am.

UN Hospitals are strategically located where peacekeeping missions occur, and it's a tribute to either the effectiveness of the peacekeeping mission in Eritrea or the fighting factions' ability to shoot straight that during my visit the UN Hospital has one patient. The hospital is run by competent medical officers of Jordan's military. This time, the test for malaria is positive. They begin a regimen of sleep with brief periods of wakedness to change the IV bag, or give me some pills, or poke me with something. Lorrie gets a room at a hotel for the family, and Amanda stays with me the first night. After the family leaves, it's just Amanda and me. She pulls out a can of sour cream and onion potato chips and offers me some. Since I haven't eaten anything for three days, I try two. Bad move. I grab hold of a wastebasket just in time.

Asmara is at an elevation of over 7,000 feet, and is cold at night. I am not affected much because my room is in an enclosed part of the building. There are times, however, that I need a trip to the bathroom. My greatest periods of physical activity occur when I grab the IV tree, wheel it to the door, over the threshold, down a step, down the cold, outdoor alleyway, then up a step, and over the threshold into the bathroom and back again. After a couple times of my doing this, always late at night, one of the nurses catches me and says that if I just turn this little knob and unhook this thingamajig, I don't have to take the tree with me. He also says – I

think, because my Arabic is as limited as his English – to call when I need to go, and somebody will help me. He probably figures I just didn't understand what he said, but pride forces me to go to the bathroom alone. Cold to be sure, but alone.

Lorrie, Greggii, and Emily come back in the morning, and after Lorrie and Dr. Ahmad Shono, the hospital's director, grumble in low tones in the corner for a few moments, we visit. I don't remember much, except that it's Emily's turn to stay with me. I change beds because the bed I had last night has a broken brace and my right shoulder was about two inches lower than my left.

Everybody on staff and in my family tells me I have to eat something. The staff sows seeds of guilt, asking, "Don't you like the food we serve you?" and, "You must eat this, I made it special for you." I don't want to eat anything. Nothing.

On the morning of my third day here, two of Dr. Shono's assistants enter and say they finally found the right medicine at the Indian Pharmacy on the other side of the city. One of them holds a giant syringe, and both of them grin with sly satisfaction, knowing this stuff is magic. They tell me to turn over. I do. We wait for the magic. It doesn't happen.

Early in the evening, Dr. Shono takes Lorrie aside for another round of grumbling. When they return, he tells me they've done all they can and I should go to Cairo, where better medications are available. (Lorrie shares with me later that the reason for Cairo is that I have a type of malaria that will be fatal, should it go to my brain, and no life-support equipment exists in Eritrea.) They prepare me to board the 3:00am flight to Cairo. We must pay our hospital bill first, which is US \$125 per day. When I ask about the drugs, the x-rays, and the tests, Dr. Shono says the price is for the room, the treatment, the doctors, everything.

Our supply of US Dollars dwindles, even with *Snowgoose* and *Legend II* helping as they are able. We leave the hospital, and I notice for the first time the security surrounding it. The ambulance exits through an armed checkpoint.

Amanda plans to go to Cairo with me, but we don't have enough money for two tickets. The cost is US\$400 per ticket, payable at the counter. They won't accept payment in Nakfa nor will they let us pay for our passage, on Egypt Air, when we arrive in Cairo. The airport manager, who on first impression is stern and unfriendly, tries to help, but cannot get both of us on the plane with the cash we have. I say goodbye to a crying family and leave alone.

While we are sorting out the details, the three o'clock departure is delayed. By the time I board, it's 4:00am. There's a man sitting in a seat next to me, but he moves one row back because the plane is less than half-full and he wants to stretch out.