TAHITI—where globetrotters meet...

by
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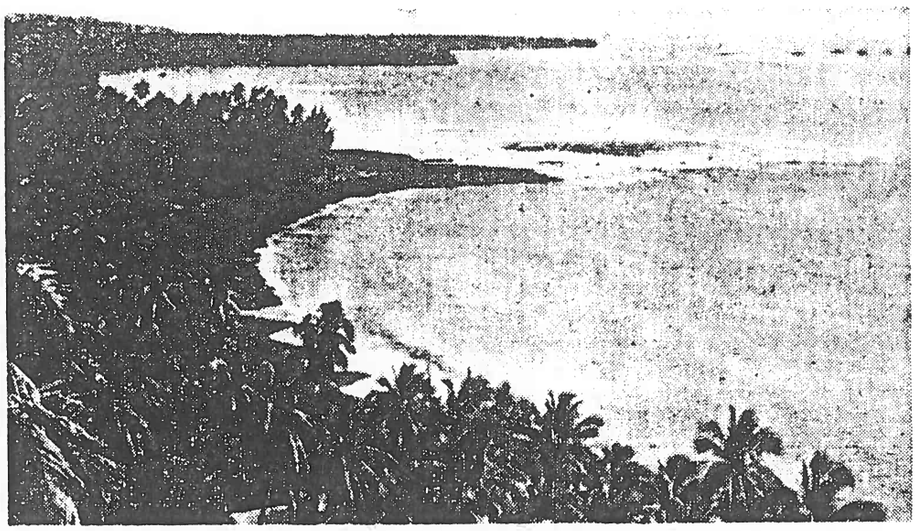
co-skipper of the Tauranga yacht Leda, which reached Hawaii from Tahiti this month. She was expected to sail for the Pacific Coast of the United States this weekend.



● *Curving beach and sparkling sea . . . the view from Venus Point, Tahiti.*

ACROSS the wide Pacific sail droves of globe-trotting yachtsmen in boats large and small and, inevitably, each one of them calls at Tahiti.

Leda was just one of dozens and dozens of yachts to have sailed into Papeete, and our impressions of the island and its inhabitants have already been shared by countless predecessors.

To say that there is no place like it in the Pacific or anywhere else in the world doesn't tell much, yet there is little else to say.

The blending of French and Polynesian ways of life in a wealthy Pacific Island paradise has produced something unique. On many people the island has an immediate and demoralizing effect. In this place, which has no word for illegitimacy, long-standing European marriages break up and other alliances are made with extraordinary but casual swiftness.

Singing

PARTIES, singing and dancing go on all night and every night. What work is done is nearly always finished before 11 in the morning.

France makes things easy for the Islanders. No taxes, cheap goods, preferential treatment. It is a show place. For the visitor, and this definitely includes the yachtsman, it is expensive. We thought we had money for three weeks in Tahiti, but we had to leave in 10 days. But we had had a good time, had seen the sights and (by the way) my marriage was still intact.

We missed the other Auckland boats which had called at Papeete this winter, but we heard all about them. Ken Brown's little 28-foot Ghost, which had been the first, then White Squall, Taurangi and Blue Water. In particular we heard stories of Ross Norgrove, of White Squall, who had been a tremendous hit with the Tahitians.

Before this winter, one gathers, the reputations of New Zealand yachtsmen in Papeete had not been high, but after the visit of these Auckland boats future New Zealand voyageurs may be sure of a warm welcome from Tahiti.

Nor would it surprise me to learn that at least half a dozen were making the trip next winter, during the famous Bastille Day celebrations.

We arrived there at the tail end of the celebration and during a slack time for visiting yachtsmen, but even so there were many craft of interest.

The 130-foot South African ketch Cariad had arrived two days before us and we spent much time with her six merry crew members. She was on her second round-the-world voyage, the crew getting a free trip in return for working the ship. As she was built more than 70 years ago there is a fair amount of work involved.

● *Sam the Egyptian, before one of his abortive attempts to get to the island of Bora Bora. He has yet to get beyond the harbour entrance at Papeete. (He won't.)*

Yachts . . .

ALONGSIDE us, where we were moored with our stern to the main street, was the even bigger schooner Vega, owned locally, and dismasted two hours after starting her first passage to Honolulu. She is a magnificent craft, built of steel by Krupps in Germany in 1932.

Across the bay was the trim clipper-bowed schooner, about 50 feet long, with broad square-sail yards, owned by W. A. Robinson, of Svaap and Deep Water and Shoal fame.

Nearby is a big Chinese junk, of full-length teak planking and equipped with powerful engines, built for the wife of an American millionaire before the war. She is lying unused in the stream these days.

Egyptian

THEN there was "Sam," as he was known to the populace who came to see him off and welcome him back. He is an Egyptian who professes to be stony broke (although the authorities have made sure he still has his passage home) and who sets off periodically for Bora Bora in a 12-foot open West Indian rowing boat of most unstable design.

He has never yet got beyond the entrance to Papeete, and invariably returns declaring that there is "too much sea." It is the extent of the ocean, not its motion, apparently, which upsets him.

Hauled out on the beach at Point Venus we saw Wind's Will, a 45-foot, 80-year-old British Honduras-built schooner, which was sailed out three years ago by Americans and looks like leaving her bones on the island.

Near her, in the water, was Calypso, a husky 35-foot cypress-built ketch owned by Americans from Panama, whose guests we were.

Settled

YET another American couple owned the 38-foot Atkins-designed double-ender Novia, and they it was who gave us most news of our Auckland predecessors. They have taken a house along the coast, and, with Novia moored snugly in the lagoon a few yards from their door, are ready for an indefinite stay on the island.

Near them is the little French racing cutter Les 4 Vents, sailed single-handed from France round Cape Horn. Among the adventures claimed by her owner are twice being rolled completely over off Cape Horn, and logging 35 miles to leeward in four hours while lying to a sea anchor.

Inspire, the last of the famous Brixham trawler ketches to be built, is proving a vast success as a trading vessel under the ownership of an Australian.

Peace

OTHERS there were, but in the wild and enervating round of Tahiti night life I had neither the time nor the inclination to find out about them. Thankful to get our clearance at last we made a quick three-hour dash across to Moorea for a little peace and quiet.

Here we are moored in lovely Robinson's Bay, the self-same spot where Erling Tamb's Teddy came, sinking, after leaving Papeete.

And the same American plantation-owner who helped him bail her out is still here; nor is his sense of hospitality in any way dimmed by the hundreds of yachts which have visited his cove in the intervening years.

Even this winter he has been visited by such craft as Ghost, White Squall, Taurangi, Blue Water, Novia; also Beyond, an aluminium, plastic-sheathed craft owned by Tom Worth, of England, another English craft, Moonraker, and two American yachts. Three American yachts, which are racing from Honolulu, will no doubt also call to pay their respects.

We have certainly been glad to rest here for a week.

Tomorrow, weather permitting, we will sail for the Tuamotus, then on to the Marquesas and Honolulu.