

## **DIARY OF ALEX J. FORSYTH ABOARD *LAYMORE* ESCORT VESSEL FOR VICTORIA–MAUI 1968**

### **DAY 1, Monday, July 1, 1968**

Race Start – clear sky, light winds. Embarked on *HMCS MacKenzie* at 0830. Lieutenant Governor Pearkes officiated at start. Cruised for 1½ hours, returning to Esquimalt for lunch. Departed YFM for *Laymore* 1400. Dinner 1700. Meals: breakfast 0730 – 0830, lunch 1130 – 1230, dinner 1630 – 1730. American gunboat passed 1730. Overtook all yacht by Neah Bay by 1830. *Velaris*, *Gabrielle III*, *Mary Bower* and *Porpoise III* all close together. Lifeboat drill 1530. 1900, slowed down to let crew fish. Caught two. Tried Roll Call at 2200. Successful until Coast Guard requested we postpone until 2330. Able to reach all by *Suerte* and *Velaris*. Most ships off Neah Bay/Tatoosh. Turned in at 2330 after cup of tea.

### **DAY 2, Tuesday, July 2, 1968**

Good sleep. Ship rolled and diesel fumes evident. Awakened 0715. Bright, clear day; little wind. Four sails in sight – *Porpoise III*, *Velaris* and two others. Three Russian trawlers, albatrosses visible. 1000, US Coast Guard plane buzzed us. Position at 0800 47°39' N, 125°08'W, off Coos Bay. 1015, cook's fishing rod fell overboard. Crew sighted a whale. Noon Roll Call successful. All boats reported in. 1430, saw three small sharks. Larger shark seen later by crew. Hove to all day to allow ships to catch up. Minor repairs done by ship's crew on ventilator fan. Turned in at 2200. Played three games of crib and lost all three. Taught the boys solitaire.

### **DAY 3, Wednesday, July 3, 1968**

Good sleep. Still some diesel fumes from stabilizing tanks. Up at 0715. Overcast with NW wind blowing. 1100, took ocean temperature measurement at 900 metres. Sea birds quite plentiful; albatrosses, stormy petrels, shearwaters and the odd puffin. 1200, WSW Cape Disappointment. All ships reported in at 1400. Picked up Japanese fishing ball with goose barnacles. Seriol [Dr. Seriol Williams] operated. Saw movie after dinner – Paul Newman; *Cool Hand Luke!* A dog!! Buzzed by US reconnaissance aircraft. Beat the skipper at crib. 2200 Roll Call reasonably successful. Advised them Roll Call will be at 1800 daily. To bed at 2230.

### **DAY 4, Thursday, July 4, 1968 – Happy July 4<sup>th</sup>!**

Up at 0730. Foggy, little wind. Crew had caught two tuna. Lots of ship traffic. Russian factory ship was passed in the night. 18 lb tuna caught. Plankton net dragged for Dr. W. Some specimens caught. Ocean temp taken. Noon Roll Call to ships not contacted last night. Spent afternoon doing weather map, reading and sun(?) bathing. 1800 Roll Call, good reception. *Mary Bower* did 190 miles in 30 hours. Won first round of crib tournament. Did running, pushups and skipping on foredeck. Had fresh fried tuna snack – delicious! Egged and cracker crumbed, ten minutes each side. Geoff Irvine's 14<sup>th</sup> birthday. Cook made him a wonderful birthday cake. Tried steering the ship – only within 5° either side – must try again. Plankton net out again but not too much result. Bed at 2230. Also took LORAN lesson.

### **DAY 5, Friday, July 5, 1968**

Up at 0715. Good breakfast. Pills working; feel fine. One of the crew caught a gooney bird in his line. Took it aboard and freed it. Found life buoy off the *Hawaiian Builder*; it had been at sea for a long time from the marine growth on it. Picked up another large glass ball. Ruffled off. Fire drill at 1230, including foam. Neil T. would have been proud of them. Prepared daily weather map. Won second round of crib tournament. Good Roll Call with some chit chat. Saw green flash with sunset. Beautiful night, clear and warm. Our best weather since the start. Turned in 2245. PS skipping, running and doing push-ups.

**DAY 6, Saturday, July 6, 1968**

Up at 0715. Beautiful day. Not much wind. 1000, no sails for 2½ days then encountered Capt. John Cotton; vessel, ketch *El Viajero* (The Old One), a concrete boat built by a Canadian in New Zealand. 72 days from West Samoa to San Francisco. 20 days overdue. Down to eating tuna he had caught in net. Sailed two years ago from Victoria on *Escapee*, ex RVYC, registered in Maple Bay and now in New Zealand. Passed him food, time and position check – 41°11' W, 132°10'W (500 miles approx. SF). 1100, two Russian whalers sighted. One, B27, came over and perused us. Two more glass balls. Whaler B19 passed us. Rest of day uneventful. Won another round of crib tournament. Roll Call went well. Started Happy Hour procedures with a new cast and poems – they were a riot. To bed at 2345. PS *Oriole* now south of SF.

**DAY 7, Sunday, July 7, 1968**

Up at 0715. Clear with some cloud. CKWX starting to fade. Sea choppy, morning uneventful. Wind blowing 20+. Took a turn steering. Tried to call CPA321 for John Long; no luck. Crew caught gooney bird in fish line. He got off OK. Pills okay; down to one a day. Routine becoming routine. Do weather map after lunch. Do Roll Call after dinner. Balance of time our own. Talked to CPA321 with Evelyn Long aboard and passed message to John. Hopefully set up date for next Friday. Roll Call completed with some difficulty – yachts spreading out. Porpoise reported. Sky overcast, late afternoon, now raining (1800). *Jeunesse* reported Japanese freighter 300 yards off, apparent party on board. Introduced to a new game by a seaman, called “Rook”. To bed at 2300 after 2200 Happy Hour washed out due to radio interference.

**DAY 8, Monday, July 8, 1968**

Up at usual time. Good choice of breakfast. Cloudy; fair sea running. Bed linen changed; got my PJs washed. I finally sighted a ball; it had a small fish in the goose barnacles plus lots of little crabs. Back to walking and skipping – tough to do on a rolling deck. Wind unfortunately from the west. Ship’s speed advanced to ½ speed. Gooney birds very graceful as they glide over the waves. Good day for Japanese balls. Roll Call OK. *Jeunesse’s* freighter turned out to be Panamanian. They traded six balls for a bunch of bananas. Progress slow; still no trade winds. Show tonight *Bonnie and Clyde*. Another dog! Tried 2200 Happy Hour but too much interference. To bed at 2300.

**DAY 9, Tuesday, July 9, 1968 – Half way, hopefully!**

Up at usual time. Cloudy with occasional rain squalls. Did noon Roll Call for weather; not entirely successful. Tried Happy Hour with transmitter problems. Received news from Esquimalt re *Jeunesse’s* bananas. More steering time. Got beaten on first round of crib finals. Sun came out in afternoon so got some tan time in. Lots of Japanese balls but still none for me. Managed to get Roll Call in despite ionospheric disturbance. Beautiful sunset with green flash; lovely orange sky. Full moon really set off evening. No trade winds yet so it will be a long trip. Shower night. To bed at 2300. PS saw two killer whales in PM.

**DAY 10, Wednesday, July 10, 1968**

So, what’s new? Up at usual time. No wind. Cumulus clouds and sunshine. If nothing else, should get a suntan. One more gooney caught. Noon Roll Call quite successful. Tom and I had an interview by radio with Bill Herbert, CBC Vancouver on race results. Crew caught a beautiful mahi mahi. Afternoon spent relaxing. Lost out in crib finals. Saw another movie – *Arizona Bushwhacker* – they don’t make westerns like they used to! Ship organizing raffle on finish time. Also practicing the “Laymore Blues” for the luau. PS Dr. Williams fell down the fo’c’sle ladder and hurt his left knee.

**DAY 11, Thursday, July 11, 1968**

Lousy sleep – too warm and sultry. Flying fish found on deck. Up at usual time. Some cloud. Dr. feeling better. We acted as relay from catamarans to Ocean Station November, including Jim Arness in *Seasmoke*. Skipper caught a banded gooney bird on his fish line. Got some nice pictures I hope. Nice morning; took two sextant shots. Crossed with a US naval freighter. Had a salt water bath in rubber boat – very refreshing. Noon Roll Call okay except *Cuna Mara* and *Potlatch*. Evening Roll Call completed. Still no trade winds but wind is starting to veer so it should not be too long. Seriol's knee is still bothering him but he won't stay off it. The ship's routine has fallen into place; not too much work for anyone. To bed at 2300.

**DAY 12, Friday, July 12, 1968**

Up at usual time. Hope we will be able to contact CPA today. Acted as relay for multi-hull race. See the odd flying fish. Finally, we seem to be in the trade winds. Uneventful afternoon until we arrived at Ocean Station November. The ship is a CG Cutter out of Seattle. We were the second ship she'd seen in three weeks; she is relieved tomorrow. Listening for CPA, we get a message "Man overboard" off the *American Corsair*, 200 miles NW of us. This may interrupt our call. No contact with CPA – sorry I missed you. We estimate our ETA late on 17<sup>th</sup>. Relayed for multi-hull and have adopted *Valentine* for our Roll Call. To bed at 2315.

**DAY 13, Saturday, July 13, 1968**

Routine morning. Relayed for "cats". Spend a fair amount of time on radio – it helps to pass the time. *Valentine* is skippered by Peggy Slater, the Kettenberg agent for Southern California. Spent the afternoon playing quoits on deck, sitting in the pool drinking cokes and taking saltwater showers. One wag posted a sign "Sheraton Laymore". Tough life! All ships contacted on evening Roll Call and another yacht, *Liasifial*, going to Kauai with *Valentine*. No report from her. Finally, a good show – British comedy, "Doctor in Clover". Did my running after the show, read and went to bed at 2300.

**DAY 14, Sunday, July 14, 1968**

Up at usual time. Looks like a nice clear day for a change. I have been surprised at the amount of clouds we have been experiencing. Relayed multi-hull yacht race, including *Valentine*. She apparently had taken some water aboard but is okay now. Found Japanese weather radio buoy floating; took aboard. Ocean temperature 77°. I had a good, hot, hour's sunbathing. After lunch, since then we have gone through a series of rain squalls. There is a fever of raffles, guesses and contest re the daily longest run plus ETAs. The whole ship's company is very interested. Steak, cake and ice cream for supper. Contacted B. McD on CPA. Hope my message got through. PS skipper showed his slides of Alaska. Very good. No hurry to go to bed – it's too muggy.

**DAY 15, Monday, July 15, 1968**

Good morning – a hot night. Up before sunrise – we have not adjusted our clocks yet so are two hours ahead. Finally got in four rubbers of bridge; it was a change from crib. Good sunbathing weather. Spent about three hours on the radio – multi-hull and our Roll Calls. It certainly helps pass the time. I even missed the show; some Dean Martin effort. We are setting the clock back three hours tonight so it will be a long one! Anyway, it will get us back to Hawaiian time, although we still have to call the ships on PDT. We will arrive in Lahaina late Wednesday and anchor out overnight on the finish line. That will be a long night!!

**DAY 16, Tuesday, July 16, 1968**

The time change certainly mixed me up and I forgot the 0800 "cat" Roll Call. No loss – most are already in Honolulu. Up two hours before breakfast. The crew are readying the ship for Lahaina. We now have music from Radio Kahalui piped on deck. Took a lesson on splicing rope. Let's hope I remember how! More crib and bridge – what a life! Saw Dean Martin in *How to Save Your Marriage*. They shouldn't show such films to sailors! It would appear we should arrive off Lahaina late tomorrow afternoon. Whether I can get off remains to be seen.

**DAY 17, Wednesday, July 17, 1968**

Up at 0500 Hawaiian time to try and make contact with *Auriga* and *Valentine* – no luck. Beautiful sunrise. Sighted porpoise off Pailolo Channel, around 1100. Sailed and rowed and towed the “Laymore Lunker” across the finish line. Mick and Alison on *Kadi IV* came out at 0630 and rescued us.