

Dear Arne,

October 1, 1995

HI EVERYONE!

The crew on "Oso Bueno" has been out at sea now for one year. We all remain healthy and happy and committed to continuing on our circumnavigation. We are currently tied to a large half-sunken buoy in the middle of Pago Pago harbor in American Samoa rafted up against another cruising sailboat from California. It was a rough 10 day passage from Bora Bora to Samoa with a one week stopover at Suwarrow in the Cook Islands (17 days total).

Suwarrow is an atoll kept as a natural preserve with a small family living there as caretakers. The reception was overwhelmingly warm, friendly, and generous. We were welcomed with fresh coconuts and fed daily with fish, the rare and legendary coconut crab, and taro. The motu is a bird sanctuary for a half dozen different types of nesting and birthing tropical birds. It was beautiful and restful. Suwarrow gave us the kind of exceptional experience that we hoped for in doing this crazy thing. An experience only available to those of us who sail.

American Samoa is reminiscent of a tropical small town in some part of the U.S.A. maybe a hundred years ago. The people are open and helpful, huge in size, clothed in T shirts, lava lavas, and flip flops (a lava lava is a piece of printed material worn as a wrap around style skirt by men and women alike). It's fun having access again to U.S. mail, fax, and telephone services as well as T.V., ice cream and good old cheeseburgers with french fries. We plan to spend a week or two here awaiting mail orders for boat parts, reprovisioning for the upcoming six months, and preparing for hurricane season by purchasing heavy chain and rope for building a secure mooring. The South Pacific cyclone season spans from November through April. We hope to find safe haven in the harbor of Neiafu located on the island of Vava'u in the northern island group of Tonga. As soon as we are ready we will be setting sail for the 300 mile crossing arriving during the latter part of October.

We have chosen Neiafu in Tonga for an extended stay for many reasons. It is a beautiful and wonderful place to entertain family and friends who wish to visit us during this winter and spring. Tonga is the only region left in the South Pacific never to have come under foreign rule. The Kingdom of Tonga is a constitutional monarchy with a real king. The Tongan people are proud and independent despite their abject poverty. They are Polynesian with a little Melanesian mixture and closely resemble Samoans. Tonga is famous for its handicrafts, tapa, and colorful inexpensive fabric. It should be very interesting and quite enjoyable. The swimming, snorkelling and diving is some of the best in the world.

The Vava'u group is composed of 34 islands, 21 of which are inhabited. That means many scenic places for day sailing and side trips. For those of you planning a vacation with us we recommend buying the paperback book entitled "South Pacific Handbook" by David Stanley and published by Moon. The best accommodations are with the Paradise International Hotel which can also be used as a mailing address for us: Yacht Oso Bueno, David & Roberta Hayertz, c/o Paradise International Hotel, P.O. Box 191, Neiafu, Vava'u, Tonga. Air travel can be arranged with Hawaiian Airlines flying twice weekly from U.S. western coastal ports to Vava'u via Honolulu and Pago Pago. Be prepared for a very different kind of vacation. Conditions in Tonga are primitive and items and foods that you are customarily used to will not be available! Hotels are not up to standards and you may be sharing your room with some large but very polite cockroaches. The locals are devoutly Christian and Sundays are set aside exclusively for church and related activities. Men and women must be fully clothed while walking down the street. Things will of course be relaxed on the boat and in outlying areas. Sunday offers two choices when in town: stay on the boat or dress up and go to church. We joined a church service in the Marquesas and had a fine time enjoying the local singing and observing everyone dressed in white. The climate is warm and humid. Cotton is best. Footgear needs to be worn at all times. Bring with you surf shoes, polarized sunglasses, and good quality snorkel equipment with a personally fitted mask.

Send Oso Bueno a FAX 011-684-633-1133 by October 10 and we will promptly rely. Summertime should put us in Fiji which would also be a beautiful and fascinating opportunity for a visit. Send us mail! We miss family and love you all.

P.S. Tonga crosses the dateline. If it's Sunday in America, it's Monday in Tonga.

Dave and Bobbi
(my cruising name)