

Dear Arne,

October 22, 1996

Today we are anchored at a place called *Baie Ngo* south of Noumea by about 15 miles. The southeasterly trades are reinforced being that it is springtime here and are blowing like the breath of hell. We mind the freshening of the wind less now that Dave has installed a wind generator and it is kicking out over 10 amps of juice. We finally do not have to run the engine for battery charging. Running the engine is \$\$\$\$ if you know what I mean. We have been particularly happy since arriving in New Caledonia and in spite of all Dave's efforts to be mad at the French, we both really like it here. They have made the places that they live in alot of fun. The French of New Caledonia are made up of descendants of transported French criminals and French Algerian refugees - a tough combo. New Caledonia looks like it will be good sailing (if the trades quiet down). You will learn in the canned portion of our letter that we are staying on in Noumea for a while and we want you to know that you would love it here. It's like a bit of Europe located in the South Pacific. The city is lively and clean and the museum is great. (The exhibit we saw included ancient Melanesian culture from Vanuatu as well as New Caledonia.) Hotels and meals are at about three times U.S. prices but can be done more conservatively. We would love to have you visit us either here or in Australia next spring-summer. Tell us your thoughts. Write us soon and tell us all about your escapades and what your kids are doing. How about a photo of Kristin and John. It has been years since we've seen them and probably wouldn't even recognize them.

(canned portion)

Oso Bueno departed Fiji on the second day of October bound for Noumea, New Caledonia, a voyage of 700 miles. Within 30 minutes of clearing the pass through the outer reef system we encountered winds from 25-30 knots making for some fast sailing. Bobbi & I really don't mind the high winds anymore - anything under 35 is ok. The sky was bright and featureless & the seas were moderate. The winds eventually rose to gale force 35-40 knots and stayed that way until the next morning. We were not really comfortable but no worries - only the towels in a forward cupboard with a leak were getting drenched with seawater. We decided to try to stop at the southernmost island of the New Hebrides group, an island named Aneityeum. Aneityeum is about 12 miles in diameter with a population of 600. We arrived three days after our departure from Fiji at dawn, still being pushed by high winds. We began to explore the northwest coast of the island, the leeward side, hoping to find a spot to anchor. (I'll never be a Captain Cook.) We just could not find a place to get into so we hove to in the island's wind shadow for a day resting, eating, cleaning, doing laundry and other things that sailors do when they're hove to. It was great. We moved on for Noumea still riding high winds. Several days later we arrived at the pass through New Caledonia's outer reef a bit early and had to heave to for a few hours waiting for the flood tide to take us through. "What a beautiful place" is our visual impression of this relatively unknown group of islands. The distance from the reef passage to Noumea is

over 40 miles through coral heads and interior reef systems. The place is riddled with all sorts of "first world" navigational aids - buoys, day marks, cardinal marks, light houses, etc.. (Tonga & Fiji are both "man on the spreaders" style coastal work.) We passed through a canal several miles long and only a mile wide. The flood tide, now peaking, increased our speed by 3 knots. Landfalls are wonderful! The flat seas in the lagoon are so pleasant. We just looked around and at each other grinning. We were tired but happy after this passage and decided to postpone our arrival into Noumea one more day. We found a small uninhabited bay about 20 miles south of Noumea and had a great night's sleep in calm waters. When we came into our slip in Noumea there were 14 people on the dock to receive our lines - some we had not seen since French Polynesia. It was a nice welcome. Clearing Customs, Immigration, Health, etc., was very easy. The officials came to the boat, one at a time, polite and humorous - all was painless. In the evening we joined old & new friends for snacks & drinks. Walking back to Oso Bueno we decided to slip into town since we were both eager to see it.

It was a warm & dark walk through the parkway near the marina towards town. Everything looked so European except that one could see dark skinned peoples sitting in clumps under trees and near shrubbery - Kanakas. Kanakas are the indigenous Melanesians of New Caledonia. They are not a part of the Noumean social structure. They are on the fringe and do not return your smile. Eyes divert and discomfort is felt. How very, very different from Fiji! The Kanakas are unhappy with the French and they think we're French because of our appearance. If they knew we were Americans they would like us. Many Americans wear small USA flags sewn to their clothing in the outer areas. This is done to prevent being damaged. The Kanakas want their land back. The French keep them in the bush as much as possible. The independence movement became violent here in 1988. A few Kanakas took some French hostages and held them in a cave while making political demands. Elite French forces stormed the cave leaving all of the Kanakas slaughtered beyond recognition. Of course a large monument was erected commemorating those French troops that stubbed their toes charging up the hill. We continued our walk into this beautiful city, each step bringing us further into the city's lights, laughter, and opulence. This place is really great! We walked for a few hours before returning to Oso Bueno quite in love with Noumea. In the center of Noumea is an enormous monument dedicated to the American servicemen who "defended the freedom of New Caledonians from the Japanese" during the Second World War. The monument was significant in several ways. It was erected in 1992! It covers a large and expensive piece of ground in the heart of town. It is on French ground. We met a Scotsman named Ron who explained to us as follows: Admiral Halsey's headquarters during the war was located here in New Caledonia. This land was on the very edge of that total and uncontrolled conflict. The Solomon islands are just a stones throw north. These people formed a very strong bond with the thousands of American service people stationed here during that period. Most of all, there were six very large hospitals that provided the first line of care for wounded & maimed American men. He

told us that the locals saw and still remember the great suffering of those men and that this image persists as part of their memory. Just last month another downed American fighter plane was found with the pilot's remains in the hills of the northern part of this island. Ron explained that the finding was a very big deal here attended with much press coverage and ceremony. Such authentic gratitude made me feel very good about this place and these people.

A few days later we joined with new and old friends at the Noumea Yacht Club for a Saturday barbecue. The greatest part of cruising is the diversity of people that we meet. Our group consisted of 2 Americans, 2 Swiss, 1 Argentine, 1 Brit, 1 Canadian and 1 Kiwi. We finished up late in the evening having been to a few cafes and bars getting back to our boats.

Noumea is like a small European Santa Barbara - only the water is warm. It is sometimes referred to as the Paris of the South Pacific. All of the ladies are gorgeous and run around in those great little T-shirt dresses. We discovered a wonderful open air public market which daily sells fresh fish, produce and pastries. Each day we have tried a different kind of fish with a marvelous salad and French wine. The streets are paved and clean and lined with busy shops and boutiques with all the latest gadgets and fashion, albeit a bit pricey. Everywhere are cafes with tables outdoors where people sit and chat sipping espresso or drinking beer. Gourmet restaurants are numerous and the ice cream is fantastic.

We have now decided that we will stay in New Caledonia for hurricane season. New Caledonia lies midway between Fiji and Australia and is truly unique and a total surprise. Its weather is less hot and less humid than the rest of the South Pacific and we find it quite refreshing. Its vegetation is more subtropical with both coconut palms and bananas as well as wispy firs and Eucalyptus-like trees. Although the country itself is quite large its overall population is tiny with a total inhabitanacy of maybe 160,000 people half of whom reside in the urban center of Noumea. It's an interesting mix - about 42% Melanesian, 37%

European, with some Wallisian, Polynesian, Indonesian, Vietnamese, and a few Thai.

New Caledonia is also different geologically in that it has an abundance of mineral resources many of which are mined including nickel, chrome, iron, cobalt, manganese, mercury, lead, gold, silver, and even jade. In addition coffee is a main commercial crop. So we are happy to be back in a land of civilization and good tasting coffee.

There is a brand new haulout facility and long term storage that opens this week and seems very well constructed with excellent precautions for hurricane safety and security. We have scheduled Oso Bueno for haul out on November 4th and will stay on the hard until the end of the cyclone season which is April. During this time period we plan to finally do our bottom painting, stop up our leaks, and do all the other boat projects that Oso Bueno needs. We also plan to fly to New Hebrides (Vanuatu being its new name) for four weeks starting November 7th (an early trip being necessary to extend our visa here). Later on we want to rent a 4WD vehicle and do some real exploring of this country as well as fly to

New Zealand for six weeks of inland travel and camping in February and March. Our address for the next six months will be:

David & Roberta Hayertz  
Yacht Oso Bueno  
c/o American Express  
B.P. 50  
Noumea, New Caledonia

Communications can be faxed to the local American Express at (687)27-26-36. We will check the office weekly when we are in town. Now please sit down and write us a long letter telling us all there is to tell!

Love  
Dave & Bobbi