

"DANIEL'S BAY LOST"

by David Content, s/v Barefoot

Since 1970 cruising sailors have enjoyed refuge in Daniel's Bay, an exquisite anchorage in the southwest corner of beautiful Nuku Hiva in the Marquesas Islands. Charted as Taioa Bay, its eastern arm, Hakatea Cove, is the best natural harbor in the Marquesas with 360-degree protection, good holding in mud, cruising manta rays, and soaring cliffs surrounding it. The white sand beach once boasted a pipe with a freshwater showerhead and a tap fed with delicious drinking water from a distant hillside stream. Daniel planted pamplemousse, bananas, mangoes, papayas, and coconuts around his solitary beachfront house and shared them abundantly with visiting sailors. He patiently explained to each arriving boat how to find the landing at the river and the trail to the cool waterfall. The reliable and generous hospitality of Daniel and his wife, Antoinette, extended to cruising boats for more than 30 years, gave Daniels's Bay its name and character.

But now it is gone. I was anchored in Daniel's Bay last October, watching the yellow bulldozer on the beach scrape up portions of the foundation of Daniel's house. Only the white toilet and bathroom sink remained, standing exposed on their concrete base. When I entered the cove earlier in the afternoon a small speedboat came by and said the bay was closed and I had to leave. "I'll leave tomorrow," I responded to the wake of the boat. Instinct told me I should fill my water jugs at the spigot ashore immediately. On the beach I stepped around the now-resting dozer, but plainly all signs of habitation, including the small jetty, were being forcibly removed.

The next morning I took the dinghy to Hakauai Cove, the western arm of the bay, and found a stunned Daniel and Antoinette in a brand-new two-room prefab house with bright, smooth linoleum flooring. He welcomed me and pointed with amazement at the house, built in three days. "The Americans are quick and rich," Daniel said. "They took the bay to use for the television show 'Survivor.' We didn't want to move, but there was strong pressure."

I stayed four days; my Yamaha 36, Barefoot, was the only boat in the bay. The second day the yellow dozer took out the showerhead and water spigot. The third day a landing craft appeared with a second dozer and dump trucks for loading the concrete. On the fourth day no one would have known the bay had ever been inhabited. At 6 o'clock every morning men in white suits, boots, and masks, with tanks on their backs and nozzles in their hands, boated in to spray insecticide on the beach to suppress the white no-nos, a local type of no-see-ums.

Daniel is now 74 years old and has one tooth. He toiled for decades building the house, planting the fruit trees, piping in fresh water, and erecting a small pier. He watched in dazed silence while equipment he never dreamed would come to his cove crushed and

carried away in three days the proof of his existence.

Over at Taiohae Bay, the main village on Nuku Hiva, the 1,700 residents faced an onslaught of 250 American and Australian "Survivor" staff. Crews of Australian boat drivers arrived with 14-person dual-outboard surfboats. The VHF radio was monopolized by Australian accents coordinating transport for the divers, builders, challengers, survivors, directors, and video and sound crews to and from Controleur Bay, Anaho Bay, Aotupa Bay, and Daniel's Bay. All locations were off-limits to tourists, sailboats, and even the local population. Native fishermen were unhappily barred from adjacent waters. At the new pier a "prop" crew of Australians was busy ten hours a day with power saws, lathes, sanders, stain, and paint, making crude paddles, torches, tikis, rafts, canoes, and similar ersatz Polynesian items for the production.

A huge screened dining and cooking pavilion sprouted near the old pier. Survivors and crew received three full meals a day, monopolizing the tomatoes, onions, and potatoes that are normally plentiful only after the arrival of the island freighter. The advance team survived in tents, but then from Los Angeles came the 320-foot luxury cruise ship 'Spirit of Oceanus' to provide refuge for the workers, video and sound crews, and production staff. The ship was anchored beside us in Taiohae Bay, running 100 tender trips to shore each day and burning

4 tons of fuel daily to provide the survivors with air conditioning.

The entire sumptuous Pearl Lodge Hotel, with an infinite-edge swimming pool overlooking the bay, sheltered the actors, directors, and executives. All rental cars were engaged, and local taxis raced along the short streets answering calls in English. Two helicopters, one fitted with a forward video ball, whizzed vital players and instant replays to and fro. The few cruising boats anchored here were struggling to survive the sudden and total loss of tranquility.

CBS's "Survivor" production had been scheduled for filming in Jordan-the props of the pharaohs were ready and the fakirs engaged-but, as is true of so many things, had to change location after September 11. Who would have thought that Daniel would lose his bay and his house because of our tragedy in the United States?

When filming is completed on Nuku Hiva, Daniel will be able to, but probably will not, return to his bay and have a new house built. With luck the showerhead and water faucet will be reestablished at the beach, but maybe not. With certainty, an American TV "survivor" will receive a million dollars and, thanks to the men in the white suits, probably not even a bug bite.

-David Content