

NEWSLETTER # 3
Ahe Island, Tuamotus
French Polynesia
January 1986

Dear Friends,

The Marquesas Islands that we visited were all so different from each other, and each one special. Fatu Hiva (where Thor Hyerdahl and his bride spent their honeymoon many years ago) was the most unspoiled so far as "Progress" is concerned. They haven't "paved" that "Paradise" yet and people walk everywhere. The local generators give electricity for lights for several hours after dark. A few TV's and videos from Papeete are in evidence.

Church is very important in one village. They ring the bell at five or so every morning. A tiny protestant church was also there, but most all are Roman Catholic.

A group of boys who paddled out to entertain us became our friends and borrowed our guitar and autoharp as often as they could. They had one guitar and one ukelele for all to share in this bay. We sang our songs to them when we could squeeze some in, as they never stop singing for long. Lisa and Brenda learned to play on the spoons with real gusto from these boys!

The wind blew hard on our crossing to the Tuamotus and because of this we ended up in the atoll of "Ahe" which has a calm anchorage. An atoll is a flat island and you anchor inside the center of a ring of shore so the land is all around the rim, almost like a sunken volcano. The Tuamotus were hit by a hurricane in 1983 and many trees were lost and fruit is scarce. When we left Fatu Hiva the islanders sent fruit with us to give to the Tuamotu Islanders. The bananas ripened too fast but the limes and pomplamouse (very large grapefruit) kept well and we gave them to the chief who is also the store keeper. He distributed the fruit and we received some hard-to-find propane gas from him as ours had leaked out at the back of the boat from a defective valve. We also received many other lovely gifts as our stay here (at Ahe) lingered into two weeks. We received dinners, shells and shell necklaces, pareas (wrap around skirts) and a giant sea turtle shell.

The little village here has two grocery stores, but mostly bare shelves. The supply ships had not come by Ahe since before Christmas. We could rejoice with the islanders when three cargo and copra boats stopped at Ahe during the two weeks we were there.

Our supply of food is lasting us well and when we run out of odd things like a certain kind of baggy for our butter, eggs, garbage, etc., we pray for what we need and it appears! Sometimes in odd ways, like I'll find a plastic bag cast into the ditch by some shopper, or a neighboring boat will have just the "O" ring we need, or the copra boat arrives just in time to get some eggs or diesel fuel.

These people sell copra from their remaining coconut palms and they also farm pearl beds. The pearl beds are "sick" right now, so we said we'd pray for the oysters to get well.

The French government rebuilt the houses after the hurricane. They look like small two or three room houses with colored tin roofs. While we were there the cement arrived for the volleyball / basketball game court to be built so the islanders could exercise again with games. I believe the Mormon church

was building the court for them. They were looking forward to a big get-together of 300 or so from other islands and Papeete next week. There is an airport on a neighboring island. There is one doctor who travels from Papeete to all these islands, and another one who lives on the neighboring island, who can be reached by phone for advice. There is a Ham operator on Ahe named Ron. He is Scottish and his wife is French. They built a little bungalow of woven palm branches in the "A" frame shape and his Ham Shack is in the loft where they sleep.

The Tuamotu Island people are mostly Mormon. They explain that this Mormon Church is the "Reorganized" Mormon Church. The church says that it is OK to smoke and drink, but not OK to dance! They read writings or prophecies of Wallace Smith, son of Joseph Smith. Jesus is elevated to being a Saint instead of a Prophet. The Mormon people are usually very loving and giving people—at least these people certainly are. So we pray for them that they find the true Jesus and who he really is,—The Son of God!

We spent time with one large family in particular. They took us in, sharing their fish, fishing trips, dinners, and music with us. The men admire Loren's expertise in things and Loren learns new things from them. This family had left the Mormon Church. Lisa and Brenda spent time with their young men who took them fishing, scuba diving and pearl bed cleaning. We enjoyed this family especially in the music department. Haiti, one fellow, played our mandolin very expertly. They are the leaders in music here but they need more guitars and other instruments, as many were broken or lost in the hurricane of 1983.

When we arrived here(Ahe) a 53 ft. gaff rig schooner was already anchored in the lagoon. Our new neighbors were three brothers and a 15 year old son from England. They had sold their business and liquidated their worldly possessions to get out together on this sailboat to see what the plan was for them in the future. They wore crosses around their necks and believed in God as they knew Him. So we shared with them about being "Born Again" and found very eager listeners. We have loved these new neighbors as we love ourselves and now hate to say goodbye. Perhaps they will want to be part of the Small Boat Ministry. Please pray for them as they are reborn now and starting anew:

The words of the song are so true:

"Freely freely you have received
Freely freely give.
Go in My name, and because you believe,
Others will know that I live."

We are now crossing the open sea to Papeete and looking forward to all our mail waiting for us there. This crossing is very smooth and gentle. Thank you Lord! We even left on a Friday, which is breaking a superstition! With our God, "Every day is a day that the Lord has made and we will rejoice and give Him thanks for it!"

Your prayers are making a difference. This area was quite a "stronghold" but there has been a victory. Thank you for taking the time to pray.

Love in Christ,

Loren, Georgia & Brenda Murphy & Lisa Zick

On board the yacht, American Flyer