

## CLASSIC CRUISES

**F**rom the New Hebrides, we set sail to the Solomon Islands, 375 miles to the west, and *SILMARIL* set sail for New Guinea. From New Guinea, they would sail across the Indian Ocean, up the Red Sea, arriving just in time for the 1973 Yom Kippur War, where they ran an Egyptian blockade to Israel, where *SILMARIL* was shipped overland to the Mediterranean.

We were on our own again when we arrived at Santa Ana Island, the first anchorage for *SKYLARK* in the Solomons. We anchored in front of the small village of Upuna. Before we could get our anchor set, the headman of the village was alongside. Tattooed and with pierced ears, he introduced himself as Alfred. We invited him aboard and spent the next couple of days learning about his island and the village. Upon our departure, he gave us an old Solomon Island shield and also included lessons on its use . . .

In the next five weeks, we traveled 500 miles of the 900-mile string of island jewels which make up the Solomons. We visited a dozen islands and found excellent and remote anchorages, friendly people, and were constantly intrigued by the mysterious and dark beauty of this tropical archipelago.

At Tamba Pavu Island, hard by the pass into Kolo Lagoon, we were hardly anchored when this Solomon Islander (**Photo 15**), Segi, came out to greet us. The next morning, with several of his friends, he brought these carvings out to trade. We left the anchorage minus several shirts and some Levi shorts, but the carvings now grace our walls.

We arrived at Guadalcanal 31 years after the U.S. Marines. *SKYLARK* anchored in the crowded little anchorage which lies in an open roadstead in front of the major city of the Solomons, Honiara. A new acquaintance was kind enough to take us on a tour of the area, and we started at Henderson Field, the once coral airstrip the marines had come to capture. Standing on top of the old abandoned tower, we could look toward Red Beach where, on August 7, 1942, 10,000 marines of the First Division stormed ashore as part of Operation "Watchtower." To our backs was "Bloody Ridge."

One felt that he was visiting a tropical Gettysburg or Valley Forge. In front of the small commercial air terminal was a long neglected anti-aircraft gun. Standing high above the field on the rusting fighter tower, gentle tradewinds ruffled our hair as we looked out on the peaceful countryside. It was difficult to imagine the horror of those last few months of 1942, when, during the darkest part of the campaign, the marines had only two airplanes to fight 40 Japanese Zeros and those with only enough fuel to fly one mission.

Those dark days aren't forgotten on Guadalcanal, as evidenced by this battered and rusty reminder (**Photo 16**). It is our understanding that this Japanese destroyer was sunk by U.S. Navy gunfire in August 1942, and was subsequently raised by Navy divers and beached on Florida Island in order to allow construction experts to study the then new and fast design. The shot is of Robby on the destroyer's foredeck.

As one wanders about Honiara, numerous signs depict various advances and retreats by both sides. A major street is still named "Mud Alley."

Also on Guadalcanal, we found this shrine (**Photo 17**) erected by a group of 70 Japanese who were visiting there at the same time. Their mission was to recover remains of war dead, to be buried in the Fatherland, and to locate any survivors who may yet be living in the remote jungles of the Solomons, especially in the New Georgia Group.



PHOTO 16

Rumor had it that some were still alive, but an old Solomon Islander from New Georgia reckoned that they were eaten by cannibals long ago.

"That's great!" we thought, "When we go to New Georgia, we won't know whether we will be attacked by hungry cannibals or demented Samurai!"

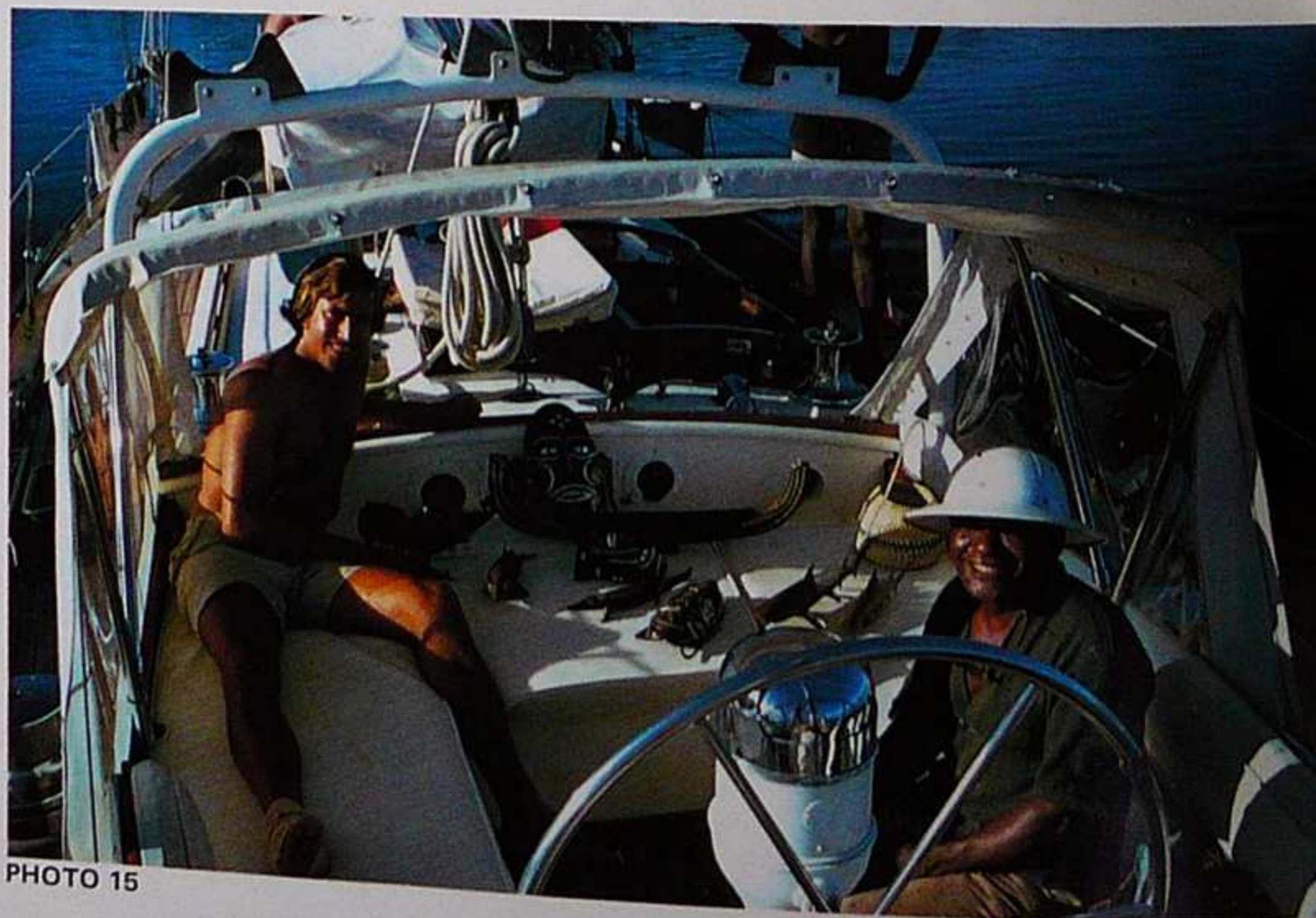


PHOTO 15