

OCC Award of Merit Winners for 2015 in Vanuatu

The OCC Award of Merit is shared by Martin & Elizabeth Bevan on *Caduceus*, Brian Wallace & Sue Dracott on *Darramy*, Tom Partridge & Susie Plume on *Adina*, Jonathan & Donna Robinson on *Chez Nous*, Dennis & Sherry Day on *Trillium*, Graham & Avril Johnson on *Dream Away* and Sam & Jess Bell PORs Vanuatu.

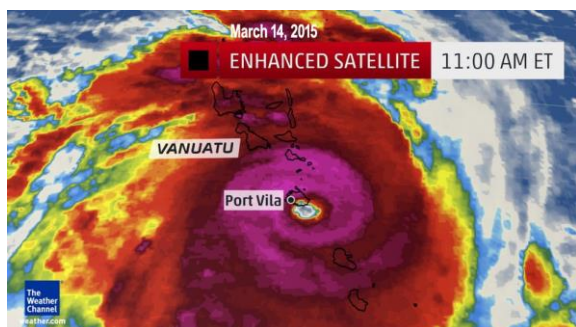


Adina was ashore in Vanuatu for the Cyclone season 14/15. Tom Partridge and Susie Plume returned just after Cyclone "Pam" went through, and upon launching did a lot of aid distribution to the outlying islands, also wrote notes to help give an idea to other vessels following in their wake. Their activities can be found on the [OCC Forum](#) between 18 March and 6 May approximately.

Chez Nous, with Jonathan & Donna Robinson, departed Fiji toward the end of April and joined two other boats on the Sea Mercy 1st response fleet. Jonathan filed comprehensive reports to Sea Mercy, who are using this as a basis for a manual to help implement future aid to the Pacific Islands for disaster relief. *Chez Nous* just got on with food and aid distribution and backed up the other boats who had doctors on board. We received much guidance from *Chez Nous*, who after their rotation spent many hours or days meeting with Vanuatu officials and large NGOs building contacts to try and improve and procure aid stuff for the smaller outlying islands. They were in Vanuatu from end April until the beginning of September with a 3 week break for family celebration in the USA and UK all the time there they continued to assist where ever they could in Port Vila and around the other islands.



Darramy arrived mid-May together with the other two boats in their Sea Mercy rotation. We were the first non-medical boats Sea Mercy had on the scene. We had to make up much of what we did as we went along. I wrote a couple of reports on the [OCC Forum](#) in May/June, and wrote our travelogue No 25. Click on this link. Number 25 is at the bottom. This will give you a description of some of the stuff we were involved in. *Darramy* was in Vanuatu from mid May until early Sept, with a 3 week dash back to the UK for a family wedding.



Caduceus arrived in Vanuatu toward the end of our Sea Mercy rotation, we met them in Havana Harbour in early June. (They have written a fair bit of their time in Vanuatu, it is well documented on the sites.) and, we again met them in Aiwa when I was repairing a water cistern, and Martin and I installed a new water collection system on Aiwa.

Trillium arrived toward the end of June. Amazingly they had visited Vanuatu last season, and spent the 14/15 cyclone season in NZ, where they had already decided to return to the Island of Avoch in the Maskelyne Islands to help them improve their lot even before "Pam" came along and made things even worse.

Their blog site is sv-trillium.blogspot.com



OCC Port Officers Sam and Jess Bell live in Port Vila and were very involved in giving Sea Mercy boats, OCC yachts and other vessels a great deal of assistance and guidance.

Meanwhile, Graham and Avril Johnson were in the northern fringes of Vanuatu and spent four months distributing aid goods, and assisting with "mending and making". They submitted their account to the OCC Newsletter.

Sea Mercy have various accounts in their records, seamercy.org/node/163. They have already mobilized a relief effort for Fiji after Cyclone Winston devastated the island nation in February of 2016. e-mail jivey@seamercy.org



BIOS



Brian Wallace and Sue Dracott, s/v *Darramy*

We had been fortunate to have had 3 years in the Pacific when Pam struck Vanuatu. We had had such a fabulous time the previous years amongst the Pacific Islanders, We shelved our plans to sail to Indonesia and wanted to help the people of Vanuatu.

We joined Sea Mercy and we were with two other boats sent to the Shepherd Islands to help distribute aid, do assessments for WHO (World Health Organisation). We were loaded to the gunwales with all sorts of stuff much of which has been donated from Aus and NZ.

We soon discovered that the outlying islands had received very little help. A quick assessment determined that collection of water and storage was a major task, and we set about repairing collection systems in communities. By the time we had finished we had provided water storage of over 200,000 litres. We also repaired a couple of community fishing boats which had been badly damaged. So no fish to sell, no money coming in. It was important to get these people back on their feet. We edged around local tribal politics, which at times was interesting, but important for us not to play the big brother card.

We did what we could during all this hardship, the Vanuatu people who had lost nearly everything still kept smiles on their faces.

After the Sea Mercy Rotation ended, we stayed on and helped where we could on the islands, mainly concentrating on repairing water cisterns in the Maskelyn Islands. Here we met up with fellow award winners Trillion and Caducious.



Jonathan and Donna Robinson, s/v *Chez Nous*

Retired Royal Navy officer Jonathan and his American wife Donna were onboard their 40' catamaran CHEZ NOUS in Port Denarau, Fiji when Cyclone Pam flew past them and devastated Vanuatu.

Looking for a way to help, they joined the US based Charity SEA MERCY and sailed for Vanuatu where OCC vessel ADINA was already making a difference.

<http://www.seamercy.org/>

Turned back by Cyclone Solo, they finally made landfall in Aneityum in company with medical teams aboard the Swedish vessel SALSA and the American vessel LIL EXPLORERS. Their three vessels comprised SEA MERCY's first Emergency Rotation.

Moving North through the island chain, they worked with various NGO's, local charities, Super Yachts, Greenpeace and the World Food Programme "Standing in the Gap" until more help arrived.

Reaching Port Villa they liaised with SEA MERCY's second rotation: OCC vessel DARRAMY and their compatriots PERSEPHONE and BUFFALO NICKEL.

With guidance from Sam and Jess of Kaleva Yacht Services, CHEZ NOUS continued north to address the needs of the Shepherd Islands. During this time they were privileged to meet with OCC vessels CADUCEUS and TRILLIUM, both conducting outstanding work in the Mascelyne Islands.

Jonathan and Donna remain passionate about SEA MERCY's work in the South Pacific and are sailing CHEZ NOUS from New Zealand back to Fiji this year to direct SEA MERCY Fleet operations in the Lau Group.

<http://www.seamercy.org/tuvuca>



Martin and Elizabeth Bevan, s/v *Caduceus*

Martin joined the OCC in 1973 having completed a qualifying passage whilst in the Army and studying for an engineering degree when he was granted a summer sabbatical to go away adventure training. Sailing with a recently retired couple who were setting off cruising set the seeds for the future. Taking part in the London to Sydney leg of the Financial Times Clipper Race in 1975 sealed the deal. Thirty-seven years later, in 2010 following retirement he and his wife Elizabeth, a General Physician, set off in their AMEL 54 *Caduceus* on their own retirement project. In 2010 they crossed the Atlantic and subsequently spent three years cruising the east coast of the United States before crossing the Pacific to New Zealand in 2014. All of their passages have been double handed. The experience gained during a month in Vanuatu in September 2014 and news of devastation caused by Cyclone PAM in March 2015 lead them to modify their plans and return to Vanuatu for four months to assist with medical services, mentoring and the provision of aid to remote communities. They are currently in Malaysia and about to start on a crossing of the Indian Ocean to Mauritius and South Africa.

Elizabeth started sailing with her husband to be, Martin, in 1971 and kept an interest over the years with occasional charters whilst working full time as a doctor in general practice and raising a family. Still working full time but with the family grown up there was time and resources to start worldwide chartering and this together with working through various RYA qualifications laid the foundations for the purchase of *Caduceus*, an AMEL 54 in 2007 in preparation for setting off in 2010 on a double handed, circumnavigation as a retirement project. Her qualifying passage for the OCC was an Atlantic crossing from Las Palmas to St Lucia in 2010. In September 2014 they reached Vanuatu and spent an interesting five weeks cruising the islands. News of devastation caused by Cyclone PAM in March 2015 lead them to modify their plans and return to Vanuatu for four months to assist with medical services, mentoring medical staff and the provision of aid and instruction to remote communities. They are currently in Malaysia and about to start on a crossing of the Indian Ocean to Mauritius and South Africa.

Web diary at <http://blog.mailasail.com/caduceus>



Sam and Jess Bell, OCC Port Officers, Port Vila

Sam received his first boat when he was 5, growing up near Wellington, New Zealand. Jess grew up all over the world and learned to sail in Southern California. They met in Istanbul about 10 years ago. Jess was an educator in a Turkish University and Sam was build and then IT Engineer on the 88 meter Maltese Falcon. A year later, they "retired" and went sailing. Eight years ago their sailing brought them to Port Vila, Vanuatu which soon became home. They had two small boys, Jackson (6) and Nixon (5) and started a Marine Engineering and Yacht Support company, handling logistics for visiting Superyachts. When Pam struck Vanuatu last year, some of their superyacht friends and customers wanted to help. From there, Wita Aid was born. Even now, almost a year post cyclone, the Bells are running a "water barge," delivering desalinated water to isolated communities suffering affects of Pam and El Nino.



Sherry & Dennis Day, s/v *Trillium*

Sherry and Dennis Day are currently circumnavigating in their Hallberg-Rassy 46. They left Michigan heading for S/V *Trillium* in Tracy's Landing, Maryland USA on October 25, 2013 where they tossed the dock lines. Having sailed with several Caribbean 1500 Rallies and a couple of ARC USA rallies, they joined the World ARC 2014 in St. Lucia through Fiji.

On their own, the Day's explored the Pacific Islands, sailed to New Zealand for the 2015 cyclone season, then returned to the Pacific Islands. During their first season there, they became involved with the village on Avokh Island, in the Maskelyne Islands of Vanuatu. Following Cyclone Pam, they returned to the village with aid, materials and skills.

Working with the villagers for two months, they helped restore water catchment systems in the Primary School and in the village, installed solar lighting in the church and distributed food, clothing, housewares, textbooks, school supplies, tools, and petrol. They provided clean drinking water from their water maker. Since the school needed a computer, the Day's purchased one and Sherry taught two people how to use it.

They even sailed to and from Port Villa with the Chief and his right hand man to order and pick up roofing supplies, rice, flour and a boatload more. Sherry started "Dresses for Dignity," a program to raise matching funds which resulted in purchasing new Mother Hubbard dresses, panties and bras for 100 women and teens on Avokh and Awei Islands.

For cyclone season 2016, the Day's are exploring the waters of Australia and will rejoin the World ARC in July to complete the trip across the Indian Ocean, around South Africa and across the South Atlantic back to St. Lucia in April 2017. Then it will be back to their home on Lake Huron as they plan to continue traveling the world by land. They have already visited 51 countries.

The circumnavigation was Dennis' retirement plan, leaving the practice of law after 44 years. Sherry, former Executive and Leadership Coach, learned to sail so she could go with him. They live in Michigan and have five children and five grandchildren in California, Michigan and London, UK.



Tom Partridge and Susie Plume, s/y *Adina*

Tom Partridge and his partner Susie Plume set off from England in March 2013 with the intention of sailing around the world. Having crossed the Atlantic in November that year they spent the 2014 season cruising the South Pacific. They chose to experience life on a tropical island by spending the cyclone season in Vanuatu, storing their yacht, *Adina*, on land, stripped bare and tied down in a strong cradle. Category five cyclone PAM hit Vanuatu in March 2015 causing widespread devastation. *Adina* escaped unscathed and Tom and Susie sprang into action raising funds to help those affected. Sharing information through the OCC they encouraged other yachts to sail to Vanuatu and provide support. Tom says "We launched *Adina* as soon as we could to distribute aid and carry out first aid clinics on some of the smaller islands. On arrival, we would ask the Chief of each village to help co-ordinate sharing the aid. We were amazed how everything was opened and shared fairly, the whole village present - even nails for new roofs were counted out one-by-one". Tom and Susie are planning to continue their adventure sailing across the Indian Ocean in 2016. www.yachtadina.co.uk



Graham & Avril Johnson, s/y *Dream Away*

Graham & Avril Johnson joined the OCC in 1986. In 1990 they were jointly recruited as Membership Secretaries, serving the OCC for the next ten years. They left England in 2002 aboard their Kelly Peterson 44 'DREAM AWAY', serving as Roving Rear Commodores for seven years during this on-going adventure.

Having a wide network of friends in NZ ensured a flood of relief aid goods arriving aboard. Dream Away voyaged through the entire island chain, visiting many remote locations and villages where aid was needed. Help ranged from supplying clinics with baby clothes to providing building materials and designs for a new cyclone shelter and encouraging local enterprises. Graham is a professional engineer, enabling him to mend and rebuild power systems, equip local people with tools and skills to facilitate the recovery, and generally fix a range of things from computers to ancient sewing machines, whilst Av's IT expertise produced great promotional materials for future events and ventures.

They hold the four months spent in Vanuatu amongst the most enriching, rewarding and humbling experiences of their sailing lives.

More to come...