



SIGNALS FROM T•A•R•S•U•S

August 2002

Summer Greetings!

This is the Summer, 2002 issue of *Signals from TARSUS*, and accompanies *Signals* and *Ship's Log*, the latter being the report on the 2002 Annual General Meeting. Accompanying this issue of *SfT* is the annual TARSUS membership list, and the distribution map of TARSUS members in the U.S.

Welcome

Welcome to Abigail, Ed, Martha, Pippa and Ridgely Biddle; Janice Garbarini; Robert O'Connor; Alexina Scheel; Dina, Ed and Griffin Scheel.

Résumés

No new résumés this time. If you have not sent a Résumé please consider doing so. They make wonderful reading and tell us a lot about how our fellow U.S. TARS have found Ransome (and TARS).

Dollar to Pounds Sterling Exchange Rate

For some time we have been able to keep our exchange rate steady at £1.00 = \$1.50. Unfortunately in the last few months the dollar has slipped badly against the pound and TARS is now losing money on each transaction with us. We are going to give it another few months to recover, but if it does not, then we will announce a new exchange rate with the next (November) issue of *Signals from TARSUS* which will be in effect for 2003 renewals.

2003 AGM and Literary Weekend

The 2003 TARS Annual General Meeting will be run by the East Anglian Region on the Shotley Peninsula, convenient for Pin Mill, Alma Cottage, Secret Water, etc. Dates will be May 23-26 2003. This will be the Spring Bank Holiday weekend. The 2004 AGM will be run by the Scottish Region, probably in Edinburgh, on the same last weekend in May.

The next Literary Weekend will be held at the University of Greenwich, London (the *Cutty Sark* site) on September 5-7, 2003.

Lake Michigan Gatherings

In late June, a small group of Michigan TARS arranged by the Wessel Walker family got together on Gull Lake in Michigan for a day of sailing and recreating. This event was announced on the **Tarboard** and by e-mail to northern Midwest TARSUS members as no *SfT* was going to be out in time. They plan another gathering of the "Picnic Cat Association and Arthur Ransome Society" in early August, which will have happened by the time you get this, also arranged by e-mail. However, a write-up is promised for the next *SfT*.

Ransome-Related Article File

I printed a complete list of articles in our Articles file in the last (April) issue, which made it inevitable that someone would send me more articles. Here are three new articles, sent me by Tom Grimes. As always, copies of any of them are available to TARSUS members for the cost of postage and copying.

First Things First
Classic Boat, April 2002
(In 1879 Henry Davies introduced the readers of the Boy's Own Paper to his home-built skiff "Swallow")
In the Wake of Arthur Ransome
Practical Boat Owner, March 2002
(Charter boating aboard *Lullaby*, a Norfolk Broads classic)
Ransome Notes
Classic Boat, April 2002
(A review of "Racundra's Third Cruise")



Feature Column: Ransome Readers Recommend

This column presents short reviews of books which Ransome readers want to recommend to others, especially Juniors, and we hope that both Juniors and others will offer reviews of books which they think will appeal to Ransome readers. This issue's review was originally posted to the **Tarboard** by Jonathan Labaree, who agreed to modify it slightly for publication in this column. What is particularly nice about Mr. Labaree's agreeing to do so is that he is not a member of TARSUS, simply an Arthur Ransome fan willing to share his discovery, and we thank him very much for his article.

Raiders of the Lost Barque by Steven Duff
Reviewed by Jonathan M. Labaree

Billed as "an adventure story for young boaters" and as drawing inspiration from Arthur Ransome, *Raiders of the Lost Barque* takes place in Perry Sound on Lake Huron's Georgian Bay (Canada).

The story spans the summers of 1995 and 1996 and follows the adventures of two families of children, the Vermeers and the Hudsons, who are occasionally joined by a pair of boys from another family, the Wallaces. The book begins as the children's world is falling apart. Dramatic changes threaten their summer utopia of islands, water, boats, and friends. Over the course of the two years, normal summer activities of sailing, cruises, and picnics weave into their efforts to thwart the new menace in their midst -- a corrupt businessman who builds ugly houses, drives loud boats, and generally disrespects their traditional quiet way of life.

Mr. Duff creates wonderful characters including an opera singer-neighbor, who swims among the islands every day belting out his sweet tenor, and the children's warm and adventurous Norwegian grandfather. He relates exciting adventures: a midnight cutting-out expedition, and a rescue at sea in a rising gale. He also captures many of the nuances of children enjoying their family's summer camp — recounting annual traditions, visiting favorite haunts, learning to run the boats, and the long and agonizing winter at school. The principle characters' devotion to traditional wooden craft mean that boats play a central role in the story, where they become characters in themselves.

Mr. Duff has some wonderful passages and images, such as: "When you open a cottage door for the first time each season, there is always a chill, as if winter left something of itself behind, and a thick and somehow expectant silence." That's a wonderful description of what it's like to return to a summer house after a winter's absence.

My only quibble is that Mr. Duff writes the story in the first person from the perspective of one of the Vermeer children. As a retired high school teacher, the author knows well how teenagers use the language, so his portrayal is accurate. I imagine that this style appeals to his target (young) audience, so I do not begrudge his decision. Having left my teenage years far behind, however, I found the slang, idioms, and grammar distracting.

I enjoyed the book and recommend it, particularly to “young boaters.” Reading it also made me appreciate Arthur Ransome’s accomplishment in creating such rich characters, lush landscapes, exciting adventures, and engaging prose. He is a tough act to follow, and Mr. Duff is brave and honest in recognizing Arthur Ransome as his literary mentor.

Raiders of the Lost Barque was published in 1999 by Trafford Publishing.



A Visit to Crayfish Falls – Maureen Eichner

If you are ever in Columbus with a few hours to spare, I strongly suggest going to a waterfall. It is located north of Columbus off of Hayden Run Road. The waterfall is called Hayden Run. That being a somewhat nativish name, my sister and I decided to call it Crayfish Falls. There certainly are an abundance of them there, both dead and alive. Crayfish Falls is very lovely, especially in the spring when there is lots of rain here. Later on in the summer it will probably dry up and become no more than a little stream, but now it is quite big. It is also a very nice place to be if you are hot. The very sight of the cold (very cold) water cooled me off. That was before I got into the mist that is right around the waterfall.

We didn't have the place to ourselves. On the other side of the river a team of rock-climbers scaled the cliffs. I shuddered whenever I looked at them. I don't think I'd be much of a rock-climber. Another family was there too, but they soon left and all we had to worry about were the crayfish. We must have come right after a lot of them died off because there were more skeletons than live beasts. I prefer the live ones. They don't look as disgusting as the long dead skeletons. Also, it is kind of fun to pick up rocks and see the little things scuttling away.

You can go very close to the waterfall if you want to, although you might want to wear a bathing suit. For those you cannot or will not get in the water, there are plenty of rocks to sit on as you watch the others happily gambol. After we had satisfied our longing for the water, we trooped back along the river and looked back at the site of the waterfall (Pirate's Cove). On our way back to the car we saw two ducks and their offspring at the mouth of the stream that flows from the waterfall. It was promptly named Duck Haven.

This spot is really lovely, and could be the site of some wonderful Amazon adventures if you let it. One word of warning. If you do go, be careful of two things. The way down to the waterfall can be steep in places, and there is a lot of poison ivy. In fact there is a tree of it. I almost went under it before I realized what it was.

Maureen Eichner's last contribution to Signals from TARSUS was "Another Kind of Sailor" in the February, 2002 issue.



From our 10-Gong Contributing Editor Mary Wessel Walker:

In Which I Explore the Darkroom

The Big Six has always been one of my favorite Ransome books. I especially like the end, when Dick is able to save the day by producing his photographic evidence. And, of course, there is the description of the darkroom and the magic of seeing the image come out on the paper that was blank before. This year in school I got to take a photography class, and it was a terrific to be able to experience this magic for myself.

The first thing we studied in Photography class was the pinhole camera. A pinhole camera is basically an ordinary box (mine was an old oatmeal container) with a small hole in it. When you put light sensitive photo paper in the box, you can take a picture. When it has been developed, the original photo paper is a negative image, and you can print a positive image by laying the negative on top of another piece of photo paper and letting light shine through the first paper to expose the second paper. The pinhole camera can take really interesting pictures, and it amazed me that a person could make such a good camera using ordinary materials found around the house.

My favorite part of the photography process was developing a print. To make a print, using either film or pinhole camera paper, you use a machine called an enlarger to control the light and expose your photo paper. Once you have made your print, the paper still looks the same as before you exposed it, a milky white color. (I think. I only saw it in the red light of course!) In order to see the image, you must develop it using a four-step chemical process. The first step, the developer, was my favorite. You put your plain piece of photo paper in a basin of the chemicals for two minutes and you literally get to watch as the image appears. This is very exciting! Sometimes, if you have used too much light, the image will get too dark and that can be sad to watch; or if you used too little light, the image will never get dark enough.

In order not to waste the photo paper, our teacher had us make "test prints" where we exposed the same print to light for four different lengths of time by covering part of the photo paper with cardboard while it was being exposed (see example picture). This allowed us to get an idea of what the perfect amount of time for that print would be. After the developer, you move your print to the stop bath for 30 seconds. This chemical stops the developer from developing the print any more. Then you move the print to the fixer. The fixer makes the print safe to take out into the light. This is probably the most frustrating part of the process because it takes four minutes and there's really nothing you can do but wait. After the fixer is the wash, which is just plain water, and takes 5 minutes. If you rinse the picture off you can look at in the light for a moment to see if everything is ok before doing the whole wash so this part does not cause so much impatience as the fixer does.

My least favorite part of the photography process is developing film. This is very tricky, and I don't like it because, unlike developing a print, you can't watch the process happening, and a mistake early in the process can spoil your whole roll of film, and you can't even tell until you're done! First, you have to roll the film from the little canister you put into your camera onto a reel, which is a spool for the film. This process must be done in total darkness, because film is very light sensitive, and it's a bit tricky to do because you have to try to avoid touching the film as much as you can. Also, it's not hard to mis-roll the film on the reel, and if you do that you spoil a number of pictures.

I had to practice a lot out in the light with junk film until I got it just right, but it's still more nerve-wracking when it's your own film and pictures at stake! Plus, at school where so many people use the same equipment most of the reels are a bit wonky, and this also makes it hard to be sure you're rolling the film correctly. Once you think you've got your film rolled properly, you consign it to a little light-tight canister, and you can't check on it till you're done. This canister is called a tank, and there are tanks for a single reel, and there are tanks with room for two reels. I usually used a double tank, partnering up with my friend, Sandra. This has its advantages and its disadvantages: with two people concentrating on it you are less likely to do something wrong, but also if you mess up, you've not only spoiled your own film, but someone else's as well! Fortunately, this never happened to us.

So now we come to the actual developing process, which I found very frustrating, because you spend a lot of time pouring chemicals into the tank through the light tight valve, and agitating (shaking the tank at very particular times), and trying to keep track of how long it's been and there always seems to be about a dozen people crowded into this little room "Hey can you pass me the fixer?" "Now has it been two minutes or three?"

"Is it time to agitate now or in another 10 seconds?" And there was the time our "light tight" lid had a crack in it, and we had no idea if our film was ruined or not. But when the long process is finally over, it is very rewarding to be able to look at your film, all perfectly developed, knowing that none of the mistakes you thought you made have ruined your film! It's actually a kind of adventure in itself!

There's a lot that goes into photography, and I've only begun to explain how it works, but the appeal is the same from Dick Callum to me. Even my least favorite part was a lot of fun. And though it seems unlikely that I'll ever solve a mystery with my photography, I have enjoyed it a lot. I definitely recommend taking a photography class to any TARS who gets the opportunity, especially if you've always been fascinated by Dick's experiments in *The Big Six*.

About the author: Mary Wessel Walker graduated from Huron High School in Ann Arbor, Michigan this June. She will be attending Bryn Mawr College in Pennsylvania in the fall. She plans to continue writing columns for TARS while getting her education. (We certainly hope so! Ed.)



A Final Word from the Editor

Have a wonderful rest of summer, and a wonderful autumn. Let me know about any upcoming TARSUS events (which, naturally, you are all working on for this autumn or winter!) and please send me more material for the next *Signals from TARSUS* due in November.

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TARS U.S. as of July 2002



AK-1	CT-4	HI-2	LA-1	MI-4	NH-1	NY-7	PR-1	VT-1
AZ-1	FL-3	IL-1	MA-9	MN-7	NJ-2	OH-5	RI-4	WA-9
CA-21	GA-3	IN-3	MD-5	MO-1	NM-1	OK-1	TX-1	WI-5
		KS-1	ME-5	NC-1	NV-1	PA-3	VA-7	

TARSUS has 122 households distributed approximately as shown including Alaska, Hawaii and Puerto Rico.
(Locations of Alaska, Hawaii and Puerto Rico have been changed to fit them onto the map.)