



SIGNALS FROM T·A·R·S·U·S

May 2006

Ten-Gong Contributing Editor Mary Wessel Walker shares a recent adventure...

IN WHICH SHE EXPLORES THE BAHAMAS

This past October I had the incredible opportunity to go to the island of San Salvador in the Bahamas with my Paleobiology class and other geology students for our weeklong fall break. The whole trip was a terrific adventure.

San Salvador is very much off-the-beaten-track as far as the Bahamas is concerned, although it is the island where Christopher Columbus landed in 1492 (we were there on Columbus day and went to a local festival and party). San Salvador is about eight miles long and four miles wide. We stayed at the Gerace Research Center, a field station with very basic accommodations.

Because October is the off-season, we got to stay in the graduate student housing – cinderblock buildings with rooms for three people opening directly to the outdoors. This was a far cry from a posh hotel, but at least it was better than the dormitory-style accommodations for the undergraduates. We explored that building and something about the white walls and crowded beds was reminiscent of a hospital during an epidemic. We couldn't imagine what it would be like to stay there when the place is full! Fortunately everyone at the research center is very friendly and the food was simple but good.

Each morning we would load up on one of the research center's trucks and drive to an interesting site for snorkeling or looking at rocks (usually both). Riding the trucks was like going on a hayride where the tractor and the wagon have been combined into one and there's no hay. As passengers we sat on benches in the back of the truck and held on to our hats! It's hardly the safest way to travel (especially considering Bahamian driving...) but I think it's the only way to get around on a beautiful sunny and windy day.



Everyone on truck ...the only way to travel!

I'd never been snorkeling before, but I really enjoyed it. We saw so many interesting creatures on the reefs. Like Dick, I started keeping a list of the things I saw. Among other things we saw starfish, anemones, barracuda, puffer fish, conch, *Acropora palmata* ("moose antler" coral), fan coral, and calcareous algae. I was the only person to see a sea turtle.

Our professors warned us that many things in the water sting, so we were somewhat paranoid about touching anything, which is good because it is so easy to damage the reef ecosystem. However, I did get to hold a starfish during one of our snorkeling expeditions. One night we went for a night snorkel, which was a lot less scary than I expected it to be. Most of the creatures seemed to be sleeping, but we did get to see a cuttlefish. It was very confused by the light of our flashlights. One day we took a boat to some of the small islands or cays around San Salvador which are wildlife preserves. We saw tons of iguanas, as well as birds called frigates and boobies.

(Continued on page 3)

HOW TO DRESS LIKE A PIRATE

“Hands up,” said the pirate girl from the Amazon, who was in the captain’s tent.

“Hands up yourselves,” cried Captain John, and made as if to leap to his feet. Both the pirates shot off their arrows.

“Now,” shouted John, “before they load again. Swallows for ever!” The four Swallows were up and half-way across the open space In a moment. The red-capped Amazons leapt up out of the tents to meet them. But they pointed their bows to the ground.

“A parley,” shouted the one who seemed to be the leader.

“Halt!” called Captain John.

(Swallows And Amazons, p. 104)



Captain Helen models a red woolly cap.

How would the Swallows have known that Nancy and Peggy were “pirate girls” without their quintessential red woolly caps? If you’d like to be recognized as the terror of the seas like the Amazon Pirates, read on, mateys, and stir your stumps to make a cap like theirs! Thanks to Elizabeth Jolley, of Portland, Oregon, for this great “skills for scalawags” how-to!

Supplies:

1 large (4 oz.) skein worsted weight red yarn
Knitting needles in size 6 & size 8

Cuff:

With smaller needles, cast on 80 stitches.
Work in Knit 2, Purl 2 ribbing for two inches.

Crown:

Change to larger needles, and work in stockinet stitch (K 1 row, Purl 1 row), beginning with a K row, until hat measures 7 1/2 inches, ending with a P row.

Shape Top:

Row 1 (right side): * Knit 8, Knit 2 together, place marker on needle *; repeat pattern between *’s 7 more times.

Row 2 and every other even-numbered row:
Purl to end of row.

Row 3:

*Knit until two stitches remain before marker, knit 2 together; repeat from * 7 more times.

Repeat rows 2 & 3 until final row: Knit 2 together across row.

Finishing:

Cut yarn, leaving long end. Using yarn needle, sew this end through remaining stitches; draw up tightly & fasten securely.

Sew seam from top to bottom. Tie off ends on outside of cuff (which will become inside when you fold cuff up).



Ahoy Readers!

**Signals from
TARSUS
wants to hear
from you!**

Contributions from all sorts of adventurers are most welcome (even the armchair variety!)

Deadline for the April issue will be March 1st.
For details about submission length, format and topics, contact Debra Alderman, editor, via e-mail:
dalderman@antiochsea.edu

MARY EXPLORES THE BAHAMAS

(Continued from page 1)

One of the most interesting (if least photogenic) things we got to see are stromatolites. Anyone who has studied geology knows that stromatolites are essentially the oldest recognizable form of life in the fossil record. They are simply mats of algae that can build up into distinctive layers. Stromatolites have a lot of predators, so today they are forced to live in very hostile environments where other creatures can't survive.

San Salvador has several very salty inland lakes which provide good habitat for stromatolites (but nothing else can live there). Seeing the stromatolites alive was very exciting, in spite of the fact that they're not much to look at. The stromatolites are kind of gray flat stuff on the bottom of the pond. Some graduate students who are researching the stromatolites explained that the stromatolites produce this snot-like substance which serves the organism in several different ways, including protection from UV rays! To us the snot stuff just looked and felt disgusting.

Of course, as the Swallows and Amazons would agree, the very best part of the trip was making friends with my classmates. Each person had to have a dive buddy to keep track of when we were out snorkeling, and if you weren't friends before, you became close quickly after coming face to face with a baby barracuda together!

On our last evening on San Salvador, my dive buddy Vicki and I were hanging out with our classmates in the "conference room" – a large room in the building with the wet labs. We had been playing cards and talking and it was pretty late. Suddenly we heard a strange scraping noise by the door that led to the rest of the building.

When we went to see, there was a large crab, about the size of a dinner plate, standing in the corner waving its claws at us! I'm not sure who was more freaked out, the crab or us. I mean, you don't usually expect a crab to walk in on your game of Go Fish at one in the morning, even in the Bahamas! Shannon greeted it by saying "Hello, friend!" in a



Mary gets up-close-and-personal with the wildlife

strange voice, but judging from all the scuttling and claw waving, I don't think it was happy to see us. Fortunately, we managed to get it to go back into the other room. I think it had probably escaped from one of the wet labs, but we didn't know how it had gotten into the conference room or why it had gone wandering around at night. We didn't really know what to do, so we just left a note on the chalk board to say that there was a large crab on the loose in the next room and went to bed. Perhaps you had to be there, but the whole episode was just hilarious and a fitting ending to the whole adventure.

Mary Wessel Walker is graduating from Bryn Mawr College in May. After graduation she hopes to spend as much time as possible outdoors, probably working on an organic farm somewhere in the UK.

'BEST OF ALL NATIVES'

By Debra Alderman
Seattle, WA

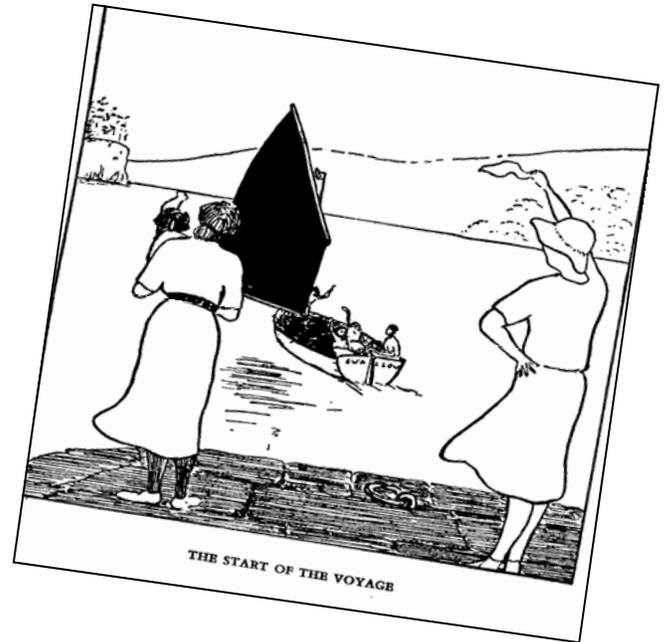
One of the most valuable things about the AR books, especially the more realistic ones that take place in the Lake District and on the Norfolk Broads, is that they offer the reader a vision of what an ideal youth should be about—having adventures that offer the opportunity to develop independence, make mistakes, take risks, learn responsibility, and just have a lot of amazingly fun experiences. Most of us APs had childhoods and teenage years that included at least some of those elements, but many of us feel that childhood in the 21st century is too coddled, too programmed, and too much indoors! Part of the appeal of the AR books is that we wish our kids and our neighbors' kids could be freer to have those kinds of experiences today. A little less adult supervision would probably make the world a whole lot more fun for kids, and help them to become more responsible, capable adults one day!

Despite nostalgia for the “good old days,” we are here at *this* moment in history. So to some degree we have to indulge our fantasy for childhood adventure and independence via fiction and memoir. Beyond fantasy, books can serve to inspire the youngsters in our families, communities and ourselves to get outdoors, be curious about nature, talk to strangers, and maybe even do something foolish but character-building once in a while.

While the AR books are great reading for kids, they're also a lot of fun for adults. Ironically, while AR never had children of his own (he and his wife even proposed adopting “Titty” Altounyan), his books feature parents and other adults who are great role models for those of us attempting to raise kids in the 21st century. Of course there are a few counter-examples like the GA, but many more appealing examples of the best kind of natives. Here are some of my favorites:

Best of All Natives (Mrs. Walker):

The Walker children's mom is a typical middle-class woman whose primary role in life seems to be raising



Mrs. Walker, AKA ‘Best of All Natives’, launching 80% of her offspring!

her kids. While she fondly recalls her own adventurous youth camping and sailing in Australia, she refrains from invading her kids' blossoming independence. Instead of insisting she be treated as just “one of the crew” of the *Swallow*, she gracefully takes her place with the natives and discreetly arranges for supportive and sensible adults to supply rations, sew up britches, and be available if the kids have any kind of emergency. On the other hand she sets the bar high for her children. She makes it clear that John and Susan are being trusted and they need to live up to their parents' high expectations for responsibility—especially for the younger siblings.

Daddy (Captain Walker)

A shadowy figure we only meet once or twice. In order to like Captain Walker, we have to overlook his mildly racist use of Pidgin English with the ‘savages’ (which you can imagine he's used ‘for real’ while in Asian ports of call). For a military man he's pretty relaxed. We most remember his famous, cryptic cable which allowed the adventures to begin in the first place: “Better drowned than duffers—if duffers, won't drown.” This is a man who feels confident in his children's common sense and is willing to allow them room to make mistakes and learn from them. This rare species of parent is nearly extinct in the 21st

GREAT PARENTING ROLE MODELS IN A'S STORIES

century! Nowadays we modern parents can barely restrain ourselves from driving over to school with the offspring's forgotten lunch or homework assignment—let alone let the kids go camping and sailing with no adult supervision! And forget about children using matches alone!

Captain Flint (Uncle Jim)

Here's the kind of uncle all children should be issued at birth! He's a world traveler, lives in a houseboat (not even attached to a dock!—how cool is that?), and he's willing to play along with any kooky idea his exuberant nieces and their friends can come up with. In fact he has a few of his own. And what a good sport about his houseboat standing in for the ice-bound Fram and his generous store of provisions being eaten by the stranded explorers. No wonder he gets to accompany the Swallows and Amazons on their more imaginary adventures in *Peter Duck* and *Missee Lee*. Captain Flint, though he sometimes jumps to inaccurate conclusions, always makes atone-



At birth, all children should be issued an uncle like 'Captain Flint'

ment and restitution to those he has wrongly accused. We could all learn from his example of humility and generosity!

Mrs. Blackett:

Here's an adult who has not forgotten what it was like to be a child. She allows her daughters to be themselves. They're not quiet, polite and obedient young "ladies," and she likes 'em just fine anyway. She supports their desire for independence, freedom and adventure. She covers for them with the Great Aunt when they're not back for tea on time, and she's always welcoming to their growing network of friends.

Assorted Natives: (the farmers and their wives, Mary Swainson and her boyfriend, Old Billie and Young Billie the charcoal burners, the boat repair crew in "Rio", and the mysterious 'Squashy Hat')

With the exception of that one farmer's wife who was sure the S & A's would start a fire on High Tops, most of these natives are extremely accommodating and helpful. From stitching up ripped pants to patching the wrecked Swallow, and even providing first aid and shelter for a wounded explorer, these natives and/or savages are some of the coolest people in children's literature. I long for a world in which we could teach our children that most adults are actually nice folks that might enjoy helping them build a sled and could be trusted if there were ever a need for some 'native' assistance. But even if we can't bring ourselves to actually teach our kids to strike up an acquaintance with strangers, we can make an effort to get to know our neighbors so that few in our communities remain strangers to our kids. On the other hand, if our kids happen to see someone as *clearly suspicious* as Squashy Hat scouting around the neighborhood, we hope that they'll bother to let an AP know.

The Admiral (Mrs. Barrable)

How many non-parents would volunteer to take other people's children on vacation? This friend of

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TIDBITS FROM TARSUS

Signals needs you!

Thanks to Mary and Elizabeth for submitting their great contributions to this issue of Signals from TARSUS. Our next issue will be mailed around the end of August, so please think about writing up your summer adventures and sharing them with other readers! Deadline for the late summer issue will be **Aug. 11**. Contact me for submission format and length guidelines. Thanks!
Debra Alderman, *Signals* Editor:
dalderman@antiochsea.edu

Welcome new members

The following folks have joined TARSUS:
New Members since the January Newsletter:

Isabel Aey, Junior, Ohio
Delaney Duke, Junior, North Carolina
Nicolas Fay, Junior, Rhode Island
Philip Grimaldi, Adult, New Jersey
Bill Hamilton, Adult, Colorado
Reni Michel, Family, California
Benjamin, Danielle and Antigone Zartman,
Family, California

TARSUS contact information

Dave Thewlis is the TARS U.S. coordinator.
Please note his new address:
4390 Chaffin Lane
McKinleyville, CA 95519-8028
dave@arthur-ransome.org
707-840-9391 (work phone, messages)
415-946-3454 (fax)

Resumes of fellow TARSUS members:

Dave says he can supply a complete new resume file to any TARSUS member who requests, but will have to charge about \$3.50 for it in printing and mailing costs.

Arthur Ransome on the World Wide Web:

Need a little work or study break? Maybe it's been a while since you've been to the TARS international web site: www.arthur-ransome.org
There are on-line quizzes, info to help you plan your pilgrimage to the Lake District, stuff to buy and much more. Check it out.

Best of All Natives

(Continued from page 5)

Dick and Dorothea's parents has offered to share a potentially relaxing get-away to the Norfolk Broads with two pre-teens she doesn't even know very well. This woman has guts! She even overcomes her nervousness at not being a sailor herself, and allows the local kids to teach her and "the D's" how to sail and manage life afloat. She encourages Dorothea's writing and Dick's studious observation of wildlife, and they encourage her artistic endeavors. The friendship between these three grows beautifully during their spring holidays and offer us a great example of mutually beneficial intergenerational relationships.

The A.P. (Frank Farland)

Now be honest—how many of you adults would allow your kids to call you an "Ancient Parent"? But Port and Starboard's dad accepts this moniker with humor and grace.

So next time you are getting a little "too native," think about these wonderful adult role models and take a leap of faith (off a plank, if necessary), and if you have to be a native, do your best to live up to the example of the 'best of all natives'.

Amazon Publications 2006



There has been a special and exclusive "extra" publication, only available to TARS members and only until the end of May. It's called *Swallows & Co* and was written by Dennis Bird while at school when nothing more seemed to becoming from AR.

To order, you must send \$19 (US) to Dave by the end of May. This price includes postage.

Dave Thewlis, TARSUS Coordinator
4390 Chaffin Lane
McKinleyville, CA 95519-8028

2ND ANNUAL TARSUS NORTHWEST CORROBOREE: AUG 17-21, 2006

A coastal camping trip for all TARSUS members

WHEN: Thursday, August 17th – Monday, August 21st
(or any portion thereof)

WHAT: Campfires & cookery, sailing & surveying, birds & boats, wild corroborees & loads of fun! We will camp in tents at an old summer camp nestled on the shores of Willapa Bay, in southwestern Washington state.



The beach is shallow a long way out, safe for beginning boaters at high tide. Canoes, kayaks and a paddleboat are available for general use. Sailboats with keels will moor about 2 miles away, at a local dock with a small daily fee.

At low tide, the sand goes a long way out, great for beach soccer, sand castles, and as it comes in warmed by the sun, swimming and wading. A rope swing that flies out over the hillside provides fun and excitement!

We will have potluck suppers—nearby stores provide readily available foods.

Each family should bring their own breakfast and lunch foods.

We will have use of two refrigerators and two gas burners in an old lodge near the main campfire area. Standard dishes and pots & pans are also available for our use.

COST: \$10 non-refundable activity fee/family. \$2/night/person camping fee, to be paid at end of stay. Potluck supper dishes—you purchase foods. Dock fees if you moor a boat.

Clip and mail registration form below

WE ARE COMING TO THE 2006 COASTAL CORROBOREE!

Name(s)			
Address			
Phone ()		Number in Party	
E-mail		Ages of Children	
Date Arriving		Date Leaving	

*Please send this form with your \$10.00 non-refundable activity fee to:
Elizabeth Jolley 675 NW 114th Ave. Portland, OR 97229
You will receive confirmation of your registration.*

We are offering a new Junior TARS hosting program called “Friendly Natives”.

Unaccompanied Junior members may be hosted before and after the Corroboree, including pick-up & drop-off at the Portland Airport, Amtrak or Greyhound stations and transportation to and from the campground. Please contact Elizabeth at (503) 939-0628 to make arrangements. Juniors will have their own campsite, and will step into Susan’s shoes, cooking a meal over the campfire!