

Soon an official came on board to measure *The Aegre*, and he estimated us as 2 tons displacement. At 72 cents a ton, our passage would cost just \$1.44.

We had a few more days to wait and put the time to good use, first moving *The Aegre* to a mooring adjacent to the marina close to the Yacht Club. From there we went grocery shopping, adding 70 lbs (32 kg) of rice to our stores for the Pacific and I rescued a parrot from drowning.

Julie wrote about it in her diary: *We had just returned exhausted from shopping and were unloading the dinghy to the boat when Nick noticed a strange commotion in the water. It seemed to be something green, and alive, which was desperately trying to stop itself drowning. The buzzards were circling overhead in the midday sun.*

Being a true Englishman, and not liking to see animals suffer, Nick grabbed the oars and went to investigate. As he drew near, he ascertained it was a parrot, and it was indeed struggling for its life. It was really grateful for Nick coming to rescue it and immediately that Nick got near enough, climbed up the paddle and squatted on Nick's shoulder, real Long John Silver style.

*Nick has always been keen to have a parrot on board, as he is a great talker, and would enjoy being able to talk without my constant interjections. However, I am rather afraid of birds, and always insisted that *The Aegre* was too small and too wet to carry any pets on. Now it looked as though Nick had God on his side.*

"He seems a pretty tame sort of parrot" I ventured, "Perhaps it's escaped from one of the other yachts." We both vaguely remembered seeing a couple of parrots on board a Brazilian schooner that we had tied up to while being measured [for the Canal]. Reluctantly Nick rowed off with the parrot and very quietly tapped on the side of the schooner. "You haven't by any chance lost a parrot have you?" the swarthy chap cast a glance up forward to where the parrot cages were. "Oh yes dammit! He's undone his cage again! Thanks very much for returning him."

I breathed a sigh of relief when Nick returned alone, wishing that he hadn't been born with a conscience.

Apart from being on-hand to save drowning parrots, we used the yacht club's showers and washing machines and collected our mail waiting for us there. We were so grateful. Feeling wonderfully clean and refreshed, we sat in the Club's bar, drinking coffee and reading our letters aloud to each other, excitedly hearing all the news from our families and friends in faraway England.