



**Happy Holidays !**

destination for both New Zealanders and foreigners. Opua has been "Destiny's" home port and cruising base since 2001, after going through the process of importing "Destiny" into NZ twelve years ago. Importing "Destiny" into NZ has given us the opportunity leave her in NZ for extended periods of time when we needed to go home for family and work reasons. Although importing "Destiny" NZ was costly (taxes and duty fees), it was made attractive by having the alternative of making NZ Destiny's permanent residence. Having "Destiny" in NZ has enabled us leave the USA and return multiple times to NZ to make three ocean passages and island cruising seasons in Tonga, Fiji and most recently this year, Vanuatu. In addition, we have been able to enjoy several summers (Jan through April) cruising NZ waters. Although our offshore cruising is now at an end, we plan to spend each year aboard "Destiny" in New Zealand during their summer months January through April. The rest of the year through the Holidays we intend to be at home in the Pacific Northwest. We are most fond of New Zealand and have been blessed by establishing long term

friendships that we are sure will last for a lifetime.



ABOARD "DESTINY" IN SAVUSAVU WITH EXPAT CRUISING FRIENDS

ocean passages, this sail was made more challenging by persistent sustained wind in excess of 30 knots, often with waves in excess of three meters (10 ft). Unpredictable "Rogue" waves (counter to the average direction and size) would frequently strike "Destiny" from a radically different direction pushing her suddenly off course thus requiring an immediate steering response and abrupt motion. It was difficult to get good rest. The wind and sea conditions, coupled with auto pilot and sail furling-reefing system issues, further

After last year's Holiday Season at home in the Northwest, we flew to New Zealand arriving January 1<sup>st</sup> of this year. Our plans for 2014 were to the enjoy summer and fall months in the Bay of Islands (January – May) while simultaneously making final preparations for our last offshore passage and island cruising aboard "Destiny", sailing to the Island nations of Fiji and Vanuatu as our destinations. While in NZ we had great fun catching up with Kiwi and cruising friends, and celebrated our 33<sup>rd</sup> wedding anniversary "on the hook" (anchored) at Opunga Cove in the Bay of Islands. Located on New Zealand's North Island in the heart of New Zealand's beautiful Bay of Islands is the town of Opua where we stay. The nearby town Pahia is a summer holiday resort



**33<sup>rd</sup> Anniversary  
February 28<sup>th</sup> 2014**



**InAnne and Va Savu Savu Fiji 2014**



**Natua Village Fiji July 2014**

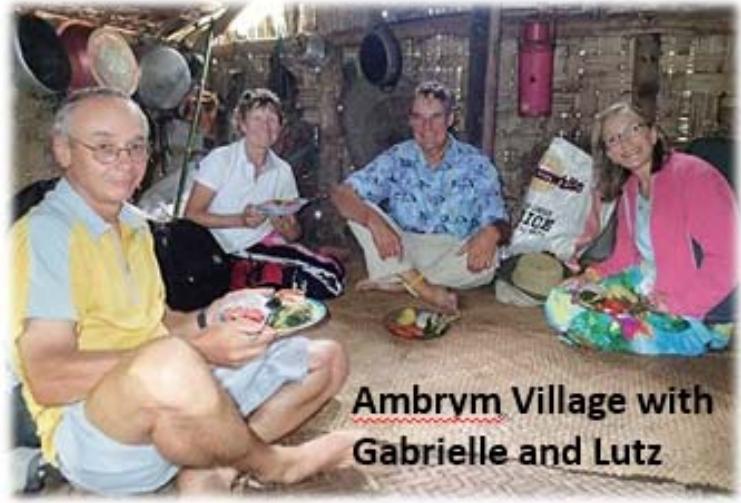
complicated the passage. Fortunately, we were able to continue sailing onward after correcting the problems, albeit in difficult conditions. On a positive note, even with our loss of time and distance while making repairs, "Destiny", true to her form, safely and very swiftly delivered us from Opua NZ to Savusavu Fiji by averaging close to 150 nautical miles daily.

While in Savusavu, Fiji we had the opportunity to catch up with long term cruising friends Jeff and Christie whom we have known since 1994 and with Steve and Iretta whom first met and cruised with during our sailing time in Mexico (1998-2001). Both couples have since moved to Fiji and this was the

first time we have seen them since our last sail from NZ to Fiji in 2008. Another highlight of Fiji was our invitation as the first-ever guests to visit Natua, the home Village of JoAnne's new Fijian friend named Va. We were the honored recipients of their warm Fijian hospitality and it was a delightful experience that included Fijian village cuisine, school children performances, and singing and dancing by the village women.

After an enjoyable couple of months in Fiji, we set sail for Vanuatu on a course taking us first to Aneityum, the most southern island of the Vanuatu chain. The 450 nautical mile passage was made in perfect trade wind conditions (20 knots) on the stern quarter with fair skies and following seas....a nice, positive contrast to our sail from NZ to Fiji 😊

We have long wanted to visit Vanuatu and felt that doing so this year was a fitting end to our last season of offshore sailing. The most significant attraction for us visiting Vanuatu is the diversity and differences between the customs of each island and their pride in their cultural differences with the rest of the world. Although the people of each island have different traditions and customs, they seemingly share a common goal of protecting their customs of the past. Vanuatu is an island nation located in the South Pacific Ocean. There are 83 islands in the chain, 67 of which are inhabited. As has been the case for all of our cruising, our focus is on interacting with local people and to the greatest extent possible, experiencing their culture and day to day lifestyle without it being filtered/masked by tourism venues. We feel truly blessed to have had many wonderful interactions with the people of Vanuatu. Our only regret is that we will likely never have the opportunity for the quality of interaction that is afforded by visiting aboard an ocean sailing yacht. Our reference to "Destiny" as a yacht is not pretentious in this part of the world. The noun "yacht" defines a sailboat as opposed to a "launch" which defines a power boat... 😊



**Ambrym Village with  
Gabrielle and Lutz**

One of the many wonderful aspects of offshore cruising is the opportunity to make friends from all over the world. As members of the global cruising community, we share in common a

bond of choosing and being committed to the cruising life style. Although there are sometimes difficulties and challenges to having made this choice, the rewards are experiences we feel are truly unique. Among our many blessings this year is to have met Lutz and Gabrielle aboard their German flagged sailboat "SuAn" at Aneityum Island, our first Vanuatu landfall. Lutz and Gabi became very special friends and we sailed together through the Vanuatu islands chain until October. In October we were forced to part ways for "Destiny" to head south to NZ and "SuAn" to sail north to the Solomon Islands and beyond (including Japan). Lutz and Gabi have plans to sail to the Pacific Northwest and ultimately to again sail across the Pacific to New Zealand, so we are grateful to know we will see them again in the not too distant future. We explored many islands together, meeting with the local people and experiencing custom dances unique to each island. Lutz and Gabi's friendship made our Vanuatu experience even more meaningful.

Our impressions of the life of the villagers in Vanuatu is one that features simplicity, respect for their families and each other, pride in their heritage and culture, and stewardship of the environment and understanding of their dependency upon nature. They do not pay taxes, and other than marginally supported education to grade 6, in most cases receive very little assistance from the government. One of the consistencies we observed, perhaps due to their independence from the government, is their self-governance and sufficiency. They are thankful for their freedom and happy with their lifestyle.

Generally speaking, the village economy is based on Copra, fishing, handicrafts, and growing fruits and vegetables (for their own use and exported for sale to their capital city, Port Vila). Tourism is also a significant part of the economy for many of the villages. To many of the outer islands, visiting cruising yachts are a significant part of tourism revenue to the village's economy. There are also cruise ships that call on a few of the islands.

We found it interesting that villages can have

more than  
one chief.  
In these  
cases, the

chiefs are in a hierarchy that may be defined in terms of authority and/or area of responsibility. For instance, a village may have a



**Tanna Island Volcano**



**Tanna Island Custom Dance**

designated "custom chief" who is responsible for maintaining their traditions and culture, as well as organizing dances or cultural events (for visiting yachts). Custom dances and events are held that are unique to the Island and village that serve to maintain the unique customs of each village as well as provide a revenue source for the villages. We were able to spend a day or usually more interacting with the villagers in their daily activities lifestyle prior to them arranging the custom dancing. It was quite the contrast to have spent time with them in their normal daily living and dress and to then see the same people all "decked out" in their custom dress....or lack thereof ☺ We found it remarkable that they could blend their traditional beliefs and interpretation of history with that of

Christianity, which forced on them by missionaries in the past. Proselytization to Christianity was a risky business, as evidenced by the fact that a number of missionaries ended up in the pot as dinner.

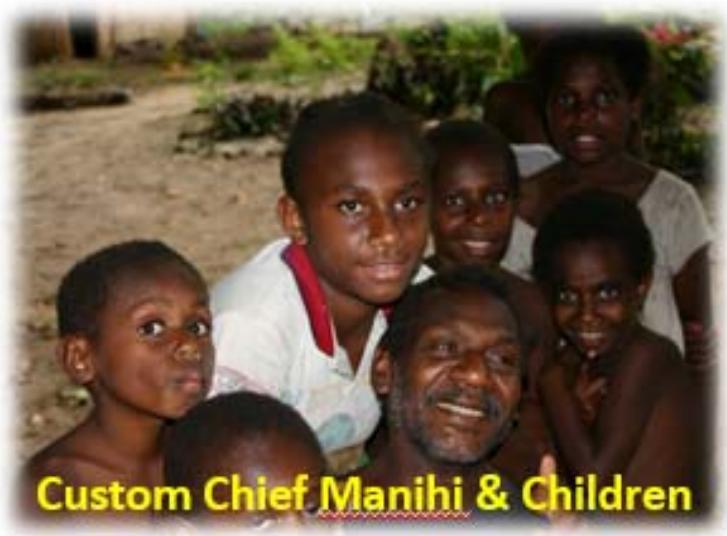
Over the past sixteen plus years of our voyaging, we have been fortunate to have experienced warm hospitality from numerous people of all nations during our visits aboard "Destiny". Arriving on a sail boat ("yacht") enables an experience much different than a normal tourist, which is one of the reasons we chose to make traveling this way our goal. The warm and friendly greetings of the Vanuatu villagers exceeded that of our past experiences in other pacific islands.



**Banam Bay Village Custom Dance**

rudimentary restaurants catering to the visiting yacht community, some have rudimentary bungalows for rent, and some have small shops with a minimum assortment of canned food, etc. For the most part, however, trading for handicrafts, fresh fruit and vegetables on a one-on-one basis is the preferred practice. We had collected boxes of clothing, lengths of line, fishing supplies and other items to give away or trade which proved to be the accepted way and a wonderful memory and experience.

Villages in Vanuatu are built from the building material which is provided by the nature like Bamboo, roofs of grass and walls woven of Pandanus leaves. Very few homes had the upgraded materials of corrugated metal roofs and cinder block construction. The family kitchen is separate structure from the family sleeping and gathering area, as well as the bathroom/toilet area being a separate structure. The kitchen is a thatched roofed structure with an open fire, making it quite smoky even with side openings. Cooking is fueled by dry twigs, and thick plant stalks collected in the woods. Food sources are from their own gardens, pigs, chickens and from fishing. The national language is Bislama (a form of Pidgin English), however, each island has its own dialect as well. French and English is also spoken. The dugout canoes are the primary water craft transportation of the islanders. In a number of cases, a village would also have one or more outboard motor powered skiffs for transportation to other villages on the same island or fishing further from shore. Commercial exchange of



**Custom Chief Manihi & Children**



**Custom Chief Manihi with JoAnne**



Sailing Canoes in the Maskalyne Islands



Returning from the family garden



Building a dugout canoe



Skiffs delivering goods to shore from a supply ship

Our final island cruising season ended with our departure from Port Villa, the capitol city of Vanuatu which is located on Efate Island.

In contrast to our rough passage from NZ to Fiji, the passage back to NZ was overall pleasant. Although the first three days required aggressive sailing to windward in 20 – 25 knot wind “on the nose” in two meter seas, the following couple of days the wind was lighter and coming from a more comfortable direction. Eventually the wind died during the 4<sup>th</sup> day and we ended up motoring to NZ the final 3 days. Although we could have continued sailing (albeit at slower speed), we opted to motor in order to arrive in Opua prior to a major bad weather system forecasted to arrive. Happily we arrived the morning of Thanksgiving and were able to partake in the “American”

style Thanksgiving dinner hosted each year by the Opua Cruising Club. The yacht club has been putting on this event since the late 1990’s and it is attended by NZ Cruising Club members and cruisers throughout the world, making for a wonderful international gathering. True to the spirit of Thanksgiving it was a time for all of us to reflect on and be thankful of our cruising way of life.



*We wish you a joy filled Holiday Season  
and a New Year filled with countless  
blessings, happiness and  
health.... Michael & JoAnne*

