



# The Birman Letter 2006

## Merry Christmas

## Happy Chanukah



We hope that this, our 38th edition of this letter, finds you in good health and at peace. 2006 has been an exceptionally busy year for both of us. We lost a dear cousin and gained a new grandniece, we traveled to places far far away and enjoyed a number of visits with our small and far-flung family.

We began the year with a black-tie gala at our yacht club, joined by sister Sylvia and brother-in-law Barry. While they were in town we took in the King Tut exhibit at the Fort Lauderdale Museum of Art. Frankly we found it much too crowded to properly enjoy and walked ourselves to near exhaustion!

Rosemarie and Paul, aboard the trawler *Rosemarie 3*, joined the cruisers



of the yacht club on a weekend cruise to No Name Harbor in Key Biscayne. We rafted at anchor overnight and were awakened to a fierce squall which caused some damage to a few of the yachts. We managed to tie up at the sea wall and escaped major problems.

Paul flew to Los Angeles in early April to join many of our family in celebrating Barry Cooper's 70th birthday. Niece Jean was the hostess at a very



Sarah Isabel Cooper

elegant affair in her home. On April 29th Sarah Isabel Cooper was born to David and Katrina, becoming our 4th grandniece (with one grandnephew).

Shortly thereafter, on Easter Sunday, we departed for Easter Island in the Pacific where we joined the *National Geographic Endeavour*, a small expedition vessel for a month-long voyage that encompassed Pitcairn Is.; Mangareva, in the Gambier Group; Ravahere, Fakarava, Makatea and Raroia in the Tuamotos; Bora Bora and Tahiti in the Society Group and finally the Cook Islands, including Atiu, Palmerston, Aitutaki and our disembarkation port, Rarotonga.



This voyage, unlike past Lindblad Expeditions, two of which were aboard this same ship when she was named the *Caledonian Star*, was not aimed at viewing exotic wild life: Leopard seals and penguins in Antarctica—Polar bears and walrus in the High Arctic.

This time we were observing



the remains of very isolated human civilizations. Isolated Polynesians on Easter Island who constructed huge statues (called Moai) and Bounty mutineers on remote Pitcairn Is., who, against all odds, have a modern society with internet access (through Albuquerque NM—courtesy of a seismic station linked to the university in New Mexico) and a lively ham-radio group, with whom Paul visited.



Detail of a 47 ft high 56 ton Easter Island Moai with coral eyes and a 3-ton top knot of volcanic tuff



We bought black pearls on Manga-  
reva for \$5 each

and found that as we got closer and closer to Tahiti the price crept up: \$20 on the next island, \$200 on the next and \$1,500 in the expensive jewelry shops on Tahiti!



Palmerston Atoll in the Cook Islands group was perhaps the most interesting. It was settled in 1862 by an English sailor who brought his wife and her twin sister. They were joined later by a third woman. With these three women the sailor, William Marsters, sired some 60 children. They formed three separate "families" and occupied separate settlements on Palmerston. They undertook to marry only outside of their matriarchal family in



Children on Palmerston await our arrival in rubber Zodiac landing craft.

recognition of their shallow gene pool. When we visited, we found dozens and dozens of small children (some traditions die hard!) and left gifts for the small school run by a teacher from New Zealand.

Bora Bora was spectacular. Below, the ship enters the lagoon after a 1-



hour delay because of a report of an earthquake in the Tonga Trench. Our captain did not want to be caught in a tsunami. As it happened none was noticeable.

On several islands we were met by dance troupes who performed traditional hula-type dances accompanied by wooden drums.

Our flight home passed back through Tahiti, where we found the Air New Zealand ticket agent to be one of the Palmerston Is. Marsters.

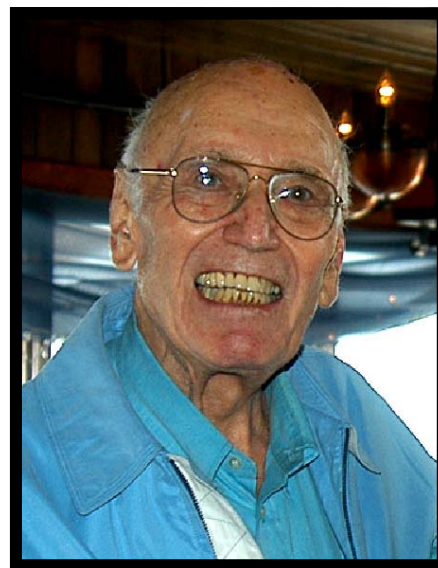
We spent a weekend with Jean and Daron and Erica and Ari Toooh and their two dogs: Copper and Tinkerbelle in Los Angeles before flying back to Ft. Lauderdale to pack and migrate north to Long Island for a slightly delayed spring at our summer home at Cedar Beach.

The summer passed quickly with a few excursions out onto Peconic Bay aboard our New York boat, the *Rosemarie 2*. Sylvia and Barry came for a few days to help Paul celebrate his birthday. Rosemarie underwent two cataract surgeries a month apart on both eyes. She is seeing quite well now, with only minor corrective lenses needed for distance vision.

In his second (and final) year as a governor of the Florida yacht club, Paul found himself commuting back to Ft. Lauderdale once a month to attend board meetings. Rosemarie accompanied him on all of these trips, earning her own frequent flyer miles on Southwest.

The deer population has exploded in our little corner of Long Island's North Fork. We had a whole herd grazing on our lawn and denuded flower beds. Paul put up fencing in a partially successful effort to keep

them away from the flowers. One Bambi figured out that if he climbed up on our front steps, he could slip BEHIND the wire fencing. He did that and feasted on impatiens, salvia and our hydrangeas. His mother gobbled the geraniums from our window boxes by standing on her hind legs, front hooves planted against the building! Ah, the joys of mother nature.



Cousin Leonard Ansell

In late October came news that Leonard Ansell, the senior of my generation of first cousins, passed away. Paul was glad that he'd had an opportunity, a week earlier, to visit with Len in the hospital where he was being treated for kidney and breathing problems. Len always had wonderful stories of our parents' activities from before my time and was a principal repository of our family's memories.

We wish you all the blessings of this holiday season and hope that 2007 will bring peace to this troubled world.

Rosemarie and Paul