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## **WHU Updates from Australia/New Zealand trip - Jan/Feb 2001**

### **1st Update 1/18/2001**

For most of you this will be our first update. After the first week and a half you'll be pleased to know that Patty has been reasonably well behaved. I'm already 3 days behind in my journal, so will make this brief and save what little creativity I have for the journal. However we did want to at least advise Sal and Bo that the storms over here haven't gotten us, yet, so no need to go into plan A, or B! Actually, one of our planned stops for next week, Dubbo, has just had their area declared a disaster area after suffering their equivalent of a tornado night before last -- this declaration, we're told, almost unheard of in Australia, so apparently they were devastated. I spoke with my guide in that part of New South Wales, and he said we're still go, so we're going to head there, and hope the storms didn't put all the fish down! Nothing's changed from last trip, unless things have gotten even better. These people are the best! We have had so damn (sorry Jim!) many funny experiences, we have to journal them so that we can share some of them with you. Melbourne just great, again stayed at Sofitel, finest place we've ever found in the world, and we had same experience last year. Hobart also, same great digs, just more fun people. Then up in the Highlands area of Tasmania to a spectacular new lodge, run by a terrific young couple. Five other Aussies there who were fascinating company, and some great evenings with them. Fishing was another thing. A front came thru that made the place seem like Minnesota, but not before I landed a 27" Brown on a dry fly! Right after we released that guy we were literally blown off the lake -- 40 - 50 knots in an aluminum skiff is enough for me! The rainforests in Tasmania, and the coastal views are enough to bring you back, but we made it back to Melbourne last night, and proceeded over to Geelong. Left Geelong early this AM after deciding to make our first schedule adjustment. The Great Ocean Drive between Geelong and Adelaide was/is too spectacular to do in one day, so we delayed our arrival in Adelaide until tomorrow night (Friday), and are bagging out in Mt. Gambier tonight. The drive so far makes anything on the West Coast look tame -- spectacular surf in the Southern Ocean, and the bluest green water we've ever seen! But -- once again, all pales when you put it up against the people. You may be able to detect from this that we're enjoying ourselves. As one of our new pals (a well known writer and photographer in Australia - we will show you two of his spectacular books!) said after learning of our planned itinerary "it's great to meet some backroads blokes!" He really thought our plan was the way to see Australia, and so far it sure seems so! Love to all, Patty & Bill, Mom & Dad, Mema & Pops, etc.!

### **Update #2 1/20/2001**

We head out in the AM for a three day drive across the bush country. Not too rugged - good roads, and we don't need 4-wheel drive. Only caution they give you is to drive

slower in early AM and late afternoon/evening because the kangaroos range/feed then, and as we've already witnessed with roadkill, they aren't car shy! Continuing to meet great Aussies. Strolling around the outdoor mall in Adelaide last night convinced us that this city is nearly as diverse as Sydney, and because of its much closer proximity to the Outback, you get some unusual sights. People watching continues to be much more our bag than Art Museums. Anyone surprised? More to follow, although we may not update for a few days. At the end of this trek over to the Brisbane area is my next fishing connection -- Des Charles. Talked with him the other evening, and he sounds like he'll be a great guy to spend a few days with (Sorry to end that with a preposition, Jake!). Love to all, Billy Boy and The Princess

### **Update #3 1/27/2001**

Wow! Hardly seems possible that it's been a week since my last update. There's been so much activity, and we've met so many great people since then, that if I don't tire telling you about it, you'll surely tire reading about it. Ah well, most of the recipients need intellectual stimulation, and that I certainly provide. I'm adding a couple of new guys to this distribution list because I had the occasion to meet Greg Norman at breakfast this morning at The Stamford Plaza in Brisbane. I had the opportunity to chat about Oldfield with him (the project that Chuck Mitchell is running over in Bluffton - for you uninformed folks). Anyway, he's a nice guy, said nice things about Chuck, and the Savannah area, was delighted to hear that I had not taken all the fish out of Australia (he fly-fishes, too), and relieved to hear that I was leaving for New Zealand Monday. Also, he had never heard of Peter Crosby, Cliff Draughn or Joe McGowan, and as far as he knew, they weren't golfers! He's really not as big a guy as I had expected, although that could be because I'm now coming in at about 22 stones!

OK, since the last report, we left Adelaide driving rural roads across the lower outback, staying in Broken Hill, Coonabarabran, and Warwick on our way over to Hinze Dam/Nerang, where I was to meet Des Charles (eat your heart out, fishing enthusiasts!) We had great experiences in each place. You'll have to buy a copy of my soon to be published journal to get the full treatment, but perhaps my most profitable contact was with a Joanne Woodward look-a-like, who, when we were about half way to Broken Hill, and stopped for petrol, advised us that the constables were tough in the area. (I had been tripping along at about 140 k/h in 110 k/h areas) About 5 minutes after bidding G'day to Joanne, we saw our first constable, and a number of them after that. Thank you, Joanne!! (Also, may not have passed along that I had my first breath-o-lyzer a week or more ago! On our way to Adelaide, about 2PM, just outside a small town, they were making routine stops. A nice young officer asked me if I'd had anything to drink "today". I allowed that I hadn't had anything in over 17 years. He was not deterred. I was still eating a grilled ham & cheese sandwich - a traveling lunch, and between bites blew into the tube! Don't know if the ham & cheese registered!)

Broken Hill is a classic old mining area, our Motor Lodge owner steered us to two great sites, an old deserted mining town with a still operating saloon that has been used for some old films, and a desert sculpture sight that was fascinating. They then put on a great feed for us - one of our best yet. The next stop, Coonabarabran, also put us in contact with one of the nicest young couples we've ever met. The Wrights run the Lodge there, and have a 7 month old gorgeous daughter. We made such a

fuss over her at dinner, that after we got back to our room, Bruce, the young father, called and asked if we'd have breakfast with them in their kitchen! We did! Got a little later start than we had originally planned, but worth it. He had been an all Australia footballer from New South Wales, and then became a police detective. She, a Tassie, though had lived for some early years in Pennsylvania. A handsome, interesting young couple, and we're hoping our paths cross again. Warwick was a pretty conventional stop, where I fell in love with our waitress. I seem to be doing that frequently in this country! Have to do a jump shift here. One of the most fascinating things has been the change in topography as we've worked our way across Victoria, New South Wales, and into Queensland. In this period we've started in desolate, dusty, parched, almost desert conditions in the outback, to more arid, rolling hills, to regions of great grain fields, and starting to see cattle raising. The cattle crosses reflect the conditions, and it's not until you get to the eastern stretches of NSW that you start to see irrigation, great soil, then truck farming, and as you move into Queensland, fruit orchards, and more traditional cattle, Pold Herefords, Murray Grays, Angus, etc. It's still considered outback, the conditions are just such an incredible contrast to what we saw three days earlier. BUT, the people remain the same -- just great blokes and sheilas every way you turn!

Patty is pestering me to take her to dinner, so will make this shortER. Des Charles is as advertised. He's a dynamite guy who looks like you'd expect an Aussie outdoors guy to look. He's a top guide, does a TV outdoors show, and great fun to be with. We did not have great weather for fly-fishing, but managed to get several good bass, even with the wind conditions, and low pressure system that cut our three sessions to two. I'll bore any of you with more detail who want it but Patty and I are hoping Des, and Vi (his Irish wife!) will join us at Skidaway, and I think they will. (Stay alert CSM)

We're now in Brisbane, as you know from the breakfast meeting with Greg Norman. This is really a spectacular city, and the Stamford gives you a spectacular view of the river and the city. The action is along the river walks, and that is where we're heading for dinner RIGHT NOW!! More to follow! As all good e-mail programs do -- if you're bored to tears, send a reply with UNSUBSCRIBE in the Subject line!! G'Day and love to all! Billy Boy and PATSY!

#### **Update #4 2/3/2001**

Had a great stay in Brisbane -- it's a great city where most of the action occurs around the water. I gave you a little idea of the Gold Coast, which is too much action for us, so one day drove north to The Sunshine Coast. A little closer to our speed, but still pretty much wall to wall with the sun and surf set. It's just a little more relaxed, family oriented beach action. Saw our first Kite boarding - something we'd not seen before. It's a takeoff on parasailing, but the line from the 15'x10' kite goes to a person on a 5-6' board, and their ability to maneuver both the kite and the board is impressive! Flew out of Brisbane on the 29th and said goodbye to Australia after a great 3 weeks (hope to be back next year!), and into Auckland.

This happens to be Auckland Anniversary Day and they celebrate by all getting out on their boats. It's estimated that there is a boat in Auckland for every 4 residents! Most are sailors, and based on our experience last year, this truly is a city of spars

and sails. We're a little late arriving, and decide to head through the city and head up north so that crossing the bridge we may be able to get a glimpse of the late celebrants. Saw several hundred sailboats, but in Auckland that's like a no show. It was still light, though, so it was a pretty sight. Took a couple of days to explore the rural areas of the west coast - have a few funny stories and experiences I can relate, if prompted. Have probably seen more gravel rural roads, and been lost more times than the natives. But, eventually we'd get to a farmhouse and roust out a shearer, or see a gal out at her mailbox (her husband "buggered out and left me with 2 kids") who would get us reasonably back on track. (-- and for those of you who remember Daisy Mae of Dogpatch fame, I discovered her in the form of Kim waiting tables at The Funkey Fish luncheonette at Bayley's Beach! Honest!) If I haven't said this before, one of the things that Aussies and Kiwis share is their incredible sense of humor. We have pictures of the Loo at the Funky Fish to prove it!

Working our way over to Russell on the East coast (and I know some of you have been there) we drove through the Waipoua Rain Forest with its giant Kauri trees. Incredible! It goes on for miles and miles (sorry, kilometers), and as you're descending along these winding, narrow roads -- all of a sudden the most spectacular view of a harbor comes into view - the Hokianga Harbor, and across the harbor miles and miles of huge white sand dunes. Hard to describe the beauty, and the rapid contrasts! We stayed in a small Maori village that night, and decided to just get "takeaways" to have in our room. Instead of a #, I suggested to the chef that she just call out "come and get it, Fatboy", when it was ready. Instead, she brought it out to us, and said "I was going to call out for Yankee Doodle Dandy, but decided against it!" The Maoris have a sense of humor, too!

Took the ferry over to Russell after driving through more wonderful NZ farm country, and seeing some very impressive stations. Russell is pretty special. It has incredible NZ history, and the first church built in NZ (an Anglican Church, as you'd expect), which still stands even though the town was razed at least four times, but the Maori chieftan would always spare that beautiful little structure. Our hosts in Russell, Mary & Kent MacLachlan, are a Kiwi/Canadian couple who run a B&B in Russell, and sail in NZ about 7 months a year, and the other 5 months, live aboard and sail Lake Ontario. They are a hoot! She's a self described Crazy Kiwi, and when you hear her life story, and see her in action, you've got to love her. Kent owned a construction business in St. Catherines (large commercial), then sold it, decided to manage his own resources, and ended up as a broker for 25 years -- all the time sailing competitively. He met Mary, and they've been doing their thing in Russell for the past 16 years. The four of us went out sailing yesterday (our first real sail since the sale of "Hi Tide"), and had a blast. A spectacularly beautiful day, great wind, crystal clear blue green water, at one point I suggested that we just stay on the same tack forever -- believe that would have eventually put us in Chile! Now here's one for the book (brace yourself, Bo!) We anchored and bottom fished for a while to try for a little dinner -- PATTY caught 4 or 5 small snappers! Most of them were pretty small, but we managed to get a few keepers and they sure were good eating! Kent & Mary invited another couple from Canada (friends of theirs with 2 great little kids) to join us for a regular Kiwi dinner, so we supplemented our catch with some Fish N Chips from the local "take away" (that's Aus/NZ for carryout, if you missed it!) Really a great evening. Tonight we're in Snell's Beach, tomorrow night in Auckland and dinner with the McGowans good friends, the Rowlands, and then Monday off to Christ Church in the South Island.

I've received only about a dozen requests to take people off the mailing list, so I'll continue for another report or two. Patty and I are each keeping a journal, and we're finding it helpful to remember the stories and experiences from one day to the next. We continue to stack up the niftiest bunch of new friends as we go along. If 10% of the people we've invited to come see us do it, we'll be entertaining a lot of Aussies and Kiwis for a long time!

Cheers! Billy Boy & The New Fearless Snapper Killer!

## Update #5 2/12/2001

Had a wonderful evening with Don and Coralie Rowland in Auckland (good friends of the McGowans), and did it up right with dinner at SAILS, a wonderful restaurant overlooking the most impressive array of sailboats you've ever seen. The restaurant is where Don's old rowing club used to be located, so it is still a special spot for Don. (Sir Donald was the New Zealand singles rowing champion on 6 different occasions -- sort of like Babe Ruth except Ruth's record was broken!! My comment - not Don's! You would never sense he's a Sir or a record holder, just a grand guy!)

On to Christchurch, a really charming place. We had enjoyed it so much last year, but went through so quickly that we never really took advantage of all there is to see and do. The first day we drove out to Akaroa, a beautiful little seaside village. We had stopped in there last year on our cruise ship, and in an effort to save a few bucks, I carried my little laptop into town and sat in the kitchen of a little cafe, and went on line. The same cute gal who owned the cafe was there this year, and gave a shout, and said "I remember you!" Since I'm about to test Patty with 3 days of fly-fishing next week, I decided to build points by taking her "Punting on the Avon". For those of you who don't see me as a romantic, this is about as close as a guy can get. More great stories from 3 days in Christchurch than you'd want to hear. Met several memorable folks, had more than several memorable meals, and just generally found it to be a great stop!

Out of Christchurch on Thursday 2/8, heading south on our way to the Southern Alps and Fiordland. However, we have a real treat in store. We had told our friends, the MacLachlans (remember them from Russell? You've got to pay attention!) that we would stop in Fairley (a VERY small farming community) and say hello to their friends, the Robinsons. Marie is the local Kindergarten teacher, and John is a 3rd generation sheep farmer, who 4 years ago decided to get into deer farming. When we arrived, John had already put together a picnic lunch, and off we went in his 4 wheeler up into the hills of his 3000 acres of mostly gorgeous, rolling deer grazing lands. The countryside is so much more spectacular, when you're in it, and I got good at jumping out and working gates -- and there were lots of them! What Kiwi hospitality!! It was like we'd been pals for years. There are two things we've learned about almost all New Zealanders --- 1) They have a great sense of humor, and 2) There is no pretense, they are the most easy going, down to earth folks you'll ever meet. There are probably exceptions, but they'd be just that -- exceptions!

Will save you on the details, but have had a great few days in the southernmost stretches of the South Island as well, including 2 days in Invercargill, and Bluff. Fascinating history, and more fascinating people. Also got up to Mount Cook, and are now in Athol for 4 days. (What? Never heard of Athol? Population - 70 fine folks, including one Len Prentis, who will lead me to the legendary South Island Brown Trout, beginning tomorrow AM!)

Patty IS a good sport! Love to all, Billy Boy and GS Patty

## Update #6 2/23/2001

All right you readers of fine literature, we're home, and about to share with you the last chapter in the exciting saga of "Billy & Patty Down Under"! When last heard from Bill had just brought Patty to the thriving metropolis (Population - 70) of Athol, in the South Island of NZ. The curtain opens with me taking a tumble down an embankment, going in to my ranger role to save my fly-rod (thanks to my training/association with Semper Fi Ruppert), and landing with one shoulder in the stream, upside down. I immediately "sprung" to my feet, put a perfect cast to a large brown trout, he took, and I proceeded to damn near break his neck with my rather strong "set". He won that one! But for three days I learned from the master, Len Prentice, and we did great! Len can read trout in streams, and stalk them better than anyone I've ever met, and is a real Kiwi outdoorsman, and great guy! Our last day (which was a half, due to rain), I landed 3 in the 4-4.5 lb. range, and one 6 pounder. Not bad for stream browns on a 5 wgt outfit, and 6x tippet, and #20 Blowfly (for those of you who care about such things!) AND since those of you who do flyfish are bound to ask -- a blowfly is the common large housefly type critter that likes to hang around sheep dung. Therefore, I have become a huge fan of sheepdung! (There's an opening for you, Jake!)

Patty (God bless her!) spent those three days taking the measurement of Athol, attended services at both cafes in town, and really became a good pal of our hostess, Noaleen. The fishing gods were really smiling on me, as she really did manage to enjoy her stay there. I'll tell you one thing, --- we both have a pretty fair appreciation for life in a small, rural New Zealand hamlet! (and Patty has developed a keen interest in, and taste for Hokey Pokey --- be sure and ask her about it!)

Retracing our steps north to Queenstown gives us still another view of the spectacular Southern Alps, and we catch our flight back to Auckland, in the North Island. After checking in to our old digs at The Parnell Inn, we go out and hunt up a couple of bottles of wine for tonight's hosts, Mike and Judy Harrington. Judy is the daughter of Gil & Rosalie Small, from the Landings, and G&R have just arrived the day before to see them in their new setting. Mike and Judy have just transferred to Auckland from Singapore after 2 1/2 years there, and Mike has just been made NZ Country Manager for Eli Lilly. It was great to see G&R, and to share an evening with the Harringtons, and their terrific 3 children! What an impressive family, and a great meal!!

We spend Saturday in downtown Auckland prowling, as it is only the 2nd rainy day in 6 weeks! (The first was when I got shut out of 1/2 day of fishing -- remember?) We decided to pass on the annual Heroes Parade, much to Patty's consternation (you MUST ask her about her attraction to these parades!) Four hours of that time was spent at the NZ National Maritime Museum. Since Auckland is the City of Sails, and with the Kiwis tradition with The Americas Cup, the part that maritime history played in the settling of New Zealand, and the Maori sea links to Polynesia, etc., you can imagine how much there was to see there. It is truly an impressive museum, and a must see for anyone interested in understanding the roots of this culture. Sunday gives us a chance to re-explore, by car, Devonport, across the Waitamata Bay from Auckland. This is a fascinating and historic old town that we visited by boat last year, and this gave us a little more opportunity to prowl the neighborhoods there. A quaint place, with a spectacular view of the Auckland skyline. We then drove out to St. Heliers, where we once again enjoyed seeing the bay filled with HUNDREDS of children learning to sail in HUNDREDS of one-design sailboats. Amazing! Kind of answers the question about why Kiwis do so well in all kinds of international sailing competitions! A quick wood-fired pizza at our favorite little place in St. Heliers, and then off to the airport for our flight back to the States!

What a great way we have to wrap up our 6 weeks. A visit with my cousin, Bob, in Arcadia, CA, who is making great strides after some tough health setbacks, and the great hospitality of his son John, and his dynamite wife Judy, and two of the niftiest young guys you'll ever meet! Brian (10) and Kevin (8) have become two of the folks we enjoy most in all the travels we've EVER taken! The visit is too short, but we pack in a lot of laughs, and a lot of love with this gang!

Off to Savannah, and here we are. We both agree that this has been perhaps our best trip, yet. We count 80+ new friends and/or meaningful contacts made, and where we hope to either get them over here, or we'll sure revisit in the future. These are two spectacularly beautiful and interesting countries, and with 11 weeks there under our belt in two years, we're sure no experts, but we may be their biggest fans! The people of both Australia and New Zealand are the best!! We're going back!!

Thanks for hanging in there with us --- Love, P&B