

8/8/14

Rufino <Santo Rotary Assistant Governor> met me on arrival in Santo last Friday night. Helped him with installation of spouting and water tank at medical centre on Saturday afternoon after last minute shopping. Helped Rufino on home job on Sunday and delivered sand to medical centre to set water tank.

On Monday started clearance of container which went smoothly and arranged for fumigation. On Tuesday the container was delivered to the ship which is a landing craft with a front ramp that lowers to load and discharge cargo. General cargo loading went on until evening then we sailed at 10-30pm. There is no accommodation and people sleep where they can. It can carry up to 86 passengers plus chickens and pigs. Our first stop was early in the morning then many others including Lolowai. I went up to yje hospital hoping to catch with Rod but found that he and his Team had left for home.

Stops went on through the day and night dropping and picking up passengers, discharging cargo and taking on bags of Karva roots which is the major trade in the islands and we would have loaded around 80 tons by the time the ship left me at Tongoa. We made a lot of stops along Pentecost island before crossing to Epi. We encountered strong winds at times crossing between islands and when the wind was against the tide it became quite rough so much so that two passengers had to be put ashore because of seasickness. Not for this sailor though and I enjoyed spending time in the wheelhouse following our track. "Basic" food was available however I had bought some buns and jam which along with cups of coffee kept me going but the lack of sleep was starting to get to me. We had a small vehicle at the front of the deck and I was able to get a couple of hours sleep from time to time sitting in the front seat.

We finally arrived at Tongoa at 7-30am on Friday morning. At least it was daylight as I would not like the thought of unloading the container in the dark on a beach with a bit of a surge on. The unloading went well and everything was in good shape. Everything is handled by hand. or many hands, and dumped on the beach. It was interesting getting the big generator off however it was slid out onto the deck then using some of our timber it was slid up above high water all 400+ kg of it. The unloading took about 2 hours but nothing was damaged and we didn't have any rain so that was good. Using 3 utes the cargo was ferried up to the school. The priority was to get all the cartons up before any rain which was completed late in the night. The timber, spouting, pipes and roofing materials were finally delivered this morning, Saturday. I must say that it was a huge task also to see a group of men lift the generator onto the back of the ute.

I sent this morning checking through things and unwrapping and assembling things. The men will have a well earned rest on Sunday then it is all hands to the pump as I will have a lot of work on my hands. I am not sure if you are aware but the Team from Warkworth have pulled out over uncertainty of flights and as they had not purchased their tickets the price was escalating. It really leaves me in a corner to say the least however I will just have to do what I can. At least I will have a good team of willing workers but it will keep me on the run going from task to task.

I hope that this will get out to you as comms are slow.

Best Regards  
Peter W.