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# Touring the Tropic Star Lodge

## A Jungle Paradise off the coast of Darién

### August 20-22, 2005



Tour of the Tropic Star Lodge in Piñas Bay, off the coast of the province of Darién. This was our 12th CyberNews Excursion. We are proud to have made two trips this year to Darién.

Photographs for this report were taken by:

Earl Patrick Watson, Eleanor Armstrong, Vivian Morgan, Richard Frank and Carmela Gobern.

### From the Editor's Desk:

Thanks to the coordination of **CyberNews subscriber Eleanor Armstrong**, an administrator of the Tropic Star Lodge, CyberNews subscribers enjoyed a most enjoyable weekend at the Tropic Star Lodge in Piñas Bay, off the coast of Darien from Saturday, August 20 through Monday, August 22, 2005. It was a unique occasion for all us, because the experience was something totally different from any of our previous tours. We will attempt to share the highlights of this excursion in this report, bearing in mind that we have limited spacing. We are proud to have made two trips this year to our "almost unexplored" province of Darien, the first being March 4-6, 2005 to the Santa Fe Fair. The map below shows the exact location of Piñas Bay.

**CLG (Carm)**

### LOCATION:

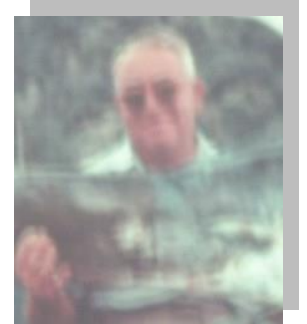
In his book "**Adventures in Nature: Panama**," **CyberNews subscriber William Friar** states: "Tropic Star Lodge is an exclusive, world-famous deep-sea fishing resort perched above lovely Piñas Bay, 56 kilometers (35 miles) from the Colombian Border on the Pacific coast." He also adds: "It's the kind of place movie stars frequent—it was one of John Wayne's favorite haunts back then."

**Piñas Bay**



### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE TROPIC STAR LODGE:

In 1961, **Ray Smith**, a wealthy oilman from Texas, built the lodge as his "Home-away-from-Home." It is literally carved out of the side of a mountain of the Darien Jungle and it is 150 miles south of Panama City and 35 miles from the Colombian border. There are no roads within a hundred miles. Having discovered that the waters in the area was perfect for deep-sea fishing, in 1965 Smith inaugurated it as a fishing lodge named "Club de Pesca de Panamá." Ray Smith passed away in 1968, and shortly after, the property was bought by **Edwin Family** from Canada, who later renamed it the Tropic Star Lodge to correspond with a "sister lodge" in Canada known as the Arctic Star Lodge.



Ray Smith



Conway Kittredge

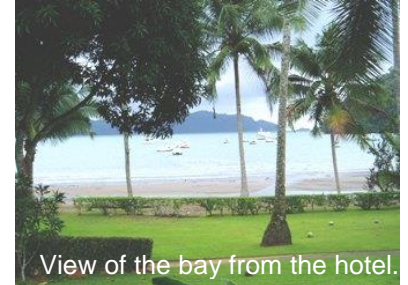
In 1976 an earthquake struck the region and caused extensive damage to the lodge. It was at that time that real estate investor and former World War II bomber pilot **Conway D. Kittredge** of Orlando, Florida, purchased the property and continued its resort expansion. Kittredge passed away in November 2001 and today it is still operated by his daughter **Terri Kittredge Andrews** and her husband, a retired Panama Canal employee, **Mike Andrews**. They are the parents of an eleven-year-old son, **Zane Andrews**.

Terri Kittredge Andrews



## A FEW FACTS ON THE TROPIC STAR LODGE:

- The Tropic Star Lodge is rated the “number one fishing destination in the world” by Robb Report Magazine.
- The resort is known as the “Home of His Majesty the Black Marlin.”
- Over the last 40 years, more than 200 World Records have been established in these waters.
- Good fishing has lasted at the lodge simply because of the incredible number of fish available in this remote location.
- As a result of Terri Andrews and CONAMAR’s leading the fight to protect Panama’s marine resources, Panama’s fishing ethics have been changed and no commercial fishing is allowed within a 20-mile radius around Piñas Bay. (CONAMAR es la Fundación para la Conservación del Mar, la Naturaleza y Especies Marinas.)
- A decree in 1997 issued by President Ernesto Perez-Balladares prohibits any billfish from being killed throughout Panamanian waters, unless it is a world record. All billfish are caught and released. (A billfish is a fish with long slender jaws.)
- The resort has adopted a “fish friendly” circular hook instead of the conventional “J” hooks.
- The lodge has a fleet of fifteen (15) 31-foot Bertrams, the famous brand of convertible boats famous for deep sea fishing.
- There are no telephones, fax machines or television sets at the Lodge.
- Most of the art work at the Lodge facilities is done by author and marine artist Guy Harvey.



View of the bay from the hotel.

### FISHING IN PANAMA

1. Black Marlin – Marlin Negro
2. Blue Marlin – Marlin Azul
3. Striped Marlin – Marlin Rayado
4. Sailfish – Pez Vela
5. Swordfish – Pez Espada
6. Wahoo - Wahoo
7. Dolphin Fish - Dorado
8. Roosterfish - Gallo
9. Great Barracuda - Barracuda
10. Tarpon - Sábalo
11. Albacore - Albacor
12. Striped Bonito - Bonito
13. Silk Snapper – Pargo Seda
14. Blue Jack/Crevale – Arpa Jurel
15. Pacific Sierra/Mackerel - Sierra
16. Red Snapper – Pargo Achiote
17. Crevale Jack - Jurel
18. Almaco Jack – Bojalá
19. Black Snook - Robalo



Marine Artist Guy Harvey

**SATURDAY, AUGUST 20, 2005**



Preparing for departure at Marcos Gelabert Airport in Albrook.

### PESCA EN PANAMA

20. Yellowfin Tuna – Tuna Cola Amarilla
21. Blackfin Tuna – Tuna Aleta Negra
22. African Pompano – Pámpano de Hembra
23. Pacific Dog Snapper – Pargo Dientón
24. Golden Jack - Boquipenda
25. Yellow Snapper – Pargo Amarillo
26. Black Grouper – Mero Negro
27. Whitefin Croaker/Weakfish – Corvina Amarilla
28. Lane Snapper – Pargo de la Mancha
29. Yellowtail Croaker/Weakfish – Corvina Plateado
30. Broomtail Grouper - Cherna
31. Goliath Grouper – Mero
32. Spotted Grouper - Cabrilla

**Saturday, August 20, 2005**

10:30 a.m. Our exciting weekend began when we arrived at Albrook's Marcos Gelabert Airport and at approximately 10:30 a.m. boarded a 20-passenger propeller plane from the Turismo Aéreo Airline to transport us to the Piñas Bay area. The plane ride was smooth and in one hour we landed at an airstrip where we were met by staff of the Tropic Lodge, who offered us courtesy beverages (sodas, bottled water or beer) while our luggage was being taken off the plane.



11:45 a.m. We then boarded a specially-made passenger "tractormobile" which took us down a dirt trail for a distance



We traveled by the Airline Turismo Aéreo of approximately one mile to a small dock, where we then boarded the famous "pangas" (canoes) which would then take us for a 15 minute ride across the Piñas River and Piñas Bay to the lodge.

Specially-designed tractormobile to take us to the dock

We arrived at the lodge at noon time and were escorted to the dining room, where in minutes we were all served a delicious gourmet lunch. Following lunch we received an orientation by the resident managers then, checked into our rooms, and were allowed about one hour for rest and relaxation before taking off for the Emberá Indian Village, across the Piñas River.

2 p.m. While some of us were at the Chocoe-Emberá Indian Village, others enjoyed the swimming pool of the facilities at the Lodge.



Treated to dances at the Indian Village.



Enid Sullivan and Dominga Watson enjoying the swimming pool at the lodge.



7 p.m. We were entertained with a delicious barbecue next to the hotel swimming pool. Some members of the group enjoyed dancing.



Barbecue next to the swimming pool.



Barbara and Richard Frank enjoyed dancing after the barbecue on Saturday night.

### **THE PALACE – EL PALACIO**

The original owner's home 150 feet up the mountainside is known as "El Palacio." It is reached by trolley cable car or 122 steps up the mountainside. The Palace can sleep six and has a luxurious living room, outside terrace, three bedrooms with private baths and dressing areas, as well as a beautiful panoramic view of the harbor and surrounding mountains.



Going up to "El Palacio" in the cable trolley.



One of the bedrooms in El Palacio.



El Palacio was the original owner's home at the top of the hill. This is the living-dining area.

**SUNDAY, AUGUST 21, 2005**

- 6:00 a.m. Breakfast for the men in the group who were going fishing.
- 6:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. Half-day fishing on the "Island Star" Bertram Yacht, accompanied by a captain, a seaman, fishing equipment, lunch and non-alcoholic beverages.
- 7:30 a.m. Breakfast for those of us who did not go fishing.
- 9:00 a.m. Hike to Playa Blanca Beach accompanied by a guide.
- 1:30 p.m. Lunch at the hotel restaurant.



Returning with a Dorado "Catch of the Day."



Preparing for kayaking along Piñas River.



3:30 p.m. Some members of the group went kayaking along the Piñas River.  
 7:30 p.m. Candlelight supper in the hotel restaurant. Farewell speeches, awards and certificate presentations, special celebrations and thank you messages.



Enid Sullivan (seated) received the "Fun Award" Certificate for hiking through ants to the beach.



Certificates for Catch-and-Release of three Pacific Sailfish for Cedric Gittens, Earl Patrick Watson and Vivian George Morgan



The path to the beach, with ants.



Excursionists following supper on the last night at the Tropic Star Lodge. Couple in the center: Honeymooners William and Michelle Worden. Couple on the left: Harold and Marie Putallaz.

9:00 p.m. Following supper, we had a fun time playing a card game on the hotel terrace.

**MONDAY, AUGUST 22, 2005**



Enjoying breakfast at the hotel.

7:30 a.m.  
“Made-to-Order” Breakfast on the hotel terrace.



Departure from Piñas Bay in a “Panga.”

10:30 a.m. Departure from Piñas Bay in a “Panga.”



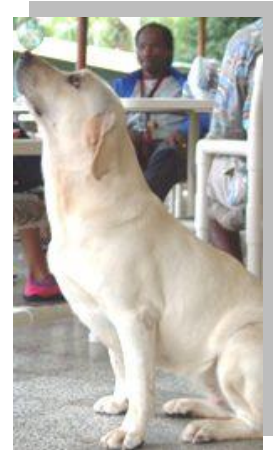
Debarking from the “panga” (during low tide) to board the plane for return trip to Panama City.

11:30 a.m. Arrival at Marcos Gelabert Airport in Albrook.



**We thank all those who supported our excursion by attending and those who made our excursion a reality and a success, especially the staff of the Tropic Star Lodge:**

- **Mike and Terri Andrews**, CEO/Operators
- **Eleanor Armstrong**, Public Relations
- **Lorena Sampson**, Human Relations
- **Tom Juhl and Roberta Brewer**, Resident Managers
- Guides: **Luis Villarreal and Iván Tuñón**
- Waiters and Bartenders: **Edgar Montenegro, Mario Vega, Richard Martínez, José Sousa, Joel Panezo and Julio Martínez**
- Captain **Junior Palacios** and Seaman **Mario Perdí**.
- And last but not least, thanks to **“Chichi,”** the faithful “human-like” mascot, who was kind to escort us to the beach and was our constant companion and protector at the Lodge facilities.



Chichi



Tropic Star Lodge Staff (left to right): Richard Martínez, Lorena Sampson, Edgar Montenegro, Eleanor Armstrong and Julio Martínez.

If you would like to join one of our future excursions in a repeat trip to the Tropic Star Lodge, please contact **CyberNews subscriber Eleanor Armstrong** at telephone (507) 232-8379, e-mail [eleanor@tropicstarpanama.com](mailto:eleanor@tropicstarpanama.com) or **CyberNews Editor Carmela Gobern** at telephone (507) 314-0398, e-mail [goberncl@cwpanama.net](mailto:goberncl@cwpanama.net)

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