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Dick Baird's passing and ICLARM's emergence

With funding of my salary and travel confirmed for at least the immediate future, 1976 loomed bright. It was therefore a tremendous blow when, only a few weeks into the year, Dick Baird was diagnosed with lung cancer that was found to be aggressive, incurable and terminal. He had been a very heavy smoker for many years, smoking unfiltered Gauloises. His commitment to his work with the fisheries officers of the region was such that the week after his diagnosis, he undertook a 10-day field trip to the Cook Islands. His wife was not at all pleased with this arrangement. She pleaded with him to, for once, put himself first. But that was not Dick's nature.

After trips to Australia for surgery, he died from cancer in March. That day was a particularly poignant one for me, as when I went home to tell Hope of Dick's passing, she had just returned from her doctor's appointment. She confirmed that she was pregnant with our first child. She said, 'One life ends as another begins'. It was a day of highly confused emotions for both of us.

Dick's illness itself had a huge impact on me and on my working environment. His passing forced me to accept that continuing to work at the SPC with not a single close colleague or confidant was going to make fundraising just that much more problematic. I was at this time not aware of what a great professional colleague and friend Dick's replacement, Dr Rene Grandperrin, would become.

Immediately following my meeting at the Rockefeller Foundation, I had begun, as requested, to increase my communication with Dr Phil Helfrich, who had now taken up his appointment as director of the International Center for Living Aquatic Resources Management (ICLARM) in Honolulu. ICLARM and Phil himself were strong supporters of the Skipjack Programme. We became very good friends and were to remain so for many years. We discussed my predicament following Dick's death and agreed that it would be beneficial to both of us, and to Richard Shomura, as chairman of the Expert Committee on Tropical Skipjack, for me to base myself in Honolulu for at least a few months. I still had funding to get me through to at least August. ICLARM's offices were in the same building as Richard's, so this would be the logical place for me. Hope was happy to live in Honolulu for a while, even up to the time she intended to go back to Australia in September to have our first baby.

Richard Shomura thought it was a great idea for me to take up temporary residence in Honolulu; he happily provided the necessary office space.

My discussions with donors continued, effectively unchanged. If anything, it was marginally easier to travel from Honolulu than Noumea. While their assurances that they were on track to fund the Programme were becoming a little more strongly worded, nothing definite was happening. The money I had to fund my position was not going to last forever. It was not as though I was on a permanent appointment and could afford just to wait for things to happen. I found it difficult to determine what the problem was that all the donors appeared to share. It later became apparent that they simply would not provide any additional funding to the SPC (see Chapter 9).

My relationship with ICLARM continued to strengthen. At Phil's request, I used my contacts in Canberra to arrange a meeting for him and I with Sir John Crawford to promote the case for having ICLARM accepted into the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), of which Sir John was effectively the Patron. ICLARM's membership in the CGIAR eventually came to pass some years later. In addition, at Phil's request, we travelled to Japan for discussions with the government and with scientists of the Far Seas Fisheries Research Laboratory in Shimizu. The bullet-train trip, Tokyo to Shimizu, was a cultural experience in itself.

In 1976, there was hardly a word in English about Japanese trains. We congratulated ourselves for getting on the right train unaided, but then quickly realised that we had no way of knowing when to get off. The train

was racing through most stations at about 300 kilometres an hour and then stopping at one, but which one it was, we had no idea. We divided responsibility for identifying a station, any station, by one of us looking at the first Japanese character and the other the last character on the station name as we sped through each one and then trying to match these characters with those on the chart of the railway network on the wall of the train, which was all in Japanese. Had it not been for a Japanese gentleman who worked for *The New York Times* and obviously spoke very good English and saw the trouble we were having, we might still be on the train!

We made it back to Tokyo two days later without incident, thanks to some excellent instructions from our scientific colleagues in Shimizu. That evening, though, when we went for a walk around the Ginza, two policemen decided to make our stay in Tokyo a little more exciting. They approached us, and after about five minutes of questioning in moderately good English, they arrested us for not having our passports with us when out of our hotel. This was not something we had any idea we were required to do. Fortunately for us, after threatening to take us to the police station, they concluded that about half an hour's detention was sufficient for the crime, after which they let us go with a warning.

My meeting with the Japan Fisheries Agency was straightforward. In essence, Japan was ready to pay for at least the first two months of the vessel charter as soon as I had enough money to commit to the charter of a Japanese pole and line boat for at least five months.

This text is taken from *Pacific Skipjack: The Remarkable Story Behind the World's Biggest Tuna Fishery*, by Bob Kearney, published 2026 by ANU Press, The Australian National University, Canberra, Australia.

doi.org/10.22459/PS.2026.06