

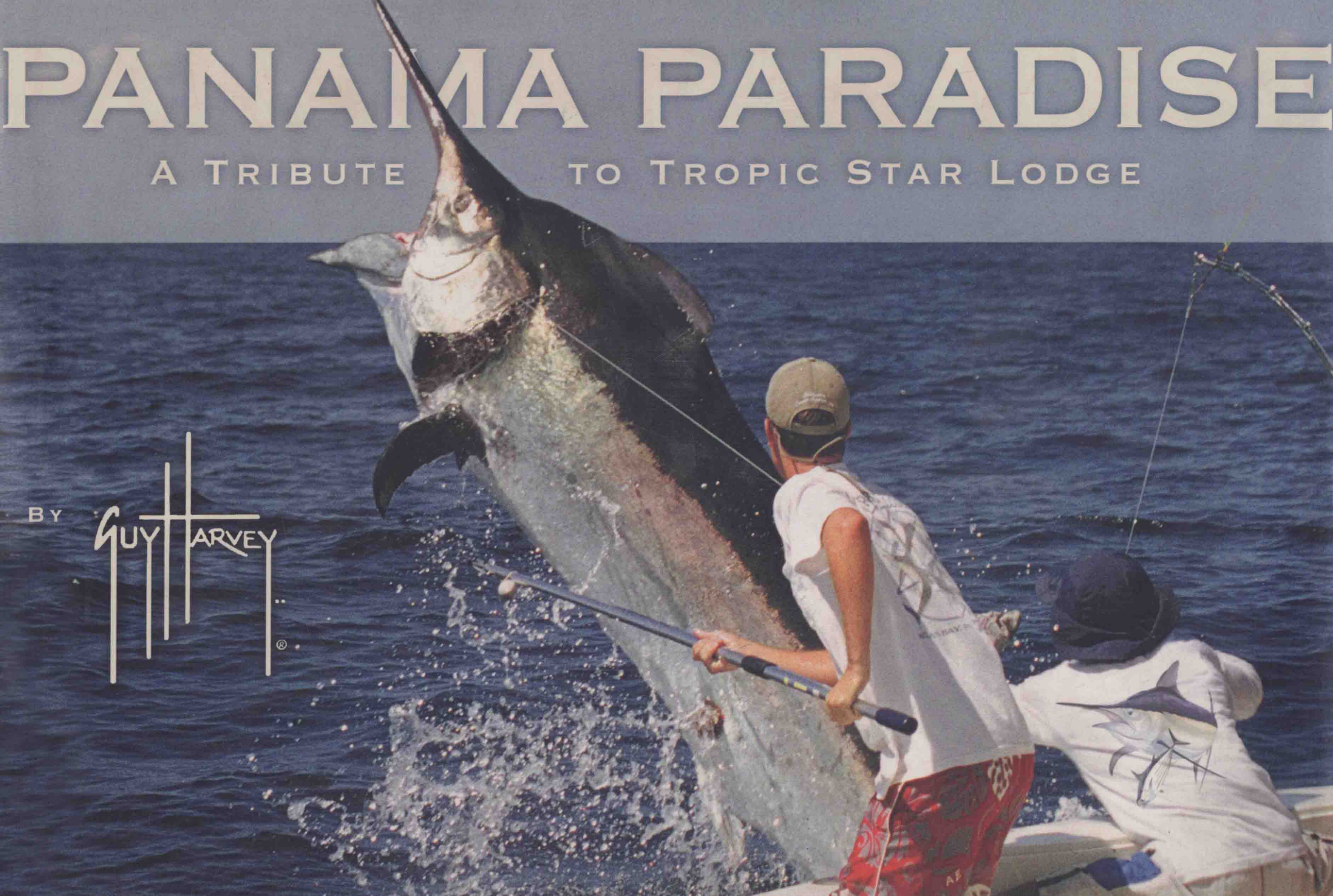
PANAMA PARADISE

A TRIBUTE

TO TROPIC STAR LODGE

BY

GUY HARVEY



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THE DERRYDALE PRESS
Lanham, New York, and Plymouth, UK



THE DERRYDALE PRESS

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The background of the page features a faint, artistic illustration. On the left, a fishing boat is shown with two people on board; one appears to be reeling in a line. On the right, a large marlin is depicted, its long, pointed snout extending towards the center of the page. The overall style is that of a watercolor or light ink drawing, blending into the page's color scheme.

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DEDICATION

By their vision, determination and persistence over several decades, the Smith family, the Kennedy family and the Kittredge family have each played a significant role in the development and sustainability of Tropic Star Lodge.

This book is dedicated to the memory of Conway and Polly Kittredge, who took an abandoned collection of earthquake-ravaged buildings and turned it into my favorite place on earth.

Conway passed away on November 27, 2001. Polly followed on October 2, 2005.



The background of the page features a faint, artistic illustration. On the left, a fishing boat is shown with two people on board; one appears to be reeling in a line. On the right, a large marlin is depicted, its long, pointed snout extending towards the center of the page. The overall style is a soft, watercolor-like sketch in muted tones.

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FOREWORD

BY RALEIGH WERKING



I made my first trip to Tropic Star Lodge in 1981, and it is not hyperbole to say that it changed my life forever.

As we arrived on the flight from Panama City to Piñas Bay, I remember marveling at the remote Darien jungle, the pristine scene of 5,000-foot-tall mountains rolling down to touch the emerald shoreline. It was nature at its best, and it didn't take long to realize this was paradise.

On that first trip we stayed in "the palace," which was the home of original owner Ray Smith, located 150 steps up the hill and accessed by a six-minute cable-car ride. The view of the bay from his perch was spectacular, and from there it was easy to feel the history of his Club de Pesca, which in 1969 became

Tropic Star Lodge.

Between 1981 and 1989 I visited Tropic Star 22 times as a client. It became like a second home, with family included. The quality of the fishing, expertise of the staff and close proximity — only two-and-a-half hours from Miami to Panama City — made the one-hour flight to Piñas Bay a joyride. Even today, after more than 100 visits, I still feel the same rush as we make our final approach in the jungle.

As the years passed, I would learn more about the history of this incredible place. Legendary anglers the likes of Stu Apte, Alfred Glassell, E.K. Harry, Lee Marvin and even John Wayne became part of the Tropic Star archives. The walls were adorned with plaques commemorating IGFA world records

and other notable achievements set at the lodge, including several 10-to-1 and 20-to-1 catches. I dreamed of someday joining that group.

In 1987 I succeeded by catching a world-record 120-pound Pacific sailfish on 4-pound line, my first effort with that line class. To make it on a TSL plaque with a world record was quite an honor. Having my best friend and Yankee great Rudy May along to share this incredible experience was icing on the cake.

Terri Kittredge, the manager at that time, was the daughter of Conway Kittredge, who had purchased the property back in 1976 to make all this possible. She had a passion for light-tackle fishing and set nine IGFA world records, including a 364-pound black marlin on 16-pound-test line.

I was fortunate to build a strong friendship with Terri through the years, as well as with Mike Andrews, whom she married in 1991. With Mike's background in refrigeration and mechanics, which he acquired while working in the Panama Canal, they made a great team. At that time, my role was to help rebuild the client list after the demise of the Noriega regime.

To get the word out that we were open for business with plenty of black marlin, we began exhibiting at the Fort Lauderdale and Miami boat shows. We also invited magazine writers and television shows to help rebuild the legacy of Tropic Star that Noriega had interrupted.

At about that time, in the late 1980s, I also was working with Scott Boyd of Boyd's Tackle on a new design for the Fort Lauderdale Billfish Tournament. He presented to me an incredible piece of art from an unknown artist and marine biologist named Guy Harvey. It didn't take long to realize this was different than anything I'd ever seen in my 15 years

of producing T-shirts. I met with Guy and we bonded immediately, setting the stage for what would become the Guy Harvey brand of apparel and art.

In 1991, I invited this new friend, business associate and aspiring young artist to join me for a trip to Tropic Star. I was enthralled with what I learned.

From his early days as a young boy growing up in Jamaica, Guy was stricken with a passion for the sea and all that it contained, especially the majestic blue marlin. His parents, Philip and Josephine Harvey, were primarily cattle farmers in Jamaica, but both loved fishing, and his father chartered his 32-foot boat when they were not using it. This access to the ocean gave Guy his inspiration and the ability to pursue his dreams. Guy furthered his education by heading off to grammar school in England, then to Aberdeen University in Scotland, where he graduated with honors in marine biology. The combination of his passion for the sea, scientific training and attention to detail gave Guy a unique perspective, and through his talent and hard work he provided us all a "window" into his underwater world.

Over the years, Guy visited Tropic Star more than 30 times. I joined him on many of those visits, and we also fished together in several other great fishing destinations, including Australia, Hawaii, Costa Rica, Venezuela and British Columbia. I have come to realize that Guy's success was no accident. It was anything but luck. What he has achieved has come through pure hard work. No matter what Guy focuses his energy on — fishing, painting, diving, writing, photography or family — he gives it his all, all the time. That level of dedication, combined with his God-given talent and his team of professional staff members, has produced an "empire" that now includes restaurants, retail stores

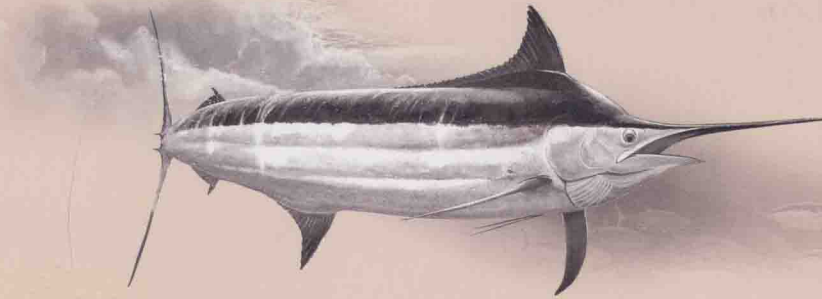
and a collection of licensed products unrivaled within the fishing industry.

As we have traveled the world together, I have watched Guy's children, Jessica and Alex, grow into accomplished anglers and divers. As his children matured, so did Guy's view of himself. He experienced a conversion of sorts, as this truly great angler traded his fishing rod for a pen and camera to chronicle his real-life experiences for the benefit of others. Through his articles, seminars, books and *Portraits From the Deep* television series, he has helped anglers the world over better understand the behavior of billfish and other pelagic species.

Guy has transformed himself from biologist to marine artist to photographer to philanthropist. Today, Guy is most passionate about the work he does to protect the sea that he loves so dearly. He donates his time and works of art to support numerous organizations that fight to conserve pelagic species. He harnesses the power of his fan base to support grass-roots organizations like the Guy Harvey Ocean Foundation, and he applies the resources of his corporation to fund important research activities at the Nova Southeastern University in Florida.

God presented Guy with a talent. But lots of people have talent. What sets apart Guy is his steadfast commitment to use his resources and celebrity status to help make the world a better place. I believe that Guy was inspired to write this book because to him, Tropic Star Lodge in Piñas Bay, Panama, represents that idyllic "better place."

I had the privilege of introducing Guy Harvey to Tropic Star Lodge in 1991. Today, I am honored to introduce you to his newest expression of passion for the sea and the creatures within it. 🐟



PREFACE

Every person who has been to Tropic Star Lodge has benefited from the visionary genius, the persistence and the generosity of Ray Smith. The first section of this book looks at the challenges Ray overcame to cut a swath in the Darien jungle just big enough to allow a permanent human presence for one purpose only — fishing. Ray didn't envision just any ordinary type of saltwater fishing. He was on the hunt for the biggest, the toughest and the most majestic.

Inspired by early reports of the prolific numbers of billfish off the coast of southern Panama, Ray focused the horsepower of his business, and his desire to catch black-marlin world records, into creating a fishing Mecca that set the standard for all others to follow. He called it Club de Pesca de Panama.

Ray's untimely passing in 1967 opened oppor-

tunities for like-minded people to take up the challenge. A family by the last name of Kennedy stepped in to take control of the property, changed the name to Tropic Star Lodge and successfully ran the outfit from 1967 to 1976.

The pristine Darien jungle covers a restless chunk of real estate prone to volcanic activity and earthquakes. One of these proved to be the undoing of the Kennedy family's interest in the property, and so entered Conway and Polly Kittredge. They executed the repairs necessary, put the lodge back in working order for the 1976 season, and the clients returned.

Operating the lodge was always a challenge for both owners and managers because of the remote location and the logistical problems of transporting clients and supplies such long distances by air or



water. However, this remoteness was also one of the key attractions that brought clients back for repeat visits. In 1981, Terri Kittredge jumped into the picture to assist her father Conway and quickly got into the light-tackle game, becoming proficient at the sport. Selling fishing trips at the lodge was easy at the time. The number of line-class world records for different species coming out of Piñas Bay was considerable, and Terri contributed to that list. Business was good, and Mike Andrews added his own unique qualities — including marriage — to the formula.

But politics got in the way of progress in the late 1980s, when many clients grew wary of traveling to Panama. Not so Raleigh Werking, who was drawn repeatedly to the location by the same strong force that got Ray Smith there in the first place — the desire to catch world-record fish. Raleigh's persistence was such that he came on board to assist the Kittredge and Andrews families through the downturn and on to the other side. Their promotional efforts began working, and soon business picked up, the lodge was refurbished, the boats were overhauled, and the capacity was increased. Shortly thereafter Tropic Star Lodge was voted the best fishing lodge in the world by *The Robb Report*.

My visits to Tropic Star began in the early 1990s, and as my children Jessica and Alexander grew old enough to fish, they accompanied me on many subsequent expeditions. I make no apology for the focus here on their accomplishments and their companionship, as they have greatly added to my appreciation of the lodge and the prolific waters of Piñas Bay.

I have also brought dozens of friends to the lodge over the years. I am always gratified when I watch their expressions as we land at Piñas, or when they get

their first dolphin finger from the bar staff, or when a 600-pound black marlin clears the ocean behind the boat on its first jump.

I have carefully documented every trip, every bite, every fish and every dive. This attention to detail has allowed me to set about the task of writing this book, something I realized I could do four years ago. By then I had reached a threshold — a critical mass of information, a broad base of experiences, and a growing library of action images to make it all possible. Once I made up my mind to complete this project, which was long overdue, I set about filling in the gaps in the story on each subsequent expedition.

During the time that I have been visiting Tropic Star, the resource slowly declined due to pressure from commercial fishing, which has affected the population of billfish and sharks all along the Pacific coast of Central America and out into the eastern tropical Pacific Ocean. No longer were billfish “so plentiful you could walk on them,” as they were just 30 years ago, according to Ray Smith. They were being stacked up on the docks of many countries, destined for the U.S. and Asia. Fishing practices at the lodge underwent changes to reflect the concern at this depletion. Crews began releasing all billfish in the early 1990s, and moved to circle hooks in the late '90s. A 20-mile no-commercial-fishing zone was sanctioned around the Piñas Reef.

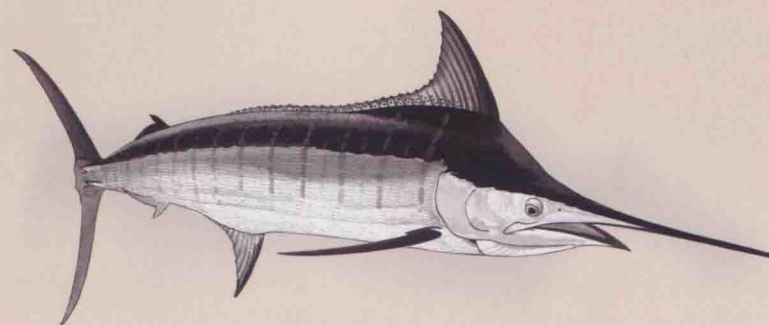
The lodge has provided a platform for research on billfish so scientists can better understand their migrations. As a result of these findings, conservationists have been armed with the tools necessary to encourage governments to better manage these species from a regional perspective, rather than a local or national perspective. In spite of these efforts, the demand for fish protein from a growing



global population has reduced the dorado, shark, tuna and billfish populations to a shadow of their former numbers. All the good intentions of anglers, scientists, NGOs and conservationists will be for naught unless the consuming public becomes more educated in ocean resource issues, and rationalizes the long-term consequences of overexploitation. Tropic Star Lodge remains at the forefront of this conservation movement on behalf of Panama and its neighboring countries.

For me, Tropic Star represents the ultimate fishing destination, my idyllic corner of the planet, and I am excited just at the thought of returning. A unique formula of ingredients makes this area of land and sea magnificent, and the lodge is perfectly integrated into that recipe.

It is so singularly unique that the thousands of words and hundreds of images contained in this volume still don't do it justice. You have to go there for yourself. Walk briefly in Ray Smith's footsteps, and then you will know why I was inspired to pay tribute to this incredible fishery. —



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Each time I land in Piñas Bay and get into the panga to make the short journey to the lodge, I feel as excited as if it were my first visit. The anticipation of the coming week of action has been building for weeks, and now I am finally here. This is the magic of the Darien jungle and of Tropic Star Lodge.

For encouraging me to go there in the first place, I must thank Raleigh Werking. In the early 1990s, my business was starting to blossom due to the combined efforts of Charlie Forman and Scott Boyd (of Bill Boyd's Bait and Tackle in Fort Lauderdale), who hooked me up with Raleigh and his T-shirt printing operation. Famous Australian captain Laurie Wright was a client of Scott's at that time and was fishing a great deal in Piñas Bay, and also encouraged me to take the trip.

Raleigh introduced me to Terri Kittredge Andrews in 1990, and since my first expedition to the lodge in 1991 we have maintained a tremendous relationship with her, her family and the staff at the lodge. Terri and her husband Mike Andrews have been of huge assistance in making things happen for me while fishing and diving from Piñas Bay. I have used every expedition to get better content for my art and television show, and their participation has been monumental. Their enthusiasm for and understanding of my exploratory spirit, and more recently their interest in the production of this book, have made this all possible.

Similarly, Conway and Polly Kittredge had a lot of say in this, and I remain eternally grateful for their support. Their enthusiasm has been effectively





passed on to their managers and staff, which is half of the reason for the success of the lodge. The other half, of course, is the tremendous big-game fishing.

In the early years, Jose Smith was always helpful and enjoyed listening to our fishing stories on the patio. He kept the mechanics of lodge going before Mike arrived on the scene full time. From the beginning, and over the years, Eleanor Armstrong has been and continues to be a huge supporter, and I am always appreciative of her attention to detail. Eleanor has given 24 years of her life to the lodge so far. The late "Tingo" Brewster made all our arrivals in Tocumen, and subsequent transits, smooth and enjoyable, marching us through immigration and customs with a wink and a nod to open-mouthed agents. Nowhere else in the world do I have a

welcoming party like the one Tropic Star clients receive in Panama. In the Orlando booking office, Bonnie Karp is always ready, willing and able to make things work.

In Panama City, Marcos and Irene Ostrander have been most gracious hosts and have introduced me to many of Panama's leading citizens, including former president Martin Torrijos. Marcos has been a huge help in the writing of this book, particularly where it concerns the politics of fishing in Panama. The entire staff in the Panama office, which includes the greeters, the drivers and the *pangeros*, all make a significant contribution to the smooth operation of the lodge.

At the lodge itself, Terri and Mike served as managers starting in 1985, and Terri was there on my first visit in 1991. Several managers have served since that time, but for eight recent years Hennie and Ursula Marais were competent managers who assisted me greatly in accomplishing the various goals I set for many expeditions. Peter and Yolanda Blok were recent managers, and the new generation of assistant managers includes Frank and Maura Leone, along with Lorena Sampson and office manager Jose Cortez.

Carlos Alvarez took over as maintenance manager five years ago and has run a tight ship in charge of everything outside the office, including the generators, boats, cabins, etc. He and Mike Andrews have had a magical effect on the area. They built their own fiberglass pangas, for example, instead of cutting down huge trees to make dugout boats. Carlos' wife Consuelo founded a kindergarten school in Piñas village, which Tropic Star Lodge supports, and where she works four days a week without any compensation. Maintenance assistant Luis Lamastus

and guest relations manager Catherine Wilder work hard to continue the legacy.

At the dock, I have met many competent dock masters and fishing captains. The most recent is Albert Battoo, originally from Trinidad. Albert keeps us all up to date with the fishing reports and helped me locate images for the production of this book.

Many of the employees have been working at the lodge for a very long time. Seventeen of them have served for over 25 years, and nearly 40 employees have been there for more than 20 years.

The lodge and bar staff are always at their best, and many of them began working at the lodge many years before I started going there, including Julio Martinez, Mario Vega, Richard Martinez, Eddie Biscomb, Edgar Montenegro, Filipino Dumasa, Joel Panezo, and Edgardo Patterson.

That same commitment can be seen in the kitchen staff, who prepare the best fish dinners on the planet. The kitchen manager is Concepcion "Pollo" Martinez, and he is assisted by chef Rogilio Vasquez; morning kitchen staff Juan Vaquiza, Jose Sousa, Elias Dumasa; and evening staff Julio Mosquera, Anastacio "Nacho" Asprilla and Valentin Cordoba.





Then there is Federico Sousa (father of Jose, mentioned above), who works quietly in the tackle store as he has done for the past 41 years, fixing reels, putting on new line, making feathers, crimping leaders, rigging lures. I wonder how many leaders he has made up in all this time, and how many world records have been set in which he has played a role?

Behind the scenes are mechanics Abelino Mosquera and Oscar Mosquera, who keep the boats going; the gardeners who keep the grounds immaculate; and laundry ladies Machi Maxima Asprilla and Yeya Deyanira Alvarez, who can remove every spot of fish blood from a shirt.

The captains and the mates at Tropic Star are some of the best in Central America. They are all good, though many clients tend to stick with the same captain after the first couple of trips. In the early years I fished quite a bit with Fausto Martinez and mate Libardo Cabrera, as this was Raleigh's lucky team. After that I fished with Isauro Urrutia and mate Olivio Cossio for 19 expeditions before they went into retirement. For most of the five years filming

Portraits From the Deep, I fished with Alberto Alvarez and mate Alexis English. I have also fished with Friolán "Chito" Bermudez, Epifanio Candelo, Walter Placios, Yunier "Flaco" Palacios, Gilberto "Pucaro" Seciada, Dagoberto Arango and Gustavo Córdoba, who received The Billfish Foundation's black marlin tagging award for 2008.

I am especially appreciative of Alberto and Alexis, who have shown great patience and put up with the repetition necessary in television shoots, to keep sequences flowing and to give the producers options when they begin editing. They were particularly cooperative when it came to the diving sequences. I never once had a concern that Alberto would leave me out there or run over me.

Whit Davis spent a season at the lodge and was on hand to tag several marlin during his stint, including a 1,200-pound black marlin on January 25, 2005. Working with Whit was a great pleasure.

My diehard film crew of director/producer Ken "Kendog" Kavanaugh, and cameramen Ricky "Spiderman" Westphal and Dee Gele, are a wonderful team, and I would go anywhere with them. We were lucky enough to be in the right place at the right time



on many occasions, and brought the excitement, action and drama of Piñas Bay into people's homes all over the world.

John Richardson, his family and his crew on the *Picaflor* have always assisted where possible, but particularly with providing diving tanks for my underwater shooting.

On the Guy Harvey Inc. team, Michele Grey has been instrumental in gathering together all the photos and art images for me. This has been a huge undertaking, considering the thousands of images that were poured through to deliver this final cut. Steve Stock, the president of the company, and Harvey Taulien, executive vice president, have been of great assistance, as have Pat Lamonica, Jay Perez and Courtney Graves.

From the scientific perspective, I am grateful for the assistance and collaboration of Dr. Michael Domeier, director of the Offfield Centre for Billfish Studies. Michael got the black marlin electronic tagging program at the lodge off to a good start, and I was able to shoot a lot of his work for the TV series. Paxson Offfield has been of huge assistance in underwriting the cost of the PSATs for the current black marlin study and has funded more billfish research than anyone else on the planet. Paxson sponsored the one-hour special on billfish that I co-produced with Diana Udel for PBS, and he went on to sponsor 13 episodes of my *Portraits* TV series on billfish, much of which was shot at Tropic Star. As I do, Paxson strives to educate the public about the plight of billfish and other resource issues.

Dr. Eric Prince has accompanied me twice to Tropic Star while deploying electronic tags on sailfish and marlin. His studies on sailfish migration in the eastern Pacific have assisted the management



efforts within the region, and they've educated thousands of recreational anglers who target this species from Mexico to Ecuador. His participation in the TV series and his assistance with this book are much appreciated.

My thanks also go to Dr. Julian Pepperell and Dr. John Graves for their assistance and continued collaboration. John spearheaded the post-release survival studies on many species of billfish, and his work has led fishermen the world over to move away from J-hooks and to circle hooks when using bait for billfish. Julian is considered by his peers to be the world authority on black marlin.

As the journey of researching this book continued, I had the pleasure of working with Nancy Vallee, Ray Smith's daughter. I met Nancy at Tropic Star in June 2006, and since then she has been of huge assistance in helping me dig up some of the action from the Ray Smith era.

I received a lot of assistance from Gloria Furman and her son Scott. Gloria's late husband, Larry Furman, was instrumental in helping the Kittredge family get Tropic Star back up and running in the late 1970s and early 1980s. In addition, our mutual friend Spencer Merinoff has been able to help me relate some of the action he experienced fishing with the Furmans in those early years.

Jerry and Deborah Dunaway were always welcoming and offered all kinds of assistance while the *Madam* and the *Hooker* were stationed at Piñas Bay. I never stayed on the mothership because the lodge is so beautiful and the service so consistent. I have chartered the services of Jerry's boats and crew in far-flung locations such as Cocos Island, the Cape Verde Islands and the Azores. Jerry's captain, Trevor Cockle, was a huge help at the lodge, always passed on good fishing information, and helped out with diving gear whenever I needed anything.

Capt. Skip Smith contributed immensely to the chapter on swordfish, as the *Hooker* crew was the only crew that really persevered with swordfish fishing day and night in the mid-1980s. I am indebted to the late Capt. Jimmy Davis and his wife Gloria for their unwavering enthusiasm for adventure, their friendship through the years, and the time they gave us on the *Madrugador* in Piñas Bay.

Capt. Laurie Wright and wife Julie have been longtime friends and have been generous with their time and knowledge. Laurie gives a great account on the black marlin world record on 8-pound.

I congratulate captains Ronnie Hamlin and Peter Wright on spearheading the charge to have circle hooks used in conjunction with bait when fishing for billfish. They have changed the way we fish for the better, forever. Both the resource and

Tropic Star Lodge have benefited hugely from this new fishing technique.

Bill Boyce has had many eventful expeditions to Tropic Star, both with me and my family and for his own TV series. Bill thrives in a place like this, where the action is all around, and he records that action and the beauty of the location in some amazing photos. I have used many of Bill's tremendous images in the book.

Andy Byatt of the BBC Natural History Unit spent three weeks at Tropic Star in March 1998, at which time I was a consultant for the BBC in the field shooting for the epic series *Blue Planet*. Andy was a great help in teaching me many new techniques in underwater filming.

Kent and Veerle Ullberg have been to the lodge many times, and I have reveled in the research opportunities with Kent. He makes a valuable contribution in the chapter about the art of Tropic Star. We both find this to be one of the most inspirational locations we have ever visited.

