

# ***COVE HOPPING SOUTH TO PANAMA***

By J A Rogers



## **PANAMA'S "DRY" ISLANDS**

A fisherman had pointed out an anchorage near Isla Cavada, the central island of the Islas Secas in the Gulf of Chiriqui on Panama's Pacific coast, to a cruising boater we had met at Puntarenas in Costa Rica, so we decided to stop there on the way to the Panama Canal. There are no large scale detailed US government nautical charts of the Islas Secas. The US government publishes Sailing Directions for the area but that publication is written primarily for commercial shipping and warns against navigating there without local knowledge.

Sailing downwind on a strong breeze, we approached the island



# ***COVE HOPPING SOUTH TO PANAMA***

By J A Rogers



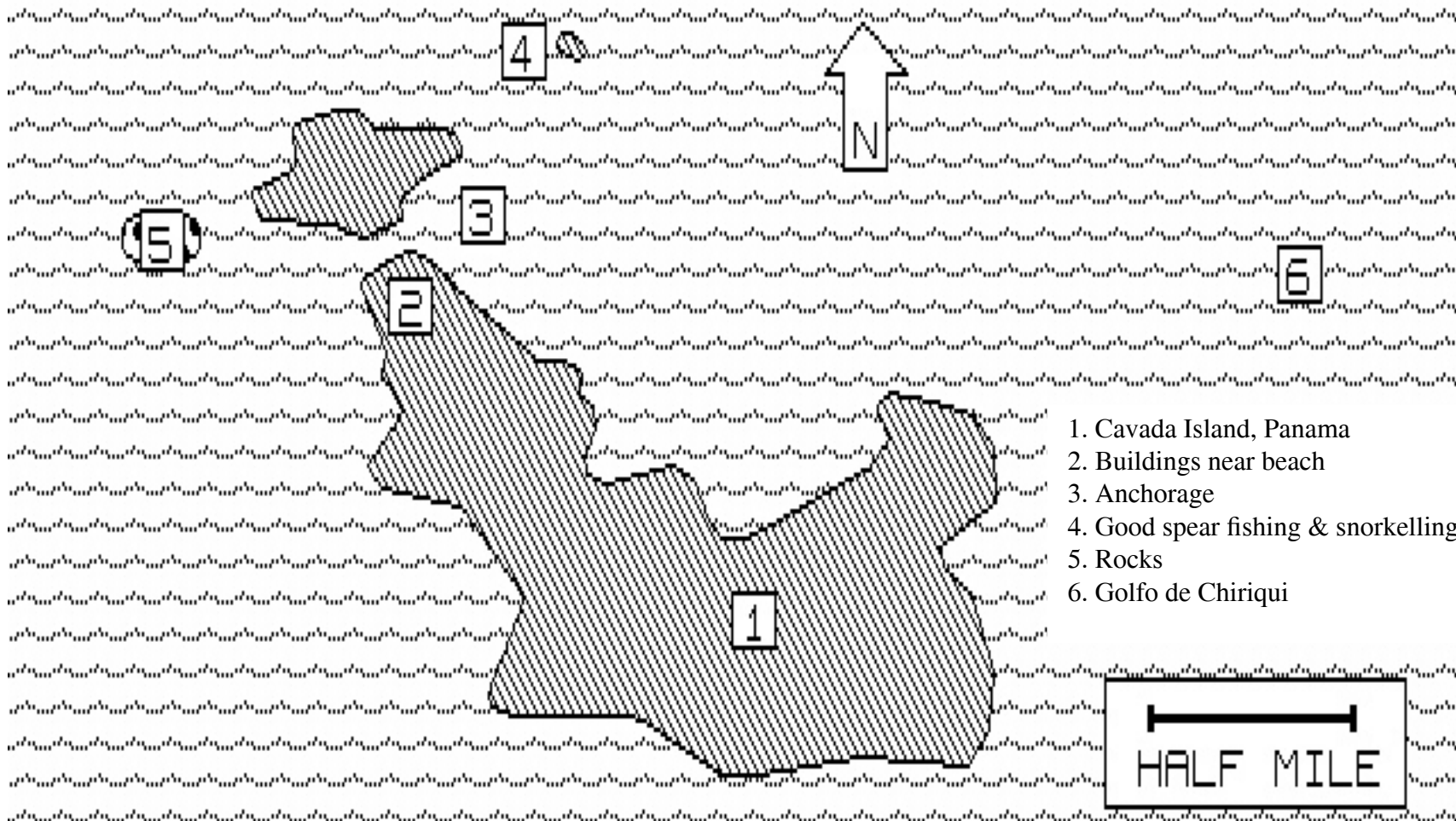
group from the southwest where there is deep water indicated on the small scale nautical chart I had. Giving the islands a wide berth, I jibed sails and headed up the northeastern side of the group until reaching Cavada. In a cove toward the northern end of the island, there were several buildings. Two commercial fishing vessels were anchored nearby. I chose a spot to anchor farther to the north where there is a narrow isthmus that is submerged at high tide. The bottom there is sand and pebbles in which I could clearly see the anchor buried. This is an adequate anchorage except during strong winds from the north or east. In fact, while there we had a squall blow out of the east but experienced no problem with the anchor's holding. In stronger winds it is possible to move around to the other side of the island.

The Islas Secas are not dry islands as the name implies, but a verdant garden of vines, flowers, coconut palms and other trees. Fresh water from springs high up in the dense undergrowth, trickle across beaches of white sand, and according to the friendly people living on the island who rowed out in a dugout canoe to welcome us with gifts of mangoes and other fruits, the island's soil supports many crops.

In the clear water around the islands, coral formations of many kinds and colors abound. Much of the coral forms the shape of hollow toad stools. These strange cave like corals have openings

# COVE HOPPING SOUTH TO PANAMA

By J A Rogers



1. Cavada Island, Panama
2. Buildings near beach
3. Anchorage
4. Good spear fishing & snorkelling
5. Rocks
6. Golfo de Chiriqui

# ***COVE HOPPING SOUTH TO PANAMA***

By J A Rogers



in their sides large enough that a person can swim through. The formations are brightly colored inside and filled with fish seeking refuge from the many sharks and other predators in this area. In fact, while snorkeling over several such corals, I came across a big Tiger Shark only a few feet

below me which had apparently gotten stuck chasing prey through one of the openings in the coral and couldn't get out. His head was inside while most of his great striped body and tail remained outside. My curiosity getting the better of me, I poked his back with my diving spear and he jumped. I sympathized with the poor fellow, but there was no way I could help him get free without endangering myself, so there I left him and hoped perhaps the ten foot incoming tide would come to his aid.



Click on the book cover above to get a copy now.