

FATHOMS

APR 85

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Safety in Diving

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VSAG

VICTORIAN SUB-AQUA GROUP



VSAG

Victorian Sub-Aqua Group, Box 2526W, G.P.O., Melbourne. 3001 Australia

President & S.D.F. Delegate

Alex Talay,
3/7 Cross Road,
Chelsea. 3196
Ph. 772 3085

Treasurer

Mick Jeacle
5 Donn Close
Frankston. 3199
Ph. (059) 71 2786

Vice Pres. & S.D.F. Delegate

Des Williams - 762 1623
Asst. Newsletter Editor
Barry Truscott - 789 3955
Points Scorer
Andy Mastrowicz - 318 3986
Social Secretary
John Goulding - 890 6634
Property & Safety Officer
Pat Reynolds - 789 1092
Public Relations
Max Synon - 465 2812
Committee Member
Geoff Birtles - 846 1983
Committee Member
Paul Tipping - 387 2027

Secretary

Don Abell,
80 Liston St.,
Burwood. 3125
Ph. 29 4415

Newsletter Editor

Keith Jensen
99 The Fairway,
Kingsbury. 3083
Ph. 460 3672

COVER STORY



This brilliant photograph was taken by Kieth Jensen in May 1983 when diving the U.S. Destroyer Y.P.284 off Guadalcanal, Solomon Islands. The divers from bottom to top are Alex Talay, Geoff Birtles and Steve Gardiner (dive guide). Reg Thomas' dive boat can be seen on the surface. The ship lies in 120 ft. of water and was sunk on Sunday 25th October 1942 when attacked by 3 Japanese Destroyers (Akatsuki, Ikazuchi and Shiratsuyu). TECHNICAL DETAILS: Kieth used a Nikonos 3 with a 15 m/m lens. The photo was taken using natural light and Fujichrome 100 A.S.A. film.

The Victorian Sub-Aqua Group was founded in 1954 and has continued as a strong and active diving club since that time. It is incorporated as a non profit company and has no commercial affiliation with any organisation.

VSAG is committed to the preservation of independant diving freedom. It believes that divers must take a responsible attitude toward the protection and preservation of the marine environment but as a general rule is opposed to legislative measures that place prohibitive limitations and restrictions on diving activities.

Local diving is organised on a bi-monthly basis, generally out of participating member's boats. This is supported by weekend camps, charters to more remote locations and annual overseas trips. The club has a considerable investment in diving equipment.

Regular functions provide an opportunity for members, friends and families to socialise. Each month VSAG meets at North Melbourne Football Club where bar facilities are available prior to and after the General Meetings. Visitors are very welcome - smart casual wear essential.

FATHOMS

Official journal of the Victorian Sub—Aqua Group

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APRIL 1985

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DIVE/SOCIAL CALENDAR

25

Next general meeting:

Wednesday, April 17, 1985 8.00 p.m.
North Melbourne Football Club
Fogarty Street, North Melbourne

Next committee meeting:

Tuesday, April 23, 1985 8.00 p.m.
Des Williams' Home
29 Valerie Street, Boronia

EDITORIAL



fuel tank putting it on the not available list. So should you be told that there is no room on a dive, you will understand the reason why.

Bazza has been doing some rather secretive wreck bashing of late. Early morning dives complete with chains and lock to resecure the item sought after, lest some opportunist makes off with the booty that he has put so much bottom time on. Success at last, he has the item at home now and reckons it looks GRATE mate.

Tony Tipping should be very happy with the club's decision to holiday at Byron Bay at Christmas time. Tony has been lobbying for Byron Bay since he enjoyed his last holidays there. Was it the great diving Tony, or perhaps the pink pointers on the beach.

Seems that diver bashing is on again with bureaucrats pushing for legislation to further restrict our activities. Ports & Harbours already have Port Rule 62A in the pipeline to prevent our activities in the southern section of the bay.

As you read this edition of our newsletter Fathoms Easter will have come and gone, and we may or may not have had a lot of diving at our Easter camp at the Prom. but the Easter Holidays impose problems with getting out "Fathoms", so quite a bit of midnight oil has been burnt to have our magazine arrive on time. This issue is a lot thinner because of the above reasons. Our last issue was exceptional but then a lot of newsworthy items developed.

Our boat owners are certainly having a run of problems, Robert Swoffer's outboard is currently having some rather expensive repairs, Max Synon's alloy boat split at a couple of welds, requiring some expert attention and Geoff Birtles is still waiting patiently for his boat to be refurbished to pristine condition and to top it all off, Barry Truscott's beloved Haines has a possible split

Only a few boats are offending and not all are divers, but it seems that we may all suffer for the sins of a few, surely this is a case for education and not legislation. Let us hope that the S.D.F. of V. can intervene on our behalf, it would be disasterous should we be banned from using this part of the bay.

Fisheries & Wildlife have been looking at our right to obtain a feed of crays again. Rumour has it that divers will be banned from taking crays or at best limited to one per diver per day. I feel that the Fisheries would be better off policing existing rules, as undersized crays are served at seafood restaurants, hotels and sold openly at the Victoria market. Cray fishermen would be better off weeding out the pirates in their own industry, than lobbying against divers taking crays.

We have a good dive social calendar drawn up, but the committee are always on the look out for something new or different or challenging. If you have any ideas let the committee know, and we shall try it out if possible.

K. Jensen

COMMITTEE REPORT

Meeting held at Don and Nikki Abell's home on 26.3.85. In attendance Alex Talay, Don Abell, Mick Jeacle, Keith Jensen, Des Williams, Barry Truscott, Andy Mastrowicz, John Goulding, Pat Reynolds and Max Synon. Apologies received from Paul Tipping. Visitors - Nikki Abell, Tibor Rottweiler and Possum.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Cash on hand	\$774.01
Cash at bank	\$48.00
Building Society	\$1,445.08
Total	\$2,267.09

Accounts for payment:

Aust. Post	\$60.00
Copy Quest	\$105.00

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

List of dives and social events drawn up until Queens Birthday weekend in June.

Byron Bay selected for VSAG Christmas camp.

GENERAL BUSINESS

1. Keith Jensen enquired what was being done about the old Honda engine from club compressor. Pat Reynolds has cleaned up same and will advertise it for sale.
2. Des Williams tabled new membership kit comprising of - (i) Procedure Form, (ii) Membership Form, (iii) Medical Form. Club Secretary responsible for issuing of same.
3. **Dive Australia.** Book listing all diving clubs in Australia, filling stations, shops and other information. The new book is being updated. VSAG listing to be renewed.
4. Alex Talay advised only 2 month supply of Fathoms cover left. Photo required for new cover URGENTLY.

APRIL 1985

A very laid back meeting which included a possum hunt around the Abell's lounge room. A rather tense Don berating Nikki for releasing the beast in the house. Alex saved the day by locating the said beast under the stereo speakers.

Meeting ended at 9.48 p.m.. Nikki made amends by providing a tasty supper. *

TIDE TABLE, PORT PHILLIP.

		PORT PHILLIP HEADS. MAY, 1985.																	
Month Day	Week Day	High Water.				Slack Water Flood (Stream Turns).				Low Water.				Slack Water Ebb (Stream Turns).				Week Day	Month Day
		h.m.	Ht. M.	h.m.	Ht. M.	h.m.	Ht. M.	h.m.	Ht. M.	h.m.	Ht. M.	h.m.	Ht. M.	h.m.	Ht. M.				
1	W	07 14	1.2	20 12	1.3	10 03	0.8	22 52	1.0	00 35	0.6	12 42	0.4	03 54	0.9	16 32	0.9	W.	1
2	Th	08 30	1.2	21 10	1.3	11 13	0.9	23 56	1.0	01 33	0.6	13 57	0.6	05 01	0.9	17 33	0.9	Th.	2
3	F	09 55	1.3	22 17	1.3			12 36	1.0	02 43	0.6	15 17	0.7	06 19	1.0	18 47	1.0	F.	3
4	Sa	11 16	1.4	23 23	1.4	01 08	0.9	13 59	1.1	03 59	0.5	16 42	0.7	07 37	1.0	20 02	1.0	Sa.	4
5	Su			12 22	1.6	02 15	0.9	15 09	1.1	05 09	0.4	17 57	0.7	08 45	1.0	21 08	1.1	Su.	5
6	M	00 19	1.4	13 17	1.7	03 13	0.9	16 08	1.2	06 08	0.3	18 59	0.6	09 42	1.0	22 04	1.1	M.	6
7	Tu	01 09	1.5	14 08	1.8	04 05	0.8	17 01	1.2	07 02	0.2	19 54	0.6	10 35	1.0	22 54	1.1	Tu.	7
8	W	01 55	1.5	14 56	1.8	04 55	0.8	17 51	1.2	07 55	0.1	20 46	0.6	11 25	1.0	23 43	1.1	W.	8
9	Th	02 40	1.5	15 43	1.8	05 42	0.8	18 38	1.2	08 44	0.1	21 34	0.6			12 13	0.9	Th.	9
10	F.	03 25	1.5	16 31	1.7	06 28	0.8	19 24	1.1	09 32	0.1	22 17	0.6	00 29	1.0	13 01	0.9	F.	10
11	Sa	04 13	1.4	17 19	1.6	07 15	0.8	20 09	1.1	10 17	0.2	22 59	0.6	01 15	1.0	13 48	0.9	Sa.	11
12	Su	05 04	1.3	18 05	1.8	08 02	0.8	20 52	1.1	11 01	0.3	23 40	0.6	02 01	1.0	14 33	0.9	Su.	12
13	M.	06 00	1.3	18 52	1.4	08 51	0.8	21 37	1.0	11 42	0.4		0.5	02 50	0.9	15 17	0.9	M.	13
14	Tu	06 59	1.2	19 35	1.4	09 42	0.9	22 22	1.0	00 22	0.6	12 25	0.5	03 40	0.9	16 00	1.0	Tu.	14
15	W	08 04	1.2	20 22	1.3	10 39	0.9	23 15	1.0	01 09	0.6	13 14	0.7	04 36	0.9	16 48	1.0	W.	15
16	Th	09 15	1.2	21 14	1.3	11 45	1.0			02 08	0.6	14 16	0.8	05 41	0.9	17 45	1.0	Th.	16
17	F	10 27	1.3	22 13	1.3	00 16	1.0	13 04	1.0	03 19	0.6	15 42	0.8	06 53	0.9	18 57	1.0	F.	17
18	Sa	11 27	1.3	23 08	1.3	01 20	0.9	14 13	1.1	04 28	0.6	16 59	0.8	07 57	0.9	20 03	1.0	Sa.	18
19	Su	12 17	1.4	23 54	1.3	02 13	0.9	15 07	1.1	05 19	0.5	17 57	0.8	08 48	0.9	20 55	1.0	Su.	19
20	M	00 34	1.3	12 59	1.5	02 57	0.8	15 51	1.1	06 01	0.4	18 43	0.7	09 30	0.9	21 38	1.0	M.	20
21	Tu	00 34	1.3	13 35	1.5	03 36	0.8	16 30	1.1	06 38	0.3	19 26	0.7	10 06	0.9	22 17	1.0	Tu.	21
22	W	01 09	1.3	14 11	1.6	04 11	0.8	17 08	1.1	07 13	0.3	20 05	0.7	10 42	0.9	22 53	1.0	W.	22
23	Th	01 42	1.3	14 46	1.6	04 44	0.7	17 44	1.1	07 47	0.2	20 43	0.6	11 16	0.9	23 29	1.0	Th.	23
24	F.	02 16	1.3	15 22	1.6	05 19	0.7	18 20	1.1	08 22	0.2	21 18	0.6	11 52	0.9			F.	24
25	Sa	02 51	1.3	16 02	1.5	05 54	0.7	18 57	1.1	08 58	0.2	21 52	0.6	00 04	0.9	12 30	0.8	Sa.	25
26	Su	03 31	1.2	16 44	1.5	06 34	0.7	19 35	1.0	09 38	0.2	22 27	0.6	00 41	0.9	13 11	0.8	Su.	26
27	M	04 19	1.2	17 26	1.5	07 19	0.7	20 14	1.0	10 19	0.2	23 02	0.6	01 23	0.9	13 52	0.8	M.	27
28	Tu	05 15	1.3	18 11	1.5	08 08	0.8	20 55	1.0	11 01	0.3	23 40	0.6	02 08	0.9	14 36	0.9	Tu.	28
29	W	06 17	1.3	18 55	1.4	09 00	0.8	21 39	1.0	11 44	0.4		0.6	02 58	0.9	15 19	0.9	W.	29
30	Th	07 21	1.3	19 41	1.4	09 57	0.9	22 27	1.0	00 24	0.5	12 34	0.6	03 52	0.9	16 07	1.0	Th.	30
31	F.	08 32	1.4	20 32	1.4	11 01	1.0	23 24	1.0	01 14	0.5	13 31	0.7	04 53	0.9	17 01	1.1	F.	31



FLOTSAM & JETSAM

By the time you get to read this article, Easter will be over for another year and it will have been either the highlight or lowlight of the diving year so far. Wilson's Prom is a strange place. Magnificent in its rugged beauty it can turn on the most evil of weather or be quiet and docile. But rarely does either weather pattern last for long. So the timing of VSAG trips to the Prom have seen most variations of the weather. Easter at the Prom has become a tradition for VSAG. In 10 of the last 12 years we have been back there. It was here in 1973 that gave the author of F. & J. the inspiration to write the first article on the doings of VSAG members. However, no matter what happens this year, no matter how great the diving, or how monstrous the parties - relax in the knowledge that your Flotsam and Jetsam correspondent was not there and will not be reporting on the things as they were or were not.

Talking about evil weather, Sunday 24th March turned on a fair sloop of sea as we headed out from Flinders on way to the George Kermodé. Five VSAG boats headed out across the entrance of Western Port Bay and down the Phillip Island coast. I managed to get a standing room spot on John's boat and as we bucked our way down to the dive site, the bilge pump worked feverishly as gallons of spray enveloped us at every touch down. Now John's boat has been a point of ridicule for the past 8 years, however it has never fallen over or split its bottom or back or whatever boats have. This is not so much due to the (dis)abled seamanship of the skipper but probably more as a result of the immense strength of that old glue "Tarzan's Grip" which was used to stick the whole thing together. (Tarzan's Grip was advertised as the black stuff that sticks - not to be confused with the black stick that stuffs!) Well as we anchored over the dive site a plaintiff call was heard over the radio. VSAG, VSAG, this is Max, my boat has just split. Poor old Max, there he was out near Pyramid Rock about to join the ranks of other well known boat owners who permit deluges of water to enter their boats. Keith and Andy immediately went to his assistance and after a quick assessment of the damage, reported back that Max's boat had split a weld near the water line and was taking water at a rate that would have made the Titanic sink like a rock. Max rearranged some gear on the boat, sat himself and his 2

passengers on the one side and continued on to the dive site. His crew Chris Llewellyn and Anthony Finnegan were able to have their dive whilst Max sat there patiently watching his boat fill up with water whilst he bailed furiously. Well done Max! Many other boat owners would have probably insisted the dive be cancelled whilst he was escorted back to land. Max made it back to Flinders without any problem under the watchful eye of the other boats, despite an attempted mutiny by his crew.

Bryan Lynch may be in his 50th year but he's still a dashing man about town. For many years he has led the V.S.A.G. runners including a few marathons. Not content with these "fun runs" Lynchy took up Triathalons. During March he added another victory to his impressive list by winning the Masters section of the Frankston Triathlon. This consisted of a 2 km swim, an 80 km bike ride and a 30 km foot race. Not only did he win the Masters event, but he came 4th overall in the Australian Triathlon series. Well done son!

Don't forget the fabulous Chinese Banquet on May 10th. Just \$23.00 per head will buy you a great night at the Beijing Palace with all the food you can eat. It's B.Y.O. and you must pay your deposits or final money to Mick Jeacle at the May General Meeting.

Signed AL FAROMIO

CRAYFISHING IN THE WEST

By Des Williams

It was 4.30 a.m. and Gary Fagan and I were sitting in the rear of a Toyota Landcruiser heading south from Dongara (W. Australia) at 100 kph. The air was sweet with the scent of stunted coastal vegetation and our company was a box of rotting cow hides and bait fish. The Landcruiser was being driven by Doug Jenkins (crayfisherman) and he was chatting with his "deckie" Ted, in the front cabin protected from the cool morning air.

On my recent trip to Western Australia I had taken up the offer to spend a half day on a cray boat, whilst visiting friends at Dongara, south of Geraldton. The weather had been hot (very hot!) for weeks and Perth was entering its 24th consecutive day over 30°C, a new record for the city.

Doug turned the vehicle off the sealed road and onto a track in the sandhills, where a little further on we drove onto the beach. The first rays of dawn were beginning to show in the east as we pulled a small aluminium dinghy down to the water. As we waded out to deeper water, the tepid Indian Ocean was showing the results of the northern latitudes and continued hot sunny days; it was like a spa on my tired feet.

Doug's boat was moored only a short distance from the shore and we were soon aboard and preparing to leave the mooring. The Volvo engine pushed the 32 ft. fibreglass boat along at about 23 knots and reminded me more of a Haines than the usual cray boat we have in Victoria. The boat was soon plaining and I couldn't help but think what a great dive boat it would make, with its huge flat beamy deck, high speed and excellent handling qualities.

The boat was fitted with a pot winch and cradle on the port side, which allowed the 50 kg cray pots to be pulled up onto the cradle, which tipped the pot inboard where it was emptied. The pot is then re-baited with cow hide and fish and stacked on the flat deck. Once the deck was full of pots and the crays sized and stowed in a large sack, Doug used his depth sounder to "shoot" them into new territory. Ted worked like a slave baiting, stacking and pushing the pots overboard as Doug yelled "YEP!", when the depth sounder showed a crevice or pinnacle.

This routine continued for five hours as the hot sun rose steadily, and the temperature increased. It had been a reasonably good morning for Doug,

with two large sacks of crays on board. I learned a lot about the industry as he cheerfully answered my questions.

There has been an enormous amount of research into the life cycle, stocks and growth rates of crayfish in Western Australia. The variety being caught around Geraldton grows much quicker than our Southern Rock Lobster here in Victoria and Tasmania and as a result the legal size of 3" is much smaller than compared with our 4½" and 4½" in Victoria.

Approximately one third of the crays caught in the pots that morning were returned immediately to the sea, because they were under size. It is important that under-sized crays be returned to the water very quickly, otherwise they dry out quickly and when returned lay on the bottom for some time before regaining consciousness and thus are easy prey to enemy animals.

The fishermen receive about \$11 kg. at the Co-op where the crays are processed. Only their tails are taken for export to U.S.A. and Japan.

The initial outlay is large for the fisherman, some \$300,000 for a cray licence and then there is the cost of a boat and equipment to consider. Doug has been craying for some years now and is considered one of the best fishermen on his part of the coast; he loves the outdoors life and the sea.

It isn't always sunny and calm as it was on my trip, and the winter storms are particularly fierce. Several boats and lives are lost every year because of the boat's loss of stability when stacked up with cray pots. Working close to reefs where the big swells break without much warning takes its toll. On this particular day the sea was flat and very clear, so Doug moved his boat into the shallow water where he had two pots fouled; they had been down for five weeks.

I grabbed my mask, snorkel and flippers and shot down the first line which vanished into a very deep, tight cave at about 30 ft. depth. Without scuba, I wasn't about to risk my neck squeezing into a cave for a cray pot, so I gave Doug the direction in which to pull on the line with the boat. No luck, the line parted so we headed off to the next fouled pot. This time, a 25 ft. descent to the pot hooked under a ledge, was more successful and it was soon on board.

For the next 10 minutes I snorkelled over some brilliant cray territory in water varying from 15 ft. to 40 ft. deep. My thoughts were of Barry

Truscott and Mick Jeacle of VSAG, they would have been in second heaven here.

Back on the boat, Doug showed me how to despatch a large octopus by biting through its nervous cord. When brought up in a cray pot, octopi are kept for resale. By biting the central nervous cord at the base of the head it is curtains very quickly for the "occy". A neat trick, but revolting to watch as the animal grabbed Doug in a headlock prior to the fatal bite.

We returned to the deserted beach, moored the boat and drove home in the fierce 40°C heat of midday.

I had a very enjoyable time. Doug and Ted have a great Aussie sense of humour and hearts of solid gold, it was a fantastic experience. Needless to say, Julie and I had our fill of crayfish at Dongara!

Note: At the April General Meeting of VSAG I will show a short slide presentation of our seafaring adventures in Western Australia - hope you will join us. *

V.S.A.G. CHINESE BANQUET

- * SESAME PRAWNS, CRAB CLAWS
- * SCALLOPS AND SNOW PEAS
- * CANTONESE BEEF
- * CHILLI PRAWNS
- * BAR B QUE SPARE RIBS
- * PEKING DUCK
- * FRIED ICE CREAM
- * RICE RICE RICE RICE

FRIDAY MAY 10TH
7.30 p.m.

at

BEIJING PALACE
(Phone - 20 3100)

760 Toorak Road, East Hawthorn
(Near Cnr. Tooronga Road - Parking at rear)

COST \$23.00/HEAD

B.Y.O. DRINKS & SMALL CAR
FRIDGE IF YOU WISH

BOOKINGS THROUGH JOHN GULDING H: 890 6634
W: 341 3543

Deposits or full payment by April General Meeting to
John Goulding or Mick Jeacle

PERSONAL MARKER BUOYS

by John Lawler

Ask yourself this question - How often during your diving life have you spotted something and wished it could be marked for a revisit? Many times I wager.

Some examples spring to mind.

A situation during cray dives (excluding drifts). A ledge is found where the cray is too far back for the normal "arm" reach. The problem could be resolved and cray bagged by employing a personal marker buoy for return accurately to the ledge with a longer "arm"?!!

During some dives, relics, ab beds, weight belts, anchors, mermaid's home, crays in hole, but out of air . . . Oh for a personal marker buoy.

Andy Mastrowicz and his lovely diving buddy wife Gail found a 10 lb. cray in a hole during a Refuge Cove dive. Despite applying their combined expertise to extract the monster, it was a failed effort and time ran out. Not to admit defeat, Andy and yours truly decided to have another bash at his cray, but do you think we could find that ledge - no way. After 45 minutes we gave up. Oh, for a personal marker buoy!

(Next day we did in fact manage to find the hole but alas and alack . . . Gone (Smart one!!)

Had we been able to mark the spot on the first day and with full tanks and bodies rested, we most certainly would have bagged the prize.

Based on a comment that day by the lovely Gail Mastrowicz, your Jumpsuit Jack set about to make up a "Personal Marker Buoy".

Yes! It has been tried and tested and the result very satisfactory. A hole found at the near completion of a dive at Flinders was marked. On return to the spot marked with my personal marker buoy, that wonderful hole gave up one 8 lb., two 5 lb. and a 3 lb. (witnesses can be produced Mick and Geoff).

I carry my buoy which fits tightly packed into the auxiliary pouch of my Scuba Pro B.C. vest and no problems have arisen due to the buoyancy factor of the pocket.

DIVING INCIDENTS A MATTER OF DISCIPLINE

by John Goulding

The topic of scuba diving has been getting a fair amount of publicity lately, unfortunately not the sort of publicity we want to or like to see.

In February a diver lost his life while diving one of the scuttled submarines out from Pt. Lonsdale.

Then on March 23/24 three Melbourne scuba divers had to have decompression chamber treatment over the weekend. One diver had an air embolism after diving off Queenscliffe. He was flown from Avalon air force base to Morwell to the National Safety Council underwater training centre and spent 6 hours in the chamber. The same weekend the National Safety Council helicopter picked up two divers from Tidal River. One diver was immediately placed in the portable decompression chamber on board the aircraft, and both divers were flown to Morwell for extensive treatment.

It is inevitable that as more and more people take up diving, the potential risk of diving "incidents" occurring will increase. However minimizing the risk is a matter that requires serious consideration before contemplating each dive. The fact that you or I may have been diving for many years does not give us immunity from such incidents. On the contrary, highly experienced divers may tend to be more lax on some of the basics that can avoid such incidents.

Fortunately VSAG has had an extremely high safety and incident-free record, however as a concerned diver and long standing member of this club, I urge members to think about minimizing the risk of incident before each dive.

Such things you should mentally run over are:

- . Your own state of health and fitness
- . Are you on any medication which may have side effects whilst diving?
- . Do you fully understand the decompression tables?
- . The state and condition of your equipment.

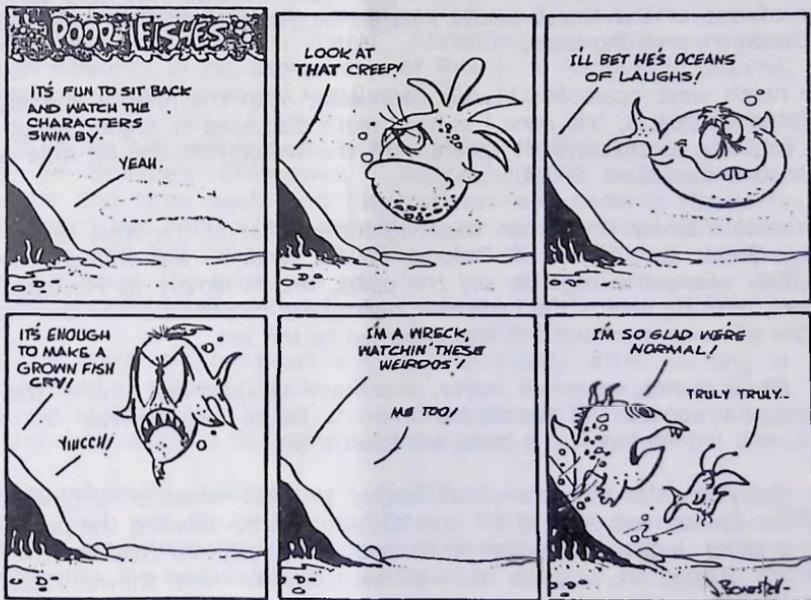
Together with your buddy you should plan your dive as to:

- . sea conditions

- current, surge, etc.
- depth and time
- decompression stops if required
- procedure if buddy and you are separated
- basic hand signals
- knowledge of each other's gear
- "experience" of buddy

The term "experience" can be most misleading. Does four year's experience really indicate the number of dives or the number of situations a person has handled? Do twenty dives indicate anything about a person's ability to plan a dive or indicate a knowledge of repetitive dive tables?

It is one thing to be a trained diver who has only ever had to rely on obeying a dive leader. It is quite another thing to be able to properly plan an enjoyable and safe dive and then to have the discipline to follow that plan. *



s.s. "KOOMBANA" & THE ROSEATE PEARL

by Des Williams

S.S. Koombana was owned by the Adelaide Steamship Company. She was 3669 tons and built in Glasgow in 1909. On the 20th March, 1912 she left Port Hedland in Western Australia for Broome with 188 passengers and crew, and shortly afterwards encountered a cyclone of great force, in which she disappeared without a trace.

In 1973 the remains of what appeared to be a large vessel were located in deep water about 35 kilometers off the coast, but were not positively identified.

Recently, an R.A.A.F. reconnaissance aircraft has discovered an anomaly in the area where the ship was thought to have gone down and the Navy is to investigate. This has further opened up hope that one of Australia's greatest maritime mysteries may be solved. And it may also solve the fate of one of the finest pearls ever to be fished from the azure waters of Broome's pearling beds.

The north west coast has always been alive with the history and legends of fabulous pearls, but none has been more discussed or argued about than the fabulous Roseate pearl taken from the waters off the 80 mile beach by an unknown diver in 1905.

It was said to be finer than the magnificent Star of the West taken from Willy Creek just north of Broome (W.A.), and it was valued then at £20,000. But, the legends say the pearl, known simply as Roseate, was cursed, and its short life in human hands was responsible for the violent deaths of seven men until it was returned to the sea.

It's final owner, a pearl buyer, Abraham Davis, was among the 156 passengers aboard the Koombana when it sailed into oblivion in March 1912, and legend has it the pearl went with him.

The story of the Roseate pearl began in 1905 when a Filipino diver, Castillo Toledo was fishing off the 80 mile beach. Sharing the pearl beds was another lugger from the south and eventually its master rowed to Toledo's lugger in a state of high excitement. He showed Toledo a magnificent pearl and eventually the Filipino diver decided it would be his. Whilst the master slept off a monumental binge, Toledo stole the

pearl and hid it on the deck of his lugger. He then persuaded his master to return to Broome, hoping to sell the pearl to some "snide" buyer, who would buy without asking questions.

But, Toledo's crime had not gone unnoticed and Filipino crewmen Pablo Marquez and Simeon Espada found and stole the pearl. According to well known author Ion Idriess, who used the pearl as his theme for the book, *Forty Fathoms Deep*, that was the beginning of the curse of the Roseate Pearl.

Marquez, Espada and an itinerant worker from Broome, Charles Hagen, attempted to sell the pearl to a Jewish buyer, Mark Liebglied, luring him on with a marble wrapped in a twist of a handkerchief. The three met Liebglied aboard a lugger, the *Mist*, abandoned on Buccaneer Rock, off Broome's mangrove-lined shore. There Liebglied was murdered and his body dumped in the sea to be found floating amid the mangroves the next morning.

After an extensive trial Marquez, Espada and the hapless Charles Hagen were hanged at Fremantle jail on December 14, 1905. But, the curse of the Roseate pearl did not end there. According to well known W.A. author Hugh Edwards in his book, *Ports of Pearls, a History of Broome*, Marquez gave the pearl to an old Manilaman, Sulu, to hide.

Sulu hid it in an old wasp's nest in his ceiling at the Rio de Janiero guesthouse in Broome's Chinatown. Although Sulu's quarters were searched time and time again and his mattress and bedding ripped to pieces, the pearl was not found. When Marquez and his companions were executed, Sulu sold the pearl to the proprietor of the Rio de Janiero, Gomez, and although the price was very low, the old Manilaman was well satisfied and returned to his native land to live out his remaining years.

However, the curse of the pearl struck, and shortly after landing at Manila, Sulu died of a heart attack. Shortly after, the curse struck again. The pearl was stolen from Gomez and in blind despair Gomez committed suicide - the sixth death to be linked with the pearl.

The man who originally stole the pearl, Castillo Toledo, was drowned when the pearling fleet was struck by a cyclone in 1910 - the seventh death. From then on the whereabouts of the pearl remained a mystery until it finally came into the possession of a white pearl diver who sold it to the pearl buyer, Abraham Davis at Port Hedland. A few days later Davis left

on the Koombana - and sailed into the teeth of a tremendous cyclone. Historians believe the pearl went with him.

But, apparently Davis had not finished with this world. He had built a magnificent house in Broome, which he called De Vahl, later to be known as the Bishop's place.

The then Bishop of the North-West, Bishop Garrard Trower, reported the house was haunted and he firmly believed the ghost was that of Davis.

Was the ghost searching for the pearl or was the Roseate still active? *

HIT LIST AIR FILLS

The following owe the club for air used on the Refuge Cove trip. Payment may be made by sending a cheque to the Treasurer, V.S.A.G., P.O. Box 2526W, Melbourne, Vic. 3001 or direct to Mick Jeacle at the next general meeting.

Reece Birtles	1 fill
Terry Brookes	3 fills
Paul Crellin	2 fills
Rick Garretson	3 fills
Bob Scott	3 fills
Bill Hayes	1 fill

\$3.00 per fill

CAMERA FOR SALE

NIKONOS II complete with electronic flash,
extension tube, light meter, sports viewfinder,
carry case.

Contact: Dave Henty-Wilson 497 3976

MEDIA WATCH

This is from the "West Australian" of March 4th, 1985. I found it amazing to read how the blame was being passed from one self-interest group to another.

D.W.

Shark was 'not to blame'

ADELAIDE: Attempts to hunt down a shark that killed a woman in South Australia would achieve nothing, according to the head trainer of Adelaide's Marine-land aquatic park, Simon Lattimer.

Mr Lattimer, who has been working with sharks for 14 years, said yesterday that the automatic reaction to kill the shark, which tore Shirley Ann Durdin (33) into two pieces at Port Lincoln, was pointless.

He put much of the responsibility for the attack on the game-fishing conducted near Port Lincoln last month.

"Really the only people you can blame are the

sports fishermen," he said. "They baited the area with offal trying to catch sharks."

Tournament

In PERTH, a game-fisherman has denied allegations that the game fishing tournament was to blame for the presence of the shark.

Mr Dean King, of South Perth, who took part in the competition, which ended just over a week ago, said the cause was the big tuna industry,

which was in full swing with off-shore processing.

"It is the peak of the tuna season and there is plenty of offal going into the waters - that's why they have the tournament at this time of year," he said.

"I was amazed that the tournament was being blamed because game fishing isn't like that.

"They can only use fish offal like tuna oil, which means there has to be a shark there to catch."

Fort will be tourist haven

THE Minister of Housing, Mr Ian Cathie, said last Thursday that the "Victorian Town Properties will soon develop South Channel Fort Island as a tourist attraction".

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South Channel Fort Island is about seven kilometres off Rye.

The Victorian Ministry for Industry, Commerce and Technology has arranged to make the fort available for visits by tourist launches.

State Historian Dr Bernard Barrett said that the fort was constructed about 1880 to protect one of Port Phillip's main shipping lanes, the South Channel.

"The South Channel Fort was part of an elaborate defence system which made Port Phillip one of the best defended ports of the British Empire.

"Port Phillip became hailed as the Gibraltar of the Southern Hemisphere."

"A hundred years ago Marvellous Melbourne was Australia's largest city and one of the most important trading ports of the British Empire.

"Britain's economic interests in the Pacific were being challenged by France, Germany and Russia.

"By the early 1880s, forts at Queenscliff and Point Nepean were equipped with the most modern artillery guns, but the range of these guns in the 1880s was limited.

War

As the South Channel was still vulnerable a fort was constructed in shallow water (two metres deep) on the northern side of the south channel.

"Draught schooners were chartered to carry bluestone blocks to the fort from quarries near Point Wilson on Corio Bay.

"Oval in shape, South Channel Fort has a maximum diameter of 180 metres.

"Timber piling, closely spaced around the perimeter, allowed the bluestone blocks to be carefully placed to form a retaining wall sloping upwards to a height of about six metres above sea level.

"Contained within the reclamation are ammunition-magazines and galleries of the forty.

"Although the guns have been removed, concrete emplacements can still be seen covering the South Channel," Dr Barrett said.

The only site ashore that could have protected this channel in the 1880s was Point King (near Sorrento), but this was 3km distant from the track of ships.

"South Channel Fort was only 1,400 metres from a narrow portion of the shipping channel, and guns here could be most effective.

"Iron plates in the chamber of South Channel Fort were made thick enough to withstand possible return fire from passing ships."

Dr Barrett said that in the 1880s the Victorian Government also began constructing a second artificial island, called Pope's Eye Fort, to protect the West and Symonds Channels.

"When Britain declared war on Germany in 1914, the first British shot fired anywhere in the world in World War I was fired from a large naval gun at Point Nepean to stop the

"Experts soon decided that a recent invention, torpedoes, would prevent an enemy from using those channels.

"A torpedo fort was developed on Swan Island, near Queenscliff.

"When the construction of the Pope's Eye Fort was abandoned, the circle of stones was only half finished.

"It is still there - a semi-circular stone wall projecting about 2.5 metres from the water.

"A beacon marking the starboard side of West Channel is erected there."

By 1886 the defence system of Port Phillip was complete, including electrically operated mines in South Channel fired from a control room in the South Channel Fort, Dr Barrett said.

"After 1900, new longer-range-guns were installed at the Heads and by 1909, the South Channel Fort was no longer manned.

"The fortifications of the South Channel Fort were later removed, and the ports and harbor authorities began using South Channel Fort for storing the explosives used for blasting and extending the channel across the Rip at Port Phillip Heads.

"South Channel Fort never had an opportunity to beat off a Russian invader.

"When Britain declared war on Germany in 1914, the first British shot fired anywhere in the world in World War I was fired from a large naval gun at Point Nepean to stop the

German ship *Pfalz* which was found to be manned with German naval reserves and carrying war-like stores.