FATHOMS

Registered for posting as a publication Category B Print Post Approved PP332873/0035



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VSAG

AUG-SEP 94

VICTORIAN SUB-AQUA GROUP

VSAG

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



Cover photo:

This colourful photo of Sant Khan was taken by Des Williams on VSAG's 1994 trip to the Solomons & Vanuatu

The Victorian Sub-Aqua Group was founded in 1954 and has conlinued as a strong and active diving club since that time. It is incorporated as a non profit company and has no commercial attiliation 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 in 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 lamilies 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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Next General Meetings:

Thursday 18th August 1994, 8.00pm sharp! Thursday 15th September 1994, 8.00pm sharp!

North Melbourne Football Club Fogarty Street, North Melbourne Meet beforehand at club for dinner

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Tuesday 23rd August - Andy Mastrowicz's home Tuesday 20th September - Don Abell's home

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EDITORIAL

In the last few months, Melbourne has seen the closure of four dive shops, while in complete contrast V.S.A.G celebrated its 40th year in June. Not bad for a non-profit organisation which when originally set up in 1954 was run along very strong business-like lines. A short look in our Club files reveals professionally prepared stationary, club rules, a Club manual, order books, instructions for dive medicals with notes for doctors to follow and many other business-like procedures.

The base on which this Club was established

The base on which this Club was established was certainly rock solid and professional, something for which each of us can be both proud and thankful.

It was my pleasure to be seated with Jim and Fran Ager at our 40th Year celebration dinner and I learned a lot of the old days of V.S.A.G. The Club was lucky to have such an energetic and world respected foundation member as Jim Ager and it was fantastic to see the Agers at the dinner.

Some of the early members of V.S.A.G. who attended the 40th Dinner were: Jim and Fran Ager, Keith and Pat Batchelor, Alf and Jan Watson, David Carroll, Alan and Glenys Cutts, Bill Jansen and John Noonan.

We had seven of our total number of nine Life Members present and were disappointed Peter Mathews and Frank Coustley didn't attend so we could have a photo of the "full set".

A brilliant and entertaining speech by our President, Don Abell, covered the full 40 year history, highlights, lowlights, achievements, fun times, sad times and above all the valuable contributions made to the Club by both past and present dedicated members.

Modesty naturally restricted Don in one department through and that is the

EDITORIAL cont.

amazing contribution he himself has made to V.S.A.G. over the years. Five consecutive terms as our President and at least four times Clubman of the Year says it all! Don is a natural leader and is completely immersed in his work for the Club at all times. I for one thoroughly enjoyed every minute of his speech at the dinner and Don has provided some excerpts for this issue of FATHOMS.

For those who missed this evening, I can safely say you missed the best evening I have enjoyed with my friends at V.S.A.G. Most of us were still there as the staff tried to sweep us out with the butts - no one wanted the evening to end.

Bill Jansen gave up some of his evening to be official photographer and we have some of his souvenir photos in this issue for you. Thanks Bill.

It was a pleasure also to have Darren Salter and his lovely wife Sally at the President's table. Darren has worked solidly for us all as chairperson of the Scuba Divers Federation of Victoria over several years. A good opportunity for Darren to meet more V.S.A.Gers and visa versa.

Now Mick Jeacle; a superb effort Mick, in organising the venue and setting dress standards. No one else could have done a better job. Thanks also to Alex Talay for providing the printed tickets for the evening.

Tony Rossi won the raffle for the free motel room for the evening and Russell Olorenshaw cleaned up the ticket for two to fly to any port in Australia, presented very generously by Qantas Airways Ltd. Russell and Gaylene havn't disclosed their destination yet.

Well folks, hope you enjoy this bumper 40th Anniversary edition of FATHOMS and may there be another 40 years of good times in the Club yet.

DES WILLIAMS Editor

TO THE MASTROWICZ FAMILY

On the recent tragic loss of your sister Andy, your friends at VSAG send you and your family love and understanding.

40th YEAR DINNER DON ABELL

The night of Saturday 25th June was a special night and a big night for V.S.A.G. Nearly 100 current and past members gathered to celebrate the Club's 40th year.

I was impressed that so many of our members hired suits and ties for a top night and I was pleased to see the number of former members who took the time to join us for the evening. Of particular signifance to me was that we could muster seven of the nine "Life Members" of the Club. I expect that a photo of this illustrious group is printed in this magazine.

In preparing for the night I did a little research through the Club archives which had been well arranged in earlier years by John Goulding and Dave Carroll. The archives are a treasure of information about our club. Those at the dinner would have heard me mention some of these as well as read a few letters from the 1950's and 1960's.

Some of the highlights were:

- Finding that the club had a patron in its early years. Captain W.O. Shelford R.N. Des Williams has put together some information about this distinguished gentleman that will appear in your "FATHOMS".
- The highlight for Mick Jeacle must be a letter from GTV 9 thanking the club for helping to promote its new television show "Sea Hunt".
- The highlight for me, is a letter on the letterhead of the organising committee of the 16th Olympiad Melbourne.

In the early years it was obvious that Jim Ager was a dynamic driving force of the club. The correspondence generated and received by Jim on behalf of V.S.A.G. was voluminous. Jim made sure the club was promoting itself at every opportunity and was, no doubt, a great contributor to the success and strength of the club in its early years. It was wonderful that Jim was able to join us for our celebration.

The minutes of our meetings were also of interest. Back in the 1960's the club was very involved in determining a design for the "Divers Flag". The club

corresponded with all relevant authorities as well as other interested club in Australia and overseas.

In September 1961 the club agreed to take steps to form a federation of diving clubs to deal with wider issues affecting diving. The club also agreed to advance five pounds for the purpose. At the meeting in December 1961 it was advised that the first meeting of clubs to achieve this purpose had been held.

February 1974 marked the first sponsorship for the club by TAA (now Qantas). A flight to Heron Island Island was donated as a prize in the "Divers Derby Day" which was held in conjunction with moomba 1974.

I also noted with great interest that a decision was made in November 1974 to award a first prize of \$30 for the clubman of the year I personally find this an admirable gesture and can find nowhere in the minutes where the decision was rescinded. I therefore assume the failure to pay this amount in prior years is merely an oversight.

I also found a letter which was of interest to me. It was a suggestion to the club that immediate action be taken to establish the maritime Archaelogical Association. The letter was written in 1978 and it was very soon after that date that the association was formed with many V.S.A.G. members forming its foundation.

V.S.A.G. was a sophisticated organisation for its time. As well as a diving and social sub-committee, the club had a library sub-committee and a library of some 40 books which have since been sold. The club had a research sub-committee which corresponded and worked with the CSIRO, museum of Victoria, Melbourne University, Council of Adult Education and Department of Agriculture. On file, we have documentation of experiments with underwater photography.

On display at the dinner were examples of the forms and documents used by the club. I see we had a form for completion of medical for applicant members. Since this was new to many doctors, we also provided a letter to the physician explaining what we required and providing relevant medical publications for their referral.

V.S.A.G. also taught diving to students before the F.A.U.I. and P.A. D. I. qualification were heard of. But it had to start somewhere and a number of the original members of our club were learning from reading and experimenting

because there were no teachers to help.

All of this should make one thing very clear. In the early days of diving V.S.A.G. was without doubt on the absolute "Cutting Edge" of diving in Australia.

For those who like a few statistics, V.S.A.G. had 98 financial members in 1960 and the club felt it had strong growth. Interestingly, the membership had fallen to only 52 some 3 years later. Apart from 1960 the club is currently as strong in membership numbers as it has ever been. In 1961 the club had accumulated funds of 15 pounds 15 s and 9 p. In 1962 this had soared to 298 pounds 19 s and in 1979 \$3462. Now with assets of close to \$10,000 the club is financially as strong as it has ever been.

So where to from here?

The diving industry and diving as a sport have mutually bright futures. Equipment continues to be developed which assists us to enjoy our sport in a safer way while we continually understand more about our environment underwater. While new dive locations continue to be discovered the possibilities are unending.

The club scene in Victoria is in the capable hands of the S.D.F.V. under the presidency of Darren Salter. V.S.A.G. members had great foresight when they initiated the Federation and they deserve our club's active support, the federation is doing a good job in representing clubs and providing a communal voice.

And then there is V.S.A.G. this is a club now with a long history back to the very start of scuba as a recreational sport. We are a strong club with our own culture and tradition.

We are a group which shares many experiences together most of which are enjoyable and good fun. I have always said (and it was proved when 15 members toured the Solomons and Vanuata this year).

That it is not possible to go away with a VSAG Group and have anything other than a great time.

Although our activity is diving, this club has built its strength around the comraderie and close friendship of all its members. This is now the strength that forms the foundation of our club. This is the strength that sets this club apart from others and will ensure that V.S.A.G. continues for many decades to come.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR EDITOR

Received a letter and annual subscription from our good friend Rob and Mary McLaughlin at Penong in South Australia. Rob sends greetings to all V.S.A.Gers and congratulations on the Club's 40th year. I couldn't help think what a great time they would have had at our 40th Party, bad luck you missed it Rob, it was a great night.

Rob and Mary's little Pub venture at Penong (just past Ceduna on the way to Perth) is going very well indeed and there is an invitation to any members of the Club to call and stay if passing through.

Rob isn't getting wet as much as he used to because the pub is a seven day a week job, but he sees a lot of Victorians who travel to the area to surf nearby Cactus Beach. Not to be out done by our Bobby "Bends" Scott, Rob has also had some time "in the can" at Adelaide's Hyperbaric chamber. Just like Bob, the lure of those big Crays at the back of Twistle Island was too much for the body beautiful. At Easter, Rob was burning the candle at both ends working night shift and taking divers out in the day time! It seems fatigue caught up with Rob and the bend took two months to clear up!!

Well, best regards to Rob and Mary from all your mates at V.S.A.G, we hope you are much improved now and we appreciate your letter. If you wish to read more about Rob see our Treasurer for the copy of his letter.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Please remember our Annual General Meeting to be held on Thursday 15th September 1994. As usual, the club will provide a sumptuous supper afterwards.

This is the most important meeting of the calandar year, so be sure to attend. New committee member nominations are always welcome, so if you feel you would like to contribute to the running of our great club, please discuss with a current member now.

V.S.A.G. 40TH YEAR OVERSEAS TRIP

By the time this article gets to print you will probably be over exposed to the tales of our great expedition to the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. There have been a few snippets in the last issue of fathoms and I suspect that this may not be the only article for the August issue.

What I can guarantee you is that nothing you hear or read will do justice to what was, by any measure, an exceptional trip.

The trip should be broken down into three sectors, each centered on the principal lady involved.

Gizo- Catherine Honiara - Sally Bokissa - Sandy

This perhaps does not do justice to the topless sunbather at the Le Lagon in Port Vila, but I didn't get her name - not that it was relevant. I still have my memories of the delightful form and the VSAG quotes:

Graeme Blanchard as he ate his hamburger with his back to her (I sat opposite): "I reckon I picked the wrong bloody chair".

Sant after he slept all afternoon:

"I wouldn't have minded if you'd woken me up for that".

Chris Llewellyn watching afternoon TV: "You bet we've been up to the pool".

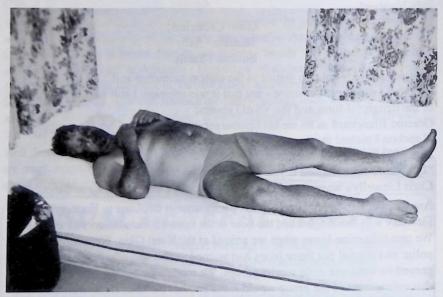
Anyway back to the dives we made. Melbourne to Brisbane to Honiara to Gizo. First day was the longest and the beer in the open air bar at Gizo was a lifesaver. We met Catherine Jones when we arrived at the Hotel Gizo. We were, of course, polite and cordial but Peter Jones had warned us that she was the Gizo siren who preyed on innocent male tourist groups. We made a pact at the start of our trip that no member of the group would leave another member alone with Catherine.

So we dived with Danny Kennedy. A deviate who fitted in perfectly with VSAG. Danny dives and enjoys himself. He has spent 10+ years in Gizo and knows what goes on. Two dives on the "Toa Maru" are worth a trip to Gizo. A really good

wreck inside and out. You need the 2nd dive to appreciate this wreck. Our other dives were reef dives and the water was beautifully warm. We even had some current that was Port Philip Heads standard. When the current starts taking your air bubbles down it gets your mind focussed.

The life on the reefs is abundant, everything from sharks to turtles, you name it and we saw it.

Honiara is an interesting town, mainly because it was in the centre of the Guadalcanal war action. While there are many wrecks around, we concentrated on 3 off shore wrecks. That is, you walk in and swim to the wreck - usually about 20-50 meters from the beach.



VSAG Demolition dozer at rest! So this is what death feels like. Ross Luxford with absolutely nothing on his mind - Bokissa Island

Sally was the first of our dive guides. She was a little New Zealand lass whose parents has told her to leave home and find a husband. Since she was a P.A.D.I. Instructor she just walked offshore in the Bay of Islands and started swimming North.

Her efforts were not in vain because she found Nick and they were very happy until VSAG came along. There was no doubt that Sally found the members of the group extremely attractive and I could tell she was wondering if she had been a bit hasty marrying Nick.

We dived the "Hirokawa Maru", "Kinagawa Maru" and "Kyushu Maru". Just about enough Marus for two days!

The first was a dive to 140ft with plenty to see, including gun carriages and a tractor or tank in the rear hold.

Each was worth doing and the safety stops in 20 - 10 feet were packed with sea life and almost enough to justify the dive by itself.

On the last morning we did a bus tour of the battle zone from the 1940's. The battles around Henderson Field were partly with the enemy and partly with the jungle and the mosquitos. I was eaten alive by sandflies in 10 minutes on a beach! Both military powers had to live and work under worse conditions for months and they were slaughtered in their thousands.

From Honiara to Vanuatu. This place had the most perfect weather I can remember. Day and night it was faultless. A one night transit and then onto Bokissa, the "President Coolidge" and Sandy.

I was with the "A" team diving with Brandon and so i did not experience the diving days with Sandy first hand. Unfortunately, as the tour leader I was confronted with that problem that I was fearing from Day 1. I refer of course to Sexual Harrassment.

It wasn't long before individual members of the group started mentioning little incidents that were occurring with "Z" group and it soon became clear that Sandy was taking advantage of theses guys in the group who just wanted to dive without dealing with these other pressures. The insistence on helping the guys to adjust their gear, the brushing up against them unnecessarily. Justin even complained that he could feel her mentally undressing him with her eyes.

It required an emergency meeting of the group. My advice - that's life! We have to understand that Sandy is only human and finds trouble expressing her emotions. I asked the guys to try and cope. It was only for a few days and then we would be home where most people would prefer them to keep all their clothes on and fully buttoned up.

So again we concentrated on the diving. No words will describe the diving on the "Coolidge". I had ten dives on the wreck and just started to identify the wreck and how it lay. We saw it from bow to stern but there must be a few more weeks of diving still there.

We saw jeeps piled high in the holds, guns, helmets, pistols, ammunition. fuel tanks for aircraft, troop carriers and an engine room the size of a small aircraft



How could a woman resist this provocative, raunchy pose by our cultural attache` Jack Liddy? Bokissa Island Toga Party.

carrier. But then how many wrecks can you dive on that have a swimming pool, a beauty shop. a barbers's shop, a Doctor's surgery still equipped, a ballroom complete with chandeliers and a beautiful statue above an open fireplace. This is some wreck and only diving it would let you comprehend what it it all about.

Bokissa is the right place to stay, particularly for VSAG. There was plenty of fun snd plenty of time to relax. Food excellent and the bar closes when the guests leave.

I dived with Brandon as dive guide on most days. He liked to enjoy himself and was one of the best divers we have come across on our travels. He would certainly pass the stringent VSAG admittance tests. He is also a whiz at changing O rings after the practice he had.

Two weeks away seemed like a month. I hope VSAG gets the chance to dive the Solomons and the "Coolidge" again soon. It's too good to miss.



Three amigos Ross Luxford, Chris Llewellyn & Don Abell at "The" Toga Party - Bokissa Island.

TO ALL V.S.A.G. MEMBERS

Our president wishes to commence all General Meetings at 8.00 pm sharp in future - Please be on time as we often have a guest speaker and/or a full schedule, so time often runs short.

You can expect meetings to start at 8.00 pm sharp! Your co-operation is requested.

FORTHCOMING PRESENTATIONS AT V.S.A.G. GENERAL MEETINGS

18th August - Dr Geoff Broomhall will tell us of case histories of decompression sickness treated at the Alfred Hospital 1993-94

20th October - Ray Campbell, Staff Captain of Victorian Squadron of the Australian Volunteer Coastguard will speak to us about their work.

V.S.A.G. 40TH YEAR COMMEMORATIVE VIDEO

The committee asks all members, past and present, to join into help the Club produce its 40th year souvenir video which will be available to all members as a record of the club and its history.

Andy Mastrowicz is co-ordinating and producing the video, but he cannot do it without your help in the form of old super 8 or slides of the good times this great club has seen over the years.

So come on and have a look around the house for those old memories and share them with your fellow members.

You can contact Andy on 318 3986 (H) and discuss any material you may have, don't leave it to someone else to provide all the old photographs when you know you have some material which will make this project souvenir a source of fun for everyone.

EVENTS FROM OUR SOLOMON ISLAND/VANUATU TRIP LEST WE FORGET??? JUSTIN LIDDY

The flight to Brisbane, good natured and friendly hostess has to be some sort of world first! Playing low tricks on an innocent diver was in very poor taste but with a body like that, who cared?

Catherine looking at the fishes.

The daily parade through the streets of Gizo. The locals had never seen a blue condom that big with so little in it.

Trying to get back into the Gizo hotel after the fortnightly "disco" and nearly waking the ever alert security.

The bloody crayfish at Gizo. Breakfast, lunch and dinner, bloody crayfish. Didn't that get boring??

After that little dive against a 5 knot current, that magic run around the island right on the surf line.

Honiara, a semblance of civilisation, and that magnificent Thai meal where they turn the lights out so you can't see the food. One hour to eat and two hours to pay the bill.

Deco stops on Bonegi 1 or 2 or whatever. The only decent part of the dive apart from the superstructure on the dive guide.

The complete and total self control of our beloved leader at Gizo International when he discovered the plane was too small for the gear. If the Cultural Attache and his apprentice had been sober they would certainly have been embarrassed.

Bokissa and, Sandy aborting the first Coolidge dive and the good humoured way we reacted.

Sandy getting into her gear on the table while no one took any notice.

Kevin and the notorious spittoon joke that even turned Pat green.



VSAGers wash down their anti-malarial tablets at the Bokissa Island Bar. Note the traditional night attire. Right to left, Messrs Luxford, Llewellyn, Vleugal, Liddy and Reynolds. Barman Johnson attempts to keep up with the paperwork!

Brandon and his refusal to accept that the OK sign means "See you on the deco line" and that the buddy system means being in the same ocean. His favourite quote, "you guys are f---ing unbelievable".

Sandy anywhere......

The togetherness of divers on the shark feed and the keenness of all to be in the centre of the group. Never have VSAGers been so interested in their surroundings on a deco stop.

Des imploring and pleading everyone to stop rocking the little tin boat and then saluting bravely as it slowly sank with all 17 hands.

The barbecue on Turtle Island and the impromptu dip in the sea by everyone except Priya who suddenly disappeared. No mean feat on about an acre of island.

The toga party on the last night and the smell of fear in the air (or was that

Louie's cigars as the swimming pool got closer and closer to the bar and the locals got braver and braver.

After a hard day's diving what better than to jump into a nice hot shower with plenty of pressure and a few magic words.

Listening to one of our number serenading the more shapely of the dive guides in the early hours and the curses of several others as they tried to either keep him out of their huts or stop him singing or put him to bed.

The bliss of the saunas at every small airport, although Twin Otter seems a funny name for a sauna..

And then of course there's Priya!!!! (Bugger, the printer has run out of paper) Here's to the next trip.....

V.S.A.G. Celebrates 40 Years

Saturday 25th June 1994
Photos of the evening on the following pages



Early VSAG divers John Noonan & Jan Watson recall the good old days



Chris Llewellyn well positioned between Debbie Finnigan, wife Rhonda & Annie Jeacle



Seven of VSAG's Total of nine life members-L-R: Bob Scott, Pat Reynolds, John Noonan, Tony Tipping, John Goulding, Alan Cutts & Barry Truscott - Absent were Peter Mathews & Frank Coustley. What a photo it could have been!



Sally Staddon & Alex Talay



L-R: Andrew Maybus, Justin Liddy, David Carroll, Leo Maybus, Lesley Tipping & Deborah Carroll. How long is it since we saw David Carroll last?



Ross Luxford & John Lawler pose for photographer Bill Jansen



John Goulding leads "Three British Cheers" to toast VSAG



Tony Tipping, Chris Llewellyn & John Goulding examine some photographic memorabillia

AUGUST/SEPTEMBER



A good snap of Pat & David Moore enjoying the ambience



Des Williams between very special guests Jim & Fran Ager



L-R: Annie & Mick Jeacle with Bob & June Scott. Mick relaxes after a top job as venue convenor



L-R: Don Abell, Jim Ager, Mick Jeacle, Des Williams & S.D.F.V. Pres. Darren Salter



Enjoying a pre dinner drink are L-R: Tony Rossi, Jenny Dempsey, Barry & Marie Truscott, Pat Reynolds & Neville Viapree



Priya Cardinaletti & John Mills



Good to see Glenys & Alan Cutts again



President Don Abell delivers his expose of V.S.A.G.'s 40 years

"A BIG TRIP" "LOUIE" LLEWELLYN

From the moment I saw Priya's vibrating toiletry bag at the airport I knew this was to be a big trip!

Not long after that Nikki Abell lined us all up for a good bye kiss that left her looking like a used sponge, but happy!

It was then that I was given one of my greatest ever thrills when Justin "Jack" Liddy advised that I was to be his apprentice cultural attache for the trip. Little was I to know that "Attache" was french for bag and that I had to carry his bags for the entire trip and later he even tried to have me empty them for him!

My apprenticeship began quickly when our Melbourne - Brisbane Qantas Hostie called jack a wimp for waiting until 7.30am for his first Bloody Mary.

He looked hurt and stunned but quick as a shot and very diplomatically told her the difference between a step ladder and an air hostess! After a few more compliments things quickly settled down especially when we discovered she was a ballarat "Girl" too, just like Jack.

After a useful stopover at Brisbane for provisions including the biggest box of cuban cigars I could find, we were on our way to the Solomons! I won't burden you with any more boring flight details from here on, as they were all the same routine of drinking, eating, unseemly loutish behaviour and perhaps a bit more drinking. All the ingredients of a great VSAG trip.

The Solomons were just as I remembered them hot, humid and sticky and nothing had changed with Solomon Airlines either as we were soon embroiled in the first of a sequence of mexican standoffs regarding claims of excess baggage. Luckily this time a local "Sir Galahad" came to our rescue and gave up his seat to reduce the load. We gave him a quick Ra-Ra and bolted for the plane and Gizo.

It had been a very long day, but when we finally tasted our first local ice coldy, relaxing in the open air leaf house bar at the Gizo Hotel, we knew we were on holidays. If there was ever a place to feel a million miles away from civilisation

and relax in tradional island surroundings without the resort trappings, this is it. The Gizo Hotel menu claimed crayfish as a specialty and they weren't joking. We soon had crayfish coming out our earholes, and those who chose the chilli cray probably had it coming out of other holes! As it turned out we couldn't even have a simple island B.B.Q. lunch, no at Gizo it had to be a crayfish B.B.Q.

Now whether it be by luck, coincidence or destiny we had arrived on Friday evening which just happened to be the biggest night of the week, you see Friday night was the disco night at the Gizo Club. So off we set, all five of us. We lost Priya and Andy at the front door, Priya concerned about the dress code, or lack of it, and Andy refusing to cough up one coconut entrance fee. Unabated Dave Moore, jack and myself continued on. The moment I saw one of the local girls dancing with only one thong on, I knew this was a classy joint! I asked her if she'd lost a thong and with a toothless smile she informed me that she had in fact, found a thong. Half her luck! The local beer was cold and plentiful the only trouble was, once purchased, negotiating the stubbies under the chicken wire that enmeshed the bar. At least they weren't lax on security, as the local police chief whom we had been introduced to back at the Gizo Hotel and who had encouraged us to attend, was in there.

He was however causing quite an inconvenience to the dancers by choosing the middle of the dance floor to sleep off his drunken stupor. About this time that I felt very conscious of people staring, the main problem being it was us three they were staring at. I quickly dismissed it as jealously amongst the local bucks, obviously concerned at the sight of three such good looking, funky "Women Magnets" like us appear at their dance. Of course it's hard to convey by body language alone that we were married (or had been in Jacks case) and were unavailable and of no threat at all to their women folk. In any case they continued to stare, whisper and point, that is until I reached for one of my 10" long cuban cigars and lit it in a defiant gesture. Within two minutes we had more mates than a dog on heat. I tell you they hadn't tasted tobacco that good in years and talk about service with a smile, you should have seen me light those cigars for all our new found friends lining up for a tug on a genuine fidel castro. I felt good stumbling home in the dark that night, knowing that we had forged new mateships. One young fellow even entrusted us with a message of love to pass on

to his Australian girlfriend, who he informed us lived in the Sydney suburb of K-Mart.

Believe it or not, but we had come to dive and over the next three days that's exactly what we did. The water around Gizo was crystal clear with spectacular fish life everywhere that included sharks, rays, turtles and barracuda. in one dive we completely circumnavigated Kennedy Island and ended up strolling back along the beach to the dive boat and all without even raising a sweat. The "Toa Maru" is still a great dive, in fact I saw more this time than I did 10 years previously on my first trip to these parts. our guide from adventure sport took us right inside the ship showing us ampules, a handgun, gas mask, flask and a lightfish show that was like staring up at the stars on a clear night.

After a big days diving it was procedure to head back to the dive shop for a quick rinse of the gear followed by a leisurely stroll back to the hotel. It didn't take long for this daily stroll to become quite an event for the locals who came out in droves to watch. To this day I don't know if it was Des in his aqua condom sting suit or Neville in his lemon G-string and strange tropical growth that they came to see.

Everyone by now was rested, relaxed and right in holiday mode, apart from Priya that is, who had flooded her torch, been attacked by killer mosquitoes and run into a very unfortunate accounting error with her room bill. The morning of our departure was tranquil and serene, who would have thought that the peace and quiet would soon be broken. By none other than our cool, calm and collected tour leader. Now I've seen a few serves before but I'm sure the Solair representative, who insisted we leave about a dozen bags laying around Gizo airstrip before he would allow take-off, must have thought the surf was up after the spray he copped from Don. But in true VSAG tradition we were all right behind Don and had the situation sized up perfectly. You see Don was about the perfect size of twelve bags and if he had been refused a seat on the plane we calculated that we could get the luggage on board. Unfortunately Don was allowed on board and our luggage wasn't!

The Mendana Hotel in Honiara had changed quite dramatically. Bought out by the japanese it seemed to have lost a lot of its previous island charm and had developed a lot more regimented approach than how I remembered it when it was

owned by the locals. our beach entry dives on the Japanese transports Bonegi 1 and 2 were interesting, but I couldn't help the feeling of Honiara as a pleasant stopover prior to bigger and better things ahead.

Our group had by now developed into quite an efficient unit when it came to traversing airports, customs and immigration, baggage carrousels, currency exchange booths, duty free shops and airport transfers. So needless to say the afternoon flight to Vila, pleasant stopover at Le Lagon Resort and early morning flight to Santo were handled with an air of professionalism only shown by world weary travellers.

We were to spend the next week on bokissa island, a small unspoilt coral cay about 15 minutes by speed boat from Santo, so the travel brochure read. And that is exactly how it was. Kevin Green, owner of Bokissa Isle Dive and his lovely assistant Sandy soon had us picked up, loaded on board and lapping at the shores of Bokissa ready to start our next adventure in fine time.

And it didn't take us long to realise our next adventure as we soon discovered a cause for alarm (especially for Des) that a previous cyclone had seen the demise of the jetty. This meant a dinghy ride, a'la refuge cove, was required for each trip to and fro the dive boat. My mind ticked over, two dingy trips for each of our ten dives equalled 20 torturous crossings. As it turned out all my silly worrying was in vain as we only sunk the dingy twice!

We had come all this way to dive the mighty liner the "President Coolidge" and that was exactly the plan for that very afternoon. Well as they say in the classics even the best laid plans can go astray, and unfortunately ours did too. No sooner had we barely touched the hull of this monster of a ship when the pin was pulled on our very first dive. Our dive guide, fearing a tragedy in the making when a couple of our divers went awol, called time out! We were not a happy boatload heading home that afternoon especially when we had to listen to the other half of our group on the other boat, wooping, hollering and giving us obscene hand gestures about their mind blowing dive. Sucks! I drowned my sorrows that night, even polished off the last of the Southern Comfort but come the next morning I knew I was going to have a real look at that ship. And look we did! Over the next week we made up for that first debacle many times over. The Coolridge is

enormous! The size of the one link in the anchor chain was enough to bring home the magnitude of this once proud ocean liner. I scrounged through the forward holds, kissed "The Lady" (she's no lady after what I saw her accommodate), got high in the medical supply, did breaststroke in the swimming pool and probably had my most unforgettable deep penetration dive to a tiny doctors surgery that seemed like it was in the very bowels of the ship. The amazing thing about diving the coolidge is that your dive is by no means over when you leave the ship as waiting for you after every dive is "Boris", a huge cod that must be 6 ft long and hovers just below your fins as you head up to the coral garden deco area. Watching Kevin green hand feed ravenous "Boris" was one of the highlights of the trip. Speaking of feeding fish, we also witnessed a spectacular shark feed (not by hand this time) that had us all as close to our buddies as what we had ever been. Thanks Des, next time I'm on top OK!

Accommodation on Bokissa was by way of traditional leaf "Fare" with hot water only possible if you could avail yourself of Pat Reynold's technical expertise. These fares were open to both prying and unsuspecting eyes and I'll bet there were a few shocked passers by unlucky enough to see Graeme Blanchard attending to Des' festering crutch! John Lawler had boosted our numbers by this stage and our spirits, with a couple of bottles of fine red and a Dire Straits tape that got a good flogging. Our ever smiling barman Johnson, was also given a fair workout and how he managed to keep our fluid intake up, the music pumping, light our cigars and keep tabs on the bar bill has to this day got me stuffed. This was indeed a great place with a good atmosphere and friendly hotel and dive staff. They even prepared Jack a 70th birthday cake and he was also presented with a coconut husk toupee just for his troubles.

The day before our departure had been declared a rest day to dry out and dissipate a few built up nitrogen bubbles. And what better way to dissipate than a delightful BBQ lunch over on Turtle Island. I knew we were in trouble when I saw four guys struggling with the esky, it was ominously big and very full! I can't remember who went in the drink first or who started it but it didn't really matter as everybody eventually got their turn. It was a huge day of ribald revelry that left that esky high and dry on the beach. From memory it was only after our second loop to pick up a another drunk overboard that the concept of a farewell

toga party gathered any momentum. The sceptics (those with no unskidded undies left in their possession) were soon converted as we raged till the early hours dressed only in our bed sheets or less in some cases. There was one sad absentee I must state for the record, the cultural attache, you see he had put in such a huge effort on Turtle Island he had retired for the evening to find his false teeth somewhere in the bottom of the dunny. Rosscoe and his suave counterpart Peter were indeed having a fine time of it and I didn't know if it was the Tequila Slammers, cigars or gangrene - but did they look sick!

It was about this time that our boaties and their local mates decided they wanted a piece of the action too, and began to systematically drag us from the bar and deposit us in the pool! Some of the guys put up a sterling fight, in fact Murray Black did a good job of scalping his heel. But Sant was on hand to reassure him that a significant loss of blood would not lower his blood alcohol content.

With dawn not to far away I finally collapsed in my fare too exhausted to even worry that it had been trashed by a lost rampaging drunk trying to find his own room. I'll always remember those few fleeting thoughts I had that morning before drifting off into oblivion, "A Big Trip............... A Very Big Trip".

V.S.A.G'S PATRON RE-DISCOVERED DES WILLIAMS

During our investigations into some of the Club's history for our 40th year celebration, Don Abell and I were ploughing through the VSAG filing cabinet. Wow! we found a heap of old papers worth reading and spent a lot of time sorting out old correspondence of more than thirty years ago. One such folder of correspondence revealed that VSAG once had a Patron in the U.K. by the name of W.D. SHELFORD. There were letters from our Club to this gentleman and replies back (on Siebe, Gorman & Co letterhead) containing words of advice and even one sent as a Christmas message to the members of the VSAG about 1960, if my memory serves me right.

So, I spent some time looking for more information about Mr. Shelford, to see just who this Patron of our Club was so long ago. I found reference to him in my copy of "DEEP DIVING & SUBMARINE OPERATIONS" by Sir Robert Davis,

Chairman of the famous diving and breathing apparatus manufacturers, Siebe, Gorman & Co. Boy, was I in for a surprise! Just another example of the rock solid foundations on which this Club was built by our founding members and the enormous foresight they had coupled with sheer hard work to build a Club with a very high profile and commitment to safety.

COMMANDER (Later Capt.) W.D. SHELFORD, RN

Early in 1942 during World War 2, the British Admiralty decided to develop, in great secrecy and at very high priority, both the human torpedo and midget submarine (or X-craft). both schemes were under the control of Admiral Sir max K. Horton, then Admiral Commanding Submarines. To Siebe Gorman & Co. Ltd., in conjunction with Lieutenant-Commander W.D. SHELFORD RN., who was Instructional Officer of the Davis Escape Apparatus at H.M.S. DOLPHIN, fell the task of developing and producing the special diving equipment required for these ambitious schemes. Such diving operations had never before been attempted on such a scale in the U.K.

The Admiralty Experimental Diving Unit (A.E.D.U.) was born with its headquarters at Siebe, Gorman & Co.'s works at Tolworth, London. This unit consisted of a team of experimental divers, with diving officers and instructors to supervise the diving, medical officers and laboratory assistants and secretarial staff, the whole was under the command of Cmdr. Shelford.

The famous Professor J.B.S. Haldane acted as advisor on certain physiological matters and carried out a number of experiments on himself and his colleagues. For those of you not in the know, haldane was the father of the Dive Tables we use today.

The whole of Siebe, Gorman & Co's experimental plant and equipment and the facilities of their factory were placed voluntarily at the A.E.D.V's disposal. Thus, in a very short time after inception the Unit was able to start a most comprehensive experimental programme.

The Unit developed lightweight underwater suits and six-hour re-breathing apparatus for underwater "Chariots". It undertook what was probably the most exhaustive programme of human experiments ever attempted on one aspect of diving. Many of the experimental dives were taken to the point of unconsciousness and convulsions, and the young divers of the Unit showed great courage in submitting themselves cheerfully to these experiments.

Shelford's Unit also worked on the development of the necessary equipment for

Shelford's Unit also worked on the development of the necessary equipment for underwater swimmers to carry out their now famous missions of underwater

sabotage. The equipment included items as basic as fins and masks as well as dry suits (in conjunction with Dunlop Rubber Co.) which had to be tight fitting yet not restrictive to easy movement. In 1943, no swim-fins were known to be in existence in Great Britain, the only clue to their construction lay in some photographs in an American publicity pamphlet depicting a Hollywood beauty draped over the edge of a swimming pool, wearing fins on the wrong feet! High priority samples were requested from the U.S.A., but were sunk by a U-boat in mid Atlantic and trials had to start with a crude set cut from heavy sheet rubber. The hood and face mask were a fine example of latex dipping technique and the final design of the flange joint between mask and close-fitting hood was



Admiralty Experimental Diving Unit at Siebe, Gorman & Co.'s Works, Tolworth. Stuff and a few of the trainees, January, 1944. (Sitting): Surgeon Lieutenant (later Lieutenant-Commander) K. W. Donald, D.S.C., R.N.; Commander (now Captain) W.O. Shalford, R.N.; Commissioned Gunner E. Crouch, R.N.

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an excellent example of the rubber-worker's skill.

Thus, the British "FROGMAN" became the best equipped in the world and many daring acts of under water sabotage were carried out successfully.

Early experimental work on the extension of the Haldane tables to suit depths up to fifty fathoms was also delayed by the Second World War. This work was resumed in 1946 by the A.E.D.V. Once again Cmdr. W.O. Shelford was Superintendent of Diving with the Unit's transfer to H.M.S. VERNON at Portsmouth.

So, you can see that V.S.A.G. was indeed very fortunate to have such a pioneer in the diving world as its Patron in the early days. Only Jacques Cousteau himself could have made a comparable Patron!

ANNUAL CLUB SUBSCRIPTION NOW DUE

From June 1994, V.S.A.G. annual club subscriptions became due - 12 months fee is \$50 and you know every cent of this money is used wisely to run our great club and produce "Fathoms" magazine.

So come on folks, if you have not already paid at a General Meeting, send your cheque to "The Treasurer", P.O. Box 2526W, G.P.O., Melbourne, 3001.

For those members who are not financial by our September Annual General Meeting, this will be your last issue of "Fathoms".

Our Treasurer also reports Monies Outstanding from 26.4.94:

Murray black 2 x \$15 T-shirts \$30 Neville Viapree 1 x \$15 T-shirts \$15

At the time of writing these debts are 4 months old! Please send money immediately to our treasurer.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

John McCormick's Scuba Equipment Repairs has now moved to:

57 Levanswell Road Moorabbin Telephone: 555 5777 This article from Black Rock Dive Club Newsletter is printed for your interest. Thanks to B.R.U.G.-Editor

Black Rock Underwater Dive Group (AUSTRALASIA) PTY LTD 276 High Street Kew VIC 3101 24 March 1994

Dear Graeme.

Enclosed are three articles I believe will prove of interest to the troops. It is interesting to note the results, however rough, of a bit of mathematics: The total Southern catch of Crays of 5300 tonnes=6,000,000, Crays. Split between States this is 3,500,000 for SA, 2,040,000 TAS, 450,000 VIC. With a total Fleet of 175 Fishing Vessels this breaks down to 34,286 Crays/Vessel/PA or 659 Crays/Vessel/week.

If broken down per state split it would be around: 102 Vessels in SA or 3.48M Crays/PA 60 Vessels in TAS 2.06M 13 Vessels in VIC 445,718 in VIC

This would be accurate as the Fisheries Bulletin indicates 450,0000 taken in VIC in 1992!!!

Of the number of Recreational Divers one can only guess at the number who regularly take Crays as well as their presumed catches.

Presuming say 50 Divers regularly take crays in VIC (probably accurate) at an ave of 2 Crays per day at an ave of 1 day per week our totals would be approx 100 Crays/week throughout VIC.

If logical Season, Weather Availability for Dives of Divers is taken into account the days Dived would be around max of 24 Dives (probably 15) which=a Max of 2,400 Crays per annum for VIC recreational Dives OR 3.6 days of professional fishing catches (probably more like 1 day).

Even if the max limit is used and 5 times the amount of Divers is calculated (which is ridiculously unrealistic) the VIC recreational catch is still only 24,000 Crays= a 6 month catch of 1 professional vessel or 5% of the Total VIC yearly catch.

The average Diver(above) would spend around \$60/Dive for petrol, air etc x 24 dives=\$1440 x 50 Divers-\$72,000 over 6 months OR \$12,000/Mth.(not incl; gear, maint, incidentals etc) injected into the economies of local suburbs and dive sites such as Flinders OR \$30/Cray IF they got 2 Crays every dive (the logical/realistic ave catch=15 crays per person x 50 Divers @ same cost = \$96++per Cray.

Best regards Bill Rendall

THE 1994

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 23rd, 1994

ROBERT BLACKWOOD HALL
MONASH UNIVERSITY CLAYTON

With the incredible success of last year's Festival, Victorian Divers again have the opportunity to attend an entire day of equipment displays and sales, lectures and stunning audio-visual images from both locally and overseas.

This year's Festival will again be hosted by the Divers' M.C. - Reg Lipson. Reg will introduce a host of top class speakers on topics including Diving Under the Antanctic Ice, the Latest Info on Diving Medicine, Victoria's Top 10 Dive Sites, and much more.

As well as the Audio Visual presentations, you will also be able to browse through the many exhibits and stands from our local shop owners and industry members, and if you are quick, pick up a bargain for the coming season's diving.

DON'T MISS THIS
INCREDIBLE
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There is sure to be a number of stands offering all types of equipment for sale, and at prices that are going to be hard to beat!!

Again, there will be fantastic prizes for tickets holders, kindly donated by some of our Equipment Wholesalers.

But you will have to be quick - there are only limited tickets available.

Watch the pages of Dive Log and Sportdiving for further details.

"RESENTATIONS.

AUDIO-VISUAL

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FOR FURTHER DETAILS CONTACT TONY DAVIS - FESTIVAL CO-ORDINATOR ELEPHONE (03) 781 3820

DIVE/SOCIAL CALENDAR

DATE	EVENT/LOCATION	DIVE CAPTAIN	MEET AT
31 July	Spectacular reef	Sant Kahn 817 3214	Sorrento 10am
14 Aug	"George Kermode" Wreck	Pat Reynolds 789 1092	Flinders 10am
18 Aug	General Meeting Nth. Melbourne Football Club (Meet beforehand for dinner at t Lecture by Dr. Geoff Broomhall		8.00pm Sharp!!
28 Aug	Nepean Wall Limestone caves	Leo maybus 318 3986	Sorrento 9.30am
11 Sept	"Rotomahana" Wreck	Andy Mastrowicz 7271568	Sorrento 9.30am
15 Sept	Annual General Meeting Nth. Melbourne Football Club (Meet beforehand for dinner at t	he club)	8.00pm Sharp!
25 Sept	Heroes cave Abyss Charter Boat Dive-Book early	John Lawler 598 9874	Sorrento 10am
2 Oct	Horse riding	Andy Mastrowicz 318 3986	
9 Oct	Spectacular Reef	Alex Talay 867 8492	Sorrento 10am
20 oct	General Meeting Nth. Melbourne Football Club (Meet beforehand for dinner at Lecture by Ray Campbell Aust. Volunteer Coastguard	the club)	8.00pm Sharp!!

DIVE/SOCIAL CALENDAR CONT.

DATE	EVENT/LOCATION	DIVE CAPTAIN	MEET AT
23 Oct	90ft Submarine	Mick Jeacle (059) 712786	Sorrento 9.30am
29, 30, 31 Oct & 1 Nov	Cup Long weekend Venus Bay	Andy Mastrowicz 318 3986	
13 Nov	Nepean Wall	John Lawler 598 9874	Sorrento 9.30am
17 Nov	General Meeting Nth. Melbourne Football Club (Meet beforehand for dinner at t	he club)	8.00pm Sharp!!
20 Nov	Annual Tennis Party/Family Day Cranbourne-Tipping Bros.	y	
9 Dec	Annual Xmas Function -venue to be decided put this in	your diary now!!	

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TIDE TABLES

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ADD 1 HOUR TO TIMES SHOWN FOR OFFICIAL "SUMMER TIME"