

FATHOMS

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VSAG

VICTORIAN SUB-AQUA GROUP

in this issue ...

ARTICLE	AUTHOR	PAGE
VSAG Committee Members		
Editorial	Josie Maré	3
When the Living Was Easy	Herb Epstein	6
Guest Speaker	John Lawler	7
City of Launceston in Collision	Des Williams	8
Wedding of the Century	Doug Catherall	10
20,000 Lagers Under the Sea	Des Williams	11
Alegria	Judy Brincat	11
April Fools Day Dive	John Lawler	13
Nusa Island Retreat	Mick Jeacle	14
GPS	John Lawler	18
Vanuatu - Luxurious Sailing	Peter Vleugel	20
Easter 2001 - Osprey Reef	Alan Beckhurst	23
Dive Calendar		27
Tide Tables		28
Emergency Contact Information		32

Forthcoming General Meetings

(Winter Solstice)

Bells Hotel
157 Moray Street
(cnr Coventry Street)
Sth Melbourne 8:00 pm
Thursday 17 May
Thursday 21 June
Thursday 19 July
Thursday 16 August

Forthcoming Committee Meetings

(NB meeting to be held at Milanos Brighton)

Leighoak Hotel
1555 Dandenong Road
Oakleigh
Thursday 14 June
Thursday 12 July
Thursday 9 August

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Editorial

sure signs of stress

Today, I must start preparing Fathoms for April | May. Check the post office box and then emails.

Nothing for Fathoms in either.

Okay, don't worry, plenty of time. Get format ready.

Check emails again. Check PO box again. Zip!

Forget about Fathoms for a few days.

Lots of other stuff to do.

Check emails . Check post office box. Only junk.

Easter holidays. Great. Forget about Fathoms and work.

Back from holidays. Check emails . Check PO box.

Nothing for Fathoms. Mmmmmmmmm.

Another busy week. Must check later in week for Fathoms stuff again. - Still nothing.

Layout for Fathoms altered - reduced by four pages due to lack of articles.

Phone USAly people. Find out if anyone went to the Prom.

No Prom stories. No diving stories. Where the #* &! is everyone?

Cut off date for articles looming.

Cut off date for articles arrives. Aaarrvgggghhh

Check post office box. Check emails.

Far out brussel sprout!

Heaps of stuff for Fathoms.

Thank you.

thank you.

thank you!!



Josie

Editor

MEDIA WATCH

New fears over brain damage among divers

BY SUZANNE STEVENSON

SCUBA divers are five times more likely to develop brain damage than non-divers, researchers found.

A study in Switzerland increased fears that diving can do long-term harm on top of the short-term risks of brain damage from the 'bends'.

It comes at a time when the popularity of diving as a hobby is at an all-time peak. Dr Christian Seiler, of the University of Berne, took scans of the brains of 52 divers and the same number of non-divers. He found 41 lesions - damaged brain tissue - in 19 of the

suffer a slight case of the bends - when they surface too rapidly and their bodies are starved of oxygen.

The effects include vague confusion or slightly blurred vision, for which divers are unlikely to seek medical attention as they wear off quickly. But such mild effects could cause brain damage, experts say.

In addition, the study - published in the *Annals of Internal Medicine* - seemed to confirm fears that divers are more likely to suffer from a defect called a patent foramen ovale, where the efficiency of blood pumping through the heart is undermined.

Scuba diving: Health risks



divers, compared with seven lesions in six of the non-divers.

Dr Seiler said: 'Diving increased the incidence of one or more brain lesions by five-fold.' The affected divers had

not performed more, or deeper, dives than unaffected divers and the lesions did not seem to be linked to smoking, alcohol or medication. Doctors believe the lesions may occur when divers

Bay anglers take big toll on fish stocks, study finds

By **CLAIRE MILLER**
ENVIRONMENT REPORTER

The average weekend angler on Port Phillip Bay catches an average of one fish every hour. It hardly seems the stuff of exploitation except that, collectively, the state's 800,000 recreational fishers are catching at least as much as commercial operators.

A review by one of Victoria's leading marine biologists has found that recreational fishers are catching more than 2.7 million fish a year in the bay. The annual catch from recreational boats was estimated at 469 tonnes, close to the commercial catch of 462 tonnes.

What recreational fishers lacked in weight, they made up in numbers. With snapper, for example, commercial operators caught 7000 fish weighing 28 tonnes over four months in 1998, compared with 22,000 smaller snapper weighing 17 tonnes caught by recreational fishers.

Marine biologist Mark Norman, a research associate at the University of Melbourne and the Museum of Victoria, said in his report that the figures belie common perceptions among the state's recreational fishers.

He said recreational fishers generally believed they had a minor impact on stocks, individually and collectively, and that commercial harvests were to blame for sea creatures seemingly

The fish take

Species	Catch (tonnes)	
	Commercial	Recreational
■ Snapper	50.0	42.0
■ KG whiting	59.3	62.0
■ Garfish	54.2	19.0
■ Sand flathead	8.2	240.0
■ Southern calamari	29.4	78.0

Source: Victorian National Parks Association (L/THE AGE 26/1/01)



getting smaller and harder to catch. Neither perception was supported by the available studies.

Dr Norman said recreational pressure on stocks was increasing due to rising numbers of participants and use of advanced fish-finding technologies.

Recreational fishing also took its toll on the marine ecology through undersize fish being kept; released animals suffering high mortality; lost and discarded gear such as fishing line; habitat damage from propellers and anchors; and trampling of intertidal zones.

Dr Norman said one of the problems in assessing fishing impacts was the lack of no-take reference areas.

He pointed to the bay's only no-take reserve, the tiny Pope's Eye reef. Fish numbers and sizes had boomed at Pope's Eye since fishing was banned in the 1970s, compared with nearby areas sharing the same environmental con-

ditions. Dr Norman said marine national parks would establish such reference areas as well as protect representative marine habitat types.

The report was commissioned by the Victorian National Parks Association in support of the Environment Conservation Council's recommendations to set aside 6 per cent of Victoria's marine environment as no-take national parks. The government is expected to respond by mid-year after considering costs.

The recommendations, made after nine years of community consultation, are supported by the diving industry, international and Australian marine scientists, the tourism industry and some coastal councils such as Surf Coast Shire.

The leading recreational body, VR Fish, has accepted most of the conservation council's recommendations, but says it will not accept that recreational fishing has a large impact on stocks.

WHEN THE LIVING WAS EASY BUT THE DIVING DANGEROUS !!

Herb Epstein



Hello Josie,

When I can make time, I'll write you an article of my diving experiences off Mozambique and Zanzibar (East Africa) back in my "Hey Day" of diving in the 1980's - when we used to dive at least 4 times a week.

These days, with my own business, 3 kids and scuba equipment that is long overdue for service or replacement, I'm lucky to dive twice a year!!

Cheers

Herb Epstein



My early years were spent learning to SCUBA dive in the waters off Cape Town (1973 - 1987), whilst residing in that beautiful city before moving to Melbourne in 1987.

I clearly remember one particular dive of Gansbaai, about 70 klms from Cape Town, back in 1979. We had just entered the water and were enjoying watching the antics of a group of Cape fur seals frolicking in the water ahead of us. Suddenly, a great white shark came from "nowhere" and bit right through a seal pup - about 10 meters ahead of us !

Quite shocked, we headed straight out, while other sharks moved in and tore up the remnants of the seal carcass. I managed to resist the urge to dive at Gansbaai for the rest of *that* summer!

This episode left an indellible memory with me of my early diving days with the Atlantic (Underwater) SCUBA Club - an amateur SCUBA club very similar to VSAG except they had their own club house, pool and pub in Greenpoint, Cape Town. They also boasted a membership of over a thousand back in the 1980's. I think it would be fair to assume that at least 50% were only members to get access to the pub and cheap eats but rarely dived).



Glad you're still around to share this story with us Herb. Good to hear from you.

Cheers.

Josie

GUEST SPEAKERS

JUNE MONTHLY MEETING

Thursday 21 June

8 pm sharp

JOHN STAV

MANAGING DIRECTOR - JV MARINE WORLD & HIS TEAM MEMBERS

John Stav and his crew will give an informative talk on new boating trends, an overview of new motors, services now available at the new scuba facility and answer questions relating to outboard motors.

An expert in the use of GPS systems will present all the latest on this wonder of modern day technology.

The onsite manager of the scuba centre will highlight aspects of services within a marine facility.

This is one presentation not to be missed. Leading personalities from the boating, technical and diving world will present to VSAG members on subjects of interest to all who dive from boats and who use modern day instruments to search the ocean floors and locate sites with ease and precision.

***Please support your club by coming along to this
interesting and informative evening.***

Comedy Quickie

When I was younger I hated going to weddings... it seemed that all of my aunts and the grandmotherly types used to come up to me, poking me in the ribs and cackling, telling me, "You're next."

They stopped that stuff after I started doing the same thing to them at funerals.

"CITY OF LAUNCESTON" IN COLLISION 19TH November 1865

Des Williams

The collision between the steamers "Penola" and "City of Launceston" was probably the most spectacular and talked about event in the bay during the 1860's. And now in the year 2001, the time-capsule wreck of the "City of Launceston" is still much discussed.

"City of Launceston" was a very modern, purpose-built vessel for her time, beautifully appointed and the forerunner of some of the famous vessels which linked Melbourne with Tasmania. Today, the Devil Cat and "Able Tasman" cover the same service.

The outward bound "City" was struck by the in-bound "Penola" at about 8.30pm and sank in about 20 minutes. All those on board had the opportunity to transfer safely to the "Penola" before the "City" disappeared below the waves, taking all their luggage with her. The "Penola" had penetrated the "City" on her starboard side, slicing into the Captain's cabin. Today, a huge steel plate from the bow of the "Penola" still protrudes from the gash in the "City" as she lies in her grave.

Visibility on the wreck site of the "City of Launceston" has generally been no more than a few meters, so it is not a pleasant dive and the waters of the centre of bay are very often rough and polluted, making a visit to the wreck hazardous. The Maritime Heritage Unit (MHU) of Heritage Victoria, has spent several, diving seasons on this time-capsule wreck, photographing, mapping and salvaging some items too precious to leave on the site. There is a wealth of wonderful information to glean from this remarkably

intact wreck and even with the pitiful amount of money set aside by Government for work on the wreck, much has been achieved due to a great extent by the free labour, time and often loan of equipment provided by private maritime enthusiasts in the Maritime Archaeology Association of Victoria.

If you would like to learn more about this wonderful wreck, which is basically intact and only 20 kilometers from the metropolis of Melbourne, I strongly suggest that you mark Wednesday 6th June in your diary. On that evening, the Scuba Divers Federation of Victoria (SDFV) has arranged for members of the MHU to present the very latest update of their work on the "City of Launceston". The venue is the spectacular Storey Hall at RMIT in Swanston Street, Melbourne. See the advertisement in this issue of Fathoms for more detail.

This is a unique chance for you to visit the wreck of the "City of Launceston" and learn her secrets first hand from those who are in charge of the surveys being done seasonally. You will see some spectacular underwater photographs of the wreck and learn more about your maritime heritage.

I urge all VSAGers not to miss this event and especially ask you to support your SDFV, as the charge of \$5.00 at the door is minimal for two hours of fine entertainment at the most comfortable venue in Melbourne. The SDFV is running this Sunken Assets Seminar for your enjoyment, **NOT** for profit, so **PLEASE** be there or be square.



The RMIT Underwater Club is proud to host a
SCUBA Divers Federation of Victoria

presentation of a

Sunken Assets[®]
Special Lecture

"City of Launceston"

An evening presentation by maritime archaeologists of Heritage Victoria's MHU on the work and protection of the *City of Launceston*. Slides and information will provide a "virtual" dive of the fragile wreck and describe the general conservation work being carried out on recovered relics.

Come and hear why protection and study of shipwrecked vessels like the *City of Launceston* are important for our maritime heritage.



Open to the public

**Wednesday 6 June, 2001
7.30 pm - 9.30 pm**

**Auditorium
RMIT Storey Hall
Swanston St, Melbourne**

Admission: \$5.00 at the door

*For further information contact:
John Hawkins phone (bh) 03 9764 2001
SDVF website www.vicnet.net.au/~sdfv*

Wedding of the Century

Congratulations

PJ & Lara

Doug Cathall

Queenscliff was the destination with the invited guests to meet sharply at 3:00 pm in the foyer of the Vue Grand Hotel (*no less*).

I'd been sworn to secrecy and had no desire to lose a body part, so I led the party down the streets and through the foreshore park, high heels, stockings, dinner dresses - the whole bit, (ladies that is!) destination - the wharf where Peter arrived by the Portsea Ferry.

Surprise, surprise!!

It was all aboard and cast-off. Peter and Lara were married in the middle of the Rip, bathed in late afternoon sun with passing container ships and even a visit by the dolphins.

What a fantastic venue for the ceremony (but wait, there's more). We cruised to Chinaman's Hat remains where PJ told the captive throng of our 6-hour ordeal clinging to the roof, watching the search and rescue boats looking for us. Then it was off to Pope's Eye and back to shore where the Vue Grand turned on a superb meal and a reception for PJ and Lara. Great wine, great fun and a really memorable wedding.

Our thanks and best wishes for their future to Peter and Lara.

Doug & Maxi & VSAG

Sorry Doug, your article arrived too late to scan the photo.

Some Mensa Madness

Arrange all the letters of the newspaper headline below to spell out three animals.

**HANGOVER KID
BRA-STRAP PRANK**

$$\begin{array}{r}
 N + N + M = 14 \\
 L + L + K = 20 \\
 M + K + N = 12 \\
 N + K + L = 18
 \end{array}$$

What is the value of K?

zardark, springbok, panther
K = 4, N = 6, M = 2, L = 8

20,000 Lagers Under The Sea

BEER FIND - TUESDAY 17 APRIL 2001

Des Williams

A sunken treasure of thousands of bottles of beer has brought out scavengers on the NSW North Coast, with some locals donning scuba gear to illegally recover the grog.

About 24,000 bottles of beer sank to the bottom of the Tweed River after a semi-trailer hit a median strip on the Pacific Highway, lost a wheel and crashed into the river.

Large cranes were brought in to salvage the truck after last Tuesday's accident, but the company was able to recover just half its load of beer when the Roads and Traffic Authority ordered them off the Pacific Highway.

Tweed Heads police Inspector Stan Single said residents thought it was "open slather" and have spent the Easter weekend diving for the beer. One person is believed to have recovered 400 bottles of Hahn Premium.

But there were no reports of wild parties and no noise complaints in Tweed Heads or nearby areas as the beer was consumed.

"The company never left any security there and on Friday, Saturday, Sunday, the general public obviously thought it was open slather," Inspector Single said. "People were going down with scuba gear and loading up."

Although "they obviously thought the owners had abandoned the load and they better get the rest", this was in fact "stealing by find", he said.

"But I doubt whether in these circumstances we'll be chasing people for convictions."

Rather than consume the beer by the river, people loaded their cars and went home, he said. The company is expected to retrieve the remaining beer today when it will discover just how much was stolen.

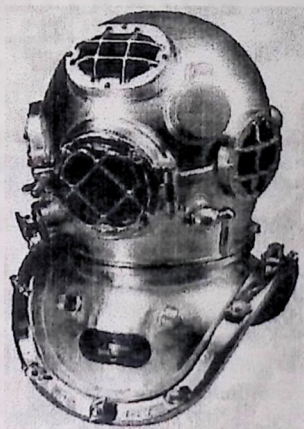
ALEGRIA

Judy Brincat

The arrival of autumn in Melbourne saw several VSAG members attend a performance of Alegria by Cirque du Soleil. Le Grand Chapiteau was bigger than the Taj Mahal, even by VSAG standards, and it was felt that it would even withstand whatever the Prom could dish up, because although it bucketed with rain, it certainly didn't leak!

As for the performance itself..... sensational! The examples of excellence in human achievement we saw were truly amazing. Two female acrobats who would have won the Limbo at TR hands down, literally...one of who managed to sit on her own head (you had to be there). There were examples of male physique which ...well.... Sorry guys, but, unsurpassable, really!!!! This was the type of event of which life - time memories are made.

V.S.A.G
HELMET DIVING
EXHIBITION
on
Saturday 21st July
at
Flinders Jetty



9:30 am
to catch the tide

Des Williams will dip his 1943 US Navy Standard Diving outfit and some other V.S.A.Gers will also take a plunge. Members are invited to join the standard dress divers in the water and photographers will have a unique opportunity to record how diving was done before scuba was invented.

Members are requested to be on time to assist with the set up for this event, as there is a lot of heavy gear to put in place and many hands make light work. Take part in the diver "dressing in and out" procedure on the jetty and/or bring your scuba gear if you wish to observe the divers in the water. This will be an educational, fun event for all the family.

Dive captain: Des Williams
Tel: 9551 3201 Friday evening 20th July
BYO Lunch

April Fools Day Dive

1 April 2001

Dive Captain - John Lawler

The dive profile for this day was the Lonsdale Wall, however the conditions outside the heads were good so a decision was taken to conduct our diving on the wrecks. The boats of Viapree, DeVries and Lawler set out from Sorrento for a comfortable ride to the dive sites. Neville's crew was Jack Namiota and Bob Scott, Gerry's was Leo Maybus and Darren Pearce and mine was Robert Birtles and Don Abell. Gerry was keen to dive the deeper wrecks and headed for the Milora, whilst we decided to do the 90ft sub. Finding this wreck was done in record time as Ocean Diver and Dive Victoria were already there with shot lines on the wreck. We waited for the charter boats to complete their dive and we then set our shot lines on their departure. Don had not had a dive for some time and opted out of the deep dive on this occasion, leaving Rob and I as buddies for the dive. Jack and Neville also buddied up.

The vis was OK at around 15 mtrs and no sooner had we arrived at the wreck, Rob indicated he was experiencing some small difficulty with his air and decided to return to the surface. I teamed up with Neville and Jack to do the dive. This submarine is one of my favorite dives. Having the bow broken away from the main body of the submarine during sinking, the torpedo tubes are clearly exposed and very easy and safe to inspect. Penetration of the wreck is also reasonably safe as exit points are quite clear due to the

amount of natural light flowing in from the wide opening at the bow and hatches. The fish life around the conning tower and the bow area was wonderful. The other great feature of this wreck, not to be missed, is the plaque at the base of the conning tower set by the "Bottom Scratchers" who were the first to dive this wreck.

On surfacing, Gerry and crew had arrived with news that their dive plan was cancelled due to mechanical problems with the motor. They could not turn the motor off for concern that it might not start up again. They decided to head back to the bay and did a dive off the lighthouse, motor running continuously!

Rob offered to be the boat driver on my Haines, allowing Don and I to do a dive in the slack water off Shortland Bluff. Like the 90ft Submarine, this area is also one of my very favorite dive locations. Some of my most memorable diving has been done in this area, as it is just covered with bommies, ledges, swim-throughs and drop offs truly magnificent, and Don and I experienced some of this on this dive. Neville's crew also had their second dive in the same area.

With all the diving completed, we headed back to Sorrento. Despite the motor and equipment problems, we all had a very great day, in true VSAG style.

John Lawler



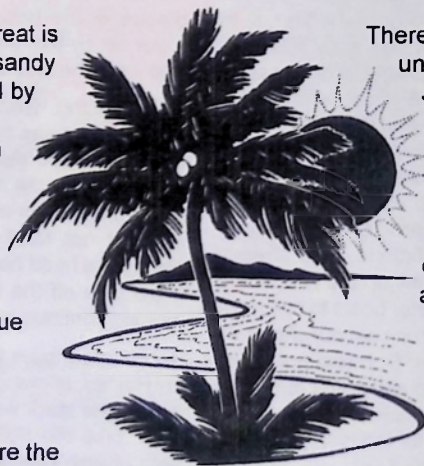
OVERSEAS DIVE TRIP MAY / JUNE 2002

NUSA ISLAND RETREAT KAVIENG, PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Nusa Island Retreat is set on an idyllic sandy point surrounded by a beautiful swimming beach teaming with marine life. It is the perfect choice for those seeking that elusive slice of true paradise.

Set right on the beach, guest bungalows capture the relaxed tropical lifestyle with their traditional island design.

The local waters are rich in aquatic life and the surrounding area is widely considered to provide some of the best diving in the world, with visibility up to 60 metres. The diving is mostly multilevel and large pelagics are indeed prolific.



There are two unidentified Japanese WW11 wrecks to explore for those of us who are wreck enthusiasts and need that deviation from reef diving.

At time of writing, I still await an answer to

my email to the dive shop operators at Nusa Island Retreat, including the maximum number they can cater for. This will be advised in the next issue, but in the meantime I advise hereunder proposed costings and other details so that those of you who are interested can reserve a spot and commence saving towards this exciting trip.

AIR FARE

Sydney/Port Moresby/Kavieng/Port Moresby/Sydney – Air Niugini

LAND ARRANGEMENTS

International Gateway Hotel, Port Moresby – Standard Twin (One night)

Nusa Island Resort, Kavieng – Twin (Seven nights)

International Gateway Hotel, Port Moresby – Standard Twin (One night)

DIVING COMPONENT

10 dives – Scuba Ventures, Kavieng

Tank/weights/air fills

Cost \$1,940 per diver

\$1,415 per non-diver

Plus \$85 taxes per person

Plus *Optional* meal package at Nusa Island Retreat - \$315 pp

**RESERVATIONS**

A \$220 deposit will be required at time of booking.

We could expect a price increase of no greater than 5% to apply to 1992 prices.

SO, WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR?

This trip promises to be something different, and is excellent value.

It should appeal to those who can only afford to be away for a short period of time due to work/family commitments.

RESERVE YOUR SPOT NOW

and be prepared to pay deposit by say early July

Mick Jeacle

Phone 03 5971 2786

Marine parks will kill c



There can be no question that the installation of national parks is highly damaging to our economy and to the entire fabric of our society.

When Wilsons Promontory was reserved as a national park last century it was pretty much the end of the civilised world as we knew it. Our logging, sealing, whaling and mining industries were lost to us in one fell swoop.

We barely managed to maintain cattle grazing until 1992 or quarrying until 1995, and even efforts in 1997 to install a luxury hotel and condominiums in Tidal River were thwarted by green groups. Similarly, it will be the end of the world if the

government proclaims marine national parks, as a few resource fishermen like me may be unable to fish on about 6 per cent of the Victorian coast.

The proposals are the "tip of the wedge", they are "unscientific" and they end our civil liberties to fish where we want. (I could pass another 20 clichés on request.)

In reality, of course, national parks are among Victoria's most important resources and support "industries", and are the lifeblood of many regional areas. It is crucial that this not attract publicity. If it does, we must certainly to speak using gene

MEDIA WATCH

Abalone poachers jailed

TWO Victorian men have been sent to jail for poaching abalone.

Melcolm Wyber, 42, of Yuulong, near Cape Otway, where the offences occurred, and Brian Carr, 43, of Warrnambool, were sentenced in the Colac Magistrates' Court on Monday to 33 months and 23 months respectively.

Wyber also had a car forfeited. Both men had motorcycles and diving equip-

ment forfeited. Carr was fined a further \$2000 for minor fisheries matters.

The poaching incidents occurred in January and February at Moonlight Head near Cape Otway.

The men were charged with taking abalone illegally on five different occasions.

They pleaded guilty to all charges.

Great whi

By ED O'LOUGHLIN
CAPE TOWN

Afterwards, Mike Ladley was ecstatic.

"It was the most amazing thing I have ever done ... I always wanted to do something like that," he told Cape Town's *Cape Argus* newspaper. "It was one of my ambitions in life."

Mr Ladley had just kissed a Great White shark, which might sound an odd ambition.

For Mr Ladley, however, the world's first photograph of man smuggling shark brought worldwide fame, if not admiration.

Taken last month during a shark-viewing expedition to Dyers Island at Gansbaai, near Cape Town, the photograph was beamed to newspapers

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ivilisation (or worse)

amounts of fearsome language, shout a lot, refuse to listen to anyone else and appear to be very angry. We must pretend that those of us who are protesting represent the small number of commercial fishermen who could be affected by the declaration of parks.

Under no circumstances should we mention that voluntary redundancies (if they are required at all) have been routinely performed across all sectors of our society now for many decades.

But perhaps we need not worry too much as most "green" people apparently think that imperatives for conservation and preservation of biodiversity end at the low-tide

mark. If the people of Victoria had even a vague inkling of the treasures and wonders underneath all that blue stuff out there, we would not stand a chance. They would now be ringing and writing to their MPs and contacting the media in their droves.

This is one rare instance when we should make sure at all costs that the conservation movement and in particular the Victorian public, continue to keep their heads well and truly "above water". God forbid that we should allow our coast and country to be ruined further by the creeping "cancer" of new national parks.

NEIL TAYLOR, Woolamai

te shark kissing: daring and flaky

magazines around the world — a priceless advertisement for South Africa's booming shark tourism industry. Each year thousands of tourists, mainly foreign, pay up to \$200 a head for the chance to see some of the great white sharks that cruise the waters around the Cape of Good Hope.

For more daring can, if they have the diving experience, go in cages to see the giant sharks from a prey's-eye

view. The well-rewarded tourists, there is no doubt about it, are shark viewing. Not only are the trips good for the local economy, the operators say, they also contribute directly to public awareness and education for a misunderstood

and endangered species.

For others, however, the benefits of shark tourism are less clear. Three years ago a movement sprang up in Cape Town to ban both cage diving and "chumming" — the practice of putting mashed fish and oil into the water to attract sharks to the boats.

According to the pressure group Save Our Sharks and Swimmers, tangling with boats and cages is harmful to the sharks, while the feeding of sharks from tourist boats could lead them to associate human beings — and hence swimmers, surfers and divers — with food.

Some scientists have complained that "chumming" tourist boats have disrupted shark behavior and inter-

fered with genuine research.

According to white shark expert Leonard Compagno, the truth probably lies somewhere between the pro and anti views.

The director of the Museum of South Africa's shark research unit in Cape Town, California-born Dr Compagno was, many years ago, technical adviser on the film *Jaws*. The Richard Dreyfuss character was, he says modestly, loosely based on himself.

"If the shark tourism didn't exist it would make our lives as scientists easier. If it does exist it can have benefits as well as problems. It can make people appreciate the value of sharks and white sharks in particular," he said.



Mike Ladley's smooch.

Picture: CRAIG FERREIRA

GPS

John Lawler

For someone with the unfortunate inability to understand even the basics simplicities of modern day technologies, (my grandson tunes the VCR for me), it is probably brave to undertake submitting an article on one of the modern day wonders, the Global Positioning System.

However, as I am currently in the process of being advised as to the way to go in the selection and purchase of a GPS for my boat and, in the future some hiking, I am a little further advanced than I was when I had to send my first E-mail!

I have been reading up on this subject and with the technical terms and data borrowed (*read plagiarized*) from one Michael Specter, a Washington reporter, this is what it's all about.

Colorado Springs has apparently replaced the North pole as the most "meaningful place on earth" for the directionally impaired! Why? The control of the global positioning system, the largest constellation of Military satellites that has ever orbited the earth is housed there at the Schriever Air Force Base.

Some twenty-four satellites (and four spares!) circle the planet twice a day. These units move in six orbital planes, creating a gigantic birdcage effect around the earth, assuming that we have usually eight satellites in the range. This is the simplistic view of the GPS system, but in fact it is much more complicated than this.

We scuba divers who have been around the local scene for the past twenty years or so will remember watching the talented ones in our dive club finding a wreck site using land marks and then criss/crossing the area watching the bottom come across the screen printed on a paper scroll.

Today we plug in given coordinates into the GPS and the rest is simply to follow the given direction to the site. Until May 2000, it was still necessary to do a fair amount of searching from the depth sounder as the accuracy of the GPS was distorted somewhat by the US Military. In May last year the Clinton Government removed the signal corruption. This now allows for accuracy that was around 100 metres to be reduced to 20 metres or better. Many of the boats in the VSAG dive club are equipped with a GPS and the time saved in finding dive sites has been dramatically reduced.

Advances in the GPS system is ongoing and now we are soon to see the Palm V have an interface with GPS capabilities. It gets better! Some GPS models now have area maps inserted via a card so that the position at any point in time can be seen on the map. These units I am told are in place in late model cars such as the BMW.

More fascinating in this world of the GPS is what is in the future. Specter says that within a few short years, every mobile phone, quartz watch, and laptop computer will come with a GPS receiver

embedded in the unit. By December 2002, US federal law will require mobile phone networks to be able to locate the position of every person making an emergency call! Any person calling 911 anywhere in America can be found!

The application of the GPS technology seems not to have any boundaries. As the prices for GPS circuits are falling faster than for computer chips, some GPS systems as cheap as \$100 will tell you where you are almost anywhere on Earth! Land surveyors now do not use the old plumb and pole, giving in to the GPS technology. In time, when you want to collect your luggage from the receiving bay, it will have a chip in it and you will find it with your GPS!

So we can thank President Regan for spending 5 billion and making the system available to everyone in the world without charge for the service.

By the time this article goes to print, I am hopeful that at least two boat owners in our dive club, and possibly three, will have the latest GPS with integrated map systems in their boats and my boat will be one.

All said, it is my guess that when it comes to the GPS, whilst we are seeing the many wonders it is offering right now, we probably "ain't seen nothin' yet".



Comedy Quickie

Only in America - taken from a Florida Newspaper*

It was the mailman's last day on the job after 35 years of carrying the Mail through all kinds of weather to the same neighborhood. When he arrived at the first house on his route he was greeted by the whole family there, who congratulated him and sent him on his way with a big gift.

At the second house they presented him with a box of fine cigars.

The folks at the third house handed him a selection of terrific fishing lures.

At the fourth house he was met at the door by a strikingly beautiful woman in a revealing negligee. She took him by the hand, gently led him through the door (which she closed behind him), and led him up the stairs to the bedroom where she blew his mind with the most passionate love he had ever experienced.

When he'd had enough they went downstairs, where she fixed him a giant breakfast: eggs, potatoes, ham, sausage, blueberry waffles and fresh squeezed orange juice. When he was truly satisfied she poured him a cup of steaming hot coffee.

As she was pouring, he noticed a dollar bill sticking out from under the cup's bottom edge.

"All this was just too wonderful for words", he said, "but what's the dollar for?"

"Well", she said, "last night, I told my husband that today would be your last day and that we should do something special for you. I asked him what to give you".

He said, "screw him, give him a dollar".

"Breakfast was my idea".

* Similar newspaper to "The Truth" of yesteryear I think!!!

VANUATU – LUXURIOUS SAILING

May 2000

Peter Vleugel

Sub Title: Better late than never !!!!

I had arranged for another dive on "The Coolidge" after the rest of the club members left Santo in the morning. It was the stern – a deep one. My dive buddy was (I don't remember) and we dropped in at the shark cage leaving the nitrox there for deco. Both of us dropped over the edge and into the pool, then into cargo hold No 3 for a bit of a sniff around. Then the deep one – hold No 4. Fantastic hardware here, trucks, bombs and a prop blade embedded into the keel of the ship – it was unreal! Then out of the hold and to the stern and the sand. What a site, looking up at that majestic shape, the way they were built in those days, was unbelievable. It was 70.5m deep at the sand (the tide must have been out), as the last time I dived the exact same spot, it was 72m!

We moved up the keel of the ship and back to the cage to pick up the deco bottle (old man's gas) and then to the coral garden to waste another 30 minutes. You wonder why you are so fit - every day 2 swims up and down the ship must do the trick. It's great. Once again we experienced the most awesome diving with Kev and his crew. Thanks again to them all.

After the dive, there were a few hours left for packing, lunch and then aboard the Octopussy Charter boat, back to Port Vila. This was supposed to be the most luxurious 48ft trimaran at Vila that we chartered. WOW this will be great!!

So we were off to sail the archipelago and experience some island thrills.

Firstly the intro to the crew – great blokes: Eric the cook, Sirius the captain, Tommy the dive master, Soni the deck hand, Michael the engineer, and one guest (didn't get his name). Most of the crew didn't speak any English but a little bit of pigeon, except for Eric. These blokes were on their first trip! Captain Sirius usually crewed on coastal trading ships, never on something so small. Eric had never cooked before. Tommy's first day started on the night they left Vila to pick us up at Santo, new recruit. Michael the engineer, well you couldn't see him in the dark until he smiled! We communicated with sign language and through Eric. By the way, all of the crew spoke different dialects of their language, so they had trouble understanding each other as well. Sirius the captain was missing a few teeth in the front of his mouth so when he smiled, you couldn't help but hone into his gob straight away. They would all shout at each other in their own fascinating way. You wouldn't be game to look sideways at these dudes in a dark street but as it worked out, they were all really nice, harmless blokes when the ice melted.

However, I will say Chrissy said "shit.. what is the only woman on the boat feeling like. vulnerable.!" Well not really, once we set sail out of Santo, on the most exciting adventure that we had

ever undertaken, all she felt was seasick. After dinner the big chuck – it was dark and we were in the middle of a big ocean with a bunch of black gorillas. She felt like shit but she managed to get into the stemtills and we were able to get a reasonable night's sleep in the luxurious cockroach infested boat.

By the next morning, the yacht had managed to motor 85NM to Lamien Bay on Epi Island just south of Ambrym Island. After talking to the crew with my hands, I worked out that these dudes had never sailed before, that's why the motor ran all night. They didn't have a clue on how a yacht worked and how to set the sails except to make them flap, but the motor saved their bacon. The next thing to do was dive. This without a doubt would have to be the place that would rate as the most perfect coral bay that you would wish to see. Untouched by disease or cyclone, it was perfect, not a crumb out of place – vis 60-100m depth max 40m. I saw 50 turtles, huge leopard rays, lots of large fish, fantastic. After the dive, Chris and I snorkeled to see if we could find the dugong in the harbor but disappointed, we didn't see it but that's the way the cards fall sometimes. We went for a walk in the village, met some locals and had a look around that afternoon. Next, we set sail for Cooks Reef.

This is where I showed these baboons how to sail this heap of shit. I managed to extract 16 knots out of the ship. It was unbelievable how this crate would not point at the wind without losing speed. They didn't even know how to use the GPS. It was set for the middle

east – Cairo I think! So I fixed that up also. The other problem was the radio, it just didn't work except for the CD player – we heard Bob Marley over and over again. If we ever hear Bob again, we will scream.

That night (you guessed it...) the motor broke down. I sailed the tub into the harbor and we dropped anchor. As it worked out, the problem with the motor was that the first bearing on the propeller shaft had seized and there were no other bearings on board. Well you have to give it to Michael, he went on shore to a small village and cast a bearing out of lead, spent the morning filing it out to make it fit. And bugger me, it worked, but we had to conserve it, so I had to sail and trim the boat, tell them what direction to point the bloody thing in and get us down to the next group of islands closer to Vila. We sailed to Nguna Island 30 NM away. At this island, the boat dropped anchor and the crew went on shore to check with the Chief for permission to dive. While they were ashore, I went diving on my own, not deep, 20m max., but there were the most amazing lava flows. When the lava flowed, it dropped legs into the water creating caverns that you could swim through, absolutely fascinating. It was black, just on dusk, not many fish or marine life but quite an experience. The crew came back and said that the chief didn't agree to the diving, so bad luck, I had finished any way.

The next day Eretoka Island (Heart Island) 17 NM further on. The dive was good, lots of good coral, fish and marine life. The last cyclone through the area was in 1988. I did a night dive

but had trouble convincing by dive master Tommy, that it was OK to dive at night. He was scared so I insisted that they just drop me out there and it would be OK. He finally agreed to come along and what a dive! Through caves, sleepy fish, coral the colors that you couldn't imagine were possible. The big 12V light was amazing. They came up on fire, I don't think Tommy thought it could be so good. There was a larger island opposite, which had a picture-perfect beach. We decided to go ashore and not a foot print in the sand anywhere. The water was quite shallow, warm and there were huge round boulders and lush tropical growth. While we were there, Eric asked what we would like for dinner. We suggested fish with coconut. Eric took to the palms and got coconuts and Sirius went spear fishing and got fish. We ate like kings and it was bloody good. (Eric can cook!)

The last day it was raining, and while looking over to the picture-perfect beach, we saw some waterfalls flowing over the top of the hillside. Tommy and I went for a dive at Heart Island and pulled a 2.5K Painted cray. The dumb bastard that I dived with was too scared to hold the other one and it got away. So we had fresh cray for lunch while we motored back to Vila.

We pulled up at the wharf and Chris was like the Pope, she kissed the pavement of the wharf, then into the taxi and to the hotel Le Meridien where we had reserved a thatched hut apartment, over the water. It was five star and we both think we'd earned it. Civilization, wonderful!

Thanks to Sirius, Eric, Tommy, Sony, and Michael for the bearing. We had a great time with Oceanic Expeditions Port Vila. (We will fly back next time!!!!)



Comedy Quickie

Having a bad day? Just remember, it could be worse!

The average cost of rehabilitating a seal after the Exxon Valdez oil spill in Alaska was \$80,000. At a special ceremony, two of the most expensively saved animals were released back into the wild amid cheers and applause from onlookers. A minute later, in full view, a killer whale ate them both.

A woman came home to find her husband in the kitchen, shaking frantically with what looked like a wire running from his waist towards the electric kettle. Intending to jolt him away from the deadly current she whacked him with a handy plank of wood by the back door, breaking his arm in two places. Until that moment he had been happily listening to his Walkman.

Two animal rights protesters were protesting at the cruelty of sending pigs to a slaughterhouse in Bonn Germany. Suddenly the pigs, all two thousand of them, escaped through a broken fence and stampeded, trampling the two hapless protesters to death.

And finally.....

Iraqi terrorist, Khay Rahnajet, didn't pay enough postage on a letter bomb. It came back with "return to sender" stamped on it. Forgetting it was the bomb, he opened it and was blown to bits.

Your day's not so bad, is it?



Easter 2001 - Osprey Reef Trip

Alan Beckhurst



Mary didn't have much trouble getting six names to get the special deal to dive Osprey reef in the Coral Sea aboard Undersea Explorer. We were joined by Frances (from V.S.A.G.), Carol, Peter, & Paul (from S.W.A.M.P.). We flew to Cairns, spent a few hours sightseeing, then a bus to Port Douglas. After meeting the 6 crew and 14 other divers, we settled in our cabins for the overnight trip to No. 10 Ribbon Reef.

We dived Pixie – Wall, Pinnacle, and Gardens. A nice introduction to tropical diving, and the profusion of life on one side of Pixie Pinnacle was the best of this area. It was a little disappointing to see so much dead coral, which was blamed on Crown of Thorns starfish, but there was plenty of live coral as well. A night dive at Pixie Gardens was a little early to have all the fish asleep, but some had tucked themselves into the branches of coral and put on their night colour "jamas". The hot action was at the stern of our boat, as the bait fish attracted by the bright deck light were being ripped up by marauding Trevally.

The wind rarely dropped below 30 knots all week, but, at 26 metres long, and 130 tonnes, Undersea Explorer ploughed through the swell, and found relatively calm moorings in the lee of the reefs. The crew were great, dive briefs described the sites, and we were left to make our own dive plans. After each dive, hot meals were served, and we dived 4 times a day! The food was both excellent and plentiful, though we missed on a fish dinner due to the chef being unsuccessful at fishing. All 20

divers could be seated in the dining room, and also in the lecture room. The top deck was much more spacious, and the ideal place for a BBQ dinner on one evening.

Osprey Reef is outside the Barrier Reef, 185 klm from land, in the Coral Sea. To me it was almost legendary for its sharks and giant soft corals, and I had wanted to dive here for decades. I rushed to gear up for our first dive at North Horn: shark headquarters. Despite the vis being down to 15 – 20 metres, I wanted to get in before the other divers scared the sharks off. As the bubbles cleared, I looked down and counted. 4, 6, then 10, no 12 sharks which cruised around, and a couple approached. The divers were not going to scare them away, this was their home! We swam with White Tip reef sharks totally unafraid of us, and Grey Reef sharks cruising at a comfortable distance. I saw a Hammerhead down deep, but no Silver Tip or Tiger sharks, which also frequent this area.

The highlight was the two "shark attract" dives, where fish scraps are brought to a coral head inside a couple of milk crates. This brings the sharks in but stops the frenzy associated with feeds. We were able to get close, no, into the action, as White Tips swam between divers legs, and pushed past cameras and patting hands. The Grey Reef sharks cruised within a couple of metres of the coral head, allowing us great photo opportunities. A Potato Cod attended


each of the "attract" dives, a smaller one on the second dive pushed the White tips, and divers out of the way to get to the milk crates. We have lots of close up footage / slides. When the computer said "Go Up!", we hung around the coral gardens in the shallows 'til the air ran out.

Current constantly runs up both sides of Osprey Reef, mixing at North Horn, and is the reason for the shark concentration there. It also makes for some great drift diving along the walls. The walls plunge over 1000 metres in a series of steps and undercuts, alive with huge soft corals and large fans. In ambient light, it is all monochrome, but with strong lights, the rich magentas, fire reds, and stunning yellows break the monotonous blue. Fish are found in small groups here and there, with the odd shark, or Dog Tooth Tuna patrolling the dropoff.

Having an abyss handy means we are able to trap some 27 Nautilus from around 450 metres, and join in some research activities. A weird gill less eel was also brought up in the trap, and frozen for later research. The Nautilus were measured, aged, sexed, weighed, and engraved, before they were given to the photographers to blast with strobes. Having done their bit for science, they were released during a

night dive. To raise money for the nautilus research, we played Nautilus Lotto the night the traps were set. We had to guess the number of nautilus brought up in the morning, and one of the crew hedged his bet with a "supplementary crab"!

On the return leg to Port Douglas, we dived sites along the Barrier Reef, the best being the last dive at Nursery Bommie, Agincourt Reef. Again there was a lot of dead coral, but the profusion of fish here made up for it. The vis was far less than Osprey, but then this was only the Great Barrier Reef!

On the last evening aboard, they held a "Quiz Night" where everybody got into dresses, trivia questions about the trip were asked of teams, and adjudicated through a set of dubious, and ever changing rules. Of course there were protests, which drew a penalty of 5 points, and who listens to a man in a dress anyway? We said farewell, and well done to a great crew, and spent an evening in a 5 star resort in Cairns before flying home the next day. It was a great trip. Thanks to Mary, who has a talent for organising such trips, it all ran smoothly, and was extremely good value. I was home for thirty hours in relentless Melbourne rain before my throat got sore, and Mary started researching for the next trip. 

Whiz Kidz

Teacher "Where were you born?"
 Student "Singapore, Sir."
 Teacher "Which part?"
 Student "All of me, Sir."

Teacher "Peter, you missed school last Friday."
 Peter "You're wrong, Sir."
 Teacher "Wrong, how is that?"
 Peter "I was absent, yes but I certainly didn't miss it!"

Where our minds wander

Joie

They were alone in the house. It was a cold, dark and stormy night. The storm had come up quickly and each time the thunder boomed he watched her jump.

She looked across the room and admired his strong appearance and wished that he would hold her, comfort and caress her, protect her from the storm, she wanted that ... then the power went out.

She screamed.

He raced to the sofa where she was cowering. He did not hesitate to pull her to him. He knew this was a forbidden union and expected her to pull back. He was pleasantly surprised when she didn't resist but instead clung to him. The storm raged on ... as did their growing passion and there came a moment when each knew that they had to be together. They knew it was wrong, their families would not understand, but ... so consumed in their passion were they, they didn't hear the door or the click of the light switch ... the power was back on.....

please turn over (the page)

21ST CENTURY TERMINOLOGY

Blamestorming

Sitting around in a group discussing why a deadline was missed or a project failed and who is responsible.

Seagull Manager

A manager who flies in, makes a lot of noise, craps over everything, then leaves.

Salmon Day

Spending an entire day swimming upstream, only to get screwed and die in the end.

Ohno-Second

That miniscule fraction of time in which you realise you've just made a BIG mistake.

Percussive Maintenance

The fine art of whacking the crap out of an electronic device to get it to work again.

Umfriend

A sexual relation of dubious standing or a concealed intimate relationship, as in 'This is Bridget, myum friend'.

Mouse Potato

The on-line equivalent to the couch potato.

Starter Marriage

A short-lived first marriage that ends in divorce with no kids, no property and no regrets.

Assmosis

The process by which some people absorb success and advancement by kissing up to the boss.

Yuppie Food Stamps

The ubiquitous \$20 bills spewed out of ATMs everywhere. Often used when trying to split the bill after a meal. 'We owe \$8 each but everybody's got yuppie food stamps'.

Cube Farm

An office filled with cubicles.

Prairie Dogging

Someone yells or drops something loudly in a cube farm, and people's heads pop up over the walls to see what's going on.