



## TRUK ODYSSEY

By Tim Howe

I am going to bore you with another story about Truk Lagoon. The Hurter's were diving there in June and Pierre described that trip in last and this month's newsletter.

I arrived in Truk about 10 p.m. on July 19<sup>th</sup> after about 30 hours of flying. SFO to LAX to Hawaii, Hawaii to Guam, Guam to Truk. Actually, *Truk* is Chuuk, one of the Federated States of Micronesia or in short F.S.M. The other three states are Kosare, Pohnpei & Yap. The flag being a blue field with 4 white stars.

I heard about this trip from a flyer at Steele's a couple of years ago. Actually, the flyer was for a 2 week dive trip on the Peter Hughes' Sky Dancer to the Galapagos for 2010. The contact was Dennis Hocker in Newark.

Eventually I sent him a deposit for a spot on the trip. A year ago he cancelled the trip as he could not get enough people to sign up. The price for the Sky Dancer was approx. \$4500 a week, so \$9000 for 2 week excluding the airfare etc., etc., so I just transferred what money I had sent so far to the 7/19/09 – 8/3/09 Truk Lagoon adventure. The cost of that trip came to about \$7500 and it broke down as follows. \$2400 per week for the boat plus \$400 for a tip, airfare round trip \$1800 and \$500 incidentals (souvenirs, airport food, pay the kid to feed the cats etc.).

The boat I stayed on was the Odyssey which like the Thorfinn normally runs 1 week long charters in the lagoon. This was Dennis Hocker's fifth trip to Chuuk, always on the Odyssey.

The crew met our group at the airport with a bus and a truck for the bags. We travelled slowly down Moen's (the main island) only road toward the Blue Lagoon Hotel and the boat, which was moored near the hotel. In passing we said hello and goodbye to the people who were leaving. A group of 'tech divers' who dove deeper wrecks.

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## SENTIENT BEINGS

By Ken Gwin

The recent article in the New York Times, at [www.nytimes.com/2009/07/12/magazine/12whales-t.html?\\_r=1&pagewanted=all](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/07/12/magazine/12whales-t.html?_r=1&pagewanted=all), describes, in sensitive terms, unusual relationships being realized between man and other creatures, particularly the whales that share this world we know as our reality.

Please take the time to read this thoughtful observation. It should be worth a measure of your precious time.

This might also be an opportunity to look at many of the long held issues that mix politics, religion, and human behavior in the soup of modern life.

You might consider that somewhere back in time, the world we live in became separated from the world that really is. In many ways, our civilization has passed over and missed the lessons of the world as such, and confused it with the world they have chosen to believe in in its place.

Here, instead, we may affirm an understanding that many of us as divers have come to realize--that no life form lives outside the food chain. We are all part of a greater biological whole. We are neither separate nor above the creatures we live among or the wondrous world in which we live.

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## GENERAL MEETING

AUGUST 19<sup>TH</sup>, 2009

AT SINDBADS



Pier 2, Embarcadero Street, San Francisco

MEET at 7:00p.m. for socializing, DRINKS & FOOD and 7:30p.m. for CLUB BUSINESS



*Der Stammtisch*

By Pierre Hurter

**MORE OF WHAT I DID ON MY SUMMER VACATION ...**

Before extolling the virtues of Palau, it's worth noting that we managed to get in some local diving in July, our first foray back into the brisk pea green waters of Monterey. A hardy band of Reef Divers including Ken, Jim, Norm, Jason, Holden as well as Royston headed south aboard the Cypress Sea with Phil at the helm and Mike as our trusty crew, rescue diver and master of the soup pot. The diving was phenomenal. We dropped anchor at Pescadero, Pinnacle, Butterfly House and Fire Rock. After the initial gasp as I hit the 48 degree water, all went well. We were diving singles for a change, being too lazy to reconfigure our regulators after our trip to Palau. It takes a little getting used to the idea that you have to pay attention to your air supply after having been diving mostly with doubles, that and the whole cold water ritual, dry suit, burp the suit, brain freeze when you hit the water. I'm beginning to appreciate the charms of diving in bathtub temperature water with unlimited visibility.

The first two dives were good with visibility in the 20 to 30 foot range. The final dive was spectacular! I have seldom seen the water as clear as it was on our third dive. When I jumped in and started down, we had the usual green tinged pea soup, but near the anchor something magical happened. The water clarity opened up and became crystal clear for a distance of 5 to 10 feet ahead of us. It was as if there was nothing between us and the wall we were diving. Gerda tied off her reel and we set off to explore the crystal clear abyss. It was one of those near perfect dives where you have to tear yourself away at the end and slowly head back to the surface, where traffic, parking and the myriad joys of modern life await you. It's dives like this one that make me remember why I love diving in Monterey, and I'm not really a big fan of baths anyway.

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## Reefer's Rap 2009

<b>JANUARY</b>	<b>FEBRUARY</b>	<b>MARCH</b>
01 - New Year's Day 07 - Officers Meeting 10 - Cypress Sea - (3 Dives) - Sat - Pierre - 415.810.6851 <b>21 - Meeting - Sinbad's</b> 27 - CenCal Board Meeting	04 - Officers Meeting <b>18 - Meeting - Sinbad's</b> 19 - 22 - SF Ocean Film Festival	04 - Officers Meeting 14 - Cypress Sea - (3 Dives) - Sat - Pierre - 415.810.6851 <b>18- Meeting - Sinbad's</b> 25 - CenCal Board Meeting
<b>APRIL</b>	<b>MAY</b>	<b>JUNE</b>
01 - Abalone Opener - Fort Ross - CenCal 01 - Officers Meeting 11 - Cypress Sea - (3 Dives) - Sat - Pierre - 415.810.6851 <b>15 - Meeting - Sinbad's</b> 17 - 18 - San Jose Dive Show 29 - CenCal Board Meeting	06 - Officers Meeting 09 - Cypress Sea - (3 Dives) - Sat - Pierre - 415.810.6851 <b>20 - Meeting - Sinbad's</b> 27 - CenCal Board Meeting 30 - 31 - Scuba Show - Long Beach Convention Center	03 - Officers Meeting <b>17 - Cypress Sea CANCELED</b> TBD - Abalone Closer
<b>JULY</b>	<b>AUGUST</b>	<b>SEPTEMBER</b>
01 - Officers Meeting 11 - Cypress Sea - (3 Dives) - Sat. - Pierre - 415.810.6851 <b>15 - Meeting - Sinbad's</b>	TBD - Abalone Opener 05 - Officers Meeting 09-11 - Channel Islands - Jim Vallario - 415.566.0784 13 - Kayaking Santa Cruz Island <b>19 - Meeting - Sinbad's</b>	02 - Officers Meeting 19 - Cypress Sea - (3 Dives) - Sat - Pierre - 415.810.6851 <b>16 - Meeting - Sinbad's</b> 30 - CenCal Board Meeting
<b>OCTOBER</b>	<b>NOVEMBER</b>	<b>DECEMBER</b>
07 - Officers Meeting <b>21 - Meeting - Sinbad's -                      Officer Nominations !!!</b>	04 - Officers Meeting 14 - Cypress Sea - (3 Dives) - Sat. - Pierre - 415.810.6851 <b>18 - Meeting - Sinbad's -                      Officer Elections !!!</b> TBD - Abalone Closer	02 - Officers Meeting 02 - CenCal Board Meeting 12 - Cypress Sea - (3 Dives) - Sat - Pierre - 415.810.6851 <b>16 - Meeting - Sinbad's -                      Christmas Party ???</b>

### Truk Odyssey from page 1

I had inquired from Dennis who teaches tech diving what that would have entailed. The cost of that course is an additional \$450 plus another \$100 to \$150 for books. This included a week of 2 to 3 hour evening classes and a weekend of dives in Monterey. I could not see myself doing this and having taken a nitrox course 6 months ago I was good to go for the wrecks we dove, plenty deep for me.

There were 12 of us divers on the boat. Because of the number (the max the boat carries is 16) we each got our own cabin. My lodgings were air-conditioned, wood-paneled with 2 twin beds, a sink, shower and toilet, flat screen TV with a DVD player. We were fed 3 meals a day with a mid-morning and mid-afternoon snack. ALL drinks were free and available any time, that included coffee, tea, hot coco, sodas, beer, wine and hard liquor. There was a well stocked DVD library.

All the divers were nitrox certified and everyone used the boat's standard 27% O2 mix for almost every dive. If you preferred or were not certified you could always opt for a regular air fill. For that matter, when we dove the San Francisco Maru, a deeper wreck, they changed the O2% to 24 for everyone to reduce the possibility of oxygen toxicity and ensure every ones deco time would be similar.

And decompress we did. I had deco time on nearly every dive. Average depths were between 80 to 120 feet. There was a lot to see on the wrecks resulting in longer dives. I averaged about 3 45min. dives per day for 13 days. I think I had about 45 dives at the end of the two weeks.

Water temp was around 85°F. I brought a 2.5 mil shortie and a hood which was fine. A skin would have been a good idea as we had numerous dives with jellyfish, but a spray bottle with vinegar helped when you got stung.

A normal dive day started with a dive briefing by the Captain after breakfast. The boat was already moored on the wreck to be explored with the mooring balls 15 to 20 feet under water so that the boat would not foul its props on them. The crew would draw a picture of the wreck, it's name and point out all the things of interest on it. To back this up they also had a copy of the book by Dan Bailey describing every wreck in the Lagoon., It definitely helped to read the 3 to 4 pages to get a better sense of what you were diving on.

After the dive briefing people would go to the back of the deck. Your tank, BC, regulators and all other dive gear were in a locker assigned to you. You could dive by yourself, with buddies or ask on of the two dive guides (Chuukese men) to lead you. No one checked your dive times, depths and everyone used a computer. There was a horizontal bar at 10 feet under the twin ladders at the stern. This made it easy to hold on and to decompress before coming on board. In addition, the boat hung off a tank with two regulators from this bar.

You started your dive with a giant stride off the dive platform at the stern. Then you kicked forward to the bow to find the mooring line (normally attached to the wreck or something close to it). Often the crew would run a green rope from the boat's bow to the bow of the wreck. During the

briefing you were told which condition prevailed.

So what was it like? Vis was usually about 40 feet, 60 at times but not more, and so it was gloomy, this being a lagoon and not open ocean.

The ships are big, 300 to 500 feet, which means you can only see a portion of it at any given time. The ships would sit either upright or laying on their sides on the sandy bottom. Hard and soft coral cover everything, in particular the deck and superstructures. Occasionally you'd see the bomb blast or torpedo holes that sank them. There would be tropical fish everywhere and schools of Jacks hunting smaller fish. Occasionally, we'd see grey reef sharks during the day, often at night, cruising 30 feet below us while we were doing our deco time on the horizontal bar.

The ships were military transport vessels (actually freighters) commandeered by Japan during the war. All but two warships (assigned to guard the merchant marine vessels) got out of the lagoon before the main raid Feb 17 & 18 of 1944.

We did dives on a destroyer and a submarine but these were the exception. All other were freighters, carrying war supplies with a bow gun and a stern gun. At times we saw depth charge racks (with depth charges) on the stern.

Here is a list of things I saw on various ships: planes, plane parts, torpedoes, mines, artillery shells, naval shells bullets (both riffle & machine gun) periscopes, trucks, cars, tractors, tanks, etc., etc.,

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### Truk Odyssey from page 5

Also, part of the adventure of diving on these ships would be exploring the ship's bridge, radio room, kitchen, crew's quarters and engine room. In particular, the engine room dives seemed to me like what a cave dive must feel like - no obvious way out, the scene illuminated by lonely dive lights, careful attention to precise buoyancy and conservative fining, staying close to your buddy and conservative breathing.

I'd rate the engine room penetrations as some of the best diving of my life!

My favorite dives were 2 engine room dives on the Rio de Janeiro Maru (led by a dive guide) Another favorite was a led dive on the Fujikawa Maru (fascinating engine room), also loaded with old trucks and tractors and road paving equipment. Diving in and around these machines was incredible.

So what were the crew and passengers like? The crew consisted of a Captain and a 2<sup>nd</sup> Captain, Instructor / Videographer, 2 dive guides, cook, waitress, room cleaner, engineer. And then there were the 12 passengers. A couple from Wisconsin, a guy from Reno, 2 guys from Honolulu and the rest of us (2) from the Bay area . Dennis Hocker and the people from the Bay Area are members of the Aquatutus Dive Club. This was not a club dive but something Dennis has done on his own for some years. I guess he offers them to his friends first and then if needed to other people . Thus I became part of the group.

Dennis takes some getting used to. He's a fanatic diver and something of a loner – seemingly

a bit of a curmudgeon. It took me a while to warm up to him, but by the end of the trip I was socializing with him. The other divers were a mixed bag. Some I liked, others not so much. Most of them were competent divers.

He is planning a 2 week resort based trip to the Philippines in 2011 – I might sign up for it.



### Sentient Beings from page 1

Many divers know these things and find refuge in the deep ocean realm, either in the thrill of adventure, braced against the force of a restless storm tossed sea, or floating peacefully in the quiet calm, free of gravity, free of land, and free of the noise of "civilization" and man.

This article in the News York Times by Charles Siebert focused on our ocean and some of those complex beings, the many families of whales.

No diver I have met, retelling his chance encounter with a whale or dolphin, has described their experience in any way short of transformational, inspiring, full of some deep and absorbing significance--a moment to remember in a lifetime experiences.

Who are these creatures that look back at us with their deep and thoughtful eyes?

Modern divers have had a renaissance of discovery in their encounter with these beings. These are not just the maddened killers turned against us as in Moby Dick. They may actually be a part of us. We may be a part of them.

And, among the many things discussed in this article on whales, the idea of forgiveness strikes me as the most unexpected. Forgiveness is a trait generally reserved only for mankind. While anthropomorphism may be a questionable practice, looking at things from that perspective may offer some greater clue.

These are the whales we have hunted for generations with simple spears and arrows, turning in more modern times to the tools of war, with giant ships and powerful harpoons. These are the same dolphins trapped in our nets, slaughtered in our search for lunch and tuna salad. These are the whales and dolphins in whose oceans we have dumped our waste. These are the beings whose hunting grounds we have carpet bombed with massive attacks of noise pollution and military sonar. Yet, somehow, through it all, they still live--though at times only by a thread.

The article subtly outlines a possible sea change in our relationship with these beautiful, intelligent, tribal and clan based creatures. That they take the time to look so thoughtfully back at us might help to add to our understanding of ourselves and realize our proper place in this world.

The sins of man against the whales are many. Their long lives and memories should not have

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forgotten the decades of their slaughter. No less a sin is the taint of pollution we have poured into their ocean.

But, their eyes still look back at us. What are they thinking? We still ask why?

If they are not trying to communicate forgiveness, are they, perhaps, looking at us with a silent note of encouragement, that they can be free to go off and do the business of being whales, while we wake up to the business of being fully human?



### Stammtisch - from page 2

On the way home we made a brief pit stop at Any Waters to drop off regulators, tanks, etc. for their annual or more often “whenever they stop working right” servicing. The regulators in particular had been getting a workout this year and it seemed a good time to have them looked at. I’m not a fanatic, but it pays to service you gear, at least once a decade or sometimes more often, it is after all, as Ken often points out, life support equipment. It’s just painful when you bring in as many as we did (six) at one time. Aside from the regulators the tanks we wanted to take to the Channel Islands were out of visual inspection, the next thing you know we had what seems like most of our gear in a pile on the shop floor.

While we’re on the topic of gear, I can’t resist this gem. I came home to find the “Northern Tool and Equipment” catalog in my mail box. No idea how I ended up on their mailing list, but they have it all, power washers, alternative energy windmills, logging equipment, you name it, they’ve got it. There on page 21, tucked in between the 10 ton hydraulic log splitter and the 50,000 BTU portable kerosene heaters ... the 2-stroke 23 cc gas-powered party blender. I kid you not, this baby’s got handle bar mounted throttle controls, 21 inch telescoping legs and a one quart stainless steel pitcher to deliver your favorite blended beverages anywhere, anytime ... except for California. Turns out it is “not available for sale in California.” What is this state coming to? First the prohibition on silencer equipped belt fed automatic weapons (am I the only one with a gopher problem?) then the budget and now this. And people wonder why I’m still a registered Republican.



Last month’s Stammtisch ended with ... “Next month it’s on to Palau, home of the endless buffet and umbrella drinks at the poolside lounge. Oh, and hot, really hot showers; there is heaven on earth, so stay tuned.” Palau, it’s out there in the middle of the ocean, not far from Truk and aside from the umbrella drinks and the hot showers, it is in a different league in many ways.

I’m not too sure what sort of deal the various Trust Territories cut with the US but Palau appears to have been much better at negotiating. Leaving the airport, you can’t help but notice that the road is paved, not a pothole in sight, and you’re sharing it with late model newish looking cars. Add to that that both sides of the road are lined with businesses with their lights on close to midnight and it adds up to a different economy all together.

Palau or Belau as the natives prefer to call it is a chain of about 343 islands located 528 miles southeast of the Philippines, eight of those islands are inhabited full time. The population is approximately 20,796 a combination of Malay, Melanesian, Filipino and Polynesian. Like many of the islands in this area, Palau bounced back and forth among the European powers, the Spanish controlled the islands for 300 years before selling them to Germany in 1899. During WWI they were occupied by the Japanese who stayed until the end of WWII when they became Trust Islands administered by the United States. Palau became a sovereign state in 1994, but in a happy circumstance for tourists, continues to use the almighty dollar for its currency.

We stayed at the Palau Pacific Resort, a fairly luxurious operation that sits on a 64 acres parcel of land that started life out in 1934 as a seaplane base. The dive shop on the pier is on top of what was once a taxiway and the ramp the Kawanishi flying boats (Emily) used is next to the pier we took off from every morning.

Our days would start with a leisurely buffet breakfast at the

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Coconut Terrace, the resorts restaurant, where we had signed up for the buffet dining experience. As there are a large number of Japanese tourists the breakfast

buffet covered a lot of food group territory.

We typically started out with some congee or juuk, a porridge made from rice which we would doctor up with either pickled Japanese condiments or raisins and dried fruit depending on the mood and bodily needs. It's true what they say about stewed prunes. Of course they had the usual run of pancakes, bacon and eggs, baked goods, omelets and my favorite, natto and rice. Dinner revolved around a series of theme nights, Discover Italy, the French Way, Japanese Theme night and my favorite American BBQ night. Needless to say no one on our trip went hungry and I don't think there was any appreciable weight loss amongst our group.



After breakfast we would waddle to the pier a couple of hundred feet from our ocean view rooms to be picked up by our dive boats for the day's excursion. The resort had their own dive shop on the pier in case you forgot something or had an early morning need for some retail therapy. They also sold the small individual size "Sink the Stink"

packets, just the thing to soak your gear in the bathtub with. There's nothing like two weeks of warm water diving to bring out the best in bootie aroma. As an aside, I find that Dr. Bronner's Magic Soap in the peppermint

version works miracles on stinky booties. The resort itself even had a resident cat that would come by to give Gerda her feline purr fix in the morning and later in the afternoon.

Have you ever looked up any on-line reviews? It's a fascinating new way to entertain yourself. I'm not sure it's particularly useful, but intriguing all the same. How can so many people review the same place with such diverse results? The Pacific Palau Resort reviews were all over the map, ranging from "a slice of paradise on earth" to "Got screwed BIG TIME" or my favorite "no internet in the rooms". I can't speak to the last issue because I was on vacation and not too bothered with what was going on in the larger world. The really important information finds its way across the seas soon enough. We all knew about Michael Jackson passing soon enough for my needs and as for the rest, I expect they'll pick up the radiation no matter where you are.

To digress, just slightly, once in awhile you get news that sticks with you, the sort you can't shake out of your mind. I still remember that afternoon, I had a dentist appointment and as a treat my mother took me to Sages, our local grocery store which had a café with the best strawberry pie in town. Half way through my

slice of pie ala Mode, the waitress came to our table in tears, the Muzak stopped and over the sound system you could hear ... "From Dallas, Texas, the flash, apparently official ... President Kennedy died at 1 p.m. Central Standard Time. 2 o'clock Eastern Standard Time, some 38 minutes ago." The same sonorous voice brought us the news of the moon landing and when after visiting Vietnam remarked ... "We have been too often disappointed by the optimism of the American leaders, both in Vietnam and Washington, to have faith any longer in the silver linings they find in the darkest clouds. But it is increasingly clear to this reporter that the only rational way out then will be to negotiate, not as victors, but as an honorable people who lived up to their pledge to defend democracy, and did the best they could." President Lyndon Johnson is reported to have said, "If I've lost Cronkite, I've lost Middle America."

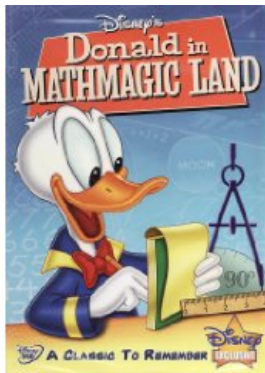
It's probably hard for a generation raised on YouTube, Twitter, Facebook and whatever else out there fuels our compulsion to know and share everything we think is news 24 hours a day, every day. In a world before the Internet, before the 24 hour news cycle, when there were only three networks, Walter Cronkite, once described as the most trusted man in America, was the news. Now there are those who will point out that Henry Kissinger was not far behind in that poll, but their spoilsports.

Some of you will remember watching 16mm educational movies in your distant formative years, along with the ones covering personal hygiene and

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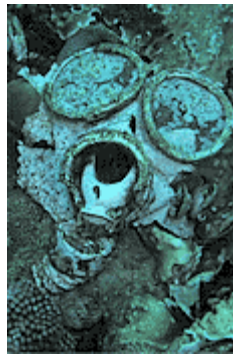
“Reefer Madness”, who can forget “You are There”? Next to Donald Duck in “Mathimagic Land”, the most interesting movies available in my high school; I can still picture Cronkite sitting at his desk, a sheaf of papers in hand intoning “All things are as they were then, except ... You are There.”



Back in Palau, after breakfast, standing on the boat dock for the morning's pickup by Sam's Tours. I loved the way their boats are setup. Along both sides there are racks with deep storage bins underneath. They are lined up so that there are three tanks, a space and then three more. Gives even the most “expansive” divers enough room to spread their gear without slopping over into the next diver's area. There is a dry box up front by the helmsman and a canopy overhead to ward off the sun or rainfall as required. They also provide nitrox at no additional cost, that's an idea that I think many operators could benefit from. There were thirteen of us split into two groups. About half of the Truk group left after a week and headed to Palau, the rest with the exception of Eskel, who headed for Denmark, showed up later in the week. A week of diving wrecks and failing generators was enough for us, we had decided to split our holiday

equally between the two dive locals.

Our first dive was a wreck, I know you would think we had had enough of wrecks, but this was a great checkout dive. Palau is less known for its wrecks than Truk, but there are plenty of them here too. Helmet Wreck, named after the pile of helmets fused into a lump in her cargo hold was no more than five minutes from Sam's Tours base of operations. It was only discovered in 1992 and is a great dive ranging from a depth of 100 feet at the bow and 45 towards the stern. There are some radial engines destined for Zero's in the forward hold along with piles of Saki and beer bottles.



The boats here were equipped with twin four stroke Yamaha or Suzuki 150 horsepower motors to get you to and from the dive sites lickity split. We would do two dives in the morning and have lunch on one of the many small islands set up just for our pleasure. Lunch was either a sandwich or a bento box which we ordered the day before. When we stepped off the airplane in Palau, folks from Sam's Tours were there to take our lunch orders for the next day, these folks have their priorities in order. Aside from the lunches, I couldn't help but notice that each boat also had an 80 cubic foot bottle of Oxygen, just in case.

After lunch we would do a third dive and then head back to either Sam's Tours which had a great little watering hole, the Bottom Time Bar and Grill, adjacent to their facility or directly to the resort for showers, umbrella drinks and the usual things that people on a grueling schedule do to decompress after a tough day at the office.



One thing we got plenty of on this trip was liquid sunshine. In between gorgeous sundrenched days we would have rainfall the likes of which I have seldom experienced. You could have stood out in the rain and lathered up as if you were in the shower. I suppose that's why umbrella drinks were first invented.

We did several dives near the island of Peleliu, the site of some of the fiercest fighting of the war. One of the early landings by US, Operation Stalemate II it was estimated to last four days, it took two months. The troops who were met by well entrenched Japanese troops. The US suffered 1,794 dead and 8,010 wounded. The Japanese garrison of approximately 11,000 suffered 10,695 killed, 202 captured. When you wander around these islands you can't help but notice that the remnants of war are everywhere, from small arms ammunition to piles of “knee mortars” “rounds, their fuses looking to be in remarkably intact shape. The island is full of shrines, both US and Japanese,

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commemorating fallen comrades.

If you ever find yourself in the neighborhood don't miss out on the most interesting free dive I've done to date, Jellyfish Lake, *Ongeim'l Tketau* to the locals. There are actually over 70 similar lakes, but this is the one you can visit and snorkel in. I didn't count, but the estimates are that between 10 and 20 million jellyfish inhabit the lake. The thing that makes these jellyfish, *Mastigias* and *Aurelia aurita*, interesting is that they have very small nematocysts, which means they have essentially no sting. Scuba diving is not allowed, but the feeling of diving to the bottom and then slowly coming up through a virtually solid cloud of jellies is hard to describe. It's a great way to spend the afternoon, especially when you have a cold beer waiting for you when you get back.



On a slightly less cheery note, a bill is now moving through the legislative process in Palau that will significantly weaken its previously strong shark fishing laws. Previous legislation in 2004 had made shark fishing by foreign fisheries illegal with strong prohibitions against shark finning. To those who would argue that this is an issue of cultural sensitivity, I would agree. It's a value judgment on my part. Shark finning, is the result of people who apparently never had the parable of the Goose that laid the golden eggs read to them as

children, or they never got the point of the story. And that's the way it is ...goose liver Pate anyone?

## DIVING IN CARMEL / MONTEREY IS LIKE INDULGING IN A FAMILY PACK OF REESE'S PEANUT BUTTER CUPS.

By Gerda Hurter

Ever since I had my first taste of these scrumptious, lip smacking morsels I found that it is never enough to just leave it at one. I am not sure if it is the smell, the texture, the chocolate, the peanut butter, the sweetness or the saltiness. Or if it is the combination of these two extremes that promises all but leaves you with wanting more once the first piece is devoured?

I ask myself the same thing when it comes to diving here at home. Is it the smell of the sea which seems spicier than anywhere else in the world, the cold that numbs your fingers while creeping up your spine and makes your forehead hurt? Is it the abundance of life and array of color encountered down there? Or is it, the combination that promises all and leaves you with wanting more ...?

Just being back from our dive adventure in Micronesia and wallowing in 86 degree water, Pierre and I once again boarded the club's monthly Cypress Sea charter. The skies were grey and heavy with fog, the sea a bouncy affair until we were around the point.

The boat hummed with anticipation as people put their gear together, exchanged stories

and readied themselves for the first plunge of the day.

I love my BARE underwear, it was so warm and comfy, extending the cozy feeling of wallowing in 86 degree water ... until I plunged into the reality of Carmel. Man, oh man, someone had forgotten to turn off the air conditioning down there!

We descended through green illumination, brushing against kelp blades and passing by the watchful eyes of blue rockfish. Looking down the green suddenly seemed to shiver, slowly starting to show faint shadows taking form and shape, building a pinnacle exploding with color when hit by the beams of our lights.

The rocky surface was covered in red strawberry anemones, yellow brown kelp, purple & white hydrocoral, white and brown shelled cowries, crusty, overgrown scallops and decorator crabs, bryozoans, red sea cucumbers, orange-peel and white dorids and, and, and ...one nudibranch in particular caught my eye, a little white *Flabellina* or *Flabellina babai*, white in color with tips glowing bright orange in the light.

Maybe because in Truck /Palau everything was so tiny, I kept on seeing all those things that I had not before, well besides the humongous hunting sunflower starfish which made the brittles scurry like chickens.

But on every dive I saw schools of tiny, 1 to 2 inches, rockfish (at least that what the looked like to me) hiding in rock crevasses, lots of Kelp and Painted Greenlings, including one Juvenile, perched on a small rock ledge.

Continued on page 10

### Reese's peanut butter cups from page 9

The best though was the Gunnel, not sure which kind, it was 7 inches long with a white bar from the top of its head to the corner of its mouth with reddish almost scarlet sides and dark bands on its dorsal fin. It swam with jerky motion and totally enticed me, almost having me clock into deco.

So much to see and to behold. Visibility was around 20, 30 feet with the last dive having the best. Pierre still marvels how crystal clear the water was in the immediate surroundings of Fire Rock.

It was as if all of the usual suspects had lined up for us to welcome us home, plus some new additions, least I forget to mention the Basking Shark.

While placing my first stage back onto the valve between refills, I gazed out over the water and held me breath. "What the heck, this is a dorsal fin of a shark..." went through my head, " a big one", the dorsal more rounded then pointy though. I looked around to catch the attention of others, heard some hoopla in the wheelhouse and made a bee line for it. "Did you guys see that?" I inquired with Mark our safety diver replying, "Yup, that's a Basking Shark, gets as big as a great white. Not too many around here anymore."

Now how cool is that?!

Needless to say I stared more into the "green" Blue on the next dive. But all I saw were Rockfish and jellyfish, nettles primarily but one, one beautiful egg yoke jelly gently undulating by.

What a beautiful home coming it turned out to be, ... well, one exception, did I mention that it was cold? Yikes, my computer read 50 degrees for all three dives, but I just could not, not jump off the boat and explore all three sites, Pescadero Pinnacles, Butterfly House and Fire Rock.

As I said, diving in Carmel / Monterey is like indulging in a family pack of Reese's peanut butter cups ... it leaves you with wanting more. ...

### FLOTSAM & JETSAM

#### Swiss Police Divers kill monster fish



No really, I don't make up these headlines. Police divers in Switzerland ended the reign of terror of a huge fish that was attacking swimmers in a Swiss lake.

The fish, a Zander, *Sande lucioperca*, weighing 17 pounds and over two feet long had attacked several bathers in Lac Majeuer (Lake Maggiore) near the Italian border. After sending two swimmers to the emergency room for stitches, police divers literally jumped into the fray, spearing the fish which they apparently later ate.

#### The Cove - Or Who Killed Flipper? Coming to a Theater near you

The Cove is a movie presented by the Oceanic Preservation Society, an unabashed advocacy film that follows former Flipper trainer Richard O'Barry in his

efforts to end the annual dolphin slaughter in Taiji, Japan. Hundreds of dolphins are corralled and herded into the cove where the prime specimens are collected and sold to trainers.

The rest, well the whale meat you get in Tokyo, may not be from a whale. Whatever you think of whaling, dolphins or the whole "it's cultural" argument, it's an unusual movie that gets described as an eco-thriller halfway between Flipper and the Bourne identity as the Huffington Report recently did. The movie opens at the Embarcadero Center Cinema starting August 7.



#### Marine Biology Class

For those of you who have a hankering to know the scientific names for the critters you've been seeing, here's your chance.

Marine Biology, Bio 32, a class offered at City College of San Francisco August 18 thru December 15. The instructor is James Grass, Ph.D. For more information, go to ... [www.ccsf.edu](http://www.ccsf.edu) or call (415) 452-0600.

There are also 4 weekend dive trips scheduled, September 26 - 27, Monterey; October 24-25, Gerstle Cove; November 21-22, Mendocino and December 4, Point Lobos as an optional activity.

This is a great class; it's where I first meet Loretta and heard about the Reef Divers. Good way to learn a bit more about the 70% of the life on earth that lives underwater.



*We encourage you to also support the other organizations listed below when you pay your annual dues. (Please indicate your membership options with the checkboxes below.)*

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**SINCE JANUARY 1<sup>ST</sup> 1973**

**ABOUT SAN FRANCISCO REEF DIVERS (SFRD):**

The *Reef Diver Times* is the official newsletter of the San Francisco Reef Divers, a not for profit community organization dedicated to safe sport diving and the preservation of our ocean resources. Membership is \$25 annually, dues payable to "SFRD". The General Meeting is held the 3rd Wednesday of the month at Sinbad's, located at Pier 2, Embarcadero Street, SF, CA 94111. Meet at 7:00pm for socializing, drinks and food and 7:30 pm for club business and entertainment. For more information, visit <http://www.sfreefdivers.org/>.

SAN FRANCISCO REEF DIVERS  
Reef Diver Times  
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