



REMEMBER THE SILVER PRINCE?

By Jim Valario

Sunday, Dec 11th, 2011

Definitely old, slow, crusty and the worse for wear...but, enough about Norm and Jim, let's talk about the diving, which is really what we were there for. Capt. Mike Minard (who used to occasionally skipper the Cypress Sea), took us to the tried and true Mono-Lobo wall for our first dive. Conditions were acceptable, except for some intense surge, depending on what part of the topography you were near. Since we were so close to Point Lobos, saw some big lingcod, just hanging out. Nice dive, except that Jim's new drysuit had sprung a leak (again!). Did I mention that it was a NEW drysuit?

Second dive was not too far from Mono-Lobo, maybe a little bit south of Bluefish. Mike called it Half Dome (a la Yosemite), and nobody on the boat had been there before, not even the old, slow, crusty divers mentioned in the first paragraph. It's basically a pinnacle that starts at 50 ft. and bottoms out at 105 ft. The pinnacle looks as if it has been cut in half, so one face is a sheer drop-off to the bottom. Hence the segue to Yosemite. But, even though the topside Half Dome is an imposing sight, the nautical version is a riot of color, covered with all forms of life. It's also a haven for ling cod and crabs. The surge monster dictated that we stay on the vertical face of the pinnacle, so can't report on what's on the other side. Stay tuned ...



Happy Holidays

A CHRISTMAS BLAST FROM THE PAST WITH THE WOLFMAN

A quick recap for those who may not remember how I came to be the proud owner of a trove of Reef Diver newsletters. The call had come in late afternoon, the sun hanging low on the horizon, trying to poke its way through the dreary gray overcast that held the city in its embrace, my glass was empty, the bottle of Old Granddad likewise. Business was slow, the evening young. The caller whispered into the phone and in a raspy whiskey slurred voice asked, "would I be interested ... interested in a stash of old Reef Divers Newsletters, no questions asked?"

I've been sifting through the brittle dusty pages ever since. So here I am on a gorgeous weekend, after Thanksgiving, still waiting for the last of the stuffing to make peace with the cranberry relish while going through 1972's newsletters. It was a lazy afternoon, Christmas movies droning in the background a steaming cup of tea to keep me company. It's almost Christmas and *You are There* ...

So what happened in December of 1972? For starters the newsletter was two pages long, single sided, and crammed with all the news that was fit to print.

The Point Lobos dive was bagged due to water conditions spent the day hiking the preserve instead.

Twenty-six divers showed up for a dive aboard the Se Bee in November. After the first dive at Stillwater Cove, the compressor broke down, but was back up and running in three hours. Visibility was about 20 feet early in the day but dwindled to about 10 feet by late afternoon. Spearfishing was good for rock cod. The number of dives ranged from one to four per person.

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Reefer's Rap 2011

JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH
<p>08 - Sanctuary Dive Boat - K Dock - 07:30 14 - Paris International Dive Show - salondelaplongee.com 19 - Movable Feast - Check our Yahoo Site for Location 22 - Boot Show - Dusseldorf - boot.de 28 - Baltimore Washington Dive Show - divechronicles.com</p>	<p>16 - Movable Feast - Check our Yahoo Site for Location 18 - Our World Underwater 41 - ourworldunderwater.com 18 - Golden Dolphin - Moscow 25 - Texas Dive Show - divechronicles.com/texas</p>	<p>05 - Great Lake Shipwreck Festival - Ann Harbor 09 - SF Ocean Film Festival - oceanfilmfest.org 16 - Movable Feast - Check our Yahoo Site for Location 18 - Ohio Scuba Fest - scubafest.org 19 - Sanctuary Dive Boat - K Dock - 07:30 25 - Beneath the Sea - New Jersey beneaththesea.org 26 - London International Dive Show</p>
APRIL	MAY	JUNE
<p>01 - Abalone Opener - Fort Ross - CenCal 08 - Dive & Travel - Tacoma - diveandtravelexpo.com 08 - Bay Area Dive Show - San Jose - www.divechronicles.com 16 - Sanctuary Dive Boat - K Dock - 07:30 20 - Movable Feast - Check our Yahoo Site for Location 16-18 - Ocean Fest - Fort Lauderdale www.oceanfest.com</p>	<p>14 - Sanctuary Dive Boat - K Dock - 07:30 18 - Movable Feast - Check our Yahoo Site for Location 21-23 - Dive & Travel Expo - Tacoma - www.diveandtravelexpo.com</p>	<p>04 - Scuba Show - Long Beach - scubashow.com 11 - Sanctuary Dive Boat - K Dock - 07:30 15 - Movable Feast - Check our Yahoo Site for Location TBD - Abalone Closer</p>
JULY	AUGUST	SEPTEMBER
<p>01 - Malaysia International Dive Expo 16 - Sanctuary Dive Boat - K Dock - 07:30 20 - Movable Feast - Check our Yahoo Site for Location</p>	<p>TBD - Abalone Opener 14-16 - Channel Islands - Jim Vallario - 415.566.0784</p>	<p>24 - Colorado Dive Show - Denver - divechronicles.com 17 - Sanctuary Dive Boat - K Dock - 07:30 21 - Movable Feast - Check our Yahoo Site for Location</p>
OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	DECEMBER
<p>15 - Sanctuary Dive Boat - K Dock - 07:30 19 - Movable Feast - Check our Yahoo Site for Location 22 - UK Dive Show - Birmingham - diveshows.uk.com</p>	<p>02 - The DEMA Show - Orlando - www.demashow.com 06 - Point Lobos 16 - Movable Feast - Check our Yahoo Site for Location TBD - Abalone Closer</p>	<p>21 - Movable Feast - Check our Yahoo Site for Location</p>

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From the book department:

R.K.J. Bartoli highly recommends "Log of the Sea of Cortez" by John Steinbeck. It is a documentary about Steinbeck's experience with the late Ed Ricketts, author of the world famous naturalist's guide "Between Pacific Tides". The latter book is also recommended to those people who wish to have a not too technical guide to the maritime animals and plants we see when we dive.

One bit of bad news ... Emmett Malone and Jay Schaeffer experienced car trouble on the way back from Monterey November 26, so they left the car parked just north of Greyhound Rock. During the night the car was stolen, with all their dive gear in the trunk. Anyone approached to buy some used gear should contact Emmett so he can check it out.

Future Schedule:

No dive planned for late December

December 19 - Meeting Lake Merced Boathouse.

January 7 - Lovers Point. (At least we will meet here and possibly move to another nearby spot.)

January 20-21 - Ice diving in Clear Lake Probably have a lodge for staying overnight.

The best part of the newsletter was the announcement that the Memorial Day weekend dive trip was on. Start saving your pennies. We have received confirmation for the "Bottom Scratcher" out of San Diego on Memorial Day weekend. The three days of diving will cost \$90 person. Travel arrangements are extra.

We'll be featuring more blasts from the past in future newsletters, so stay tuned, the Wolfman will be back.

STAMMTISCH

by Pierre Hurter



Do you ever get those odd pieces of unsolicited mail where you wonder how you ended up on their mailing list? One of my favorites involved an

investment fund, which more or less guaranteed that I would be able to write off losses in the 100's of thousands of dollars against my more impressive and apparently more heavily taxed gains in other sectors. I didn't really understand it, something about petroleum exploration credits and foreign tax revenue offsets, all very arcane. In the end I didn't meet their minimum "liquid assets" requirements so I didn't get the free weekend in Vegas or the losses.

My favorite mailer of late was a glossy catalogue from National Geographic's travel division, all sorts of exotic locations along with experts to explain what you've seen and where you've been. My favorite trip is the offer of a round the world jaunt aboard a private Boeing 757 set up for 78 passengers instead of the more normal 200 some-odd. Imagine twenty-four days and five continents, from Machu Picchu, to Angkor Wat, the Pyramids and more. I really should have booked this years trip as it is going up in price in 2012 and I'm not sure I'll have the \$66,950 per

person it's going to cost and I'm positive that going alone would not be a wise option, besides there's the inevitable singles surcharge. I may just have to settle for some mystery fabric blend travel clothes with the hidden pockets and zip off sleeves and lower legs and imagine the trip itself.

Last month I'd mentioned that the final resting place of the *Nautilus*, the submarine used in the Wilkins-Ellsworth Trans-Arctic Submarine Expedition of 1931 had been discovered. For those who don't remember, Sir Hubert Wilkins, wanted to be the first to cross the Arctic Ocean by way of the North Pole in a submarine.

Some considered the expedition to be a foolhardy undertaking. Others thought it was nothing more than a publicity stunt. Partnering with Simon Lake, a pioneer submarine designer, and Sloan Danenhower, a former submarine officer, Sir Hubert acquired the vintage World War I submarine O-12. Decommissioned in 1924, the O-12 was awaiting scrapping in the Philadelphia Navy Yard.

After extensive modifications to prepare it for under-ice operations, including a 12-foot-long cushioned bowsprit, a telescoping man-sized hollow drill capable of boring through 15 feet of ice, special hollow air intake and exhaust drills to enable recharging the batteries while submerged, a diver lock-out chamber, and a scientific laboratory.

After a series of travails the *Nautilus* with its 20-person crew headed north to Tromsø for refueling and then on to Spitzbergen.

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The *Nautilus* arrived at the pack ice on August 14, and spent several days conducting scientific observations.

On August 22, a test dive under the ice was attempted, but without success. A diver was sent down and reported that the diving planes were gone. How they fell off is a matter of conjecture, but both Sir Hubert and Sloan Danenhower suspected sabotage.

On September 6 the battered and leaking *Nautilus* left the pack ice and sailed into Bergen on September 20. The lease called for the submarine to be returned to the United States, but the vessel's condition made that impossible. Permission was given to sink the submarine and on November 30, 1931, the *Nautilus* was towed three miles offshore and scuttled in 1,138 feet of water.

In 2005 through a combination of fortuitous circumstances, which included the German submersible JAGO being in the area for a project off Spitzbergen, "Project Nautilus 2005" began to take shape. Around the same time the Royal Norwegian Navy was conducting a mission using a HUGIN 1000 an autonomous underwater vehicle capable of performing underwater surveys down to a depth of 1000 meters.

When asked if it were possible to extend the operation area to include the probable location of the *Nautilus*, the Royal Norwegian Navy did, and provided crucial sonar imagery.

During the week of September 11, a total of four dives were made on the wreck of the *Nautilus*. Approximately 1,800 digital



images and 8 hours of video were acquired during these dives. Among the distinctive features visible were the bowsprit, the hollow drill, the air intake drill, and the diver's air lock.



Seems as if we haven't been able to get into the water since we returned from our trip to the old country, well Vienna anyway, its terrible how they've let the place run down, you'd think after all these centuries they would tire of the same old buildings. We were primed to head out on the weekend after we came back, but we both brought some sort of hacking, coughing crud with us and thought it was probably not a good idea. That and I still had our regulators configured for single tanks and I'm too lazy to swap back and forth.

We finally decided that something had to be done; we needed to go diving, so we made the obvious choice, let's go to Fiji. For those of you who can't place Fiji, it sits out in the Pacific, 18°10' South and 178° 27' East, about 1,100 nautical miles northeast of New Zealand. I don't want to post the exact location because I'm afraid some of our more intrepid members

might punch the numbers into their handheld GPS devices and head their kayaks that way and I'm looking forward to a nice quite vacation.

The country consists of some 332 islands of which 110 are inhabited on a regular basis, with a population around 850,000. We were heading for the Koro Sun Resort on the Island of Vanua Levu. I know that sounds familiar to some of you, if you are a devotee of the Bachelorette, it was filmed here back in July of this year. According to their website, it is "a remote setting that defines paradise". With the biggest city on the island having a population of 5,000, it sounded promising.

People have been living in Fiji for at least 5,000 years. Europeans first poked around in 1643 when the Dutch explorer Abel Tasman visited. The first European settlers didn't arrive until the 19th century, possibly because of the reputation the Fijians had for cannibalism. It became a British colony in 1874 and stayed one until independence in 1970. Under British rule Indian contract workers (Indentured workers) were brought in to work the sugar fields. That has lead to tensions between the two major groups on the islands, the Native and Indo-Fijians who have been trying to work out their cohabitation ever since.

It's an interesting place politically, having had two military coups in 1987 and one in 2000. Then there was the *coup d'état* of 2006, later declared illegal and the constitutional crisis of 2009. I kept most of this historical perspective from Gerda who was really more concerned with the "small plane" we would

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be flying to get from the main island to Vanua Levu. I've found that any relationship that is to survive extended out of the mainstream travel needs, to be able to traffic in a certain level of euphemism. Who wants to hear that we are flying in on an ex Soviet puddle jumper flown by an alcoholic Ukrainian cashiered-Soviet Air force deserter with a bad attitude, a lousy divorce lawyer and no concept of preventative maintenance? It's much easier to stick with "we'll be flying an executive airplane".

Like all voyages of adventure our trip started out with the first step out the front door. Our limo pulled up early as they normally do shiny, black with lots of trunk space, and a friendly driver, this is the way to get to and from the airport. The first leg of our journey had us flying Southwest to one of my least favored airports, LAX. As an aside, why is it that I get to check two bags onboard Southwest, at no cost and weighing up to 50 pounds apiece, while other airlines look at you as if the idea of having luggage were completely out of the ordinary? And they wonder why the overhead bins are full to bursting.

Back to the voyage, Southwest to Los Angeles went off without a

hitch; we grabbed our luggage and made our way to the International terminal. The Tom Bradley International terminal is set to be completely re-modeled next year. The practical impact of that is that there was almost nothing going on there now, a McDonalds would have been a luxurious treat. We grabbed some prime seats near an electrical outlet and watched as the group of fellow travelers slowly began to assemble at the gate for the flight to Nadi in Fiji. The trip was with Any Water Sports and 38 brave souls had signed on for the adventure, 34 divers as well as 4 who were looking forward to the spa action.

The check in line for Air Pacific gave us an early taste of the concept of "Fiji Time", the line at the check-in counter was already fairly long, and the message board overhead announced that they would be open for business at 16:30. That time came and went, with the occasional person wandering around behind the counter, probably to tantalize us. We eventually were checked in along with our baggage, everything weighed and tagged and then on to the next phase of the journey.

It often seems to me that the time in-between flights adds up to as much or more time as the

flights themselves. The plus side is that standing in line and waiting at the gate gave us a chance to meet, swap tall travel tales and get to know each other a bit. It turned out that we had traveled with a fair number of our fellow travelers before.

Do you remember when flying was a special experience? That long ago time when you got dressed up to pick someone up at the airport and even small boys wore ties and a blazer and young ladies a dress and shiny black shoes if they were going to actually fly in a plane. Family and friends would line up to wave goodbye; it was an exotic experience, an affair to remember. That's the way it is in Fiji, entire extended families hugging the chain link fence and waving as the plane leave the ground. Of course several appeared to be praying which made me wonder if that was based on local knowledge of the airlines track record.

The flight to Nadi was uneventful, but full. When we landed in Fiji it turned out that the puddle jumpers that were supposed to take us to Savusavu on the island of Vanua Levu had been canceled. Can't say that Gerda was overly heartbroken

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about that turn of events, she's not really a big fan of small planes. So instead of flying into the airport just down the road from our resort in a 19 seat DH-6 Twin Otter we all piled into a 44 seat ATR 42-500 and headed to the airport in Labasa. From there we tossed out luggage into a local bus and headed over the hill towards the Koro Sun resort in Savusavu. The ride lasted two hours and took us through some incredible scenery, not to mention plenty of rain.



By the time we arrived at the gates of the resort, the rain had stopped and the sun was hanging bright in the afternoon sky. The staff met us at the gate with guitars and ukuleles strumming and serenaded our arrival. Our lodgings were a small Bure, a Fijian style cottage complete with a white picket fence, a four-poster bed with mosquito netting, a pair of resident geckos and a lazy ceiling fan whirling overhead.

The dive shop was directly across the street from the resort, the owners Collin, an Aussie and his wife Jeannine, a Kiwi and their son young Master Blye would be our dive companions for the next week. Because of the size of our group they had arranged for a second boat. The two boats were the *Namali* and *Bligh's Express*. The *Namali* was brand new with twin Susuki 300 HP outboards to help it get to the

dive sites in short order. The *Bligh's Express* was a grizzled veteran with twin Suzuki 200 HP outboards, still plenty fast and more than serviceable.

The diving was good, not necessarily great, but diving 80-degree water is certainly better than going to work and staring at e-mails all day long. The operation definitely run on Fiji time, best described as a bit lackadaisical. Once you get used to the pace you begin to notice that people here are unique. We've been to a few places in this

neck of the world and I have never met so many people who were genuinely friendly and ready to talk to you about their way of life. If you

showed the slightest interest in something there would be someone who would notice and come over to explain what you were watching, why they do it



and how. They take obvious pride in their islands and way of life.

Gerda and I decided to take the bus into town one day. As we waited for it to arrive, we watched, as coconuts began raining from the trees. In short

order someone wandered over and began explaining how coconuts were harvested, the difference between the brown and green ones and how they now had hybrid trees that grew with their crowns much closer to the ground so that the coconuts were easier to pick. It was fascinating. Riding the bus was an event in itself, the music was cranked up full blast, mostly reggae inspired tunes. Every time someone got onboard they would slowly walk down the aisle like a receiving line pausing to say hello and chat with everyone already on board.

The British colonial rule of Fiji left the culture remarkably intact and I suspect that's why the people you meet are genuinely engaging and proud to share their culture. It's well worth the visit if you have the chance. If you go make sure you visit one of the local villages. There's a protocol, first you make an appointment then you head for the village of choice, in our case Vuadomo up the road from Savusavu apiece. When you arrive, you kick off your shoes and are introduced to the chief by the village

spokesman, there is a bit of back and forth and then the assembled villagers sing and play guitars to welcome the visitors to the village. Afterwards there is dancing, as seems to be a trend I was plucked from the audience by

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one of the villagers to show what I could do, not a pretty picture.

At least this time I got to dance with someone in my age bracket, well under eighty anyway.

On the way to the village we stopped in town to pick up some kava or *Piper methysticum*. The bundled roots (wrapped in a newspaper) are the gift of choice when visiting. The roots are pounded or ground to a powder, a little cold water added and down the hatch. The drink is usually served from a large wooden bowl in a coconut shell cup. It's an "acquired taste" a little earthy and looking like muddy water, I'm curious what sort of wine pairings Ken would come up with. It left my tongue tingling around the edges and just a little numb. It's an integral part of the culture and you will often see Fijians, always men, sitting around a large round wooden bowl of kava, passing around a coconut cup and playing guitar and singing into the night.

On our last night at the resort they prepared a traditional meal for us, local vegetables, slow cooked pork and taro. Afterwards we were treated to a performance of traditional dances and songs that among other things illustrated the islands history. The participants ranged in age from three to eighty, it was wonderful.

Inevitably it was time to pack our soggy dive gear and start the journey homeward. The journey back to the workaday world was an adventure in itself. Our luggage was picked up from our room while we ate breakfast and made its way to the bus that would take us back over the hill to the airport in Labasa. The bus was clearly nearing the end of its usable life; we crawled over each hill at the speed of a pedestrian. They have speed bumps in Fiji hat

they call "sleeping policemen" as the journey wore on and the bus grew steadily more tired we breathed a sigh of relief every time we managed to clear one. At one point we were passed by a local on horseback, grinning and waving his machete as he passed us.

We made it to within 8 kilometers of the airport before the bus decided to give up the ghost. I had a premonition about this journey when we stopped on the way to pick up a coke bottle full of oil to slake the buses thirst. No sooner had we passed the sign announcing the distance to the airport when the bus shuddered to a halt, all eight pistons frozen in their cylinders, transmission sending an evil reeking plume of grayish brown smoke into the air like smoke signals in the Wild West, the synchros having given up the ghost along with everything else mechanical. I looked across the street from where we had stopped, the local gas station Fijian Seven Eleven, the local Mosque bright in the sunlit shafts streaming between the rain clouds. Allahu Akbar, had barely crossed my mind when the first pickup stopped. Some of us hoped rides in Taxis, some in pickups a few waited for another bus to be sent, but in the end we all made it to the airport and on to the next segment of our journey.

We arrived in Nadi without incident and settled in for our five hour layover. A few wandered across the road to Raffles, we settled into the local pizza joint and calculated how much beer and pizza we could consume with our remaining Fijian dollars. We were going to start a betting pool on whether those whose bags had been left on the tarmac in Labasa would get there bags in time, but it seemed mean spirited, especially when we found out that the bags had left, but were

heading for another airport on the way, sort of.

Once we had our bags checked, we headed upstairs to the departure lounge. Each airport is different, but generally when you get to this point they start rolling out the shops and this was no exception. If you have an urge to buy a Rolex or one of those huge bottles of scotch, this is your chance. Of course the prices might be a bit high, but hey, you're on vacation. I ended up with a Fiji Bitter (the local beer) t-shirt featuring a scuba tank on the back. I was angling for the Rolex, but life is full of compromises.

So, we're back, my inbox has been cleared up, ruffled feathers soothed and starting to look forward to the New Year. Our gears been soaking in fresh water and Sink the Stink, booties treated with a secret sauce to attempt to inhibit that raunchy smell that develops after a week or so of immersion in tropical waters. I usually bring along a squirt bottle of Dr. Bronner's Magic All-One Peppermint Liquid Soap. It doesn't completely get rid of the odor, but it sure helps, plus it keeps your hair and scalp, silky and itch free.

"There are known knowns, there are things we know we know. We also know there are known unknowns, that is to say we know there are things we do not know. But there are also unknown unknowns – the ones we don't know we don't know" Donald Rumsfeld ... well on that note, that's what I know.





SINCE JANUARY 1ST 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. Location is announced one week prior to the meeting. Please check our yahoo site for details <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/sfreefdivers/> We meet at 7:00pm for socializing, drinks, food and club business. For more information, visit <http://www.sfreefdivers.org/>.

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