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# Scuba Diver

AUSTRALASIAN  
U/WATER  
PHOTOGRAPHER  
OF THE YEAR  
— WINNING PICTURES

SULAWESI  
SOJOURN: THE  
REEFS AND BELIEFS  
OF THE OLD  
CELEBES

DIVE THE JAPANESE  
FLEET — THE TRUK  
EXPERIENCE

COLOURFUL  
PRAWNS FOR THE  
MARINE AQUARIUM

PLUS:  
LADY ELLIOT PART II,  
MOTHER OCEAN'S  
DAUGHTERS,  
PHOTO COMPETITION,  
ALL OUR REGULAR  
DEPARTMENTS...  
AND MORE!

COVER STORY:  
EXPLORING YONGALA  
— THE GHOST SHIP







# PART ONE TRUK LAGOON: YESTERDAY AND TODAY

Gary Graf examines Micronesia's famed WWII wrecks and the events which created spectacular marine life from total devastation.

It could have been a lot worse. As it was, the Japanese Imperial Navy lost more than 250 planes and some 200,000 tons of shipping. Had the attack come a few days earlier, Admiral Mineichi Koga could have seen his Combined Fleet reduced by an additional battleship, a couple of carriers, five or six heavy cruisers, two more light cruisers, over a dozen destroyers and nearly that many submarines.

In 1920 the League of Nations handed over the Caroline, Marshall and Marianas islands to Japan, basically as a reward for being on the winning side in World War I. Although the Treaty of Versailles stated "... no military or naval bases shall be established in the territory", in a few years the Japanese would have imperialistic designs on the greater Pacific region. The only honourable thing to do was to leave the League. This they did in 1934, immediately posting *No Trespassing* signs all over the place. One very prohibited area was Truk Lagoon in the Eastern Carolines.

After that December day of infamy at Pearl Harbour, the Japanese Fourth Fleet established a command centre and an anchorage at Truk. Soon they would be joined by the Sixth Destroyer Flotilla, Seventh Submarine Flotilla and 17th Air Corps. In August 1942, Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, the guy in charge of everything with a rising sun ensign, made Truk his headquarters. At one time 40,000 Japanese were stationed

on the islands in the lagoon. They constructed more than 1,200 buildings, including a huge hospital, communications centres, barracks and repair shops. They also built fuel storage tanks, ammunition dumps, fortifications and anti-aircraft gun emplacements, seaplane and submarine bases; and several deep-water anchorages. All these facilities plus the presence of the Commander of the Combined Fleet helped foster the belief that Truk was an impregnable fortress, a veritable Gibraltar of the Pacific.

By early 1944 Nimitz's naval forces were well underway across the Pacific, systematically hitting one Japanese base after another. Task Force 58, one of the most powerful naval forces ever put together, commanded by Rear Admiral Marc A. Mitscher, had just devastated Kwajalein in the Marshalls. Looking at a map, you wouldn't have to be a genius to deduce that Truk's days were numbered.

As if to confirm this, on February 4 a high-flying, solitary B-24 was sent to take some reconnaissance photos of Truk Lagoon. Once developed, they showed the anchorages crowded with all manner of warships and support craft. However, this overflight hadn't gone unnoticed. Admiral Koga, who'd taken over in April 1943 when Yamamoto's plane was shot down, put *ni* and *ni* together and had his big combat ships make wakes to Palau. Koga himself, apparently figuring he could get a better perspective of everything from a distance, hopped aboard the giant battleship *Musashi* bound for Singapore. (He would die a month later in an air accident.)

Mitscher his boss, Vice-Admiral Raymond A. Spruance, and the other allied planners had heard all that Gibraltar talk, so they ruled out an

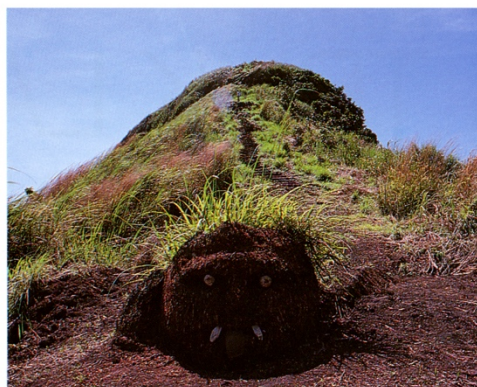
amphibious assault. Since there wasn't any land handy for land-based aircraft and since the Japanese fleet moorings were too far inside the lagoon for naval gunfire, they decided to try something unprecedented in the annals of naval warfare. An attack carried out solely by carrier aircraft.

Mitscher came prepared. His three task groups, including the carriers *Enterprise*, *Yorktown*, *Belleau Wood*, *Essex*, *Intrepid*, *Cabot*, *Bunker Hill*, *Monterey* and *Cowpens*; the battleships *North Carolina*, *Massachusetts*, *South Dakota*, *Alabama*, *Iowa* and *New Jersey*; the cruisers *Santa Fe*, *Mobile*, *Biloxi*, *Oakland*, *San Diego*, *San Francisco*, *Wichita*, *Baltimore*, *Minneapolis* and *New Orleans*; plus assorted destroyers; and submarines.

Before sun-up on February 17 they were sitting about 90 miles from Truk, ready to launch Operation Hailstone. One after another 72 Hellcat fighters catapulted off the carrier decks with orders to destroy enemy aircraft and gain control of the skies over the lagoon. Then a second wave of 18 Dauntless dive-bombers peppered the airfields with incendiaries and fragmentation bombs. Next came a wave of fighters, dive-bombers and torpedo bombers bent on destroying every ship in the lagoon. Such was their enthusiasm for the task at hand that a number of the pilots made a little U.S. Naval history, continuing their carrier operations right through the night.

Meanwhile, Mitscher's battleships, cruisers and destroyers were patrolling nearby waters looking for enemy shipping. And outside the two unmined reef passes packs of submarines sat, waiting to surprise any ships favoring Falstaffian discretion over valour. Other subs stood by to pick up downed airmen.

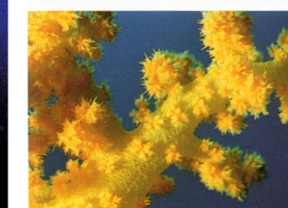




Left: Rusting in peace — a three-man tank — part of the cargo of the San Furanshisuko.  
Below left: A study using infra-red Ektachrome.  
Below: The beauty of nature has overgrown the twisted sculpture of war.



The lush environment of Truk hides the battle scars from the havoc wreaked in 1944, and Micronesian life goes on — slowly. Right: The Truk Continental Hotel.





One, the *Tang*, did itself proud by fishing 22 crewmen out of the drink, some from right inside the lagoon.

In reply, the Japanese didn't particularly distinguish themselves. They shot down some of the 26 planes lost by the U.S. and towards evening on the first day they launched seven Kate torpedo bombers, one of which managed a hit on *Intrepid*, killing 11 men, injuring 17 and sending the carrier to Majuro for repairs. This poor showing by the imperial forces was due in part to the quick destruction done to their airstrips as well as a shortage of experienced pilots following the battles of the Coral Sea and Midway. But mainly it was the result of some pretty fuzzy strategic thinking. The Japanese brass left the defence of this enormous, extremely important base to just a handful of troops and a mere 40 anti-aircraft guns. Sure there were the planes, but they weren't much use after that second wave.

By the end of the second day, 30 waves of planes had flown 1250 sorties, unloading 400 tons of bombs and aerial torpedoes — 15 times the ordinance dropped on December 7, 1941. They had destroyed 90% of the Japanese shore installations and all the airfields. They put over 250 planes out of commission. And they sank or crippled more than 30 major vessels, most notably the cruiser *Naka*, the auxiliary cruisers *Aikoku Maru* and *Kiyosumi Maru*, the destroyers *Fumitsuki* and *Oite*, the submarine tenders *Rio de Janeiro Maru* and *Heian Maru*, as well as six tankers and 17 freighters. So much for that Gibraltar of the Pacific myth!

Finished for the time being, Task Force 58 steamed on to Guam, Tinian, Saipan and Eniwetok. A couple of months later, near the end of April, they paid a return visit to Truk and added another 93 planes to their total, 59 in the air and 34 on the ground. This time 35 U.S. planes were lost. Subsequent attacks took place in May and June.

Not only did all this spectacular carnage go a long way toward ending the war in the Pacific, it also created the all-time greatest collection of artificial reefs anywhere in the underwater world.

\* \* \*

I must have first read about the graveyard of sunken ships at Truk some 10-15 years ago. The idea of all these huge wrecks resting in clear, tropical waters virtually untouched by plundering divers so intrigued me that I vowed to dive them one day.

When it finally looked like happening, I started doing a little research on Micronesia in general and Truk Lagoon in particular. The name 'Micronesia' couldn't be more descriptive. From the Greek, it means 'tiny islands'. By one recent count 2141 dots of land, totalling just 528 square miles, lay scattered across three million square miles of the Pacific in a hot, wet belt between the Equator and the Tropic of Cancer. Some are coral atolls, others sunken mountains. Some are flat and barren, others covered by lush rain forests. Some have sparkling beaches, others mangrove swamps. Still others feature rugged cliffs and crashing shorelines.

Anthropologists believe most Micronesians came originally from the Malaysia area. Over the years they developed some regional differences, most obviously their languages — they speak nine with a

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variety of dialects; and their appearances — they traded genes with a series of Western colonisers. In the 18th century the Spanish decided to bring their God to these primitive island folk. Their zealous, pious efforts met with considerable success, and today about half of all Micronesians look to the Vatican for spiritual guidance. Following the Spanish-American War, Germany anxious both to become a colonial power and to take advantage of all the copra, bought the islands for 25 million pesetas. With the outbreak of the First World War, Japan moved in and seized everything they could get their hands on. Germany, having more pressing business elsewhere, withdrew without opposition. They left a legacy of increased production, expanded trade and disciplined administration. The Japanese brought progress. New roads, hospitals, cisterns, even a railroad system on Saipan to carry sugar to the docks. And, of course, they brought lots of fortifications.

Next it was the turn of the United States or, more correctly, the United Nations. When World War II ended, the islands became a U.N. trust territory, administered first by the U.S. Navy then the Department of Interior. The Americans undertook to prepare the islanders for the time when they would take their place on the world scene. In accordance with the original intent of the trusteeship, the island groups have lately begun deciding their own political fates. In 1977 the Northern Marianas became a commonwealth. Then the Marshalls and Palau Islands split away. And in June 1983 the Federated States of Micronesia, a 1500-mile chain of islands which includes Truk, voted to end U.S. administration. In its place they've established a Compact of Free Association. Which, I suppose, leaves them free to associate with whomever they choose. Or choose not to.

Truk is not an island; it's a *district* in the Eastern Carolines about 2500 miles West of Hawaii and seven degrees North of the Equator. Covering 180,000 square miles of ocean, Truk District includes 11 major islands and over 100 smaller ones with a total population around 33,000. Although the district encompasses more than 100 separate atolls, none comes close to Truk Atoll in scope. Forty miles across and surrounded by one of the world's largest barrier reefs, Truk Lagoon would be something special even without what lies beneath its surface.

One of my main reasons for researching Truk was to find out about the weather conditions. No one, particularly a photographer, wants to dive during a rainy season. Reports conflicted somewhat as to the length of the wet in Truk, but basically it seems to run from June through September. Because of the lagoon's proximity to the Equator, the water temperature remains a pretty constant 84 degrees year round. Visibility, mostly due to a proliferous planktonic population, could rarely be called great. It averages from 40-60 feet, improving from October to May when the winds pick up. Naturally, these same winds can also churn up the surface. The water gets really choppy when the local trades occasionally hit 30-40 knots. Sediment is another problem. The wrecks, especially their innards, are blanketed by a deep cover of fine brown silt.

For these reasons I wanted to try and pick a time when the conditions were favourable but the number of

visitors minimal. The fewer fins stirring silt, the better. My buddy, Bill Mulholland, another expatriate American living in Australia, and I chose mid-January. We figured most people would be back to work, still catching their breath from Christmas and New Year. And fresh out of spare cash.

When we rendezvoused at the hotel in Hawaii, we discovered that our entire tour group consisted of just the two of us plus one other diver from Houston. Normally, these groups tend to average 15 or so people. We three heartily congratulated each other on our good fortune. Then we found out there can be a drawback to being this kind of lucky. The tour outfit we'd sent our money to, probably because they weren't making much (if any) profit, didn't exactly bust their collective butt for us. First, they hadn't made arrangements with the Honolulu hotel, which was a part of the package we'd already paid for. (The vouchers they'd sent us were useless.) So we had to pay again, and I was only reimbursed six months later after numerous letters and telexes. When we arrived at the Truk Continental hotel, neither they nor the Blue Lagoon diving shop (whom we were diving with) had been notified that the three of us were on the way. I must say, however, these people proved a lot more accommodating than that hotel in Honolulu.

A brief mention of the plane trip. It ain't brief. After short stops at Johnston Island, Majuro, Kwajalein and Ponape we reached Truk. More than nine long, cramped hours later. This is in no way a dig at Air Micronesia. They do exceptionally well under the circumstances. Anyway, as our 727 came in to land at Moen, the district centre, I could see the roughly circular lagoon. I tried to imagine it a million or so years ago when it was still a big, mountainous mass. Not easy. Today, all that remains are a few of the highest peaks surrounded by an awful lot of water. I got out a map and tried to find some large shadowy shapes beneath the surface. Either the bottom, which reached 240 feet, was too distant or, more likely, I wasn't looking in the right places.

After shuffling through a cursory customs check, we boarded the hotel bus for a 15-minute ride. Had the road been paved instead of a track of mud ruts, the trip probably would have taken just five minutes. As we bounced along, I took in the sights. The tropical vegetation provided lush evidence of Truk's average 100-inch annual rainfall. The barefoot women

showed a preference for muumuu-type dresses of brilliant parrot-plumage colours. The men tended to wear long pants, sneakers and ersatz pro football shirts. The cars and light trucks we passed, even those only a year or two old, were in advanced stages of fatal corrosion. The dwellings ran the gamut. I saw a few carefully-restored Japanese-style houses. Some cubistic structures of concrete blocks. And, most common, haphazard shanties of corrugated tin and wood. Perched over the water were a number of small buildings which the cartoons usually depict with halfmoons cut in their doors. A cheap but pretty effective plumbing system. In front of the less imposing abodes I spotted something I hadn't expected. Great piles of shiny beer cans.

In my research I'd read how a couple of years earlier the women of Truk cleverly countered a growing

"As I started down the kingposts I could see this awesome form lying below, like the body of some dead leviathan. Then the straight lines that betray something man-made. . ."

drinking problem in the district by organizing a prohibition referendum. The clever part was in the timing of the voting. Sunday morning. When most of the menfolk were still too indisposed to participate. I asked our driver about the cans, and he explained that a booze black-market now flourished. We would soon learn where to whisper 'Joe sent me' and start our own more modest, less blatant piles of cans.

The Truk Continental proved a startling contrast to the rather laid-back aspect of all we'd passed on the way. Carefully manicured, emerald green lawns with colourful shrubs and rows of stately palms. Three low, sprawling buildings with full-length glass doors and balconies overlooking the lagoon. Wall-to-wall carpeting in the rooms and sashimi on the menu. After a dinner served by giggling girls of quite ample fleshiness, we retired to the lobby for a Cousteau film on the wrecks. The three of us struggled manfully to stay awake.

Our first wreck was the *Fujikawa Maru*, an aircraft transport that had been torpedoed and sunk upright in 120 feet. We rode out the next morning in one of Blue Lagoon's custom-built 18-footers, we three plus a helmsman and Kimio Aisek's son Gradvie as guide. *Le pere* is widely acknowledged as the foremost expert on Truk wrecks. We tied up to a bit of superstructure conveniently sticking out of the water.

The initial dive was planned for 30 minutes at 90 feet, exploring holds one and two. As I started down the kingposts I could see this awesome form lying below, like the body of some dead leviathan. Then the straight lines that betray something man-made in the midst of everything else natural. A collection of geometric shapes of varying shades of blue. Squares. Rectangles. Circles. They gradually resolved themselves into the bridge, different deck levels, open holds and hatches, cargo booms, ladders, railings, cables, piles of debris. And guns.

Several different impressions vied for centrastage in my mind.

The size was enormous. The books said 434 feet in length, but those are just numbers. I found it easier to think of the ship in terms of a football field, including one end zone. I figured we could easily spend weeks just investigating this one ship.

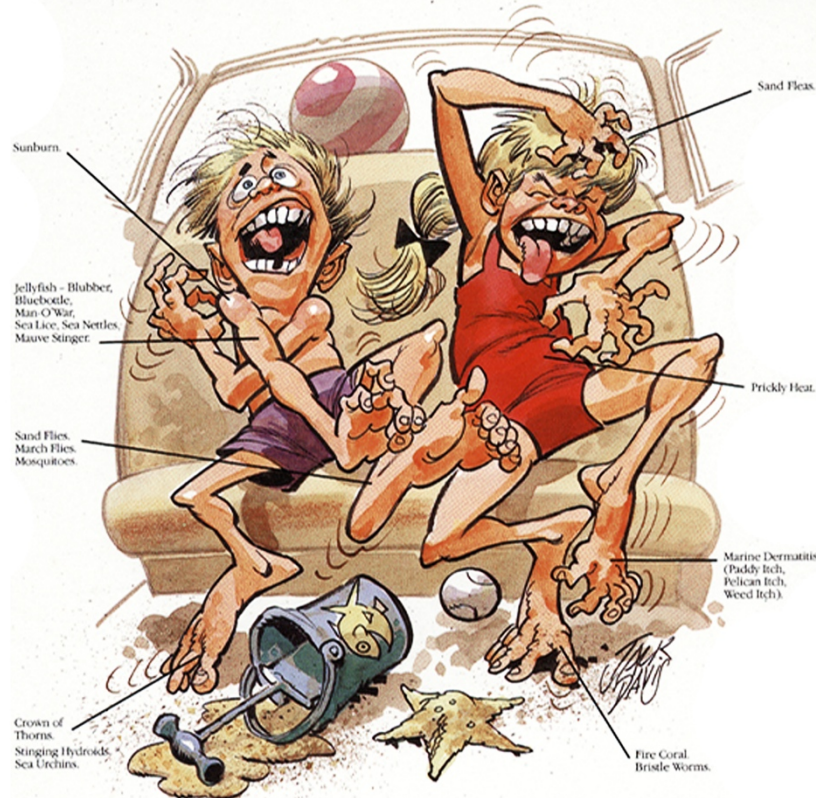
The Quiet. Aside from the usual reassuring bubbling of used air, the clacking of shrimp and munching of parrotfish, the sensation was one of, to coin a phrase, deathly stillness. Exactly the opposite of what it must have been like that cacophonous day it went down.

Life. In direct contrast to the somberness of the dead ship was the profusion of underwater life covering it. Just about anywhere light reached, something grew. Splashes of brilliant colour and fantastic shapes encrusted the length and breadth of the *Fujikawa*. The delicate, rainbow-hued tree corals in particular excited my imagination, suggesting a master pastry chef gone wild with his tubes of icing. The leather corals were huge in size and dense in numbers. Also in abundance were large, jagged-mouthed oysters. Sea whips. Frilly, white algae. Sponges. And so on. I couldn't help thinking that there was something very ironic about having all this beauty slowly but surely covering these weapons of war.

*To be concluded next issue.*



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# Scuba Diver

## THE CASE AGAINST SHOOTING DIVERS

THE ADVENTURE OF DIVING  
PHOTO COMPETITION

THE ART AND SCIENCE OF  
U/W FILM MAKING

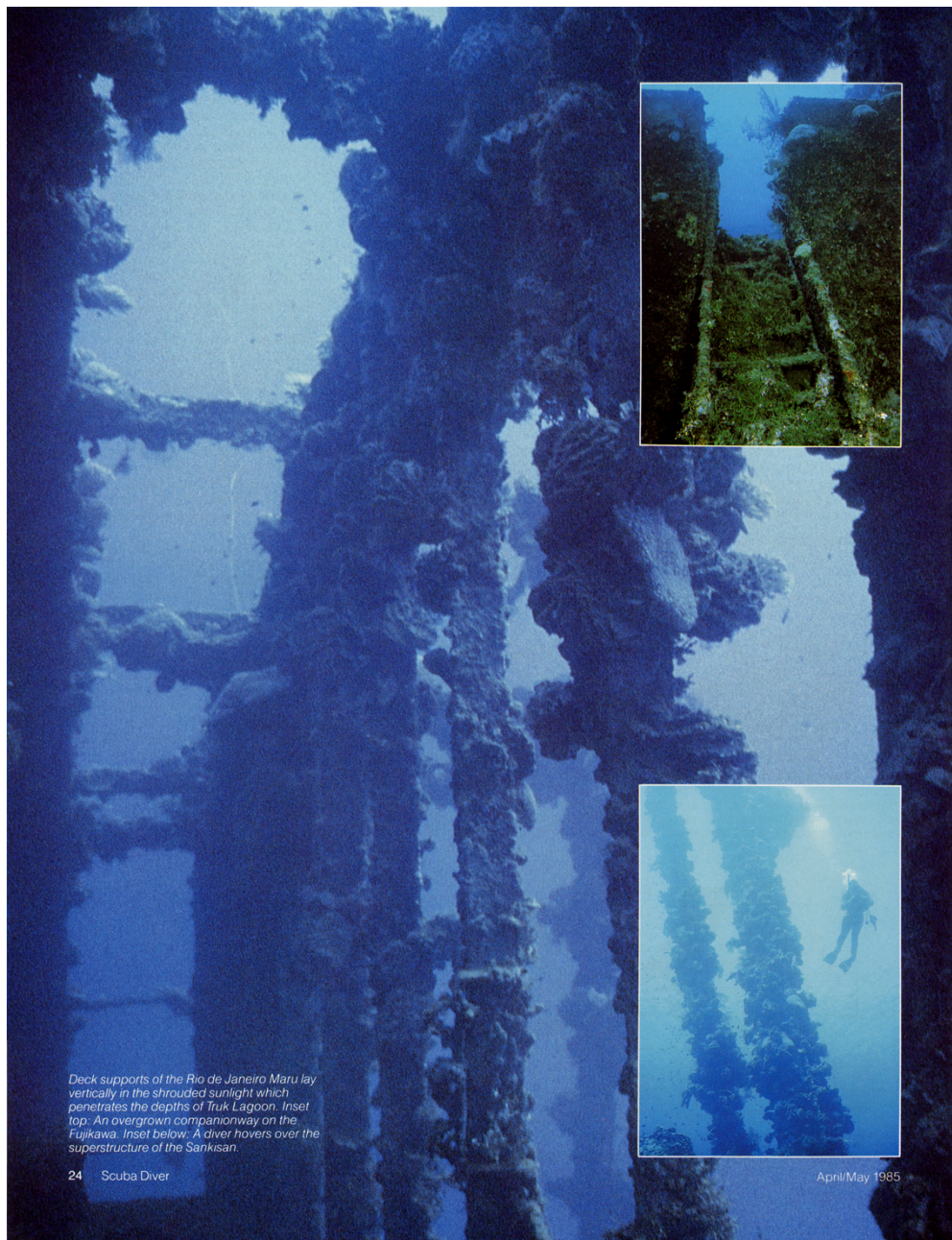
## LEGACY OF TRUK LAGOON PART II

PETER ALLEN - HOME ON THE REEF

A CELEBRATION OF DOLPHINS

PLUS ALL OUR REGULAR DEPARTMENTS





Deck supports of the Rio de Janeiro Maru lay vertically in the shrouded sunlight which penetrates the depths of Truk Lagoon. Inset top: An overgrown companionway on the Fujikawa. Inset below: A diver hovers over the superstructure of the Sankisan.

## PART TWO TRUK LAGOON: YESTERDAY AND TODAY

Gary Graf concludes his adventure to dive the Japanese Fleet.

The devastation described in the first part of this feature left the Micronesians of Truk Lagoon with an interesting heritage which has become a major diving attraction — the largest collection of artificial reefs anywhere in the world. Now the author has started diving on the sunken fleet and describes his experiences in trying to photograph the massive wrecks, and the prolific marine growth which adorns them. The first wreck explored is the Fujikawa Maru — a huge munitions carrier laying at peace with its cargo of war . . .

Along with an old Nikonos hanging around my neck I also carried a housed Nikon F with a strobe. I decided to start with the lens I used most often, the 55mm Micro. Although it proved ideal for shooting the marine growth, it really couldn't cope with the combination of massive subjects and turbid water. The next day I switched to a 24mm lens and stayed with it right through our last wreck dive.

We swam into the *Fujikawa's* holds and I saw the things I'd read about; the wingless Zeros, broken boxes of ammunition, warheads, gas masks, scattered bottles, oil drums and all kinds of good stuff worth taking home and sticking on the mantle. Anyone who's dived wrecks denuded by souvenir seekers can't help but be gratified by the number of fantastic relics still lying around these ships and planes. I'd learned how early divers displayed no qualms about plundering, and their larcenies had

led the administration to designate as historical monuments the "... ships, other vessels and aircraft, and any and all parts thereof, which formally belonged to or were a part of the Armed Forces of Japan and were sunk to or otherwise deposited on the bottom of the Truk Lagoon prior to December 31, 1945".

According to Truk District Law 21-5, anyone removing any artifact will be subject to a \$1,000 fine and/or six months in the calaboose. You're supposed to sign a declaration saying you have no intention of ripping-off anything. And those mandatory guides aren't there just to guide you!

I don't see much sense in going into any great detail about the individual wrecks we visited. If you're planning a Truk trek, you'd be foolish not to get a copy of *Divers' Guide to the Truk Lagoon* by Philip Rosenberg and Clark Graham. In it you should find all the information you need to help decide which wrecks you'd most like to dive on. Because there were just the three of us, it was easy to reach a consensus about the ones we wanted to see most.

After the morning dive on the *Fujikawa* we putt-putted over to Dublon, which the Japanese used as their main island. A short walk through some rain forest and we came upon the remains of what was once one of the largest hospitals in the Pacific. All we saw were crumbling walls and smelly piles of coconut meat. Then we snorkled around a subchaser called the *Susuki Maru*.

Our second dive centred on the cargo ship's bow, which rises to within 60 feet of the surface. Here we found really spectacular coral growth. And because we weren't too deep, I was more aware of all the colours the invertebrates came in. One magnificent lemon yellow tree coral so struck me, I took half a dozen shots

as quickly as my strobe could recycle. Only when I got home and had my film processed could I truly appreciate just how colourful these submarine gardens were. The tints and shades read like a who's who of paint charts. Pumpkin and apricot. Pink and crimson. Saffron and canary. Lime and peacock. Along with white, off-white, ivory and cream. And any colour not represented among the invertebrates was sure to be worn by the reef fish hovering nearby.

The first day's activities set the pattern for nearly each day. Thirty minutes at 90 feet in the morning. A little island tour and/or some snorkeling on a shallow wreck or reef at luncheon. Then with our residual nitrogen sufficiently reduced, another 30-minute subventure, this time at 60 feet. Followed by the motorboat trip back. Looking after gear. Adding to the can pile. Freezing in the more-than-adequately air-conditioned dining room. And trying to stay awake during the after-dinner filmfest.

The second day we headed out to the second most popular Truk wreck. The still-oozing oil tanker *Shinkoku Maru*. The first thing you notice here are all the finny creatures. Haughty batfish greeted us at the surface. On the way down we swam through vast schools of silvery baitfish. While exploring the wreck itself, I came upon jacks, groppers and clouds of small, colourful reef fish. It may have been my imagination, but it certainly seemed like we were to encounter far more fish on the wrecks which had not been carrying explosives.

Also plentiful on the *Shinkoku* were big, white blobs of plankton. The unusual density of micro-organisms (and not-so-micro organisms) here is probably due to the ship's position out in the middle of the lagoon. At this point Gradvie did his party trick for



*Spread: The battered remains of the cockpit of a U.S. Betty bomber and inset, the cockpit inside.*



*Below: Human remains on the Shinkoku and decaying machine gun ammunition.*





## TRUK LAGOON — PART TWO

the tourists. He ducked into a compartment and emerged with three skulls and some femurs or ulnas or whatever for us to photograph. When we'd each taken token shots, back they went until the next intrepid explorers swept down.

We returned to dive the stern after lunch. The coral encrustation blanketing the ship not only offers underwater photographers superb subject matter, it's also providing marine biologists with heaps of useful information on invertebrate growth.

"... but it certainly seemed like we were to encounter far more fish on wrecks which were not carrying explosives."

In some cases, official records reveal to the minute when a ship went down and thus the earliest moment anything could have started wreck bedecking. The third morning we dived what in

retrospect has become my favourite wreck. The *Sankisan Maru* was a 365-foot munitions freighter that most likely went down with a good deal of noise. From bridge to stern nearly everything's been blown away. However, the three forward holds are intact. And loaded! Number one holds untidy heaps of cases and boxes of machine gun ammunition and warhead detonators. The policy of the administrators has long been to let the seawater naturally defuse all the ordinance in the lagoon, but no one knows for sure just how far nature has taken its course. So it's not a good idea to start banging these detonators against the bulkheads.

In the second hold I found bottles, cans, airplane engines and the skeletons of four trucks. Another six emaciated trucks sat on the deck above. Strangely, the tyres don't look too bad. As interesting as all this war material may be, it's the coral growth that really takes your breath away. The whole ship is festooned with 40 years worth of corals and other invertebrates displaying the most gorgeous colours and intricate designs. It made me wonder whether that witch with the gingerbread house might have had a sister who brought

her decorating talents down below. And to make the scene still more magic, the visibility was unquestionably the best we would experience. I'd estimate 100 feet. I shot both rolls in no time.

At lunchtime I snorkeled over the gunboat *Dai Na Hino Maru* using my Nikonos. I found this little wreck quite photogenic. Once I'd exhausted the picture possibilities (and myself from all the 40-foot freediving), I snorkeled closer to shore and discovered the remains of an airplane *Gradvie* didn't know existed. After the usual sandwich and orange soda, we dived the sub tender *Heian Maru*. Perhaps I had become blasé, but I found this one boring.

However, the following day we explored its sister tender, the *Rio de Janeiro Maru*. Resting on her starboard side, the ship's giant funnels, props, long companionways and cargo of different size warheads provided all sorts of excellent subject matter.

That afternoon we split our time at 60 feet between two plane wrecks, the first a Betty Bomber G4M1. Aside from the absence of its two engines, this medium-sized bomber appears from the outside to be in reasonably

good shape. It would seem the sessile life hereabouts isn't terribly fond of aluminium, because the plane's skin was mostly bare. I swam in through an opening near the tail and forward to the cockpit where a yellow trumpet-fish had settled in. From the rather radical rearrangement of the nose area, I expect the pilot would have experienced a none-too-gentle return to earth.

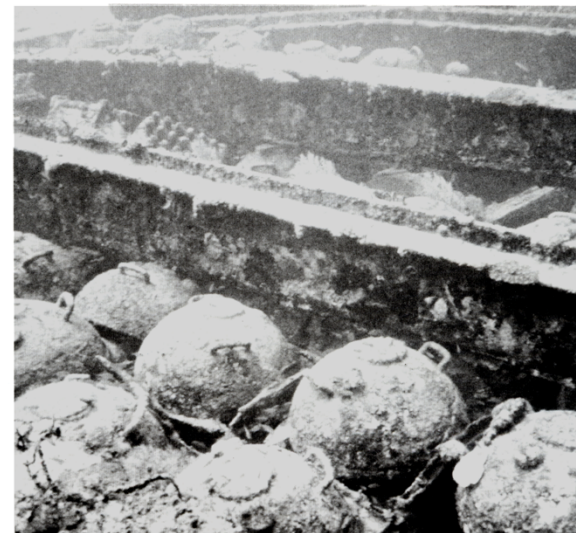
The second plane was an Emily H8K2, reputedly the finest flying boat in its class. With the emphasis on 'boat'. At 92 feet it was big enough. And inside the rib structure immediately reminded me of the ships we'd been diving the past several days. From a photographic standpoint both planes made very good subjects, in large part, I think, because you could get a much more complete sense of the entire craft. With the ships, no matter how hard one tried or how wide a lens one might use, their immense size and the limited visibility combined to restrict you from seeing anything more than a small part of some larger, undefined whole.

"As my underwater light picked out one beautiful cluster of coral after another, I found myself wondering whether Mitscher and his cohorts ever gave a thought to what they hath wrought."

The next morning we set out for the *Yamagiri Maru*, a transport that was carrying some thirty 18-inch warheads destined for the big-daddy battleships *Yamato* and *Mushashi*. (It would seem that Admiral Koga couldn't wait to load the latter's share aboard before shoving off.) The largest shells turned out during the war, they were said to have a range of 20 miles. Rosenberg and Graham write that they're "believed to be stable". How reassuring! Although the *Yamagiri*, which translated means 'misty mountain', was hit by both bombs and torpedoes, she's in pretty good condition.

After snorkeling round looking for sea-type shells during lunch, we returned to the *Fujikawa* and its bridge. For the first time during all

## TRUK LAGOON — PART TWO



Opposite page: The eerie stillness of the *Fujikawa*'s bridge. Above: Racks of anti-ship mines in the hold of the *San Furanshisuko*, marine growth was noticeably absent around munitions.

these dives I felt like I might have been intruding. We explored the bath area, complete with Japanese-style tiled tubs and Western-style urinals. Here the blanket of sediment was particularly thick and we had to move very carefully. I could just imagine the same dive with 15 pairs of fins swirling great brown clouds of silt

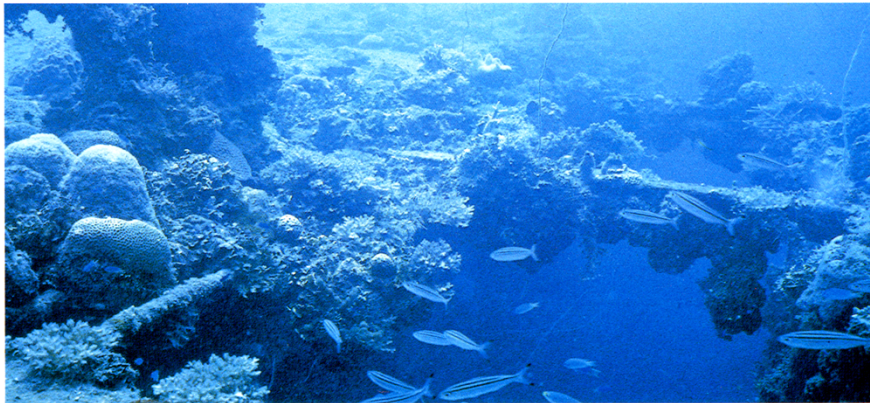
everywhere. Because the island structure suffered heavy bombing, enough light floods in through huge jagged holes to create exceptional photo opportunities.

Following another dive on the *Shinkoku* where I spotted a spotted eagle ray amid the same snowstorm of white plankton, we dived a newly-

Truly a water closet — directly over the lagoon!







The prolific coral life covering the collapsed deck of the Rio de Janeiro.

discovered wreck. Tentatively identified as the cargo ship *Kanshu Maru*, this one really had a virgin feel about it. Mainly because no one had ripped-off the bridge glasses, various pieces of china and a few other highly desirable odds and ends. I even noticed a nice branch of black coral at about 45 feet.

On our last day of diving we did things differently. Waiting until noon when the sun apogeed and afforded us maximum light, we made our only decompression dive. Fifteen minutes at 160 feet on the *San Furanshisuka Maru* with a one-minute stop at 20 feet and four minutes at 10. It turned out to

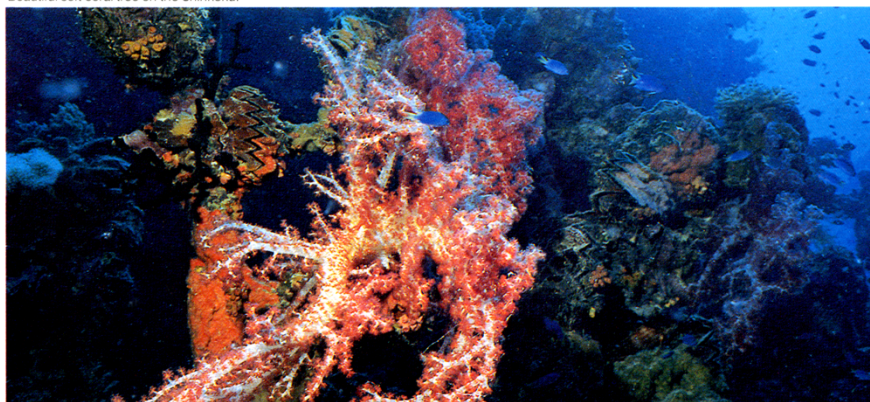
be a fantastic dive, well worth the little extra effort. The "San Francisco" has plenty to see. Three small tanks, the only type the Japanese had. Trucks. Half-trucks. Hundreds of round anti-ship mines racked in neat rows on the deck. A coral-covered 75 mm deck gun. I moved quickly from one subject to the next trying to record it all on both rolls of film. Because of the depth, the over-all bluish caste from the strobeless Nikonos seems much more appropriate.

That night we paid our fourth visit to the *Fujikawa* to see the flowers bloom. Very pretty, very peaceful. And a

fitting way to end our diving at Truk Lagoon. As my underwater light picked out one beautiful cluster of coral after another, I found myself wondering whether Mitscher and his cohorts ever gave a thought to what they hath wrought.

Looking back, Truk Lagoon lived up to all my expectations. And over those 10-15 years I'd come to expect a lot. Nothing like it exists anywhere on this planet. If you seek the ultimate diving experiences, there's no doubt in my mind that you must include this huge watery graveyard. O

Beautiful soft coral tree on the Shinkoku.



# You can count the ways to rent an Avis car on the fingers of one hand.

You really have to hand it to us. Look at all the ways we make reserving a shiny Ford as easy as possible for you.

**1 From your home or office.** You or your secretary can ring one of the more than 170 handy Avis locations scattered throughout Australia. And if you're not too far away, we'll deliver your other car.

We can also deliver your other truck, your other utility, your other campervan, your other Mini-Moke or your other 4-wheel-drive vehicle. (Depending on where you are and where you're going.)

**2 Through your travel agent.** Business or pleasure, if you're using a travel agent to make your airline reservations, have him reserve an Avis car at the same time.

**3 Through the airline, railway or shipping company.** When you're ordering your tickets directly, order an Avis car too. Just about every Australian airline, railway office and shipping company is equipped to handle Avis reservations for you.

**4 At the airport.** In some 90 airport terminals you'll find an Avis desk and an Avis girl eager to help. (We bid for this right, and we're proud of it.)

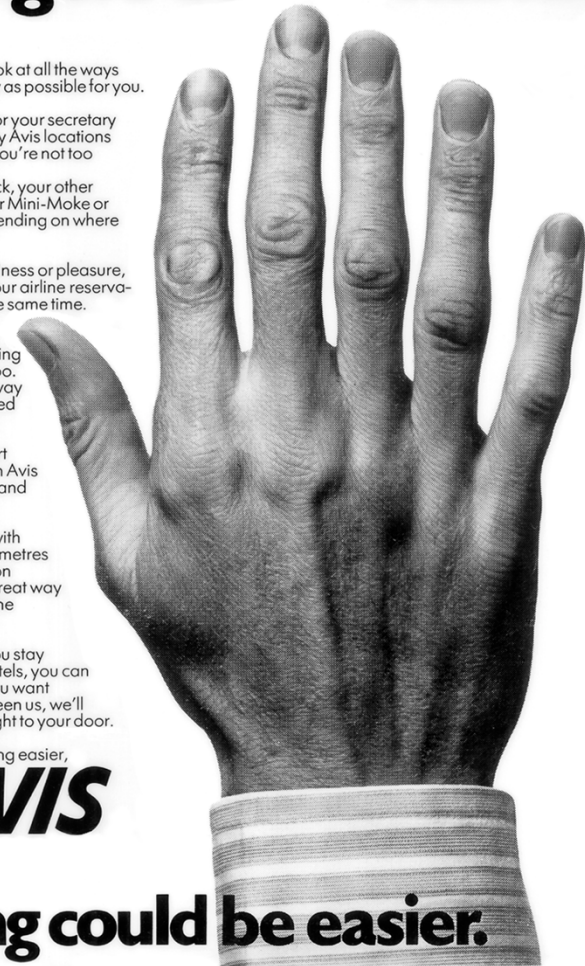
**5 In flight.** Reserving an Avis car with either Ansett or TAA while you're 9,000 metres in the sky is as easy as pushing the button right over your head. Besides being a great way to get a car, it's not a bad way to meet the hostess either.

**6 At your hotel or motel.** When you stay at one of Australia's major hotels or motels, you can just tell the girl on the switch what car you want and when and where you want it. Between us, we'll make sure your other car is delivered right to your door.

When it comes to making car renting easier, we win hands down. You hardly have to lift a finger. (Sorry.)

# AVIS

# Nothing could be easier.







Elkhorn coral (*Acropora palmata*), part of a shallow reef surrounding the Blue Hole off Belize. Yellowish cast is due to a 10Y filter.



A clump of unidentified zoanthids, Lord Howe Island, NSW.

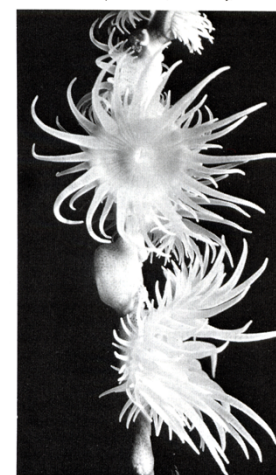
"Divers are perhaps the most common subjects for underwater photographs." So observes Howard Hall in his excellent instruction book *Guide to Successful Underwater Photography*.

He didn't have to qualify the comment with the word 'perhaps'. If you need any further evidence to confirm the dominance of the diver as subject matter, just take a gander at the covers of dive magazines, both local and imported, in any newsagency. (Some are now going so far as to feature divers not even diving.)

Inside you'll find more of the same. Photo after photo of web-footed humans relating to the underwater world and its denizens. Lately, these shots have tended to take two tacks: the extra-wide, low angle version showing a patch of reef in the foreground with the strobe highlighting a large fan or somesuch and the diver filling the negative space towards the surface. Then there's the close-up portrait of a diver staring goggle-eyed from within a garish plastic rim at a Seahorse or some other cute critter.

No doubt market research has determined that shots like these work most effectively in getting readers to identify with the sport. And to plunk

Sea-whip anemones (Subclass *Zoantharia*) under Point Perpendicular, Jervis Bay, NSW.



April/May 1985

down the purchase price of the magazine.

However, a second school of thought holds that many underwater photographers (and those editors who encourage them) have recently, if you'll pardon the expression, gone overboard. These purists regard taking pictures underwater as a form of nature or wildlife photography. For them, awkward, rubber-skinned amphibians with all sorts of dangling accoutrements are intruders and look quite out of place in the marine environment. (Or anywhere else, for that matter.)

What's more, they view those editors who insist on having divers stuck into nearly every shot as a rather insensitive lot. The type of people who might well have held the following apocryphal conversation with Ansel Adams when the great landscape photographer was still alive and clicking, "Terrific pic of the waterfall, mate, but do you have one with some tourists in it? Maybe a honeymoon couple, you know, for human interest".

The same type who might instruct the brilliant Australian naturalists Des and Jen Bartlett thusly, "Look, when you're shooting those lions and elephants and stuff, how about making sure there's a Land Rover in the background for scale".

It goes without saying that the least sensitive of this ilk are those editors whose own fully-captioned countenances keep cropping up among the diver shots they choose to run.

Back in the early black and white days, editors of diving publications could be forgiven for the abundance of diver shots, even all the ones that showed macho types grinning and bearing huge groupers with entrails spilling from jagged spear holes. After all, in those days these divers,

as pioneers of an unknown frontier, could claim to be heroes in their own right.

More to the point, of the few who did own some sort of leakproof camera set-up, most knew little about photography in general and underwater photography in particular. And that goes for the best-known and most-published divers, people like Cousteau and Hans Hass. For all their other abilities, they weren't exactly in the same league with Cartier-Bresson or Ernst Haas.

As the sport evolved, a growing group of underwater photographers, Bates Littlehales, Ron Church and Al Giddings among them, began to take a good, close look at the magnificence around them down there. Experimenting with ingenious equipment of their own design, notably macro accessories and watertight housings and flashes, this second generation introduced the world to the colour and glory of sea pens, angelfish, shrimp, anemones and a host of other spectacular subjects. During these still primitive days, underwater photographers in their naivete believed a well-composed invertebrate study or a striking fish portrait held enough inherent interest to make a fully satisfying shot. They felt no compunction to clutter their compositions with a token diver or two. And editors in their naivete put these diverless photos on many a front cover in the '60s and '70s. (It should be noted here that we're talking about quality work, photographs that adhered to the same basic tenets that make any graphic work exceptional. As opposed to those very common, very average snapshots which amount to little more than records of the existence of some underwater plant or animal.)

## THE CASE AGAINST SHOOTING DIVERS

By Gary Graf





Plate coral (Genus *Acropora*) reef near Heron Island, Qld. Opposite: Pod of juvenile Striped Catfish (*Plotosus anguillaris*) near Palm Beach, NSW.



Tree coral (*Dendronephthya* sp.), a quite common soft coral in the waters around Lord Howe Island.

Not even the purest of purists would insist there's never a time or a place for divers in underwater photographs. Even Ansel Adams shot the odd human being, as long as there was a reason. Where the diver plays an integral role in subventure, say exploring a cave, communing with a dolphin or setting up house in a saturation bell; that's all fine. And certainly, nothing could be more appropriate than divers investigating wrecks, swimming along companionways once swaggered along by other surface dwellers.

The distinction that the dedicated nature photographer makes is simply one of relevance. Does the diver belong? Is he or she adding to the photo or detracting? And here one should bear in mind that any element added to a shot almost automatically minimises the importance of any other element shown.

Of the periodicals that use underwater photography on a regular basis, the one that seems to best have its priorities in order must

be *National Geographic*. No gratuitous divers within their covers. Those who do appear, do so only to enhance the telling of the story.

Wouldn't it be nice if a dive magazine were to adopt a similar philosophy? To publish photos strictly on their own merits, as celebrations of that marvelous world down there. Or as a way to embellish or help explain an article. But never just to give the reader a warm feeling of belonging.

And wouldn't it be nicer still if that magazine were to demonstrate its courage by running such a photo on its front cover? But, of course, if that were to happen, who would buy such a magazine? Or read articles like this one?

Except, perhaps, you. ○

*Editor's note:* The opinions expressed by author Graf do not necessarily reflect those of the editor. However, you will see from the *What's Going Down* column in this issue that the author's comments have been carefully considered.

April/May 1985

# Without mercury, your water wouldn't be fit to drink.

It would look revolting. It would smell worse. And it would probably make you feel really crook.

The main reason your water comes gushing out pure and clear and perfectly safe to drink is the chlorine that goes into it first. Chlorine produced for the Water Board at the ICI plant at Botany.

Chlorine produced with the use of mercury.

If you're like most people, you've no doubt heard a fair bit in recent years about the dangers of heavy metals like mercury.

And if you live in the Sydney area, you've likely heard a fair bit in the past week about the mercury loss at our Botany plant.

Unfortunately, you've also heard some distortion of the facts.

It's true that mercury can be dangerous if you swallow it or absorb it through your skin.

However, it does occur naturally and is commonly used in thermometers, tooth amalgams and on the back of mirrors.

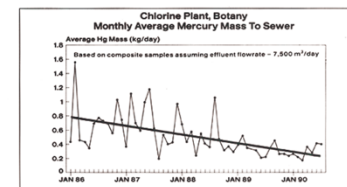
It's also true we lost about a kilogram of mercury on Thursday, July 26. But that's less than half a cup.

In fact, when you add up all the mercury released by us into the sewer during the whole month of July, it amounted to just about half that

allowed under our agreement with the Water Board.

And that includes the kilogram on July 26.

As you can see from the graph, the amount of mercury released by our Botany plant has fallen 62.5%



since 1986. But that reduction hasn't come cheaply.

At present we're spending \$120,000 a week on refining our processing equipment. And by the end of the year the bill will total \$3.5 million.

All to cut down mercury.

We wish we could use some other method to produce the chlorine. They do exist. But we simply couldn't afford to start all over again.

Yet chlorine is essential. So we intend to keep on producing chlorine for Sydney taps as responsibly as we can.

If you're still not sure how this mercury business affects you, we invite you to phone us on the numbers below between 8am and 5pm, any day including today and tomorrow.



**Botany Operations**

**(008) 025 138 (02) 695 2111**





It's no joke.

When it comes to funding road improvements, the Federal Government has been pretty tight-fisted.

Over the past six years they've actually slashed road funding by about 30 per cent, once you take inflation into account. As a result, some Australian roads rate among the most dangerous and deplorable in the civilised world.

It's not that the Government doesn't know better. Their own research clearly reveals the stupidity of their roads policy. In releasing *Road Crash Statistics Australia* last year, the then-Minister for Transport and Communications Support summed up: "Better roads had been shown to have substantially reduced Australia's road death toll."

This study by the Federal Office of Road Safety detailed specific examples. For instance, before the Mooney Mooney Creek Bridge in New South Wales opened in 1986, a nearby section of the Pacific Highway averaged nine fatalities a year. There were no fatalities in the first 15 months after the opening.

With the opening of the Wyong Bypass, also in New South Wales, crashes were reduced by 88 per cent, saving the community an estimated \$6.9 million a year.

Other Federal studies describe how replacing rural arterial roads with restricted access highways has led to a 70 per cent reduction in crashes.

There have also been 70 per cent reductions where urban freeways have replaced divided arterial roads.

Constructing passing lanes on Queensland's Bruce Highway has helped cut crashes by half along those stretches.

And using the Emerson Overpass in Adelaide to separate a major intersection completely eliminated crashes.

The list goes on. But the Federal Government continues to detour petrol taxes away from our roads.

Right now they're taking about 30 cents in tax for every litre of petrol you buy and returning only about five and a half cents of it

to roads. We want both the Federal Government and the Opposition to commit an extra two cents of the petrol tax you pay to roads. As the research proves, it would go a long way.

If you think the Federal Government should pay more attention to their own studies, call the NRMA on 260 9111 or 008 427 427. We'll explain how you can add your voice to our campaign.

**Where are the roads our petrol taxes pay for?**



APRIL/MAY 1986 \$3.00\* (NZ \$3.75)

# Scuba Diver

**DEPTH GAUGES:  
THE GOOD, THE BAD  
AND THE CHEAP!**

**GOING TO THE GBR?  
WE TAKE A TRYON TRIP**

**FISH AND THE SOLUNAR CALENDAR:  
PREDICTING THE BEST TIME TO DIVE**

**DIVE BOAT REVIEW  
— MARLIN BROADBILL**

**PLUS SIX OF THE BEST O/S DIVES:**  
**NIGHT-TIME ON WUVULU**  
**TONGA: BLACK CORAL KINGDOM**  
**TAKING IT EASY IN W. SAMOA**  
**NEW BRITAIN: WILD WALINDI**  
**THE LAID-BACK MALDIVES**  
**HAWAII DIVE-O**

**DOLPHIN INTERACTION  
— MONKEY MIA, WA**





# WESTERN SAMOA

... For those who like a little  
Paradise with their diving.

by Gary Graf

It says a lot for the beauty of Western Samoa when you can still say it was a terrific holiday, despite problems with travel and accommodation, rain, rough seas and ravenous *Acanthaster planci*. But it's the truth.

The holiday didn't get off to a good start, I had to delay my flight for a week, because the Fijian Government seconded the aircraft to give a Chinese politician a tour of the area. The trip didn't end too well, either. I couldn't leave, because the airliner had broken down!

The flight to Upolu (the most populous of the four major islands comprising Western Samoa) left Sydney at about eight o'clock on a Sunday evening. After refuelling in Nadi and crossing the International Dateline, we arrived at Faleolo Airport just before six the same morning. It was dark when the Boeing 737 touched down, but by the time we cleared customs, the sun had cleared the horizon.

My gear and I were collected by a mini bus from the Samoan Hideaway Beach Resort, which lies along Mullivai Beach some 45 minutes away on the other side of the island. We turned left (on the right side of the road) out of the airport, past a few loose horses and straight into a pungent smoke haze, my first sign of the profound influence missionaries have had here since first arriving in 1830. The smoke came from cooking ovens.

It seems the Sabbath rates as such a special day, families start preparing

Sunday dinner first thing in the morning. Peering through the smoke, I spotted more evidence of the religious fervour which transformed these former headhunters into one of the world's most modest — even prudish — peoples. (I'm inclined to believe Margaret Mead's celebrated account of Samoan life, particularly the sexual mores, may have been somewhat tempered by wishful thinking!)

Virtually everyone — man, woman, child, young, old, fat and skinny — sported *lava lavas*, a colourfully-patterned piece of cloth wrapped around the waist like a long skirt. I learned later the missionaries had so impressed Samoans with the virtue of modesty, many islanders actually have special *lava lavas* to wear when bathing or showering.

We drove on, scattering dogs, chickens and pigs; talk about free range! The road taking us to Hideaway was in amazing shape considering it dated back to World War II. Apparently, a bunch of bored U.S. Navy SeaBees, having nothing better to do, decided to see how fast they could lay down a road straight across the island.

As we passed one village after another — there are more than 200 on Upolu — I noticed one aspect of Samoan life could hardly be deemed modest. At least half the houses were the traditional open-sided *fales*.

These homes are little more than an ellipse of teak or mahogany poles

spaced a metre or so apart, embedded around the edge of a concrete floor and topped by a thatched roof, or (in many instances) a more contemporary galvanised version. Personal touches appeared in the form of brightly-painted trim, equally colourful gardens and, oddly enough, rather ornate graves.

As if to atone for the decidedly public approach to domestic life, most villages have as their most prominent edifice a church. It could be Congregational, Catholic, Methodist, Mormon or some other denomination, but it is prominent. In many cases, massive; and, in every case, totally incongruous.

The road continued past fields of stubby plants with large, heart-shape leaves — taro. The major cash and subsistence crop for Samoans. From the starchy tuberous roots they make a stodgy bread, the main constituent of many a Samoan's diet, and the main reason for many a Samoan's stodgy appearance!

Eventually, I began to catch fleeting glimpses of the ocean. As the sun climbed higher, I also became aware of a palpable moistness in the air. Then we were turning right at a church, down a dirt track and into the grounds of Hideaway. The resort's large main building had all the usual features associated with a resort hotel: lobby, office, bar, dining room and kitchen.

While I stood there, taking it all in, one of the proprietors walked up and

Approaching Nu'usafe'e Islet in Hideaway's glass-bottom boat. The native is Suili, a scuba student and our faithful companion on every dive trip.



## WESTERN SAMOA

introduced himself. Robin Poole: expatriate Kiwi, former local manager of Polynesian Airways and a long-time resident of Western Samoa. He would prove to be the most accommodating of hosts and an impressive fount of information about his adopted islands.

Outside under the palm trees sat nine duplex bungalows, their elliptical shapes and rows of louvred windows obviously patterned after the native *fales*. The beach lay only metres away, stretching left and right as far as you could see. Beyond, as green as an emerald, was the sandy lagoon; then the fringing reef, sending up white spume. On the other side lay the deep, blue ocean.

During the next fortnight, I would have plenty of opportunities to see first-hand what stirred Robert Louis Stevenson and Rupert Brooke to write so rapturously of Western Samoa. Heading back towards shore after a dive, I'd often find myself staring transfixed, marvelling at just how lovely Upolu was.

On those too-rare sun-drenched days, the island seemed to glow between sea and sky; the lush, green tropical vegetation blanketing the slopes down to where pristine white beaches lay between black volcanic cliffs. I had one recurring thought: this is the way it's supposed to be, this is just what a tropical South Seas island should look like.

Even on rainy, grey days — when Upolu sat shrouded in mist, with the bright colours well dampened — the island was still beautiful, but in a muted, mystical way.

Up close, the land's impression of utter beauty intensified. On sunny days, everything seemed to sparkle, especially the flowers. Hibiscus, both the common large, red variety and the smaller ones of deep reds and yellows, appeared to be the most prevalent bloom. I saw flame-like poincianas, bougainvillea and red ginger plants, with their odd fleshy petals.

However, if I had to nominate the most spectacular plant, it would have to be the frangipani tree, its deep green leaves contrasting so strikingly with the delicate white flowers. There were lots more, but you would need someone more knowledgeable than I to identify them all.



Above: Tree coral (*Dendronephthya* sp.), a common soft coral in Upolu waters, most often seen deflated.

Top Right: Regal angelfish (*Pygopittes diacanthus*), a not particularly shy species.

Centre Right: Emperor angelfish (*Pomacanthodes imperator*). This is not the ancient one I've written of, but was found in the same area near Action Rock.

Right: The magnificent Pink sea fan (Family Melithaeidae) near Nu'usafe'e Islet.



## WESTERN SAMOA

I also saw sweeping vistas from the mountains; lava fields; rivers, lakes and waterfalls; coconut plantations; amazing tropical plants; and kilometres of palm-fringed beaches, often unmarked by a single footprint. In a way, I almost welcomed the rain as a sort of respite from the intensity of all the magnificence.

Once settled into my room, I went looking for Mike Batterton and Cecily Newling, the young New Zealand couple who run Hideaway's diving operation. It was they who broke news about the trade winds. Springing up at about 10 in the morning and dying down around four in the afternoon, the trades had been blowing for a couple of weeks when I arrived at the end of April.

We then discussed Upolu's general weather patterns. The tourist brochures are misleading, particularly for anyone mainly

interested in diving. There are two distinctly different weather patterns affecting Upolu, thanks to a volcanic mountain range which divides the island east to west.

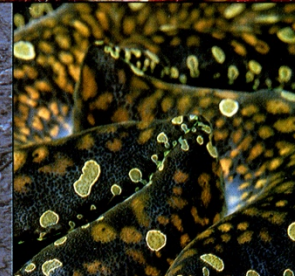
Apia and almost all the tourist accommodation is located on the north side, so you only read about northern climate conditions. However, the best diving — and the one resort set up for divers (Hideaway) — is on the southern shore.

Travel agents will tell you (as they did me) the wet season extends from October to March. But the southern side doesn't have a true wet; instead, there's a period of short daily showers.

More importantly, during this rainy spell the seas stay flat and visibility regularly exceeds 30 metres, sometimes twice that. So for divers visiting Hideaway, the recommended time is around December, especially if you also want to experience the colourful Christmas festivities staged by the Samoans.

Incidentally, part of the reason for the contradictory advice on local weather is, it's changed in recent years. As with many people in the area, Samoans blame the French and their stubborn insistence on being an active member of the global nuclear family.

The trades meant Mike and Cecily initiated a routine which saw us starting out to nearby reefs



Main Pic: Samoan women washing clothes in a handy river.

Top Left: Profile of fish believed to be a bream. Mike and Cecily, Hideaway's divemasters, have several of these large fish trained to appear immediately for a handout.

Centre Left: Unidentified hermit crab.

Left: A specimen of the not-uncommon junior-sized giant clam *Tridacna maxima*.

Above: Unidentified fish among staghorn coral.



## WESTERN SAMOA

immediately after an early breakfast and again in the afternoon when the trades abated. Even so, the swells were usually heavy and the visibility limited to about 15 metres.

It got to the stage where I could pre-empt each subventure from the surface, looking down to see how far I could see, how dramatically the fish were being swept back and forth and how much the coral had regenerated.

Mike said a visiting marine biologist estimated the Crown of Thorns had feasted on the local coral about 10 years earlier. A reef theoretically takes some 40 years to regain its original splendour after such an infestation, so the foundation was a colourless, shapeless rubble.

The most prevalent coral species were *Acropora*. Smallish growths of most types of staghorn were sprouting everywhere, as well as bush, plate and knobby coral. Here and there, clumps of *stylophora*, leaf, mushroom, honeycomb, mosaic and brain corals had begun to establish themselves. Soft corals such as *gorgonia*, sea whips, leather, opal bubble and tree corals — the latter generally deflated — were in evidence as well.

I also spotted the occasional junior-size giant clam (*Tridacna maxima*); lots of large anemones; several varieties of sea stars and urchins; some zoanthids; and surprisingly few sponges.

If the corals and other invertebrates didn't prove as grand and profuse as I might have wished, I certainly couldn't 'carp' about the fish life. At every dive site, we encountered wall-to-wall finny creatures and more different species than I had ever seen anywhere.

An exporter of marines for aquarium enthusiasts should be able to become very rich in a very short time. Not unexpectedly, on each occasion I decided to concentrate on shooting fish with a 105mm micro lens, the swell and/or visibility proved especially bad!

We made a couple of hour-long trips to a picturesque islet called Nu'usafe'e in Hideaway's newly-launched glass-bottom boat, *sans* its glass bottom. While awaiting an overseas shipment, they were using a steel plate . . .

Nu'usafe'e looks like one of those drop-in-the-ocean islands: a thick clump of green foliage ringed by a sparkling white beach. Just on the ocean side of its fringing reef is an undulating area of coral ridges and sandy gutters running down to about 40 metres.

Again, the staghorns dominate, but you will also see numerous brilliantly-

hued tree corals; their pink, orange, lavender and red polyps bristle splendidly. Of special note was a huge pink sea fan at a depth of some 20 metres.

There was also a phone box — you heard right, a genuine telephone booth, standing on the sand in about 35 metres of water. Nearby, a garden of eels were poking up out of the sand.

Between dives I made a couple of trips with Mike and Cecily into Apia, the capital of Western Samoa. The main road twists along the waterfront, interrupted by some roundabouts. Lining one side you will find the town's



The tomb of a former Samoan king on the outskirts of the capital of Apia.

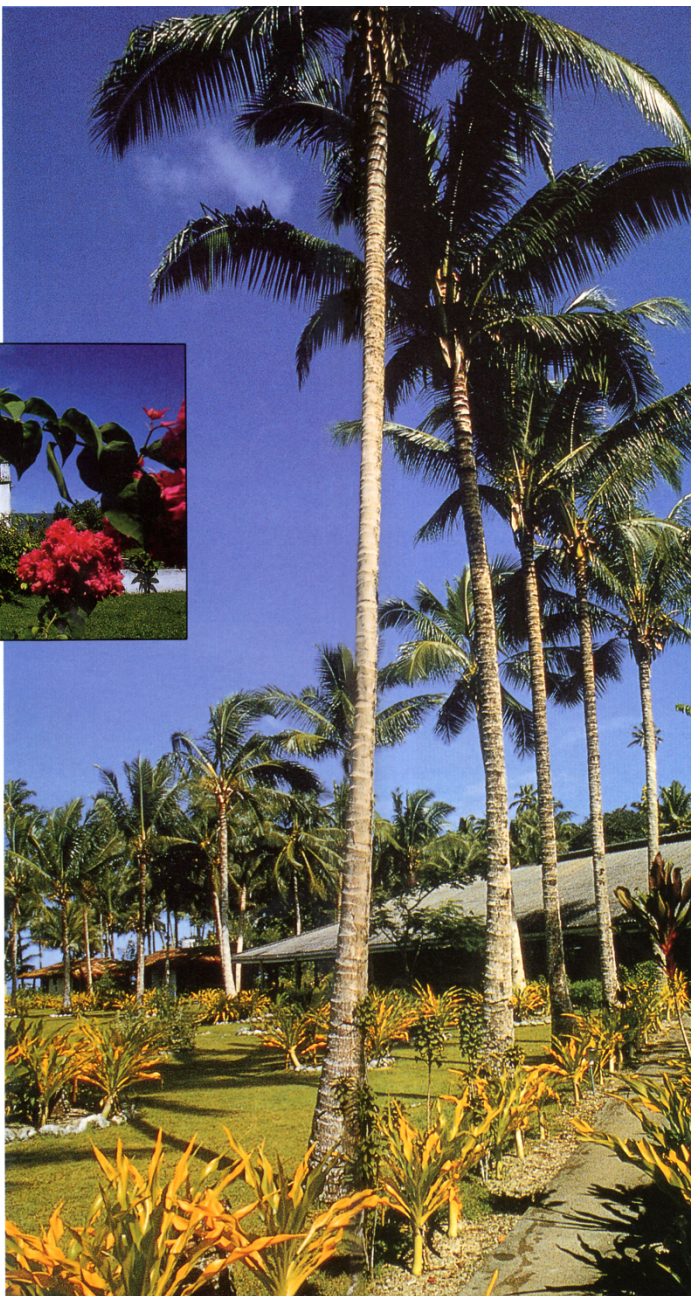
legacy of the old days as a South Seas trading port. Large, weathered wooden buildings, bearing such historical names as Burns Philp, Morris Hedstrom and J. H. Carruthers.

In between, more modern (but considerably less distinguished) stand the expected handicrafts shops, banks, travel agencies, airline offices, restaurants and snack bars, including a pizza place. Plus hotels, most notably the celebrated Aggie Grey's.

By the way, there's a widespread belief the redoubtable Aggie served as inspiration for James Michener's *Bloody Mary*. If you've read *Tales of the South Pacific*, you'll probably remember *Bloody Mary* was Tonkinese (Vietnamese), an ethnicity which considerably added to her persona. I was told Aggie is half German, half Samoan. Whatever, she definitely bears no physical resemblance to Michener's memorable character.

On one Apia journey I brought my gear to dive Palolo Deep, Western

Buildings of the Samoan Hideaway Beach Resort lie beneath towering palms surrounded by neat, well-tended gardens.



## WESTERN SAMOA

Samoa's first marine reserve. The official government brochure says: "... Palolo Deep is typical of the hundreds of deeps in the Western Samoan lagoons . . . and is noted for the beauty of its coral formations . . ." Unofficially, I heard this 'natural' hole was actually created by dredging fill for the reclaimed part of Apia.

After diving the area, I know who I believe. I saw lots of fish, some scattered outcroppings of unspectacular corals, bunches of unusual zoanthids . . . and tonnes of loose silt.

Although Western Samoa can claim the distinction of being the first Polynesian nation to declare its independence, the powers-that-be in Apia continue to demonstrate a real reluctance to upset the *status quo*. Unlike virtually every other South Pacific island nation, Western Samoa has not joined the head-long pursuit of the almighty tourist dollar.

Certainly, the government makes the usual welcoming noises to *palagis* (non-Samoans), but in a whisper, not a shout. Foreign investment is carefully tolerated rather than widely courted.

Accommodations are comfortable but far from opulent. The eating

Indians: they were officially asked to leave after independence.

Another example of the Government's longing for the old ways is its interpretation of the parliamentary system. The concept of one person, one vote doesn't exist in Western Samoa. In line with a tradition some 2000 years old, local authority still rests with village chiefs called *matais*. Only a *matai* can vote. Of course, in a way he (or she) is representative, having been selected by the villagers.

*Matais* are all-powerful. They make all decisions affecting the village, including the determination of punishment when a villager breaks the law. The worst sentence is banishment; not much of a solution when you realise banished villagers generally end up in a slum area near Apia.

The development of the slum has brought the almost inevitable result that the petty crime rate in towns is on the rise. So far, the police force, such as it is, seems to do little more than direct rush hour traffic. The one jail rarely holds an miscreants.

On my last day of diving, we went into Apia early to run a few errands before heading toward the Aleipata district at the eastern tip of Upolu. Along the way I took a dip in Fatumea Pool, a small natural basin fed by a freshwater stream, or spring, which flows from a cave beneath the Puila Methodist Theological College. I mention this episode only because it's one of the ballyhooed things to do in Western Samoa. Three minutes was enough for me.

Although I found myself underwhelmed by Fatumea, the drive along the coast to the pool and then over Mafa Pass to Aleipata was nothing short of sensational. We drove past unspoiled villages, through magnificent tropical vegetation, up a winding mountain track with panoramic look-outs and down to what must be one of the most lovely palm-fringed shorelines anywhere in the South Pacific.

We had journeyed to Aleipata the previous day as well, but coming from the other direction. Both times we travelled in Hideaway's Toyota van, with the 15-foot Avon inflatable on the roof. On the first occasion, Mike and I had dived between Nu'utele and Nu'ulua, two islands which appear to extend the mountain range into the sea. It was nothing special, but the afternoon dive turned out to be something else.



The common red ginger plant with its succulent petals.

establishments will keep you from starving, but hardly titillate the discerning palate. Sports facilities for golf, tennis and lawn bowls exist, but aren't what you'd call world class.

By the same token, you won't find any big, golden M's, flashing neon lights or prideless natives with their hands out. You also won't find many



Continued from page 45

Weeks earlier, Mike and Cecily had spotted a saddle formation rising to within three metres of the surface and not too far offshore. For reasons which would soon become obvious, they christened the place Action Rock. Until I arrived, only one other diver had visited it. I had the honour of being the fourth.

Even before we dropped anchor, it started to look good. Within six or seven metres of the boat a turtle lay basking on the surface. About four metres below, a large, sleek shape which could only be a shark was cruising around. As we got directly over one of the ridges, we could see huge shoals of fish through the clearest water yet.

Mike and I hurried over the side, descending into dense clouds of blue and yellow fusiliers, big-eyed trevally, large batfish and an unusual silvery fish which appeared to propel itself by flapping dorsal and ventral fins from side to side.

I saw a large school of moorish idols, a few of those bizarrely-marked clown triggerfish and dozens of other colourful species. In about 15 metres of water there was a fine black coral tree covered with a cork-like substance and lots of crinoids. The turtle flipped by for a closer look. Then the shark.

From the surface, Mike and Cecily had decided it must be a Black-tip reef shark, mainly because that happened to be the type they ran into almost exclusively in these waters. I couldn't see any black tip — anywhere. What I *could* see was this two metre long eating machine which seemed a bit too interested in us.

Later, after consulting some books, we would identify our playmate as a whaler, a shark I've come to distrust implicitly over the years. Mike said while I was headfirst into a hole photographing a gigantic moray, the shark displayed a disconcerting interest in my waving fins. Mike was disconcerted; I was oblivious.

Anyway, after such an eventful dive, we had no doubt about the site of my final two subventures. Next day we were back, having crossed Mafa Pass. Again we plunged into vast schools of fusiliers, trevally and those fish with the weird swimming stroke, plus all the others in less numbers. Including that self-same shark. A well-developed sense of territoriality probably fuelled its fascination with us: either that or hunger.

However, following a few passes, the shark seemed to lose interest and

disappeared in the blue haze. We continued exploring and photographing the fantastic fauna.

About 25 metres down Mike spied an enormous, old emperor angelfish; judging from the way its mouth had grown up and out, I'd have to guess the fish was about as ancient as they get. On the way back up we found the turtle sleeping in a cave. Naturally, we were both out of film.

We returned after lunch with freshly-loaded cameras for a third exhilarating dive. The whaler showed up as soon as we entered the water, more aggressive than ever. It tried circling us, but we kept our backs to a wall. So it began a series of figure-eight manoeuvres, each one bringing the shark a little nearer.

Throwing caution to the waves, I swam out towards the whaler, shooting one photo after another. But it showed itself to be less than intimidated and continued to close. Then my strobe flashed brightly enough to make the shark flinch, at which point it turned tail, not to be seen again.

The rest of the dive, while less eventful, provided plenty of photo opportunities, and I climbed back aboard the rubber boat feeling nicely sated. And thinking, about time.

I began by saying I really enjoyed my stay in Western Samoa. You may wonder why if, apart from the last three subventures, the diving wasn't all that crash-hot.

There were two compensating reasons: one was the island itself. I've already attempted to communicate a little of its idyllic beauty. Suffice to say, I can think of no more perfect place to get away from it all without sacrificing creature comforts.

Then there were the people. Robin Poole, Mike Batterton, Cecily Newling — all were friendly and helpful above and beyond the call of duty. But the people who really affected me were the Samoans I met.

Reserved at first (due, I believe, to a refreshing lack of presumptuousness), they warmed as you came to know them, becoming as friendly, open and charming as any people anywhere. Perhaps I can give a better idea of the Western Samoan character through a few random observations.

Only the most generous of Westerners would describe the stolid Polynesian as handsome. But, thanks to intermarriage with Chinese and Solomon Islanders brought in as indentured servants to work on German plantations, some Western Samoans are quite stunning.

Moreover, no matter how lacking in subtlety their facial features or how

extravagant their girths, Samoans move with an assured grace which would make Fred Astaire green with envy. Add to that their sense of humour: if you want to get a good, hearty laugh from a Samoan, try something basic. Like falling off a log and breaking your neck.

However, despite 150 years of missionary zeal, many Samoans still harbour some primitive beliefs. They're afraid of certain animals which might possess them; young girls have a similar fear of old women. Many islanders still won't travel over the mountains at night because the *umus* (ghosts) might get them. And some won't live upstairs for the same reason.

Adding to the confusion, in the Samoan family unit the youngest child is raised as a girl — regardless of sex — to care for its parents when they're elderly. As you can well imagine, this can lead to misunderstandings among those unfamiliar with the practice.

Samoans, as with other Polynesians, place great stock in their kava ceremony, where all, including guests, are expected to drink the mild narcotic from a communal bowl.

Their communal entertainment is called a *fia fia*. I witnessed two, staged by the staff of Hideaway. Forty-five minutes of strenuous singing and dancing capped by a fire dance. While many movements might be termed suggestive, it would seem the missionaries were quite successful in getting the Samoans to clean up their acts.

Consider this excerpt from *The Encyclopaedia of Samoa* published in 1907: "When this skilled dance was concluded . . . the males who had danced exchanged girdles and commenced a variety of antics and buffoonery which formed a prelude to the closing saturnalia, of which a description is inadmissible, but which was always received with shouts of laughter and approval from the onlookers."

Virtually everyone you talk to on Upolu, both white and native, will disclaim any knowledge of such 'night dances', but I have it on good authority they're still performed. But not widely — and with a minimum of PR. Probably another government plot to keep tourism down.

In any event, Western Samoa offers a lot more than diving. And I enthusiastically recommend these islands to anyone who'd like to mix a little paradise with his or her diving. Especially if you go at the right time of year.



April/May

RED IS WARM, EXCITING, BOLD,  
VIBRANT, DARING, THRILLING, ALIVE,  
POWERFUL, FIERY, DOMINANT, GLOWING  
AND SEXY AS HELL.

CAMPARI IS RED.

Campari is also a light, refreshing change of pace. Afternoon or evening. Before meals or after. With a variety of mixes.

**Campari & Soda:**  
Pour 1/3 Campari and 2/3 soda over ice in a tall glass. Add a slice of orange.

**Campari & Tonic:**  
1/3 Campari and 2/3 tonic water over ice in a tall glass. Squeeze in a wedge of lemon.

**Negroni:**  
1/3 Campari, 1/3 gin, 1/3 red vermouth and ice. Shake, then strain into a cocktail glass. Add a slice of orange.

Salute.

**CAMPARI.**  
ACQUIRE  
SOME  
TASTE.