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*Bret Gilliam, president of Ocean Tech and chairman of the board of NAUI, sent us his thoughts on our article.*

Dear *In Depth*,

You guys were right on point with the article on the deaths of the divers in Palau. Surface signaling apparatus should be a part of every diver's standard equipment for *every* dive. We have the economical tools to provide at least a fighting chance for rescue if an inflatable "sausage" and a flasher are carried. As you note, these items are small enough to be carried without intrusion and cheap enough to remove a financial obstacle.

I have spent far too many occasions in my career abandoned by third world boat drivers (through a variety of scenarios). If you have not experienced the singular pleasures of watching the sun set over the Yucatan as you drift north at 4 knots past Cozumel while your boat steams anxiously in the opposite direction . . . well, you really haven't seen the island with the same appreciation as one who watches the lights of Carlos & Charlie's fade between wave crests. After my last thrill-packed drift into oblivion in 1989 that lasted nearly 4 hours, I went out and bought a carton of "Com-2-Me" floats and gave them out like cigars from a proud dad. Now I also carry the Helix strobe for possible night situations and some orange smoke flares for the day whenever my schedule has me in real or potential drift situations, or if I don't know the boat operator. And I've used them every year when Mr. Murphy inevitably strikes.

I'm going to see that we place more emphasis on such devices within NAUI's courses and particularly in the new training texts and videos which we are developing for introduction at DEMA 1995. Thanks for an excellent article, long overdue for many.

*The issue is not that the waters of Palau and Cozumel are unsafe. The currents are what makes the diving so good, because they attract and support a huge variety of*

*marine life. When we dive these places, we expect strong, variable currents. However, we don't expect the dive operators to leave us with our legs dangling in the water. As we pointed out in the April issue, it's our responsibility to carry safety devices. After listening to more stories of drifting off into the sunset, I believe it may also be our responsibility to demand that the boats we hire to take us to such spots be equipped with radios and have an emergency plan ready to implement quickly if something goes wrong.*

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## Flotsam & Jetsam

### See the Whales

New England, the West Coast, Hawaii, Argentina, and the *Coral Star* in the Silver Banks all have good whale watching. After you've seen all of those, try the small town of Kaikoura, on the eastern coast of New Zealand's South Island. The area is known for 15 different species of whales (including sperm whales!) and dolphins that usually hang out less than 12 miles from the coast. Contact Nature Watch Charters, tel. 64-3319-5662, or Kaikoura Tours at tel. 64-3319-5045.

### Tuna Melt (in Your Mouth)

It was Friday night at a sushi bar when I first tasted *toro* — the fatty belly meat of the giant bluefin tuna. As the Japanese waitress explained, *toro* is to *maguro* — ordinary tuna — what a Steinway is to a Yamaha.

I'm no pianist, but the Steinway of fishes was indeed remarkable. So it was with my

usual sense of bad timing that I found in the next day's mail the June *Harper's*, featuring an article by John Seabrook with the guilt-inducing title, "Death of a Giant: Stalking the Disappearing Bluefin Tuna." The article is the Stradivarius of nonfiction: required reading for anyone interested in the ocean. Now I'll have to add *toro* to the list of undersea creatures, like squid and *tridacna* clam, that cause me more shame than satisfaction to eat.

Consider these facts before next you dine on tuna at the sushi bar: Since the Japanese market for giant bluefin opened in the mid-'70s, the Western Atlantic population (chiefly off New England and Canada's Georges Bank) has dropped from 220,000 to 25,000 — a 90% plunge.

A single bluefin sold for \$83,500 a few years ago. Another one that might seem identical to you or me could

sell for only \$3,000. To understand the difference, you have to be Japanese, and a master; such things as color, feel, and fat distribution are all part of it. The best *toro*, of course, is all sent to Japan, and even there is not available to the public, but instead reserved for power dinners for the nation's governing and business elite.

To catch the bluefin, fishermen resort to a variety of methods, including harpooning them and delivering an electric charge through the dart before dispatching them with bullets to the head. The electric shock is necessary to subdue a fish that can "take out 600 feet of line in 30 seconds, that will fight until its muscles burn up and its heart explodes."

To prevent commercial extinction of the bluefin tuna — the giants of today are 30 to 40 years old — the World Wildlife Fund and the Audubon Society will again attempt to list the giant bluefin as an endangered species at the next CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species) meeting in Florida in November. Past efforts have caused uproar in Japan and been shelved. Since the giant bluefin is the most valuable wild animal in the world and the top status food of Japanese culture, it won't be an easy fight. If you're on the side of the fish, you can contribute by writing Carl Safina, Living Oceans Program, Audubon Society, 700 Broadway, New York, NY 10003, 212-979-3000, or Mike Sutton, World Wildlife Fund, 1250 24th St. NW, Washington, DC 20037, 202-293-4800.

## How Could We?

Dear Editor: In your March, 1994, issue, you made what seemed like a rather shameless

plug for Innerspace Vision trips run by Doug Perrine. Such a reference would be totally inappropriate for a consumer newsletter except for fact that everything you said is absolutely true. I have made two trips with Doug Perrine and have nothing but good things to say about Doug. He does a wonderful job organizing the trips and oversees every detail. Doug is also an expert photographer and readily shares his experiences with those on the trips.

I spent two weeks in Galapagos with Doug and Godfrey Merlen. It was one of the most amazing diving experiences in my more than thirty years of scuba diving experience.

I highly recommend Doug Perrine for a great scuba diving adventure. The only reservation I would make about Doug's trips is that they are for experienced divers, but Doug makes a point of screening people who go on his trips to be sure that the diving would not be inappropriate for them. — Gregory W. Prian, M.D., Phoenix, AZ

## Technically Speaking

Technical Diving International, the third training agency specializing in nitrox, mixed gas, deep air and other technical diving applications, has been formed. TDI will be headquartered in Key Largo, Florida.

Bret Gilliam, president of Ocean Tech and chairman of the board for NAUI, is a founding member, as well as Dr. Bill Hamilton, Ph.D., and John Crea, prominent physiologists and gurus of custom dive tables.

Contact Technical Diving International, 621 Cuda Lane, Key Largo, FL 33037, telephone 305-853-0966, fax 305-852-3908.

## In Depth

*In Depth* is the consumer newsletter for sport divers that reviews scuba destinations and equipment. We accept no advertising.

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