

fast tenders that are very easy to get back on. Plenty of space to relax during surface time. Two multilevel camera tables with central charging station. Large camera platform on each dive tender.

***Sun Dancer II*, January-February 2001, Vicki Singley, Houston, TX.**

Vis: 50-100 ft. Water: 80-84 F. Dives logged: 100. Dive restrictions:

Resurface at approx. one hour.

Outstanding trip. My only complaint would be going to Blue Corner 3 times — 2 was plenty. Had only mild currents at Blue Corner but strong current at dives at Peleilu — very exciting stuff! Saw sharks on every dive, couple of mantas, and loads of turtles. Had 4-5 dives a day. Crew was outstanding and helpful. The captain, Raymond, was amazingly skilled and very friendly and helpful with divers. Food was excellent, accommodations very nice. *Sun Dancer* is a beautiful boat. Service was top-notch, with crew always there to provide whatever you needed. Thumbs up all the way around. Bring a long 3 mm wetsuit (I had a shortie) — much better for multiple dives over multiple days, especially in current.

***Sun Dancer II*, March 2001, Jack and Debbie Gibson, Dallas, TX.**

Experience: 501-1000 dives. Vis: 80 to 125 Feet. Water: 79 to 81 F, calm currents. Having read about the coral bleaching we did not see nearly as much as we feared. We were told this was partly because the *Dancer* crew chose the best reefs and partly because the reefs are recovering faster than expected. Jellyfish lake is back —

they were just as thick as when we visited four years ago (before el Niño). We dove Blue Corner four times and it was great each time, producing gray reef sharks, white tips, black tips, a turtle, eagle rays, and even schooling Moorish idols. Though most of the regular crew had the week off, the replacement crew provided the same quality service that we have come to expect after many Peter Hughes cruises. Provided a separate camera rinse tank and camera table, E6 processing each night.

***Sun Dancer II*, July 2001, Tom Wardle (twardle@attglobal.net)**

Canal Fulton, OH. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 50 to 75 Feet. Water: 80 to 85 F, calm. First live aboard experience. This crew worked well together. They went out of their way to be helpful and made an old grumpy diver a happy camper. The food was excellent and there was always plenty. Only six divers on board and we all got our own stateroom. Two to a cabin would be crowded, but manageable. How is it possible to go through 40 rolls of film in two weeks? E-6 Processing onboard.

PAPUA NEW GUINEA

***Chertan*, September 2000, Allan and Barbara Jones (abjones@pacbell.net)**

Anaheim, CA. Vis: 60-140 ft. Water: 78-82 F. Dive restrictions: Common sense. This was our 6th trip to PNG and 5 of these were on the *Chertan*. This is a family run operation and caters to the experienced and mid level diver. Their area of specialty is macro-mid range photography. The

boat is 70' long and sleeps 12 in 6 A/C cabins. The captain and crew dive with you for spotting of critters. The captain is a long term resident of PNG and knows the area intimately. Food is served family style and is slanted towards American tastes with some oriental options. Dietary considerations are well received. This is an operation where you can put your photo hit list together and get your shots. There are other larger boats operating in this area. But you and 23 others may be dropped on the dive site to fend for your selves. (Ph: 675-64-11167 (PNG); fax 675-64-11291 (PNG); e-mail info@Chertan.com; website www.chertan.com)

Chertan, Milne Bay, April 2001, Charles R. Stearns, Stone Mountain, GA. We flew Airniuguini from Singapore to Port Moresby and after over-nighting at the Gateway Hotel flew to Gurney (Aloutu). Port Moresby can also be reached through Cairns. The Gateway Hotel was clean, comfortable with a good restaurant. The nearby craft market is one of the best places to purchase artifacts but it is closed on Sundays. After we registered we went to our rooms and fifteen minutes later were in the restaurant for breakfast. During the hour we were in the restaurant, one guest had his room entered and robbed. There was no sign of forced entry. He had left his billfold in a backpack. Apparently he had been observed retrieving his credit card from the back pack in the reception area. Four hundred dollars had been removed. Nothing else was disturbed.

The manager on duty at the hotel was summoned and seemed quite concerned and apologetic. The hotel has made no offer to reimburse the victim. The next morning we flew 45 minutes to Aloutu (Gurney field) and were greeted by Rob Vanderloss, owner and captain of the MV Chertan, with two vans. We were whisked to the boat, had an opportunity to do some shopping at a market near the dock and quickly were underway. Cabin 3 and 4 have the most space. I am 6'2" and fit comfortably in those bunks. Some of the other cabins had significantly less head room. There are two full heads and showers on the main deck. In each cabin there is a wash basin. There also are two freshwater showers on the dive deck. We had arranged for a special sixteen day "muck special." Service and the diving are consistently outstanding; some of us were on our fourth or fifth trip on the boat. The water temperatures were between 86 and 89 degrees most of the time. Consequently, there is coral bleaching and a shift in the marine life in Milne Bay. For the expected sightings as a group none of us saw a rhinopius. One mimic octopus was found by Rob and seen by a few of the guests. Wonderpus, harlequin ghost pipe fish, and flamboyant cuttle fish were not found by anyone. We also found two harlequin shrimp, some Coleman shrimp, one yellow leaf fish and one stone fish. We did see what may be a new species of pygmy sea horse — entirely golden yellow on a red sea fan. They were so small that one guest was using a 105 lens, a doubler and a four diopter lens

to fill his frame. We did see salt water cat fish, many large schools of bait fish (great silhouette shots), various mantas shrimp with commensural shrimp, and many gobies. Almost all divers were independent and went their own direction. When Rob or Peo were in the water, anyone was welcome to join them and let them find critters. There is a tank safety system to make sure no one is left at a site. Before going underway, the dive deck is checked to make sure no tanks are missing. Each person had his/her own slot and all unused slots were filled with a tank. If a slot were open, that meant someone was still in the water. Most diving was done directly from the dive deck but in those instances where you preferred to be transported by dingy to a location, the crew was more than happy to take you. If you surfaced and did not want to swim back to the boat, the dingy appeared magically at your side with a smiling Reuben to help you out of the water. The dingy is also used for sea mount sites where they do not want to drop an anchor. The coral reef heads or bommies had an excellent variety of reef fish and great visibility. Unfortunately because of the warm water temperatures, the muck diving was below expectations. On two separate occasions we saw dugongs and did four manta dives which had limited visibility and only provided one good encounter at a cleaning station. The deck staff was outstanding and available twenty four hours. If the boat was stopped and you wanted to dive, there was always someone available to help you with your gear.

Tank fills were a consistent 2900 or better. Once you set up your gear on the back dive deck, your BC stays on the tank and is refilled as soon as you come out of the water. The deck crew was especially attentive to dive gear and cameras. The camera table is on the upper deck above the dive deck. It is spacious and well covered. The camera area serves as a meeting place during surface intervals. When you were ready to dive, your camera was carried by a crew member from the upper deck down to the dive deck and carefully handed to you after you entered the water. When you returned to the boat, you first handed up your camera, then your fins and walked up one of the two ladders. By the time you were out of your gear and used one of the fresh water showers for a rinse off, your camera had been rinsed and placed on the camera table on the upper deck. When one of my flashlights flooded one of the crew restored it for me quickly. When I had a flash problem, Rob came up with a flash cord for me. Food was extremely well prepared by Rob's wife Peo. We had excellent variety and special needs (vegetarian) were easily met. Breakfasts were usually fruit salad, toast, the world's largest pancakes, eggs and meat. Suppers included leg of lamb two nights, an excellent spaghetti and other well prepared suppers. Fresh vegetables and fruits were purchased from natives who paddled out to the boat wherever we stopped. Whenever the boat was underway fishing lines were out resulting in catches of mahi-mahi, wahoo and Spanish mackerel. I had e-mailed the Rob about E-6

processing. He assured me that there was no problem. Upon arrival, I asked him about it several times. He explained that they had the equipment and chemicals but his daughter had been doing the processing. Sheri is no longer on the boat. I had desired to do some fluorescent photography and experiment with double exposure photography. He had communicated to one of my friends that he was a bit disturbed because there were only seven guests and this caused a cash flow shortage on this trip. My E-6 alone would have added another \$5-700 to ease his cash flow problem.

FeBrina, October 2000, Roger Roth, Cincinnati, OH. Camera space is readily available, battery charging stations are numerous with plenty of 110 and 240 electrical outlets, E-6 processing is available and the crew is very conscientious when handling cameras for their guests. The salon is set up with TV/VCR for video review, as well as plenty of movies in the library. The staterooms each have a sink and mirror, as well as small wardrobe and drawer space. Laundry is done daily for the guests, and meals are wonderfully prepared and presented, with red and white wines served at dinners. Four to six dives a day are possible with no limitations as long as safe diving practices are followed, and the captain isn't planning on a boat move. Air tanks are filled immediately upon exiting. Water mid to upper 80's, and visibility can reach above 150'. When diving some of the outer bommies, schools of many hundreds of jacks and barracu-

das are plentiful, as well as some white tips, silver tips, grays, and more. Other larger animals include turtles, bumphead parrotfish, Napoleon wrasses, and dolphins. Smaller critters include a number of octopus species including the blue-ring, blennies, coral crabs, and countless anemones with their clownfish residents. There are giant barrel sponges and huge 6-8' sea fans with tiny pygmy seahorses and longnose hawkfish living on them. We also saw seahorses, pipefishes and harlequin ghost pipefishes, crinoids with clingfish inside, seawhips with gobies attached and shrimpfish hiding between the whips, and a few dive sites held encounters with the delightfully colorful cuttlefish. When around some of the islands, muck diving becomes the order of the day with numerous goby/shrimp partnerships, pregnant ghost pipefishes in the seagrasses, squid, hundreds of nudibranchs, and maybe even a mimic octopus. Many species of mantis shrimp are pointed out by the able divemasters, as well as colorful mandarin fish, tapestry shrimp, and tube anemones with their resident Thor shrimp. On night dives, it's not uncommon to find a devil scorpionfish, or box crab burying itself in the sand, and lionfish are quite abundant, even including the shy and pretty two-eyed lionfish. Other creatures that one can look forward to seeing here include the crocodile fish, stonefish, snake and garden eels, titan triggerfish, and schools of silversides as well. (Ph: 011-675-9835441 (PNG); fax 011-675-9835638 (PNG); e-mail Alan@FeBrina.com; website www.febrina.com)

FeBrina, October 2000, Paul Johnson (pajkotwf@aol.com) Santa Rosa, CA. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 100 to Feet. Water: 80 F, calm choppy. First live aboard and I can't wait to do it again. I was with a group that had chartered the entire boat. Once Alan had kept his eye on us in few shallow dives, he let us dive our own profiles and buddy up as we felt the need. Easy in and out from a large platform at the stern and usually an admonition to follow the line down to the site. Current was none to moderate. Not a good place to be a beginner. Dive briefs were focused and to the point and usually ended with "and if you want to see such and such just stick close to Nelson, and don't get bent!" Five dives a day, almost all at different sites, including a night dive almost every night. We saw legions of creatures from pygmy sea horses to turtles, cuttlefish, and sharks. Snorkeled with a huge school of dolphin. Alan's crew is outstanding. They seemed to be able to find anything. All were safety conscious but not intrusive. The food was spectacular. Lynne treated us to a Continental breakfast before the first morning dive (0630), then a more substantial breakfast afterward, a hearty snack after the second dive and lunch after the third, often with produce and fish brought to the boat by local fisherman and farmers. She offered another snack at the end of the afternoon dive, and then a great sit down feast after the night dive, complete with Alan's outstanding Australian wine. Many of our group were photographers and all our equipment was treated and

handled well. Rooms were small but adequate and comfortable. Daily laundry service was provided. Fresh water was never a problem.

FeBrina, November 2000, Gary R. Nachtigal (divedude@swbell.net), Waxahachie, TX. Vis: 100-200 Ft. Water: 86-87 F, calm. I went on the FeBrina in 1999, as well. LA to Cairns, Australia, and an overnight. While in Cairns, visit Glass Temptations in the Pier Marketplace — they have excellent blown glass renditions of sea life. They will ship your purchases back for a very reasonable price. Fly to Port Moresby for another overnight. The Gateway Hotel and the Airways Hotel are safe and comfortable. Have your hotel arrange for transportation to and from PNG Arts where you can purchase artifacts, such as, tribal masks, story boards, etc. PNG Arts will ship your artifacts back home. I had 53 LBS sent back and it all arrived in original condition. Next or three Air Niugini flights to either Hoskins or Kavieng, where you will meet the FeBrina. The FeBrina and the diving offered is as good as it gets!!! Diversity is what PNG offers. pigmy seahorses to silvertips. Dolphins to the harlequin ghost pipefish. Schools of jacks and barracuda to the leaf scorpionfish. Pinnacles, walls, muck dives, current, drift dives, deep and shallow. Five dives a day, except during one or two travel days, when you may do three or four. Adventure diving on pristine sites. No limitations, you just need to be responsible. FeBrina is a well organized, comfortable vessel. plenty of room. The three

cabins forward have private heads. The four cabins aft share two heads. There is a rinse shower on the dive deck. Early pre-breakfast with juice, coffee, cereal and toast. After the first dive, a full breakfast with Australian bacon, eggs, toast, etc. A snack is offered after the second dive. Lunch is a great buffet, with soup and salad, including a couple of main dishes. There is also a snack served after the forth dive. But dinner is definitely the best. The food is not only 5 star, but the presentation is also 5 star. Of course, the Captain brings out the best Australian wine before and during dinner. Captain Alan Raabe is entertaining and with Hannah Wilson, the Head Chef, or as Alan calls her the "cook" make up a most entertaining comedy. Laundry is picked up each morning, cleaned and returned to your room midday. Two large camera tables with low pressure air guns. The crew will put your cameras in one of two fresh water rinse tanks after each dive. There are several 120 volt charging stations. The crew was great about handling all photographic and video equipment as requested. They would bring it to the dive platform and hand it to us immediately after entry. They were always there to take the equipment as we came back to the platform. There is E-6 processing available. In the comfortable salon, a TV accepts both NTSC and PAL and a VHS VCR accepts both formats.

FeBrina, May 2001, Nick Ferris, Arvada, CO. Water: 82-85 F. The itinerary was Kimbe Bay which

adjoins New Britain on the north, to Kavieng, New Ireland. There was a mix of muck diving and reef diving, with the latter predominating. Exotic critters such as the Rhinopias scorpionfish and the Harlequin ghost pipefish were not encountered; they are found near Port Moresby and the southeast end of New Guinea. The reefs provided schools of jacks, barracuda, batfish, and white tip, silver tip, gray whaler sharks, as well as numerous angelfish, butterflyfish, and anemonefish — spinecheeks, pinks, 2-band, orange, Clark's, black-and-red, and skunks). Sea 82-85 degrees F.; one diver recorded 88 degrees. Muck dives are in relatively quiet water where sediment accumulates. Divers have to be careful not to stir up sand and ruin the photography. Crocodile fish, stonefish, tiny crabs that live on sea pens that come out only at night, cone shells, and blind bulldozer shrimp with their goby partners are some of the sediment residents. There was only minor coral bleaching. Current was very strong at two locations in the New Ireland passages, so weighted lines were extended from the dive platform forward to the mooring line where the current was considerably less. The FeBrina is a 25-year-old, 83 ft. long, former fishing boat turned passenger boat turned dive boat. The cabins, dive deck, and most other facilities are quite satisfactory; the main drawback is the only door connecting the dive area with the living and dining spaces has a very high threshold and is close to several kitchen activities. The result is a traffic bottleneck which, however,

we learned to negotiate. Cruising speed is 10 knots. Toilets are conventional and connected to holding tanks. A large amount of fresh water is taken aboard at the outset, and a desalinator keeps the supply plentiful. Water entry is via a dive platform at the stern. "FeBrina" is derived from the chemical symbol for iron, Fe, and brine, or salt water. This amounts to iron (ship) in the (salty) sea. The chief cook is Hannah: imaginative, good-hearted, quick-witted, vivacious, famous for crisp bacon, and infamous for death by chocolate. Co-owner Alan Rabbe was not present; instead, Matt Johnson did a fine job as captain and chief dive-master. Weather was generally good, but more often cloudy than not, which cut down the ambient light in the water and those artsy shots of the sun behind sea fans. There were many night dives. My 28-80 zoom lens on a housed Canon got everything from sharks to large nudibranchs, but instilling self-confidence in the auto-focus can be frustrating. Excellent and clean operation, and a great dive trip. For space and lay-out, I'd say the Spirit of Solomons (Bilikiki sister ship) is a bit better, and that the Solomons provide as much sea life as we saw during the New Britain to New Ireland run.

FeBrina, June 2001, Bill Kimball (WaltGenlan@aol.com) Phoenix, AZ. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 80 to 120 Feet. Water: 80 to 85 F, calm. From our stay in Port Moresby to the Ambua Lodge in the highlands to the diving aboard the FeBrina, Aquatic Encounters organized it perfectly.

FeBrina, it's crew and especially their first time skipper, Matt Johnson, were outstanding. Their great personalities, senses of humor and knowledge of the boat and the sea were both admirable and surprising for such a young group. The cabins are rather small with great air conditioning and the bunks were plenty long for a tall guy. Although the food was uninspiring, they compensated by giving you loads and the cook, Hannah, was on my ass constantly to eat, eat, eat. The boat's usual captain, Alan Raabe, showed up only when we were boarding the boat, "so that we could brag to our friends back home that we had met him..." We didn't see this buffoon again until the final night of the trip when he orchestrated and hosted, in absentia, a mandatory and uncomfortable dinner at a rustic, electricity-less resort owned by a friend of his. We sweltered through 3 hours attempting to conquer inedibility. Pray that you get Matt as the skipper. They're very careful with your gear and after the second day they knew whose camera was whose. 3 large camera tables with storage, compressed air, 2 large rinse tanks, loads of fish ID books. They were available nonstop to find and point out whatever you wanted to see.

Paradise Sport, October 2000, Pete & Gena Gorrell, Toronto, ON. Vis: 50-100+. Dives logged: 250+. Dive restrictions: air on return. I wish we had taken something we could give these wonderful locals without turning them into panhandlers. Maybe books (basic English level-grade-1-3) or school supplies. I wish Mike Ball hadn't hired the cook for the way she

looks in a bikini — canned kidney beans and pineapple chunks do not make a salad. (And stale, cheap packaged cookies?) Some expensive meats, but ineptly prepared. We have dived widely — this is definitely the most beautiful area we've seen. If you go to PNG, avoid Port Moresby but go to the highlands. Gorgeous scenery — stay at Haus Poroman at Mount Hagen or the Highlander Hotel in town. (Ph: **800-952-4319 or +61 (0)7 40 315484 (Australia); e-mail mbde@mikeball.com or resv@mikeball.com; website www.mikeball.com**)

Paradise Sport, Mike Ball, December 2000, Jo Griffith, (jo@word-design.com) Washington, DC. Vis: 50 ft. Water: 80-85 F. Dives logged: 150. Dive restrictions: Dive own computer. Good combination of wall and muck diving, but short on the big stuff. Up to 5-6 dives per day, as limited by own profile. One drawback — boat docks in unappealing harbor on last day.

Paradise Sport, December 2000, Martha and Jeff Hubbard, Glenmont, NY. Vis: 40-90 ft. Water: 83-85 F. Dives logged: 885 each. Our 4th Mike Ball (2nd Paradise Sport) Trip director (not the captain) runs the operation and Mike surely knows how to pick them. Wade was patient, skilled and made sure everyone (even the Diver From Hell) had a good time. Dive your own profile and computer. Time and max depth are logged by a crew member after every dive. Crew uniformly helpful and courteous. They maximize diving. We did 44 in 9.5

days — never cancel a dive because of dinner, crew inconvenience or other excuse. We dove Nitrox 32 (expensive) except for a great 150 ft dive on a B-17. Tanks are pumped in place, no hassle, 3000+. Swim back to the boat if you like, or they'll pick you up in fast inflatables with nice boarding ladders. Room dive deck, large camera table, rinse tanks. Plenty of room for gear but we (passengers + boat) had a lot of small gear stolen by locals one night. Take small objects to cabin after the night dive. Good fresh fruit from locals. Ever-friendly Cook Tara did very well, but the food shows that it's at the end of a long PNG supply line. Good reefs, lots of small fish and inverts, few large fish. Muck diving has good little things (ghost pipefish, seahorses, harlequin crabs) but little else to recommend it. Most muck sites also have accessible good reefs. A lady on Mike's staff met our flight to assist with transfer to domestic flight.

Paradise Sport, March/April 2001, Michael Waring, Puldorrough, West Sussex. Experience: 501-1000 dives. Vis: 10-20 Meters. Water: 30 to 32 Celsius, calm, no currents. We 12 experienced divers from various parts of the world who meet once a year to dive in different locations. As we arrived in PNG we received a call from Mike Ball's office to advise us that the vessel would be picking us up in Port Moresby and not in Alatoa because the vessel had struck a reef and was limping into PM for repairs. Despite some last minute hitches we left on the scheduled day and only a few hours late. The boat was very well

fitted out with comfortable cabins and excellent public rooms. Air conditioning and plumbing were first class. In the calm “inland” seas of Milne Bay the boat was very stable but less so in the open sea with only a slight swell. The staff was pleasant and professional and the star had to be Tara the chef — each meal was outstanding with plenty of fresh salads or fruit and the most wonderful puddings! We steamed overnight the first night to try and get back onto the scheduled itinerary. The first days diving was “exploratory” and it was good fun with the highlight being a school of 60-80 bumphead parrot fish. We dove the traditional areas of Cathy’s/ Dinah’s beach and Deacon’s and Basilik’s wall. While the muck diving was great with the normal assortment of exotica, the wall diving was a sad affair. We were the first group to see the coral bleaching which had begun within the previous two weeks and it was extensive. The side effect of this bleaching was a notable absence of fish. The topography of the walls themselves was spectacular which made the bleaching even more distressing. As we moved further to the NE the bleaching was less pronounced but even in the open reefs and bommies it was evident as being in the early stages. There were however some spectacular coral reefs and the most notable was the shallower depths of Jason’s reef, where we witnessed schooling Banner fish and a Lacy Scorpion fish. On the last day we had a memorable encounter with three large mantas at the manta cleaning station. While the visibility was

generally below par other than the last two days and the reef fish and pelagic activity (Milne Bay is not the ideal choice) had definitely been adversely affected by the warm water, we have no complaints about the vessel, its crew and the general response of Mike Ball to the queries we raised with them before the trip following a critical letter in the 2000 Chap Book. The “critter freaks” amongst us were in seventh heaven particularly at an unscheduled dive under the pier at Esaala. Those divers who prefer pelagic and reef fish diving were disappointed. Many of us dive with pony bottles and welcomed the freedom to dive solo.

Paradise Sport, April 2001, Doris & Bob Schaffer (seamom@earthlink.net)

Fallbrook, CA. Vis: 30-90 ft. Water: 82-86 F, calm and flat, choppy. Logged dives: over 2,500. Milne Bay itinerary and we’re sorry we didn’t pay more attention to the meaning of “muck diving”. About half the diving was the “muck” variety and since we’re not macro photographers it was not our favorite. The other half was reef and wall diving and one very nice intact B-17 at 15 ft. Lots of dead coral and not an abundance of reef Fish. Boat is very comfortable with spacious cabins and the best head/shower facilities we’ve every experienced on a live-aboard. Food was pretty good, too. Crew knowledgeable, friendly and very attentive and accommodating.

Paradise Sport, April 2001, Mel Cundiff (cundiff@colorado.edu)
Boulder, CO. Vis: 20-100+ ft. Water:

83-88 F. Dives logged: 1200+. Dive restrictions enforced: 130' max. recommended. The potential for finding lots of unique critters/fish is very high in Milne Bay, but our crew wasn't very familiar with the sites, so there were a lot of weird species that were not found. Disappointing. The accommodations for this spacious boat were excellent.

Spoilsport, June 2001, Nikki Mahan, Bellevue, WA. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 50 to 100 Feet. Water: 83 to 87 F, calm currents. Wonderful diving but not for the faint hearted. Felt like the crew was more family than hired. (Ph: 800-952-4319 or +61 (0)7 40 315484 (Australia); e-mail mbde@mikeball.com or resv@mikeball.com; website www.mikeball.com)

SOLOMON ISLANDS

Bilikiki, March 2001, Marcia Holland, Dana Point, CA. Water: calm and flat. Logged dives: 1,000+. Good ship, comfortable quarters, excellent food — fresh, abundant and well-prepared. Breakfast not exceptional, rest outstanding. "Cocktail hour" with yummy hors d'oeuvres every evening. Night diving mediocre — most divers skipped after first few. Beautiful walls with huge, healthy sea fans starting at 5-10 ft. so shallow water decompression stop a treat. An

apparent unusual lack of current at most sites. Good native crew — immediate panga and pickup when surfacing. Solomon Airlines charges an overweight fee of significant amount; even weighing hand carried luggage. This happened to flights out of Brisbane — not out of Caines. (Ph: 800-663-5363 (US) or 250 383-7253 (Canada); fax 250 383-6598 (Canada); e-mail bilikiki@horizon.bc.ca; website www.bilikiki.com or www.infobilikiki.com)

Spirit of the Solomons, June 2001, Mark Cortright, Arcata, CA. Experience: Over 1000 dives. Water: 78 to 83 F, choppy. Table coral dead and turned upside down; the staghorn is suffering. I'd say a 30% to 40% die off. The fish are still there but for how long? Due to the hostilities on Guadalcanal they don't dive the nearby war wrecks. The air connections are a nightmare. 40 hours from San Francisco to Solomons. UW Photography: Good table for the 6 of us. Many more would be crowded. The ships power 110 system fried my chargers for my Oceanic strobes. The managers Debbey and John where super. (Ph: 800-663-5363 (US) or 250 383-7253 (Canada); fax 250 383-6598 (Canada); e-mail bilikiki@horizon.bc.ca; website www.bilikiki.com or www.infobilikiki.com)