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**A
turtle
nursery
in Bora Bora**





A nautical and not so rare encounter in Bora Bora lagoon

Cover Photo: A sea turtle swims in the Bora bora lagoon. Turtle photos courtesy of Le Méridien hotel Bora Bora & by Jan Prince

The July 2004 issue of

**TAHITI
Beach Press**

will present

Homer Morgan

**Tahiti's doyen of the expatriot American community
and self-proclaimed
"Dinosaur in Paradise"**

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A TURTLE NURSERY IN BORA BORA

(Page 5)

SAVING THE SACRED SEA TURTLES

(Page 9)

A DINOSAUR IN PARADISE (PART XXXIX)

(Page 4)

THE TRANSIT OF VENUS AND LT. JAMES COOK

(Page 7)

OSCAR WON POSTHUMOUSLY BY CONRAD L. HALL ON DISPLAY IN JAMES NORMAN HALL HOME AND LIBRARY IN TAHITI

(Page 8)

Homer's vivid memory and talent as a raconteur and writer entertain our subscribers with interesting tales of Tahiti in each edition of the Tahiti Beach Press. Complete the handy subscription form provided to receive your monthly installment of Homer's humorous adventures.

A DINOSAUR IN PARADISE

(Part XXXIX)

By Homer Morgan

As we are all aware, in this modern day, the blinding speed and efficiency of communication is what makes the world go 'round, seemingly spinning ever faster, and, in this field, Tahiti is very much apace with the rest of the planet. Certainly, be they private or public communications, French Polynesia possesses the most sophisticated communications systems in the South Pacific. Obviously, it was not always so.

Fifty five years ago, when I first arrived in my chosen Paradise, private communications, the telephone system, was just one jump ahead of smoke signals. Perhaps one home in forty had a telephone, and those telephones were crank operated. All calls passed through a local operator, and this frequently made the whole operation entertaining in the extreme. Firstly, most of the operators had hypersensitive antennae and encyclopedic memories for voices. It was a common occurrence for the operator to call you by name when you inaugurated a call. Were the person you were trying to contact not at home, the operator usually knew where the culprit could be found and would plug you in to wher-



Homer Morgan is an American expatriate who has lived in Tahiti for more than 50 years. His activities have included shark fishing, managing hotels, tour guiding, working in a travel agency, managing a Tahitian dance troupe, running a pet and fish supply shop, translating documentary films, books and magazines from French to English, and acting as curator for the James Norman Hall House and Library.

ever it was necessary for you to complete your communication.

Based on the same system, even long distance calls were, in theory, available. Their successful completion was sporadic in the extreme. Usually, masses of static, peculiar echoes and eerie murmurings created enough line noise to make the real communication and its meaning a matter of high quality guesswork.

Public communication of the period was limited to a modest short wave radio station, Radio Tahiti, Te Veo Farani no Patitifa, The Voice of France in the Pacific. As I recall, it was the only island radio station this side of Fiji. Further, because much of its broadcast narration was in a two or three dialects of the Polynesian language, it commanded a considerable audience among our neighbors in the Cook Islands, both Samoas, the Kingdom of Tonga, etc.

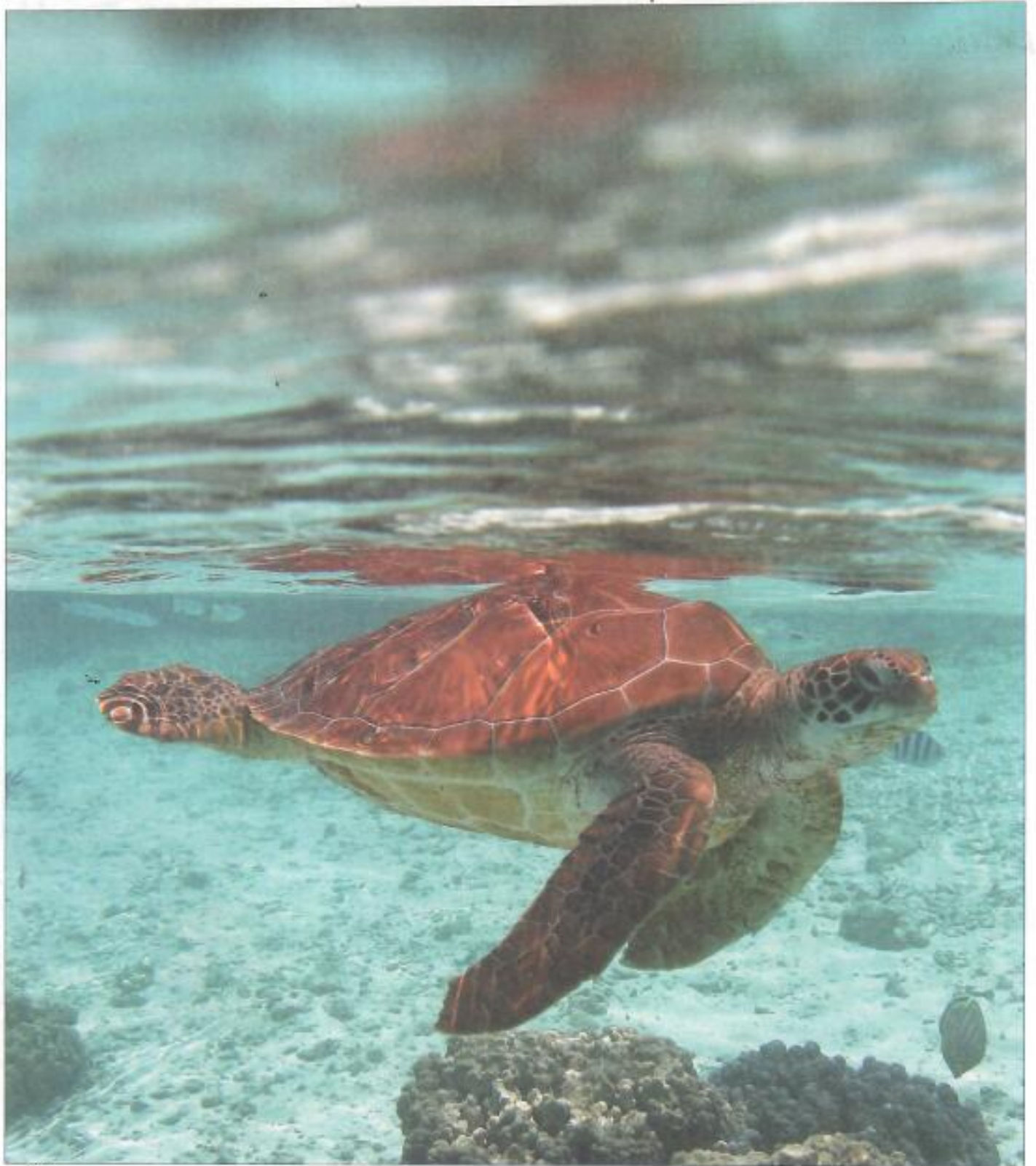
Well into the latter half of 1949, I rented my first lagoon-front shack about 11 km. from Papeete in Punaauia. The location was ideal -- nice beach, Moorea filling the background, good fishing and swimming in the lagoon and, as a special extra, some wonderful neighbors. It all began with a casual over-the-fence acquaintance.

From there, my relationship with Marc Darnois, his distinguished English lady friend, his delightful mother and sister broadened into alternating houses and hosting sundowners. Ultimately, a friendship developed that lasted as long we were all around to maintain it. I might add that, at the sundowner stage, Marc's mother would spoil us with Martinique Punches that

(Please turn to page 12)

A TURTLE NURSERY IN BORA BORA

By Jan Prince



Oko is the name given to the first sea turtle to become a resident of the enclosed inner lagoon at Lé Meridien hotel on Bora Bora. Pascal Fouquet, the hotel's general manager, recalls that one of their guests returned from a

sunset cruise with an injured turtle and asked him to help save it.

"That was 3 1/2 years ago," he said. "We contacted the Ministry of Environment and the Delegation of Environment for information on what

to feed a sea turtle and how to treat it. We kept Oko for more than a year until we were sure she was healed and then released her back into the wild."

Although Le Méridien's turtle care

(Please turn to page 6)

A TURTLE NURSERY IN BORA BORA



(Cont. 'd from page 5)

services started by coincidence, their protected lagoon soon became an official rehabilitation center. More turtles arrived, brought in from Taha'a, Maupiti, Mopelia and Tahiti by members of the Delegation of Environment, who signed a convention with the hotel. Fouquet's knowledge of sea turtles increased with each patient, along with the information he received from the Internet and e-mails on the care and feeding of these endangered creatures.

"We now have around 100 sea turtles in the center, including the babies," Fouquet said. "We are a rehabilitation center and we don't do reproduction. The baby turtles in our nursery were born in a nest and then moved to the hotel park," he added.

Fouquet explained that these baby turtles are kept in a controlled environment until they are 8 months old, and then they are released into the inner lagoon, which covers an area of about 2-3 acres. All the turtles are fed every morning at 10:30 and the hotel guests are allowed to film the feedings and even to swim with the larger turtles in the *hoa* (channel) of water that flows from the sea into the lagoon. This is not an attraction that is open to the public, however, but you can see the larger turtles swimming in the lagoon beside Le Méridien's breakfast and dinner restaurant, Le Tipanier.

The hotel guests are given a brochure explaining about the turtles in their nursery, which are usually the green turtle (*Chelonia mydas*) and the hawksbill or overlapped turtle (*Eretmochelys imbricata*). These guests are also told in advance how to behave with the turtles before they get into the water with them. The hotel makes sure they follow environmental protocol during each stage of the turtles' development, Fouquet emphasized.

He added that the oldest turtles in their care are 6-7 years old and weigh some 30 kilos. The big ones are tagged before being released into the open ocean.

Naturally, there are many stories involving the turtles and how they came to the attention of the Delegation

of Environment, and were subsequently brought to live in Le Méridien's turtle nursery and park.

"One of the last turtles to arrive here was found in the tummy of a Mahi Mahi," Fouquet said. "We named her Poeti (little pearl)."

Fouquet said that not long ago, when there were big ocean swells in Bora Bora, the water in their lagoon rose to the level of the protective fence that is built around the periphery of the enclosed park, and Poeti managed to get out of the park. Thankfully, they found her just in time to save her again, as she had been nabbed by a crab.

Legend of the Birth of the Turtle

"It happened when the world was new, that a turtle and a fowl had a dispute, one contending for the prestige above the other, when the turtle said to the fowl: "You are common, you will be eaten by women and children, but I shall be sacred to the gods, I shall leap into the god's house." The fowl answered scornfully, "How can you leap into the god's dwelling? You will yourself be eaten by women and children, but I shall dive into the depths of the sea and escape from their hands."

Just then the turtle was picked up by a strong man and taken to the king, who was so pleased with it that he sent it to the marae for the gods, and thus the turtle was ever afterwards held sacred for the gods and was only eaten by kings, priests, and marae keepers. But as the fowl tried to dive into the sea for safety, it only succeeded in getting its head under water, when a party of women and children passing by went and seized it and took it home. So the fowl became a domestic animal and was eaten by women and children. Only white fowls were offered to the gods at the marae, because all white birds were regarded as sacred.

Teuira Henry - *Ancient Tahiti* pp. 381-382



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The Transit of Venus and Lt. James Cook

On June 8, 2004, the astronomical event of the year will take place when the planet Venus glides across the face of the sun for the first time since 1882. This Venus transit is similar in principle to a solar eclipse, but instead of the moon being in line between Earth and the sun, it is Venus, the Planet of Love, that stands directly between us. The Venus transits come in pairs separated by exactly 8 Earth years minus two days; therefore, the second transit in this pair will take place on June 6, 2012.

After that the next Venus transit will not occur until December 11, 2117.

The entire 6-hour transit on June 8, 2004 will be observable from Europe, Africa (except western parts), Middle East and most of Asia (except eastern parts), and some of the transit will be visible in eastern North America, Australia and other parts of the world.

Skywatchers in Tahiti and Her Islands will not be able to observe this rarest of planetary alignments, however, so let us recount the famous story of the role Tahiti played during the Venus transit of 1769.



In 1716 Edmund Halley realized that transits of Venus could be used to measure the distance of the earth from the sun, thereby establishing the absolute scale of the solar system and solving one of the greatest problems in astronomy at that time. The technique required that expeditions travel to the far ends of the earth so that the differing parallax of the observations could be used to derive the distance to Venus.

Cook at Point Venus

One of the expeditions organized by England's Royal Society brought Lieutenant James Cook (he was later promoted to Captain Cook) to Tahiti in 1769, on the first of his three famous voyages to the Pacific. Cook's ship, the *H.M.S. Endeavour*, was the only one to visit the southern hemisphere for the Venus sightings.

Cook's orders were to take an astronomer either to the Marquesas Islands or to New Zealand for the purpose of observing the transit of the planet Venus across the disc of the sun. This event was to take place on June 3, 1769, and there would be no further opportunity to witness such a phenomenon again until 1874.

Two months before Cook left for the South Seas, Captain Samuel Wallis

In less than three weeks' time the fort was finished, which was 150 feet long and 80 feet wide, with five-foot high walls.

returned to England aboard the *H.M.S. Dolphin* with the disappointing news that he had not found the great southern continent. When he learned of the imminent voyage Cook was to command, Wallis suggested King George III's island (Tahiti) as the ideal spot to establish an observatory. Wallis told Cook that he and his men would find hospitable natives and an abundance of food and water on this island he had discovered in 1767 during his world circumnavigation just two years before.

Cook's expedition consisted of eighty-four officers and seamen and eight civilians. The civilians included Joseph Banks, a young botanist who later became president of the Royal Society; Dr. Daniel Solander, an eminent Swedish botanist and zoologist who had studied with the great Linnaeus; and astronomer Charles Green, who, in addition to supervising the observation of Venus, provided Cook with precise estimates of longitude, which was indispensable on such a discovery voyage.

Cook's instructions were changed according to the information received from Captain Wallis, and the *Endeavour* left England in the middle

of August, 1768, and arrived at Tahiti, via the Horn, seven weeks before the transit of Venus was expected.

When Cook anchored in Matavai Bay on April 13, 1769, the ship and her men were given an enthusiastic welcome by the Tahitians. Crowds of natives greeted them with the now customary friendliness, and immediately recognized four of the officers who had visited the island with Wallis.

The first thing Cook did upon arrival in what was then known to the English as King George III's Island was to build a fort to protect the astronomer and his instruments. He chose the same site that Wallis had selected, the strip of land between the beach and the river. In less than three weeks' time the fort was finished, which was 150 feet long and 80 feet wide, with five-foot high walls and two four-pounder cannons.

These precautions proved superfluous, however, for the Tahitians, especially the women, were so friendly and hospitable that the British sailors forgot their duties. Taking a lesson learned from Wallis about his men removing nails from the ship to give

(Please turn to page 15)

SAVING THE SACRED SEA TURTLES



In the olden days when the *arii*, the Polynesian chiefs, ruled the people, honu (turtles) were considered sacred. Turtle meat was reserved only for the kings, priests and keepers of the *marae*, the stone temples where the ancestors of today's Tahitians worshipped their god Oro. The *marae* that were dedicated to Oro were distinguished from all the others by stones that were shaped like turtles' heads. Some of the *marae* stones in Bora Bora are designed with petroglyphs of turtles.

The lagoon beaches on the atolls of Tupai, Mopelia, Scilly, and Bellingshausen, west of Bora Bora, are privileged breeding grounds for marine turtles. And the motu islets inside the coral reef of Polynesia's lagoons are also home for some of the sea turtles, who arrive each year for the egg-laying season, from November to February. In the clear shallow waters of the world's most famous lagoon, tourists in Bora Bora frequently see turtles when they take an outrigger canoe ride around the island.

The four species of marine turtles that are found in the waters surrounding the islands of Tahiti belong to the Cheloniidae and Dermochelyidae families.

The green sea turtle, (*Chelonia mydas*), is the most common and also the species that is generally eaten, as it has the tastiest flesh. It is covered by thin mottled dark brown plates on top and creamy white below. It gets its name from the green-colored fat tissue in their body, which is caused by the algae they eat. The hatchlings weigh about one ounce and have a carapace (shell) length of about 2 inches. The juveniles are omnivorous, feeding on plankton, jellyfish and fish eggs floating near the surface of the open ocean. Adults can grow to 4 feet and weigh up to 400 pounds and are primarily herbivorous. These sea turtles do not reach sexual maturity until they are about 25 years old, sometimes taking up to 50 years. Once sexually mature, adults migrate from the foraging grounds to the nesting grounds, often swimming hundreds of miles between the two sites. Females only migrate

every 2-4 years and it is believed that they return to the same place where they were born to lay their eggs.

The hawksbill turtle (*Eretmochelys imbricata*), is remarkable because of the curved upper jaw of its beak, which resembles a hawksbill. The name *Eretmochelys* means "oar turtle" from the way it swims, and the specific name, *imbricata*, means "overlapping" because the shields on the carapace overlap like tiles on a roof. The hawksbill is one of the smaller sea turtles, usually ranging from 30 to 36 inches in length and weighing 100 to 200 pounds. The thin shields overlaying the bones of the carapace, also known as "tortoise shell", are beautifully marked with amber and reddish tones with shadings to yellow, white, black and green. The young tend to be black to brownish-black with touches of light brown. The endangered



*The Tahitian chiefs forbade
the common man from eating turtles.*

hawksbill has been hunted to the brink of extinction for its beautiful shell, but the meat can be poisonous to humans and has even caused several deaths in these islands.

The large-headed or loggerhead sea turtle (*Caretta caretta gigas*), and the lute or leatherback sea turtle, (*Dermochelys coriacea*), whose black carapace is formed of seven longitudinal leathery plates, are both rare in Polynesian waters.

Green sea turtles may migrate over 1,000 miles to nest, navigating by magnetic cues, to lay more than 100 eggs in the very spot where they were born. They choose a beach of warm soft sand, just above the high water line, and dig their broad pits with the aid of their posterior legs, while the anterior ones serve as shovels to evacuate the sand. When the eggs are laid, the turtle covers the nest with sand, leaving no traces (in its opinion), and then returns to the sea.

The baby turtles hatch after two months of incubation and their sex is determined by the temperature of the

sand during the incubation period. Warm temperatures (84.2° F, or 29° C) produce more females while cooler temperatures produce more males.

These hatchlings then make their way down the beach to the water, and if they are successful in reaching the open sea without falling prey to predators, they will spend the next several years feeding upon both plant and animal material to gain size and weight rapidly.

When sexually mature, after 25 to 50 years for some turtles, both male and female green turtles will migrate from their resident inshore feeding grounds to the courtship areas that may be hundreds of miles away. Female green sea turtles require at least four years between nesting cycles.

These turtles can be easily captured with nets and fishing spears. Although the Tahitian chiefs forbade the common man from eating turtles in olden

times, and today's laws protecting these curious creatures are just as strict, there are still those who ignore the risks of imprisonment and fines. This same delicacy that was savored by the royal *arii* is still sought by men who wish to dine like the kings of old Polynesia.

Turtle soup and turtle steaks were served in Bora Bora's best hotel in the late 1960s, and you could see live turtles for sale, lying upside down beside the road that encircles the island.

This delicacy was eliminated from the restaurant menus when the marine turtle was declared a protected species by the international Convention of Washington in 1971.

The articles of Deliberation 90-83, dated July 13, 1990, state that heavy fines and prison sentences of 3 months to a year or more can be applied to anyone breaking the strict laws concerning the protection of turtles and their eggs.

(Please turn to page 10)

SAVING THE SACRED SEA TURTLE

(Cont'd from page 9)

The "Year of the Turtle" was celebrated in 1995. In 1996, *La Dépêche de Tahiti*, one of the daily French newspapers in Papeete, published a story stating that some 60,000 turtles were being killed each year in the islands of French Polynesia.

Soon after this article appeared, the same newspaper reported that one and a half tons of turtle meat had been clandestinely loaded onto an administrative vessel that provides weekly service to Maupiti, with a monthly visit to Mopelia, one of the turtle islands. This massacre of 30 reptiles was discovered when six sacks of turtle meat were unloaded in Bora Bora. It was revealed that another 20 sacks had been taken to Maupiti.

On Scilly and Bellingshausen the people who were then living on these atolls reported problems with long-line fishing boats and other poachers, who had successful turtle fishing expeditions to sell on the black market in Papeete.

The French gendarmes in Bora Bora, Raiatea and Tahiti have frequently caught fishermen returning to shore with their boats filled with "paumotu mouton" (Tuamotu sheep), the local name for turtle meat. On the island of Moorea the current price for raw turtle meat is reportedly 7,000 CFP a kilo.

Sea turtles swim in the open ocean waters alongside commercial fish species. Commercial fishing boats chase these fish in a variety of ways. One of the more effective methods is on boats called trawlers with giant nets called drag nets or drift nets. These

nets not only catch the fish, but every other unfortunate creature that happens to be around them.

Sea turtles are not spared from this "bycatch". Most countries of the world, including French Polynesia, have laws requiring trawlers with drag nets to have "sea turtle escape hatches" incorporated into their nets. These are called Turtle Excluder Devices (TEDS). In theory, these TEDS work, allowing larger creatures an escape route.

The problem is that often times they simply don't work very well or many boats may not even have them for fear they will lose fish. This is bad news for the turtles as they become victims of the fishing industry's bycatch.

Sea turtles do not have gills. They are reptiles with lungs and require surface air to survive. This means they typically drown in the nets. If they do make it to the surface alive, they are often seen as an additional source of income for the boat. They can be sold (illegally) to the locals for food, or sold to many blackmarket jewelry makers for their valuable shells. Either way, most sea turtles that are netted and brought aboard a commercial fishing vessel don't have a bright future.

There are a few individuals and groups throughout the Society Islands who work to save the turtle from the dangers of nature and man.

In addition to the turtle nursery and park at Le Méridien hotel on Bora Bora, a turtle project recently began at the Intercontinental Beachcomber Resort on Moorea. These two under-





takings are being carried out with the cooperation and assistance of the Environmental study bureau, SNC Pae Tai-Pae Tua; e-mail: ptpu@mail.pf.

The inhabitants on the atoll of Mopelia are helping the baby turtles to prolong their chance of survival by building turtle basins or parks, where the young turtles are fed for four months, then released into the sea.

Leo and Lolita Morou, who own the Hotel Hibiscus on the island of Tahaa, started the Hibiscus Foundation in July 1992. Since then they have saved and released more than 1,000 green and hawksbill turtles.

Their goals are to fight against underwater spear-fishing and turtle poachers, and to rescue the turtles that have been injured or accidentally trapped in fish parks inside the lagoon near the passes.

When they find these turtles Leo and his volunteer helpers shelter them in a special enclosure in their Sea Turtle Preserve for a few days, then tag them for future identification before releasing the turtles into the open ocean.

Leo has developed a simple, yet creative solution to the sea turtle problems. He offers the fishermen more money for their captured turtles than they can get from the locals or the blackmarket jewelry makers. It's a matter of economics.

He then takes the rescued sea turtles back to the preserve. The more turtles

that are rescued in this manner help spread the word among the local fishermen that there is an alternative, and that it's an economically positive one at that! Many of the local fishermen who chance upon sea turtles now will contact Leo and the Hibiscus Sea Turtle Preserve with their turtles, looking for money and also feeling good about doing the right thing for the environment.

At the Hibiscus Foundation the turtles are measured, weighed and healed, if necessary. They are then tagged with a numbered ring so they can be identified if they are recaptured, which aids in following the migrations of these marine turtles. Then they are released.

In order to attract more interest in the Hibiscus Foundation, Leo and Lolita seek sponsors to help protect these animals.

If you wish to sponsor a sea turtle, contact the Hibiscus Foundation at: BP 184, Haamene, Tahaa 98733, French Polynesia.

Tel. (689) 65.61.06;

Fax (689) 65.65.65;

E-mail: hibiscus@tahaa-tahiti.com.

You can also log onto their Internet website at: www.tahaa-tahiti.com.

You will receive a certificate with the number of your turtle's ring marker, its measurements and any follow up information



DINOSAUR IN PARADISE

(Cont'd from page 4)

were the best ever, as dangerous as they were delicious.

Marc Darnois was a truly exceptional person with skills and talents of great variety, plus a personality that impressed everyone whom he met. When we were neighbors, he was the director of Radio Tahiti and remained so for several years. He also formed a recording company with Sylvain, an outstanding photographer of the time. Together, they produced recordings of local music that are sought after as classics today. Marc had a fine singing voice, was a talented guitarist, and he made several recordings of his own that became commercial successes of the period. He was also appointed the Chef du Service des Affaires Culturelles. Finally, his love of the sea took precedence in his life, and the final chapter in his professional life had him as captain of one or another luxurious sailing yachts available for charter. It is not possible to capsule Marc Darnois' life. The full story of this colorful and exemplary character merits a book. Perhaps, one day....

The care and feeding of Radio Tahiti in 1950 and thereabouts was not complicated, and Marc was left alone to do his own thing with absolute minimum interference from the colonial administration. As a result, when he had the idea of broadcasting a 30 minute news summary in English each Saturday evening, it took him about 30 minutes to progress from idea to words to action. After the idea, the words were spoken to me, asking if I were interested. When I accepted, Marc said, "That's fine. We will start this Saturday evening."

Basically, I had three sources for my information: the Armed Forces Radio Service, the BBC and a mimeographed news bulletin compiled by the local administration and distributed to all Metropolitan fonctionnaires in service here, with at least a goodly number of them being doled out through the post office boxes. In spite of this being practically the only source of French news, the bulletin was not that appreciated, and the post office floor was always littered with the throwaways. I would always snaffle one, just in case.

When I first started, both Radio Tahiti staff and locale were modest in the extreme. As best I remember, the station comprised three regular members. Marc did all of the French language broadcasting and was the station technician at the flick-switches-turn-knobs

level. John Martin and Tauruu divided the Polynesian language broadcasting between them. Our studio was a medium sized room in the old Travaux Publics building along the Avenue Bruat. All windows were facing the Avenue, and, when a truck rumbled by, either all broadcasting stopped until truck noise was no longer a nuisance or voices were raised to compete with the racket.

Happily, the construction of a real studio was already under way when I started broadcasting, and we moved in to what seemed to be luxurious quarters a few months later. Our new studio was almost across the street from the old, as it was located on Rue Dumont d'Urville, facing the side of what is now the Presidential Palace.

As with everything else in our little fief, the approach to programming was more than a little laid back. Special programs could be put together by any one of us who had a reasonable idea and an excuse for wanting to broadcast it. I was allowed a half hour on each 4th of July and an hour and a half on a Christmas Eve to play Christmas carols.

For me, an ego-fattening sidelight to the whole broadcast idea was the totally unexpected "fan mail" I received, and from the strangest places imaginable. For instance, I received regular mail from Denmark and northwestern Germany, once from Poland, again from Sweden, etc. Of course, I had some really regular correspondents on Rarotonga and the Samoas. These could almost be expected. The others, however, were indicators of where our radio waves would be bounced back to earth. Happily, my European correspondents didn't hammer me with pages of wavelength and reception quality chatter. They much preferred asking about Tahiti and its beautiful people.

In the nearly two years that I did my broadcasts, only once did some chilling unease sliding toward terror mar the pleasure of my occupation. One week like any other, I stopped at the post office, hoping for mail and to pick up my news bulletin from the floor sweepings. I picked up one letter and my bulletin and went on my merry way.

Once I had arrived at home, I sat down to read my bulletin carefully before starting to write my broadcast. The feature story concerned some anti-French rioting in, I think, the city of Oran in what is now Nigeria. The story was

both fairly long and quite interesting; so I translated it, almost word for word, and included it in my broadcast. That evening, I sat in the broadcast booth while Marc stood before the console and its considerable collection of knobs and switches, just the other side of the broadcast booth window. Once I started on my riot piece, I saw Marc turn as pale as he could manage, wave his arms at me to get my attention, then start making violent throat-cutting gestures, indicating that he wanted me to change the subject. Okay. He's the boss; so I segued out of Oran and into something innocuous that I had gleaned from the BBC.

This also meant that I had to wing it for the couple of minutes that I had chopped from the other story. I got away with it, and my luck stopped there.

When I came out of the booth, Marc told me that, in those times when France still had many colonies, particularly in Africa, you NEVER spoke of troubles in one colony where other colonies might hear the story. Beyond that, Marc was convinced that we would be summoned before the Governor before the weekend was out. I tried to ease both our minds by suggesting that, because the story was told in English, the chances were that the Governor would not have been listening to the broadcast. Wrong again!

The following morning, Marc came over to the house to tell me that a special messenger had just come out from Papeete. He had delivered a missive requesting that both Marc and I appear before the Governor at precisely 0900 on Monday morning. Just the fact that a messenger was sent out on a Sunday morning lent evil portend to the whole operation.

As requested, we appeared, scrubbed and shiny, promptly at 0900 before M. le Gouverneur Petitbon for our castigation. We had our first big break in having M. Petitbon as Gouverneur. While he was as doctrinaire and severe as his position and responsibilities required him to be, he was also a man highly regarded for his humanity and his depth and honesty of character.

Our meeting began with a ritual scolding including, in my case, special mention my of now being eligible for expulsion from the colony. Once he had done his duty as iron handed administrator he surprised us both by complimenting Marc on the very professional job he was doing. He then informed me that he listened to and enjoyed my broadcast nearly every

(Please turn to page 14)

Conrad L. Hall Oscars

(Cont'd from page 8)

included Lifetime Achievement Awards from the American Society of Cinematography (ASC) in 1993 and the Camerimage International Festival of Cinematography in 1995. He also earned four ASC Outstanding Achievement Awards for a theatrical release ("Tequila Sunrise", 1988; "Searching for Bobby Fischer", 1993; "American Beauty", 2000; and "Road to Perdition", 2003).

Hall's son, Conrad W. Hall, also known as Winfred or Winnie, is also a cinematographer. He accepted the posthumous ASC award on his father's behalf, as well as the Oscar he was awarded for "Road to Perdition".

On May 1, 2003, Conrad L. Hall was honored on The Hollywood Walk of Fame with a star of his own. The late legendary cinematographer received the 2,224th star, which is located at 7060 Hollywood Boulevard near Sycamore Avenue. Hall's daughters, Kate and Naia, who also work in the film and television industry, attended this honor to their father.

Each of Conrad L. Hall's three children now has one of their father's Oscars. At the suggestion of their aunt, Nancy Hall Rutgers, they have agreed to let their Oscars take turns in being displayed in the James Norman Hall Home and Library in Tahiti.

"Although Tahiti and Hollywood represented two totally different lives for our father, we thought that his



The Home and Library of James Norman Hall is located on the mountainside at PK 5.5 in Ariue, a commune east of Papeete on Tahiti's north shore.

Oscars have a place in the house of James Norman Hall." Winfred Hall told *La Dépêche de Tahiti* in March 2004. "My sisters and I come to

Tahiti at least once a year and we can take turns leaving one of the Oscars here when we visit," he said.

Conrad Hall's Films

- Panic Room (2002)
- Road to Perdition (2002)
- A Gentleman's Game (2001)
- American Beauty (1999)
- A Civil Action (1998)
- Without Limits (1998)
- Love Affair (1994)
- Searching for Bobby Fischer (1993)
- Jennifer 8 (1992)
- Class Action (1990)
- Tequila Sunrise (1988)
- Black Widow (1986)
- Marathon Man (1976)
- The Day of the Locust (1975)
- Smile (1975)
- Electra Glide in Blue (1973)
- Fat City (1972)
- Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid (1969)
- The Happy Ending (1969)
- Tell Them Willie Boy is Here (1969)
- Hell in the Pacific (1968)
- Cool Hand Luke (1967)
- Divorce American Style (1967)
- In Cold Blood (1967)
- Harper (1966)
- The Professionals (1966)
- Incubus (1965)
- Morituri (1965)



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DINOSAUR IN PARADISE

(Cont.'d from page 12)

week, primarily to keep a decent edge on his spoken English comprehension. Flattered? You bet!

Time went on, and I had to remind myself that my radio work, while remunerated, was neither a career nor a living. It was pure fun. With the passage of time, I had worked myself into the position of having a small family to feed and the beginnings of a career to nurture, and, for this reason, I sought out an English friend, John Snow, to fill in for me. Johnny did so with brio for about a year, when I believe the broadcast was canceled.

Because of a health problem in my family, I packed up the brood, and we all left for California where we stayed for nearly five years before coming back here in early 1958. In these intervening years, Radio Tahiti had begun showing signs of growing up and expanding. Where, in my day, I think the day's broadcasting lasted about six hours. On my return, I believe the broadcast day had been expanded to about 16 hours. The studio had been more than doubled in size, and, even though it was still a couple of years down the road, the talk was all about television.

Finally, black and white television made its debut, and the local dealers in TV sets began to salt away their retirement money. The studio was expanded, once again, the last time before it moved to its superb quarters on the heights of Pamatai. Now, in this new and impeccably equipped installation, a greater and greater part of our TV programming is produced locally and of constantly improving quality.

Of course, the constant expansion brought about occasional name changes from Radio Tahiti through O. R. T. F. to today's RFO - Radio Télé Tahiti.

Today, television here is a highly competitive business, like anywhere else, be it for program quality, advertising money or exclusive squatters' rights on special events. It is the prime propaganda instrument all over the planet. On occasion, people almost make a life out of sitting in front of the box. Yet one cannot help wondering whether its brilliance, its vivid color, its intrusiveness bring to the widely scattered and tiny island populations the same solace, the same comfort and sense of security as did the timid, ether-borne waves of Radio Tahiti a half century ago

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The Transit of Venus

(Cont. 'd from page 7)

to the Tahitian *vahines* in exchange for their services, Cook posted regulations concerning trade with the natives. He ordered that no iron be exchanged except for provisions. He also asked his men to treat the natives with "all imaginable humanity" and to use every fair means of cultivating their friendship. The natives appreciated this treatment and came to know the Englishmen affectionately by their "Tahitianized" surnames--Tute (Cook), Opane (Banks) and Tolano (Solander).

The major problem Cook encountered was constant pilfering. From time to time he was obliged to take one or more of the chiefs hostage against the return of missing objects. The most important item taken was the quadrant, an essential instrument for astronomical observation. Although the instrument was eventually returned, the culprit had removed it from its box and taken it apart to see what was inside, and consequently, the quadrant was useless.

On June 3, the day of the Venus observation, there was not a cloud in the sky and the scientists were able to witness every phase of the transit from the fort at Point Venus, named in honor of the occasion. A small party took measurements from a motu islet inside the reef of Moorea.

Cook wrote in his journal:

"Thursday, June 1 - This day I sent the longboat to York Island with Dr. Monkhouse and Mr. Sporing (a gentleman belonging to Mr. Banks) to observe the Transit of Venus, Mr. Green having furnished them with instruments for that purpose. Mr. Banks and some of the natives of this island went along with them.

Friday, 2nd - Very early this morning Lieutenant Hicks, Mr. Clerk, Mr. Petersgill, and Mr. Saunders went away in the pinnace to the eastward, with orders to fix upon some convenient situation on this island and there to observe the Transit of Venus--they being likewise provided with instruments for that purpose.

Saturday, 3rd. This day proved as favorable to our purpose as we could wish. Not a cloud was to be seen the whole day and the air was perfectly clear, so that we had every advantage we could desire in observing the whole of the passage of the planet Venus over the sun's disk. We very

distinctly saw an atmosphere or dusky shade round the body of the planet, which very much disturbed the times of the contacts, particularly the two internal ones. Dr. Solander observed, as well as Mr. Green and myself, and we differed from one another in observing the times of the contact much more than could be expected. Mr. Green's telescope and mine were of the same magnifying power but that of the doctor was greater than ours. It was nearly calm the whole day and the thermometer exposed to the sun about the middle of the day rose to a degree of heat we have not before met with.

Saturday, 4th. ...This evening the gentlemen that were sent to observe the Transit of Venus returned with success. Those that were sent to York Island were well received by the natives. That island appeared to them not to be very fruitful..."

Perhaps the expedition to Moorea did not yield the hoped for results in sighting Venus, but the following account by Joseph Banks indicates that a good time was had by all.

Picnic in Moorea

Joseph Banks, the 25-year-old botanist on board the *Endeavour*, was young, curious and enterprising, and he never missed an occasion to make a promenade or an outing. Therefore, he joined the group that Cook sent over to Moorea to observe the passage of Venus from another location. Because of the importance of the mission, Lt. Gore was placed in charge. Among the other participants in this historic picnic, we know that the doctor Monkhouse and the artist Sporing went along. Thanks to Banks' personal journal, we know of the details of this adventure.

"June 1. It wasn't until after dinner that the boat could be ready and we had to row all night long to arrive on land in Eimeo (the Tahitian name for the island we now know as Moorea).

June 2. At the break of day we saw a pirogue whose occupants showed us a pass through the reef. We soon landed on a coral rock, about 150 meters from shore, an ideal place to install our observatory. This islet, Irioa, is some 80 meters long and 60

meters wide and has a white sand dune just big enough to set up our tents.

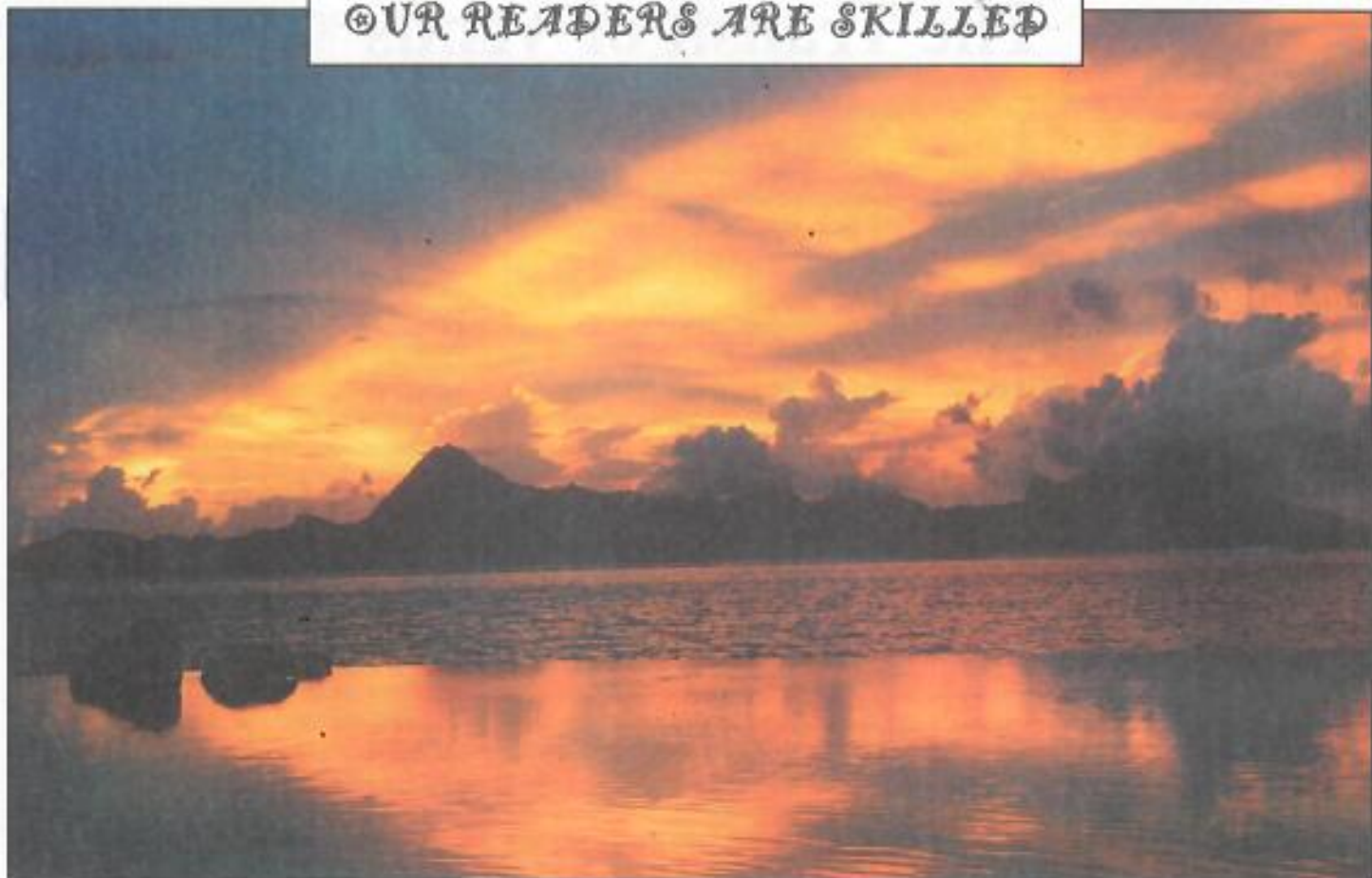
The second lieutenant and his men got to work right away while I went ashore on the main island to buy provisions from the inhabitants. I rapidly obtained a sufficient quantity and returned to the islet. Before dark the observatory was in place, the telescopes were tested and aimed toward the firmanent. We went to bed, very impatient for it to already be morning. And, as the night was very beautiful, we had every reason to hope for the most complete success of our mission.

June 3. The weather was variable throughout the night, and every half-hour we took turns, informing the others if the sky was cloudy or clear. At dawn, to our great satisfaction, the sun rose above the horizon clear and without any clouds. I wish, therefore, good luck to our astronomers, Gore and Monkhouse, and I return to the big island where I had two tasks--to examine the local products and to buy food for my companions who are occupied by all this important work. At 8 o'clock, while I had already procured a lot of supplies, I see two boats approaching. I was told that it was Ta'aroa, king of the island, who was coming to visit me. He was accompanied by his sister Nuna and together they approached the tree under which I was transacting my business. The people moved aside immediately, leaving a passage for them. I went to meet them and in a very ceremonious fashion I invited them within the space I had drawn around me, where up to now I had not permitted any native to enter.

As it is not the custom here to remain standing, I unrolled a turban of local fabric that I wore as a head cover, spread it on the ground and we all three sat on the improvised rug. The king's presents were brought forth, which consisted of a pig and a dog, as well as numerous breadfruits and coconuts. I immediately sent a pirogue to the observatory to bring back my gifts, which were a chisel, a shirt and a few glass beads. His Majesty seemed satisfied. At this moment, Tupura'a and Tamaio (the chief of Faaa and his wife), who formed part of our expedition, arrived

(Please turn to page 17)

OUR READERS ARE SKILLED



Robin Keightley, from Lowestoft, United Kingdom: "The weather had been wet and overcast - as this was our last night on Tahiti my wife and I wanted to get a good sunset photograph to remember our wonderful holiday. We thought we were out of luck as it was dull, but then this wonderful sunset suddenly broke through the clouds - A fitting tribute to a great time on the island."

OUR READERS ARE SKILLED

You have wonderful souvenir photos from the exciting vacations you spent in French Polynesia. Now is the time to share your best island images and win! The Tahiti Beach Press organizes a photo contest sponsored by **HERMAN PERLES**.

The contest will be held from June 1, 2004 until May 31, 2005. The photos have to have been taken in French Polynesia only. Each photo will compete in 1 of the 3 following categories: Faces of Polynesia, Polynesian landscapes, Playtime in Polynesia.

Send color prints only. Do not use staples or paper clips. They can scratch your photos. Tahiti Beach Press is not responsible for lost or damaged photos.

Please include a story behind the photo. Each photo must mention when and where

it was taken. For the faces category the name of people and their written permission for public view must be included. Tahiti Beach Press will publish every month a sample photo, which cannot be considered as the winning photo and does not mean it can become the winning photo. Tahiti Beach Press reserves the right to utilize the photos for any use. The name of the photographer will be cited.

If you want your photos to be returned, you must send a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Make sure the return envelope is large enough to accommodate your photos, provide ample Tahiti postage for your residence country, and include a return address. Entries that are not accompanied by return envelopes and sufficient postage will be discarded.

Do not telephone the Tahiti Beach Press office. The winning photo will be published and the name of the winner will be cited in the (July 2004) issue of the Tahiti Beach Press. The winner will be advised by mail.

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Send this completed entry form with your photograph and a self-addressed, stamped envelope to: Tahiti Beach Press, P.O. Box 887, Papeete 98713, TAHITI, French Polynesia

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The Transit of Venus

(Cont.'d from page 15)

at the observatory. This latter, who they say is family of Ta'aroa, were offered a long nail and his wife, Nuna, was given a shirt.

When Venus began its passage across the solar disc, I returned to the observatory, accompanied by Ta'aroa, Nuna and some of the members of the royal party. We showed them the planet, which stood out on the solar disc, and tried to explain to them that the goal of our mission was to observe this. Then I accompanied them ashore and spent the rest of the day examining the produce of the island, which I found very similar to those of Tahiti. This also applies to the residents, many of whom we have already seen on the sister island and each of them is already perfectly aware of the objects that we bring and their exchange value.

At sunset I return to the observatory, after having bought another pig from the king. Three ravishing young girls, whom we already saw this morning with Ta'aroa, came to visit us in a pirogue. They asked us questions and talked with us very freely, and it was no trouble to persuade them to send back their pirogue and to spend the night under the tent. Such proof of

trust, after such a short meeting, is, I swear, something that I've never seen before.

June 4. We prepared to depart, but remained longer at the insistence of our agreeable companions. Between our gifts and our provisions, we had too much to load on the boat, and I was obliged to distribute most of it to the islanders. After that we departed and were lucky to reach Point Venus before dark."

During their three-month stay in Tahiti, Banks and Solander gathered huge collections of new species of plants, birds, fishes and insects. Of equal importance from the scientific point of view, Cook learned much about the Tahitian way of life. He observed the native customs, manners, religion and law. He described the people's appearance (explaining their tattoos), cooking methods, food-stuffs and apparent social and political order. He also made a trip around the island in a longboat and drew a complete and accurate map of the whole coastal region of Tahiti.

The *Endeavour* sailed away from Tahiti on July 13, 1769. Heading westward, he anchored in Moorea's Opunohu Bay, and took a longboat to

explore Pao Pao, which he named Cook's Bay. Cook also discovered the islands of Huahine, Raiatea, Tahaa and Bora Bora. He named them the Society Islands "because they lay contiguous to one another." He also discovered two islands in the Austral group and several of the Tuamotu atolls, before sailing on to claim New Zealand, Australia, and several other islands for his country. He returned to Matavai Bay again, as Captain Cook, on three separate occasions in 1773, 1774 and 1777, during his second and third voyages of exploration. Today there is a monument to this great discoverer at Point Venus.

The readings of the 1769 Venus transit that were taken at Point Venus, from Tahiti's east coast and on Moorea were subsequently found to be of little value because the irradiation of the sun does not permit a human observer, unaided by a camera and other modern equipment, to determine with enough precision this astronomical phenomenon.

Unfortunately, Edmund Halley's method of observing the Venus transits proved impractical since contact timings of the desired accuracy are

(Please turn to page 18)



The Transit of Venus

(Cont'd from page 17)

impossible due to the effects of atmospheric seeing and diffraction. Nevertheless, the 1761 and 1769 expeditions to observe the transit of Venus gave astronomers their first good value for the sun's distance.

Today the distance to the sun and planets can be measured extremely accurately using giant radio telescopes as radar guns to shoot powerful signals to Venus and time the reflected echo. Using this method the distance to the sun is given as 149,597,870.691 kms.

Although the 2004 transit will have no scientific value in measuring distances, it is still a remarkable rare

event. With the recent discovery of the first transit of a planet around another star (Henry, March, Butler, and Vogt, 1999) interest in extra-solar transits is high. Scientists are looking forward to this opportunity to develop and test new techniques that can be applied to the detection and characterization of extrasolar planets.

For the Venus transit on June 8, 2004, hundreds of observers from all continents except Antarctica (where the transit will be essentially invisible) will attempt to measure the exact times when Venus passes the sun's limb and submit their data to a website. All observations will then be

combined in an historical re-enacting of the measurement of the distance from the earth to the sun.

On another level, many of the people who will be watching Earth's sister planet Venus as it stars in the "astronomical event of the year" will join their minds and spirits in a Oneness Celebration that will take place in several countries. The overall purpose of this meditation is to open ourselves up to telepathic contact and the extended intuitive awareness and harmonizing effects of this new field. You can do this even if you are not able to watch the silhouette of Venus as it crosses in front of the sun ☉.

MAURUURU AWARD LETTERS

SKIPPER DAVID LEVRELS YACHT EIAO - ARCHIPELS CROISIERE

In October 2003 I had the privilege of touring your beautiful French Polynesian paradise aboard the EIAO (a 57' catamaran).

I wish to honor the skipper by recommending him for this prestigious award. He, as well as the first mate, Dorothy, definitely meet the defined criteria for this award. I read about the prize in your "Tahiti Beach Press" publication.

Reason for recommendation: Skipper David and the first mate were "extraordinaire"!!! I wish to nominate the skipper and give honorable mention to Dorothy because they helped me fulfill a lifelong dream of my grandfather's, without them having knowledge of it. My grandfather used to read to me about Tahiti and adventures in your paradise. I was about 8 years old when he died. He asked me to do a couple of things for him if I ever got to your side of the world. I did get there, and I did fulfill his wishes. Skipper David was able to take us places not otherwise accessible. I am now 54 years of age and I rejoice in the beauty of your people and of the land. It IS truly a paradise! How God has blessed you! Thanks to the skipper I got to meet native peoples of your islands (Bora Bora, Tahaa, Raiatea, Huahine). I also had the fortune of traveling aboard the vessel to get to know people from French Polynesia and France. What an incredible experience! We were able to tour rivers, plantations, pearl farms, experience sea life, customs of the people, and much more...taste typical foods of the lands...dance the Tamure...learn how to cook some of the foods of your people... How exciting, and educational, as well. My adventure was far more than Grandpa and I ever could have imagined! I feel as though he was with me. He would have loved it! Skipper David was professional and at the same time hospitable. He made the voyage a FUN journey. He taught us about the waters and its creatures, the people of French Polynesia, the vegetation, local

dancing, and the food. He and first mate Dorothy tended to the needs of each passenger (safety, interests and well-being...). I have journeyed on several boats, vessels and large cruise ships before, but these two people rate number one on my list. The food they prepared was outstanding and presented so beautifully, as well. I shall never forget my experience aboard the EIAO. We did not want the journey to end. My heart carries warm and precious memories of French Polynesia, thanks to Captain David and Dorothy. They are truly great ambassadors for your Tahiti and the surrounding islands. I thank them for making my dream come true.

Valerie Iacovangelo, OTR
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"Pai Moana", Hero of the Ocean, Is Making History Out of Legendary Name

The way Canadian Peter Ringland sees it, Tahiti has only two businesses worth being in—tourism and Tahitian cultured pearls. He should know. He's one of the few foreigners with experience in both.

But he wouldn't be here today if an insurance company hadn't been scared off by the hurricane season in the South Atlantic in 1978, forcing Ringland to abandon plans to sail from Hawaii to the Bahamas.

At the time, Ringland owned the 70-foot sailing yacht *Seer*, which, under the name *Sea Sage*, had become famous to Americans in the "Hawaii Five-O" TV series.

Forced by the weather to change plans, Ringland and his crew sailed to Tahiti. The first person Ringland met when he arrived in Papeete in June 1978 was the seafaring Tahitian legend, Rodo Williams.

Like many Polynesians from another generation, Rodo had an innate sense of navigation on the high seas. He and the Canadian developed such a close relationship during the *Seer's* four years of diving charters that when Ringland married a local girl a few years later, Rodo carried out the Tahitian tradition of giving the newlywed foreigner a Polynesian name: "Pai Moana".

Pai was the ancient Tahitian hero, who, according to legend, threw a spear from the island of Tahiti, making a hole in one of Moorea's tallest mountains. That hole is still there today. Moana is Tahitian for the word ocean. So Ringland became "Hero of the Ocean".

When Ringland started up an import-export business, he named it Pai Moana Trading Corp. The business developed into a pearl farm on the Tuamotu atoll of Manihi, which became the foundation of his new business experience after he sold the *Seer* in 1987.

Ringland opened his first Pai Moana Pearl boutique in Papeete's Quartier du Commerce. He also has a Pai Moana Pearl shop on Moorea, located close to Le Petit Village and all the hotels in the Haapiti area. Free transportation is provided by air-conditioned limousine between all the hotels or boat docks on Moorea and the Pai Moana Pearls boutique.

Ringland divides his time between the two pearl shops, his Europcar business on Moorea and his pearl farm in Manihi. Normally his busy schedule includes a lot of travel overseas, taking



The Yacht "Seer" under sail

care of his wholesale business for the cultured pearls he produces on his farm in the Tuamotu atolls.

Ringland personally selects from each harvest the pearls of the best quality and color for his pearl stores. They are dedicated to the principal of offering the best possible quality for the best possible price.

Pai Moana Pearls is offering up to 30 percent discount off his retail price on unset pearls, and he guarantees to beat anybody's price in the market. He or any of his trained staff will happily sit down with you to find the perfect pearl for you and your budget whatever it may be. You learn how to grade the pearls according to size, shape, surface quality and luster or orient. The thicker the nacre or mother-of-pearl aragonite substance covering the nucleus inside the pearl, the more light it reflects.

The Tahitian government has passed a regulation that requires a minimum thickness of 0.8 millimeters of nacre for all pearls exported. Pai Moana Pearls guarantees a minimum aragonite thickness of 1 millimeter. This guarantee is provided in writing, along with your certificate of origin and authenticity.

How does Ringland know what thickness of nacre covers the nucleus in his pearls? He produces all his own oysters and pearls, and he keeps a record of the size of the nucleus that was grafted into each oyster. When the pearl is harvest-

ed 14-18 months later, all Ringland has to do is measure the finished pearl and compare it with the size of the nucleus. The difference is the nacreous coating.

Visitors often ask: "Can a pearl be X-rayed?" Ringland's answer is: "The Tahitian government now has a machine that X-rays all pearls to be exported in quantity to make sure they meet the set requirements for quality. Besides that, only the G.I.A. (Gemology Institute of America) in Santa Monica, California, has the technicians and equipment to X-ray a Tahitian cultured pearl. Nobody else has the expertise or equipment to do it correctly. X-raying pearls for retail sale is a gimmick."

"French Polynesia is THE source for Tahitian cultured pearls. There are pearls for all budgets. And Pai Moana is a French Polynesia company that is vertically integrated with its own pearl farm. There's no middleman; therefore, we can offer the best quality and prices on the island."

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