

STAN WATERMAN- TIM & BARBARA- NEW SOLE & WASPFISH- 5 NEW DIVEMASTERS- CELEBRATION DAY-NEW STUDENTS-ANNIVERSARY DIVE-BACK TO OUR GOLDEN WALLS

Hi, Everyone,

Our week with Stan was a warm, funny, wonderful experience for all of us. My guys were superb at helping him- he has a few balance and vision problems, but otherwise is an unbelievably YOUNG fit and active 85-my hero and idol. Our -supposed -to-be- perfect week was, naturally, hindered by rough water and rain, sinus infection (me) ear problems, (Tim). Stan was accompanied by long-time friends and colleagues Tim and Barbara Blanton, with whom he has worked on various projects . Great people- Tim is a highly talented videographer in his own right. We got in only one dive out on the islands, the rest here in our lagoon- but we found some incredible stuff in there, including an as yet unidentified sole. . They filmed everything- our Headstart Program, my guys teaching a class and spearfishing on snorkel, villagers, carvers at work, etc. Sat. night we hosted a "Stan Waterman" night for the whole village showing several of his works under a moonlit sky. The villagers loved it. They are the ONLY guests who have ever been honored by having our Pathfinders (church youth group) come and do a program. I used the opportunity to get all the little kids (the Adventurers) to come, too, and we did a big sing-sing for them. They were charmed!!

Sun. was the grand finale- we headed Kicha to Biche village over on the weather coast in perilously huge swells. It was so rough, we couldn't land; villagers skillfully timed the waves, paddled out in a dug-out canoe and transferred us, suffering an extreme case of skepticism, 2 at a time for the short, nonetheless harrowing, trip ashore. We had barely recovered from our trial at sea when we were viciously attacked by savage, wild haired, painted headhunters. With no escape but the roiling sea, we cringed and begged for mercy. At the last second, our freedom was ensured by the intercession of another headhunter who, after heated negotiations (possibly regarding our "tastiness") purchased us with shell money (possibly to eat later?? Us, that is, not the shell money!). WHEW! Here it must be mentioned that Biche was the last village in the whole area (1915) to give up headhunting (which Dellington phrases as "the hottest sport in the Western Province in pre-history times") and cannibalism. With great relief, we proceeded to the river eel experience. A slew of near black conger eels with blue eyes have been fed for years, and are tame enough to play with. Stan, Barb & Tim were enthralled with the velvety soft animals slithering around their legs as they stood in the cold stream.

The entire A team arose at the crack of dawn to escort them to the airstrip and see them safely off. Viso presented Stan with one of our shirts inscribed with "Honorary A Team Member"- Stan is now sole member of a very exclusive club!. We arrived back at Vuana with a very subdued group- my staff are experiencing the difficulties of getting so close to our guests in such a short time- and then seeing them leave. I reassure them that the good part is that these people will probably come back- as they have taken a piece of our hearts with them and must return it.

And back to school and finishing Divemaster requirements with students John Wood, Kiddo Jeffry, and Ronex Morrance. Exercises came to a sudden halt as Dellington pointed out a tiny scrap of leaf that turned out to be our first, so minute it was barely discernible, Cockatoo Waspfish waddling along the sandy bottom.

AND IT IS WITH THE GREATEST JOY THAT I ANNOUNCE THAT PEAVA VILLAGE NOW HAS 5 NEW PADI DIVEMASTERS!!! After 2 years of training (1 year and 359 days, to be exact), Nateson Henry, Dellington Bare, Ronald Amos, John Viso Timothy and Bryan (Broom) Palmer on Sept. 12 completed their Divemaster course. For those of you not familiar with diving, Divemaster is the first Professional Level where they can be in charge of and teach other divers and non-divers. To reach this pinnacle, they have passed through 5 different courses, the last 2, Rescue and Divemaster , being the most difficult.

And that, of course, called for a play day at Kicha to celebrate. A shimmering morning found us loading Kicha with 17 tanks, 8 divers (Fred -a she- & Wade from the sailboat Kuna- BBC filmmakers-came with us!!), 2 dogs, and a huge picnic lunch. Our walls of fish seemed to join our celebratory spirit, and we spent a blissful day diving, snorkeling, soaking up sun, eating, fishing and hiking Kicha's extraordinary beauty. Ronald caught 2 big bonito- Mac's favorite. MacTavish had swum out to the boat; we did NOT want to leave him on the boat while we went diving- he'd eat the whole darned fish! So I put him back in the water and told him to go to shore. That pup swam around the boat, and when noone would grab him, climbed up our steep and, for a small dog, slippery aluminum ladder all by himself & dug hungrily into the fish. We were just howling.

It's been an educational month here in Peava. Fred and Wade hosted an "Antarctica Night" out here in the library showing slides of their freezing adventures filming Emperor penguins; their presentation to an overflow audience prompted a request for a village night. My trusty little Epson projector is being well used. Villagers were mesmerized by the sheer magnitude of ice and snow, by humans all but invisible in their insulated cocoons, and the massive penguin colony.

On Sept. 18, we celebrated 2 years of diving- my crew had started their training 2 years ago to the day. That, of course, called for another celebration- this one off our home wall, Vuana, where so much of our training has been done. I was most pleased that they elected to limit their own dives so that our 3 students could accompany us; it seemed as though our underwater "buddies" were celebrating with us- they were all "home" - our pair of barramundi, our lions, our anthias, our 2 baby dragon wrasses, even "Jeffrey", our saddled shrimp goby. A traditional navy biscuit, peanut butter and jam party followed- I never cease to be amazed at the sheer volume that these guys can consume when they're cold and hungry.

And "Winter" is loosening her surf-laden grip; we have begun waking to flat seas again on many mornings- enabling us to re-explore our beloved summer dive sites. Golden Dawn, my "drowning in color" site, was so resplendent in golden soft corals with blue and yellow fusiliers cascading down the sheer drop. I was too busy just enjoying " being home again", I neglected my camera and was simply swept along in the beauty- except, of course for the 2 new species of fish we found- the Blackbar filefish (Viso) , and Ambon Toby (Lisa).

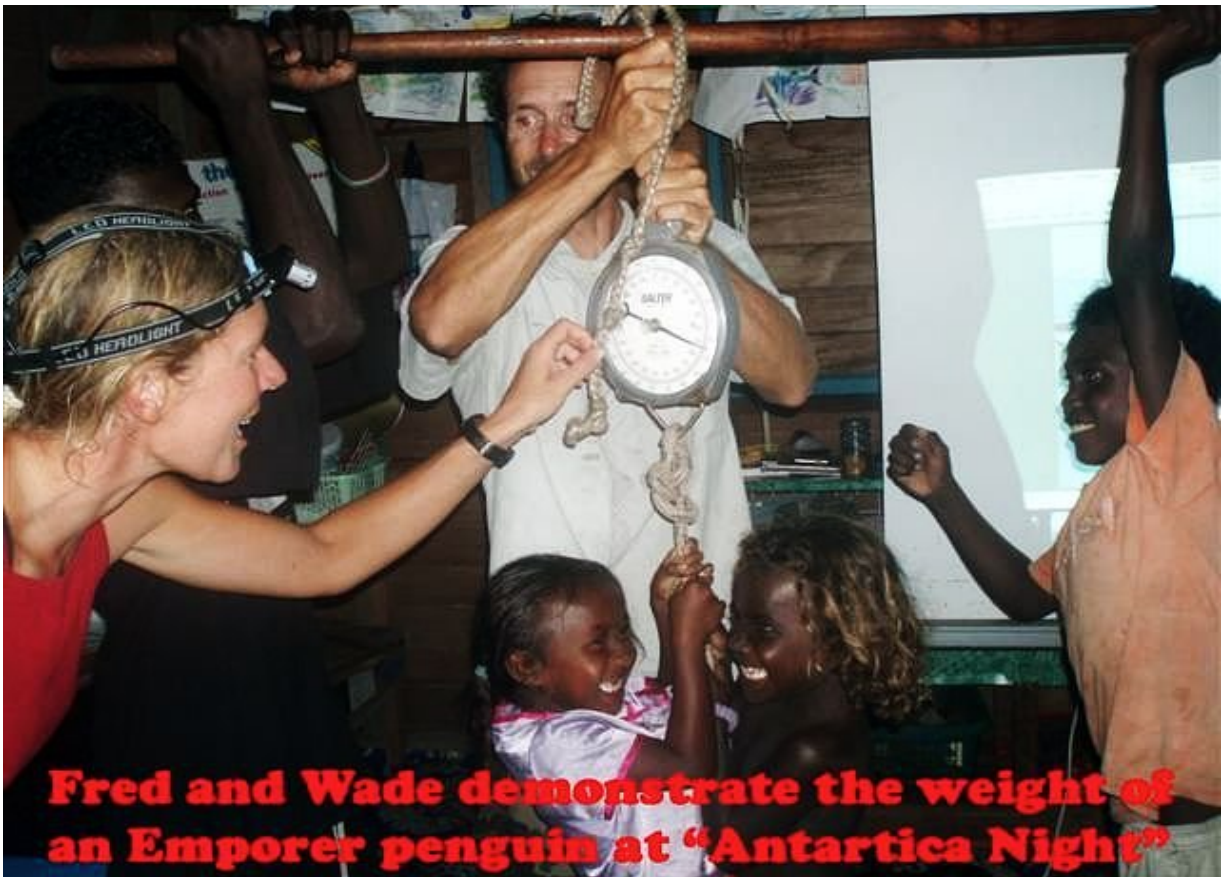
And so it is that this busy month of warm reunions, new friends and celebrations has drawn to a close, with classes going on and new friends you'll meet in next month's letter.

Have a great month, all.

Love and hugs,

Lisa

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**this 1 inch long variation of a
cockatoo waspfish ---**

---joined our class one day



our unidentified little sole



“A” team with our first honorary member!



Stan with the Biche warriors!



**village sing-sing for
Stan, Barb and Tim**