

Bermuda

Overcoming The Idiosyncrasies

I have long avoided a diving vacation to Bermuda. Had it not been for Peter Benchley's characterization of Bermuda diving in his novel/film *The Deep*, I suppose I would have forever avoided this tiny haven for romanticists. Bermuda, you see, compared to diving destinations to which I have grown accustomed has too many idiosyncrasies. It does not fit the profile. Let me be specific.

1. Being on the same latitude as North Carolina, it is no place for a winter dive vacation. The water is cold, the weather can be stormy, and full wet suits are required. Yet in the summertime the gulf stream waters may be 80° or better.

2. Diving is generally shallow; thirty feet is normal. Fifty feet is just about the maximum. Many of the famous wrecks are little more than piles of rubble. Neither the reefs nor the fish life is spectacular.

3. Bermuda is clean, well-kept, organized and modern. It is more like the English countryside than a tropical isle. There is no poverty, no hostility, no confusion. It is both a throwback to the 19th century and a glimpse at the 21st.

4. Only a handful of the tourists come to dive. Most come to play golf or tennis, bat around a shuttlecock or a volleyball, lounge in the sun, bike around the island, shop for English goods, and conduct themselves with aplomb.

5. Accommodations can be expensive, up to \$200/day/couple (American plan) in luxurious hotels, or inexpensive (\$20/day) in small guest houses.

6. The Island has a dress code. Shorts, shirts, and sandals are quite satisfactory in the daytime, but after 6 pm men are requested to wear jackets and ties in the hotels and restaurants. Anyone otherwise attired on the street will not be sent home, but will indeed feel a bit out of place.

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7. Tourists may not rent cars. Transportation is by bus, bike, motorbike, or shanks' mare. Getting one's dive bag to a charter operation can be a bit clumsy.

Surely, this could be no place for the serious diver, the gorilla diver, the photographer or the well-traveled. Nor could it be a place for me. I am not one who likes lounging at luxurious hotels, finding myself seated at the bar with guests who might just as well be on a cruise ship. I do not prefer sipping yellowbirds while attired in my seersucker jacket when I could be sipping a cold Heineken and letting the froth soak into my T-shirt. My goal is good diving and correlation with the amenities of Bermuda seemed absolutely out of the question. I was certain that Bermuda would be best reserved for septuagenarians, honeymooners, or even novice divers. But it would not be a place for me.



THE SONESTA BEACH HOTEL

I selected the Sonesta Beach Hotel, the only residence on the island which advertises itself regularly in diving periodicals. Half of the Sonesta's 384 rooms overlook the ocean, the other half offer a pleasant view of Gibbs Lighthouse, the beach and the domed swimming pool. It is a lovely and well-managed hotel in an attractive setting, and indeed it should be at \$155/day/couple (add \$18/day for extras which appear on the bill) for a room, breakfast and dinner. The Sonesta offers all the frills one would expect at that tariff, including tennis, shuffleboard, swimming pools, a night club with a floor show, a number of bars, et. al. The tour director and the social director can arrange a day's schedule for the nondiver. One may visit the Maritime Museum, Somerset Bridge, the City of Hamilton, or the aquarium, play nine or eighteen holes (\$15), or simply shop in the seven stores on the first floor arcade within the Sonesta, where leather goods, sportswear, European china and crystal, and Swiss watches are readily available. And, the nondiver may simply sit back and enjoy the summer sunshine.

Upon arrival at the hotel, guests select a dinner hour (6:30 pm or 8:30 pm) for the duration of their stay and a permanent table is assigned. Breakfast included: eggs, pancakes, fresh fruit, and Scottish kippers. Dinners are what one might expect to find in a grand hotel on a special holiday, formal sitdown affairs, served by well-trained waiters. Each evening five appetizers, three soups, a salad six entrees, three vegetables and five desserts are offered. One typical dinner might be Bermuda mussel pie, chilled borsht, chicken curry madras with pineapple fritters, and French cream horn; another might be eggs mayonnaise with caviar, cream of asparagus soup, lemon sole meuniere, and chocolate mousse.

So I sat after dinner on my first day of arrival, sipping my dark coffee, letting the cognac roll around my tongue, watching the cigar smoke curl upwards, loosening the cravat at my throat and thinking not a moment about tomorrow's diving. "Who cares?" I said to myself. It is the grande bourgeoisie life I am meant to appreciate.

But when the morning comes, when the sun dances off the rippling water, I become a diver. I arrived at the beach front dive shop of Kevin Burke's Underwater Safaris for the 10:30 dive, was asked if I were certified, then signed the liability

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waiver required of all Bermuda divers (see Undercurrent, June, 1980). I boarded the 27-foot dive boat, with benches along the side and a ladder for easy boarding after the dive, which promptly headed for the selected site. Only one other diver was experienced; seven were novices. Many had just completed the resort course offered two hours before departure. Three guides accompanied us. Once on the bottom in 30 feet of water, I was required to play follow the leader on a speedy tour of the reef. When I stopped for pictures I found myself suddenly alone, but the guide would quickly return to shepherd me back to the group. I found little of interest to photograph or observe--a few common tropical fish, much storm-damaged hard coral, gorgonia, fans, and a few coral canyons and short tunnels. This was a reef for first-time divers.

In the afternoon we visited "Kevin's Wreck," reputed to be at least 300 years old. A debris pile, its highlight, is but a 16-foot beam. After a quick look we again charged around the reef. At the conclusion the guides were generous enough to let us experienced divers burn up the remaining air beneath the boat. The few tropical fish present hovered nearby, unafraid of cameras. When we returned to the hotel, we were ordered to carry our tanks back to the dive shop, a 50-foot walk. At the single tank rate of \$25/dive (\$30 if you need a regulator) I thought the attitude a bit brusque, as did a few others.

I made several other dives with Underwater Safaris and had no experience which varied sufficiently from the above to cause me to report further. The underwater pace, it would seem, was designed to exhaust the diver's air supply as rapidly as possible so the dive excursion could end. Since this operation took us to sites near the hotel, we were never gone from the hotel much longer than an hour. Div-ing quality was never much of a consideration. Getting people through the resort course and on the dive boat so that they might thrash about in 30 feet of water for \$30 a pop seemed to be the priority. I can't imagine anyone who has been around a bit wanting to dive with these blokes. Indeed, I didn't.

I awoke on my fourth day itching for a good dive. I called Dave McLeod, whom Undercurrent readers have frequently praised. "We have a good reef dive on the calendar," he said. "I'd sure go for a good wreck," I responded. "Then a wreck it is," he replied. I knew immediately the reasons for our readers' praise.

I arrived for the 9:30 dive to find Dave separating novices from the experienced divers. Somedays he would use separate boats for the skill levels. Today we would be divided up at the dive site, the L'Herminie, a 60-gun French frigate, wrecked in 1838 while enroute from Havana to Drest Franc. Still remaining were large coral encrusted cannons, an enormous anchor with a 15-foot shank, the windless, anchor chain, brick from the oven, and a collection of ship items. One diver discovered a beautiful old liquor bottle near the bricks, while another found three small cannon balls. In the 60-foot visibility, there were more tropicals than on any of my previous dives. Returning from this dive I imagined the sights and sounds as this great ship foundered against the coral reefs, finally sinking, but with all 495 men aboard rescued.

No one can visit Bermuda without diving the Constellation, the sunken vessel which stimulated the imagination of Peter Benchley, creator of The Deep. In December 1863, the Montana, an English paddle wheel steamer, was sunk in transit between London and Nassau, with a cargo for the Confederate states. In 1943, the Constellation, an American four-masted schooner, met its fate on the same reef, settling directly on top of the Montana. The Constellation, if you'll recall from The Deep, was carrying cement and those famous ampules of morphine, which can still be found among the rubble (as did one diver on our trip). There is little left of the Constellation--some large pieces of wood with great spikes sticking out, a large pile of cement bags, and many medicine bottles. The Montana's large boilers and paddle wheels provide an interesting photographic backdrop for the many tropical fish which play about the wreck.

Here I found blue sergeant majors - females who had recently spawned - protecting their eggs with such vigor that they continually nipped me. The thirty-foot depth provides plenty of bottom time to poke through the sand or explore among the hard corals and gorgonia.

The most intact ship I dove was the North Carolina, an English iron barque wrecked in 1880 while bound from Bermuda to Liverpool with a load of cotton. The bow section with bowsprit is upright, the stern relatively intact, and in between rests the remains of the hull. A wide-angle lens is a must; visibility seldom exceeds 30-40 feet at this site.

With Underwater Safaris I dived the Mari Celeste, a Confederate paddle wheel steamer wrecked in 1864, enroute from Bermuda to Savannah with a load of corned beef and rifles. It was the typical follow-the-leader-race-around-the-hull-then-off-to-a-nearby-coral-reef-dive I had grown accustomed to. I returned with Dave McLeod, but did not mention my previous visit. With Dave it became a casual tour around the wreck with plenty of time to explore and photograph. What had been an uninspiring dive with one operation, became a good dive with another. A visit to the same coral reef this time brought tours through wonderful little tunnels, some of which led into large rooms with openings on top through which I could watch the surf pound. I was not shown these openings on my first visit. I can see now why some divers have mediocre experiences on Bermuda, while others return home satisfied.

Perhaps the best of the coral reef dives with Dave was to Southwest Reef, where among the hard coral and gorgonia were parrotfish, cowfish, blue angels, barracuda, wrasse, Spanish hog fish, jack, blue runners, snappers, etc. The reef abounded with caves, grottoes and canyons, and Dave took us through all of them, again providing plenty of time for the photo bugs. I found nothing spectacular on this dive, but it was pleasant and calming.

McLeod operates two dive boats, both 40 feet long, one licensed for 16 people, the other for eight. He pumps his 71.2 aluminum tanks to 2475 psi, charging \$25 for a dive which includes everything (including a wet suit top) but a regulator (\$5 additional). I was not asked to produce a C-card, but I was asked if I was certified. His shop is small, neat, and well-stocked. From the Sonesta Beach Hotel, the 10-15-minute trip by cab to McLeod's was \$9 round trip. A bus, running every half hour, cost \$1.10 round trip.

Bermuda offers easy diving on small and pleasant reefs, different because of the wrecks, and perhaps exciting because one never knows what he might turn up in the sand. Artifacts of value cannot be taken from the country, but small souvenirs are usually carried out in the bottom of a suitcase. I would return again, but with a crew of people to make special arrangements with Dave McLeod to get to the remote wrecks not visited by everyday tourist divers. Dave arranges those trips, charges less per individual, and can even arrange accommodations at nearby guest houses which charge \$20/day/person and include kitchenettes. There are other operations on Bermuda, but when it comes to service I can't imagine anyone surpassing Dave McLeod.

The Bermuda Dive Operations:

Dave McLeod's Skin Diving Adventures
Somerset Bridge
Sandys, Bermuda Tele: 1-6207

Underwater Safaris, Kevin Burke
Sonesta Beach Hotel
Southampton Tele: 8-8122 ext: 217

Schaffer's Underwater World of Diving
Maurice Schaffer
Holiday Inn Hotel
St. George's Tele: 7-1777 ext. 199
Ross Menzies Tele: 8-0815

Bermuda Water Sports
Paul Wakefield
Grotto Bay Hotel
Hamilton Tele: 3-2640 ext. 36

Diver's Compass: Travel agents everywhere have files full on Bermuda lodging, including the guest houses; it is relatively easy to find accommodations suited just to your needs. . . .I used Beth Thomas, Sports Holidays, 5700 Arlington Ave., Riverdale, NY, 10471 (212/543-3958), who is an active diver and knows Bermuda well. . . .Customs into Bermuda is a formality, with no baggage inspection. . . .a moped tour of the island is a must; rates are roughly \$15/24-hour period for a bike for two. . . .bugs were no problem. . . .With the exception of the Holiday Inn, only cash or traveler's checks are accepted; many shops and restaurants accept credit cards, but bring plenty of currency.

Getting Bent In Foreign Waters

Two Cases Worth Considering

Not long ago we came across a piece by NOAA diving officer Dick Rutowski describing the extraordinary problems facing the treatment and evacuation of an injured diver in foreign waters. Subsequently we learned of the harrowing experience of a good samaritan diver bent during the hurricane season in Cozumel.

These two cases not only indicate the complexity of taking care of an injured diver in foreign waters, but also suggest how difficult it is to survive a serious embolism or case of bends without a recompression chamber nearby. Next time you consider taking that third or fourth dive of the day without carefully computing your standing on the tables or the next time you think about dropping down an extra fifteen feet to take that last peek before you surface, think of these two unfortunate victims. It just doesn't pay to shoot craps with the basic rules of diving.

* * * * *

Dr. James Short was diving from a tourist boat off the coast of Cozumel on August 4, when a fellow diver panicked and began ascending too rapidly. Short swam to the distressed diver and grabbed him to stop the rapid ascent. But when Short himself reached the surface he was paralyzed in his right arm and leg and could barely talk. He had developed an embolism in his head and in the artery of his neck.

Short was treated in a small hyperbaric chamber, but the chamber became inoperative when Hurricane Allen hit and damaged power lines. The government closed the airport, but provided emergency clearance for Short's evacuation. Neither the U.S. Navy nor the U.S. Coast Guard, however, had an aircraft which could handle the storm while keeping Short at the appropriate cabin pressure. So for three days Short lay in pain, the numbness in his legs growing, waiting for the weather to clear.

Back in the States a friend of Short contacted a Mobile, Alabama, civilian air ambulance and asked that they attempt an evacuation. Their Lear jet was the only plane available which could fly at 28,000 ft. to avoid the hurricane, while keeping the cabin pressure at sea level. They agreed to use that plane, but when it

arrived, nearly out of fuel from the long journey, they found the airport had not been prepared for arrival. The runway was cluttered with trees and wreckage strewn by the hurricane. Scores of workers were rounded up and dispatched to clear the runway and the sputtering plane landed just before its fuel tanks were empty. After Short was taken to the plane, the refueled craft departed, skirted the hurricane, landed in New Orleans for another refueling, then traveled to San Antonio, Texas, where Short was placed in the Navy chamber.

Short's improvement has been rapid and full recovery is expected.

* * * * *

This is Rutowski's story:

The Marine Laboratory in Jamaica called to tell me that it was treating an embolized diver in its small recompression chamber. Personnel at the laboratory were working via telephone with Dr. Dean Heimbock, who was located at the U.S. Air Force (USAF) School of Hyperbaric Medicine in San Antonio. All treatment was being made as advised by Dr. Heimbock, but because of the victim's critical condition and the lack of proper medical facilities in Jamaica, the suggestion was made that he be evacuated to the Miami Hyperbaric Trauma Team for further treatment and for a neurological follow-up. The Aquatic Medical Team at Jackson Memorial Hospital in Miami was notified immediately. They called Jamaica and gave further consultation. Efforts then began to evacuate the victim.

The Jamaican Air Force was to transport the victim to Miami. To do this required the following: the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) had to be notified; they in turn had to seek permission for an overfly of Cuba; the victim had to be cleared through Jamaican and U.S. Customs and Immigration; USCG at Miami and FAA had to maintain communications; Dade County Fire and Rescue had to keep contact with all local medical and recompression chamber personnel; USCG Air Station Miami was on standby; Randal Eastern Ambulance Service was on standby; the pa-

tient was to go to South Miami Hospital—they were on standby; and on and on the list goes.

Eleven government agencies were rapidly working to save the life of an unknown victim. In the emergency room at South Miami Hospital, doctors learned that the victim was a 24-year-old male from Edmonton, Canada, who was on vacation with a friend at Negril, Jamaica. The two friends decided to go diving and contacted a local dive guide who was supposed to be a diving instructor; this person instructed them for about one-half hour on the beach before the victim and his companion began their wonderful new adventure. Neither of them had used scuba equipment before, or had even snorkeled. According to the victim, their dives on the first day were very "shallow"—only 60 feet. On the second day, they were at 140 feet for 10

minutes. The victim's buddy ran out of air, so they tried to buddy-breathe to the surface. This was all the victim knew until the next day. When the two reached the surface, the victim was unconscious. Luckily, a doctor was onboard the boat; he kept the victim's vital organs functioning and realized that the diver needed a recompression chamber.

As soon as he was brought ashore, Air Jamaica flew the victim to Montego Bay; from there he was taken to Discovery Bay, to the Marine Laboratory where the chamber was located. The victim was immediately taken to a "depth" of 165 feet. The Marine Laboratory then contacted the USAF School of Hyperbaric Medicine to begin treatment.

The victim is still paralyzed from the waist down but is improving. Whether he will walk again is not known.

U.S. Navy Regulator Tests

The Dogs

In this last of the three-part series on the U.S. Navy regulator tests, we bring you the dogs, those regulators which failed to pass either the new standards or the old standards. We should note that two regulators which failed are unique. The Dacor C3NB is a two-hose regulator, a relic of ancient times, still preferred by a few old salts and some steady photographers who want to keep the exhaust bubbles flowing from behind their heads. The Scubapro Air II is the device attached to the BC to be used in out-of-air emergencies. It is not a primary regulator.

Sportsways:

Two Sportsways regulators didn't make the cut: the Sportsways 1390 and the Arctic 950. The Arctic's failure is perhaps the biggest surprise in the entire study, since it's the most expensive Sportsways regulator and has been given substantial promotion. The full story of the failure is stunning. *The Arctic 950 failed to meet Navy specifications at every workload, at every depth.* When a regulator can't measure up at a light workload at 33 feet, it can't be much more than an overpriced snorkel.

We called Paul Chesney, President of Sportsways, to get his comments on the Navy results. Chesney said that the 950 "works well for sport divers." When we asked what that meant, he replied that "we don't consider it to be sport diving when heavy workload is tested at 300 feet." We might have pointed out that sport divers do drop down to 100 feet, and that the regulator didn't pass muster anywhere along the descent route, but we decided to leave well enough alone. Chesney did acknowledge that Sportsways is working on the 950, but he would not indicate the changes being contemplated nor would he say when the revised version might be ready.

It is indeed a surprise to see a regulator do so poorly, especially in light of the advertising claims that "the rugged Arctic 950 regulator, from Sportsways, has it all. High performance reliability with state-of-the-art features."

Consider what the *Skin Diver Magazine* review of the 950 said:

"Dependable to begin with, the Sportsways line of regulators has undergone a major change that incorporates their reputation for solid performance with some new features that extend both their reliability and diving range. . . . [The 950] is a unique regulator designed for divers who will be diving under unique conditions. . . . The 950's first stage is massive. You have the feeling that it will handle any extreme the diving environment might offer. . . . If you are the type of diver who lets your activities take in a wide range of conditions, this may be the regulator for you. At about \$190 in most dive stores, the Arctic 950 is one of the most adaptable bargains available today."

We might conclude with one additional sentence from the article which, today, has a slightly different meaning than originally intended:

"Although imitation is the most sincere form of flattery, it is doubtful that many manufacturers will try to copy the Arctic 950."

In light of the Navy tests, we suppose not.

Seapro

Seapro didn't do well either. Of the four regulators in the Seapro line, two didn't pass the test. The other models, which have sonic reserve, were not tested.

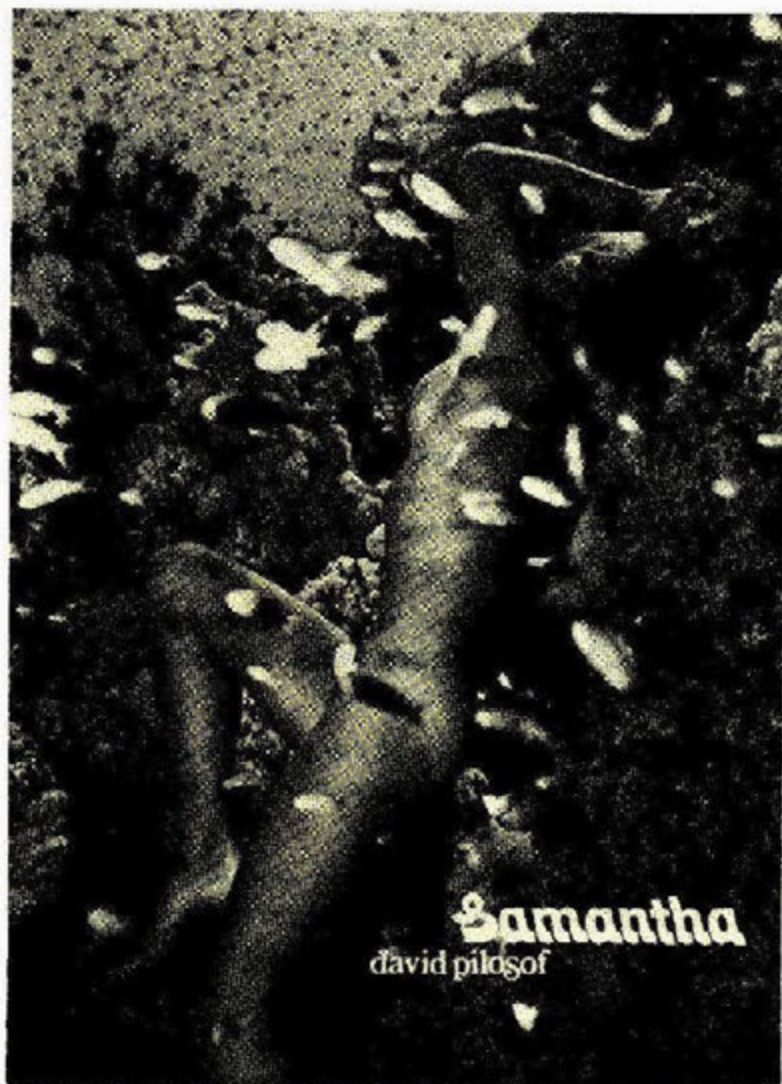
Conclusion:

We will have more to say about the Navy tests in forthcoming issues. For the time being, the facts speak for

(Continued on page 9.)

Samantha

**AN
UNUSUAL
LADY**



**AN
UNUSUAL
BOOK**

Samantha is unique

Samantha is a fantasy

Samantha is an exercise in creative photography

You see, **Samantha** is an attractive Australian lady who models beneath the surface of the Red Sea for Israeli photographer David Pilosof. **Samantha** models in the buff. Her poses are tasteful, graceful and sensitive. Her hues blend with the colors of the reef. Her form seems to fit with the forms of life surrounding her. She belongs. She is another wonder of the underwater world.

Samantha is photographed wearing only three pounds of weight around her ankle. The weights are often not visible or not worn. She is photographed without a regulator, with her eyes open and observant. In the photographs, no escaping bubbles are visible. **Samantha** is just another creature of the reef.

In most photographs, **Samantha** is alone in the Red Sea with gorgonia, or sergeant majors, or the ubiquitous goldfish, which decorate her every pose. In some photos she is swirling in her own bubbles from a dive through the surface. In a few she is rising toward the surface.

The book concludes with six ballet-like poses with a male companion, equally undecorated. Because the couple floats free, surrounded only by shimmering blue and silvery bubbles, these shots work nicely.

Samantha is not lewd, lascivious, lecherous, or licentious, which is why some of you will not choose to read the book. She is always sensuous, but never sensual, which is what photographer Pilosof intended.

To quote:

"I need to compose a symphony from the soul, a pure fusion of form with technique in a medium which would utilize my professional and my avocational skills. The themes were familiar: the unimaginably beautiful world which exists under the surface of tropical seas, and the beautiful God-given loveliness of the perfect human body. To connect the element of shape and motion, color and ethereality...to display the nude female form in a medium that most of the world will never experience...I found everything I was looking for in **Samantha**."

Interspersed through the 110 pages of color photographs are photos of reef creatures. Most are interesting. A few very special. But the real interest here is **Samantha**. In limited text accompanying the photographs, **Samantha** describes her feelings. Her words occasionally add to the sensuousness of the book.

Samantha posed after a toke or two on her assistant's octopus regulator. A few shots show the setup or show **Samantha** with other divers to illustrate the technical side of the photographic expedition.

Pilosof provides a short discussion of the problems of shooting **Samantha**: training her to dive, to pose underwater, to shore up her courage to keep away the dirty old men wanting to ogle.

MOST USEFUL OF ALL HOWEVER, is a section one wishes would appear in all photography books. It includes the technical data for each photograph: the camera used, the lens, the film, the exposure, the lighting and the depth. It's a fine opportunity to understand what the photographer did to capture the moment.

Here's a book you'll enjoy. Or you might want to give it to a dive buddy for Christmas. It's the kind of book you'll proudly display on your cocktail table. And it's yours for only \$29.95, plus \$2.50 for postage and handling. It's available right now!

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19. After you were certified, how confident were you that you could work the Navy Dive Tables?
 Very Confident _____ Somewhat confident _____
 Needed to check with someone _____ Let my buddy do it _____
20. Immediately after certification, did you feel confident to dive with another recently certified diver, without an instructor or guide present?
 Very confident _____, Somewhat confident _____, A little nervous _____, Very nervous _____
21. How often in the past year, have you practiced each of the following:
- a. Buddy breathing, sitting on bottom 0 1 2 3 4 5 or more
 - b. Buddy breathing while swimming 0 1 2 3 4 5 or more
 - c. Buddy breathing while ascending 0 1 2 3 4 5 or more
 - d. Free ascent with weight belt 0 1 2 3 4 5 or more
 - e. Free ascent without weight belt 0 1 2 3 4 5 or more
 - f. Using the Navy dive tables 0 1 2 3 4 5 or more
22. How confident do you feel that you could free ascend from 60' or deeper (with or without weight belt)? Very confident _____, Somewhat confident _____,
 Not confident at all _____, Don't think I could do it _____
23. How confident do you feel that you could buddy breath to the surface from 60' or deeper?
 Very confident _____, Somewhat confident _____, Not confident at all _____
 Don't think I could do it _____
24. How many scuba dives did you make last year?
 0-10 _____ 11-20 _____ 21-30 _____ 31-40 _____ 41-50 _____ More than 50 _____

TRAINING QUESTIONNAIRE

We're curious about your scuba training. We hear claims from agencies and instructors about what they teach and how effectively they teach it, but at the same time we hear from divers who wonder why they didn't have better training. During our travels, resort operators tell us that the divers certified in the U.S. and Canada don't know the first thing about ocean diving. They make their dive tours plain and simple to ensure that the novices don't run into trouble. Experienced divers, of course, suffer.

Please complete this form and return it to us. Make copies and pass it on to any of your friends who have recently been certified. And please, return it to us within 20 days after you receive it so we can begin tabulation.

Mail to: Ben Davison, Undercurrent Editorial Offices, POB 1658, Sausalito, CA 94965.

Do you have any comments?

	<u>OPTIONAL</u>
	Name _____
	Address _____
	City _____
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	Age _____ Tel. _____

(Continued from page 6.)

themselves. If you're about to purchase a regulator, buy one from the list of top-rated models which meet the *new* Navy specifications. Since you cannot predict what kinds of circumstances you'll find yourself in, why not be prepared for anything?

If you own one of the dogs, you ought to seriously consider giving it the deep six—unless you confine your underwater forays to YMCA pools. There are deadly serious risks in using these regulators, and you'd be wise to write off your investment in favor of a longer

life.

These charts represent the results of regulator tests from light to extreme workloads, defined by the Navy as ranging from 22.5 RMV (respiratory minute volume in liters per minute) to 90 RMV. The supply pressure is 1000 psi and the depths range from 33 feet of sea water to 198 fsw. A solid circle (●) indicates the regulator's performance was acceptable. A semicircle (◐) indicates the regulator's performance was marginal. An empty circle (○) indicates the regulator's performance was unacceptable.

Dacor C 3NB; performance at 1000 psi

Work rate	Depth in feet of sea water					
	33	66	99	132	165	198
Light	●	●	●	●	○	○
Moderate	○	○	○	○	○	○
Moderately Heavy	○	○	○	○	○	○
Heavy	○	○	○	○	○	○
Extreme	○	○	○	○	○	○

Seapro FSDS—50; performance at 1000 psi

Work rate	Depth in feet of sea water					
	33	66	99	132	165	198
Light	●	●	●	●	●	◐
Moderate	◐	○	○	○	○	○
Moderately Heavy	○	○	○	○	○	○
Heavy	○	○	○	○	○	○
Extreme	○	○	○	○	○	○

Scubapro Air II/MK V; performance at 1000 psi

Work rate	Depth in feet of sea water					
	33	66	99	132	165	198
Light	●	◐	◐	○	○	○
Moderate	○	○	○	○	○	○
Moderately Heavy	○	○	○	○	○	○
Heavy	○	○	○	○	○	○
Extreme	○	○	○	○	○	○

Sportsways 950 Arctic; performance at 1000 psi

Work rate	Depth in feet of sea water					
	33	66	99	132	165	198
Light	○	○	○	○	○	○
Moderate	○	○	○	○	○	○
Moderately Heavy	○	○	○	○	○	○
Heavy	○	○	○	○	○	○
Extreme	○	○	○	○	○	○

Seapro FSDS 10; performance at 1000 psi

Work rate	Depth in feet of sea water					
	33	66	99	132	165	198
Light	●	●	●	●	●	●
Moderate	◐	○	○	○	○	○
Moderately Heavy	○	○	○	○	○	○
Heavy	○	○	○	○	○	○
Extreme	○	○	○	○	○	○

Sportsways 1390; performance at 1000 psi

Work rate	Depth in feet of sea water					
	33	66	99	132	165	198
Light	●	●	○	○	○	○
Moderate	○	○	○	○	○	○
Moderately Heavy	○	○	○	○	○	○
Heavy	○	○	○	○	○	○
Extreme	○	○	○	○	○	○

Telling The Facts About Regulator Performance

The View From The Executive Offices

A shock wave of surprise swept through our collective bodies not long ago when we picked up the September/October issue of *Sport Diver*. The cover announced that inside we would find the article:

"How The Navy Rates Your Regulator"

Our reaction, admittedly, was schizophrenic. On the one hand, *Sport Diver's* publishing of the details of the Navy regulator study—and disclosing which models excel and which fail—would seriously cut into our little corner of the diving publication market. After all, is not *Undercurrent* the sole source of critical and irreverent commentary about the industry and its products?

On the other hand, we realize that divers need the facts about equipment. At last, we presumed, a publication other than *Undercurrent* would stop pulling punches and tell sport divers the truth about their regulators, both good and bad.

As we perused the story our initial reaction became short-lived. If the article had anything at all to do with how the Navy rated "your regulator" the message escaped us. Instead, it was a typical mass publication "review" of regulators which cited standard information about ports and reserves and purges. Fifteen so-called "top-of-the-line" regulators from fifteen manufacturers were featured with pictures. As we should have expected, no effort was made to sort out the *real* differences between regulator models—the differences discovered and published by the U.S. Navy. The author, Jon Hardy, who has written for *Undercurrent*, prepared the standard article acceptable by magazines. We have no quarrel with Hardy's work. He made no effort to tie his piece to the Navy study. He only said the regulators listed can "give you years of dependable service and are worth your consideration." The problem runs much deeper.

Hype on magazine covers is designed to sell magazines. We can live with that, although the title offered by *Sport Diver* is deceptive, since there is no copy inside which relates to "how the Navy rates your regulator." And, it should be no secret to any reader of *Sport Diver* and *Skin Diver* that the editors take special pains to ensure that manufacturers of equipment get even-handed treatment throughout the pages. But, in an effort to provide even-handed treatment in this article, the distortions by anonymous headline writers and side-bar authors are downright deception. Under the heading of U.S. Navy evaluations, a sidebar to the article states:

"It is reasonable to expect that all the top-of-the-line regulators reviewed in this survey meet the older Navy performance requirements. If you stay with the

top-of-the-line regulators and avoid the bottom-of-the-line of any manufacturer, you can be reasonably assured of having a regulator with little breathing resistance."

The first statement is flatly untrue. The second does a serious disservice to the industry. Let us indicate the problems with the fifteen selected regulators:

First, one of *Sport Diver's* fifteen "top-of-the-line" regulators is the Seapro FSDS 50. Although the article says we can "expect that all top-of-the-line regulators reviewed in this survey meet the older Navy performance requirements," this regulator failed both old and new.

Second, the story features Sporstways W-900, but if price is the determinant for "top-of-the-line" status, then the Arctic 950 should have been given the nod. Perhaps the 950 was avoided because it failed to meet either old or new standards.

Third, five of the regulators featured were not even tested by the Navy, although the sidebar still says we can expect that they meet Navy performance requirements. Those regulators: Tabata's Ventura TR30, the Cressi-sub 50, U.S. Nemrod's Delta II, the Scubamaster Piston 7690, and the Submarex Atmos I.

It's apparent, then, that there is no relationship between the article and the Navy study. Nevertheless, the headline for the article claims:

"If you're still diving with your first regulator you're breathing harder than you have to. These new models perform better and last longer. The U.S. Navy said so."

"We are now expected to believe that the Seapro FSDS 50 is somehow comparable to the U.S. Divers Conshelf, to the Scubapro Air I, and to the Tekna 2100 B. That fellow divers, is horse manure."

What *Sport Diver* has done with sleight-of-hand is to take the Navy's statement in its report that "the state-of-the-art in scuba regulator design has improved significantly during the last four years," and applied it across the board to every manufacturer, to every "top-of-the-line regulator." They may presume that it provides even-handed treatment of the manufacturers, but they are openly deceiving the sport divers who buy their publication. We are now expected to believe that the Seapro FSDS 50 is somehow comparable to the U.S. Divers Conshelf, to the Scubapro Air I, and to the Tekna 2100 B.

That fellow divers, is horse manure. The U.S. Navy said so.

We'd also like to jump to the defense of the manufacturers. To suggest that sport divers should stay with the top-of-the-line of *any* manufacturer

rather than go with the bottom-of-the-line regulator of any other manufacturer ignores the facts. The bottom-of-the-line regulator from Scubapro or U.S. Divers outperforms the top-of-the-line from both Seapro and Sportsways and outperforms many other models of many other manufacturers. Scubapro and U.S. Divers probably sit still for this stuff to maintain harmony in the industry. But, when all the insiders seal their lips, what they know to be pure fiction becomes fact to the outsiders—the sport divers.

Nikonos IVA Begins Distribution

More Improvements For Land Than For Underwater?

Say goodbye to the Nikonos III.

Say hello to the Nikonos IVA.

For sometime there have been rumors afloat that the folks at Nikon would at last bring us an underwater single lens reflex camera so we could target and focus on our subjects directly through the lens. The Nikonos IVA sends that rumor directly to the ocean bottom, since the IVA, like previous Nikonoses, is a view finder.

But there's good news because the IVA now contains the Nikon automatic light-metering system which is read through the enlarged view finder and permits all but the most demanding photographers to go below without the customary light meter for available-light photography. Unlike the II and the III, the IVA syncs with the flash at 1/90th of a second. Should there be insufficient light for the selected camera setting, a flashing red light in the view finder indicates that either the aperture must be changed or the camera must be switched to flash. When the flash is charged and switched on, a lightning bolt appears, to signal the diver to shoot. In the manual mode, the only shutter speed available is 1/90th of a second, but in the automatic mode the range is 1/30th to 1/1000th of a second.

The new Nikonos auto-computer strobe, the SB 101, when plugged into the camera and set to automatic, electronically sets the shutter speed at 1/90 of a second for flash photography, while computing the correct light-exposure time.

The IVA will accept all of the lenses and accessories of the III, but the 15mm lens cannot be used in the automatic mode. And, to use the close-up kit, a new rod holder is required. The body has been redesigned to simplify removing and reloading the film. The back easily snaps open and shut, eliminating the need to remove the lens, a cumbersome requirement of the II and the III.

Although the IVA has been available in Europe for several months, distribution in this country is just beginning. The camera body will retail for \$399. The addition of the standard 35mm lens raises the price to \$567.

Regulators are serious business. Our lives depend upon them. The depths at which they work—and the depths at which they don't work—should not be ignored. For an industry to advertise its safety consciousness while collaborating to keep this kind of information from the consumer is, at best, unethical. It's about time we sport divers demanded the same kind of even-handed treatment given the manufacturers.

But don't bet that we'll get it.

The Nikonos III has been taken out of production, but a few still remain in camera stores and dive shops. If you don't like automatic metering, then you must act quickly to purchase a new III. Although you get no service or advice from large discount houses, you may be tempted by their low mail-order prices. We've listed the September prices at three firms, from which you may order by phone and charge to a credit card. If the cameras are still available, the cost will increase for shipping and applicable tax. In the days spanning our going to press and your ordering the camera, inflation too may bump the price upward. The listed prices include the standard 35mm lens:

\$314.95	\$333.33
New York Camera	Cambridge Camera
1328 Broadway	7th Ave. and 13th St.
NYC 10001	NYC 10001
212/564-4398	212/675-8600
\$342.88	
Park Camera	
558 Western	
LA, CA 90020	
213/385-6232	

Undercurrent Comments: The Nikonos IVA automatic metering system is primarily a feature to enhance the camera's value on the land rather than underwater where nearly all diver/photographers rely on the strobe to bring out the colors. A diver keen on available light photography will find that the single available manual shutter speed, 1/90th of a second, will limit his creative ability. Whether the automatic strobe features enhance the camera's performance underwater can only be determined by full testing, which we will undertake shortly.

The Next Issue

Undercurrent is published eleven times a year. The next issue is a combined November-December issue. It will arrive in your hands during the latter part of December.

Dear Undercurrent:

Will My Deposit Get Ripped-off?

Dear Undercurrent:

I recently got a slug of information from Turks and Caicos Ministry of Tourists, including a brochure from a Miami Marina which told about a charter boat, M/Y Panacea, which would take divers to those islands. I wrote for more information and within a week I received a 35mm print of the boat and price information. They require a 25% deposit on the \$595 price.

My question is, what guarantees my 25%? Can they just skip with my money? Is there a way to place the money in trust until the cruise date? Is 25% reasonable and customary? Is there an agency that all charter or cruise ships must register with, so I can check on the reliability of a particular craft?

The \$595/person for a week of unlimited diving is too good to be true and I just hope it isn't a scam. Please help me out. It wouldn't be the first time you've come through for me.

*Richard Todd, President
Explorer Skin and Scuba Diving Club
Palatine, Illinois*

Dear Richard:

For the most part the only guarantee you'll ever have on the money you put on deposit with a charter operator is the desire of that operator to stay in business. Nothing can prevent an unscrupulous operator from absconding with your funds, and if he does the likelihood you'll get a refund is remote. Charter boats traveling in foreign waters aren't members of any kind of controlling association. We've heard of no one who puts money in escrow until the trip is underway. Advertising in diving periodicals is no guarantee that an operator is honest and the magazines are under no obligation to stand behind the claims of their advertisers. On the other hand, it's common practice for a charter to ask for a deposit to ensure the sincerity of the customer and to provide some up-front money for the smaller operations which need to bankroll gas and food for the trip.

To protect yourself, there are a few things you can do. First, select tour operators with proven records: the names that appear in Skin Diver or Sport Diver year-after-year are generally safe bets. Second, call dive shops in the area for a report. Check with a tourist association, the Better Business Bureau, or the Chamber of Commerce. Ask the tour operator for references, including the name of his bank and names and addresses of past customers. Call those customers for their reports.

As to the M/Y Panacea, we called the owner, Lester Netherton, and learned that the maiden voyage will commence on October 1. The Panacea is an eighty-foot converted trawler, fit to sleep 15 with seven crew members. A Mako compressor with a 16-cubic-foot/minute pumping capacity and a backup cascade system should ensure plenty of air for unlimited diving. Netherton told us he has not been in the dive business before, but has been diving for ten years and searching for a diving business opportunity for the last few years. He expects to moor the Panacea at the Admiral's Arms on South Caicos, dive in the Turks and Caicos for a year or so, and then consider other bases. We posed your question: "What guarantees my 25%?" Netherton responded quickly. "Although I'm just getting started, I intend to stay in this business a long time, so I have to produce."

So, Richard, unless you hook up with a tour operator who has been in business for a long time and has built a substantial reputation, that's the best—and only—guarantee you'll get.

Correspondents located strategically in the major diving areas of the world as well as on all coasts and major inland waters of the continental United States.

The editors welcome comments, suggestions and manuscripts from the readers of *Undercurrent*.

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