

Antigua, British West Indies

—Some Good Diving, Some Bad Diving

As the travel editor of Undercurrent, it is my onerous responsibility to take many of our dive review forays, though I regularly share the responsibility with two other cohorts. Now and then we accept a piece from other writers, as is the case this month. As required from our Undercurrent writers, this writer traveled as would any other tourist, paying his own way and remaining silent about his intention to write about his experience. He has lived in the Caribbean, dived many of its islands, and has visited Antigua annually for the past seven years, watching the quality of dive services ebb and flow.

C.C., travel editor

As I began packing for my annual excursion to Antigua (pronounced An-tee-guh) I realized I was sorting my scuba gear without much gusto. Though I had visited a few fine sites, the dive operations in the past few years had deteriorated and on my last journey I was stuck with picked-over reefs and wrecks. No one seemed willing to take the longer journeys required to reach the better diving. So, I was returning this time for the fine people, the island beauty, the tranquil British culture. Over the years I've gained a few friends, I know the lay of the land and the good restaurants from the bad, and generally I can live like one of the locals. Now, if only someone would put together a decent dive operation. . . .

Many divers coming to Antigua know only of the shop at the Hyatt Halcyon Cove Hotel because it frequently advertises itself in Skin Diver as a "fully equipped" professional dive shop. For the past four years that's not been my experience--but it's been about the only operation with regular runs to the reef. On my first dive day I arrived well before the 11 am departure time and paid my \$25 for a single-tank dive to Dan James, a likeable fellow who, I learned, had been in Antigua only three weeks. He had just completed an instructor's course and had gotten his job by answering a want ad. Six other divers and my buddy and I chewed the fat while we watched Dan laze through pre-dive preparation; when noon arrived he and helpers (us) finally began loading a small boat on the beach for the short

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trip to their so-called Liberty ship dive boat, a 40' craft moored away from the surf. Once on board I quickly learned I could not remove my shoes since my bare feet could stand neither the searing temperature of the metal deck (when I dived from this boat last year there was a canvas sun cover) nor the jagged debris in the unkempt craft. Dan was unable to start the engine until assisted by a helper from shore. We were finally underway at 12:30.

Our destination was an old sunken steamer, a partially intact 100-ft+ wreck I had dived many times. When Dan finally found the wreck, he simply told us divers that below was a wreck, so "have a nice dive." Since he had asked none of us about our certification or experience, I hoped he at least had counted heads. I didn't expect, however, that the dive would last too long, since some of the steel 71.2 tanks had as little as 1800 psi, and none were pumped greater than 2100.

In 50-ft. visibility I descended down the anchor line to the 40-ft. bottom, and there I was greeted by a 4-ft. barracuda who lives at the wreck and points the way for visitors. The wreck is nicely covered by coral, but unlike trips here before, I saw few fish. The highlight, I suppose, was a swim through a 30-ft. triangular tunnel formed by the hull and flooring. During the dive I noticed that the shop equipment used by the other divers was in disrepair. Pressure gauge hoses leaked and so did the BCs. After seeing all I cared to, I ended my dive before the others and returned to the boat, where I had to struggle aboard since Dan had neglected to lower the dive platform. From beginning to end, the dive was a classic case of inexperienced leadership and shop incompetence.

Nevertheless, without the time to explore other options, I joined Dan the next day; we still left late and there were engine problems. I told him of a site at Sandy Island he knew nothing of, and though we missed the exact spot I sought, I enjoyed the descent through a valley of elkhorn and brain coral in 80-foot visibility. On the bottom, at 60 feet, I scared a baby ray out of the sand and observed plenty of tropicals, and more than a fair share of morays. It was a pleasant dive.

The problem with this operation is not so much with Dan, as it is with the manager, Leonard Kentish, who has put a novice into a position requiring experience. Dan is untrained, unsupervised, and doesn't know the waters. He can't handle repairs, nor can anyone else. I suspect he'll learn the business and he was responsive to suggestions I made. But until Kentish puts some effort into his business, divers should turn their backs on this operation.

That night my buddy and I contemplated our problems over fresh banana daiquiris and superb lobster dinners at the Cockleshell Inn, where I spotted John Birk, a great hulk of a man who aids the Cousteau divers when they're in the area. John told me he had just opened a shop at the Jolly Beach Hotel, a large and pleasant family-style hotel about 20 minutes south of the Halcyon Cove. His location meant he was accessible to the better diving on the island, so he had no trouble persuading me to join him for the morning dive. When I arrived at his beach shop I was pleasantly surprised to find a stock of 50 nearly-new rental tanks, a compressor and banking system, and a small repair shop. His 30' flat-bottom boat pulled into shore for easy loading by John and his aide, Harry Kopp. With extra gear aboard to ensure that none of the tourists had problems, we depart-

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ed right on time and 45 minutes later, we arrived at Cade's Reef. John gave us a brief dive plan, established buddies, and signaled us into the water. (I was delighted to see that my buddy and I each had 2600 psi in our 3000 tanks, but why not fill them?) John, a highly-skilled diver, led us to a massive virgin coral formation at 75 feet, where we found Herbie the nurse shark, a 6-foot critter who is always around and cooperates nicely for people with cameras. There were a range of tropicals--soldiers, blue chromis, etc.--but I was more impressed with the 5-foot barracuda floating along and the large, perhaps 4-ft., groupers. I took a 360° panoramic turn and just enjoyed the beauty of Cade's Reef, one of the tops on Antigua and among the best anywhere in the Caribbean. Though the reef slopes to 180 feet, we stayed at about 80, then finally surfaced for cokes and boogie music from the tape deck, then a short hop into the Curtain Bluff Hotel for superb blue cheese hamburgers. We returned to the inside of Cade's Reef and 40 feet of water for swarms of blue chromis, trumpets, drums, trunk fish and ocean surgeons, all in plentiful hard and soft coral, and an unusual trigger fish who played with us and posed up close for photographers. Visibility ran about 80 feet. At the end of the dive John splashed rum in those cokes, then found the boat wouldn't start, so we signaled for a tow (the ship-to-shore radio worked, but no one was listening) and taxied back to the dive shop. The two-tank dive was \$40, and single tanks run \$25-\$30, but the rates are negotiable.

Knowing that John could not get his boat running the next day, Harry suggested we try Nash Edwards, who operates a shop at Runaway Beach Hotel, (a small, quiet and pleasant hotel on the northwest end of the island). I arrived a half hour early for my prearranged dive and found Nash raring to go for my buddy and me. We proceeded to Sandy Island in his speedy little boat, to the exact location I searched for and missed with Dan. Once underwater we found a number of large lobster, all of which escaped my grasp, a beautiful 6-7 foot ray skimming across the sand, and a good supply of the normal tropicals among the clean and undamaged coral. Nash proved to be a competent guide--and he expects his charges to be certified. We had anticipated a second dive, but a storm appeared on the horizon to change our minds. It hit hard just as we returned to port.

A fourth operation I must mention, but did not dive with, is located at the Curtain Bluff Hotel, the luxury villa of Antigua. It's a beautiful hotel with formal dinners (coat and tie required) and a tariff as high as \$190/day/couple in the winter, but that includes one boat dive per day for each person. My friends on the island tell me the guide, Tom, is first class, and in my quick review of his operation I spotted about 50 brand-new aluminum tanks, a compressor and banking system, and a 24-foot lifeboat for a dive boat. Many trips are to Cade's Reef and, I am told, are highly organized and well-controlled, perhaps just what the generally middle-aged, wealthy clientele at this fine hotel prefer.

Much of Antigua diving is average Caribbean diving, though I've had splendid dives at Cade's Reef. But the fine sites are limited and not all operators go to Cade's. John Birk and Nash Edwards seem willing to search out the best spots, but even after a week one can expect a lot of repetition.

So Antigua may not be a place to head for a serious diving vacation, but it's a fine vacation island for families and nondivers, with some decent diving thrown in. The island is brown and dusty during the July-December dry season, but becomes lush and green the remainder of the year. There's plenty to see, some evening dancing and a casino at the Castle Harbour Club, golf, tennis, sailing, fishing and, of course, shopping. Nelson's Dockyard, a restored 18th century naval dockyard, is a must on the touring list, as is a visit to the market and the 17th-century Cathedral in St. Johns, the capital city. In fact, Antigua is a good island on which to have a car, not only for touring, but also to visit the several splendid restaurants. My favorites are the Cockleshell Inn and The

Yard, and everyone's favorite is the Spanish Main Inn, serving such specialties as shark puffs and stuffed crab back. Others recommended include Chez Blanche, Le Bistro (at Hodges Bay), Darcy's, Brother B's and Admiral's Inn.

John Burke also serves two other hotels, the Galley Bay Surf (a fine, thatch roofed-rattan furnished isolated villa on a magnificent beach) and the Club Caribee (a 50-room informal beach hotel). Now and then he will pick up divers from the beach, but he also may ask them to take a taxi to the shop (about \$3-\$4). Inexpensive accommodations can be found off the beach throughout the island: for example, Cornelia's Castle is \$38 double in winter, the Pigottsville Hotel \$32 double. With many low-priced hotels, high-priced hotels and condominium rentals, it's important to seek the aid of a good travel agent in planning a trip to Antigua.

Finally, I should add that there are at least two other shops I didn't visit, one at the Holiday Inn, the other at Long Bay Hotel. I know nothing of the Holiday Inn operation but two Undercurrent readers have had kind words for the Long Bay Hotel.

Divers' Compass: To rent a car, a \$10 driver's license fee is required. The license must be gotten near the airport. . . A number of charter flights to Antigua from New York can make the trip relatively inexpensive for easterners. . . Winter water temperature drops as low as 74° so a wet suit top is useful. . . rental cars from Dollar are \$23/day in the winter. . .

Buddy Breathing, The Air II, and the Octopus

And Some Thoughts From NASDS

Next to being stared down by an eighteen-foot Great White, most sports divers' biggest fear is running out of air. What could be more panic-inducing than to be at 90 feet, inhale, and hit a vacuum? Immediately it's the moment for decision. Do you go for your own octopus, hoping it's only a second-stage failure? Do you turn to your buddy for assistance? Or do you head for the surface, breathing from your BC (as explained in an *Undercurrent* article in February 1979) or do you simply exhale on the way up, without considering any other source of air?

What you do is your choice—but should it be a conscious choice or a subconscious choice? There are those who argue a diver should be trained to respond automatically to an out-of-air situation and free ascend. Others say a choice should be made consciously and without panic. Proponents of both theories have their successes to show—and their failures. In too many cases divers panic. The result is injury or even death.

Buddy Breathing

Buddy breathing is the traditional "save yourself" technique taught in most certification courses. But it's controversial as a "save yourself" technique because it requires the cooperation of another diver, who may or may not be physically or emotionally capable of responding. Free ascent, on which you depend on no one

but yourself, is usually considered too dangerous to teach to novices, though simulated methods are used by many instructors. So, buddy breathing still remains the dominant self-rescue method in most training. (NASDS emphasizes the octopus or "safe-second-stage" technique and uses it in training.)

"...The out-of-air diver panics and rips the regulator from his buddy's mouth and a tug-of-war follows."

Having to rely on the cooperation of a buddy when out-of-air often proves to be misplaced faith. In some cases the diver with air refuses to remove his regulator from his mouth—he either panics or decides to save his own hide first. In other cases the out-of-air diver panics and rips the regulator from his buddy's mouth and a tug-of-war follows. And sometimes the two divers trying to share air are simply too rusty to pull it off.

Just last summer a death in Southern California waters was attributable to the failure of buddy breathing. A 21-year-old diver who had been certified for only a month ran out of air, so he turned to his buddy who cooperated and began to share his air. But the out-of-air diver refused to return the mouthpiece, so the diver who owned the mouthpiece yanked it away, began to breathe for himself, and surfaced. The out-of-air diver, now in a panic, shot to the surface, em-

might consider a better second stage, one that ranks higher on the Navy list.

NASDS and the Air II

Although AIR II has been accepted by most training agencies, NASDS is less accepting. Having incorporated the octopus (called the "safe second" by NASDS) into their training since 1976, they believe that retraining divers or altering their training course because of the development of a single new product is unwise. Since any manufacturer's regulator can be used as a safe second, a universality exists in octopus training—there will be a lot more standard second stages around for use as a backup breathing device than there will be AIR II's. In a recent NASDS article they said "we do not intend to change training techniques to met the eccentricities of one manufacturer's equipment design." Furthermore, NASDS believes that a diver should never give up his primary regulator, which is required with the AIR II.

But NASDS does not reject the device out of hand.

Evaluate Your Diving Trips

We want *your* review of *your* diving trips. We frequently publish our reader's comments about trips taken to areas which we ourselves cannot update. Help your fellow readers—as they help you—and send us your comments from your most recent trip.

And notice our new means of scoring resorts!

They believe that the AIR II is valuable—as long as the diver also carries a safe second.

The NASDS points deserve consideration. And they're especially important to those people who cry for standardization of training. Standardization of training and equipment will someday reduce injuries and deaths in diving. By holding firm on its decision to retain the safe second in its training, NASDS helps force the dialogue.

Four-year-old Sport Diver Dies

With one day's notice to its employees before termination, the publisher of *Sport Diver* magazine, Ziff Davis, announced to its staff that the May/June issue which they had just completed would be their last. Claude Sheer, Advertising Director of the Ziff-Davis Outdoor Group, told *Undercurrent* "the industry is just not large enough to support two quality publications and rather than lowering the quality of the color printing and paper stock, it was decided to cease publication." More simply stated, the publication was losing too much money and simply couldn't be supported.

To *Undercurrent*, the news is not surprising. In our June, 1977 issue, when we reported on the premier issue of *Sport Diver*, we commented that although Richard Stewart, the first editor and founder of *Sport Diver*, told us that he will have "more readers than *Skin Diver* in three years, we're not certain there's sufficient market among divers to support a second publication . . . We are certain that divers don't need another publication that's just a shadow of the Granddaddy (*Skin Diver*). As publishers before have learned, unless you have something different to say, the industry just may not be big enough for another variation of the same theme."

In our search for more specific reasons for the termination of *Sport Diver*, one industry source told us that he had heard that as much as 70 percent of their advertising space had not been paid for. *Sport Diver's* Sheer scoffed at that. "Every publication has

But This One is the Magazine

large accounts receivable, but ours is in no way that high."

But advertising income is the key to the survival of magazines and *Sport Diver* was never able to build a large enough circulation to attract the advertising fees it needed to pay for its appealing yet expensive format. When it folded, according to a commercial list broker in San Francisco, "the *Sport Diver* paid subscription list numbered about 22,000, but that probably included expiries. The real figure is probably something less." In contrast, *Skin Diver* magazine has 144,000 subscribers, though with expirations dropped, that figure too might be a bit less.

Sport Diver made great claims for its over-the-counter sales and the number of readers who read individual issues, but the facts were that *Skin Diver* had six to seven times the circulation of *Sport Diver*. That ought to mean that advertisers in *Sport Diver* would pay only 1/6th or 1/7th of the rate for *Skin Diver*, but *Sport Diver* salespeople were able to command much higher—unjustifiably higher—rates from a naive and hungry diving community. Still, they could never charge enough to pay for their publication.

We called *Skin Diver's* Editor/Publisher, Paul Tzimoulis, to ask his reaction to the demise of *Sport Diver* and how he thought it might affect his publication. Tzimoulis said "*Skin Diver* will celebrate its 30th anniversary this September. From what we can figure out most of the readers of *Sport Diver* were also reading *Skin Diver* so we won't gain any circula-

tion. As far as advertising revenue goes," he said, "we may pick up a little here and there, but it won't be anything major because the advertisers were already with us and I don't expect them to increase their space."

We asked Tzimoulis why he thought *Sport Diver* failed and his thoughts paralleled ours. "The industry isn't as large as a lot of people think. There aren't enough dollars available to support two publications."

Anyone who reads *Skin Diver* (or *Sport Diver*) is aware that when the magazine features a major piece of equipment, a specific resort, or an entire island or country, advertisements related to the feature can be found throughout the magazine. That formula keeps many commercial magazines afloat. It works for *Skin Diver*, but it failed for *Sport Diver*. "It's no secret we work at that," Tzimoulis told *Undercurrent*. "Take travel, for instance. When we decide where we are going we send a writer, a photographer and a salesperson. They are there at the same time, working together. That way the writer isn't covering resort A, the photographer off some other place shooting resort B and the salesperson trying to sell

ads at resort C. We tie it all together. I don't think *Sport Diver* did that."

What now for *Sport Diver*? Editor-in-Chief Steve Blount has also been editing *Adventure Travel* and it appears that Ziff-Davis may try to entice divers to that publication. Blount told *Undercurrent* that there have been several major diving features in *Adventure Travel* and "this can be expected to continue." In fact, Claude Sheer, the Ziff-Davis advertising director, claimed that a survey of *Adventure Travel* readership found that 35 percent were divers or interested in diving, so he expects that some diving advertisers will use that publication.

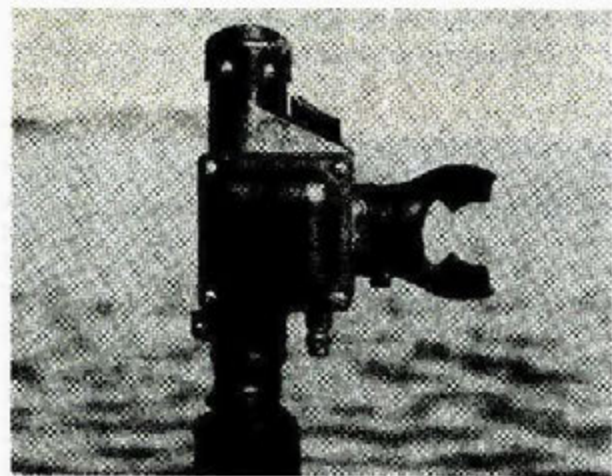
As to the subscribers of *Sport Diver*, Ziff-Davis apparently has yet to decide how to handle the remaining term on the subscription. When a magazine goes under it's customary for subscribers to get another magazine in place of the defunct publication. Our guess is that *Sport Diver* readers will soon find themselves subscribers to *Adventure Travel*.

As to *Undercurrent*, we doubt the disappearance of *Sport Diver* will have much effect. But we do know one thing. It's certain our advertising revenue won't increase.

The Turkey Diver—

Resort guides are truly clairvoyant. The very moment a turkey diver wanders into the dive shop to sign up for his first dive, we know who he is. Even before the incessant, raucous gobbling begins to emanate from that tiny pinhead perched atop a blunched, rotund, out-of-shape body, or even before the stench of last night's booze cuts the aroma of the compressor oil, we know. Indeed, we know.

We also know that as soon as the turkey arrives, any



THE SCUBAPRO AIR II: AN EMERGENCY REGULATOR, A BC ORAL AND TANK-POWERED INFLATOR.

A View From The Resort Guide

enjoyment we get from our work is going to slide right down the tubes. Turkeys are no fun to dive with. Everyone, from guide to nongobbling guests, prefers their turkeys on dinner platters, not as buddies on week-long diving packages.

"The gilded turkey arrives at the resort, loaded to the beak with the latest in expensive dive gear—hot off the down-home shelves, some still in the display boxes—without a clue as to how it all fits together or works."

But what really constitutes the so-called "turkey?" Who among us is not guilty of an occasional turkey trait? And who of us is able to honestly recognize the turkey in all of us?

Species of the Bird

There are some obvious types. The "Gilded Turkey," was discovered by former Club Med guide Pat Ryan. This bird arrives at a resort, loaded to the beak with the latest in expensive dive gear—hot off the down-home shelves, some still in the display boxes—without a clue as to how it all fits together or

works. He (or she—yes, there are both male and female of the species) assumes the resort has the expertise and tools to make it operate, even though we at the resort have never seen it before. Dive magazines arrive four months late in Paradise, you know.

When we put together what should have been assembled and tested back home, we invariably find a missing link. The turkey who waits to rig new gear on a remote resort island often ends up setting it aside in favor of local rentals because he forgot, lost, or never had a vital component of the equipment.

Naturally, while we struggle to assemble this strange gear and instruct the proud owner in its use, the rest of the customers have to wait for their vacation dives. To add insult, we often have to help the turkey operate it underwater just to get him through the dive safely.

Then there's the "Cocky Turkey," the crusty old salt or hotshot young "pro" who claims more knowledge of scuba than Jacques Yves Cousteau. These are the ones who so often balk at performing the simple pre-dive skill tests conducted at most resorts. Flashing certification cards galore, and/or professing intimate association with Lloyd Bridges, and the president of Deep Dive, Inc., an equipment manufacturer and the Iowa State Police Diving Coordinator and the Creature from the Black Lagoon, they try to pass the in-water skills tests orally, instead of actually.

These turkeys seem to get more hay fever or sinus attacks when pressed into gear and water than all the rest of the divers put together.

"Mounting your regulator to a tank incorrectly occasionally is permissible—even professionals do that—but time-after-time does tend to make others call you "turkey."

Fortunately most of us don't allow diving under our auspices unless a diver passes these tests—some as simple as clearing mask and regulator and reading an air pressure gauge underwater. We rightfully feel that any diver who can't perform such skills is a hazard to both himself and those nearby, and does not belong in the open water without a private instructor/babysitter.

Sometimes a turkey manages to sneak past the screening, and doesn't become obvious until he's underwater. This is the one so aptly described by veteran guide, John George, of Cayman Brac. This bird, the "Turkey Trotter," gets into the water with the group, and then flies off into his own space, oblivious of the group dive plan which has been set and put into action. Ignoring that plan, often with no instrumentation of his own to warn of approaching depth or time limits, he generally plummets down the Brac wall toward the abyss, at least 25 yards from the guide and the group.

On the routine 100-foot dive, John figures on

catching him at about 130 feet, just before he drops out of sight. "Gee, I didn't realize how deep I was," is the turkey's only defense for his self-destructive stupidity.

There are other turkeys for sure, some of them not so obvious. There's the one who insists on walking through a crowded dive boat in full gear, including a tank that doesn't quite squeeze through the pass without banging heads, hands and other turkey tanks. And the one who spreads his gear all over the boat and requires time, assistance, and no small measure of patience on the part of his buddy and guide to get him into the water.

There's the one who's always just a little bit late for the boat's departure, who delays everyone in his quest for another five minutes of sleep. There's the one who's never satisfied with the dive site, who always knows of a "better spot than this one." And, the one who persists in trying to get a "deal" everywhere he goes.

But that's the bad news first. For those of you who are squirming in your seats, now there's some good news.

When you get right down to it, we don't actually believe that there are very many *real* turkey divers. Most of those gobbling around are just ignorant, or trying to be heard, to attract some attention, to belong. And they usually need but a little direction to get on track and off being a turkey.

If guides had the resources to teach divers how to avoid *acting* like turkeys it would be great. Since most of us don't, this discussion will have to suffice until prices rise to pay for the extra efforts required by these so-called "turkeys."

The prime point is to know what you're doing divingwise, from the initial planning to hanging up the gear. Plan ahead to get yourself and your equipment in shape for your scuba sojourn. A pretrip equipment check and skill review, even in a local pool, helps a lot.

At the resort, don't quibble about the skills tests. It's for your own benefit, no matter how experienced you are, and no one will ask you to perform skills that are out of the range of the average sport diver.

Listen humbly and quietly to the guides to learn the

**CORRECTION:
DIVING EMERGENCY? DIAL
919/684-8111**

Last month we listed an incorrect phone number for a 24-hour answering service to solve diving medical problems. Should any of your buddies get bent, embolized, or otherwise need help with a diving emergency, you may reach a specially trained physician at Duke University by dialing 919/684-8111.

procedures for the particular resort. You can question them for sure, but share your concerns with the guides well before giant-stride time to let them respond free of the press of urgent business.

Communication really is the key to finding out what diving's about, so let's communicate about some other "turkey" traits so you can train out of them.

Be honest about your own experience as a diver when you get to the resort. Not being able to recall the last time you dived, or how much experience you've had puts you in the category of novice turkey. Blossoming a three-hour resort course experience of six years ago into a full certification course (somehow you've "forgotten your card") and six years of "diving around," earns you a turkey-tail feather badge. The ultimate is parlaying a single four-minute submersion in Dad's swimming pool, breathing from his two-hose regulator back in 1960, into a lifetime of scuba diving—even though you're now only 30 years old.

Turkey Traits

Those are the extremes, but there are many divers who hit the water about once a year—certainly not enough to stay in A-1 condition—who claim to be "active" divers. In reality they should probably take a refresher course, or at least a private guided dive, at the outset of each annual dive trip.

If you carry your cards and dive log, and are honest with us and yourself, you'll not be a turkey up front. You'll get an honest evaluation from us, and most likely much better treatment all around.

For actual performances, avoid the following, or be prepared to wear your turkey label proudly. Mounting your regulator to a tank incorrectly occasionally is permissible—even professionals do that—but time-after-time does tend to make others call you "turkey." Not having any idea of how much weight to wear, or how much you wore last time or that a wetsuit is going to make you float better, also gives you a gobble. Being confused about how to don your BC, trapping your weight belt with a crotch strap, continually adjusting straps, forever forgetting your mask, walking around on a rocking boat in your fins, and not turning on your own air—these are other definite turkey traits.

Your initial entry into the water can also indicate your diving level, i.e. your turkey grading. Try to avoid: going in face first, like a belly flopper; entering a current by throwing your floatable scuba gear in first (just like you were taught at home in a *still* quarry) and watching your gear go floating away; or causing a bottleneck on the swim step while you adjust gear that should have been in place before you arrived at the entry spot. It goes without saying (but we'll say it anyway) that jumping, stepping or falling on another diver is the ultimate in true turkey behavior.

Once in the water, the "turkey" will tend to fumble with his gear some more, clutch at the swim step or des-

cent line, thrash about and gobble a lot. Very obvious, indeed.

Violating a dive plan is probably the most frightening of a turkey's actions—especially for the guide. Equipment fumbling, a lousy entry or a loud mouth might be excused by lack of training experience, or social consciousness. But not following a dive plan, which is suicidal at times, is unforgivable. The planless turkey not only puts his own life and fun diving in jeopardy, but those of the fellow vacationers and guides as well—often for no apparent reason or benefit. And that's scary!

In essence, if you follow the old adage and plan your dive—from the day you decide to make it—and dive your (the group's) plan, you will not be labeled a turkey, by the guides or your fellow travellers.

More good news for the turkey diver— or is it bad? You're not alone. This is not a one-sided case. There are turkey guides as well as turkey divers.

"A real turkey is one who persists in breaking up coral reefs with his fins after repeated warnings and instructions on buoyancy adjustments designed to prevent the destruction."

For example, there's the silent guide who keeps the rules quiet until one is broken, then jumps all over the unsuspecting offender. Or the cynic who treats all divers like they're turkeys, whether they are or not. There's the dull one who seems asleep at the wheel, taking little or no interest in the customer—the source of his livelihood. And the one who makes no effort to learn enough about his or her own diving environment to be able to pass interesting and valuable information on to the curious customer. Finally there's Super Instructor who knows all the answers, and gives them without benefit of anyone asking the questions.

Here, too, these turkey guides are usually more the victims of past bad experiences with unfriendly, uncooperative guests, and/or just human beings waiting for a polite word or pat on the back.

The Real Turkeys

We have come to the conclusion that there actually are only two *real* turkey types in this world. The first is the diver who insists on killing nonedible, reef fish for the "pleasure" of it. The second is the one who persists in breaking up coral reefs with his fins after repeated warnings and instructions on buoyancy adjustments designed to prevent the destruction. These two types have heard, ignored and gobbled. Had they changed their ways a bit for the benefit of man- and marine-kind, they wouldn't have been turkeys.

Let's have a little communication, and a lot of cooperation, to stamp out both the "turkey diver," and the "turkey resort guide."

The Trials and Tribulations of Treasure Hunters

Some Are Pirates, Others Prisoners

Piracy did not end off the Florida coast in the 18th Century. At least that's what the U.S. Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled when it upheld a lower court decision that branded two interlopers as "modern-day pirates" who tried to claim treasure found underwater by another famed treasure hunter, Mel Fisher.

In 1971 Fisher found a portion of the Spanish galleon, the *Neustra Senora de Atocha*, in Key West, FL. The *Atocha*, filled with over three hundred million dollars in gold and silver it was hauling from the New World to Spain, sank in a 1622 hurricane. Although Spaniards salvaged some of the treasure after the wreck, Fisher brought up close to \$20 million from only a small part of the wreck. He was unable to locate the bulk of the treasure.

In 1979, Olin Frick and John Gasque began diving near the wreck sight, searching for the main section. Unable to stop them, Fisher sought an injunction, claiming that since *he* had found the wreck, he alone, under U.S. Law, was allowed to salvage it.

Frick and Gasque (operating as Caribbean Ventures) argued that because Fisher had only found a small portion of the *Atocha* they had the right to search for the remainder. The court disagreed and prohibited Caribbean Ventures from exploring a 49-square-mile area around the wreck.

While Frick and Gasque appealed, their divers continued to search the off-limits area. Again Fisher's lawyers rushed to court and the judge ruled the two "modern-day pirates" were in contempt and sentenced them to five months in jail.

According to the *Miami News*, Fisher's attorney, David Hurrain said, "I'm really, really happy to see that the federal court has made this decision. There's no doubt that someone who goes out and finds a vessel after tremendous search and spending all that money and time should have his salvage protected." Hurrain said the decision also means that the federal courts have the jurisdiction over all parts of a wreck, not just those parts on the bottom of the ocean, as claimed by the state. "This ruling completely wipes out their whole line of reasoning," Hurrain said. "It's extremely important because it brings federal protection to the wreck sites. The decision is good for all salvors and brings sanity to the wreck site. We know now we can work secure under the protection of the federal court."

Frick and Gasque aren't quite so copasetic. "We'll go to the Supreme Court on it. We're not going to stand and let Fisher get away with this," Gasque said. "It's a drastic and dark day for America."

Gasque also said that he and his partner were preparing to launch an expedition in the next few months to bring up the *Pinta*, one of Christopher Columbus's ships, which they claim to have found near Turks and Caicos islands. Gasque said, "It would be kind of bad for the historians of the world if we did go to prison since we are about to go and find the *Pinta*."

Fisher's attorney, however, replied that "scholars have proven that the wreck located by Gasque and Frick could not be the *Pinta*."

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Many divers dream of sailing off in their well-outfitted treasure craft to find millions of dollars of bullion beneath the sea and that was the precise dream of fourteen Americans earlier this year when they sailed into Columbian waters in search of a 300-year-old Spanish galleon that sank with \$100 million of treasure in its hold.

The expedition was organized by San Francisco businesswoman, Margaret Brandeis, who said she "paid dearly for secret information on the wreck" and had evidence that the wreck was there because divers had recovered about \$1 million in silver and bronze cannons before her craft, the *Coral Sea*, set sail.

But when the *Coral Sea* arrived in Columbian waters, engine problems halted the journey and shortly thereafter a Columbian gunboat arrived to seize the craft and crew without giving any reason. For seven days the crew members were held under arrest on the island of San Andres, released finally on March 20th. The 85-foot *Coral Sea* remains under control of the Columbian government.

Undercurrent correspondents are 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*.

Editorial offices: P.O. Box 1658, Sausalito, CA 94965.