
Flotsam & Jetsam

News on line and in letters

UNCLEAN AND IN SHAPE. The November issue of *Men's Health* reported two helpful tips. Real strong: **To stay in shape for ocean activities**, run along the sandy bottom of the ocean carrying an 80-pound boulder. A professional surfer was quoted as saying that he started out in 10 feet of water and ran 20 to 70 yards before dropping the boulder and surfacing from a 30-foot depth. Try it. Real strong smell: When traveling in the tropics, **ditch the soap, deodorants, and other body grooming products** because bugs are attracted to them. Smell bad and the bugs won't pursue you. Neither will your friends.

TRIP OF A LIFETIME. The Starlight Foundation, a nonprofit group that grants last wishes to terminally ill kids (skydiving, scuba diving, rafting, and such), has organized a fund-raiser dive trip to **Cocos Island, Costa Rica**, aboard the *Undersea Hunter*. Airfare from New York, accommodations, meals, and diving total \$3,000. The trip is scheduled for the last ten days in June. Donations can be tax deductible. Contact David Leonard at 212-289-0087 or dsl@bway.net.

MONEY BY WIRE. For some of us, quick math is not a strong point, but when **dealing with foreign currency** in another country it's a sorely needed skill. If you're not a math whiz, before traveling surf over to <http://www.xe.net/currency>. It has a simple-to-use converter. Scroll through and find the currency you want to convert to, plug in several useful denominations (\$10, \$50, etc.), write them down, and stick them in your billfold for later.

FOODBURN. After returning from a Club Med vacation in the Caribbean, a well-tanned 18-year-old showed up at her doctor's office with a **symmetrical**

sunburn on her inner thighs. The case, later written up in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, pointed out that handling foods such as celery, parsley, and citrus can cause increased sensitivity to the sun. In the Club Med case, the young lady had been playing a drinking game in which players balanced limes in their laps. A host of other things are on the list for increasing your chances of getting scorched by the sun, such as antibiotics in the tetracycline family, sulfa drugs, some high-blood-pressure medicines, antiinflammatory drugs, antidepressants, and antiseizure medicines. Even some after-shaves can leave a red, sunburned handprint on your face where it was slapped on in the morning.

AIR WARE. In a 1992 issue of *Undercurrent* discussing the then-raging controversy of Nitrox, Ben Davison made the statement that "without a major technical advance, it's unlikely that live-aboards will ever carry Nitrox." In the same article, Peter Hughes, who had looked into putting Nitrox on both the *Sea Dancer* and the *Wave Dancer*, said, "We pump 100 tanks a day and don't have the room to safely store pure oxygen in the quantities that we need." Now the millennium is near, and Peter's boats are pumping Nitrox. Instead of adding oxygen, there's now a machine that subtracts nitrogen from the air — in effect, a compressor that pumps Nitrox. Because the machines are compact, weigh less than 70 pounds, and eliminate the need for storing and handling large, green oxygen bottles, several live-aboards are installing them. You can check it out on the *Cayman Aggressor*, *Sea Dancer*, *Golden Divers*, and *Sea Fever* (Undersea Breathing Systems, Inc., 561-588-7698, fax 561-588-0608, e-mail dnax@ix.netcom.com). ■

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