

Sunset House, Grand Cayman, BWI

—After Sunset, Cayman is Grand

So far as I know, Grand Cayman is the most complete diver's island this side of Fantasy Island. Divers' tourism, next to international banking and tax sheltering, is the big industry and, as I wrote in the last issue, the island is replete with hotels and services for divers. This issue I write of the Sunset House, which has a substantial dive operation (though the hotel still caters to nondivers) and now attracts a number of dive tours. Its location, on the iron shore with a reef out front, its proximity to town, and the hotel ambience, make it a good selection for many divers. But first, a word about its dive operation and diving:

The Sunset Dive Shop is managed by Dave Nicholson, a congenial chap who remembers the names of every diver in sight, sees to it that dive boats run precisely on schedule, and delivers what he promises. These are rare talents in this neck of the woods. Divemasters Harry, Phil and Marcus I found also to be good fellows--friendly, helpful and competent.

The Sunset Diver's Shop is well-equipped for rentals, purchases and minor repairs, but it is not without its inconveniences. With nothing more than an ice chest of water to clean gear--and with no place to store divers' personal gear --I was forced each night to tote my salt-soaked stuff back to my room, rinse it in the shower, and apologize for my mess each day to the maids.

The dive package allows for unlimited air, so the aluminum '72's can be picked up any time during the day, and returned the following morning. (A \$5 charge is levied, so a sign states, for a usual inspection should one run a tank below 300 psi; they begin at 2800 to 3000 psi). Shop policy requires strict adherence to the U.S. Navy dive tables; as required by the Cayman Diving Organization, the maximum diving depth is 100 feet.

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Of the Sunset's four boats, two were used during my stay; Tee-Two, a 45-foot covered boat that can handle 30 divers, and Sun Diver, a 35-foot craft capable of carrying 20 divers. After Dave logged my C-Card numbers, I signed the required "hold harmless" form, and was assigned a boat for the week. The departure depends on the number of trips the dive boat is making that day, but it was generally between 9:00 and 10:00am; a two-tank trip takes roughly three and one-half hours.

A favorite dive off Seven Mile Beach is Trinity Caves. After the briefing, I entered the water and waited at the anchor line until everyone was in. It was not a "follow-the-guide" dive, but the Dive master wanted to ensure that everyone found the caves. After exchanging OK signals, my buddy and I headed toward the 45-foot bottom, the beginning of the wall. With a slope of 70 to 80 degrees it was an awesome drop into the blue-black depths to 6000 feet. The top of the wall was a mass of staghorn and other hard corals with many gorgonia and large sea fans. The ambient light was registering F11 on my light meter at 50 feet. That, my friends, is clear water!

The Trinity Cave area is marked by the junction of large coral canyons converging at this near vertical wall. The canyons are loaded with large, spreading growths of gorgonia, sponges, enormous barrel sponges and sea fans. Once inside, I found the interior, covered with large gorgonia, also home to lovely black coral trees growing upwards from the floor. As I exited, I found nothing but water was between me and the mile-deep ocean bottom. Turning to the wall, I was immediately struck by how alive it was. Tiny blue cleaner shrimp lurked in the anemones. Banded coral shrimp antennas were everywhere. Occasional lobsters could be spotted hiding in the holes. As I entered a coral canyon, an acre of garden eels greeted me with their rhythmic swaying, disappearing quickly as I swam over them. A rather large sting ray allowed me to inspect him closely before flapping off in a sandy wake. As I reached the top of the wall I could see two divers ahead, but only their legs and fins were visible. Their trunks were hidden by a mass of yellowtails and sergeant-majors competing for the food being handed out. Suddenly, my bottom time reached 25 minutes; I ascended to 10 feet on the anchor line, where I hung for three minutes. This was a super dive. Though diving along Seven Mile Beach can be mediocre, Trinity Caves gets high marks.

We motored to Devil's Grotto where after a one-hour and ten minute interval we were ready for 50 minutes at 50 feet (the maximum depth of the reef and no decompression limits). Enormous hills of coral rose from the bottom to within a couple of feet of the surface. As I descended, I discovered a large cave opening with shafts of laser-like light beams piercing the water. The cave opened into a large chamber with several tunnels illuminated, all with varying degrees of light. Disciplined silver bait fish were everywhere, opening and closing as I swam through. In one tunnel an entire family of lobsters clung to the ceiling. In another, crabs hid in the crannies, while neon fairy basslets swam upside down on the ceilings. Emerging from even another, I explored the large coral formations covered with crinoids (or feather starfish), sabellid tube-worms, long-armed anemones with small shrimp, large clusters of blue, green, purple and nearly white anemones looking like large flowers with small petals, and the two enormous Christmas tree worms, who refused to stay open for a macro shot. Two large squid let me approach, but as I moved to photograph them they suddenly broke their graceful pace to speed away. Two large puffers played,

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chasing and bumping each other. Parrot fish turned coral into sand, sergeant-majors and yellowtails looked for handouts, squirrel fish and big eyes were waiting patiently under coral ledges for nightfall; trunkfish, trumpetfish, black durgons, groupers, chubs, angels, butterflies, and hamlets, were plentiful. A few jacks came by for a visit. Indeed, this was a pleasant second dive.

During the succeeding days I dived many places; the Oro Verde, a steel-hulled vessel of 180 feet sunk intact in 50 feet of water off Seven Mile Beach; the Balboa, a 375-foot trading ship that sank during a hurricane in 1933 in 35 feet of water off George Town Harbor; the Aquarium, a shallow reef teeming with tropical fish waiting to be hand-fed; Eden Rock, an area much like Devil's Grotto; Bit Tunnel, a giant coral archway on the Cayman Wall; Big Dipper, a drop-off on the wall marked by allegedly one of the largest basket sponges in the world; Sand Chute, a coral canyon ending on the wall where a giant barrel sponge, almost ten feet tall, resides.

Diving from the shore at Sunset House is so convenient, I dived every night but one. Take one giant step into 12 feet of water or a short climb down a wooden ladder, and then a swim through a dredged canyon to the coral reef less than 50 yards out to find good diving in less than 50 feet of water. I swam through large sea fans (two with reddish basket starfish perched on them) and nice hard coral formations with large gorgonia of several varieties, and found several old anchors, some being used to hold moorings. Peacock flounders and rays were hidden in the sand-floored canyons; a scorpion fish lay poised and camouflaged along the side of the canyon. One must be careful before putting a hand on these ledges. My buddy was in the act of using a scorpion fish for a hand-hold when I saw the scaly ruffian and deflected the hand. Squid, cardinal fish, squirrel fish, big eyes, glassy sweepers and the occasional octopus were found foraging for their nightly intake of food. A school of southern sennets reflected my lights. Brittle stars, some almost red, covered many of the sponges, while the tiny red eyes of many shrimp reflected my underwater light. Red finger sponges so uninteresting during the day were beautiful when their true color was revealed by our lights. Parrot fish, wrapped in their own mucus-like blankets, slept in coral crevices. Flamingo tongues clustered on sea fans like beautiful jewelry, while blue tangs and hamlets scurried to escape our lights.

After the first night dive we found it was smart to save some air for watching the tarpon hunting for dinner right in the dredged canyon just a few yards from where we would exit. Their silver bodies brightly reflected the light, but their eyes flashed as if they had lights of their own.

My day dive on the Balboa wreckage--Cayman's own underwater tourist trip--convinced me that it would be a wonderful night dive, but the Sunset Divers do not use boats at night. I contacted an independent guide, Peter Milburn, who had been highly recommended by several knowledgeable Undercurrent readers. Peter had not planned to dive that night, but needed no arm twisting to take four of us at \$30 a pop. It proved a bargain! He met us at a dock in George Town in his 26-foot Bristol Flattop and I quickly learned he lives up to his motto, "We make diving so easy, all you have to do is breathe." Peter put our back-packs and regulators on the tanks, checked them for proper operation, strung the weights on the belts, carried everything to the bow of the boat, helped

SUNSET HOUSE, GRAND CAYMAN, B.W.I.

Diving for Beginners	★ ★ ★ ★
Diving for Advanced	★ ★ ★ ★
Beach Snorkeling	★ ★ ★ ★
Hotel	★ ★ ★
Hotel Food	★ ★ ★ ½
Money's worth	★ ★ ★ ★ ½

*****excellent. ****good. ***average.
**fair *poor.

each of us on with the tank, checked our lights and performed a safety check. Ah, the attention. I loved it. He asked us if we wished to poke around on our own, or if we would like him to show us some of his favorite places and things. Fortunately, we opted for his leadership. We rendezvoused on the bottom by the anchor, where he showed us a peacock flounder, then a whole row of lobsters peering out from under wreckage, and then a large sponge where we shut off our lights. Peter gently tapped the sponge and it filled the water with bioluminescence so bright I could see my companions clearly on this dark, moonless night. At an azure vase sponge he coaxed a tiny shrimp to the top for macro shots, then coaxed more tiny shrimp from anemones. It was as if Peter were their friend and they were emerging to greet him. Peter found a decorator crab so camouflaged that even in my macro slide, I could hardly find him. He then showed us the nocturnal orange ball anemone, discovered only within the last decade according to Carl Roessler. At the ship's boilers he pointed out more shrimp on an orange and red wall sponge, gently handled a banded coral shrimp to permit us to photograph him before replacing him. Then, as if on

Barefoot Bounces Back

There's not much in the way of nightlife in Grand Cayman, but there's the Barefoot Man, and he's still holding forth nearly nightly in the Caymanian Holiday Inn. Barefoot, who plays what might be described as white man's island music, devotes many of his songs to the dilemmas and daring of divers, and he can now be celebrated on his second album, *Scuba-Do-2*.

Barefoot's music is pleasant at times, raunchy at other times, and funny at other times. Most of all, it's music for divers. The record is professionally recorded, well-balanced stereophonically, and has been found worthy of radio play by more adventurous disc jockeys, Los Angeles' Dr. Demento being one of those.

On this album you'll find such gems as the *Urban Diver*, a white man's blues number with a decent little guitar riff punctuating the lyrics about, "an urban diver, a city survivor who keeps himself sane, by saturating his brain."

Big Bad Don, like the title suggests, is a *Big Bad John* take off.

Jeff the Muff Diver needs no description (in the lyrics Barefoot sings about Bob Soto, Jack McKenney, et. al). Similar scuba raunch is found in the little calypso number, *Divers Below*:

The next day the daughters were swimming
They started laughing and giggling
The old man wonder what they so happy about
Well around his daughters were bubbles
The old man thought there were troubles
And then one of the daughters started to shout

Oh, Papa please go,
There's divers below. . .

Well, you get the point. Most of the other tunes are not of the same genre. Barefoot croons a couple of soft ballads, not to make the top fifty, but surely pleasant to the diver contemplating his last trip, or fantasizing about the next one. *Scuba Love*, *Island Dreaming*, and *A Talk with the Dolphin* provide plenty of schmaltz. . .and sure deja vue for anyone who has heard Barefoot strum on Grand Cayman.

Still, I'm at a loss to figure out who buys these albums, other than those who care to dredge up their Cayman nostalgia. Perhaps they are collectors of scuba memorabilia. Or those who want to give curious gifts to fellow divers. Or even people with the task of coming up with door prizes for scuba club festivities.

If you're one of these—or if you're simply curious—you may order the album by sending \$8.50 to Barefoot Records, Box 1249, Grand Cayman Islands, BWI. Allow 4-5 weeks for delivery. Wholesalers may order ten or more at \$4.25 each. Specify record or cassette. The first album is also available at the same price.

C.C., travel editor

cue, a puffer fish practically swam into Peter's hand. On top of the boilers he produced a jackknife fish, a sleeping banded butterfly fish and some feeding orange Tubastrea coral. As we swam over the wreckage, Peter flicked two large urchins away to show us a tiny baby octopus. How could he have seen such a small creature, hidden as he was? He then pointed to four more octopi, a couple of rather large ones, all of whom were cooperative photographic subjects. One even let me frame his head for several macro shots. Peter did not hunt for these creatures, we swam directly from one to another! Seldom have I dived with a person so in tune with the sea and its inhabitants, so knowledgeable about the marine life, and so concerned about the conservation of the reef and its marine dwellers. While on Cayman, one must indeed take one dive or a dozen dives with Peter Milburn.

As to lodging, I fared well at the Sunset House. No Spanish Cove, but it does offer decent accommodations at a reasonable price in a pleasant, island-style building. Perhaps even Somerset Maugham would feel at home. The dining room, which seats 100, overlooks the ocean and provides views of the spectacular sunsets. Although management seems to prohibit shorts at breakfast and dinner, our group of divers objected so strenuously that the requirement was waived, at least temporarily. The food was fine. The well-prepared dinners featured shepherd's pie or turtle steak (raised commercially on Cayman) or fried grouper or stewed conch, preceded by oxtail soup, conch mousse, lobster salad or fish chowder. Cherry strudel or banana Betty might be the dessert. Lunch ranged from fried chicken to cheeseburgers to tuna salad. Dinner would normally be preceded with a pina colada (an extraordinary \$4.20!) in the attractive thatched-roof bar.

The winter rates at Sunset House will be \$562.50 for room (double occupancy) for seven days, eight nights, two morning boat dives and unlimited afternoon dives from the shore for six days, breakfasts and dinners, and airport transfers. A gratuity of 10% will be attached to the bill for the room and food service and 6% tax for the room only. Reservations may be made by calling any travel agent or dealing directly with the Sunset House (POB 479, Grand Cayman, BWI: 809/949-5966). Peter Milburn may be contacted by writing Box 596, Grand Cayman, B.W.I., or by calling 809/949-5341.

Divers' Compass: Cayman Islanders are a friendly lot by any standards. English is universally spoken and the island seems very safe....Many people rent condominiums rather than stay in hotels; the Christopher Columbus on Seven Mile Beach is highly recommended....Strobes can be charged with room electricity at the Sunset House....Visibility during my late spring stay ranged from 100 to 130 feet; the water temperature was over 80 degrees....There is no swimming pool at the Sunset House....There are rumors that Waldo, the famous friendly eel, has returned, but a reputable source says he is indeed dead, after having been fed coral by a tourist diver who couldn't find a fish to feed him for a photograph....Well, one story is as good as the next.

Reports From Our Readers' Travels—Part VIII

Providenciales: Third Turtle Inn is still a fine outpost and our readers seem to enjoy the ambience and especially the cuisine. Several of our readers have said that because Art Pickering has stepped back from close management of the dive shop, the quality of the diving dropped below the high standards we reported in our March 1980 review. Dive master Gale Anspach, imported from Cayman Kai, (where the ship he ran, readers wrote, was far too tight) keeps the place "professionally run," but the halcyon days are over. Dive guide Fuller still gets high marks from readers. Evelyn Berman (NYC) writes, "thankfully,

Fuller is still there and should easily have the title of dive master by now." Rosie Kenyan (Spring, Texas) says "the diving was excellent. We did a lot of wall diving and Fuller did a great job."

British Columbia: Powell River. Greg Becvar (Pine City, MN) writes "excellent macro photography, good possibilities of seeing octopus, wolf eel and even sea lion. I dove with incomparable Jim Willoughby of the Sunset Marine. Stayed in Beach Gardens Hotel. Definitely dry suit country."

Losing Your Certification Card

—A Lesson From The YMCA

Dear Undercurrent:

My 18-year-old son, who has had a YMCA certificate for a little over three years, recently lost his card and wrote the National YMCA Center for Underwater Activities in Key West to request a replacement. He was advised to do this by the local YMCA, which assured him that the National Center maintained records on YMCA certified divers.

The response was a form letter addressed to "Dear Diver," a copy of which is enclosed. Incidentally, the certification card blank referred to in the letter was not enclosed.

Aside from the fact that I cannot imagine any "local instructor" doing what the letter suggests gratis (if in fact one would do it at all) if my son had not had a log, which he has now used on several occasions since he lost his C-card to obtain air refills and admission to dive sites, he would have missed the better part of a summer's diving.

Of course, he could have lost his log as well as his C-card, and I don't know what the answer to that would be, other than taking a new certification course.

Do you have any suggestions?

Thomas W. Flynn
Dayton, Ohio

• • • • •

Dear Diver:

I ran you through our computer and you do not appear on our list of divers.

The only thing you can do is to locate a local instructor and have him put you through the Aquatic Performance Tests, a written test, and an open water dive.

After you have completed these tests, have your instructor give you a letter stating that you qualify and send a copy of the letter to me along with the enclosed certification card blank, completely filled out, an

I.D. size picture, your Social Security number, birth-date, and a \$5.00 certification fee. As soon as I receive these items, I will send you a new certification card.

I'm sorry I couldn't be of more help.

Ms. Frankie Oliver
Office Manager

• • • • •

The YMCA form letter, not seeming very conciliatory, led us to call Bob Smith, National Director, and Frankie Oliver, signer of the form response. Both assured us that the form letter was not the end of the line and they had, indeed, written Flynn Junior's instructor (whose name was in the original letter) to obtain more information. Flynn had been sent a follow-up letter, we were told, which indicated that the Y had taken further action.

We were unable to get in touch with Flynn for nearly a week, and once we did we learned that a handwritten letter had just arrived, indicating the Y would make an effort to track down the instructor and verify Flynn Junior's certification.

According to Mr. Smith and Ms. Oliver, when a student begins a "Y" course a form is filled out and filed with the national office and goes on one list. When the student is certified his name goes on a second list. About three years ago the "Y" put all their lists onto a computer, and apparently Flynn's name did not make it. It is "possible but not likely," Bob Smith told us, that there were two glitches in the system.

Smith says the most likely possibility is that Flynn was not certified as a "Y" diver but holds some other certification such as PADI or NAUI. Many "Y" instructors are cross-certified, that is they are certified instructors for two or three training agencies. Thus Mr. Flynn's instructor may have used the facilities of a YMCA for training but issued Mr. Flynn a different certification. If that happened, then Mr. Flynn would not appear on any of the National YMCA records.

Continued on page 9

Undercurrent Travel Questionnaire

Response Requested

Mail to: Undercurrent, PO Box 1658, Sausalito, CA 94965

Location being evaluated _____ Would you return? _____

Date of your trip _____ Hotel _____ Dive shop _____

What other resorts have you dived? _____

- | | | | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| fish size
tropical fish
kinds of tropicals
hard coral
soft coral
sponges, gorgonia...
caves, ledges...
wrecks
sharks
shelling
snorkeling from boats
water temperature
visibility | <input type="checkbox"/> large ones plentiful
<input type="checkbox"/> abundant
<input type="checkbox"/> impressive variety
<input type="checkbox"/> plenty and colorful
<input type="checkbox"/> plenty and colorful
<input type="checkbox"/> very nice
<input type="checkbox"/> good variety
<input type="checkbox"/> exciting
<input type="checkbox"/> a couple for fun
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent
<input type="checkbox"/> some of the best
<input type="checkbox"/> 80° +
<input type="checkbox"/> 90 ft. or more | <input type="checkbox"/> a few big ones
<input type="checkbox"/> not bad
<input type="checkbox"/> fairly interesting
<input type="checkbox"/> o.k.
<input type="checkbox"/> o.k.
<input type="checkbox"/> pretty average
<input type="checkbox"/> some of interest
<input type="checkbox"/> worth a tank or two
<input type="checkbox"/> none
<input type="checkbox"/> o.k.
<input type="checkbox"/> not bad
<input type="checkbox"/> 74°-79°
<input type="checkbox"/> 50-90 ft. | <input type="checkbox"/> too small to cat
<input type="checkbox"/> sparse
<input type="checkbox"/> common ones only
<input type="checkbox"/> kind of a bore
<input type="checkbox"/> kind of a bore
<input type="checkbox"/> not much
<input type="checkbox"/> none worth diving
<input type="checkbox"/> none
<input type="checkbox"/> too many
<input type="checkbox"/> none or prohibited
<input type="checkbox"/> nothing to see
<input type="checkbox"/> less than 74°
<input type="checkbox"/> less than 50 ft. |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

- | | | | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| rules for experienced divers
guides for new divers
diving frequency
night diving
boat diving
beach diving
dive shop manager
air quality
air fills
rental gear
repair capability | <input type="checkbox"/> no restrictions
<input type="checkbox"/> top-rated
<input type="checkbox"/> 3 or more tanks/day
<input type="checkbox"/> frequent
<input type="checkbox"/> two tanks under \$25
<input type="checkbox"/> as good as the boats
<input type="checkbox"/> a great person
<input type="checkbox"/> no problems
<input type="checkbox"/> 3000 psi +
<input type="checkbox"/> everything you need
<input type="checkbox"/> can handle anything | <input type="checkbox"/> a little tight
<input type="checkbox"/> acceptable
<input type="checkbox"/> 2 tanks per day
<input type="checkbox"/> 1-2 times/week
<input type="checkbox"/> \$25-\$35 for two
<input type="checkbox"/> fair possibilities
<input type="checkbox"/> just does the job
<input type="checkbox"/> I wondered
<input type="checkbox"/> 2250 psi +
<input type="checkbox"/> tanks, wt. belts...
<input type="checkbox"/> some repair capacity | <input type="checkbox"/> treated as a novice
<input type="checkbox"/> lousy
<input type="checkbox"/> one per day
<input type="checkbox"/> none
<input type="checkbox"/> over \$35 for two
<input type="checkbox"/> no way
<input type="checkbox"/> a real bastard
<input type="checkbox"/> I worried
<input type="checkbox"/> short-changed often
<input type="checkbox"/> bring everything
<input type="checkbox"/> pray nothing breaks |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

- | | | | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| hotel food
nearby restaurants
accommodations
car needed
nightlife
locals
weather
insects | <input type="checkbox"/> gourmet
<input type="checkbox"/> must try
<input type="checkbox"/> luxury
<input type="checkbox"/> of no use
<input type="checkbox"/> swinging
<input type="checkbox"/> helpful, friendly
<input type="checkbox"/> great every day
<input type="checkbox"/> none | <input type="checkbox"/> not bad
<input type="checkbox"/> adequate
<input type="checkbox"/> o.k., decent
<input type="checkbox"/> only for touring
<input type="checkbox"/> enough
<input type="checkbox"/> no complaints
<input type="checkbox"/> o.k.
<input type="checkbox"/> now and then | <input type="checkbox"/> ough!
<input type="checkbox"/> better off fasting
<input type="checkbox"/> far below par
<input type="checkbox"/> a daily must
<input type="checkbox"/> dead
<input type="checkbox"/> hostile
<input type="checkbox"/> many bad days
<input type="checkbox"/> too many bites |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

Comments and comparison to other places visited: _____

Circle the number of stars applicable to your experience, from 0 to five (for the tops)

Diving for beginners	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Diving for old pros	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Beach snorkeling	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Hotel meals	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Hotel otherwise	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Moneysworth	★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Location being evaluated _____

Date of your trip _____ Hotel _____ Dive shop _____

What other resorts have you dived? _____

- | | | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| fish size | <input type="checkbox"/> large ones plentiful | <input type="checkbox"/> a few big ones | <input type="checkbox"/> too small to eat |
| tropical fish | <input type="checkbox"/> abundant | <input type="checkbox"/> not bad | <input type="checkbox"/> sparse |
| kinds of tropicals | <input type="checkbox"/> impressive variety | <input type="checkbox"/> fairly interesting | <input type="checkbox"/> common ones only |
| hard coral | <input type="checkbox"/> plenty and colorful | <input type="checkbox"/> o.k. | <input type="checkbox"/> kind of a bore |
| soft coral | <input type="checkbox"/> plenty and colorful | <input type="checkbox"/> o.k. | <input type="checkbox"/> kind of a bore |
| sponges, gorgonia... | <input type="checkbox"/> very nice | <input type="checkbox"/> pretty average | <input type="checkbox"/> not much |
| caves, ledges... | <input type="checkbox"/> good variety | <input type="checkbox"/> some of interest | <input type="checkbox"/> none worth diving |
| wrecks | <input type="checkbox"/> exciting | <input type="checkbox"/> worth a tank or two | <input type="checkbox"/> none |
| sharks | <input type="checkbox"/> a couple for fun | <input type="checkbox"/> none | <input type="checkbox"/> too many |
| shelling | <input type="checkbox"/> excellent | <input type="checkbox"/> o.k. | <input type="checkbox"/> none or prohibited |
| snorkeling from beach | <input type="checkbox"/> some of the best | <input type="checkbox"/> not bad | <input type="checkbox"/> nothing to see |
| water temperature | <input type="checkbox"/> 80° + | <input type="checkbox"/> 74°-79° | <input type="checkbox"/> less than 74° |
| visibility | <input type="checkbox"/> 90 ft. or more | <input type="checkbox"/> 50-90 ft. | <input type="checkbox"/> less than 50 ft. |

- | | | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| rules for experienced divers | <input type="checkbox"/> no restrictions | <input type="checkbox"/> a little tight | <input type="checkbox"/> treated as a novice |
| guides for new divers | <input type="checkbox"/> top-rated | <input type="checkbox"/> acceptable | <input type="checkbox"/> lousy |
| diving frequency | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 or more tanks/day | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 tanks per day | <input type="checkbox"/> one per day |
| night diving | <input type="checkbox"/> frequent | <input type="checkbox"/> 1-2 times/week | <input type="checkbox"/> none |
| boat diving | <input type="checkbox"/> two tanks under \$25 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$25-\$35 for two | <input type="checkbox"/> over \$35 for two |
| beach diving | <input type="checkbox"/> as good as the boats | <input type="checkbox"/> fair possibilities | <input type="checkbox"/> no way |
| dive shop manager | <input type="checkbox"/> a great person | <input type="checkbox"/> just does the job | <input type="checkbox"/> a real bastard |
| air quality | <input type="checkbox"/> no problems | <input type="checkbox"/> I wondered | <input type="checkbox"/> I worried |
| air fills | <input type="checkbox"/> 3000 psi + | <input type="checkbox"/> 2250 psi + | <input type="checkbox"/> short-changed often |
| rental gear | <input type="checkbox"/> everything you need | <input type="checkbox"/> tanks, wt. belts... | <input type="checkbox"/> bring everything |
| repair capability | <input type="checkbox"/> can handle anything | <input type="checkbox"/> some repair capacity | <input type="checkbox"/> pray nothing breaks |

- | | | | |
|--------------------|--------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| hotel food | <input type="checkbox"/> gourmet | <input type="checkbox"/> not bad | <input type="checkbox"/> lugh! |
| nearby restaurants | <input type="checkbox"/> must try | <input type="checkbox"/> adequate | <input type="checkbox"/> better off fasting |
| accommodations | <input type="checkbox"/> luxury | <input type="checkbox"/> o.k., decent | <input type="checkbox"/> far below par |
| car needed | <input type="checkbox"/> of no use | <input type="checkbox"/> only for touring | <input type="checkbox"/> a daily must |
| nightlife | <input type="checkbox"/> swinging | <input type="checkbox"/> enough | <input type="checkbox"/> dead |
| locals | <input type="checkbox"/> helpful, friendly | <input type="checkbox"/> no complaints | <input type="checkbox"/> hostile |
| weather | <input type="checkbox"/> great every day | <input type="checkbox"/> o.k. | <input type="checkbox"/> many bad days |
| insects | <input type="checkbox"/> none | <input type="checkbox"/> now and then | <input type="checkbox"/> too many bites |

Comments and comparison to other places: _____

Circle the number of stars applicable to your experience, from 0 to five (for the tops)

Diving for beginners	★	★	★	★	★
Diving for old pros	★	★	★	★	★
Beach snorkeling	★	★	★	★	★
Hotel meals	★	★	★	★	★
Hotel otherwise	★	★	★	★	★
Moneysworth	★	★	★	★	★

PLEASE RETURN THIS TO:
UNDERCURRENT, P.O. BOX 1658,
SAUSALITO, CA 94965

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____

Zip _____ Tel. _____

Continued from page 6

Flynn explained that they had his son's log book, which he could send to verify his son's training and experience. He believed that his son had been promised both a PADI and a YMCA certification, but didn't recall the PADI certification ever arriving.

So now the "Y" has to wait to find out from the instructor just what happened. Since they have no record they can't issue a new card out-of-hand.

Flynn's problem points out a dilemma faced by many divers. Frequently, a diver notices his card is missing when he is about to leave for a tropical trip or just as he's heading out to get tanks filled for a morning dive. The resulting panic can throw a whole trip into a tizzy.

Each agency has a different approach to lost cards. After we talked with the folks at the Y, we called the other certifying agencies to determine their procedures.

PADI and NAUI have similar means to deal with lost cards. Write or call the national office, give your name, the city in which you received your instruction, the instructor's name and, if possible, the instructor's number. If you have all that at hand the cost will be \$10.00 for PADI and \$5.00 for NAUI. If you do not have the instructor's name or number NAUI will increase the cost to \$10.00 for the search

time. PADI also requires a photo to laminate on the back of the card.

For a lost NASDS or SSI certification, contact the dive shop where you were certified and start the replacement procedure through the shop. Since they are supposed to have your records, it is much faster and may be cheaper. If the shop has gone out of business or if you have moved, write the national certifying organization, give them the shop name and the month and year you were certified. If none of that is recalled, a copy of your log book showing the instructor's signature or initials for your instruction will suffice. Both NASDS and SSI charge \$10.00. SSI also requires a recent photo.

If none of the information is available to you, then you may be in for another training session or at least a short course. Since a "C" card is issued upon completion of a standard course and states to all concerned that you have received such training, no agency will re-issue the card just on your say-so.

The easiest method to prevent the entire hassle is to make a photo copy of both sides of your card. In fact, make two copies. File them away and if your card is ever lost then you can prove beyond a doubt that you once had a card. Just send one of the copies along with your request for a new one and your certifying agency, no doubt, will be quick to respond.

Certification Agencies

N.A.S.D.S. P.O. Box 17067, Long Beach, CA 90807 (213) 595-5361
N.A.U.I. 4650 Arrow Highway, Suite F-1, Montclair, CA 91763 (714) 621-5801
P.A.D.I. 1243 East Warner Avenue, Santa Ana, CA 92705 (714) 540-7234
S.S.I. 1449 River Side Drive, Fort Collins, CO 80524 (303) 482-0883
Y.M.C.A. P.O. Box 1547, Key West, FL 33040 (305) 294-5288

Poaching California Abalone

Jail Sentences Now the Reward

Take one California abalone. Cut away the waste, leaving the white, sumptuous flesh, and slice it thin as a Philly cheese steak. Pound it till it's soft as butter, dip it into a solution of eggs and crumbs, saute it in butter and lemon for no more than 30 seconds a side, open a bottle of Sage Creek Chardonnay, and the meal will be unmatched.

Abalone is such a delicacy that a pound in a supermarket runs up to \$20, depending upon the season and the demand, and a two-ounce serving in a restaurant is always priced higher than Maine lobster or filet mignon.

Abs are single-shelled mollusks, which fasten themselves onto rocks with such force that unless one is quick enough to slip an ab iron under the muscle

while it's relaxed, it's impossible to pry off. And they're difficult to spot. A novice diver may search an entire dive, and never distinguish the creatures from surrounding rocks. Though they run as big as 10 to 12 inches in length (the minimum legal size runs from 4" to 7", depending upon the species), they can be nearly invisible. Because they are often exposed at low tides or in shallow water accessible to just about any well-trained California diver, the California Department of Fish and Game carefully regulates abalone season. Anyone who takes an abalone must have a fishing license. From Yankee Point (near Carmel and Monterey) to the Oregon border, abalone can be taken only by free divers or by people picking them off rocks at low tide. South of Yankee

point, scuba may be used. The season is open only part of the year.

Commercial harvesting is permitted south of Yankee point. Only hookah rigs (no scuba) are permitted and the fishermen must be licensed. The work is hard, but when a fisherman is lucky, he can be well rewarded financially.

As one might expect, because abalone is such a delicacy, a number of divers do what they can to skirt the law. Here are two cases where the punishment was tough—yet just.

* * * * *

California Diver Kenneth Cascarden got 74 days in the local slammer for poaching 74 abalone from the North Coast of California. The legal limit in these waters is four; they must be taken free diving. Cascarden, wearing tanks, took 70 too many. The judge also fined him \$500 and confiscated his dive gear.

But that may not be the end of Cascarden's problems. He also tried to sell his illegal catch, and that trial is still to be held. According to Capt. Robert Hudson of the California Department of Fish and Game, "Cascarden told the judge that he was putting himself through college this way."

Capt. Hudson said that Cascarden's crime was a misdemeanor, but others are outright felonies. He told us of one such case, to be brought to trial later this year, which involves some 13 people who conspired to sell 1,300 lbs. of processed abalone to retail outlets. At retail, now about \$20 per pound, the street value was \$26,000. The Department of Fish and Game estimates that a legal limit of four abalone over 7 inches across would bring between \$120 and \$140 at retail prices.

Capt. Hudson could not tell exactly how Cascarden was caught but said that "some poachers are turned in by other divers who are obeying the law, and others are spotted by one of the eleven wardens the department has between the Golden Gates and the Oregon state line." Sometimes it is a restaurant or store that notifies the Department of Fish and Game about illegal activities. One diver in Fort Bragg, California, called a restaurant to inquire if they wanted to buy some fresh abalone. The restaurant called the Dept. of Fish and Game and a warden was waiting when the diver brought in 200 lbs. of processed abalone.

Capt. Hudson said that it is "impossible" to tell how much is lost through poaching. Sport divers taking more than a legal limit of four, or using tanks, or non-divers who go out on a minus tide and "rock pick" are hard to control with only 11 wardens. He could not give a figure of the number of people caught poaching in his area, but told *Undercurrent* that the number was increasing year-by-year, despite budget cuts and reduced manpower.

In a second case, 35-year-old fisherman John Passyka pleaded guilty to taking abalone with scuba gear and possessing an overlimit. When caught, Passyka had 100 abs (worth \$6000) in his possession. Just the day before, he had been cited for taking 150 abs illegally.

Judge Joseph Orr sentenced Passyka to 50 days in the Medocino County Jail, ordered him to work for 160 hours on a stream restoration project, fined him \$700, and placed him on three years probation. The judge also had Passyka agree to submit to search by game wardens at any time, under any circumstances, with or without a warrant.

But the judge didn't stop here. The more literate among us may remember this passage from Nathaniel Hawthorne's *Scarlet Letter*:

"On the breast of her gown, in red cloth, surrounded with an elaborate embroidery and fantastic flourishes of gold thread, appeared the letter A."

And rather than take away Passyka's livelihood as a fisherman, the judge decided to permit him to con-

The Creature From Neary's Lagoon

It began with calls to the police about a mystery scuba diver who regularly disappeared into the mist-shrouded waters of Neary's Lagoon in Santa Cruz, California, just after daybreak.

The diver would make his way through the chilly water 100 yards out to a small island that, for the last ten years, has been part of a city park and wildlife refuge.

There, amid a thick growth of tall grass and cottonwood trees, police found a carefully cultivated marijuana plot.

"It was pretty ingenious," said Santa Cruz police Sgt. Bill Aluffi, who needed a rowboat to reach the island.

Aluffi found a 40-foot by 60-foot clearing, hacked out of dense tule grass and supporting forty thriving marijuana plants. Fully processed, Aluffi said, the harvest would bring about \$80,000.

Who is the creature from Neary's Lagoon? Police don't know and say they have little hope of finding him. But, they've left him a note in the middle of the now barren minifarm. It reads "You are under arrest. (Signed) The Santa Cruz Police Department."

—Jack Foley
San Jose News

tinue, but to mark him forever. Fish and Game wardens had complained that Passyka's 18-foot boat was painted battleship gray (in contrast to standard white), therefore permitting him to slip past wardens lying in wait, especially in the heavy fog of the Nor-

thern California coast or at night. The judge ordered Passyka to paint his boat a "bright" color before he would be permitted to return it to the water.

Passyka complied. He painted it international orange, with red lightning bolts.

The Sting Of Commercial Defogging Solutions

In January, we reported that severe (but not lingering) eye problems were being caused by two commercial mask defoggers—*Keep Klear* and *Scuba Defog*. The solutions, which contain irritating ingredients, were to be applied to the inside of the mask lens, then carefully rinsed off. But the problem we reported was less a problem of these two brands than a problem endemic to any defogging solution which is not properly cleaned off a lens.

Although some excess solution can be washed into a diver's eyes when water gets into the mask, the explanation for most of the temporary injuries is more subtle. As the air—and the solution in the mask—come under pressure, the solution is vaporized. It can then easily enter a diver's eyes, causing irritation which can be highly painful and linger for 24 or more hours.

The two products we reported injured diver's eyes are manufactured by Exxene Company. Although more than 500,000 bottles had been sold to consumers with few complaints, claims Exxene President Bill Warmack, they now only sell their product to the military, whose users should be sufficiently trained to use it properly.

Since our article, medical research has been published on the immediate and lingering effects of defogging solutions, which we find important to share with the readers. The problem can be created by virtually any product on the market, and divers should be aware of the cause, the symptoms, and the cure. This information was prepared by Walter L. Wright, M.D., a member of the faculty at the Duke University Eye Center. A longer version of the article appeared originally in the *American Journal of Ophthalmology*, April 1982.

* * * * *

Toxic or caustic chemical damage to the cornea, conjunctiva, or both, constitutes a large percentage of all ocular emergencies. Most such cases involve accidental exposure to liquid or vapor forms of household, garden, or industrial chemical mixtures, and vary widely in the type and severity of ocular damage. In the case of severe alkali or acid burns, the patients are made acutely aware of the exposure by symptoms of conjunctival and corneal irritation. This is not the case with exposures to organic-inorganic compounds or mixtures of essentially neutral pH.

Corneal Damage Is Possible

Often symptoms are delayed several hours and the patient has no recollection of any such exposure.

Two interesting cases have recently been seen in the Duke University Eye Center. Both occurred in novice scuba divers. Each case was attributed to the accidental misuse of commercial chemical defogging agents on the diver's mask.

Case 1:

A 24-year-old woman came here complaining of severe burning pains in her eyes. The patient had been scuba diving off the coast of North Carolina earlier the same day, but had experienced no ocular pain during the dive. After surfacing, she reported halos around lights and some painless blurring of vision that resolved within 30 minutes. Approximately 60 minutes later she developed severe burning, photophobia, tearing, and blepharospasm such that she could not voluntarily open her eyes. . . . On specific questioning the patient related the use of a chemical defogging agent for the first time (*Keep Klear*, Exxene Corp., Corpus Cristi, Texas). The solution had been used immediately before the dive without buffing or allowing proper drying on the lens surface.

Examination was possible only after instillation of topical anesthetic drops. . . . Antibiotic drops were administered and the eyes patched for 18 hours, after which the patient was asymptomatic. Normal visual acuity returned and there was no evidence of corneal scarring or opacities.

Case 2:

A 42-year-old man was brought to the emergency room complaining of severe burning pains and loss of vision in both eyes. He had spent the afternoon scuba diving off the coast of North Carolina, having experienced no ocular symptoms. Approximately three hours after surfacing he developed blurring of vision, photophobia, tearing, and severe blepharospasm. At that time he rinsed his eyes with water, instilled Visine drops, and was brought to the Center. . . . On questioning he acknowledged using a chemical defogging agent (*Pro-Clear*, Belcher Industries, Miami, Florida), for the first time; the agent was generously applied to his mask lens, without wip-

ing or drying, immediately before entering the water.

Examination required the use of topical anesthesia with subsequent relief of all symptoms. . . .Antibiotic drops were instilled, and bilateral patches placed for 24 hours. The next day he was entirely asymptomatic with normal vision.

DISCUSSION

The interesting feature of these corneal reactions and one that distinguishes it from the more acute toxic or caustic reactions, is the delay in onset of the symptoms (burning, photophobia, defensive

"Both commercial defogging agents noted in these cases contain chemical compounds capable of producing this type of corneal damage. . . ."

blepharospasm) and objective evidence of any damage. . . .Many different classes of chemical com-

pounds cause such a delayed response (surface active agents, allyl and aromatic alcohols, alkylating agents, sulfhydryls, and silylating compounds). The variety is a reflection of the nonspecific nature of such a corneal reaction. . . .Both commercial defogging agents noted in these cases contain chemical compounds capable of producing this type of corneal damage, and the temporal relationship to their use is well-documented.

There are currently some 28 commercially available defogging mixtures marketed in the United States, nearly all of which depend on glycols, alcohols, surface active agents, or phenol derivatives for their special physicochemical properties in the prevention of moisture buildup and fogging. The pH of these mixtures varies considerably, as does their content of volatile solvents, and this can cause differences in the clinical situations of patients exposed to such mixtures.

The patient in Case 1 used a mixture of 70% isopropyl alcohol containing ammonium lauryl sulfate and neutral methoxy phenols. Of particular interest is her description of halos around lights with painless blurred vision before the onset of other symptoms. This represents a well-known reversible effect seen in persons subjected to a number of volatile vapors, including isopropyl alcohol. Such symptoms have been described in isopropanol vapor-concentrations under 800 ppm (easily achievable in a diving mask at body temperature).

In Case 2 the patient used a mixture composed of surface active agents and polyglycols. Such a mixture is far less volatile and this patient did not describe earlier symptoms. The eventual delayed corneal damage in both instances is almost certainly related to direct contact between the offending agents and the cornea and therefore is not merely a vapor exposure phenomenon.

The use of chemical defogging agents is not new, and the companies involved in the manufacture of such products are aware of the potential for ocular damage. Most include specific instructions on the label warning against instillation directly into the eye, and encouraging the use of small amounts applied to the lens surface with adequate buffing, well in advance of the dive. I have used both products mentioned here in the proper manner and found them to be safe and effective.

Nevertheless, the practice of applying copious amounts to a mask lens, rinsing briefly with water, and using the mask immediately thereafter seems commonplace among novice divers. Thus, it is likely that such mild delayed toxic keratopathies will continue to occur, and they should be recognized and treated as such. The treatment suggested is simply the instillation of a prophylactic antibiotic drop with patching for comfort. Results of treatment should be rapid with complete resolution.

Good Ol' Spit?

We received the following communique from John H. Foster of Sandy Springs Divers, Atlanta, Georgia, in reference to our comments in the January 1982 issue of *Undercurrent*:

You state that "Good ol' spit" is the preference of most divers for keeping their masks defogged. Perhaps your position could be better understood if you explained to your readers that this unsanitary, unsightly practice was intended as an emergency procedure.

If the yellowish-green ring on the inside of the mask of long-time Honkers is not enough to discourage this disgusting habit, then possibly "most of your staff" needs more information.

Cold viruses are always present in the throat. They usually do not cause illness because of the body's natural defenses against them. The mildly acidic environment of the healthy throat impedes viral reproduction long enough for the throat's microscopic hairs, the cilia, to sweep them into the digestive tract, where stomach acids kill them. Fatigue, stress, overwork, lack of sleep, anxiety and dry air make the throat drier and less acidic, allowing virus particles to infect the throat cells.

Now, you say a defogger has no place in a diver's eyes. Do you mean "Here's Spit in your Eye?" The eyes cannot always ward off this germ attack.

When you consider "Diver Safety" maybe "Good, ol' spit" could stand a little more research.