

# undercurrent®

THE PRIVATE, EXCLUSIVE GUIDE FOR SERIOUS DIVERS

P.O. Box 1658, Sausalito, California 94965

Cable Address: Gooddiving

Vol. 14, Nos. 11 & 12

HOLIDAY ISSUE

November / December 1989

## Sea of Cortez; Baja, Mexico

-- *On Land, At Sea, Unpredictability*

Dear Reader,

Divers visiting the Sea of Cortez during different weeks will report experiences so varied that one wonders whether they are talking about the same dive sites. Those great schools of hammerheads, an attraction found hardly anywhere else on earth, may be observed on many dives, or may never be apparent. Critters appear and disappear, currents rise and fall, and the visibility, which in the first place is never gin clear, might be 75 feet one week and 15 the next. Here is the report of two reviewers seven weeks apart, both aboard the Don Jose, which is owned and booked by Baja Expeditions in San Diego.

C.C., travel editor

\*\*\*\*\*

Grey whales, whale sharks, hammerheads, sailfish, tuna, groupers, warm, clear water . . . those were the images presented by 5 Star Diving Group. I responded to their ad in the LA Times and learned that they were organizing an eight-day diving trip abroad the Don Jose, out of La Paz, a town that drowns on the eastern coast of the Baja peninsula, about 800 miles south of L.A.

Arriving at 10:30 am in mid-August at La Paz Aeropuerto, we were met by Phil Sammet, the dive master, who said he would pick us up in town at 2:00 that afternoon. Hummm . . . three hours to wander around a hot and entirely quiet Sunday kind of town. We divers found shade by the beach, and began to get acquainted, all of us eager to get out of the heat, get aboard the boat, and go diving. Alas, this was not to be. David Leach, 5 Star leader, had not informed us that the boat would not be leaving until 8:00 the next morning! So we spent the rest of an increasingly hot

### INSIDE UNDERCURRENT

The Consensus On Ascents . . . . .	5
Rancho Leonero, Baja California . . . . .	6
Readers' Comments: . . . . .	8
What NOT To Do After Diving -- Will Exercise Or Beer Bend You? . . . . .	9
DACOR Recall . . . . .	10
Why Divers Die: IV -- The Lure Of Caves . . . . .	11
We Get Letters . . . . .	13
No! NAUI Not To Recertify Divers . . . . .	14
Loony Laws About Scuba Diving -- No Kissing, Flirting Or Onion Eating . . . . .	14
Free Flow . . . . .	16

and humid day sitting on the boat by the dock of the bay, watching the time pass away. Although the water of the marina looked inviting, we were advised not to swim there. Most people dozed . . . or fumed.

Constructed in 1979, the 80' Don Jose has seven staterooms and three bathrooms with showers to accommodate 18 divers. I felt fortunate that there were only seven of us -- more divers would have crowded the boat, particularly when donning or doffing dive gear. Dive gear storage lockers are located on the upper deck, requiring divers to move inconveniently between decks to get into their tanks. There is no air-conditioning, but the staterooms have electric fans, which nearly made up for the intense heat of the Baja summer. The large windows and cabin doors were always kept open to help with the meager breezeless ventilation. It has no water tank to cool tanks being filled, so 3,000-psi tanks almost never had more than 2700 psi. For recharging batteries, there is 110v.

We left soon after 8:00 am, traveling for two-and-a-half hours to Isla Los Islotes, a sea lion rookery. After an informative briefing, we hit the water near noon, relishing the relief from the heat. I was immediately greeted by playful sea lions, mainly females who swam near us with amazing speed and agility. The water temperature varied, with depth, between 83 and 78 degrees. I dove quite comfortably in a stinger suit (necessary protection against jellyfish and other nettlesome critters). After a second dive here, we transferred to dinghies for a trip to the beach at San Francisco Island, and walked to a salt marsh to play a good-natured game of baseball.

Next morning it was Baja fantasy land at Isla Las Animas. Reef life was abundant, with varieties of starfish (including crowns-of-thorns), surgeon fish, morays, trigger fish, parrot fish, coronet fish, barracuda, and graceful moorish idols, a sign I was in the Pacific, not the Caribbean. Schools of amberjack seemed to absorb me as I swam through. And here were those famous schools of hammerhead! Because they prefer cooler water, they were at 120 feet and deeper, which made the dives brief. Visibility ranged from 40 feet to 50 feet, which was about as good as it got on any dive throughout the week. We made a night dive in the same location, which was a beautiful experience, notably because of the bright yellow blooms of the cup coral.

Although we had expected to remain at this location throughout the night so that we could be in the water early in the morning, the captain was not comfortable with the anchorage. That meant a two-hour round trip to a safe anchorage, putting us back in the water a little after 9:00 A.M. Here again were scads of hammerheads, one of which swam close to leisurely assess me before disappearing into the blue. I, too, swam on, to play with an octopus.

In the afternoon we traveled to the tiny island of Las Parditas, where an even tinier fishing village is located. After a brief and awkward walk through the village (I felt like an intruding tourist), we were back aboard for a trip to another island that featured a vast and labyrinthine mangrove swamp.

At El Bajo Seamount, three pinnacles that rise from the abyss to about 70

©Copyright 1989 by Alcom, Inc., 2315 Broadway, New York, NY 10024. All rights reserved. *Undercurrent* (ISSN: 0192-0871) is published monthly, except for combined issue November/December by Alcom, Inc. Copies of this guide are not available on newsstands, but are furnished directly to the diving public by mail subscriptions only. To maintain its independence *Undercurrent* carries no advertising. Copying by any electronic or mechanical means, including information storage and data retrieval systems, without written permission from the publisher is strictly forbidden. News media may use no more than one quarter page of material per issue, provided that *Undercurrent* is credited. Permission to photocopy articles herein is granted by Alcom Publishers, Inc., to libraries and other users registered with the

Copyright Clearance Center (CCC) for internal and personal use only at the base fee of \$10 per article plus \$1 per page paid directly to CCC, 21 Congress Street, Salem, MA 01970. Serial Fee Code: 0192-0871/89\$10 + \$1. POSTMASTER: Send address change with old label to *Undercurrent*, 2315 Broadway, New York, NY 10024. Second Class Postage paid at New York, N.Y.

To receive the accurate, inside diving information *Undercurrent* offers, send \$55 (U.S. funds only) for a one year subscription to *Undercurrent*, Alcom Publishing, 2315 Broadway, New York, NY 10024-4397 and get a valuable FREE gift. Or call toll-free 1-800-521-7004.

feet beneath the surface, we were encouraged to dive deep to see hammerheads. I stayed at 120 feet and did see hammerheads in the distance -- and one large tiger shark. In shallower water I saw dozens of stingrays and morays, some swimming free. A night dive at Isla Los Islotes, with the sea lions, was difficult. The visibility was no greater than 15 feet, and half the group stayed out of the water because of the current. A safety line should have been trailed to prevent divers from being carried away, but none was dispatched. (Another safety lapse, in my opinion, was the absence of a tank and regulator on a decompression line, because the divers were so deep. In fact, the decompression line itself was usually not put in the water.) On the many other liveaboards I have traveled on, safety gets higher priority.

The next morning we traveled four hours to Roca Carpentaria, not making it into the water until nearly noon. I was disappointed by the strong current and visibility under 30 feet. There were interesting caves and a sandy bottom populated by garden eels, but I wanted to see pelagics, impossible with such poor visibility. A nearby seamount (El Bajito), similarly described as a great place to see sharks, involved diving to 125 feet, drifting in significant current, with 20 feet of visibility. I enjoyed the nitrogen narcosis and watched greybar grunts eating the garden eels . . . but no hammerheads.

Don Jose	
Accommodations	★ ★ ★
Food	★ ★
Diving for Experts	★ ★ ★ ★ ½ (if you accept the visibility)
Diving for Beginners	★ ★ ★ Don't go
Overall Ambiance	★ ★ ★ ½
Moneysworth	★ ★ ★ ★ ½
★ poor, ★★ fair, ★★★ average, ★★★★ good, ★★★★★ excellent	

Another day, we dived the Salvatierra, an old ferry boat. A relatively recent wreck, there is little coral growth or fish life. The word among the divers was "there wasn't much to see, but there was no visibility to see it in." It wasn't worth the effort to motor here.

On other liveaboard trips I've taken, the captain has, by traveling at night, immediately after dives, and during meals, had the boat at the dive site in the morning as divers wake up. It was this captain's habit to wake up when the divers did (and after some of us), then travel to the dive site. We were never in the water before 9:00 A.M. (except on the last day, when the captain was persuaded to awaken early, and when the divers would have preferred to skip the dive, anyway). For my money, we missed a lot of diving.

The Don Jose is reasonably comfortable for a small group, but the food was difficult to tolerate for a week -- generally fried and heavily laced with beef fat, with a rare and pleasant salad. Desserts were often plastic-looking Mexican cookies. I found the crew to be pleasant, but not particularly helpful. The divemaster, Phil Sammet, was enthusiastic, friendly, and competent, but was upstaged by trip organizer David Leach, who offered little help, although he too was a divemaster. Leach promised everything, delivered little but excuses, and placed the blame on others for problems. Although this trip was advertised as an eight-day dive trip, there were less than five full days of diving: We arrived Sunday morning, got our first dive in on Monday, and returned to La Paz at 9:30 A.M. on Saturday to fly out Sunday evening at 7:30. Prior to leaving L.A. for this trip, I called Leach to ask why we were not being booked out on Sunday. He indicated that the boat was not returning to La Paz until late Saturday afternoon. I pointed out to him that the brochure indicated the boat would be returning in the morning, and proceeded to fly out Saturday night. (When the other divers learned of this, they were not happy campers.)

I'm not an inexperienced traveler, nor an inexperienced writer, having

reviewed previous destinations for Undercurrent. I should know better than to sign up with an outfitter I knew nothing of when, in fact, I could have gone directly to Baja Expeditions to board the Don Jose. That's what our next reviewer did, and although I had better diving by the luck of the draw, she had no complaints with the trip (with one serious and notable exception) because it was accurately represented by Baja -- not inaccurately by a middleman.

\* \* \* \* \*

The male sexual response, both human and animal, is one thing I'll remember most about this trip. It was sea lion birthing season in the Sea of Cortez and the bulls zealously guarded their harems and young from advancing divers. As a warning, bulls three times my size would come rushing at me, only to veer away at the last moment. They would blow bubbles and grunt as they passed. One spied his reflection in my dome port and bared his teeth. I quickly backed off and swam away. I doubt if one would harm a diver, but I sure wouldn't want to be mistaken for another bull. But the young female and male sea lions love to play. They appear out of nowhere to frolic in exhaust bubbles or zoom by like a freight train. It was all great sport.

As did our previous reviewer, I too traveled aboard the Don Jose. After I sent my deposit to Baja Expeditions, I received luggage tags, a tourist card, a very useful Trip Information Booklet, an equipment check list, and a schedule of plane and bus departures as I was flying to Los Cabos. Unlike the previous reviewer, I was fully apprised that there would be but five days of diving. And just before departing I received a postcard reporting that on the previous dive trip, the water was cooler than normal. Due to a previous storm, water temperature would be a chilly 64° to 74°; visibility was 10 feet to 40 feet.

Upon disembarking at the Cabo airport, I realized my greatest traveling fear -- Mexicana had left my luggage in the States! I filled out the necessary forms, emphasizing that my boat left the next day. With one bag in tow, I caught a bus to La Paz, a \$4, 3-1/2-hour ride through the countryside. I had no difficulty as a single female gringo traveler, although en route, the bus broke down and we had to flag another.

Arriving that evening at the DJ, I lamented my lost bag. Baja's rep immediately made arrangements to rendezvous at sea when my luggage arrived. Luckily I had carried my regulator and mask. The divemaster, Phil Sammet, kindly lent me his wetsuit and found an extra BC. Other passengers had extra gloves, boots and hood. Thanks to these people, I was sufficiently equipped for diving. As it was, my luggage didn't arrive at Baja Expeditions until the middle of the trip, when we were too far at sea for it to be delivered.

We made three dives a day and often more, but because of winds we frequently motored to safe harbors for the night where there was not a suitable dive site. The procedure is for two night dives a trip, but one had to be cancelled due to the poor visibility and strong current.

Besides my encounters with the sea lions at Isla Los Islotes, I saw several bullseye stingray and morays, barracuda, and nudibranchs. A shallow dive from 10 feet to 50 feet, there's not much coral. After one dive, we toured around the rookery to observe and photograph sea lions basking on the sunny rocks. Bulls were continually fighting to keep their harems in line.

Once, a pod of porpoises headed our way. Our driver kept our small boat following the porpoises, which played at our bow. Each time we would enter the water, the porpoises would disappear. Isla Las Animas, with families of friendly sea lions, was probably the prettiest dive site, with large schools of tropicals

## The Consensus On Ascents

Research diving officers from several universities put their heads together in September at the "Biomechanics of Ascents" workshop sponsored by the American Academy of Underwater Sciences (AAUS) at Cape Cod's Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution.

Bearing in mind the advice of Dr. Ed Lanphier, who cautioned the group to "avoid voting to determine truth in the absence of knowledge," the workshop participants did formulate a number of recommendations.

Much of the focus was on the rate of ascent. After many presentations and much discussion, it was agreed, not surprisingly, that the maximum rate of ascent should not exceed 60 feet per minute. However, as far as decompression is concerned, slower rates provide little benefit until in the range of about 2.5 feet per minute. At the same time, slower tissues continue to ingas with slower rates, and this can affect the end-of-dive group assignment.

Participants believe buoyancy compensation is a significant problem in control of ascents. Before certification, a diver should be required to demonstrate proper buoyancy, weighting and a controlled ascent that includes a hovering decompression stop. Certified divers should periodically review proper ascent techniques to maintain proficiency. All buoyancy compensators should have reliable, rapid exhaust valves that can be operated

in a horizontal swimming position. Dry suits should be equipped with "hands-free" exhaust valves. Divers using dry suits should be trained in their use, and buoyancy compensators should be worn with dry suits. At the end of every dive, a three- to five-minute stop in the 10- to 30-foot zone is recommended. Stopping causes divers to be in control of the ascent, which many felt was every bit as important as the precaution against decompression sickness.

The participants felt strongly that every diver—even those in training—should have instruments to monitor the rate of ascent. Several speakers indicated the need for an inexpensive ascent "speedometer."

The attendees agreed on revised procedures in the event required decompression is missed. Breathing 100% oxygen above water is preferred to in-water air-breathing procedures for omitted decompression.

Expert speakers included the Rev. Dr. Ed Lanphier, Dr. David Yount of "tiny bubbles" fame, Dr. Andrew Pilmanis, Dr. Van Liew, John Lewis, Bill Hamilton of Tarrytown Labs and Dennis Graver from NAUI.

Complete proceedings of the workshop will be published by the AAUS and will be available in January 1990. For information contact the AAUS at 947 Newhall, Costa Mesa, CA 92627.

and lush gorgonians. Hundreds of brown pelicans and frigate birds covered the island's cliffs. El Bajo Seamount, where the schools of hammerheads hang out, greeted us with visibility no more than 20 feet and current so strong that we had to go down the anchor chain. We made but one dive there. And I saw not a single hammerhead. Not one the entire trip!

In early summer one risks the possibility of cool water and low visibility. The best visibility, which means about 75 feet in reality, comes mid-August to mid-November. The water is clearer, but also warmer (the high 60's in the winter, the 80's in late summer/early fall). But, remember: the Sea of Cortez is unpredictable and people often come away disappointed. Possibly because the visibility was so bad, this trip stands out more as an experience in natural history than diving. At one of our night anchorages, we went ashore on a dry, deserted island that had white cliffs of fossilized seashells and skeletons of puffer fish and sea birds. Yet I must underscore the remarkable dives with sea lions. Few thrills can top those.

I can echo the previous reviewer's disappointment with the heavy meals (we had fresh fish only once), which were only saved by the availability of fresh fruit and lemonade. Fried pork rinds for afternoon hors d'oeuvres, even if they are George Bush's favorite, just didn't pass muster.

What was an otherwise enjoyable trip was marred by a repulsive incident. One of Don Jose's crew members thought he was a dominant bull. While sitting in

the dining salon one afternoon, I happened to look out to the deck. A male crewmember was exposing himself to me. I was startled and quickly moved out of the line of vision. "You won't believe this," I said to a fellow diver, "but a crewmember just exposed himself." My companion just kept talking. The crewmember then moved back into my line of vision and though not exposing himself, continued fiddling with his shorts while he looked my way. I could hear other crewmembers laugh and joke with him. I was confused about what to do. I did not want to be intimidated or embarrassed by a crewmember's action, but yet I did not want to disrupt the camaraderie of the dive boat and bother others with my anger. The divemaster had not authority of the crew and I considered telling the captain, with whom I could only converse in Spanish. That night, while I contemplated informing him, he volunteered that most of the American women who come aboard the Don Jose arrive only "to be with Mexican men." He would be of no help. I still wonder what action I should have taken. I've since reported the incident to Baja Expeditions and will report it to you, our readers. My editor was not expecting this when he assigned me this story.

I must conclude, however, by saying that Baja Expeditions offered a well organized trip, that the diving is spectacular, however hampered by rapidly changing conditions, and though the Don Jose does not measure up to the newer luxury boats being launched these days, it is adequate to the task.

Divers' Compass: Besides the Don Jose and the Baja Explorador, two liveaboards used by Baja Expeditions, Inc. (800/843-6967 or in California, 619/581/3311), See & Sea (800/DIV-XPRT) also sells the Baja Explorador and the Elias Mann, a 68-foot topsail schooner. . . . There are a VHS video player and monitor and a slide projector for use.

## *Rancho Leonero, Baja California*

A two-hour drive south of La Paz, I found the kind of place Hemingway would have frequented. It has the smell and feel of leather and wood. The buildings are fieldstone with palm thatch roofing, hand-hewn posts and rail verandas. The 12-rooms are surprisingly spacious, with comfortable beds, air-conditioning (in the rooms that don't face the sea), cool tile floors and large bathrooms. Those rooms that face the sea are particularly large, with cozy, individual lanais. Add coconut palms and grass expanses around the grounds, a fountain in the courtyard, and you get a pretty good picture.

The original Rancho Leonero was a retreat for John Wayne and other celebrities who came for sport fishing and quail hunting. The present owner, John Ireland, has worked for the last five years building the new Rancho Leonero. The previous owner made Ireland promise not to let the place get too big or fancy, and he has kept that promise.

After a delicious Mexican dinner, complete with organically-grown vegetables, we gathered in the great room on the attractive but uncomfortable high-backed leather thong chairs. C-cards were collected and attached to liability transfers which we were required to sign. We would be diving Pulmo Reef, a marine sanctuary being studied by the Scripps Oceanographic Institute. Four specific dive sites had been buoy-marked for the group. Thought we would be drift diving, little, if any, information was provided about the tides, currents and like by the divemaster, Roger, an otherwise pleasant young man. A storm, we were told, had passed through three days before and had shut the visibility down from a reported 100-plus feet to 30 feet or so. This sounded like the old "you

should have been here last week" routine, but friends who have dived the area before swear that the visibility had always been excellent.

After a hearty breakfast (all meals were served family-style on an open patio, right on the water) of huevos rancheros, home fries, bacon, refried beans, tortillas, juices, coffee, and cereals, our gear was loaded onto pickup trucks and we were loaded into three mini-buses for the 40-minute ride across the proverbial washboard road to Cabo Pulmo. By the time we got to the beach, the three "Pongas" (20-foot open skiffs) that had made the trip from the hotel were bobbing at anchor just outside the surf line.

#### Rancho Leonoro

Accommodations	★ ★ ★ ★
Food	★ ★ ★ ★
Diving for Experts	★ ★ ★ ★
Diving for Beginners	★ ★ ★
Overall Ambiance	★ ★ ★ ★
Moneysworth	★ ★ ★ ★ ½

★ poor, ★★ fair, ★★★ average, ★★★★ good, ★★★★★ excellent

The gorgeous two-mile white sand beach would compare with any white sand beach anywhere! And we were the only people on it! Hotel staff had erected a large canopy near the water and were busy preparing for our between-dive lunch (barbecue, gringo-style: cheeseburgers, hot dogs, all the trimmings) while we readied our gear. The water, in this last week of July, was a delightful 82oF and shallow enough to wade through the surf to the waiting boats. It took arm strength and a strong kick to negotiate an entry into the ladderless Pongas.

After a short ride to our first dive, we dropped in and descended down the line. The current ran from one to two knots, so we didn't waste time getting to the bottom at a maximum of 50 feet. Despite the lousy visibility, 15-25 feet, the diving was great. The reef, while not as colorful as those in the Caribbean, was alive with fish. I counted more than 70 varieties, including long-nosed butterflies, grouper (I saw a 100-pounder), Moorish idols, Auriga butterflies, Cortez and king angels, yellowtail sawfish, triggers, puffers, as well as dragon eels, green morays (a couple of eight-footers), rays, octopus and an enormous parrotfish. Schools of pelagics cruised by us, oblivious to our presence. These were not isolated fish. They came by the hundreds! And there were plenty of corals, both hard and soft, including some black coral, as well as gorgonia, sea fans and even a few small sponges.

At 50 feet, it is hard to classify something as a wall, but on one dive we rode the current along a "wall," entering and exiting caves and tunnels filled with a great variety of fish. I kept hoping for better visibility, especially on the White Pillar dives, because that's where the hammerheads and whale sharks are purportedly seen. Upon our surfacing, Juan, our boat driver, asked each time, "no Tiburon?" Each time the answer was no. We only dove a small area of the Pulmo Ref, and according to Juan, there are many other sites that are just as interesting -- or different than the Cabo Pulmo area.

Night diving off the hotel beach was interesting, although featuring an uninspiring rock pile bottom at 20 feet. Fish were there, but not in the variety or abundance that I had seen at the reef. Divers not wearing skins got hit pretty frequently by jellyfish.

One day several of us rode back from the reef in a Ponga to take an extra dive. Mediki is a sand bottom with numerous coral heads and canyons, never deeper than 40 feet. There were lots of fish and the 40-foot visibility was a little better. After our dive, less than 30 feet from our boat, a 30-foot Orca

and his mate broke the surface! The male's dorsal fin stood a full 10-12 feet out of the water! The Ponga was only 20 feet long! We stayed with them for 15 minutes, awed into silence by the magnificent creatures. Naturally, I'd run out of film and so had my buddy.

Altogether, the trip to Rancho Leonero was unique. The plentiful and tasty food was regional Mexican, mixed with a bit of American. The staff made my short stay a memorable one. The diving operation is somewhat primitive, as I'm sure you have gathered, but by and large, it is adequate. Since they've only been open for less than two years, I suspect there will be positive changes. With so much natural beauty, this is a good stop for a long weekend or for the second part of a week after a liveboard experience. Unless larger boats are obtained to reach more distant spots, it would be limiting to dive here a full week, but it's super for a short trip to unwind and forget about "manana."

Divers' Compass: Rancho Leonero, P.O. Box 2573, Canoga Park, CA 91306, (818) 703-0930; \$85/couple/night for room and board, \$75/person/day for diving (there is a discount if you have your own gear). . . . The hotel well provides clear, clean water; you don't have to worry about G.I. maladies. . . . Confirm flights before AND after arrival; flights are available from L.A. and Tucson. . . . To get to the Rancho from La Paz, one has to rent a mini-bus (\$80.00 RT), which holds six or seven people, or a car.

## *Readers' Comments:*

Our readers have a few things to say about diving in the Sea of Cortez. Down Cabo San Lucas way, those who have corresponded with us seem to prefer Cabo Aguadeportes (located at the Hacienda and Cabo San Lucas hotels) as the dive service. As John Nunez (Seattle) says "Cabo Aguadeportes uses pancas and I prefer them because of smaller groups 3000 psi tanks. Pedro, their dive guide, is competent and sensitive to the needs of divers." At the confluence of the Pacific and the Sea of Cortez, one can find unusual conditions. Even in September, writes Lee Gibson (Irving, TX) "water is cold (mid-60s) at tip of peninsula and visibility is poor (50 feet). Fish abound in great numbers and varieties, but underwater topography is boring. The really good diving to be had is from liveboard dive boats."

You ought to read the complaints about the Sonora Bay Club Med and the well-advertised "dedicated diver program"! In the winter, the water is cold: how about in the 60's for what is billed as a tropical resort? And there is a lot of less than fifty-foot visibility much of the time. Mike and Marti Nice (San Jose, CA) say of their February trip: "Personnel were arrogant, unconcerned, rude and would not help with exit from water. Visibility three feet offshore -- 25 feet at Seal Island (two-hour trip). Cold -- 53 degrees at 40 feet. They have good equipment (ScubaPro), but it is very poorly maintained. One BC inflator stuck, another BC hose was rotten and came off. Adequate weight belts not put on boat; short air fills. Food monotonous." Says Joe Warren (Cliffside Park, NJ) of his May trip, "Diving setup disorganized, equipment beat up and old (BCs missing straps, regulators leaking air from many locations). Sites chosen for proximity to shore. No diving on Sunday! Take too much time to get out in morning. Best dive was Seal Island. Swam with seals! Visibility poor and sites boring." Says Bob Cumming (Garden Grove, CA), "Disorganized dive staff appeared more interested in getting back in time for lunch than in providing quality diving. We were taken to the same poor location three out of five days." Stan Garfunkel (Jericho, NY), there in July, says: "Overcrowded, not well-run. Novices dive in buddy teams with low visibility and strong currents. All divers restricted to an



80-foot maximum, even though the seamount off Seal Island is at 100 feet. Anyone who was certified dived in buddy teams, without a divemaster, including people who had just been certified. On some dives visibility was as little as five feet. Due to overcrowding, we could either dive during the day or at night, but not both. On one day, many divers were not allowed to dive because the boat had been chartered by divers from Tucson. What kind of nonsense is this?" If you're serious about diving, stay away from this Club Med -- no matter what you read elsewhere.

Baja Expeditions has another liveboard, the Baja Explorador. A typical remark comes from Fred Turoff (Philadelphia) who was there last year: "Boat crew was helpful and competent, food plentiful and good, divemaster Mike knew his wildlife and guided us to good diving, but didn't lead us in the water." . . . Another well regarded liveboard is the Marisla. Dave Cassavant (Medfield, MA) reports on last year's trip: "The host and hostess could not have been better. Mrs. Adcock prepares excellent American/Mexican-style meals (all you could eat) with full breakfasts, lunches, dinners better than most land-based resorts. The boat was constantly kept clean. The crew willingly helped you entering the water (they were experts at camera handling and retrieving divers who couldn't make it back to the boat), helped you returning to the boat, soaked your cameras, took your tank off and immediately filled it for next time. They were just as friendly when you wanted an early-morning dive or at 9:00 P.M. that same night after the sixth or seventh dive. (Dives were available every night. The leader of it all was Captain Adcock: a genuine, nice person who went out of his way to insure our comfort and the best diving available." Undercurrent reviewed the Marisla several years ago; it still seems to be the most favored boat in Baja (POB 121248, Del Mar, CA 92014-1548; 619/775-0375). . . . Finally, let us mention that Baja Expeditions occasionally schedules long, but special trips to the islands of Socorro and San Benedicto. Writes Kay Lasley (Princeton, NJ), "I wouldn't trade any of my diving experiences with those of diving with manta rays. At 20 feet three mantas came toward me from three sides, seemingly on a collision course. They simply lifted their wings to slip by. I felt no need to grab on -- being accepted among them was enough. One diver rode for 25 minutes, came back ecstatic and exclaimed: 'I was taken to where he lives. We hovered over sand at 80 feet. He introduced me to his family and friends, then brought me back to the boat.' . . . The bottom looked like big boulders piled on top of each other with not much growth, but with many holes and crevices for fish to hide in. In some spots we had to be careful not to get caught in surging, crashing waves. Thousands of fish and a curious white-tipped shark drifted by several times. It was exciting to be in the midst of hundreds of schooling jacks. Four or five tuna came in to look at us and moved along. A brown octopus and some reef sharks entertained us, and clarion angels, endemic only to this area, were everywhere."

C.C., travel editor

## What NOT To Do After Diving

### *Will Exercise Or Beer Bend You?*

Conventional wisdom has it that certain activities following diving can be detrimental to one's health. This wisdom is based, in part, upon theory and anecdotal experiences tending to lend a scientific cachet to them. Most have not been studied in a controlled, experimental manner. We sought the facts in interviews

with Dr. Richard Vann and Chris Wacholz at Duke University's Diver Alert Network.

#### **Valid Concerns**

*No excessive exercise prior to or following a dive.*  
A rule of thumb is no heavy exercise for six hours

before or 12 hours after a dive. Excessive exercise can include: weight lifting, jogging, high-impact aerobics, mountain climbing, heavy stair climbing, active swimming or a hard game of basketball.

Heavy exercise creates a high demand in muscles for oxygen, drawing it from the bloodstream and leaving a higher concentration of nitrogen. Furthermore, the friction or shearing action of muscle against muscle and tendon against muscle creates a void that is filled with both oxygen and nitrogen. The end result can be a higher potential for bubble formation and decompression sickness.

*No major changes in altitude for 12 hours following diving.* Actually, the rule that now obtains is that one may fly commercially four hours after a single dive lasting no longer than one hour to a depth not greater than 60 feet. One should wait 12 hours if there is a different dive profile.

A 24-hour wait won't hurt. Some people susceptible to DCS have demonstrated bends systems after 24 hours.

A great risk is evident if one changes altitude immediately after a dive. Wacholz reports that last year two cases of bends occurred after a 1000-foot change in altitude immediately after diving. It can happen in California by driving home over Donner Pass after diving in Lake Tahoe. It can happen on Maui or Hawaii after diving in the morning and taking a drive up the volcano. Or on Saba by taking a mountain hike after a dive. David Day, one of our readers, stayed in Saba at Scout's Place, 1600 feet above sea level. "Now I know what the pain in the shoulders was about one night," he reported.

Many Bahamas operations are flying people to Miami on private craft directly after diving. DAN recommends altitudes no greater than 800 feet.

### Questionable Concerns

*No consumption of alcohol or caffeine following diving.* This is still up for grabs. One theory is that both caffeine and alcohol are diuretics and tend to increase the body's outflow of liquids. As liquid is lost, there is less volume of blood to carry off gases. Platelets, which carry the gas bubbles, tend to clump, so the bubbles tend to link up into larger bubbles and create problems.

Compounding the diuretic action of either caffeine or alcohol is the diuretic effect of immersion (creating urine which is expelled) and from breathing the dry air in the tank. Thus the body is already somewhat dehydrated prior to the consumption of either caffeine or alcohol. Under this theory cola drinks, coffee, tea and hot chocolate are suspect.

The folks at DAN point out that there have been no controlled experiments to determine the validity of this theory. But they are quick to advise that alcohol does have an adverse affect on both mental and physical performance. So if you consume

### DACOR Recall

If you own a DACOR M18 or M19 console, stop using it. You could be endangered by a mid-dive loss of depth and bottom time information normally displayed.

Vern Peterson, Director of Manufacturing for Dacor, told *Undercurrent* that "we've had ongoing reports of problems with these units. The M18 battery light would come on when the battery was still in good condition. We went to the M19 to solve the problem, and found an incompatibility between the electronic module and the battery which caused a drain on the battery. We had a lot of complaints from the field, particularly as these batteries cannot be replaced in the field."

Dacor initiated a recall program, notifying its dealers to replace the consoles and to stop selling the older modules. However, some places in the Caribbean were still selling the units, so, Peterson said, "we instituted a recall program to get them off the market."

According to Peterson, Dacor has no reports of accidents stemming from a malfunction. He said that 80 percent of the units have been returned.

Dacor will replace their M18 or M19 electronic consoles with the new M110 console no charge. Contact your local Dacor dealer or Dacor headquarters for information on how to go about returning your unit.

Dacor Corporation is located at 161 Northfield Road, Northfield, IL 60093. TELEX 289499, FAX (312) 446-7547, (800) 233-3483.

alcohol do it after the last dive of the day and do it in moderation.

*No hot showers, hot tubbing, saunas, or steam baths following diving.* There is little or no evidence to support the notion that these activities bring about DCS. The theory is that heat is a vasodilator, thus expanding blood vessels in the heated area while increasing blood flow. This creates a greater potential for DCS by forming a pocket in the warmed area for the collection of nitrogen.

*No consumption of carbonated beverages following diving.* This is not supported by any valid theory. It was once assumed that carbonated beverages increased "bubble formation" in the blood and thus were a no-no. However, carbon dioxide is highly soluble and is also expelled rapidly.

### Conclusion

Underlying all DCS problems is the lack of ex-

perimental data. No one knows what each individual's physiological propensity for DCS is, nor how it may vary from day to day. As more data is gathered we can anticipate that more useful guidance will come about. But until that time, common sense is still the best preventative program.

And this common sense should be extended to the

## Why Divers Die: IV

The National Underwater Accident Data Center (NUADC) at the University of Rhode Island investigates and analyzes the diving fatalities of United States citizens wherever they were diving. For several years, *Undercurrent* has been analyzing these reports, editing and condensing them, and sharing the relevant data with our readers. We believe that by reporting the unique and varied circumstances in which divers die, we may all learn how to become safer as we conduct our own dives. This is the fourth in a series of articles discussing the 181 sport diving deaths that occurred in 1986 and 1987.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Cave diving accounted for 10 deaths in 1986 and an additional 8 deaths in 1987, most of which occurred in Florida caves. Between 1960 and 1987, 261 divers have succumbed to the lure of Florida's freshwater caves.

Nearly all of these cases have been open water divers who have had little or not training in cave diving, who entered a cavern situation without the proper diving gear, violated the need for more than one light per diver, failed to lay an exit line for safety, and violated the rule of returning from a penetration after one third of one's air is used. All but one of the 1986-1987 deaths were classic examples of this.

A female diver had just been certified as an open water diver earlier on this fateful day. Her 37-year-old male instructor, the student, and two others attempted a cavern dive after dark without any proper cave diving equipment. After a short period in the cavern, two of the divers indicated they were low on air and surfaced. The instructor and the student indicated that they would stay a little longer. It was a dark night with no moon and the two victims were apparently unable to find the exit from the cavern. Recovery divers found both bodies at a depth of 80 feet, without their lights on and only dim illumination from two cyalume sticks. The student died of severe embolism. The instructor, too, did not make it out. He drowned.

There is no excuse for the tragic double deaths of an instructor and student in a cave or cavern situa-

tion. All instructors should be aware of the great danger to open water divers who are foolish enough to enter a cave or cavern situation without extensive training and proper equipment. Statistics do not lie. Diving in caves kills open water divers.

use of computers as well as with the Navy tables. While DAN has noticed an increase in DCS among those who use computers, they also point out that the overall incidence of bends has not dropped since computers came on the scene. Thus it appears that divers are still diving close to, or at, the limits of no decompression.

### -- The Lure Of Caves

Another senseless death in 1986 on Easter Saturday at Peacock Springs. This accident was extremely well documented by members of the National Speleological Society-Cave Diving Section, who observed the start of the tragic dive.

Another senseless death in 1986 on Easter Saturday at Peacock Springs. This accident was extremely well documented by members of the National Speleological Society-Cave Diving Section, who observed the start of the tragic dive.

---

*"Stay in sight of the opening; we do not wish to make a body recovery so early this year."*

---

The fatal group consisted of three men and a woman from Augusta, Georgia, all well equipped for a pleasant ocean dive with gloves, snorkels, single dive lights and no guide lines. The veteran cave divers on site attempted to explain the potential dangers of this cave system for penetration by open water divers. The group apparently listened, but paid little attention and proceeded with their dive. The veteran divers' last words to the group were "stay in sight of the opening; we do not wish to make a body recovery so early this year."

About 30 minutes later, the woman diver surfaced and, upon questioning by one of the veterans, was unable to give any information, but the worst was expected. Two other members of the group then surfaced and confirmed that a diver was missing in the caves. The veteran divers attempted to rescue the missing diver, but after 20 minutes of searching, it became evident that they were dealing with a body recovery. One of the veteran divers reported:

"We located the body of the victim, a 31-year-old male, at the end of a gap line. He was pointing out of the cave, his single light was still burning, his regulator was out of his mouth, he was lying on the floor of the cave and there was no air left in the single 80 cu. ft. diving cylinder. The victim was less than 75

feet from an exit to the cavern and approximately 150 feet into the cave system. The body was located less than 45 minutes after the search began.

"None of the four divers in the victim's group was trained in cavern or cave diving. None thought to utilize a continuous guideline to the surface nor to allow at least two-thirds of the starting air supply for their exit. Each member of the team used only one dive light. The victim had been certified as an open water diver in May of 1985. He had recorded 37 open water dives."

A double fatality occurred in Morrison Springs near Ponce de Leon, Florida. Two men, both aged 25, planned a night dive into the spring. Both were using single tanks and were each equipped with a single rented underwater flashlight. Both divers were open water certified but relatively inexperienced. Neither had any cavern or cave dive training. Visibility in the spring was very limited. No guidelines were used, there was no evidence of use of the 1/3 rule for air, there was no backup air or backup lighting. It was alleged that some alcoholic beverage had been consumed before the fatal dive. The lack of experience, lack of training, and certainly the violation of virtually all cave diving rules took the lives of these two men.

In a particularly tragic incident, three brothers from the state of Iowa, aged 23, 29 and 31, lost their lives in the Devil's Eye cave system on the Santa Fe River in Gilchrist County, Florida. They left behind two widows and six young children.

A 28-year-old male died at Bonnet Springs near Live Oak, Florida. The victim and his wife had entered the spring and very quickly stirred up silt. The wife became frightened and left immediately. The victim, however, continued further on into the cave. Recovery divers stated, "A completely typical textbook-type open water diver cave diving with all the rules broken."

---

*"About 160 feet into the cave, this boy wrote a last message onto his tank with his diving knife. The message read, 'I love you Mom, Dad and Christian.'"*

---

The death of a 17-year-old boy in a cave near Weeki Wachee Springs, Florida, created a veritable flood of newspaper publicity. This victim had entered the spring despite signs that were posted reading "No Diving." He had 100 open water dives and planned to take a cavern diving course, but could not wait before challenging cave diving. Apparently realizing that he was lost almost 60 feet down and about 160 feet into the cave, this boy wrote a last

message onto his tank with his diving knife. The message read, "I love you Mom, Dad and Christian."

One headline following a double fatality in the popular Peacock Springs area read, "Pair who knew better drown during cave dive." Both the 34-year-old female and the 32-year-old male were experienced open water divers. The latter, in fact, was to have been certified as an instructor on the day of his death. The two had apparently penetrated the cave for a distance of 150 feet and to a depth of 70 feet when they ran out of air.

For the first time in several years, the NUADC must report the death of a diver in a cave who apparently did have some training. This 25-year-old man had just recently completed a cavern diver course. He was attempting a penetration that even the most experienced cave divers would not try. The victim dropped a concrete anchor 20 or so feet down into a cave shaft against a very fierce upward current and then attempted to pull himself further into this penetration. He apparently lost hold of the rope and was forced backward against an overhead rock. At the same time his mask was blown off and his regulator was ripped from his mouth. Since this incident occurred at a depth of 120 feet, the recovery divers had to exert strong physical effort and overcome the effects of nitrogen narcosis to cut the equipment straps away from the victim's body and extract it from this deep hole. The expert cave dive investigator who recovered the body said: "This victim attempted to accomplish something that a reasonable and prudent diver would never have considered."

Though they certainly get much of the headlines, the beautiful fresh water spring and cave system of Florida is not the only area in which diving in caves results in fatalities.

During 1986, the NUADC recorded the death of a 23-year-old man in a cave in the ocean off Cancun, Mexico. A double fatality occurred in an underwater cave system off the coast of Belize, Central America. An American diver reported to have dive master qualifications, together with a Belizean who was reported to be one of their most experienced scuba divers, both lost their lives when they became lost in the cave system.

In July, 1987, an area called Shark Cove, north of Honolulu on the island of Oahu, was the location of a triple cave diving fatality. Three young U.S. Marines in their early 20s died while exploring the salt water caves that are the result of lava flows. After they entered the caves, a strong tide and swirling water stirred up sand and destroyed visibility, making it difficult to find the way out of the caves. The victims did not carry lights and did not have any kind of a guideline back to the exit of the cave.

# We Get Letters

Dear *Undercurrent*:

In your August issue you ran an article entitled "What to Do when Your Automatic Inflator Sticks Open." It seems to me that there is a very important step before you have to utilize the ability to flare during an uncontrolled ascent. If you have a knife, you can puncture the BC. Thereafter, the weight belt can be dropped and a normal ascent accomplished.

*Richard Mulholland  
Tampa, Florida*

Editor:

I wonder if Steve Smith  
expends so much time  
writing poetry  
such as  
this  
?

*Jim Peters*

Dear *Undercurrent*:

While I am most pleased to have *Pacific Nomad* get a generous and well-deserved rave, what does your reviewer have against me? And why doesn't he check his facts?

First he gives me a blast for his "over rich expectation and my elevating diving into Mystic." Then he proves me right by praising the trip in effusive terms.

[He said that the *Pacific Nomad* does not go to] the Lau Group and Astrolabe Reef, [but] when one of my employees read the review she said, "That's crazy! The cruise I took this spring went to the Laus." Yes, the chiefs are demanding mind-boggling payments (\$4,000 [sic] per day) and the islands are pretty far out, but at least some of *Nomad's* cruises are going there.

Astrolabe is currently not available for similar reasons; several times *Pacific Nomad's* operators felt they had made a deal with the chief and told me to announce it. Then the deals fell through. They still hope to offer it in 1990 itineraries. So you know, similar problems abound in New Guinea and the Solomons.

If your reviewer had given me a call to check the facts, he might have served your readers better. A simplistic blast may titillate, but the complicated reality is what the subscriber really should receive from *Undercurrent*.

Regardless, *Pacific Nomad* is doing a great job and earned the praise. As for me, I'll retreat into Olympian detachment...

*Carl Roessler  
See & Sea Travel*

Dear Carl,

Take another read of the article. Do you really

think that the writer has something "against" you? C'mon. But he does believe that the "enthusiastic advertising" of *See & Sea* overstates the case. A fully satisfied diver is one whose expectations are met. Yes, our reviewer indeed got off on the diving. But, in this case, the advertising copy established, in his mind, nearly unachievable expectations.

More important, he notes that: "In 'The Brochure,' you are told that 'This vessel offers you the finest diving in the Fiji Islands -- Beqa, Wakaya, The Lau Group and Great Astrolabe Reef ... On board, I learned that the *Nomad* does not visit either The Lau Group in the remote eastern fringes of the Fijis, nor does she dive Great Astrolabe Reef far to the south of Viti Levu."

You acknowledge that Astrolabe is not visited and to support your claim that the Lau is visited you cite your employee who was there *before* our reviewer.

But his point is that *See & Sea's* brochure claims that the craft goes to both destinations that it is now prohibited from visiting. Those prohibitions were apparently dictated long after your brochure left the printer. But that doesn't help the diver who uses it to sign up for a trip -- nor did *Sea & See* inform our writer of the changes. To many people, changes in the itinerary are insignificant. To the well-traveled, they can be important. Of course, this is not news to you.

As for "checking the facts," that seemed unnecessary considering the source: the captain of the *Pacific Nomad* himself.

*C.C., travel editor*

Dear *Undercurrent*,

We enjoyed the article about the *Pacific Nomad*. I've been on 10 trips and certainly give the boat, the crew and Capt. Kapi the highest ratings.

I do agree that the diving was not to be considered "world class" but C.R. always used that term to describe a boat that needs to be filled ... and the Astrolabe and Lau are pure fiction....

And, please get our address correct:

*Janet Breidenbach  
Aqua Trek Dive Travel Service  
110 Sutter Street  
San Francisco, CA 94101  
800/541-4334 or 415-498-8990*

Dear *Undercurrent*,

The failure mechanisms described in your article on *Nikonos V* flooding are exactly the ones that happened to my *V* at the ripe old age of 18 months.

I was careful to always rinse the camera after a dive and soak it overnight, but didn't catch the importance of actuating the shutter speed dial, film advance, etc., while still immersed. Perhaps this move-

ment would have prevented the flooding through the film advance lever or shutter release.

After the camera flooded I rinsed it with fresh water and brought it to Camera Tech. The repair bill was within ten percent of the cost of a new camera and lens and I decided against it.

Prior to this, I had considered having an annual maintenance, but found the cost to be quite steep, around \$150. That was like buying a new camera every three years, so I decided to chance it. Bad decision.

With my pattern of a few photo dives during the year and two weeks of heavy vacation use, it's not

economical to maintain the camera, let alone replace it (or buy it in the first place, as I've suggested to several friends). I can pass on the few dives during the year and rent a Nikonos V for much less than the annual servicing charge. My flash is still good and I'll know the camera has had all the needed o-ring maintenance.

All of my price estimates were from Camera Tech in San Francisco, which from your survey appears to be far and away the most expensive. Lower servicing prices might make the picture look different.

*Russ Wiitala  
Mountain View, CA*

## Loony Laws About Scuba Diving

### *No Kissing, Flirting Or Onion Eating*

Prohibited from reading comic books while getting ready to scuba dive? Not allowed to kiss an unchaperoned woman while underwater? Scuba divers banned from winking at women on the beach?

These are a few of the situations covered by ludicrous laws throughout the world. Most of these decrees were written and then forgotten with the swift passage of time. Many reflect attitudes of male lawmakers toward women decades ago. But relevant or ridiculous, these laws are still on the books.

For example, South Laguna, California, still retains an old piece of loony legislation obviously designed to protect its female scuba diving buffs. No married woman is allowed to scuba dive at Aliso Beach on the Sabbath "unless she's properly looked after."

Newcastle in the state of New South Wales, Australia, has a unique law regarding the Sabbath. Women who happen to be single, widowed or divorced are banned from scuba diving on Sunday. Any unattached female who takes part in such outlandish activities can be arrested, fined and given a jail term.

State lawmakers do sometimes have a great sense of humor. Legislators once passed this one, which affects all female North Carolina scuba diving buffs: "No female between the ages of sixteen (16) and twenty-five (25) shall appear in a bikini on any beach within the state of North Carolina unless she be escorted by at least two officers of the law or unless she be armed with a club," quotes a former aide to Governor Jim Martin. He continues by quoting an amendment to the original statute: "The provisions of this statute shall not apply to females weighing less than 90 pounds nor exceeding 200 pounds nor shall it apply to female horses."

Are you a woman who happens to weigh in at over 200 pounds? Like to wear a skimpy bathing suit? En-

joy scuba diving? If these three questions apply, then beware of New Smyrna Beach, Florida. It's strictly a violation of the law for a woman over 200 pounds and attired in a "provocative bathing suit" to be seen at a public beach!

In Carmel, California, a woman who while scuba diving, surfing or swimming is found wearing "any device or thing attached to her head, hair, headgear or hat, which device or thing is capable of lacerating the flesh of any other person with whom it may come in contact and which is not sufficiently guarded against the possibility of so doing, shall be adjudged a disorderly person."

People on Oahu, Hawaii, are prohibited from eating onions when going scuba diving in Waimea Bay between the hours of 7 A.M. and 7 P.M. And in Brisbane, Australia, citizens aren't allowed to go scuba diving within four hours after having eaten garlic!

Not allowed to flirt? That's right! In Santa Monica, California, it's unlawful for any male scuba diver, swimmer, etc., while on a beach "to wink at any female person with whom he is unacquainted. No male person shall make remarks to or concerning, or cough or whistle at, or do any other act to attract the attention of any woman within a radius of 100 yards."

A true scuba diving lover might enjoy living in Malibu, California. An old piece of loony legislation stops local citizens from "sticking out a tongue" in the direction of a scuba diver, surfer, or any other person in or near the water.

Doctors in Huntington Beach, California, have a special social responsibility. An unusual piece of loony legislation says every woman must "be found to be covered with a minimum of 20 yards of cloth" whenever she partakes of any kind of water sport. A physician is required to inspect each female who is seen to be scuba diving or just plain swimming. The

## No! NAUI Not To Recertify Divers

There's been all sorts of press about NAUI's apparent decision to require divers to get recertified periodically.

But NAUI leaders claim they didn't make that decision and though press reports are erroneous, NAUI itself admits it is partially at fault.

The NAUI Board of Directors has decided that NAUI will not institute a recertification program.

But that's not the story. The NAUI Board of Directors did decide to study the feasibility and methodology of judging divers' basic skills and one of the possible options was recertification.

"However," reports Dennis Graver, NAUI Director of Education, "when a news release was sent out, it appeared from the way it was written that NAUI was going to institute a recertification program. We sent out another release the next day, stating the initial release was not accurate, but it was not picked up by everyone."

In the '70s, the Los Angeles County certifying organization decided to recertify divers. Graver noted that "within a couple of months, more than 20 dive shops went out of business. The concept of

recertification is enough to drive divers from diving and NAUI doesn't want to do that. Also, if NAUI instituted such a program unilaterally, it is doubtful that NAUI would survive the competition."

NAUI's concern is with the safety of divers, Graver says. "While the statistics indicate an increasing level of safety, it could be misleading. Diving has undergone some changes over time. Now divers are diving in more supervised ways, that is, resorts, liveaboards, and with groups. In the past, most divers got a buddy and went diving under unsupervised conditions."

Sam Jackson, Executive Director of NAUI, told *Undercurrent* that he gets comments from resort operators who say that too many certified divers show up without sufficient skills. "As instructors," he said, "we must consider what we can do about it." But, he added, NAUI has no plans to unilaterally institute a program of recertification. "We wanted to stimulate our instructors thinking about this problem. Our intentions are good but our PR is poor."

doctor must ascertain the woman is, in fact, complying with this archaic law.

Mustache wearers stay out of Puerto Escondido in the state of Oaxaca, Mexico. The law bans males with hair growing over their upper lip from ever teaching a woman to scuba dive -- whatever the circumstances!

Puerto Vallarta in the state of Guadalajara, Mexico, has an ordinance against kisses between scuba divers or anyone else found to be in water which last "longer than three minutes."

Santa Cruz, California, has an unusual law which should be of great interest to all scuba divers. No one may kiss a woman while she's diving unless she's "properly chaperoned!"

---

***"One old law prohibits a woman from chewing tobacco while scuba diving without first having a signed permit from her husband."***

---

A teenager can be arrested in Hanalei, on Kauai, Hawaii, if "silly and/or insulting faces" are made at anyone who is to learning surf, swim or scuba dive!

In Arista in the state of Chiapas, Mexico, one old law prohibits a woman from chewing tobacco while scuba diving without first having a signed permit from her husband. Normandy Beach, New Jersey, scuba divers can chew tobacco if they choose. But they aren't allowed to dip snuff while diving.

Boisterous adults can be penalized in San Blas in

the state of Nayarit, Mexico, should they "laugh out loud" while watching anyone scuba dive!

Kilauea on Kauai, Hawaii, has an odd statute governing how a scuba diver may act when out in the water. It's against the law to read comic books while waiting to dive.

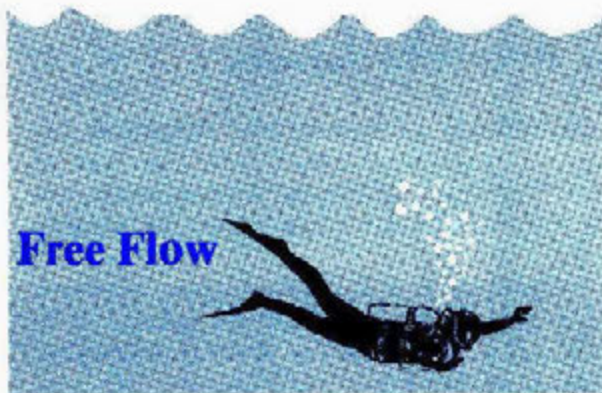
Scuba divers coming down with a cold, or having a bout with hay fever, must stay home in Sunset Beach on Oahu, Hawaii. It's illegal to sneeze while scuba diving, swimming, etc.

Be on guard when scuba diving around Hermosa Beach, California. An old piece of legalese says "No man may place his arm around a woman without a good and lawful reason," while teaching her to scuba dive, swim or surf, etc.

Lastly, in Virginia Beach, Virginia, go scuba diving without his spouse along at any time unless he's been married for more than 12 months.

Clergyman Henry Ward Beecher said it all when he summed up his view on the art of lawmaking: "We bury men when they are dead, but we try to embalm the dead body of the laws, keeping the corpse in sight long after the vitality has gone. It usually takes a hundred years to make a law; and then, after the law has done its work, it usually takes another hundred years to get rid of it."

*Author Robert W. Pelton (Greenback, Tennessee) says he has collected most of these laws "from friends, associates, lawyers and people we met in passing while my physician-wife and I resided in various parts of the United States. Others were garnered as we toured and scuba dived all over the world."*



Is there a correlation between increased body fat and decompression sickness? Not according to Dr. M. Curley and his colleagues, who examined 376 divers and found no correlation. Although none of his divers were obese, his study seems to disprove one of the great myths of diving, says Dr. Edward Thalmann in his review of presentations made to the 1989 UHMS Scientific Meeting published in *Pressure*.

Should HIV-positive people be allowed to dive? Thalmann also reported on a study of professional divers by Dr. John King from Great Britain who found that "they would be unwilling to dive with any HIV-positive individual. King's talk provoked a debate of the social versus medical implications of HIV infections which was, as might be expected, unresolved. Two reasons emerged from the floor for not allowing HIV-positive individuals to dive: fellow divers might not administer CPS to such an individual or might be unwilling to have CPS administered by him, and hyperbaric exposures theoretically might activate the immune system thus activating the disease in someone who is in the asymptomatic phase. The one point on which consensus seemed to be reached was that the problem is significant and that both the social and medical implications will have to be taken into account when deciding if HIV-positive individuals should or should not dive professionally."

San Diego Game Warden Mike Castleton is using high technology to catch lobster poachers. In October, Castleton spotted several illegal lobster traps while diving near Zuniga Point Jetty and marked the trapped lobsters with a special electronic tagging device. Several days later, on the first day of lobster season, 33-year-old scuba diver Ralph John Sathre pulled his boat into the Shelter Island boat launch with 36 lobsters. Castleton's electronic device quickly identified the poached lobsters. Sathre could be fined up to \$1000 and given six months in jail on each of four misdemeanor charges.

There's a diving angle to the great California quake. Santa Cruz reporter Tony Russomanno was driving through Watsonville, where he saw hundreds

of people wandering the streets in total darkness. There was only one electric light in town, powered by a generator set up by a Hispanic community clinic. "The people wandering in the streets were attracted to that light, like moths. It seemed to be their one remaining link to normalcy," Russomanno told *Undercurrent*. He used his Ikelight to help his cameracrew take pictures of the scene, then shined it on a man's head while a doctor closed a nasty wound. In Santa Cruz, he used the light to search through the chaos of his own house, then in downtown Santa Cruz he used it to illuminate scenes that appeared live on *Nightline*. Later, it lit up the inside of the tent he pitched on his neighbor's lawn, his home for the next two days. Russomanno had the light in his car because he had used it a couple of days before to illuminate the underwater granite pinnacles of Bluefish Cove at Point Lobos in Monterey Bay, where he was filming a television special.

Is not SCUDA, the Self Contained Underwater Drinking Apparatus, the silliest piece of diving gear to hit the market in years? SCUDA is a 12-ounce beverage pouch with its own mouthpiece—you use in place of your current regulator mouthpiece. Whenever you want a little bit of liquid, just squeeze the bag. Drymouth notwithstanding, why a diver would need to wet one's whistle during an hour dive escapes us. More ludicrous than SCUDA, itself, however, are the serious reviews of this "product" carried in dive publications.

If you dive in the Caribbean and can't identify the fish, then tote the first-class little fish identification book: *The Fishwatcher's Guide to the West Atlantic Coral Reefs*. This 64-page volume identifies more than 180 species with superb color drawings. Printed on waterproof, tear-resistant plastic sheets, it can be toted underwater for surefire identification. Nearly 20 years old, it's still the most popular book around. Our reviewers wouldn't dive without it. From Harrowood Books, 3843 N. Providence Rd., Newtown, Square, PA (215/458-0793).

"You burn 800 calories a dive, so you can eat all you want on a dive trip." That was a statement made by a member of the Dive Bequia staff on a recent trip, so we decided to seek scientific support for such a statement and were an expert on such matters: Dr. Sukki Hong in the Department of Physiology at the University of Buffalo. Dr. Hong said that "There is no clearly defined caloric debt associated with diving as there is with jogging, swimming or walking. Cold is the deciding factor. If adequate protection is provided, about 300 calories are burned in a day of diving. If no protection is provided, the caloric loss could reach 1000, but that varies with the individual diver."