

# undercurrent®

THE PRIVATE, EXCLUSIVE GUIDE FOR SERIOUS DIVERS

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## The Kona Coast, Island Of Hawaii, U.S.A.

### *Life Inside A Lava Tube*

Having written for this august publication from its inception, I've done my best to steer away from Hawaii. It's been our travel editor, C.C., who has ventured there, and though he claims it's because he loves the diving, I know it's because he loves the wahinis, single man that he is. So, on a cold and rainy March day, when he rang me up and asked if I wanted to visit the Big Island, I was a bit surprised.

"Thought that was your personal domain, those dark tans, white shorts, and all that."

"That it is," he replied, "and that it will remain. But I've left a nasty trail over there, and this time I'd better send you to cover my tracks. After all," he said, "There'll be no suspicion whatsoever because your wife--who is the real diver--will be along, and heaven knows the man from Undercurrent has always showed up solo to dive with Tom and Lisa. And Tom, if his memory's not slipping--and it should be, given the life he's lived--might even recognize the curl of my toes or the salt in my beard. It's a strange land over there, what with all the volcanoes and lava and Primo, and you're a strange man. So it's your journey."

Now I've always known he talked funny, but since he foots the bill I let him talk anyway he wants. I did ask if it might be more sensible for me to go down deep in the Caribbean because, I told him, I've never trusted an island that didn't make it's own rum. "Though Hawaiian agriculture produces superb highs," he replied, "their produce need not be distilled for effect." I lit my pipe while I pondered his response.

My first day in Kona I used to check out several dive operations. I had reserved dives in advance with Tom and Lisa (Dive Makai) for that is a must. I soon discovered that Hawaiian Divers had folded, fortunate for me (but not for them) because I never look forward to running my butt off to dive with everyone. Ocean Pacific had two shops selling gear, but ran their trips out of the Sheraton Hotel, 30 minutes by car from town. I decided

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to forego reviewing their operation. I would dive, I concluded, with Jack's Diving Locker and the Gold Coast Divers.

My first dive would be with Tom and Lisa, and at 8:45 a.m. on a bright and sunny mid-May morning, I met them at the main dock next to the King Kamehameha Hotel.

Together they proved to be a rare combination of enthusiasm and knowledge, effervescing about what they and you are doing. Lisa, blond with a big smile and a warm, teasing manner, arrived in Hawaii from Connecticut nine years ago with her now teen-aged daughters. She has never returned to the mainland. Tom, a 47-year-old, blond and still boggying Californian, managed Ed Brawley's San Mateo dive shop for several years before coming to Hawaii in the early '70's. Tom taught Lisa to dive, and in 1977 they joined together to open Dive Makai.

Our first dive was at the Twisted Lava Tube. Their boat is a 25-foot Radon with an inboard motor. On the stern are two wooden platforms for entry (if you don't want to back roll off the side) and exit. Once anchored, both explained the dive, Lisa using shoes, toes, snorkels and a dive knife to lay out the dive plan. We would be in and out of a lava tube (never out of sight of light) which began at 60 feet and ended at 20 feet. She also went over their extensive hand signals. After the full twenty-minute briefing, we donned our gear. I was surprised to find that our steel tanks had been pumped to 2600 psi (and that was not a hot fill) which proved to be my standard fill.

Dropping down to the reef, I was immediately struck with the lack of coral coloration. Not that there was a lack of coral, just that a light pink coral color covered everything in sight, and there were no soft corals or sponges to electrify the landscape. A couple of small schools of sergeant majors poked about, but that was it. Once in the lava tube, however, things changed fast. Tom and Lisa had split the six divers between them. I joined Tom and crawled through the tube peering into crevices and under rocks, often rolling onto my back to check the ceiling. It was a guided tour of an underwater wonderland. I saw, among other things, moray eels, conger eels, lionfish, blue flatworms with an orange trim, nudibranchs, small 2-4 foot white-tip sharks, cardinal fish, squirrel fish, two pufferfish (one of which Tom estimated was four feet long!) and a porcupine fish which huffed and puffed up for us.

On the second dive at "The Dome," I spotted closeup a four-foot white-tip reef shark, a half dozen incredible lion fish, their plumage rippling softly in the water, sponge crabs and plain old normal crabs, and the normal range of Hawaiian reef fish, including plenty of butterflies.

I was stoked! Immediately upon getting back into the boat I made arrangements to dive with them again. I've never had such unusual diving. Tom and Lisa know and like their critters, and they want you to know them too. I could look at any critter as long as I cared to--or as long as it would stick around. Indeed, they must have planted these fish, for how could there be so many unusual creatures all in one place? In total, I had two hours and fourteen minutes of bottom time. Normally, I don't get that in a week. Tom, looking at my well-fed frame, said, "you know, for your shape you don't have a bad bottom time." That's kinda like saying "for a fat guy you sure don't sweat much."

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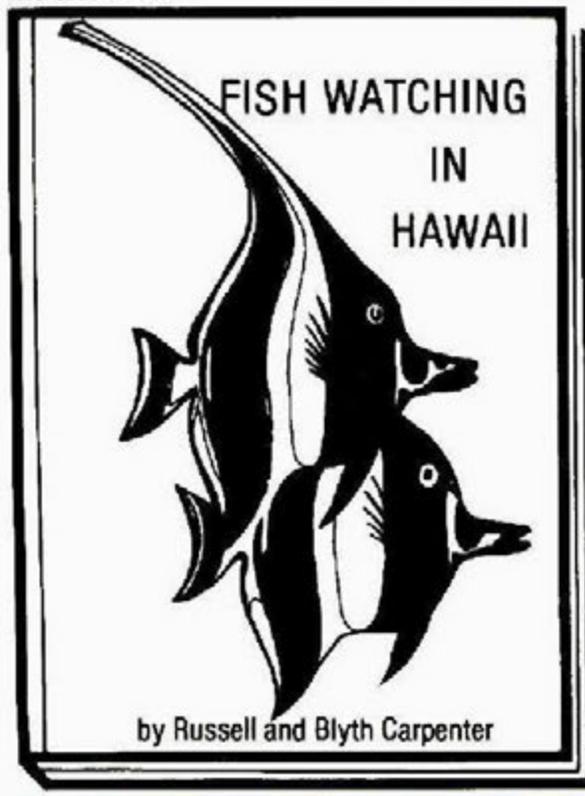
We returned to the dock at 4 p.m., nearly seven hours after our departure time, obviously not a typical two-tank, hurry-up-and-get-it-over-day.

The next day I took the plunge with Jack's Diving Locker, hooking up with Jim, the skipper, and Jerry, the divemaster, again next to the King Kam Hotel. This time we went north to "The Arches," near the Kona airport. Jerry, the divemaster, a friendly fellow about 24 years old, donned a fifty-cubic-foot tank admitting he was "showing off." Since my gauges indicated 2100 psi, I was to be less impressed with his feat than he knew. We dropped down to 60 feet, and instead of looking at critters we swam. And swam. Over the area, and not through the arches. The bottom was covered with coral, separated into valleys followed by "hills" of lava. Several schools of fish swarmed, usually sergeant majors mixed with surgeon--surgeon-fish here--some parrots and lemon surgeons. Beautiful moorish idols, a classic and graceful fish, eased about. Long-nosed butterflies appeared in profusion. We moved to a nearby bay for our second tank. Here the bottom appeared covered with broken coral, but on close inspection the coral was not broken--just not attractive. Again we swam the area, seeing the colorful fish similar to the previous dive, plus a couple of morays and banded coral shrimp. On this dive we were the only divers on the boat.

### Fish-watching in Hawaii

My biggest complaint about fish books is that they never tell me enough about fish behavior. Sure, they help me distinguish between the cleaner wrasse and the saber toothed blenny, but that's not enough. Just what do these critters do?

*Fish Watching in Hawaii*, a wonderful little fish identification book by Russell and Blyth Carpenter, answers a whole host of questions, not only about wrasses and blennys, but about Picasso trigger fish, the freckled hawk fish, and the blue Ulua.



Some samples:

"The Pacific cleaner wrasse, when put into a tank with Caribbean groupers (normally cleaned by Caribbean cleaner gobies) at first confused the groupers, but after a remarkably short time allowed the wrasses all of the normal cleaning latitudes.

"The black Hawaiian surgeon fish develops a brilliant blue face when chasing other fishes.

"When several species of Caribbean damselfish 'listened' to recordings of a variety of damsel fish voices (' chirping ') the only species responding were those whose chirp was being played.

"At night the racoon butterfly fish changes from a brilliant daytime yellow to dull brown."

The Carpenters have translated text book and technical material normally reserved for marine biologists and ichthyologists into everyday English. Although they focus on the Hawaiian islands—a few pages are devoted to the development of the islands and reefs—anyone interested in fish behavior no matter what the locale will find the book interesting and indeed useful. In fact, the Carpenters note that 66% of the Hawaiian reef fish are found elsewhere in the world.

Seventy-seven fishes are identified with accurate drawings and brief descriptions. (On my recent trip to Kona I observed 54 of those pictured.) In addition, the 120-page book contains eight pages of photographs, one an unusual shot of a moray swallowing a surgeon fish.

You may order the book by sending \$9.95 to Natural World Press, Suite 246, 251 Baldwin Avenue, San Mateo, CA 94401.

We left the dock at about 9 a.m. and were back at 11 a.m. I should add, on the second dive our guide ran out of air first, giving him a convenient excuse to bring us to the surface.

Of the three operations I dove with, this was the least preferred. But I must issue a caveat. Owner Jack Clothier had died just a month previous to my visit; his wife, Tina, had full command, no doubt a difficult charge to assume after such an abrupt and tragic change in her life. Hopefully she'll soon straighten out her staff.

The following day I returned to Tom and Lisa. The plan called for a deep dive to 150 feet, but the current was running and we traveled instead to "long Lava Tube" and "Henry's Cave." My buddy of 17 years asked capriciously to see a "Spanish Dancer" nudibranch, which the books claimed were in these waters. Lisa shook her head. "They only come out at night," she replied.

The tube began at 60 feet and was 5 feet high and 15-20 feet wide--several breaks allowed light to trickle in. Early in the dive, Lisa suddenly grabbed my arm. She handed me her dive light and jabbed her arm into a hole in the wall and soon held forth an incredible neon nudibranch, the Spanish Dancer. She gently let it go and its incredible dance began. Imagine, critters on demand! After this it didn't matter much what the rest of the dive would be like, but I saw a rare and nearly indistinguishable leaf fish, more small white-tip sharks, spiny lobster, slipper lobsters, a sponge crab with a piece of burlap on its back instead of a sponge, file fish, a crown-of-thorns sea star, a small tubeworm, more nudibranchs, more flatworms, box fish, a banded angelfish and saber-toothed blenny which mimics the cleaner wrasse by setting up a phony cleaning station. When unsuspecting fish approach to be cleaned, the blenny bites instead.

Inside Henry's Cave, a cavern with several openings, we found a legitimate cleaning station in operation, saw more lion fish, some scorpion fish, lots of crabs, squirrel fish and a couple of morays who looked us over fearlessly but let Lisa pet them. Outside we saw hawkfish, lemon butterflies, ornate butterflies, 4-spot butterflies, some long-nosed butterflies and the ubiquitous damsel fish.

Our next day's dive was with Gold Coast Divers, a full-service dive operation with two shops about 100 feet apart--one in the King Kam Hotel, and the other across the street from the docking area. Gary, skipper and divemaster, took us South (as I had gone with Lisa and Tom) this time to "Red Hill" then on to "Lava Bridge." Five divers were aboard, one who had never before been wet. Gary described the general layout and how the dive should be conducted. My buddy and I could go with him or on our own; we elected to "kinda" follow him around, "kinda" in that we could keep within a visual distance but poke into things that interested us.

At Red Hill I saw enormous schools of fish--surgeons and butterflies--thousands of fish in schools and not just one school but many schools. The bottom again was the light pink coral we had become used to seeing, interspaced with sand channels between the lava fingers. I did not see any new creatures but was taken on an unhurried, leisurely and interesting dive. "Lava Bridge" was fascinating: on the second tank I viewed a lion fish being chased by a crab, and in one crevice found six cleaned tiger cowry shells on which an accommodating crab had previously dined. Two napping white-tip sharks became a little nervous while I poked around, but never acted threateningly.

Gold Coast Divers also pump their tanks to 2600 psi and on both dives I had

all the bottom time I wanted. We left the dock at 9:00 a.m. and were back around 1 p.m. Gold Coast is a respectable and efficient operation, certainly worthy of the respect of Undercurrent. Dive Makai is preferred because it serves the diving connoisseur with personalized and private service, but at one-third more the price.

For all the good diving, my trip was not a blissful exit from mainland reality. While playing tourist, a gust of wind hit my tiny Toyota Tercel on a rain-slicked road, blowing me into oncoming traffic. I yanked the wheel to get back where I belonged. The car spun 180 degrees, rolled over on its side, and slid down a short embankment. The only injury to the four passengers was to my pocketbook, which was \$250 lighter to meet the minimum for not paying the insurance, and an additional \$60 cab fare back to the hotel.

The next day, after snorkeling, my right foot began to hurt, then it swelled beyond my shoe size. A local doctor diagnosed the problem as sunburn, though it was only a single-footed problem. I then hobbled to Honolulu, or at least to the airport to get to Honolulu, where a marine infection came to mind. I called Bishop's Museum, where a staff member at the invertebrate laboratory referred me to a local clinic. Unfortunately--or perhaps fortunately--I cannot report contact with an exotic marine creature. The diagnosis was staph infection, which had entered through a minor case of athletes' foot. My next task, a full review of Honolulu diving, had to be postponed. My buddy took a couple of Honolulu dives, however, and said she saw "nothing worth writing home about"--especially after the Kona Coast.

Room and Board: All kinds of airlines offer one deal or another to Hawaii, and the deals differ according to the diver's home port. A number have condominium arrangements--which was what I managed through United Airlines, for \$633, which included my ill-fated rental car. It was a pleasant, one bedroom, oceanview apartment, but I think too expensive. Budget-minded folks can stay at the Kona Bay Hotel for \$22/night, double. Enterprising travelers can search through many west coast magazines or newspaper classified ads to locate private parties who rent condos for \$30-\$60/night. My condo, in the Kona Reef, came equipped with cooking supplies and the supermarkets provided the food supplies, though we frequently ate out. While years ago fresh fish was at a premium in Kona restaurants, I now found fresh mahimahi (dolphin fish), ahi (tuna) and ono (wahoo) common. I enjoyed decent meals at the Galley, the Kona-Inn, and found the Ocean View to be a "best buy."

And a footnote: In the supermarket I'll be damned if I didn't find a bottle of Hawaiian-made rum under the Plantation label. I should have used it to clean off my feet to prevent staph, because after a few sips I refuse to believe that it was distilled for anything other than external use only.

Diver's Compass: Water temperature ran in the low 70's, so a wet suit top is a must, and those who chill easily might go for a full suit...excellent snorkeling at Kahaluu beach, 3 miles south of Kailua...a rental car is just about essential...visibility never ran above 60 feet, but it does get up to 100; summer is the best time to dive; tourist season, mid-December to March, has the worst weather, sometimes week-long storms...nearly every afternoon is overcast; but usually without rain...afternoon jazz, good maitais and cheeseburgers at the Tropics...You must bring your own lunch when you dive with Tom and Lisa and at their prices (\$60/person for a two-tank dive), they really ought to provide it, especially since preparing a brown bag is a pain in the arse for most vacationers; Gold Coast's and Jack's fees are \$45 for two tanks, tax included. Addresses: Dive Makai, POB 2955, Kailua-Kona, Hawaii, 96740 (808/329-2025); Jack's Diving Locker, POB 5306, Kailua-Kona, 96740 (808/329-7585); Gold Coast Divers, Box 2064, Kailua-Kona, 96740 (808/329-1328).

## Reports From Our Readers' Travels—Part VI

Micronesia: The diving, of course, is superb as we wrote in our August, 1981, issue, with Palau superior to Ponape. Richard Rhead writes that at Ponape the visibility usually was 150+ feet, and on a bad day was 100+ feet. The Arthur's, who run the Village Hotel, go out of their way to help you. Just the hotel alone is reason enough to go to Ponape. Peter DeFlorez (San Francisco) said, "I found the Village in Ponape a pleasant and friendly place to stay with exceptionally good food, but the diving is of no great consequence. An awfully long boat ride to the better sites and the fact that there is no beach, or even any way to get into the water, for a swim unless you go out on a boat is a draw back." Ellen Zank (Sausalito, CA) writes: "The Arthur's son is the guide. Very inflexible. Listens to suggestions and does nothing about them. They would like to encourage more divers to visit, but don't care to put forth the effort." ... Regarding Palau, Richard Rhead (Des Plaines, Illinois,) reports, "I spent 21 days diving Palau--the folks at the Fish and Fins dive shop were more than willing to try new sites--and would go out with only one diver, which was the case for me nearly half the time." Charles Kahr (San Jose, CA) rates the diving five stars saying, "the outer islands diving by high speed boat trip is fantastic. It's a long trip between dives, so picnic lunches are provided on deserted beaches where snorkeling and shelling is unbelievable. At the same spot you can dive a fantastic wall and then decompress along the top of the coral reef in 10 to 15 feet of water." Peter DeFlorez writes, "Truk diving was super. A relatively short ride to the wrecks and absolutely fascinating poking around the decks and interiors. They have truly enforced no-souvenir-collecting so everything is lying around pretty much as when the ship sunk. I picked up infections on both Truk and Ponape so a tube of neosporin ointment would be a good addition to a diver's first-aid kit."

Pago Pago: Here in American Samoa there's no barrier reef, and the dive quality is poor for a Pacific destination, says Daniel Kessler of New York City.

Philippines: From the increased response we're receiving from divers visiting the Philippines, it looks like the surge in Philippine promotional efforts is paying off. Ben Glick (Williamstown, Mass.) says his Poseidon Ventures boat-diving trip to the Philippines was "one of the world's best and I have dived all over the world." Valorie Hodgson (Concord, Mass.) stayed at the Tambouli Hotel, where they could dive Mactan and Cebu island reefs. She says it was "comparable to the Great Barrier Reef in Australia with even more diversity in corals and sea snakes, cave and flashlight fish." Lowell Greenberg (Palos Verdes Estates, CA) was equally ecstatic about the diving and said, "Mactan Island has resident whale sharks which we saw on two of six dives. We could not get close enough for pictures, but another group diving the day before were able to ride the 25-foot-long creatures." He also writes that at the Argao Beach Hotel (Cebu Island) the dive operation is able to provide trips to excellent sites--but the journey can take one to two hours by boat. Jim Maher (who's with the U.S. Treasury in Manila) says that diving is returning to the Matabungkay area. "The owner, Tony Lenste, of the Matabungkay Beach Resort has stopped dynamite fishing. Perhaps in the next five years diving near this resort will come back." One diver (who remained anonymous) on returning from a trip on the vessel, Lady of the Sea, declared, "Gloria Maris runs a super operation. They're caring, concerned and helpful in every way, and the diving was outstanding. We can't wait to go back."

Red Sea: Lowell Greenberg (Palos Verdes Estates, CA) dived the Red Sea

from the Egyptian side last July where he both camped on islands and stayed at the Sheraton Hotel in Hegadu, Egypt. Greenberg says, "This is a new operation using Sheraton facilities on the Egyptian side. Boats are not in good repair, due perhaps to the Egyptian equivalent of mañana attitude called "maleesh" (not to worry). Despite this we dived as much as we wanted and actually enjoyed the relaxed atmosphere, since there was nothing else to do. \$110 per day included round-trip airfare from Cairo, room and board at the Sheraton and unlimited boat diving, which proved to be absolutely sensational." ... The Sun Boat, reports Ruth Jacobsen (NYC) is for sale. Asking price: \$300,000.

Roatan: Frank Davies (Scuba Tours International in Tampa) says, "We run more trips here than any other place in the Caribbean and Anthony's Key is still the closest thing to the South Pacific in layout and style." Claude Millsap (Hominy, OK) said, "I loved my stay at Anthony's. It was the most romantic place I've ever visited." Les White, Bakersfield, CA, said, "the diving in Roatan is still relatively pristine and some of the best I've done. The area lacks some amenities found in other more travelled areas, but for the hard-core diver this area offers a little of everything. I rate the diving five stars for beginners and four stars for old pros." A.C. Burlingame, Huntington Beach, CA., gives the diving three stars for beginners, four for old pros and says, "it's difficult access (three changes of plane), but well worth the effort. Good dive boats, on time, and good facilities for the gear, washdown and locker storage." One caution about Anthony's Key. Although there is constant fogging to keep the "no-see-ums" and mosquitos under control, most readers report that they still get bitten here. If one reacts allergically to these bites, a week here can be difficult....Spyglass Hill always got mixed reviews under the previous ownership and now that it's become Punta Gorda Reef Resort we look forward to consistency in the new management....David Platt (Crested Butte, Colorado) writes that "the real bargain on Roatan is the inexpensive Roberts Hill Hotel which provides clean, basic rooms for \$15 per person and that includes three home-cooked meals a day. A five to ten minute walk away is Jackson's Dive Shop where Alvin Jackson can put you on the reefs and walls within ten minutes from shore departure. The remoteness of the West Indies may disappoint seekers of any night life, but for the serious sport diver on a tight budget it's perfect...The Reef House resort has 13 spartan, but clean and comfortable double rooms. Len Hall (Columbiana, Alabama) says, "Everyone on our trip agreed that we would return to the Reef House. The crew is friendly and the unlimited diving on the reef in front of our resort rivaled many of the boat dives we took. We rate this diving for beginners five stars, for old pros, four stars."...James Buruazik (Highland, Illinois) stayed at the Pirate's Den Resort on Roatan and said there were few fish and that "all in all, it was a very poor operation. Diving was very inadequate and rated it two stars for beginners and three for old pros."...W.T. Lowry (Slydel, Louisiana) writes of the Plantation Beach Resort: "not for inexperienced divers. When you rent this resort for a week, you have the entire facility for your own group. Will accommodate a maximum of 12, but 10 is best. You need your own divemaster; knowledgeable guides

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and dive boats are provided. The manager, an excellent diver, is very accommodating and provides unlimited tanks. Snorkeling and beach diving are right at the front door. The beauty of this area is the complete freedom and lack of regimentation. The resort is the only commercial establishment on the entire island. There's not even a bicycle, let alone a car or road. Nice bar, patio on the water, dining room and the cooks are very good." Lowry rates the diving here for old pros at five stars.

St. Maarten: Diving here is of lesser quality than at most Caribbean destinations, although as a classic resort destination, St. Maarten is preferred by many people. R. Buck of Vienna, Virginia, says, "Leroy French is the new owner of the dive shop at Mullett Bay. He does a much better job than previous owners. I visited St. Maarten for eight years for rest and relaxation; usually 6 dives in 10 days is enough."

## Charter Boat Negligence Found In The Keys

### *Are Log Books Soon To Replace C-Cards?*

The death of a diver is not an isolated incident. Obviously, not only is the diver's family deeply affected, but so is the entire dive community. In today's litigious society, where an insurance company or an industry has to pony up six-figure sums to answer a jury award, the result of a law suit can indeed be far-reaching.

On March 19, 1982, a six-member jury awarded \$300,000 to the widow of James Parks (who died in the waters off Key West, Florida, February 1980) in her action against Key West Pro Dive Shop. She alleged that the dive shop did not take adequate steps to rescue Parks when he got into trouble while diving in 25-foot waters. The plaintiff alleged that the boat was not equipped to rescue divers, (e.g., that a surfboard wasn't available to enable rescuers to reach the victim faster than if just swimming), and that the boat captain waited two to three minutes before ordering crewmen into the water to rescue Parks.

The defendant responded that he began rescue procedures immediately after having spotted Parks' distress signals, and that Parks, a certified diver,

"sucked his tank dry" because he did not watch his pressure gauge. The jury recognized some diver negligence, (in fact found the diver "27% negligent) and decided on a \$300,000 judgment, \$200,000 less than originally sought by the plaintiff. It is now up to the insurance company to decide whether to appeal.

The purpose of this article is not to chronicle the diver's death, nor is it to determine guilt or innocence. Rather, it is to explain the impact on the diving community and charter boat operation in Southern Florida and eventually perhaps on anyone operating a charter boat operation under the United States flag.

#### Reef Trips Stopped

Immediately following the court decision, both dive shops in Key West, the Key West Pro Dive Shop (the defendant) and the Reef Raiders Dive Shop, suspended dive operations. Key West Pro Dive Shop resumed operations after a week, but the owners of

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the Reef Raiders decided to bail out all together. They sold their boat and now act only as booking agents for the new owner.

Bob Holston, Key West Pro Dive Shop owner, told *Undercurrent*, "we spent \$100,000 to defend this suit. Thankfully we had sufficient insurance, otherwise we'd be out of business."

When asked about any changes he was considering Holston replied, "we are going to require that a diver's log book shows that he has had at least one dive in the past year. If this is lacking the diver must dive with one of our instructors which will cost an additional \$30 over the present \$25 for a two-tank trip. And we're going to be more selective about who we

*"...we're going to require that a diver's log book shows that he has had at least one dive in the past year. If this is lacking, the diver must dive with one of our instructors which will cost an additional \$30 over the present \$25 for a two-tank trip."*

take out. We will refuse a diver if we don't think he's capable."

According to Georgia Piacibello, owner of the Reef Raiders, "we eliminated our legal liability by selling out boat. We've always required a diver to provide a certification card, a B.C. with auto inflation and a submersible pressure gauge. We are considering requiring a log book. If a diver has not had a dive in the past year, the diver will be required to take a short resort-type course and dive with one of our instructors at an additional \$30 cost."

Corky Toth, owner of Divers World of Key Largo said that he is "asking for log books, holding c-cards until after the dive trip, giving extended talks about conditions and procedures prior to leaving the dock and a discussion of the dive site and procedures when at the site."

Bob Brayman, owner of Halls Diving Center in Marathon, told *Undercurrent* that "we will require log books from all divers. This is a better measure of diving capabilities than a c-card because it will lay out the experience a diver has. Just because a diver has been diving in lakes for several years doesn't mean that he can handle the waves or swells that he may often encounter in the ocean. In the not too distant future, it may be that log books will take the place of c-cards." Brayman feels that a log book will take some of the pressure off the boat operators in that the log will provide proof of ability and shift some of the responsibility now on the boat operator back to the diver.

Dave Inman, president of Divers Unlimited in Hollywood, Florida has different ideas. "Right now I don't plan on changing any of our procedures. We differ from the other operators in the Keys in that the majority of our business comes from our own shops. We do have some general charter business but nothing like the others. All of the suggestions that I

have heard so far at meetings are restrictive and I don't like that at all. Once a diver is certified, it is assumed that he or she can dive. If we start requiring log books or refresher courses it may not be long before we require a specific piece of equipment made by a specific manufacturer. At every step we will be driving the divers to another sport, and that can only hurt all of us."

Norine Rouse of West Palm Beach (north of the Keys) said, "this won't affect us much. We always have at least three instructors on a boat. We do not just drop divers into the water and assume that they can make it on their own. Another factor is that a diver has to take six trips with us before being eligible to join our club and if they do not indicate by their actions that they are our kind of people we do not have to take them."

The differing responses to the \$300,000 award tended to reflect the different methods of operations of Key's boats. Many of the boats operate as if they were water taxis, ferrying the divers to the sight, pointing the way down, and leaving the diver on his own. To join a dive charter, all one had to do was flash a c-card and come up with the cash, although there were some operators that were far more concerned with the cash than the c-card. No doubt, the practices have changed as a result of the verdict.

### Concerted Action Considered

Most Key's boat owners and shops are members of the Keys Association of Dive Operators, which is presently discussing standards for their membership. Amy Slate, Secretary of KADO, told *Undercurrent* that they have established a committee—which includes training agency members—to propose standardized procedures which, "we hope will be followed by all KADO members." As it is, the current range of standards means that a diver can shop around until he finds someone who will take him out, regardless of his qualifications. Some of the suggestions which surfaced at the March 23 KADO meeting include: having all boat crew members trained in CPR, first aid, advanced life saving and scuba rescue; having a copy of the diver accident management plan on board a boat; having oxygen with positive support demand and a crew member trained to administer the oxygen.

KADO members, of course, are enraged by the outcome of the suit. One operator said, "they got him back to the boat in 6-9 minutes and began resuscitation. Within 16 minutes, paramedics flown in by helicopter were at work on him. I could not have done it better and I don't think I could have done it faster." Another noted that the jury "did not have a single diver on it." A third couldn't believe that the diver was only 27% negligent when "he runs out of air on his own for failing to check his pressure gauge, then, when he gets into trouble, fails to drop his weight belt."

The dissatisfaction initially led to a number of KADO members accusing the training agencies for failing to form a united front on behalf of the dive shop defendant. NASDS and the YMCA testified on behalf of the defendant, NAUI had no involvement, but PADI, some people believed, hurt the case by "helping the plaintiff." One person told *Undercurrent* that he believed it was a calculated move to establish PADI's expertise over the expertise of the other training agencies, and points the finger at Dennis Graver, PADI training director, for whatever assistance offered to the plaintiff. Some members suggested banning all PADI divers from their boats.

On April 13, KADO sent a letter to PADI requesting Graver's resignation; a few days later Graver attended a KADO meeting to answer questions. Graver told *Undercurrent* that he believes he and PADI are getting a bum rap.

"I was contacted by the plaintiff's attorney to give an opinion," Graver said, and was supplied with depositions favorable only to the plaintiff. Graver said he then wrote a letter indicating he agreed with those depositions, but since he had not seen the defense depositions, "I couldn't state categorically that the opinions were correct on all counts. I was never called to testify. I never made a deposition, and what I wrote was never introduced into the trial." Graver said, "he had originally answered the request hoping he could minimize the affect of the plaintiff's witnesses and eliminate the loss. "PADI is a part of the industry and we have the most to lose in a situation like this."

At the KADO meeting with Dennis Graver, Graver indicated that he would file an affidavit with the Court to the effect that statements had been falsely attributed to him. Key West Pro Dive Shop owner

Holston says he will now introduce a motion to absolve Graver.

### Conclusion

A diver has lost his life and the industry is still fuming for getting pinned with a large share of the rap. Nevertheless, safety practices will be increased; for under the threat of future law suits no dive operator will risk being caught off guard. It certainly seems to be wise to have people trained in CPR and scuba rescue on board a diveboat, as it seems wise to have oxygen and a surfboard or some kind of craft to facilitate rescue.

As for c-cards, obviously they ought to be required. Log books should be helpful, but it's a lot easier to phony-up a log book than a c-card. And furthermore, there's no evidence that log books will get any more attention from some operators than they currently give to c-cards. Requiring log books creates an additional problem. Since the universal requirement is a c-card, and not a log book, KADO members will have to face the thousands of tourists who show up without log books. No doubt they'll view the log book requirement as a rip off when they're told that without a log book they've got to pay \$30 extra to dive with an instructor. Expect a few ugly scenes, and expect more than a few disgruntled divers.

But the display of a c-card or the review of a log book seem to offer no guarantee that the diver, once underwater, will check his pressure gauge or, if in trouble, drop his weight belt. Just how a dive operator checks whether common sense will prevail in the face of panic remains a mystery to us. But there should be no mystery about what is required to save and care for a diver once that panic sets in.

## Diving and Women

From time to time *Undercurrent* has written about sexism in diving. Not long ago we came across an article in the YMCA's *Ascent Line* by Dr. Tom Griffiths, Director of Aquatics at the University of Maryland. Griffiths, an instructor for the Y wrote about scuba sexism and listed eleven examples. We find them worthy of publication.

● Male instructors often make cute, casual remarks about their female students. Although these comments are thought of as innocent, they are usually far from being cute. Some of the classics: "Not bad for a girl" and "Well, you are in this class to get your "Mrs." not a 'C' card." These remarks do not help the confidence of the female students and it puts them on the defensive.

### *It's A Man's World*

● Our pictures and illustrations are extremely sexist. Seldom do we depict a women diver performing a meaningful underwater task in our publications. When a woman diver is pictured, usually her outstanding feminine features are stressed, not her diving or teaching ability. The male divers we picture are taking pictures, conducting classes, or spearing fish while the females we illustrate simply sit pretty in small bikinis or tight-fitting wet suits.

● When we organize and plan our dives, the women are usually the "Go-fors," "Tag-Alongs," or models. We assign the men as leaders and the women as followers.

● Many women encounter physical hardships when suiting-up for a dive. When a women has dif-

difficulty lifting a tank, we often chastise her by saying "You don't belong in this sport if you can't carry your own tank" or we patronize her by saying, "I'll carry that—I don't want you to strain yourself." Neither of these two reactions help female divers. Many women have a real problem with scuba gear. But rather than making these women dependent on their buddy, we must show understanding and patience and help them to learn how to cope with their gear and become self-reliant.

● Recently a major scuba manufacturing company was approached and encouraged to adapt some of the equipment designs to better accommodate women divers. They responded that there is no market in female diving gear. One major reason why there are so few female divers is because the gear is too cumbersome; it's designed for men. Just think of the potential market if women could find comfortable, suitable gear.

● Very few diving clubs have female officers except in the position of secretary and perhaps treasurer.

● If a female is a borderline student, often we will not certify her because we believe she may be a menace both to herself and her buddy. On the other hand, a male student who is a borderline case will usually get a break when it comes to certification. We assume the males, but not the females, will automatically develop into better divers.

● Female students who complete the entire scuba course but elect not to go on open water dives often admit to excessive apprehension and fear. Women after all are "emotional and can't handle stress." This, is, of course, an old husbands' tale. At least women admit their problems. Conversely, the male diver who does not attend the open water dives usually has an excuse like a death in the family, car trouble, sickness, etc. Men are not supposed to back out of threatening situations.

● Have you ever noticed what happens when a female student doesn't understand an explanation or demonstration in class? Seldom does she ask the instructor for clarification. She usually asks her boyfriend or husband who is her buddy. This often

leads to second-hand instruction and sometimes a wrong interpretation of what's happening.

● Dr. Eleanor Crown at Wayne State University states that scuba diving instruction should be sensitive to the anxiety that many women students experience during a course because of male-biased training, both in the pool and in the classroom. She says, "The example of one male instructor, who does not discuss menstruation and pregnancy in class because 'abnormal physiology' is not part of his curriculum illustrates an attitude that is prevalent and must be changed."

● Many women who enter Assistant Instructor and Instructor Institutes are confronted with hostility from the other male candidates. These women often drop out not because it is too tough as most males believe, but because they feel it's not worth it when they're not wanted.



**Dive right in!**

Imperial Manufacturing Co.

If there is any doubt that there's sexism in diving after reading Griffith's article, one need only refer to this current ad run by Imperial Manufacturing for which the intended double entendre should be obvious to even the most prepubescent adolescent.

## —A Woman's Frightening Experience

*The attached article was written by a woman who has been associated with Undercurrent from its inception.*

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Safely back home and lodged in the routine of daily life for a week, I look back on a confusing and humiliating underwater experience. I think my feelings and hind-sight are worth sharing, especially with women who dive, and with men who dive with women.

My diving began in 1976 when I completed a certification course with my husband on St. Thomas. In retrospect, two things stand out from my certification week which now have profound impact on me.

First, I felt that in diving I had found a world separate from the world above, where frustration and hassle are the norm. Underwater, I thought, was an environment which possessed the challenge of danger but was free of fear of fellow man.

Second, I remember feeling a need to be able to take care of myself—to depend only on myself in gearing-up and assuming the responsibilities of diving.

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*“...I remember the words of my instructor—a female: ‘why are you struggling so? Let your husband do it for you.’ ”*

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ing. I remember the words of my instructor—a female: “Why are you struggling so? Let your husband do that for you.” Somehow it didn’t seem right to me. I wanted to be independent.

Since certification, I have been on a dozen or more warm water dives all during vacations and all sinfully pleasurable. Until last week my feelings about diving taking me away from it all held to be true. And, in most cases, I was able to do it myself—holding my own.

When the dive boat came to pick us up at our beautiful, secluded beach on Mexico’s Caribbean coast I was filled with the usual sense of excitement and anxiety. It had been nearly a year since my last dive, and because I was diving with a type of vest I had not used before, I was a bit more anxious than usual. The divers included my equally inexperienced yet capable husband, a good friend who is a very experienced diver, myself and our guide whom I had met at the dive shop. Since I very much felt a need to hide my anxiety from my friends and to be independent, I was relieved when the highly attentive guide helped me gear up by adjusting my weight belt and BC straps and then gear down. It didn’t occur to me at the time that he paid *no* attention to the two male divers. After descending to 25 feet, the guide, never taking his eyes off me, spent about three minutes adjusting straps for me and making me feel very comfortable. I was unaware that the straps needed adjustment so I was grateful. We completed a very pleasant dive.

The next day the boat arrived to pick us up again. Once more, the guide took me under his wing, helped me dress up and once underwater, I was hardly aware that anyone was diving except for the two of us. Soon the guide, by swimming rapidly, had left behind my husband and our friend, both photographers. Although he spoke little English, he was adept at putting me at ease. Again at about 25 feet we stopped for adjustments. This time I began to realize my naivete. My straps didn’t need any adjustments, and although I kept saying in sign language, “I’m OK,” he kept swimming around me pushing and pulling the straps and me.

At last we resumed the dive. My guide swam quickly, and I followed with all my might, although I knew I was working too hard to enjoy the dive. He was looking for fish to spear for lunch for our group. I continued to swim furiously trying to keep up with the guide, who outdistanced my husband and his

buddy. And then, close to the end of the dive, my nightmare began. I watched as the guide speared a snapper, in 30 feet of water, and then I signaled that my air was at 700 psi. In a very macho way he threw the speargun to the bottom and signaled me to come to him. I presumed he wanted to look at my pressure gauge and swam toward him holding it out. He shook his head “no” and grabbed for the crotch strap of my vest, but his hands landed elsewhere. I signaled again “I’m OK,” but he had other plans. At first I thought to myself that we were only in 30 feet of water and I should simply go up. Then I thought, “Where is the boat. I can’t see the boat, I’m scared. Don’t panic.”

As his hands worked in and out of my bathing suit—occasionally pulling on a strap—I stayed in horror, uncertain about what to do, uncertain about my diving skills, afraid to struggle and get away. Fears of embolism and bends shot through my mind as I felt a captive victim.

Then for a moment my initial panic subsided. Quickly, I kicked him away and started to swim upwards. He signaled, “You’re OK” and followed me to the surface. My heart, already beating fast, began to flutter when the boat was nowhere in sight—and I really needed the boat. We bobbed in 3-foot waves, a mile from the shoreline. My guide waved his speargun in the air, glancing at me from time to time, but I couldn’t look at him. It was a long wait and I worried more and more. Finally ten minutes later, he spied the boat and, onboard, my husband spied us.

Back in the boat and later, during what should have been a pleasant beach picnic, I was in a state of confusion and hurt. After a while I shared the experience with my husband; we both struggled with what to do. Expose the guide, end the picnic, and return to the hotel? Pretend as if nothing happened? Chalk it up to a learning experience and try to enjoy the picnic? Seek advice from our more experienced friend and risk ruining his day? I decided to accept the support of my husband and set the experience aside for the day.

It wasn’t until the next day, that I could share the experience with our friends. I reported—too gently, I suppose—the guide’s actions to the dive shop owner who listened, but registered no response. Nevertheless, the incident is over.

For me, there are three simple conclusions:

(1) Since I don’t have the physical strength to handle the gear, I’ll seek the assistance of my stronger friends. I don’t need to prove my prowess every moment of the day, (2) I’ll put my trust in people I’m used to diving with. I’ll make a buddy plan before I dive, stick to it, and use the guide in conjunction with my team, (3) I’m more tuned in to the subtleties of the behavior of some men than ever before. I’ve not lost my general trust of men. I’ve just become aware of what I’ve been unaware—above and below sea level.