

undercurrent®

THE PRIVATE, EXCLUSIVE GUIDE FOR SERIOUS DIVERS

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Grenada, West Indies

-- The Caribbean's Best Wreck Dive

Dear Reader,

I had come to Grenada with one diving objective in mind: the wreck of the Bianca C. Little known to American divers, the most serious wreck in the Caribbean lies at reachable depths, 15 minutes from dive shops. Lying on its side at, say 300, it rivals the wrecks of America's east coast.

In October, 1961, the 592-foot Costa Cruise Liner Bianca C caught fire in St. George's harbor. The townspeople reacted quickly by creating an emergency flotilla to rescue passengers and their goods. The fire raged for two days when a British frigate arrived to tow the liner to deeper water. The frigate managed to get her about three miles from the harbor, where the Bianca C heeled and sank.

Today, with thirty bucks and a little moxie you can take a look at her, swim through her chambers, and maybe even poke around for valuables the locals believe went down with her. You can reach a deck railing at 90 feet. Slip through compartments at 120 feet. But it is not an easy dive ... by any stretch of the imagination.

For years I've fantasized about Grenada's tropical beauty and wondered about her diving. But for more than a decade Grenada was dominated by Eric Gairy, an oppressive leader, then run by radicals who threw Gairy out in 1979 and cemented ties with the Cubans and Soviets.

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So I wrote about other islands.

Five years ago this October, a handful of U.S. Marines arrived to do battle with Grenadian radicals who had just assassinated their country's leaders. In the fracas that followed, the Americans shot up the town and disbanded the revolutionaries, while chasing home a cluster of Cubans who were building an airport. The action created an international stink about America's role as world cop.

As a dyed-in-the-wool liberal, I had mixed emotions about the invasion, but

I supposed that we Americans had to save the world for divers. After all, who else would? If the reefs of Grenada were to fall, would Barbados' reefs be next? Certainly the British wouldn't have the temerity to save those wimpy clumps of coral?

When I arrived at the new airport -- the Cubans started it, but America gets credit for it -- I wondered what to expect. Would my bags be rifled to ferret out political literature? (That happened to me once in Haiti, when an illiterate officer spent 15 minutes trying to determine whether Hunter Thompson's "Fear and Loathing on the Campaign Trail" might provide a manifesto for the overthrow of Papa Doc). What would be my reception on this post revolutionary Third World island?

At the Grenada airport at 10 p.m., the people were all smiles, the baggage hustlers inoffensive, and the cab driver helpful and chatty. At the Spice Island Inn, where the desk was closed and we were unexpected, the manager jumped from his bed to find us a room, which we didn't like, took us to another more to our liking, and bid us good night.

That sort of treatment persisted during my week in July. My partner and I rented a mini-Moke, an Australian down-sized version of a WWII Jeep, to spend a couple of days driving the island. It's easy to get lost on Grenada and just as easy to get found. Around every corner, people are walking. Some I gave rides to; others I'd ask if I were on the right road. At times my California ear could not pick up the Grenadian dialect, but I would always figure it out. I'd stop in a ramshackle rum shop for a pop and a bit of information, or take photos of a fisherman in gabardine slacks who tried to sell me a stuffed hawksbill turtle, an endangered species. The roads were windy, the scenery spectacular, the people pleasant ... except for the occasional yet presumably harmless "sssssst" directed at my comely partner. As for the invasion? Well, for most people life on Grenada today isn't any better than it was under previous regimes. But even for them, the invasion is considered more of a "rescue mission" -- and most everybody has a good story about it if you ask.

Now, what about this diving, this Bianca C? Well, it's not to be one's first dive of the week. If you're typical (and I'll later suggest you not be), you will probably ensconce yourself at a hotel on Grenada's main attraction, the two mile long Grand Anse beach. Its white powdery sand meets a gentle ocean with such perfection that it surely is one of the better beaches in the Caribbean. It's piece d' resistance is the Ramada Renaissance, the one time Holiday Inn which figured prominently in the 1983 invasion. You'd never know it. The hotel is immaculately refurbished, years ahead of Grenada's place in time (Gad, the rooms have satellite television). It would seem better suited, especially its oddly formal lounge area, on St. Maarten or Anguilla.

The Ramada is the home of HMC Diving Centre, which has one instructor in residence, Billy Murphy, a laconic and capable chap who joined the first of the four dives I made with HMC. Other dives were led by local guides, (including co-owner Mosden Cumberbatch, who previously took divers out of the Grenada Yacht

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Services) all cautious leaders, but, as best as I could determine, not formally trained. I and my partner were required to sign a release each time we dived, but were not asked for our C-cards. Sign the form and climb aboard.

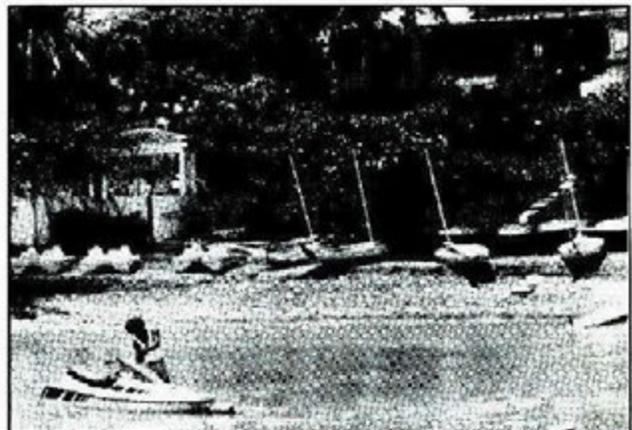
HMC ran a canvas topped outboard -- I'll guess 21 feet -- that got us to the dives within 15 minutes. On the first dive, closely managed by Murphy, we dropped to a small wreck with some nice coral growth. A few small grouper hid under the hull and two grey angels hung about. We moved away with the current, over coral, and spotted a couple of small morays and typical tropicls in 30-50 foot visibility. Indeed, a pleasant enough dive for openers.

Horse Shoe Bay Hotel, Grenada	
Wreck Diving for Experienced	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Wreck Diving for Beginners	don't go
Diving Otherwise	★ ★ ½
Hotel	★ ★ ★ ★
Food	★ ★ ★ ★
Money's Worth	★ ★ ★ ★
★ poor, ★★ fair, ★★★ average, ★★★★ good, ★★★★★ excellent	

An afternoon dive began with a drop across a beautiful forest of midnight black gorgonia, then a drift of 65 feet along a sloping wall for 100 yards. We should have drifted along this wall for the duration, but were led to shallow water, where we piddled about in a half-live coral bed till, at 1200 psi, I was given the signal to pull out. A southern stingray, a unique orange and brown trigger, a solitary stonefish and a pair of dancing juvenile spotted drums were the highlights.

Having just come from Barbados, I found the shallow diving here better, the coral more beautiful. At Dragon Bay three large barracuda observed me observing a school of hundreds of grunt that would open and close as I moved through. At the end of the dive a great forest of soft corals, running up to ten feet high, was almost reminiscent of swimming through a California kelp forest.

This is a resort operation aimed at the lowest common denominator of diver: the freshly certified, even the resort course diver. But they don't run with the precision of a good resort shop. One 10 a.m. dive became 11, then 11:30 -- more than once. One day the dive boat was used for fishing, so I was taken in a runabout 100 yards from shore in 20 feet of water. Surprisingly, it was an enjoyable macro dive -- great coral -- and they didn't balk at taking a solo diver!



The Hillside Horseshoe Bay Hotel

They urged me to dive the Bianca C with them (and told me they were the only divers on Grenada), but for what was to be such an arduous dive, I thought better. I had discovered Hans Dykman, a PADI instructor with years of varied diving experience, at the Horseshoe Bay Hotel, a super little Mediterranean-like villa on Prickley Bay, a two-mile drive from Grand Anse. Dykman is easily recognizable: when he's not diving he attends to his other duties still outfitted in his full wet suit, its top rolled down across his waist. When I told him my partner and I would like to dive the Bianca C he asked a few questions about our experience, then said "I like to see how you can handle yourself. There's a lot of current at the Bianca C, so first I take you out for a shallow dive." He pointed in the opposite direction of the Bianca. "You get some experience in the current. You get used to it."

Shallow dive, yes. But a rushing river at full flood stage? I could barely hang on to the rescue line and my partner, whose regulator was wet breathing, was being pulled so hard at the line, she opted to get back in the boat. Too macho to follow, I struggled to the bottom, only 20 feet down. I could only move by pulling myself hand over hand along the coral and remains of a wreck that had been ripped apart on this reef in the past year. Somehow I had the presence to see a small reef shark and a nurse shark sheltered in the ripped hull, but this current dive, which lasted only 14 minutes, was the equivalent of a finger tip climb up Half Dome. After exiting, we motored a short distance to tiny Glover island for a lighthearted drift past corals (plenty of it broken) and tropicals. (Hans blew up a puffer and brought up a nice crab, which we later ate as a snack with cocktails). The dive was nothing spectacular, but a good warmup for the Bianca C. My partner did just fine, proving to Dykman's satisfaction that we were ready for the Big One the following day.

Dykman dives from a 29-foot craft of Trinidad design which allows it to run smoothly across the crest of two waves at a time. After a 15-minute ride to the Bianca, he slowed the craft while his two-man-Grenadian crew triangulated to find the ship. "I've twice had floats on her," he told me, "but someone cuts them off. Some people think they own this thing."

It took five minutes to locate the wreck and two attempts to hook the anchor on the wreck. My partner entered the water first. I followed, rolling backward off the low freeboard. As soon as I hit the water I turned upright and grabbed the rescue line. The strong current had already pulled me 10 feet from the stern of the boat. One of the boatmen grabbed the line and dragged me forward to the anchor line to meet my partner and Hans.

Hans took the lead, carrying two additional safety tanks on a separate line, which he hooked to the anchor line and slid along as he went. Down the anchor line we went, head first, hand over hand, the current splaying us vertically like pennants on a halyard. Hans had instructed that if one of us were to let loose of the line, every diver must let go. It would be impossible to swim back to the line, so we should all drift together. The boatmen would find us. It took less than two minutes to pull ourselves to the bottom. Once on the ship's deck, the current substantially subsided. My gauge registered 92 feet. The water temperature was 81°F. I could see about 50 feet. We began our dive.

My partner and I dropped to 110 feet to view a score of 10 lb. snappers, swimming in and out of the torn hull. A pair of barracuda hovered above, moving away quickly as she turned to face them. I rose to peer over the coral and algae-covered railing. There, within 15 feet, were five spotted eagle rays, four feet across, slowly winging by, in near formation. As they disappeared in the distance, I imagined them to be eagles in flight, edging into an Alaskan fog. Finning slowly across the deck, I saw an enormous turtle flap slowly toward me. I could only gawk as it brought its beak within three feet of my mask. But, Hans reacted quickly, grabbing its shell to get a ride. The turtle flicked his shoulder as a speedy halfback might, shaking Hans loose, then glided on and out of sight.

Rumors abound that valuables remain inside the wreck, though much was removed during the days it took for the C to sink. To explore the hull would require many divers, powerful lights, and, for experienced wreck divers, a set of doubles. Hans says he's open to making deeper penetrations with divers who bring the right gear -- and experience. I cruised past openings into the dark hull, making short swimthroughs here and there, but nothing serious. According to my Suunto computer -- which Hans also uses and includes with some of his rental gear

-- 23 minutes had passed and no bottom time was left. Of course, one could use the Suunto to move into decompression status, but that wasn't in our plan.

On Grenada's reefs I had seen only aquarium-sized critters; spearfishermen keep the big fish thinned out. Although the Bianca C is not covered with big fish -- or a lot of fish -- it would be a local spearfisher's heaven. I asked Hans why it hadn't been cleaned out. "The spearfishermen don't like sharks," he said, "so now and then we talk about all the sharks out here. They don't want to bring up fish from a hundred feet with sharks around. So they keep away."

"Do you ever see sharks on the wreck?" I asked. His teeth flashed through his sun-bleached beard. "Never," he said.

I dived one reef with Hans, which was only mildly interesting by normal Caribbean standards, and not as attractive as those dived regularly by HMC. He claims to dive those as well, but hopes to find new and better reefs nearby. To make this a well rounded dive operation, that will be essential. But Hans is a first rate leader. His shop has good equipment. And he has three young men who put our gear away at night, brought it out in the morning, hooked up tanks, helped us dress on a rocky boat, and on our day of departure washed and dried our gear, and neatly packed it up.

The Horseshoe Bay Hotel is a romantic villa. It's operated and owned (for less than a year) by Charlotte Greene, a one time teacher of art history in Massachusetts, with whom Dykman is in partnership. Several duplex cottages stretch up a hillside. Furnished with large poster beds, they have sizeable bathrooms with sunken showers and ample air-conditioning. A larger building has comfortable hotel style units, but for true charm, the cottages are a must. Hans himself is working to improve the kitchen, and I must say the best "normal" meal I had on the island was served here; an exceptionally tender dolphin, fresh, well-prepared vegetables, and excellent dessert. Service was always slow, but with a cold beer and a good book, my patience remained nicely intact in the lovely setting. Order your meal, take a dip in the pool or bay, then come back to eat.

Charlotte and Hans are an enjoyable pair to share a drink with. They spun a few yarns about their "Don't Stop the Carnival" (see sidebar) experiences. In

Don't Stop The Carnival

If any single book could serve as a text for Tropical Island Hotel Management and Living 101, it's the hilarious novel "Don't Stop the Carnival," by Herman Wouk ("The Caine Mutiny," "The Winds of War," *et. al*).

Originally published in 1965, *Carnival* chronicles the story of Norman Paperman, a New Yorker who grows weary of life in the Apple and buys himself a small hotel on the island of Americo, in the fictitious Caribbean country of Kinja.

If anything can go wrong at Paperman's "The Gull Reef Club," it does. Of course there are water problems. And lethargic local help. There's investment trickery. And local politics. And drunks and boors and ornery and demanding guests. And one thing after another.

It's enough to dissuade even the most self-confident dreamer to leave his money in a certificate of deposit. But, the novel is also filled with enjoyable images of the Caribbean and its people that any visitor can recognize.

In my travels, I've met more than one island hotel proprietor who quotes chapter and verse from Wouk's novel. While in Grenada, Charlotte Greene, who has run the Horseshoe Bay Hotel for under a year, told me that "everything that happened in 'Don't Stop the Carnival' has happened right here too!"

Although the book has never been out of print, it's often been hard to find. It has recently been dressed up and seems readily available at many book stores. Or you can order the Penguin paperback by mail for \$5.70 (New Yorkers, add the tax please) from Simon and Schuster Mail Order Dept., 200 Old Tappan Road, Old Tappan, NY 07675.

It's perfect beachfront reading.

C.C., travel editor

fact, while I was there an inconsiderate guest drove them crazy with snotty demands, which they graciously met. He lost the upper hand when a maid reported that he had unsuccessfully shuffled her off into a room, offered her \$4 for private services ("don't worry," he said, "it will be quick") and pleaded that she not tell his wife. Further idiotic demands on management went unanswered.

Hans can also pick up divers at the venerable Calabash Hotel, at the end of the Prickley Bay. A lovely and elegant hotel, its cottages face a large lawn which runs down to calm waters. We had a quite decent meal in its excellent dining room, sipping gin and tonics before hand, while snooping on the conversation of the members of the British Consulate at the adjacent table. The Calabash is always listed in guidebooks as one of the better hotels in the Caribbean. As for other hotels, the Covaba, 300 yards from the Ramada Renaissance has an HMC shop. Its rooms are basic modern motel, its grounds insufficiently landscaped. I would be disappointed staying here. The Spice Island, another 300 yards away, of cinderblock construction, has some old island charm to it (rooms are right on the beach and some have private terraces and private swimming pools) and since I don't like the modern quality of the Ramada, I would make it my first choice on Grand Anse. Most tourists, I think, would disagree with me.

Several unique restaurants are worth exploring. Mama's serves dinner as if it were dim sum. As many as 20 plates of beef, pork, fish, conch -- called "lambi" on Grenada -- and vegetables (dasheen, yams, green bananas, sweet and sour mango) are prepared native style and served up, one after the other. For my money, this funky little spot is the most unique Caribbean restaurant I've encountered ... especially on the days Mama serves up iguana and, yes, monkey meat. My partner and I had good meals at the Calabash, decent at the Spice Island, disappointing at the Ramada -- both breakfast and dinner. We missed dining at "the French Restaurant," on Grand Anse, but the reports were delicious. If you don't rent a car, several restaurants are within a \$5 cab ride of most hotels.

Picturesque St. Georges, jammed with narrow hillside streets, is surely worth a couple-hour stroll. Visit the fish market; photograph the boats in the harbor; observe the formal police use mime to move the traffic. The country roads, lined with mango trees, coconut palms and tropical foliage, can lead you to small towns, or to a 2000-foot mountain pass where nature trails abound, to the old airport, where rusting Cuban and Soviet planes are a testament to the past. In fact, at the airport, young boys lingering near the planes, sold us Arawak Indian artifacts, mainly bird and animal heads, from broken pottery, for less than \$1 a piece. More than 300 years old, good ones command about \$20 a piece in New York, Charlotte Greene reported.

Unless better reefs get discovered, Grenada will have one purpose for serious divers: the Bianca C. For normal divers, two, three, maybe four dives will be enough. For a wreck nut prepared to penetrate, 2 dives a day, everyday, may not be enough. A group of wreck divers can have a good time here, assuming they have worked out their desires ahead of time with Hans. A couple of wreck divers may only get 2-4 dives on the Bianca C in the course of a week. If other divers in the hotel have different ideas about the diving they want, Hans, as you can expect, will be obliged to see that all divers get what they want. On those days you might make the dive with HMC if space is available.

Having visited nearly every Caribbean island, I found Grenada as beautiful, and its people as pleasant, as any. I trust that in the next year Hans and HMC will search for better reefs. If they're successful -- and if I could be assured

that the visibility gets to the 100 feet that some people claimed, but no reader of this publication has ever reported -- then I could kick back on Grenada for half a year, live on dasheen and monkey meat, and never call home.

Divers Compass: Horseshoe rooms run about \$100+/day, depending upon season and room; write for a brochure to POB 174, St. George's, Grenada, West Indies, or call 809/444-4410 or 444-4244; if you're a serious wreck diver, call ahead to discuss your wishes with Hans to see if they can be accommodated; to make reservations at the Ramada, call 800/272-6232; rates run about \$95-120 per night off-season, \$170-195 per night on-season. Watersports packages are available. . . . At nightfall, mosquitoes were pesky, repellent hard to come by; bring your own. . . . you'll need a convertor for charging strobes; electricity is 220. . . . nonstop flights arrive from NY; otherwise a change of planes in Barbados is the normal route of arrival. . . . If you want a car on Grenada, have your hotel arrange it for you when you make reservations.

C.C. travel editor

Readers Report: Part III

CALIFORNIA: It gets downright cold at depth, but life among the kelp beds is unique. The leading California dive boats -- Truth, Conception, and Vision -- are operated to the Channel Islands from Santa Barbara by Truth Aquatics. Lee Jones (San Jose, CA) says "Kelp diving at its best. Variety of critters rivals all but best Caribbean diving. I've been on several Truth Aquatics dives and can't wait to get back. Boats are clean and comfy, overnight accommodations luxurious for a relatively small boat (60-100 feet). Captains are top notch and serious divers themselves. Crew is generally very helpful. On the right days I'd rather dive the Channel Islands with Truth Aquatics than almost anywhere in the world. (Except Tiara Beach.)" (805/962-1127).

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC: Last November, David Day (NY) traveled to Puerto Plata and the Jack Tar Village. He reports: "A beautiful country filled with beautiful people. Divemaster (from Spain) not knowledgeable and a smart-ass. Water sports were supposed to be included in the one-week package @ \$1400. But cost \$40 for a two-tank dive trip. Tanks very old and not inspected. Prices are so low for everything that packages made stateside are overpriced."

FIJI: No doubt about it, diving is super. We reviewed Dive Taveuni several years ago, and readers still give us the business for picking on Ric Cammick the dive operator. But things have changed. Ric has developed super accommodations and gotten a new boat. Honolulu's William "Pili" McGrath, there a year ago says, "The bures were outstanding from the great ocean view to the very comfortable beds. Family style meals an excellent blend of English, Indian, and Fijian dishes. Trips to the first dive were nearly an hour: depths to 80 feet with lots of soft corals in "zinging colors," anemones with fish, anemones eating fish, white tipped and grey reef sharks, large Napoleon wrasses, schools of barracuda, big jacks, tuna, many groupers, millions of purple and orange finger size fish, jillions of fusilers. Best diving not always accessible due to high winds and huge tides. On marginal diving days the excellent guides got to demonstrate their gear recovery and lifesaving skills on marginal divers. One dive was a virtual keystone cops episode of dropping dive knives, falling weight belts, exploding CO masks and cameras flying through the surge. The far Pacific is not Bonaire. It is not a friendly bathtub. This is the big league. It would be wise to do about 50 Caribbean dives before considering exotic Pacific diving. Afternoon dives were good to very good dive on coral gardens. Many fish, soft

corals, small groupers, eels. Water in mid-August was a chilly 76o, definitely wet suit country. \$50 U.S. a day for room and board each; \$45 for two tanks.

Robert B. Boye (Bernardsville, NJ) is writing a book entitled Jewels of the Sea, featuring the best dive sites in the world. He wrote: "Carl Roessler said we had to dive in the Somosomo Strait to fully experience Fiji. That meant Dive Taveuni, a labor of love hacked out of the surrounding jungle. Comfort, sophistication, and friendliness describe the tiny resort. The boat -- custom built aluminum, comfortable for 10-12 divers -- is located in a safe harbor thirty minutes' drive away, time well spent seeing Taveuni Island. Ric and the excellent crew chose sites to minimize exposure to the currents and maximize the incredible visibility. While they are quite willing to leave divers alone, they are enthusiastic to point out some of the unusual critters and creatures. When the tide is right and the white soft corals are feeding, the sheer "Great White Wall" is, indeed, white -- an incredible sight, even if it now starts at 90 feet due to a typhoon. Although only two tanks a day, this is quality diving, unspoiled and special. Dive Taveuni is a jewel of the sea."

For a contrary review, Tracy and Hermann Pelz (San Mateo, CA) add: "Dive operator totally lax -- sending in uncertified guides at times and giving no dive briefs. The diving for us experienced divers was beautiful, but several inexperienced people were unnerved enough to not make their 2nd dives."

At the Nakoro Resort last November, Jack & Geraldine Murphy (Pacific Palisades, CA) wrote "Dive boat with six divers crowded; 2 out of 5 days boat turned over to fishermen. Long boat rides, do everything yourself, not much to photograph. Hotel nice but not friendly. Would not return."

The Qamea Beach Club, says Harry Kahn (San Francisco), "Seems to cater to hearty Aussie pallets as heavily 'greased' meat dishes dominated the menu. Diving opportunities, diving staff and much else is nearly ideal. Room, all meals and daily diving: \$1100 per week." Bob and Elise Kremer (Marlborough, CT), report that in May they "had almost constantly rainy weather. Assume this was just bad luck. Management's attitude toward Fijian staff paternalistic and condescending -- caused tension among guests. Dive guides attentive and fun, made every effort to optimize diving despite poor weather. Although native style accommodations, generally succeeds as a luxury resort. Less conducive to serious diving than Taveuni." Mary Peachin, (Tucson) adds: good divemaster -- very conservative. Not exciting enough for hard core divers -- like me -- but great for my husband. Great place for honeymooners."

Correction

Sherwood has not recalled the Magnum II regulator nor the Oasis regulator as reported in the August 1988 issue. The error was due to miscommunication between Sherwood and *Undercurrent*, and both parties regret the error.

The liveaboard Pacific Nomad, charter by See and Sea, says Brenda Anderson and Larry Baker (Sutter Creek, CA) is "Very spacious. Large schools of barracuda, some sharks, large turtles, beautiful hard and soft corals. Great crew sang, played instruments at night. Best dive trip ever."

Last year we printed not-so-kind comments about the "Plantation Inn Resort." The owner of the Plantation Island Resort, Les Fields, wrote us. "I trust your reader is not referring to Plantation Island Resort, the home of Aqua Trek. Our professionalism has earned us the dive service contract for the prestigious Club Naitasi and nearby Musket Cove Resort. So complete is our facility that PADI Australia is arranging an I.T.C. here. Your reader was at another resort."

Savu Savu was the destination of David & Suzanne Leeson-Vickery (Hoboken, NJ). "Divemaster a great guy, but he does not always go out. Once they rolled me backwards into the water before I was ready. Another time my wife and I were in the water having agreed to hang at 10 feet to wait for group. They never came. They went off on the surface away from us. We were never missed. Boat too small to ride the choppy seas comfortably. Wet season is December."

To book Fiji: Tropical Adventures, 170 Denny Way, Seattle, WA 98109 (206/441-3483; 800/247-3433). See and Sea Travel, 50 Francisco St. #205, San Francisco, CA 94133 (800 div-xprt; 415/434-3400). Adventure Express Travel, 185 Berry St., #503, San Francisco, CA 94107 (800/443-0799; 915/442-0799). Aqua-Trek, 1980 Mountain Blvd., Oakland, CA 99611, 415/330-2550). Sea Safaris, 3770 Highland Ave., #102, Manhattan Beach, CA 90266 (In California: 800/262-6670; 800/221-6670).

Those Pending Cases Against PADI

-- One Threatens To Shake Up The Industry

Two major legal actions against PADI in the Federal District Courts of Ft. Worth and Austin, Texas, continue to drag on. PADI has sought to dismiss the actions, but the courts have found sufficient merit to continue. No trial date has been set as the attorneys for both sides continue to posture.

The initial suit was filed on June 24, 1985 in Ft. Worth by several PADI instructors against PADI, U.S. Divers, PADI corporate officers and selected PADI staff members.

The suit alleged, as we reported in our September, 1985 issue, "that PADI, being controlled by U.S. Divers Corporation, has moved away from being a pure instructional agency to being an organization more interested in promoting the sale of equipment.

"The plaintiffs, led by Don Dibble, the owner of a dive shop in San Marcos, Texas and a PADI Course Director, allege that PADI fails to have elections for members of the Board, operates illegally, and has drifted so far from its original purposes as to be operating as a profit making organization. The suit seeks to put PADI into the hands of a receivership to manage it until these complaints are resolved. In addition, millions of dollars are sought by the plaintiffs on behalf of themselves and thousands of instructors who have allegedly been injured by the PADI/U.S. Divers relationships."

The genesis of this legal action has roots in 1984, when Dibble, who was a PADI Course Director, indicated his concerns about changing the PADI Instructor Training Course from one course to two: the Instructor Development Course (IDC) and Instructor Evaluation Course (IEC). Dibble was present at one of these courses held in San Marcos, Texas in 1985 and called PADI headquarters questioning the standards taught and the quality of the five people who passed.

Subsequently, Dibble received letters of complaint (they appeared to be form letters, differing only because of hand writing or typewriting) from each of the five who passed the courses citing Dibble's lack of professionalism. In addition, Dibble received messages from PADI that he felt were libelous and slanderous. Dibble perceived a conspiracy to cast doubt on his teaching ability and his ability to do business, so he sought legal advice.

In discussion with an attorney, Dibble realized that he did not know who the officers of the corporation were, or what rights he had under the bylaws. The attorney's research disclosed that PADI was incorporated as a nonprofit corporation with a three-member Board whose members held office for life, unless they resigned or were requested to resign by a majority of the Board.

PADI members -- apparently the instructors -- had rights to elect district representatives, who were to become the pool of people from which new board members would be elected by existing board members. But, there seemed to be no way to exercise those rights.

Furthermore PADI, the nonprofit organization, had been surreptitiously sold to International PADI (IPADI), a for-profit corporation. That sale, and the belief that some PADI leaders may have expropriated the organization for private use, seems to be a strong motivating factor in the filing of the suit, which listed some 74 allegations -- quite a stretch from Dibble's original concern about slander or libel.

PADI and other named defendants denied all allegations. They filed a motion to dismiss and countered with a frivolous action suit. The motion to dismiss was denied and the formal process of "discovery" began. (Discovery consists of conducting depositions, and uncovering business records,

correspondence and other materials related to the allegations.)

The plaintiffs have petitioned the court to make this a "class action" suit. If class action status is allowed, every present and past PADI instructor, assistant instructor and dive master will be notified of the suit and may benefit if the suit is successful. Hearings have been held on the petition and the judge's decision is expected by early October.

No one from International PADI, PADI, nor other named defendants would discuss the case with us. However, we obtained several public documents from the Federal District Court which seem to support many of the plaintiffs' claims.

For example, Section 3-Elections of the PADI by-laws states: "with the exception of the original incorporators, the members of the board shall be elected from the committee of regional chairmen."

However, no election of regional chairmen was ever implemented, though PADI members had the right to vote for them. However, at least two members have been added to the PADI board in addition to the original incorporators. Neither was a PADI member.

While PADI had been incorporated as a nonprofit organization, the IRS had refused them nonprofit status.

The by-laws were amended at least twice: once to expand the board from three members to four and once to remove any reference to voting rights or regional chairmen. It appears from the depositions that none of these changes was submitted to a vote of the membership.

In December of 1983 or January of 1984, PADI, Inc. (the nonprofit) was sold to International PADI, Inc. (the for-profit) for \$200,000. Each year, 5% of the principal is to be paid, plus interest on the outstanding balance at a rate of 10%. The board members of both corporations were identical. Furthermore, PADI, Inc. members were not informed of the proposed sale.

The reasons given for this action were: 1) the ability of a for-profit corporation to borrow money, and 2) the ability to attract and keep good employees by offering them stock options.

International PADI, Inc. by-laws still provide for memberships but as John Cronin, past President of PADI and past chief executive of US Divers, explained in his deposition, "Someone who becomes an instructor member ... has the privilege of certifying and the ability to buy goods through the organization ... in essence he is a customer."

Once the sale of PADI, Inc. was completed, there

began a series of additional incorporations, generally referred to as "corporate layering." This is commonly done to protect assets. In his deposition, Cronin described the layering.

CIVCO, a holding company, owns 100% of Forrest Equestrian Center and Professional Association of Sports Educators (PASE).

PASA, another holding company, owns PADI International College and International PADI, Inc. a for-profit corporation, which owns PADI, Inc., the nonprofit.

PADI, Inc. does business as the Poseidon Trust, set up to distribute funds to charitable organizations.

All of these are "closed corporations." Stock is closely held by Mr. Cronin, Ralph Erickson, members of the Board (or Boards) and employees of IPADI.

The Second Suit

Brought in the Federal District Court of Austin, Texas, this suit alleges that PADI, Inc. has violated the Texas Secondary School Act which provides for licensing of those companies providing vocational education and doing business in Texas. The plaintiffs contend that by training diving instructors PADI is engaged in vocational training. They further allege that PADI provides books, certificates, etc., and is thus doing business in Texas.

PADI has countered that they do not do business in Texas. They do not have an office in the state, none of their employees lives in the state, and instruction is provided by in-state instructors in local dive shops.

No trial date has been set for this action.

Who Will Prevail?

Unless a pretrial settlement is reached, both these suits will be tried before a jury. They could involve civil and treble damage penalties.

If the plaintiffs fail, their legal counsel, working on a contingency fee, will be out a considerable sum in billable legal time. If they prevail, PADI as it is now configured, may well disappear. The plaintiffs are asking for as much as \$30 million in damages.

No matter who wins, the internal maneuvering and structuring of PADI is gradually becoming visible for all to see. Only time will tell what that will mean to PADI and the individuals involved.

In the meantime, the influence of PADI in the diving world continues to grow. And PADI continues to expand.

Undercurrent welcomes comments, suggestions, resort/travel reports and manuscripts from readers. Send material to our editorial offices:
Undercurrent, P.O. Box 1658, Sausalito, CA 94965

An Evaluation of Six Fin Designs

-- Do Vents Make A Difference?

Is there a difference in power or exertion in fin designs? That's what professor Igor B. Mekjavic in the School of Kinesiology at Simon Fraser University in Burnaby, British Columbia decided to find out. His work, supported by Seaquest and Mares, was originally published in 1986 in the *Annals of Physiological Anthropology*. Undercurrent takes all responsibility for editing.

Introduction

In a previous study, my colleagues and I found that smaller fins induced significantly higher heart rates, ventilation, oxygen consumption, breathing frequencies and kicking rates. Although the main contributing factor to the differences in physiological responses may be due to the size of the surface area, other design factors may contribute to such differences.

This study of commercially available fins—straight or curved, flexible or rigid, blades with a variety of slots, venturis, vents and stabilizers—was undertaken to examine whether the benefits of these designs could be discerned in the physiological responses of divers swimming against an incremental resistance.

The Fins

The six fins evaluated had adjustable heel straps, but varied in size and design.

All the fins, with the exception of the Mares

graphite and rubber Power Planas, incorporated vents and stabilizers.

The Dacor Turboflex and Aqua Lung Compro use a vent, which would *emphasize the down stroke* during swimming, but provide less power during the upstroke.

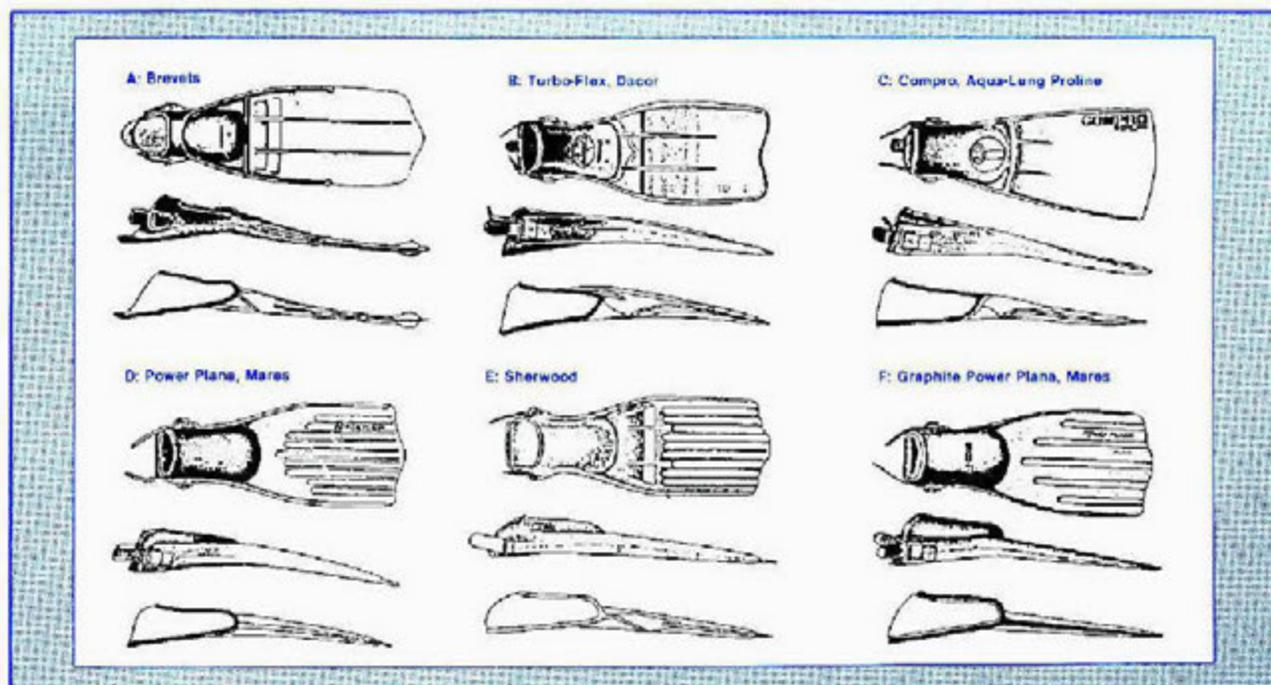
In contrast, the Brevet and Sherwood fins have vents, which would ease the down stroke *but emphasize the upstroke* of a fin kick.

All fins were constructed of synthetic rubber compounds with the exception of the graphite Power Plana. Due to the position and size of the ridges, ribs and vents, the fins had different magnitudes of flexibility.

The fins varied in surface area from 100.3 inches for the Aqua Lung Compro to 117.2 inches for the Brevets.

Method

Six male university students, all certified scuba divers, participated in six 16-minute work trials, using a different set of fins each time. They performed on an underwater ergometer, which required them to be strapped into a harness to constrain their torso, allowing free movements of only the legs and arms while swimming against a fixed resistance. The amount of air used by each diver in each test was measured. The oxygen and carbon dioxide content of the expired air was determined and heart rates were monitored. Two assistants monitored visually the



subjects' kicking rate and breathing frequency. Immediately following the work trial, subjects were requested to assign a rating for the effort they perceived during the trial.

Results

Although, *the differences in physiological responses of subjects wearing different types of fins were not statistically significant*, an identical trend in subjects' responses was observed for the variety of fins evaluated.

The fins with the smallest surface area—the Dacor Turbo Flex and the Aqua Lung Proline—induced *the greatest metabolic demands* on the divers at all four levels of work.

The larger fins—the Brevets and both the rubber and Graphite Mares Power Plana—are *the most efficient*, as determined by comparing oxygen consumption with carbon dioxide production during the test trials.

The *lowest heart rates* were observed when divers used Brevets, the rubber Mares Power Plana and the Sherwood fins.

The *highest kicking rates* were observed for the Dacor Turbo Flex and the Graphite Mares Power Plana.

The *lowest kicking rates* were observed for the Sherwood and rubber Mares Power Plana.

Divers perceived *less effort* when using either the graphite or rubber Power Plana fins.

The results confirm earlier findings that *smaller fins induce a greater cardiovascular, respiratory and metabolic demand on the divers*.

The differences in physiological responses may not be completely attributable to the differences in size of the fins. *The subjects reported a lower rating of exertion when the angle of the vents emphasized the upstroke*. Although the Brevets and Sherwood were the largest fins, the position and angle of the vents emphasizes the upstroke, whereas the down kick would be emphasized with the vent design incorporated by Dacor Turbo Flex and the Aqualung Compro.

Since Dacor Turbo Flex and Aqua Lung Compro also have a similar surface area, the differences in physiological responses observed between the Brevets and Sherwood and Dacor Turbo Flex and Aqua Lung Compro may be a result of both surface area and vent design.

Incorporating vents and stabilizers in fin design does not seem to enhance performance in the smaller fins. Neither the rubber nor graphite Mares Power Plana incorporates any vents or stabilizers, but had physiological responses similar to those with the Brevets and Sherwood fins. If vents are incorporated, they should be designed to emphasize the upstroke, as the Brevets and Sherwood.

Undercurrent Comments: Mekjavic's study basically concludes that much of the hype about fin design doesn't really mean much when the fins are put to any real test.

His basic finding is that you'll work a little less underwater with a larger fin (although you might work a little harder shuttling your dive bag between airline terminals).

Stabilizers and vents emphasizing the downstroke seem to have about as much as effect as coloring a fin lime-green rather than black.

Vents emphasizing the upstroke have marginal value.

There are a couple of ways to tell whether a fin emphasizes the downstroke or upstroke. UCLA's Glen Egstrom suggests picking up the fin and flexing the blade. "The direction which has the most resistance is the one which provides the most power."

John Canna, President of the Sherwood Group, says "you can tell where the power stroke is by looking at the vents. If the vent on the bottom of the fin is raised slightly, it indicates that the power is primarily obtained from the down stroke." What you need to look for is which stroke allows the water to flow smoothly through the vents and which tends to restrict flow. The direction in which the flow is restricted is the one which provides the most power.

Both Egstrom and Canna indicted that there is little noticeable difference in performance of vented fins, regardless of the emphasis on upstroke or down stroke.

Special Report:

The mightiest storm to strike the Western Hemisphere in this century has roared through Jamaica, Cancun, Cozumel, the Caymans and other popular tourist resorts leaving devastation in its wake. Next issue *Undercurrent* will bring you an eye-witness report from a correspondent who was stranded in one of the storm-struck areas.