
Inn with an instructor who she said used drugs. "Since I'm a little new to diving, needless to say diving with a stoned instructor was a little scary. . . . I won't mention his name but he's the only white instructor there."

According to Bowker, a frequent visitor to the Carib Inn told him of the allegations. Much of the Carib Inn's business depends on communication with customers via computer, said Lawrence Levin, the attorney for Bowker and Joslin.

When Bowker investigated the charges made by Jenny TRR and

found them untrue, he posted a message on the same bulletin board rebutting them and asking Jenny TRR to recant, Levin said. When no apology came, Bowker decided to sue for damages, claiming his business had suffered. But first he must find out the identity of Jenny TRR.

"The person who used this abused the privilege of being able to communicate with people worldwide on America Online," Levin said. "This has serious repercussions for businesses."

Several calls seeking comment from officials at America Online were not returned.

Abraham Haddad, chairman of the computer science department at Northwestern University, said the anonymity of cyberspace should be maintained as long as it was not used to commit a crime.

"There's really a need to protect people's privacy as long as no laws have been broken," Haddad said. "What would happen is people would think twice about saying things publicly. That really would be terrible."

Brian Bergstein
Associated Press

Things to Watch Out For

Readers report from the trenches

By the time you read this, our *1996 Traveling Divers Chapbook* will be at the printer, jam-packed not only with your reviews but with all-new information about weather, the seasons to dive, tips on the areas, and more.

"What's a chapbook?" you ask.

chap•book (chap'book) *n.* A small book of popular tales, ballads, poems, or tracts formerly hawked about by chapmen (peddlers or merchants) [1790–1800, chap(man) + book].

John Q. and I are the chapmen, you're the balladeers.

This past year we asked you to report on the good and the bad. In this issue we'll let you know some of the bad. Next time, some of the good.

In the springtime, now and then, sea lice appear off Little Cayman. In May, Allen and Cathy

Williams (San Angelo, Texas) were "attacked by sea lice ('sea bather's eruption') caused by the larval forms of the thimble jellyfish zapping you with their nematocysts. I had about 100 on my neck and the itching was terrible. Advil, cortisone creams, antihistamines and Caladryl help, but time is the only true healer."

That's minor compared to what happened to M. Sorrel (Old Bridge, New Jersey), who in August was on the *Febrina* in Papua New Guinea. "I wore a shorty and must have jumped right onto a jellyfish during a night dive. I was also stung numerous times during the course of the week, even through a Lycra skin. The cumulative effect of the toxins caused a severe allergic reaction (seizure) the second-to-last night of the trip. The captain assumed I was bent, appeared more concerned about liability, and was

ready to have me medically evacuated to Australia. Anything I had to say about how I felt physically was totally ignored. Fortunately, a diagnosis from the local doctor (an adventure in itself) verified the cause."

Speaking of things in the water, Alessandro Usai (Belgium) was diving on the day boat *Aquanaut* in the Red Sea out of Hurghada, Egypt. "None of the boats in the Red Sea seems to have holding tanks for their toilets," he writes. "Surfacing at some sites with more than ten boats around was fairly disgusting."

Rough territory, those tropics. Gigi Ethan Davis (Coppell, Texas) took Lariam as their malaria prophylaxis, but Ethan got malaria after spending three weeks in PNG. "Fortunately only two days of diving were missed. Doxycycline and chloroquine are recommended by those who live in PNG, but the Centers for Disease Control stand firm in recommending Lariam."

Michael J. LaFemina, M.D. (Thousand Oaks, California), a Club Med doc and once medical

supervisor of the Catalina chamber, said of Mexico's Cabo San Lucas: "They mandate \$2 a tank for chamber affiliation whether or not you have DAN or private insurance. With the chamber, significant abuses may be occurring — before the chamber, only a handful of accidents occurred that needed treatment. Dive operators told me that now, if people even say they are tired or generally achy after one or more dives, they get treated. Seems like overutilization to me."

The profile limits set by many Grand Cayman operators continue to get hammered. Of Cayman Dive Lodge one reader wrote, "The restrictions were embarrassing. To tell someone who has been diving 10+ years to limit a dive to 30 minutes on a wall with 80 feet of depth (maximum, not the whole dive) is ridiculous. I spent a lot of money to go there and would not again." And one diver who sends in multiple reports every year but identifies himself only as "PAP" (New York) says, "Fisheye was slightly less restrictive than the Gestapo of other shops, but still fairly rigid in terms of dive profiles. If the Cayman dive policy makers don't look up, experienced and computer divers are going to go elsewhere." Recommendation: Before you prepay diving in the Caymans, verify profile policy. Most operators are strict on depth, but many give more time to computer divers. The *Chapbook* will have plenty of information here.

Other limits annoy us divers, like weight limits and excess-baggage charges. The York Divers (York, Pennsylvania) report a weight restriction from Grand Cayman to Little Cayman "which our group did not know about: fifty cents per pound for baggage over 55 pounds per person. With camera equipment this gets expensive." Indeed.

A reader visiting the Little Cayman Beach resort in November

says they were "afraid to take dive boats out in seas greater than three feet. Divers appeared braver than the operators. On more than one vacation we've found operators afraid of moderately rough seas (3-4 feet). The best operation to handle this has been Sunset House (arguably the slickest operation in the Caribe). It's the diver's choice, the risks are laid out clearly about entry, exit, and seasickness. They put a divemaster and a Johnnie Line in the water to assist getting back on the boat and that works real well." Huzzah! Huzzah!

But let's set some limits here! A fellow named Fulkerson (Anelia, Ohio) said that when he was on the

Buy! Sell! Dive!

Just the thing for the commodities broker in the reader reports on this page is the Aquapac. Looking like a Ziploc bag with room for an antenna, the APQ-M2 Aquapac is designed to protect your cellular phone from salt water. Just slip the phone into the clear bag and start dialing from the deck of the dive boat. Hey, I wonder how deep Aquapac is rated? It's yours for just \$24.95. Call 800-551-0966. Outside the U.S., call 011-44-71-738-4466.

Here's an especially hot tip from Island Dreams Travel for those returning to the States through Los Angeles International Airport. After clearing immigration and getting your luggage through customs, just before exiting the LAX International Terminal you have the option of rechecking your bags for domestic U.S. connections. It seems a great convenience, but think twice before making use of this service. I've been advised, by those who've been burned, to shun this opportunity and instead go to the extra effort of hauling your gear back to the domestic terminal before checking it for home. The reason? This luggage goes down a conveyor belt served not by your airline but by an outside contractor. Divers have recently lost equipment, cameras, and housing at this juncture. They were in the bags when claimed at International and inspected by customs, but missing when the luggage reached home. The extra hassle of hauling your gear to the domestic terminal may be well worth the effort.

dive boat with Fisheye "a commodities broker had a cellular phone in his ear between every dive." Enough, already.

Now, Fiji has some fine diving, but I wonder why people fight those currents in Somo Somo Straits, visited too frequently by the two local operations. Roberta Flanders (Woodridge, Illinois) was at Dive Taveuni in July. "We often swam into three-knot currents, which allowed us only to see the next coral head in front of us. We were told to pull ourselves along on the coral. We try and avoid doing this at all costs; we didn't even have gloves. I was carrying a camera, so that left me with one hand to pull myself along. It would have been easier to do drift dives and have the boat pick us up (there were only 10 of us)." And Marilyn George (Salt Lake City), who went out in May with Dave Dickenson's Taveuni Divers at the Garden Island Hotel, says it's "by far the best shore-based operation I have experienced" and has "the best reef life I've seen (twice as good as Red Sea!)." But, she adds, "strong currents give no freedom to wander from the dive plan, make photography difficult, and kept my inexperienced roommate from diving at all. I enjoyed it immensely, but if we had realized

Hot Tip for LAX

the difficulty, we would have gone elsewhere.”

While Cozumel services seem to be improving, the crowds are increasing too. And there are still pompous divemasters. Gerry and Linda MacDonald (San Jose, California) were at the Club Cozumel Caribe in March. They liked the hotel, but the divemasters continually let them know “how much they are doing and reminding you of tipping. First dive to 90 feet with second to 60 feet, and usually no more than 30 minutes surface interval. Head divemaster stated this is well within ‘new’ PADI guidelines when challenged on surface interval. Majority of divers without computers, so they believed everything.”

Samuel R. Wheatman (Colorado Springs) took an orientation

shore dive with Cozumel Equalizers in March. “Our divemaster told us to swim with the current until 1,500 psi and then return to our entry point. When I questioned the plan, he told me my fins were no good. On another dive he had us swim against the current for 20 minutes, until I complained on my slate. After the dive he told us we were in trouble. He was imperious and blamed the divers (his customers) for everything that went wrong.” Sounds like a fun guy.

Randy Zeilinger (Ecorse, Michigan) joined Hall’s Diving in Marathon, Florida, in July: “There were six divers with no less than 100 dives per diver. We were treated like newbies. All the reefs that we went to were shallow, less than 20 feet. A lot of the reefs showed the abuse of many new divers, with vast

areas of destruction. The charter boat was like renting a horse — it knew only one path, and the trip home was the only time it would run.”

Danny & Judi Laws (Bowie, Texas) dived with Paradise Villas in Belize’s Ambergris Caye in August. “Bought a package dive trip. Don’t ever do this. If you aren’t happy with dive operations, it’s too bad. They have already been paid. For local diving we were booked with Amigas Del Mar. They were rude and belligerent to a beginning diver who panicked after the back-roll entry. I wish I had known how long the trips were to the outer cayes where the good diving was. Staying on Turneffe or Lighthouse makes more sense. You waste your whole day on a slow boat. Four hours out, the same back for three dives?”

Finally, the bad trip of the year award goes to Valerie de la Valdene Seifert, who left the warm water of Jupiter, Florida, last October to dive with orcas from the Norwegian live-aboard *Falcoy*. “I was on board *Falcoy* for 23 days; after nine we saw our first Orca and after that we saw many, but these were not diving conditions. The weather is 36° and it rains and snows into the small holes in the cabins. The boat is not outfitted for diving and the crew doesn’t understand whales, let alone know what they are doing. They would drive their small boat as fast as possible and tell us to ‘drop’ from the boat. Imagine the whales. Nonexistent is a good word. My worst trip ever.”

And one final caution: As our readers report year in and year out, if you’re flying LIAT, TACA, or ALM in the Caribbean, be prepared for late luggage arrivals, lost luggage, and plenty of delays. Carry your essentials with you. See you next month.

Ben Davison

Packing a New Pacific Fish Book

I’m carrying a new fish identification book with me to the Pacific. In the past I’ve lugged Randall, Allen, and Steene’s *Fishes of the Great Barrier Reef and the Coral Sea* around with me because I really like it — despite its five-pound heft. I’ve also used Kuiter’s *Tropical Reef-Fishes of the*

Western Pacific, another excellent book, which is a more manageable traveling size but gives only scientific names of the fish.

Now Rudie Kuiter has teamed up with Helmut Debelius to publish the *Southeast Asia Tropical Fish Guide*. It lists Indonesia, the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, and the Andaman Sea, but I’m sure I’ll be using it for a more extended range.

The book packs more than 1,000 photographs of fish, taken in their natural habitat, into a compact 6 x 9 format. Its high-quality paper and hard cover make me think this book can take the kind of abuse I dish out to a fish guide. Photos are an easy-to-use 2¼ by 3½ or larger and are accompanied by both scientific and common names, along with a short paragraph on each fish’s size, distribution, habitat, and general description.

I think this is one of the better fish books to come along in a while. It’s earned a place in my dive bag, even though I’m working on reducing my luggage weight. The book carries a hefty \$45 price tag, but none of the fish guides are cheap. Order from Ikan Book Service, 300 Shanondoah Ave., Ridgecrest, CA 93555, fax 619-375-5484.

There’s another new book by Gerald Allan, covering not only fish but marine mammals, birds, invertebrates, shells, and more, that I’ll review in an upcoming issue. I’ll be saving a spot for it in my bag as well. And of course, Paul Humann’s revised *Fish Identification* is the thing to pack for Florida and the Caribbean, along with his *Reef Creatures* and *Reef Coral*.

J. Q.