

undercurrent

THE PRIVATE, EXCLUSIVE GUIDE FOR SERIOUS DIVERS

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P.O. Box 1658, Sausalito, California 94965

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The Current Club, North Eleuthera, Bahamas:

The Only Game in Town

Goals. Priorities. Objectives. These concepts are just as essential to Defense Department planning as to planning family travel. Defining your goals ensures that you determine your ends before you select your means. When you know exactly what you want, you'll be more likely to pick the best way to get it.

Before packing your bags for North Eleuthera, you'll profit by carefully determining what you want from your dive vacation. If your objectives are consistent with what the Current Club offers, you'll be in for a delightful stay.

To make my point, you must know what you'll find at the Current Club. It certainly is well publicized and widely known among traveling divers. I must confess, however, I was a bit surprised.

I needed no more than a trip from the airport and a stroll through town to get the picture. When I landed at the airport--its combination waiting room/ticket counter was the size of a two car garage--I was singled out from the six arriving passengers by a cab driver who called my name. We hopped into his '69 Chevy (in three years he had logged over 100,000 miles driving the 10 miles between the airport and hotel) and proceeded down a road usually wide enough for one car and a bicycle, but sometimes barely wide enough for a bicycle. Getting information was not easy, but I did learn that the stores would be open until 9:00 and that he also doubles as the town constable.

At the Club I indicated that I wanted to modify my American plan to sample the food in the local restaurants. The hostess looked surprised. There were no other places to eat she said. The Current Club was it. I nodded, interpreting her statement to mean disapproval of the other local establishments. I would strike out on my own.

It took me eight minutes to cover the streets of Current. Both one room stores were open and at either I could have purchased a can of beans at double stateside prices. There were a score of houses. And that was Current. A tiny charming, isolated settlement boasting the Current Club, its restaurant and its

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bar. It really is the only game in town.

To enjoy the Current Club, one must be satisfied with the simple pleasures: sunning and swimming, fishing, eating and drinking, sleeping and relaxing. It's not luxurious. It's somewhat sparse. It's really not rustic. The diving is terrific. If that's what you want, you may now pack your bags.

The Diving. Riding the current is a thrill of a lifetime and the reefs match just about any in the Caribbean. The raison d'etre for the Current Club is the swift moving tide running between Eleuthera and Current Islands, just a half mile from the hotel. The flow may approach 10 knots, but 4-7 is more likely. I made eight trips, each exhilarating, exciting and exhausting. On my first I was not adventurous. I wanted to get the feel and stay out of trouble. I was amazed with the variety of fish scraping out an existence in the turbulent waters. Some waited for the current to bring them their fare, others poked in coral heads, while others hid in caves until slack tide to discover what had been left. I whizzed past three queen triggers, getting closer to these shy ladies than I ever have. I saw several groupers and large jacks. And gray angels. And one of nearly everything else I find in fish books. So many fish were spending their time stabilizing themselves by swimming against the current, I decided to demonstrate my similar skills. But even a three inch bluehead was stronger than I. The current simply swept me backward as it would a water-logged palm frond.

At top current speed it's difficult to control your direction, so stay alert and enjoy the free ride. Face forward, using your hands to prevent collisions with the walls or coral heads. At slower speeds you have time to look around, turn somersaults, bounce off the bottom as a moon walker would, or swim into holes where the current may stop altogether. The current may suddenly lift you four or five feet, so breathe normally and exhale regularly.

Club Guide Bob Ollier accompanies divers, but it's easy to get separated. He is surely a competent and experienced guide, but was light on preliminary instructions for divers taking their first run. You'll get answers only if you ask questions, so ask all you need to. Assistant David Symonette waits in the boat at the other end of the cut to pick up divers. You'll be supplied with bright orange gloves to facilitate pickup. Don't be afraid to surface early if you experience problems; David is sharp-eyed and will bring the boat alongside in seconds. The ride lasts up to ten minutes. You may cover a half mile or more. Depending upon air consumption, you'll take two or three trips on a single tank. Strength is not the key to riding the current; using your head is.

On later dives I found several caves with large lobsters--Bob pulled the tails off two for his evening dinner--and once observed a large hole filled with scores of conch which, once swept in by the current, are committed for life and an early death. On one ride I sailed over a beautiful six-foot eagle ray. I watched him pass under me and, when I looked up, found myself nose-to-nose with a six foot barracuda. He simply slipped aside, then turned to watch me drift by. Visibility ran as high as 60 feet, but 25-35 is most likely.

I doubt that any diver could ever tire of the ride. The thrill of flying through the water with no props is an experience to relish. As I traveled I would extend my arms as if I were Superman, diving, rising and turning as only

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Superman could. The landscape below me changed from grassy plains to peaks and valleys to clusters of coral resembling small settlements. As I sailed along fish scurried to get out of my path, but I was so speedy that I could pinch their tails before they could hide. Riding the current is alone worth the trip.

Since you won't dive the cut every time, what else is there? Plenty. There are more dive sites than you'll need during a week's stay and hundreds more wait for discovery. Two I visited were fine for beginners or the well traveled diver. Gorgonia and sponges were plentiful and the coral colorful, although the varieties were limited. The macrophotographer will come away as satisfied as the diver who prefers to pet thirty pound groupers. On one day the visibility ranged between 70-110 feet; on another it reached 80 feet, but dropped below 50 as the wind stirred-up the bottom. Visibility may change daily, but it's generally good. According to Bob, April to June is the best period. Stay away late summer and early fall.

Shelling is excellent, but how long will it last? A nondiving family had a bucket full of live shells they had gathered from nearby beaches. Today it may seem as if there is an endless supply, but a few greedy collectors can wipe out any area. A couple of signs demonstrating the concern of the Club--"please take only one of each species"--would help discourage the inconsiderate.

Accommodations: All units have a small living room, plus a bedroom and bath. They're plain but adequate. A touch of paint would help the bathrooms. There's no room service and no other reason to be inside except to sleep and shower. If your life style demands luxury and pomp, vacation elsewhere.

Food: Beware! You may gain ten pounds. For breakfast you may order any standard course. The bountiful luncheon buffet includes several salads and cold meats and at least one hot dish. Carry away a sandwich for a mid-afternoon snack if you wish. For dinner, select from two appetizers, a soup, salad, three main courses, three vegetables and two desserts. The food is hearty, not gourmet. The grouper was superb, the conch salad nicely spiced and the local bread sweet and fresh. After dinner espresso is a welcome touch. Some improvement is possible. The pancakes are leaden. The vegetables, due to island isolation, are usually canned or frozen, but always overcooked. Still, this is nit-picking. Variety and abundance are the highlights.

Entertainment: For the most part you'll have to make your own. Twice a week Rattie, a local calypso singer, holds forth. He's personable and fun and gets better if you buy him a rum. Bartender Everett pours giant drinks for under \$2.

Rates: The Club has just initiated a new winter package: the first two nights at \$195/person double occupancy, and \$62/person/night thereafter. That includes airfare from Miami or Fort Lauderdale via Mackey Airlines, airport transfer, three meals a day, plus unlimited diving. That's a real bargain for Caribbean winter diving travel. Toll free reservations in Florida; 800/432-5594: the package is available through the Delta Airlines computer. Elsewhere; 800/322-8384. Summer rates have not been determined, but may be roughly 10-20% less.

Conclusion: Congenial manager Mike Kaboth and his wife are a fine pair and host a pleasant establishment for a diving vacation--if you want unique diving, a full belly and isolation. If your objectives are consistent with what the Current Club has to offer, you may conclude it's the only game in town.

Diver's Compass: Bring all the gear you need, including film. The Hobo, their excellent 50 foot boat, can handle 20 divers. . . Wet suit tops are useful in winter. . . Keep your eyes open; one lucky diver found two cannonballs during my stay. . . A most annoying feature, no fault of the Club's are the ubiquitous sand fleas; I ignored their viciousness and presumed they would have no effect on a tough current diver; 117 bites caused many sleepless hours while I scratched; bring plenty of strong insect repellent and something to prevent the itches because they're persistent enough to ruin an otherwise calm stay.

Bringing Home the Blennies:

Capturing and carrying home that special fish in your life

Only a diver can comprehend the extraordinary bond that exists between humans and the living world undersea. That a kinship exists is known by every diver who's submerged as an alien creature and then, if he demonstrated no hostility, found himself gradually accepted by the entire underwater community. It's simply spectacular to watch a school of unrelated fish follow closely to nibble at the creatures stirred up by your fins or to wait for you to tackle a sea urchin as gratitude for their friendship. Or to hand feed a giant grouper or a timid moray. Or to play with a damsel fish furiously guarding its territory against an intruder a thousand times its size. We divers are a privileged few to experience a relationship that has existed for 3 million years, knowing that it's been only in the last thirty that man has been able to slip underwater to make contact.

Many divers have carried their love affair with ocean life from the sea bed to their own front room. For them the slurp gun has replaced the spear gun so that they may bring back their own specimens from diving trips. Now, whether you live in Minnesota or Miami, you too can bring home your own live fish from your tropical diving, even in the dead of winter. Here's how.

Tools for Collection

There are two basic tools. Professionals prefer nets because they don't damage fish, they're more versatile, and easy to travel with. Your primary net should be 12-15 inches square, and just about as deep. Some collectors use their free hand to usher fish into the collecting net, while others prefer a second net. Whatever your preference, the best strategy is to keep the large net steady and guide the fish into it. Use the handle of your auxiliary net to poke uncooperating fish out of crevices.

The second fish collecting tool is the slurp gun. Pushing the plunger outward creates a current which the unsuspecting fish turns to swim against and then—slurp! The plunger is drawn back and the fish is vacuumed right into a bag or collecting tube. Slurp guns are a little clumsy to travel with, you're limited in the size of fish you can take, and if you're not careful your specimen can be damaged. It is, however, a handy device for drawing tiny fish out of holes.

You can make your own nets with fine nylon mesh

or order nets or slurp guns through your local dive shop or commercial aquarium.

Bringing Home the Blennies

Now that you've captured your fish what do you do with them? Have your buddy carry a supply of plastic bags (about a foot long, and 8" wide) into which you carefully place your fish—one per bag—and seal with a rubber band. Wire is easier to use, but might puncture the bag inadvertently. If you're collecting a number of specimens, you can store them in an innertube and tow as you go.

Transporting your fish home need not be difficult. In most cases you have about 36 hours to get the fish home once you've bagged them. Each bag should have from one-half to three-quarters of its volume filled with air. And only one fish. Pack the bags in a styrofoam chest—the kind you keep your beer in on the Fourth of July picnic. In the more populated dive areas you'll be able to buy the chest right there. Fill the spaces between the bags with your dirty underwear or newspaper to provide insulation and to absorb shock. Carry the box on the airplane, wrapped tight, and don't open it to see how your fish are doing. Keep it closed to maintain the temperature.

To get your fish home alive, collect the day before you depart. Although it would be ideal to collect the morning of the day you depart, don't scuba dive; should your plane lose its pressurization while you're still retaining nitrogen from the tank dive you'll feel like an uncorked champagne bottle. If you have reason to collect earlier than the day before you depart, you might be able to make arrangements with a local aquarium or a dive shop with an aquarium to hold your fish. Expect a small fee.

Once you arrive home follow the basic rules for introducing any new fish into your home tank, including quarantine, until you've verified that your fish are not diseased.

What to Collect

For your first venture in collecting and transporting tropicals, stick with small varieties of the hardest sort: most wrasses (not the cleaner), clowns and damsel fish; many blennies, and such beauties as the convict tang, french angel, neon goby, pink tailed

trigger, hawkfish, lemon butterfly, squirrel fish, blue chromis, sergeant major and queen angel. If you can't make it with these, you can't make it.

For variation, consider live coral. It can survive up to a year, particularly if you select specimens from shaded areas or deep water and give them plenty of artificial light. Anemones, starfish and urchins can be brought home easily, but should be carried in plastic jars if they look like they can puncture sacks. Sea cucumbers are a snap and make first rate scavengers. Almost all mollusks, particularly cowries, make fine additions. Nudibranchia are hard to keep alive in an aquarium but can be transported. Shrimp can be transported, but are delicate creatures and must be treated accordingly.

If you wish to start a tropical aquarium visit your local aquarium store for information. There are

plenty of varieties to be had for \$3 to \$10 a fish, but a clown trigger may run up to \$150. Keeping a marine aquarium is a complex task. To understand why, get started by reading *Marine Aquarium Guide*, by Frank de Graaf (published by Pet Library). At \$6.95 it provides a wealth of technical information and plenty (90 pages) on tropical species.

There's nothing more exciting than collecting for your own aquarium, but there's nothing so sad as ending up with a box of beautiful but dead tropical fish. Take only those you can use, don't keep them in transit for more than 36 hours (24 is much better), and give them the love and devotion they deserve. If you do, you'll have the hottest aquarium in your home town and, to go with it, plenty of stories about how you saved that little angel fish over in the corner from the jaws of a 12 foot shark.

Meeting Emergency Needs: *It's as easy as yo ho ho and a bottle of rum*

Ever been on a dive boat or on the beach a mile from your car and have one of those simple little emergency needs but didn't have whatever gear or supplies you needed to handle it? Like a pair of pliers? Or tweezers? Or wet suit cement? Or a fin strap? We've never met a diver who hasn't!

Why not go diving fully prepared rather than risk the chance of ruining a dive for you *and* your buddy. All you need to do is anticipate your needs and find a compact container for your collection of odds and ends. It's that easy. Here's what you need.

1. A Swiss Army knife, complete with scissors, awl, screwdriver, corkscrew and a fine array of other items, including a blade or two, at about \$10 or so from surplus stores or even department stores. There's one over \$20 which even has a magnifying glass and tweezers!



Everything you need for those frustrating little emergencies can be carried in this inexpensive utility kit and stowed in your large equipment bag.

2. A screwdriver set (the small ones stored in the handle) with one blade able to fit the screw to your second stage.

3. A small can or tube of wet suit cement.
4. A tube of Zip-Slip for lubricating zippers, stopping mask leaks, or spreading on testy fin buckles and straps to ease adjustment.
5. Several needles of varied sizes and a spool of nylon thread for wet suit repairs or sewing up a ripped bathing suit.
6. A plastic hose clamp for the BC mouthpiece/hose connection.
7. A pair of pliers to pull the hose clamp tight and to unscrew what you have screwed too tight.
8. Two extra CO₂ cartridges even if your vest doesn't use them. You may save someone else's life.
9. Fin straps: 2 sets if your spouse dives.
10. Mask strap: two if your spouse dives.
11. A couple of O rings for the regulator/valve interface.
12. A dust cap.
13. Garden hose repair tape, which stretches and stands up well to water for assistance with wetsuit repairs, taping your knife sheath to your leg if you break a strap, or holding down a bandage.
14. 25 feet of twine.
15. Whatever seasickness pills you prefer, but take one before you get ill.
16. Small tube of sunscreen.
17. Small tube of sunburn ointment.
18. Aspirin.
19. One or two gauze bandages.
20. Half a dozen bandaids, assorted sizes.
21. Antihistamine or nonprescription ointment for scratches, cuts, jelly fish stings, etc.
22. Sudafed, for congestion.
23. Tweezers, if not in your Swiss Army knife.
24. A brief instruction manual for complex first aid procedures (mouth-to-mouth resuscitation, etc.) even if you know your stuff, because if you're the victim someone else might need the help.

And if room allows:

25. A watertight flashlight.

26. An extra regulator mouthpiece because they're not difficult to bite through.

27. Waterproof matches.

28. A foreign phrase dictionary if you don't speak the local language.

28. A half pint of good rum to make you feel better when you realize that you forgot to replace whatever you used up last time out.

Fit the items into a large men's utility case or travel kit that opens on the top. Attach a shoestring or a piece of leather as a zipper puller. The zipper will most likely corrode, so keep it lubricated with Zip-Slip and when you forget, the puller will help

You and the IRS: *An Update*

If you have performed volunteer work as a scuba diver, don't overlook certain tax deductions. Teaching Boy Scouts (for no pay), assisting the local fire department in rescue operations, or inspecting the bottoms of boats owned by charitable organizations can all qualify.

A recent court ruling relating to a person who volunteered for the Civil Air Patrol leads to these conclusions for volunteer scuba divers. None of your equipment costs are deductible, but equipment repairs, overnight lodging, meals necessary to the conduct of your volunteer work, telephone calls,

get it open. Select a kit with a plastic lining (about \$5-\$8) a little larger than your present needs since you will probably add a few items as time passes.

Store the small items, such as needle and thread and O rings, in a small box similar to the kind in which a diver's compass comes packed. Or in a cuff-link box. Metal corrodes in salt air so use plastic. For items that must be kept dry, wrap them in a small plastic bag of strong gauge and keep the top wrapped tight with a rubber band.

Organize your emergency kit now before your next dive. When it comes time to depart you probably won't have the time. Don't take the chance of having both you and your buddy left behind because you can't make the repair you need.

some materials and supplies, and mileage charges to the site of your activity (at 7¢/mile), plus parking and tolls, are most likely deductible.

Charitable organizations include religious, scientific, literary, and educational organizations, as well as government agencies such as police departments or civil defense agencies. A committee formed to create an underwater park which will be administered by a government agency should also qualify. Consult your local tax consultant for definitive information and read *You and the IRS* (Undercurrent, September).

Beating the High Cost of Dive Vacations:

Organize groups or take advantage of brand new airfare/hotel plans

The greatest travel savings for divers are generally found in organized group travel programs, the kind which your dive shop or dive club has most likely organized. Group travel rules have required that 15 or more people take the same flight, stay at the same hotel, and participate together in the group resort activities. Because of the economy of numbers the cost of the package is less to each diver in the group than it would be if he were traveling alone. The tour organizer often has the option of reducing the cost even further or receiving free transportation and accommodations for one person per every 15-20 people in the package.

By participating in organized dive trips, the individual diver has several advantages: reduced rates, plenty of buddies for diving, and a usually congenial group of divers with which to swap stories, compare notes and drink a beer or two.

There are virtually no requirements for organizing a tour, save making the reservations and putting up the money plenty of time before the trip. To become a tour organizer for your dive club or group of diving buddies, pick a destination then write to

find out the group rates and how many people are needed before there's a free space or reduction in the rates. Work it out with both the hotel and dive boat operator, but if you've selected a spot where the accommodations and diving are managed by the same people, your task will be easier. Talk to the airlines (the major ones have personnel who handle group travel) and get their requirements. Talk to your friendly travel agent for any tips, or have the agent put together the package. Don't overlook items such as ground transportation and special entertainment. Once you have all the information, get a sizeable deposit from the number of people you need to complete the package so the trip doesn't fall through. And, have a person or two for back up in case someone can't make it at the last moment.

A new plan for individuals

A recent ruling by the Civil Aeronautics Board has now extended to the individual diver many of the savings previously available only to the organized group. Liberalized charter flight rules now permit airlines, in conjunction with resort hotels, to offer

airfare/hotel packages to many good diving areas that are in many cases cheaper than the airfare alone!

The so-called "OTC's" meaning "one-stop tour charters," have no membership requirements, leave from big and small cities, and have a 30-day advance signup requirement for intercontinental flights and a 15-day advance requirement for Caribbean, Mexican, or US destinations.

Hotels in the package are often the middle range hotels which means the accommodations are good, but not luxurious. Most often you'll be located in the tourist area of the resort community so you shouldn't have much trouble getting to the dive shops and charter boats. Some OTC's include tours and sight-seeing you might not want to take—surely you'd

rather be diving—but if the price is right take the package and just skip those activities in which you're not interested.

Some examples of eight day/seven night hotel/full airfare packages are:

New York or Philadelphia to Honolulu: \$359

Dallas to Tahiti: \$629

Boston to St. Maarten: \$410

New York to Greece: \$411

San Francisco to Montego Bay: \$399

Chicago to Nassau: \$365

New York to St. Thomas: \$299

In this time of inflation, it's refreshing to be served new travel bargains. For full details, call your travel agent.

Underwater Photography: *How and where to spend your money*

Many travelers to the Caribbean take a pocketful of dollars with them to indulge in the fascinating camera bargains they've heard so much about. In the August issue of *Undercurrent* we reported, after comparative shopping at several Caribbean freeports, that there are better deals on photo equipment in the States—if you know how to find them. As we promised, here's where to look.

For nearly all underwater camera accessories, the best place to buy is of course your local dive shop. Since underwater photography is a highly technical subject you probably won't be able to get all the information you need in a single shop. Ask questions until you get your answers.

With the exception of information about the Nikonos, the best information about cameras and land strobes is generally found at reputable camera stores. Urban areas usually have a good store or two which, along with having plenty of information and the ability to service your camera gear, may discount most equipment from 10 to 15 percent. In many stores salespersons have the latitude to bargain, so try some of the old tricks like making a lower offer than the discounted price quoted by the salesperson, then walking away if your offer is refused. Go browse in the corner for awhile, near the exit, and wait for a counter offer. Paying cash rather than using a credit card may get you a reduction, but you have to ask. If you have a camera to trade in, don't get the trade-in price until after you have gotten the lowest price on the camera you're buying. Then, don't expect much for the trade-in, but you will have the lowest possible price.

Surprisingly low prices are available from discount mail order camera stores. You shop either from a price list or by sending them a statement of what you want and asking for a quote. You can telephone your order to most of these stores and charge it to your bank charge card. If you live outside the state in which the store is located, you pay no sales

tax, but a shipping charge of up to 5% may be added. Delivery time ranges from one to three weeks, but if there is to be a delay most stores will inform you. The equipment should always carry a manufacturer's warranty (if that is not stated in the price list, ask when you order) so it can be serviced locally under that warranty. Mail order stores have terrific prices, but you have the disadvantages of having to wait, of not being able to compare items side-by-side, and having to wrap up the goods if you have to return them. If you're patient, however, you can save a lot of money.

Here are ten reputable mail order camera dealers. Their discounts run up to 40% of list, higher on some specials. Unless otherwise stated, they all accept BankAmericard and Master Charge in telephone orders, require certified checks for immediate shipping of mail orders, and will send you a free price list or a quote on specific equipment if you request it. Beside each is an example of one item from their November price lists.

Cambridge Camera, 45 7th Ave., New York, N.Y. 10011; (212/675-8600 or for orders only call toll free 800/221-2253). 20 day refund guarantee.

Sekonic Marine Meter, I-164, B11, \$78.95.

Camera Discount Center, 89A Worth St., New York, N.Y. 10013; (212/226-1014). **Vivitar 202 strobe, \$21.95.**

Competitive Camera, 157 W. 30th St., New York, N.Y. 10001; (212/868-9175). 2% charge card fee. **Hasselblad 500 CM/A12 Magazine and New Black 80/2.8 planar, \$799.95.**

Cost Plus Cameras and Electronics, 8038 N. Central Park Ave., Skokie, Ill. 60076; (312/676-2010). 3% charge card fee. **Honeywell 780 Strobonar, \$110.90.**

47th St. Photo, 67 W. 47th St., New York, N.Y. 10036; (212/260-4410 or 800/223-5661 for orders only on a toll free line). 20 day full refund guarantee. Now selling camera/Ikelite housing combinations.

Canon GIII 1.7 with Ikelite Housing, \$174.50.

Franks Camera, 5631 N. Figueroa St., Los Angeles, 90042; (213/255-0123 or out of state toll free orders taken on 800/421-8230). **Kodak XL330 Super Eight Movie Camera, \$87.99.**

Olden Camera, 1265 Broadway at 32nd St., New York, N.Y. 10001; (212/226-3727). Accepts mail trade-ins and sells used cameras. **Nikon Photomic F:1.4, \$504.50.**

Olympic Camera, 828 W. Olympic Blvd., Los Angeles, 90015; (213/746-0575 or out-of-state toll free number for inquiries and orders is 800/421-8588). They pay shipping costs. **Fujica AX-100**

Single-8 movie camera with f1.1 lens in marine housing, \$157.62.

Ritz Camera, 11710 Baltimore Ave., Beltsville, Md. 20705; (800/638-4480 is out-of-state toll free number for quotes and orders). 50¢ charge for catalogue plus bonus coupon. **L-86 Sekonic light meter, \$13.95.**

Wall Street Camera Exchange, 82 Wall St., New York, N.Y. 10015; (212/944-0001). Accepts mail order trades. Ten day full refund privilege. **Nikonos III, with 35mm lens, \$279. Lists at \$399.50.**

Now with all this fine equipment, it won't be long before you see your photo on the cover of *Skin Diver*. You're on your way!

Free Flow



One of those little known but startling facts that we long to learn is that no Hollywood stuntman has ever been killed while engaging in a scuba diving stunt, but then fighting such formidable foes as The Creature from the Black Lagoon and Bruce, the inimitable star of *Jaws*, doesn't encourage us to award badges for courage... And speaking of stuntpersons, of which there are a few, the Bent Hose Award goes to the stuntman who testified on OUR side in Los Angeles. He claimed that with the LA Dive Law in effect, stuntmen who used their scuba cylinders for other purposes (such as a hidden air supply in raging fire scenes) and were not certified divers could not get their tanks filled in dive shops! The County Supervisors were polite enough to keep their giggles to themselves, although more than one must have wondered why 20th Century Fox could create earthquakes, tidal waves, monsoons and infernos, but not have a compressor suitable enough to pump up a pony tank.

From St. Thomas, Linda Ellis of the Virgin Island Diving School wrote to say that in our review of their operation we implied that it was their policy to take uncertified divers on their charters, but she corrects us to say that they take no uncertified divers. "The fact that an uncertified diver slipped in (after telling

us that he was certified) has caused us to check certification cards more closely," Linda says. Though an uncertified diver would be safe in the hands of the VI Diving School folks, we're pleased we helped them tighten up a bit. That's what Undercurrent is all about.

That new AMF strobe is a Subsea in disguise. Shop wisely... Glen Brown of Burbank wrote to us about his love affair with his aluminum tank and wants to rap our knuckles for saying that the aluminum tank costs \$150 more than the steel tank, which we didn't say. What we did say was that if you already have a good steel tank why not keep it? Aluminum is excellent, but if you maintain your steel tank, it too will last for a lifetime, which for divers means 20-30 years of active diving. One test found the life expectancy of the aluminum tank (3000 psi filled to 2475) to be 850 years, which most of us won't need... Out of Lahaina, Orley Paxton tells us "it's damn EASY to get bent on a single 72 foot tank dive," and he's not full of hot air. If that was not stated strong enough in the October issue, we'll state it again. You *can* get bent on one tank. So plan your dive. And, thanks for the important reminder. Orley... A number of photographers prefer double hose regulators because they claim fish are frightened by exhaust bubbles flowing from the mouth-held second stage. Bubbles from behind the head the fish seem to ignore.

Cuba is building two luxury resorts in anticipation of mellowing U.S./Cuba relations. Rates are expected to be rock bottom to attract tourists away from other Caribbean spots. Apparently one resort will have diving facilities nearby, but don't look for business ventures. It will be sometime, if ever, before Castro will allow American business to return.

Correspondents located strategically in the major diving areas of the world as well as on all coasts and major inland waters of the continental U.S.

The editors welcome comments, suggestions and manuscripts from the readers of Undercurrent.