

# undercurrent®

THE PRIVATE EXCLUSIVE GUIDE FOR SERIOUS DIVERS

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## The Great Barrier Reef, Australia

### *Air rate reductions put the Great Reef within reach*

Having listened to the dreams of divers over the years, I've noticed that the fantasies can be divided into two categories: "things I want to do" and "places I want to go." As to the former, every diver dreams of discovering a galleon loaded with gold, but most realize that the chances are slight on a two tank dive led by a Grand Cayman divemaster out of Seven Mile Beach. The fantasy, then, is really a wish because it is nothing we will pursue. There may be other fantasies--capturing a 10 lb. bug, seeing one's first shark, photographing dolphins at play--but none seem to be shared to any great degree.

On the other hand, divers do seem to share fantasies about destinations. Most divers dream of diving the Truk Lagoon, the Red Sea or the Great Barrier Reef, but presume that before they undertake their adventure they will have to discover that elusive Spanish galleon loaded with bullion just to afford the airfare.

No more. In July, Continental Airfares announced roundtrip airfares from Los Angeles to Sydney for as low as \$495 and for a bonus one may stopover in Hawaii, Fiji or New Zealand. Currently the fares are valid during a few specific months, some of which have decent diving, and jump to \$600 or so for the better diving months. Quantas, too, has fares in the \$600 range. So, with inexpensive fares at hand a trip to Sidney may not cost much more than a trip to Belize and in that case it makes good sense to provide our readers with a review of a recent trip to the Great

Barrier Reef, filed by an Undercurrent correspondent. The Undercurrent staff travels anonymously and never receives reduced rates from tour operators. This correspondent, however, was a member of a group of photojournalists and did receive some break in prices for the trip. This story, however, has been written anonymously; Undercurrent was not involved in planning the trip. We stand by the story as accurate and consistent with the principles of Undercurrent reviews.

C.C., Travel Editor

Flying to Australia from the United States would be nearly fatal for a restless claustrophobe. Sitting on a Quantas 747, ten abreast, for sixteen hours be-

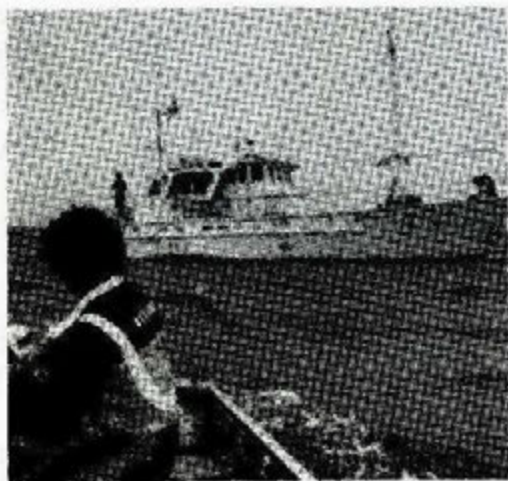
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tween San Francisco and Sydney, is indeed a drill. My plane was chock full and I'd already seen both movies. My first sense of relief occurred when I was greeted warmly by smiling customs agents in Sydney, but my trip was not over. My port of embarkation would be Cairns (pronounced "Cans"), a coastal city nearly 1,500 miles north of Sydney. Getting there required another flight, a change of planes in Brisbane, several stops along the way and additional airfare of \$350 (now \$250). We were met at Cairns airport by a modern bus, whose driver provided a fine guided tour, stopping at a bank so we could exchange American dollars for Australian and at a liquor store so we could load up with potables. The next stop was the moorage of The Auriga Bay, the 50-foot craft destined to be our floating home for a week. Upon our arrival, the ship's crew nearly expired when our mountain of luggage erupted from the bus. The eight divers, they were soon to learn, were eight photojournalists who carried a different camera for every fish species, enough strobes to outfit a disco and a variety of gizmos sufficient to reconstruct R-2-D-2 (or so it seemed). As we dragged our gear aboard ship, Skipper Barry May frowned at the falling mist and assured us that what we would see during the next week would make up for the drizzle or, for that matter, any other troubles befalling us.

Though it was grey and dreary above the surface, the colors in the 80° water below burst into brilliance with every flash of our strobe. The range of fish life along the Great Barrier Reef is stunning, comparable in variety perhaps only to the Red Sea. The coral trout (really a cod) is sun-kist orange with fine blue speckling and a purple circled eye. Equally spectacular are the chinese footballer, the barramundi (also a tasty little devil) and the white-lined, tomato and blue spotted cods. Clouds of banded humbugs, black tail humbugs and reticulated humbugs swirl around the stands of staghorn corals. And the parrotfish are surprising, especially the black-eyed, the surf, the green-finned and the blue-barred orange parrotfish. Many fish have unique features and habits. Take the long nose trevally. It grunts when it's captured. Or the snub nosed dart, that has a powerful set of bones in its throat for crushing oyster shells. And when oogling the fish don't put your hand in to a giant clam. They range from 6 to 30 inches across and the smaller ones close tight enough to crush a rock (which I verified with my own test).

On one dive alone I counted fifty different types of hard coral, three types of soft coral, more than 100 barracuda hovering together, two dozen lion fish, a school of 60 large jacks, several nonthreatening reef sharks and at least 30 species of reef fish. On just about every dive a shark or two was spotted, but one descent on the outside passages of the Great Reef is particularly memorable. It was if I were visiting a social promenade. Before me paraded scores of sharks: gummy sharks, whaler sharks, weasel sharks, little blue sharks and many varieties of reef shark, all taking their sweet time as they ambled along, seeming to have little to do other than to cruise the reefs, just as teenagers might cruise Main Street. I spent most of the dive with my back against the coral wall, hoping to be inconspicuous, but still firing away at these hulking creatures; some seemed to reach 15 feet in length and approached as close as 10 feet. Although I saw no aggressive behavior, I have no



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doubt I was in a mild state of shock throughout the entire dive. Otherwise I would not have had the courage to stay. Indeed, the experience was incredible.

We would make four or five dives a day, including a night dive. Here, 30 to 40 miles from the mainland, the boat would move among the bommies (the Australian term for their unique coral heads) which would rise like skyscrapers from the bottom (never deeper than 70 feet). Some bommies were but 20 feet in circumference while others had the girth of a house. Some were solitary while others would rise in clusters, creating a diverse underwater community. We would dive whatever bommy caught our interest, moving on when we had had enough, obviously careful to navigate between the tips of those which rose to the surface.

Although we believed early April to be the beginning of the diving season, the mist which greeted us turned to rain and for our first three days 20 mph winds, with stronger gusts, brought 4-6 foot waves and 30-60 foot visibility, far less than the expected 50-150 foot visibility. On our fourth day the winds increased to 40 mph and the waves rose between 6 and 8 feet. We latched down everything movable and would go on deck only with a buddy, wearing our masks to see through the driving rain. Outside the Reef we could see 15-25 foot waves crashing. We continued to dive, however, until Skipper May told us that the Australian Weather Bureau has christened the storm "Tropical Cyclone Stan" and that even our veteran group should no longer brave the giant waves. Here, 70 miles out of Cairns and 40 miles offshore, we quickly concurred and strapped ourselves to our bunks for a 2 1/2 day journey through fifteen foot swells back to port.

Throughout our venture the ship proved seaworthy and the crew performed admirably. Not only was Barry May an excellent skipper, but he spun fascinating yarns to turn our attention from our queasy stomachs. He began diving in the 1950s, fashioning his equipment from spare vacuum cleaner parts. After opening a sporting goods business, he became a commercial diver and told us his experiences, including having a sunken tanker tip over on him while he was cutting it up for salvage. Last February, May launched the steel-hulled, Auriga Bay. The Australian government has certified it capable of carrying 12 passengers and 3 crew anywhere in the world.

A worldwide cruise with twelve passengers, however, would be awfully cramped. Even a seven day dive cruise can be difficult. Privacy is nearly nonexistent. A cabin which sleeps four has a passageway through it--perhaps it is a passageway which sleeps four. Four people sleep in a second cabin and two private cabins sleep two each. One head/sink/shower room is below deck and a similar setup is on the main deck. These are not bathrooms but rather sailboat-sized heads. Generally, however, the air-conditioned boat is comfortable--certainly not luxurious--although

### Skindiving in Australia and New Zealand

The West Coast of Australia is longer than the East Coast of the United States and although the Great Barrier Reef may be the main attraction for traveling American divers, abundant and diverse diving opportunities are available along the entire coast. Before planning a trip to Australia, consider subscribing to their major dive magazine *Skindiving in Australia and New Zealand*. The articles and advertisements will provide the reader with a substantial understanding of the nature of the diving and the charter and beach diving possibilities. We have been unable to determine the precise subscription rate for American subscribers, but we suspect that \$17 U.S. would bring you via surface mail a one year, 10 issue-subscription to this 60-page illustrated magazine. Send \$17 or write for more information to Oceans Enterprises, 11 Parkview Court, via media, Box Hill, Vic. Australia, 3128.



I am certain some divers coming halfway round the world would prefer better accommodations. My primary concerns about a dive boat, however, are the quality of construction and the state of repair and, of course, the skill of the skipper. Our trip put The Auriga Bay to the full test and it performed with the highest of marks.

Food was tasty and ample. Dinner one night featured an excellent pork roast, another night fresh coral trout. There were always fresh vegetables, potatoes, soup or salad and a dessert such as cheesecake. Lunches were often sandwiches, hot or cold, with soup. Breakfast seemed never to be scheduled, oddly enough, but when one asked for breakfast, eggs and toast appeared quickly. Americans have a propensity for snacking, which does not seem to be the custom down under, and food was only available during mealtime. One could get pretty hungry after a dive, but still have to wait.

But no matter how competent the captain and his crew, only The Big Captain can ensure the right weather for a dive trip and since I'm not ready to board His boat I can only wish that I had done a little better planning for the seasons. The best dive months are the Australian spring, beginning sometime in August and running in- to November. May into August can be decent, although the weather is a bit cooler and winds can hurt the diving and the passengers comfort. December through April are prone to wind and rain--as I painfully learned.

If one is to suffer through 26 hours of travel time to get to Australia, a week or more ought to be devoted to touring. Although I flew to Sydney from Cairns, with a stopover in Brisbane, I would recommend driving or taking the train. The long trip down the coast, where most of the 13 million Australians live, is through rolling and verdant countryside and provides plenty of opportunity to introduce oneself to non-tourist, smalltown Australia. It's not much different than middle America in the 1950s. Along the way there are plenty of hotel rooms for \$15 and up. Any travel agent can provide more complete information.

Of course, the main reason for divers to visit Australia is to snuggle up to the wonders of the Great Barrier Reef. Indeed, the diving is as good as everyone's fantasy has made it out to be. And with the new airfares, many divers will be able to transfer that fantasy into a reality. Not long ago, I considered my trip to the Great Barrier a once-in-a-lifetime venture. Now, it looks like I'll be able to get back again. Like maybe next year.

Divers Compass: The Auriga Bay makes 5-, 7- and 11-day trips; the rate is roughly \$125/day, (U.S.)....For information write Australian Travel Scene, Level 16, Bondi Junction Plaza Tower, 500 Oxford St., Bondi Junction 2022, Sydney, NSW, Australia (phone 389-7000)....Convert U.S. dollars to Australian before departing since the George Washington dollar gets the same consideration in Australia as the Susan B. Anthony dollar does in the U.S....You will need a U.S. passport with an Australian visa, which can be obtained at an Australian consulate in the U.S., but apply several weeks before departure....Diner's Club and American Express are accepted, but not necessarily appreciated....Bring a special Australian converter for electrical appliances (they are difficult to find)....To learn about the fish life, pick up a copy of E.M. Grant's Guide to Fishes; it's 600 pages and filled with pictures....And, of course, for a trip on the Auriga Bay, bring all your gear, except tanks, backpacks and weights.

This trip was arranged directly with the Australian Travel Scene. You may get information on this and other Australian trips from the following American tour operators:

Airtour Universal, 241 E. Commercial Blvd., Fort Lauderdale, FL 33334. Atlantis Safaris, PO Box 530303, Miami Shores, FL 33153. Bay Travel, 2435 East Coast Highway, Corona Del Mar, CA 92625. Go Diving, 715 Florida Ave. So., Minneapolis, MN

55426. Metro Travel, 475 17th St., Denver, CO 80202.  
New Trends Travel, 55 1/2 Purchase St., Rye, NY 10580.  
Royal Travel and Tours, 331 West State, Sycamore, IL  
60178.

## Why Divers Die

Part III of this series, begun in the June issue, will appear next month.

# Conflict Between Buddies

## *Undeniable dangers, practical solutions*

A few years ago a close friend told me a story I shall not forget. He and his lady friend were on a diving vacation in Hawaii. Conflicts had developed in their relationship just prior to the trip and they carried that conflict, unresolved, on their diving vacation. For several days an undercurrent of tension dominated their relationship, but neither was willing to lay the issues on the table and seek resolution. Instead, they grumbled through each day without having much fun.

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*"...as he tried to blow air into her BC she imagined that he was trying to kill her by forcing her to embolize"...*

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The morning after a particularly tense evening they boarded a dive boat and went about their business in front of others as if they were a happy couple, while internally harboring their anger toward each other. They checked each other's gear and went over the side, down to about 90 feet. The woman had never been deeper than 60 feet and apparently became slightly affected by narcosis, (as she said later) and paid little attention to anything but the underwater scenery. When it became time to ascend, her buddy tried to get her attention, but she had begun to drift lower and, in fact, had swum away in pursuit of a school of butterfly fish. He knew her air was getting low so he tapped on his tank to catch her attention. She looked, but did not respond to his hand signals to surface or to check her pressure gauge. Instead, she went back to enjoying the diving. He swam over to her. Noting that her air was down to 400 psi and that they were about to exceed no decompression time limits, he signaled her more strenuously to rise, but she pulled away from him. Eventually, he grabbed her hand and tried to pull her upward, but she began to struggle. Having lost her buoyancy, she started to sink, so he grabbed her BC hose and tried to inflate the BC orally. This made her struggle even more and she tried to pull the hose away from him. Nevertheless, he was able to blow in enough air to cause her to rise and he grasped her firmly as they began to ascend. She struggled for nearly twenty feet of ascent until she eventually stopped and began to ascend

without his aid. The dive ended safely.

Later she realized that she had been euphoric during the dive, not paying attention to the time, depth or her buddy. She admitted that she was delighted to be diving and equally delighted to ignore him. While underwater she felt no conflict and tension. She was at peace. But, when her buddy tried to get her to surface, she at first thought he was trying to end the dive prematurely and, in fact, stop her from her pleasure. Then as he tried to blow air into her BC, she imagined that he was trying to kill her by forcing her to embolize and the struggle ensued. She realized after the dive that the anger she felt toward him led to distrust underwater and to fantasies which could have proven fatal. He acknowledged that he had let her go off on her own and that he was aware that she wasn't paying much attention to her depth, but that he wasn't going to give her any advice or perform as a responsible buddy until he had to. Their feelings about each other nearly had fatal consequences when they were translated into a diving buddy relationship.

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*"...unresolved conflict can erode a cooperative attitude prior to a dive, establish a situation underwater where the immutable rules of buddy diving are ignored, or impair cooperation in an emergency..."*

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I work as a Family Counselor and although I don't carry my practice to dive sites, I have indeed noticed a variety of other conflict-laden responses between diving buddies. Two in particular are worth mentioning. The first is an *I don't care about you because I'm doing what I want to* attitude and is best manifested in the diving partners who get separated. A diver might think: "Now why isn't George sticking around me; I want to look here for lobsters and he is off doing something else. Well, I'm staying here." In the meantime, of course, George can be in trouble.

Another possibility is best labeled, if you'll excuse the expression, *screw you* and might be manifested in a response like: "George acts like he knows all there is to know about diving, but look at his straps all tangled up; if he knows so much then he can discover the mess and untangle them himself."

Well, of course, the potential dangers of such bud-

## Getting High On A Reefer:

### *Senator Proxmire jumps on NOAA's lark*

Each month the redoubtable Senator William Proxmire issues his Golden Fleece Award, honoring a federal agency which, in Proxmire's opinion, has fleeced the taxpayer. His July award was presented to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration for a study of scuba divers. Here is the speech the good Senator delivered to his colleagues on the Senate floor:

"Mr. President, yesterday I gave my Fleece of the Month Award for July to the Department of Commerce's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) for spending at least \$6,000 to determine if pot smoking has a bad effect on scuba divers. While the amount may be relatively small, the taxpayers should get high over this one. One might seriously ask, 'Were these trips really necessary?'"

"The experiment was a minor part of an otherwise useful appearing \$726,000 federal grant, matched by \$625,000 from the University of Hawaii, into human performance at sea.

"Ten pot-smoking men students aged 21 to 28 were recruited from a large class at the University of Hawaii. According to the published results entitled 'Marijuana Smoking and Cold Tolerance in Man,' appearing in the *Journal of Aviation, Space, and Environmental Medicine*, 'Specifically we were interested in cold stress similar to that encountered by scuba divers off Hawaii.'

"The effects of marijuana smoking after one- or two-hour exposures to both mildly cold water and cold air were undertaken. After a preliminary hour's rest, the 10 were subjected to one-hour immersions with only their heads above the (82.4°F) water. This was done three times, each on a separate day with a day in between, after smoking pot, after smoking a placebo and after no smoking at all. Similar cold air experiments were performed on the subjects lasting two hours in a chamber with the air temperature at 68°. Dressed only in bathing suits, they were hooked up to temperature gauges attached to nine parts of the body. In addition, breath-holding tests taking from 15 to 30 minutes were involved. While the body core temperatures were essentially unaffected, there were significant losses of body heat, elevated heart action and shivering after smoking pot. The diving aspects of the study were summarized as follows:

"'Marijuana did not produce simple hypothermia during cold exposure at rest, but it did increase heat production, probably due to more rapid and intensive shivering. Thus, it would appear hypothermia during diving is not anticipated. However, the consequences of tachycardia due to marijuana interaction with diving bradycardia may be consequential. Similarly, the observed increase in oxygen uptake might conflict with normally higher VO<sub>2</sub> during swimming. In either case, caution should be suggested until cannabis action on swimmers can be determined.'

"In my view, the Government was at sea on this one. What the study tells us, is that if you smoke pot, do not go swimming, scuba diving or mountain climbing. If there were an unlimited budget, perhaps it might be undertaken. But on the scale of national needs, this experiment seems to have a very low priority.

"Mr. President, I think many Americans might be amused by this, but I think when we recognize the fact that two families, two typical American families, pay all their taxes, \$6,000, for an activity of this kind, I think it is an outrage, and I would be more careful in the future in spending the taxpayers' dollars.

"Finally, a word about costs. While detailed figures for this specific part of the overall project were not available, the Commerce Department estimated the cost at \$6,000, which seems misleadingly low. Here is why.

"Some seven professional researchers signed the academic article. The 10 students were involved for more than 200 hours. A similar amount of time was involved with the lab, breathing equipment, smoking equipment—spirometer techniques were used, etc. The routine charges by universities for lab time, professional salaries, equipment costs, and overhead, apparently not available for this study, are not routinely insignificant.

"All this, plus the cost of the pot itself—I am told \$40 to \$45 an ounce is not an unusual price—would indicate that, at best, the Department's estimate is based on the marginal rather than the total costs."

dy behavior are obvious. These aren't buddy teams. These are divers diving alone, presuming that they are aided by a buddy, when in fact they're not. Indeed, they would be better off diving alone because they would have no expectation of aid from someone else.

So, unresolved conflict can erode a cooperative attitude prior to a dive, establish a situation underwater where the immutable rules of buddy diving are ignored, or impair cooperation in an emergency. Furthermore, and far more common, it can have a subtle effect on the physiology of an individual. Conflict and the resulting stress can increase fatigue. Heartbeat may accelerate. The physiological components of stress may increase one's predisposition to panic. He may find his air consumption substantially increased, thereby cutting his dive short. Or, he may find himself so preoccupied with bad feelings that he simply can't enjoy the dive.

### **Dealing With Conflict And Stress**

Two individuals immersed in conflict, however subtle, would be best off selecting other buddies for their dive. A diver under obvious stress would be better off postponing the dive. But, most people won't observe such simple suggestions, especially if they have arrived on some tropical island for a long-planned dive vacation. They may, however, exercise some preventive measures prior to the trip to ensure that their sojourn will be conflict-free.

Often, conflict can develop while planning a vacation and remain unresolved throughout. Two divers about to embark for a dive destination should clear up all vacation-oriented issues before departing. For example, what are the

*continued on page 9*

# Undercurrent Travel Questionnaire

## Response Requested

Have you taken a dive trip to some famous dive resort recently and found it didn't meet your expectations? Have you discovered a new dive resort or location that other divers might be interested in reading about? If you have taken any tropical trip in the last year, we'd like to hear about it. Your reports will be used to update our world-wide review of diving and appear in future issues of *Undercurrent*. Won't you take a moment and evaluate your last trip for us?

Location being evaluated \_\_\_\_\_

Date of your trip \_\_\_\_\_ Hotel \_\_\_\_\_ Dive shop \_\_\_\_\_

Would you return? \_\_\_\_\_ Did you get your money's worth? \_\_\_\_\_

- |                       |   |  |   |
|-----------------------|---|--|---|
| fish size             | <input type="checkbox"/> large ones plentiful | <input type="checkbox"/> a few big ones      | <input type="checkbox"/> too small to eat   |
| tropical fish         | <input type="checkbox"/> abundant             | <input type="checkbox"/> not bad             | <input type="checkbox"/> sparse             |
| kinds of tropicals    | <input type="checkbox"/> impressive variety   | <input type="checkbox"/> fairly interesting  | <input type="checkbox"/> common ones only   |
| coral                 | <input type="checkbox"/> plenty and colorful  | <input type="checkbox"/> o.k.                | <input type="checkbox"/> kind of a bore     |
| hard soft coral       | <input type="checkbox"/> plenty and colorful  | <input type="checkbox"/> o.k.                | <input type="checkbox"/> kind of a bore     |
| sponges, gorgonia...  | <input type="checkbox"/> very nice            | <input type="checkbox"/> pretty average      | <input type="checkbox"/> not much           |
| caves, ledges...      | <input type="checkbox"/> good variety         | <input type="checkbox"/> some of interest    | <input type="checkbox"/> none worth diving  |
| wrecks                | <input type="checkbox"/> exciting             | <input type="checkbox"/> worth a tank or two | <input type="checkbox"/> none               |
| sharks                | <input type="checkbox"/> a couple for fun     | <input type="checkbox"/> none                | <input type="checkbox"/> too many           |
| shelling              | <input type="checkbox"/> excellent            | <input type="checkbox"/> o.k.                | <input type="checkbox"/> none or prohibited |
| snorkeling from beach | <input type="checkbox"/> some of the best     | <input type="checkbox"/> not bad             | <input type="checkbox"/> nothing to see     |
| photography           | <input type="checkbox"/> top possibilities    | <input type="checkbox"/> average             | <input type="checkbox"/> nearly a bust      |
| water temperature     | <input type="checkbox"/> 80°                  | <input type="checkbox"/> 74°-79°             | <input type="checkbox"/> less than 74°      |
| visibility            | <input type="checkbox"/> 90 ft. or more       | <input type="checkbox"/> 50-90 ft.           | <input type="checkbox"/> less than 50 ft.   |
| rated for advanced    | <input type="checkbox"/> terrific             | <input type="checkbox"/> o.k.                | <input type="checkbox"/> go elsewhere       |
| rated for beginners   | <input type="checkbox"/> terrific             | <input type="checkbox"/> o.k.                | <input type="checkbox"/> go elsewhere       |

- |                              |   |   |  |
|------------------------------|---|---|--|
| rules for experienced divers | <input type="checkbox"/> no restrictions      | <input type="checkbox"/> a little tight       | <input type="checkbox"/> treated as a novice |
| guides for new divers        | <input type="checkbox"/> top-rated            | <input type="checkbox"/> acceptable           | <input type="checkbox"/> lousy               |
| diving frequency             | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 or more tanks/day  | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 tanks per day      | <input type="checkbox"/> one per day         |
| night diving                 | <input type="checkbox"/> frequent             | <input type="checkbox"/> 1-2 times/week       | <input type="checkbox"/> none                |
| boat diving                  | <input type="checkbox"/> two tanks under \$20 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$20-30 for two      | <input type="checkbox"/> over \$30 for two   |
| beach diving                 | <input type="checkbox"/> as good as the boats | <input type="checkbox"/> fair possibilities   | <input type="checkbox"/> no way              |
| dive shop manager            | <input type="checkbox"/> a great person       | <input type="checkbox"/> just does the job    | <input type="checkbox"/> a real bastard      |
| air quality                  | <input type="checkbox"/> no problems          | <input type="checkbox"/> I wondered           | <input type="checkbox"/> I worried           |
| air fills                    | <input type="checkbox"/> 3000 psi +           | <input type="checkbox"/> 2250 psi +           | <input type="checkbox"/> short-changed often |
| new equipment                | <input type="checkbox"/> full range available | <input type="checkbox"/> limited range        | <input type="checkbox"/> come fully prepared |
| rental gear                  | <input type="checkbox"/> everything you need  | <input type="checkbox"/> tanks, wt. belts...  | <input type="checkbox"/> bring everything    |
| repair capability            | <input type="checkbox"/> can handle anything  | <input type="checkbox"/> some repair capacity | <input type="checkbox"/> pray nothing breaks |

- |                     |   |  |  |
|---------------------|---|--|--|
| hotel food          | <input type="checkbox"/> gourmet            | <input type="checkbox"/> surely acceptable | <input type="checkbox"/> ugh!                |
| nearby restaurants  | <input type="checkbox"/> must try           | <input type="checkbox"/> adequate          | <input type="checkbox"/> better off fasting  |
| accommodations      | <input type="checkbox"/> luxury             | <input type="checkbox"/> o.k., decent      | <input type="checkbox"/> far below par       |
| car needed          | <input type="checkbox"/> of no use          | <input type="checkbox"/> only for touring  | <input type="checkbox"/> a daily must        |
| nightlife           | <input type="checkbox"/> swinging           | <input type="checkbox"/> enough            | <input type="checkbox"/> dead                |
| other divers around | <input type="checkbox"/> all over the place | <input type="checkbox"/> a few             | <input type="checkbox"/> hard to find a body |
| locals              | <input type="checkbox"/> helpful, friendly  | <input type="checkbox"/> no complaints     | <input type="checkbox"/> hostile             |
| weather             | <input type="checkbox"/> great every day    | <input type="checkbox"/> o.k.              | <input type="checkbox"/> many bad days       |
| insects             | <input type="checkbox"/> too many bites     | <input type="checkbox"/> now and then      | <input type="checkbox"/> none                |

Comments and comparison to other places visited: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Location being evaluated \_\_\_\_\_

Date of your trip \_\_\_\_\_ Hotel \_\_\_\_\_ Dive shop \_\_\_\_\_

Would you return? \_\_\_\_\_ Did you get your money's worth? \_\_\_\_\_

fish size	<input type="checkbox"/> large ones plentiful	<input type="checkbox"/> a few big ones	<input type="checkbox"/> too small to eat
tropical fish	<input type="checkbox"/> abundant	<input type="checkbox"/> not bad	<input type="checkbox"/> sparse
kinds of tropicals	<input type="checkbox"/> impressive variety	<input type="checkbox"/> fairly interesting	<input type="checkbox"/> common ones only
coral	<input type="checkbox"/> plenty and colorful	<input type="checkbox"/> o.k.	<input type="checkbox"/> kind of a bore
hard soft coral	<input type="checkbox"/> plenty and colorful	<input type="checkbox"/> o.k.	<input type="checkbox"/> kind of a bore
sponges, gorgonia...	<input type="checkbox"/> very nice	<input type="checkbox"/> pretty average	<input type="checkbox"/> not much
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sharks	<input type="checkbox"/> a couple for fun	<input type="checkbox"/> none	<input type="checkbox"/> too many
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visibility	<input type="checkbox"/> 90 ft. or more	<input type="checkbox"/> 50-90 ft.	<input type="checkbox"/> less than 50 ft.
rated for advanced	<input type="checkbox"/> terrific	<input type="checkbox"/> o.k.	<input type="checkbox"/> go elsewhere
rated for beginners	<input type="checkbox"/> terrific	<input type="checkbox"/> o.k.	<input type="checkbox"/> go elsewhere

rules for experienced divers	<input type="checkbox"/> no restrictions	<input type="checkbox"/> a little tight	<input type="checkbox"/> treated as a novice
guides for new divers	<input type="checkbox"/> top-rated	<input type="checkbox"/> acceptable	<input type="checkbox"/> lousy
diving frequency	<input type="checkbox"/> 3 or more tanks/day	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 tanks per day	<input type="checkbox"/> one per day
night diving	<input type="checkbox"/> frequent	<input type="checkbox"/> 1-2 times/week	<input type="checkbox"/> none
boat diving	<input type="checkbox"/> two tanks under \$20	<input type="checkbox"/> \$20-30 for two	<input type="checkbox"/> over \$30 for two
beach diving	<input type="checkbox"/> as good as the boats	<input type="checkbox"/> fair possibilities	<input type="checkbox"/> no way
dive shop manager	<input type="checkbox"/> a great person	<input type="checkbox"/> just does the job	<input type="checkbox"/> a real bastard
air quality	<input type="checkbox"/> no problems	<input type="checkbox"/> I wondered	<input type="checkbox"/> I worried
air fills	<input type="checkbox"/> 3000 psi +	<input type="checkbox"/> 2250 psi +	<input type="checkbox"/> short-changed often
new equipment	<input type="checkbox"/> full range available	<input type="checkbox"/> limited range	<input type="checkbox"/> come fully prepared
rental gear	<input type="checkbox"/> everything you need	<input type="checkbox"/> tanks, wt. belts...	<input type="checkbox"/> bring everything
repair capability	<input type="checkbox"/> can handle anything	<input type="checkbox"/> some repair capacity	<input type="checkbox"/> pray nothing breaks

hotel food	<input type="checkbox"/> gourmet	<input type="checkbox"/> surely acceptable	<input type="checkbox"/> ough!
nearby restaurants	<input type="checkbox"/> must try	<input type="checkbox"/> adequate	<input type="checkbox"/> better off fasting
accommodations	<input type="checkbox"/> luxury	<input type="checkbox"/> o.k., decent	<input type="checkbox"/> far below par
car needed	<input type="checkbox"/> of no use	<input type="checkbox"/> only for touring	<input type="checkbox"/> a daily must
nightlife	<input type="checkbox"/> swinging	<input type="checkbox"/> enough	<input type="checkbox"/> dead
other divers around	<input type="checkbox"/> all over the place	<input type="checkbox"/> a few	<input type="checkbox"/> hard to find a body
locals	<input type="checkbox"/> helpful, friendly	<input type="checkbox"/> no complaints	<input type="checkbox"/> hostile
weather	<input type="checkbox"/> great every day	<input type="checkbox"/> o.k.	<input type="checkbox"/> many bad days
insects	<input type="checkbox"/> too many bites	<input type="checkbox"/> now and then	<input type="checkbox"/> none

Please compare this trip to other resorts you've been to, and add any additional comments.

Comments and comparison to other places:

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PLEASE RETURN THIS TO:  
UNDERCURRENT, P. O. BOX 1658,  
SAUSALITO, CA 94965

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_  
Zip \_\_\_\_\_ Tel. \_\_\_\_\_



goals and expectations for the trip for each of the partners? Are you both comfortable with the destination? The hotel? The length of the stay? The amount of money you intend to spend? The amount of diving you can and will do? The other nondiving activities in which you'll participate? Assumptions about the other's beliefs or dissatisfaction about these items can be disruptive throughout a trip.

Are there deeper, fundamental issues between you and your partner that may lay dormant during the vacation but still have an effect on the relationship—and on buddy diving? In opposition to the conventional wisdom that a romantic vacation will cure the ills at home and resurrect those good old feelings, couples who expect a tropical sunset and a round of mal-tais to cure an ailing relationship may find that the scenario does more to highlight their problems than to resolve them. If there are serious issues in your relationship, it's best to work them through prior to departure rather than rely on the magic of the tropics for a solution. Life is not a "B" movie; a white sand beach is no cure for an ailing relationship and a 100-foot dive is no place to take that suffering relationship.

Even though a couple may leave their abode in a perfectly blissful state, conflict can still arise. Travel, itself, is stressful. Jet lag, too much food or drink on the way, unfamiliar surroundings, the lack of normal support, perhaps an unfamiliar language—each can contribute to individual stress which becomes misdirected at one another. Upon arrival, cool off, have a decent but light supper, avoid excessive alcohol and go to bed early.

Should conflict between you and your partner still remain or should it flare up during the trip, there is a process many of my clients find useful whether traveling or at home. It begins with a recognition and an admission between the partners that a conflict does, in fact, exist. Two people on vacation, using my friends as an example, may not wish to acknowledge their conflict, presuming that bringing it out on the table will increase it. Yet, suppressing conflict has dangerous ramifications for divers. A better approach is to acknowledge the conflict and the existence of legitimate differences, air those differences and seek resolution. It works more often than not.

Once the differences are in the open, a mutually agreeable time for discussion should be selected. It can be immediately, after breakfast or anytime. But make an agreement and abide by it.

When the discussion begins, each person should be able to state his position completely without the other interrupting or offering defensive explanations for his behavior. Resolution is aided if both partners use good listening skills, perhaps paraphrasing what the other has said so that the positions are clear. Many arguments are quickly resolved by acknowledging that the other party has been heard. For example, "I hear you saying that you don't want to dive every day and I didn't realize that."

When the positions are clear, explore alternatives. Each partner should focus both on what he wants and what he wants from his partner. Be honest and be direct. Remember, the problem may have arisen because one or the other was initially vague. From the alternatives, select specific courses of action which accommodate the needs of both parties. For example, "On one day when you don't dive I'll still go on the dive, but on another we'll tour the island."

After the solutions have been agreed upon, establish a time to review the results and determine if there should be midcourse corrections. For example, after dealing with two nondiving days and your partner still does not want to dive on other days, discuss how you both felt about the two previous days and determine an approach based on those results.

This process is not a panacea, but it has helped many of my clients—and many of my friends—resolve issues and squabbles, and avoid long periods of tension, conflict and ill-feeling by acknowledging the problems as they arose and finding solutions before the positions become entrenched.

Conflicts in human relationships are inevitable. No two people have the same needs. But conflict can be resolved before it affects the safety of the dive and it can be resolved before it wrecks a good day of diving and a good diving vacation.

The author, Michael H. Smith, Ph.D., has been a counselor for the Police Department in Hayward, California, and is now a faculty member of the Department of Public Administration, California State University, Hayward. An occasional vacation diver, he avoids conflict by taking his dive vacations by himself.

## Teaching Your Child To Free Dive

*—good advice for parents*

It's not uncommon for young children, from six or seven years of age, to begin to show interest in scuba diving. Scuba at that age, however, carries unknown physical risks for young bodies; the effect of pressure and breathing compressed air is not fully understood.

On the other hand, skin diving, free diving or snorkel diving—all synonyms for the "sports of the snorkel"—can be the perfect introduction for children into the underwater world and can be easily shared and enjoyed by the entire family.

## The Parent-Teacher

As an aquatic specialist teaching snorkel-diving for a county agency in California, I encounter many frustrated diving parents who have struggled attempting to teach their own children to free dive. An adult who has been taught to dive may be a good diver but he may not be skilled in teaching others. Even many experienced parent-teachers have found that teaching free diving to their own children can be both challenging and frustrating. There are obstacles the professional instructor may not have to face. The parent must create the learning environment for his child. The teaching aids of group learning and peer pressure among students may not be available among siblings or if only one child is being taught. Inevitably, parent-teachers begin to wonder how they can create more interest in their child, how they can "push" their child, or how they can objectively critique the progress of their own child. The questions are difficult. For many parents the best solution is to send their child to a professional instructor trained to grapple with these issues, but many parents do not have access to instruction and others prefer to do it themselves.

To teach one's own child you should first understand that learning should be FUN. This is the number one rule of teaching youngsters. Parent-taught free diving lessons should be fun, less formal and free of parental pressure to achieve. Avoid duplicating your basic scuba class. Children learn unconsciously, coming from a free-play atmosphere. Less formal, less regimented sessions offering lots of fun and opportunity for success will help create and maintain a high interest level. Learning does not always take place when planned and a flexible parent may be able to respond when a child's interest and curiosity are at a peak.

Parents are rightfully concerned about learning and safety, but overconcern and constant worry will be transmitted to a child and affect progress. To teach effectively you must relax and enjoy the experience. Under an anxiety-free parent-teacher a child who is ready to learn will indeed learn.

Yet, before attempting to instruct your child ask yourself *why* you really want to teach your child at this time. Is your child ready and interested or are you pushing your child and interpreting half-hearted

answers as a desire to learn? Who really wants the child to learn? You? Or your child? Don't waste your energy until your child is indeed ready. Many children never learn to free dive because they were pushed or forced to participate when they were uninterested. Or they go through the motions of learning, but never dive again. If the learning experience is not spontaneous and fun, the child may be lost to the sport forever.

Free diving should be taught not as a prelude to scuba diving, but as a sport unto itself. If a parent teaches free diving only to entice a child to later learn scuba and does not participate in free diving with the child, then a child may drop out entirely and never learn scuba. Your child will feel a sense of accomplishment learning to free dive and, in time, will most likely pursue scuba diving with the confidence he developed from being a good free diver and the pleasure he derives from free diving with his parents.

## The Logistics

If you're fortunate enough to have warm, clear and protected local waters, then teaching at natural sites may serve you well. But a swimming pool will be a more familiar and a normally safer arena to prepare your child for open water diving.

Select the time of day when your youngster appears to have the most energy and the longest attention span. For many children mornings are best, but the availability of a facility or your own inflexible schedule may lead to a less suitable time.

Because children have a limited attention span, short sessions are preferable and each session should be responsive to the moods of the child. If he or she is feeling tired, cranky or is just not interested, the learning session should be cut short or even postponed. Attention to the needs of your child should take priority over a fixed schedule, planned sessions or expected accomplishments within a fixed time frame.

## The Equipment

Your child's equipment is as important as yours. Improperly fitting gear, like a big mask or loose fins, can create learning difficulties for your child and frustration for you. High quality, well-fitted equipment closely resembling your own gear emphasizes

### Speargun Recall

The AMF G6 and G7 carbine spearguns and the Sears 436-573140 spearguns have been recalled by the manufacturer, AMF. The guns may have faulty trigger mechanisms which could permit the gun to be fired when the safety lock is on. As of June 4, a minimum of eleven consumer complaints had been received. Since the mid-1960s, 97,300 of the spearguns have been manufactured.

In their recall, AMF pointed out the potential seriousness of the problem. They indicate that there is a possibility that a loaded gun which misfires could inadvertently be pointed at a fellow diver. If you have one of these spearguns, return it to the dive shop from which you purchased it (or any Sears store) or write AMF, 3801 S. Harbor Blvd., Santa Ana, California, 92704 for instructions.



**PROVIDING YOUR YOUNGSTER WITH PROPERLY FITTED DIVING GEAR ENHANCES HIS WILLINGNESS TO LEARN AND HELPS MAKE THE LESSONS AND FUTURE DIVING MORE ENJOYABLE.**

your child's importance and helps him to take the sport seriously because he is using "grown-up" gear.

Most dive shops have small-sized gear, thanks to recent recognition by manufacturers that divers come in all sizes, and today even high quality adjustable BC's are available in sizes suitable for youngsters. Wet suits may be more difficult to obtain but at least two manufacturers (Harvey, located in Seattle, and O'Neill, located in Santa Cruz, California), produce child-sized suits. To discuss equipment for your child call ahead to a dive shop, since many employees are not familiar with child-sized gear and you might need to make an appointment with a knowledgeable staff member. And don't forget to take your child along since good diving habits begin with your child's participation in the selection of proper diving gear.

### **Training**

Although there is no simple way to teach a child to snorkel dive, a key to learning for the child is repetition of techniques. A common fault of the parent-teacher is to have a skill performed correctly a single time and then assume it is learned. A child must perform many, many repetitions before he learns the skill. Presenting many different challenges using basic skills again and again takes a creative and patient parent. Nevertheless, repetition is the key to successful learning.

An easy way to get your child feeling comfortable with new equipment in the water is to practice kicking. Although most children have natural kicks that

are easily adapted to fins, some children keep their legs too stiff and others bend them too far and, in effect, "bicycle." Alleviate the problems by stressing relaxed, flexible leg kicks that utilize the blades of the fins and propel the student diver comfortably and effectively.

While kicking, your child will soon discover that water creeps into his snorkel so snorkel clearing becomes the next skill to master. The blast method is quick, simple and easily adapted to games such as snorkel shooting at a convenient target (perhaps YOU!). The blast-method may be upgraded to the more efficient displacement method when surface diving is introduced.

Most young people will quickly become accustomed to snorkeling on the surface and will attempt underwater dives to see or pick up some aquatic treasure. Without much concern for style, there are two major surface dives: head-first and feet-first. To teach the head-first skill, a simple explanation that "where the head goes the body will follow" usually assures proper head positioning. First, emphasize getting underwater; your child's personal style will develop shortly. Feet-first dives are necessary when kelp is present, and they do make ear equalizing easier, but most of all they are just plain fun.

Remembering that small accomplishments will keep the interest level high, it might do well to present the displacement method of snorkel-clearing at this time. It can be introduced as the blast method while your child is performing a proper ascent with his hand up and his head back. The blast will gradually become a small puff and the more truthful displacement method of snorkel clearing.

Don't push a youngster who feels uncomfortable about descending below the surface. Snorkeling on the surface is fun and soon a child becomes so curious while his surface confidence grows that underwater snorkel diving becomes the next natural step. Some young people snorkel for a long time before they attempt their first dive under the surface; others perform perfect surface dives in the pool but are apprehensive in open water. Don't push. Allow your child to dictate his own progress level. The goal is his long-term enjoyment, not your immediate satisfaction. Given your patience and his time, your child will move naturally into descending below the surface.

With surface diving and underwater swimming, it is important to stress ear equalizing. Young ears are fragile and because the ear drums are more flexible, a child may not feel the pain as quickly as an adult. Nevertheless, the child's ear is fragile and good habits are best initiated early. To explain pressure to a child, draw a picture of a drum and show how pressure forces the drum head, a membrane similar to the ear drum, to sink inward. By adding air to the inside of the drum the pressure equalizes and the drum head will flatten to its normal position. The picture should quickly get your point across.

Before taking your child to open water, be sure you have plenty of practice with BC's, weightbelts and wet suits in a safe, controlled environment. Discuss water conditions, weather, and what he can expect to see. Discuss and practice entries, exits, and practices peculiar to the open water area you expect to visit. Teach your child to decide whether it is safe to dive a chosen spot and how to plan a dive. Discuss how to make decisions about emergency situations and how to handle oneself in a variety of potential emergencies. Give him all the information he needs to know to dive safely.

The first open water dive is usually anxiety-laden for beginning divers, so don't expect too much. When the dive is over, discuss it thoroughly, and garner whatever lessons you can for the next dive. Then take your child diving often. Discuss and plan your dives together, allowing your child to have a say in every aspect of the dive, and then enjoy yourself. There's nothing quite so remarkable as having your own child as your diving buddy.

#### And A Final Comment

Despite all your instruction, nothing teaches a child more than your own diving skills and habits. As the parent, instructor and experienced diver, you are

### The Great White Shark And New Zealand Too

Carl Roessler, master underwater photographer and proprietor of See and Sea Travel Agency, led a tour last February to the Southern coast of Australia to view the Great White Shark. Roessler told *Undercurrent* that they found the Great White on two of their eight days, attracting their attention by dumping horse carcasses into the water. One 11-footer on the first day and a 15-footer on the second day were particularly frisky, jamming their snouts into the cages, rolling around on the cage tops and even chewing on the hull of the dive boat. One of the animals, Roessler said, "stuck his nose between the bars of my cage and jammed my camera against my chest, forcing me so hard against the bars at my back that I couldn't get my camera free to take his picture."

We asked Roessler how he felt about this. "Well," he replied, "I was a bit nonplussed."

Four people can join him in his February, 1980 tour to see the Great White for about \$6,000, plus airfare. As a bonus, you get a stopover in New Zealand, where, Roessler says, "the diving is just dynamite." Write him at See and Sea Travel, 680 Beach St., San Francisco, California 94109.

the child's model for the perfect diver. Your good habits will become your child's habits, regardless of what you say. If you are to teach safe diving, your own behavior must be the model.

The author, Judith Jenet, is an Aquatic Specialist for the Santa Cruz Department of Parks and Recreation in the summer and serves in the same capacity for O'Neill's Dive Shop the remainder of the year. She is a NAUI instructor and holds a B.S. in Recreation and Leisure Studies.



Small Hope Bay advertises three or more tanks a day, but when our travel editor visited in February (see *Undercurrent*, April, 1979) the weather was rough and chilly and none of the guests requested more than two dives and none was offered. Since our article three readers have responded, two of whom (with buddies) were refused a third tank by surly divemasters and the third reader had to extract it from the divemasters like one would extract a painful tooth from an elephant. Two of the respondents also believe the quality of their dives to be less than that reported in our review. Our travel editor, C.C., believes the

story accurately reflects his diving experiences, but he does suggest that if you want three tanks a day you may wish to heed the comments of our readers.

*The Journal of the South Pacific Underwater Medicine Society* reported recently that a 23-year-old diver became unconscious and sank while diving off the coast of England. A dolphin, well known to local divers who had christened him "Beaky," swam down and brought the diver to the surface where he kept him afloat until human help arrived.

The United States Navy has recently issued a report entitled "Knobology Underwater" in which they report on a study to determine the knob configuration for most rapid and most accurate adjustment underwater. Overall, a 10 cm knob fares the best on both counts, but they had to manufacture that knob themselves since none is available commercially. The report details the effect of fins, knurls and tactile markers on knobs and would be useful for anyone designing his own underwater camera case. Reprints may be obtained by writing Lt. Robert C. Carter, 2180 North Oak Lane, State College, Pennsylvania, 16901.