

San Salvador, Bahamas:

Lookin' good.

Ah, San Salvador. Believe it or not, it's just about what they claim it is. It's a place to lay back, sun yourself, eat, drink, and above all dive, dive, dive. If you want more, you'll have come to the wrong place.

Chris Columbus first set foot here, on the outer edge of the Bahamas, in 1492 and there's been little change since. Covering only 60 square miles (much of the land mass includes 35 brackish lakes), San Salvador has only a few hundred residents and but one hotel. Unlike most vacation spots romantically depicted in advertising brochures, San Salvador does have isolated beaches for skinny dipping, lush vegetation, and wonderfully friendly natives. You'll feel welcome.

The Riding Rock Inn--the only hotel--caters to divers. There are 24 air-conditioned double rooms and five cottages, all located on the ocean. About 100 yards away sits the dive shop, an efficient operation which traveling divers hope for but seldom find. I did most of my diving with manager Chris Smith, a fine guide and a fine fellow. He is assisted by Chris McLaughlin, certainly a competent chap but a bit too authoritarian for my style. More than one woman diver in the hotel found him chauvinistic. Try to team up with Smith. Each guide pilots a 34-foot tri-hulled dive boat which can accommodate up to 24 divers, making the entire operation capable of handling the largest of dive clubs. They have plenty of tanks and weight belts, but only five full sets of rental gear.

During my stay I was able to dive several sites and the lowest visibility I encountered was at Long Bay Reef, where some moderate wave and wind action stirred up the 15-foot depth. Still, 75-foot visibility ain't bad! I found schools of large parrotfish and surgeonfish, while at night cardinalfish and blackbar soldierfish made excellent camera subjects. By scraping through the sand I found hundreds of small shells (taking of live shells or coral is properly prohibited). Back in the many small caves and under ledges hang large barracuda, and behind them an occasional large lobster among the black-banded coral shrimp. All in all a first-rate place for beginners to get their snorkel wet and for the experienced diver to have a fun dive.

Grouper Gully, once proclaimed by Skin Diver, is indeed well populated by large Nassau, black, tiger and marble grouper who will frequently follow divers and may eat from your hand. If you lie still, groupers may even nestle up to be petted! A morning dive at Gardner's reef turned black coral at 85 feet, caves

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and tunnels, shelves and walls, and the entire area teeming with tropicals. Sea fans and sponges grow along the wall. It's a great dive.

I must say that I didn't have a bad dive at San Salvador. With three dives a day (two morning dives at \$15, and one afternoon dive at \$10), the second would be shallow and frequently less interesting, but that is to be expected. A typical second dive was a dynamited 1902 freighter, with not much left to pick over, but there were plenty of small reef fish and nearly 100-foot visibility. A deeper dive site is Cockburn Town Drop-Off where some junk is scattered from past anchored ships. Sand runs from the beach to about 40-feet, then the reef drops sharply. Margate, tuna, eagle and stingrays were observed, and two companions found themselves face-to-face with a 6-foot blacktip reef shark who, with his companions, began tearing into the schools of 2-3 feet fish. Exit two divers!

San Salvador is a bargain. Once you arrive, you can arrange for a 3-day dive package (9 boat dives) for \$50, or 6 days for \$100. Hotel rates are \$66 double, \$47 single, including all meals. House rules don't permit diving on the day of arrival or the day of departure, and expect to be asked for your C-card. Although I dove without my wet suit top, many were glad they had theirs along. Visibility ranged between 100-150 feet, which is hard to beat.

I enjoyed the food at the Riding Rock Inn, found it plentiful, tasty, and well prepared. I especially appreciated the curry, although most food might be described as upper-middle-class American. You may order anything you wish for breakfast, while dinners include a couple of entrees, one often being fresh fish. A couple of times a week, local talent played "rake and scrape music," while the divers listened, danced, or imbibed. A ten-minute walk away you'll find a couple of local bars. Don't fear evening strolls--you won't find more hospitable people. There's no shopping and nothing else to do except rent a cycle for a few hours. Or deep sea fishing can be arranged at the Inn. Otherwise, relax and dive three times a day. That's San Salvador. (K.E.)

Comments from C.C./
Travel Editor: Readers evaluating San Salvador in our survey concur. Two divers complained about the restrictive nature of the dives (you're not free to visit Davey Jones), and others weren't pleased about guide Chris Smith's style. One diver complained about repetition in sites. Generally, San Salvador scored high marks. You may write me, c/o Undercurrent Travel Club, to arrange a trip, or get information, or contact Columbus Landings, PO Box 1492, Fort Lauderdale, Fla., 33302.

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Baja California, Mexico: Part Three

The end of the road.

The South Gulf: Eighty miles south of La Paz a rugged dirt road heads east to La Ribera, Punta Arenas, Cabo Pulmo, and Los Frailes. Think twice about taking this road if you're hauling a big boat--it gets worse as it nears the Gulf. Two fishing resorts, located at Punta Colorado, are the only lodgings around: Laguna Guesthouse, c/o 10406 Gaybrook Ave., Downey, CA., 90241, telephone 213/869-8844, and Hotel Punta Colorado, P.O. Box 12124, San Diego, CA., 92112, telephone 714/479-9251. Neither has a compressor, but both have airstrips nearby. Punta Colorado has a fishing fleet and the boatmen will take you to nearby reefs. The price depends upon what you can negotiate, and the new road causes prices to continue to escalate.

Cabo Pulmo is a small fishing settlement with an airstrip. Pulmo is private property, so camp at Los Frailes, four miles south. Locals will charge you \$1 or so to camp along the beach.

The Tropic of Cancer intersects Baja here, and it's the largest reef area in the Sea of Cortez. These are not true coral reefs--although coral is certainly present--but rather banks surrounded by sand. Here Baja's paradox for divers is exemplified. Except for some nice shallow snorkeling, the reefs are all offshore. So, how do you dive them? There are no boat rentals outside the resort areas. If you bring a boat safely over the road, there is no gas and no real launching sites. Some of the local fishermen have been known to take divers out for \$40/day, but they are not in business to do so, and there are no guarantees they will be there. About the only method for your madness, is to use an inflatable Avon-type boat, carry as much gas as you can manage, and if you don't have a compressor, plan to free dive. If you can handle 30-40 foot depths, you'll do nicely.

Off Cabo Pulmo, there is a 50-60 ft. deep bank, a 30-40 ft. bank, and a shallow reef, 15-20 ft. deep. On the best days, when the blue "Marlin water" makes the visibility near perfect, these banks are a wild and beautiful place to dive. One diver called it a "combination of California's and Hawaii's finest -- the bottom is not truly tropical, but the fish are." Anything is likely to come through. A 12-ft. Manta ray slowly cruised the deep bank for several days during our stay. Eagle rays, sting rays, and turtles were common. Even a nice wahoo swam by. A large variety of tropicals live on the reefs, especially surgeons, parrotfish, and triggers. More exciting are the massive schools of Jack Crevalle, each fish running 5-10 pounds, and striped grunts by the thousands, perhaps the ten thousands. Gamefish also visit Pez Forte (Amberjack) in groups of three to five, often weighing 50 pounds or more. Groupers, usually 30-60 lbs., a few 100 lb. or more Jewfish, and plenty of 10-30 pound snappers populate the reefs, but they are indeed being thinned by fishing boats, nets, and spearguns. Cabrilla (sea bass) are abundant along the interesting crevasses and caves of the reefs. The coral is drab brown and the reefs slightly silted, but the myriad fish compensate nicely. Sharks will appear on the deep reef, usually the 4-6 foot Sardinero (blacktip), only one or two at a time. Of course, a speared fish to the Sardinero is like catnip to Morris, so keep your eyes open.

Snorkeling and photography are excellent on the shallow reefs, where you see trumpet fish, angels, damsels, wrasses, and millions of invertebrates, but watch out for the dreaded agua mala, which looks like a small, blue Man O'War and 3

packs a similar sting. A nearby diver surfaced to find one wrapped around his neck. Zap! By the way, this is the warmest water in the Gulf, but wet suit tops are required because the thermocline can be drastic.

Of course, no trip to Baja would be complete without the continuing local drama. One night we sat around a fire on the beach drinking tequila with a local fisherman friend, who outlined a brilliant plan in which we would make a pilgrimage to La Ranchita, a well-known establishment in La Paz where we gringos are free, for a price, to express our feelings of goodwill toward Mexican maidens in a warm and direct way. Meanwhile, eight escaped convicts were rowing a stolen skiff past us in the full moonlight and thanks to the cactus nectar we were guzzling, we didn't even notice them. The next morning our camp was invaded by jeeps full of Federales. Tito and his gang had escaped from the La Paz jail and the army was hot on their trail. Not finding the escapees among us, did not discourage the commander. Nada. "It does not matter," he told us confidently. "We will catch them before sunset." They gave us Tito's photograph. We were told to hold him prisoner if he and his boys happened to wander into camp.

At Los Frailes a submarine canyon starts in waist-deep water and goes down forever. It's an eerie dive, with big rocks and gorgonia along the south edge. The locals tell stories about "Loco Miguel," a crazy American who dove it alone at night and surfaced bent, bug-eyed, and bleeding from the ears, sputtering about fish "too big to shoot" at 180 feet. I don't know about that, but I do know that I speared a good-sized grouper while free diving, only to have it hole up in a cave at 40 feet. The unreliability of Baja's winds and water became evident when I returned with a tank after lunch to get my grouper. The visibility had dropped from 80+ feet to less than 15 feet, and I was lucky to find the cave and rescue my dinner.

Cabo San Lucas: Undoubtedly, the most popular and accessible diving in Baja for the person with a limited amount of time or for one who doesn't care to brave the roads, is at the tip--Cabo San Lucas. There is daily air service by commercial jet, so Cabo is the place for fly-in divers and other vacationers. There are fine resort hotels, some with compressors, boats and equipment rentals. Remember, though, Baja guides seldom dive with you--they're boatmen, and many probably don't even know how to swim. If you like a guide in the water with you, Cabo is not the place to come.

Off Shepard's rock one will find the famous river of sand, a unique underwater "waterfall of sand" which pours into San Lucas canyon. It's a rare sight to see the moving sandfall, a sight which divers will probably have no other opportunity to see, no matter what other parts of the world you visit. Of course, the sandfall too can affect visibility drastically.

A compressor is located at Hotel Cabo San Lucas, 10 miles east of Cabo, on Chileno Bay, and at the Hotel Hacienda, on the bay at Cabo. A fill was \$3. If you're flying in and wish to stay at the best hotel in the area, the Hotel Cabo San Lucas is the place. Rooms with three meals a day begin at about \$60 for two and run up to twice as much. It's a typical large resort hotel, with better than average food and organized activity. Hotel Hacienda is closer to Cabo diving, but is not as attractive. There are fishing boats available at both resorts, and a shop called Ultramarine on the beach north of Hacienda has diving equipment, but you'd be safer taking your own.

Photographers: Mexican law apparently requires anyone making movies to get permission prior to entry, regardless of the size of your camera. We have had difficulty getting accurate information about the law, but we have read recently of a case where the camera of a tourist was expropriated. This should be clarified prior to leaving the U.S. or, if that's impossible, with local authorities upon arrival.

Fishing regulations: Mexico fishing regulations apply to game fishermen as well as divers, and you'd be wise to follow them carefully. Mexican law is arbitrary, and whether you have an extra fish on your boat or an extra joint in your pocket, you're taking unwise and foolish risks. Only two roosterfish and only two dolphinfish (Mahi-Mahi) are permitted. With the exception of sailfish, marlin, swordfish, sawfish and tarpon, five of every other species may be taken. Preferably, you'll only take what you can eat for the day. You may not take abalone, clams, shrimp, cabrilla, lobster, oysters, tutuava, and turtle.

Conclusion: There are only three ways to visit Baja. By camper, with your own compressor unless you plan to free dive. By flying to Cabo San Lucas. Or, by boat. Although we have not reviewed a boat operation run by Baja Expeditions, more than one Undercurrent reader has recommended it. The 8-day trip begins with a bus ride from San Diego to San Felipe, then a six hundred mile boat trip southward with diving along the way, and an airflight back to San Diego. The tab is \$575 and those wanting further details may get them by writing the Undercurrent Travel Club. We will provide other information about boat trips as our readers continue to feed their experiences into our Travel Data Bank. In the meantime, happy diving. (CK, 9/76)

The Surfmat:

The surfmat is a seldom-used, never written-about item that, if used for beach diving, can greatly enhance both the safety and pleasure of a dive. Surf mats come in all sizes, but we recommend the 2½ by 5 foot rubberized mat rimmed with eyelets and strung with nylon, manufactured by Newco, a Taiwan-based company. It is excellent for divers. For free divers, it can be an essential tool, having greater use than an innertube, at a fraction of the price (about \$20) of an inflatable boat. BC's and back-pacs compensate for some of the surfmat advantages to scuba divers. But many scuba divers who have long kicks to their favorite diving area still rely on mats. Here's what a mat can do for you:

- By underinflating the mat and resting the top half of your torso on it, you can comfortably kick long distances to remote dive spots. After diving, it's easy to relax on one and to chat with your buddies before the kick back.

Consider it as a tool for safety.

- A mat is unbeatable for rescuing a tired or injured diver.
- With a surfmat in tow, you can transport your shells, game or treasures over long distances.
- Camera gear, spearguns or tools can be fastened to the mat (we prefer the mat with eyelets around the edges and strung with a nylon cord) and transported. Or, a nylon mesh bag can be attached and dangled.
- A mat serves as a platform for a diver's flag.
- It can be used for river running, playing in the surf, or resting on the beach.

For divers with a distance to kick, whether in salt or fresh water, the surfmat ought to be considered as an important tool. It can be found in many sporting goods stores located in seaboard states. Some dive shops carry them, too. If you can't find one, ask your favorite shop to order one directly. We suggest the mat manufactured by Newco.

Buying Used Equipment:

Where to find it and how to check it out.

Each year, well over 100,000 people decide to become divers. A good many of those—estimates run as high as half—stop diving entirely within several months after having been certified. The newly certified diver, filled with awe and enthusiasm for his new sport, is a prime target for equipment sales. So, an enterprising dive shop moves ahead gently yet persuasively to see to it that the new diver buys all the equipment he needs to undertake his new sport.

If the diver fails to buy a full complement of equip-

ment in the first couple of weeks, there's a good chance that the sale is gone forever. Many argue that if a diver buys his equipment upon certification, the heavy investment he has made will keep him active in the sport. Regardless, there's an incredible amount of equipment—used a couple of times, if at all—gathering dust in the basements of people who wonder what ever possessed them to buy a Poseidon Regulator or a Digital Depth Gauge. Had there been electronic snorkels, they might have bought one of those, too.

To Buy or Not to Buy

Many serious divers save substantial money by purchasing used equipment. Some, skeptical about used gear because their own safety is at stake, buy only new items. Yet, if one proceeds properly, there's no reason that used equipment can't give you the same service as new and at a fraction of the price.

Why buy used equipment? Simply to save money. If your son or daughter is begging to become certified, you may run for the Excedrin when you think of the high cost of outfitting them. If you're headed out to primitive diving areas where there are no repairs, a backup regulator or light may prevent equipment problems from destroying your enjoyment of the trip. If you want to take up photography but hesitate because of the cost, used gear might bring relief. But, finding what you need can be difficult.

The first place to look is at your local dive shop. Dive shops often sell rental gear which we *do not* recommend buying. Such gear has surpassed its value for training students and has most likely surpassed its value to certified divers. Some dive shops sell used equipment on consignment. The diver/seller sets a price. The shop will (and certainly should) bring the equipment up to par, and then take a percentage of the sales price for its services. A reasonable cut for the dive shop is 30 to 40 per cent of the sales price. Not all dive shops have recognized the potential of selling used equipment. If a dive shop you patronize doesn't sell used equipment, you might explain your plight to the manager and suggest that he get a percentage of the sale from a potential seller. If the manager discovers that he can make a reasonable profit from such a deal, he might be willing to help. But—don't ask a shop to help you for free. The owner is in business and must make a profit to survive.

Other Sources

You may also call clubs in the area (most dive shops have a club list handy) and explain your needs to the president. Clubs can be a lively market for used equipment and exchanges—that's why many divers join—and you may find what you want.

Newspapers frequently have classified ads. Although individual items are generally available, if you buy an ex-diver's entire collection, you can strike a real bargain, paying as little as half the purchase price.

Used camera gear can be found in most camera stores. The equipment usually carries a short-term guarantee. Have a lens checked for scratches and verify that the color correction remains. If you're buying gear manufactured for underwater use (a Nikonos, for example), ask to have the camera checked in a local pressure chamber. Shops with small chambers will charge you a few bucks to take the equipment down to 150 feet. It's worth it. If your dive shop doesn't have a chamber, they'll know where to send you.

Olden Camera (1265 Broadway, New York, NY 10001) is one store that accepts mail requests for used equipment. Olden keeps your request on file until the item arrives, then will send you a quote which you can

accept or reject. Normally, there's a 90-day guarantee.

Don't overlook flea markets, swap meets, garage sales or running your own ad in the newspaper.

If at all possible, before buying a used tank, regulator, seawater gauge or depth gauge, have it checked out at the local dive shop. If there are problems ask the seller to compensate you for the added cost by reducing the sales price. If you can't have an item checked out and just have to buy it, inspect it for corrosion, brittle or crumbling rubber, cracked plastic, missing parts, and other signs of poor maintenance. Small problems may not be enough to chase you away from a deal, but they should be reflected in the price you're willing to pay.

One Note of Caution

If you do buy a used regulator, have it overhauled before you use it yourself. Never trust someone else's word that nothing is wrong. That promise has no value at 90 feet.

Stay Away from the Hot Stuff

Dive shop inventory is a target for theft and burglary—and both new and used equipment get hit. When quantities are stolen, some of it may trickle piece-by-piece into the local market. Or all of it may end up on someone's charter boat or be headed toward a resort on foreign soil. Ben Jasinkas of Perry Wilson Insurance Company in Chicago (insurer of about 60 shops nationwide) says "there's no information that suggests any of the theft is organized. Essentially, it's a local matter." If a diver, in responding to a used equipment ad, finds that the seller has more than two of everything (often couples drop out and sell their equipment together), we think he has the moral responsibility to refuse the purchase—without letting the seller know why—and should contact local authorities.

Some divers have "lost" equipment on crowded dive boats, on beach dives, or from the back seats of their cars. On all detachable parts (on a regulator, for example, on both the first and second stages) engrave your name and/or social security number in the metal with a hard tool (etch deeply), or take it to a jeweler for engraving. Personal theft insurance, if not part of one of your existing policies, is available for homeowners and renters. Often there is a high deductible, or your policy may not provide for replacement value, but actual worth after depreciating the equipment for use. Furthermore, the delay suffered in getting replacement material could mean plenty of missed diving. Proving theft to an insurance company requires receipts—even several years after an item was purchased.

Bart Collins, owner of the Aqua Shop in Savannah, GA, recently lost \$7,700 worth of rental gear (about 15 full sets) and was required to produce receipts for all of it, including tanks three to four years old. He suspects that his gear will end up on a dive boat somewhere. Collins had the foresight to engrave the shop's name on the equipment. He speculates that "maybe an *Undercurrent* reader in Timbuktu will read this article

and run into the stuff some day." If so, we're sure Bart would accept a call—collect.

So, protect your own gear and don't encourage the

bastards who steal by purchasing equipment you suspect is hot. The Buddy system ought to be a fellowship that works as well above the surface as below.

Women and Diving:

There's no discrimination, but there's plenty of sexism.

Cleavage. You can find it selling wet suits, regulators and photographic equipment in publications and on dive shop counters and walls. Much advertising still thrives on the male, macho image of diving—despite the fact that the woman has come a long way from her underwater role in the textbook illustration of Martini's Law, in which she appears as a nitrogen-produced mermaid.

PADI reports that 10 per cent of its certifications were issued to women last year—an increase of seven to eight per cent over the last 10 years. According to NAUI, of the 200,000 divers in the United States, as many as 20 per cent are female.

Women have entered a male-dominated sport without suffering the sex discrimination found in other levels of society. They have done so by meeting the same requirements as set for male divers. Or, as Nicky Neau, editor of the bimonthly magazine produced by the California Council of Diving Clubs put it, "by playing the game by the guys' rules." Now, women are diving with men and they are diving without men. They instruct, own dive shops, work as underwater photographers, and write and publish.

'Now an Advantage'

Jean Gregor, owner of Marin Skin Diving in San Rafael, CA, and a pioneer in diving instruction (see *Undercurrent*, September, 1976), says that now "it may even be an advantage to be a woman diver. All the private schools and retail stores are aggressively encouraging women to get more involved in diving. At Ed Brawley's Instructors College in Monterey, they place women in jobs faster than they can enroll them."

Ed Brawley agrees. A woman graduating from the school is inundated with job offers. From an employer's point of view (Brawley owns five shops, besides the college), "women are in demand."

Gregor notes that women are getting more involved and she teaches many women who have taken up diving independently of their husbands. Today, the all-male scuba class is extinct.

An all-woman dive trip to Grand Cayman was led by Dolores Clark of Oakland, CA. Another Californian, Vi Ford, conducts monthly *women-only* dives on the rough California coast. In Florida, pioneer diver Norine Rouse runs a first-class training and charter operation and is responsible for drawing a large number of women and children into diving. And, one of the top scuba repair technicians in California, Karen Krone, runs her own service out of the Pinnacles Dive Shop in Novato, north of San Francisco.

None of these women complains of sex discrimination from male scuba enthusiasts, their employers or employees, yet they are all discontented with another aspect of the diving industry—the promotion of its products.

What About the Ads?

"Why," they ask, "aren't the manufacturers responding to the growing number of female divers? Where are the minds of the advertising people? Don't they realize that if a male diver has to wear a buoyancy compensator underwater, then the woman can't expect to control her buoyancy with her bikini strings?" But, a number of ads do show women underwater without BC's. Furthermore, sending a sales representative into a female-owned dive shop to promote a product with a photograph of a semi-nude woman lacks both common sense and business sense.

The larger manufacturers—U.S. Divers and Scuba-pro, for example—no longer attempt to appeal to men only. Or so they say. It's the smaller manufacturer who persists in stapling his dealer price list over a photograph of a young nude woman and his product.

Yet, none of the manufacturers have made an attempt to appeal directly to women either—the woman who appears to be as much as 20 per cent of his consumer population. Many think that the forthcoming movie, *The Deep*, will lure even more women into the sport.

Recently, a few ads with women diving alone in full gear have begun to appear, but the model is usually bikini-clad. A travel ad to lure divers to Jamaica features a buxom native woman in a wet t-shirt. Although Ikelite uses women photographers in appropriate settings throughout its catalogue, the most recent Ikelite ad uses the wet t-shirt gimmick and doesn't even show the model's face. Many women have already established their expertise in underwater photography, and more women are becoming interested. Does Ikelite intend to appeal to them with a provocative pair of wet breasts?

Some advertising is not only missing a good potential market in women; it is actually turning them off. Jean Gregor recalled receiving a poster-size fold-out of a girl in a bikini holding the Jeppesen Sport Diving Manual. Here I am, a diving instructor," she says, "and I'm supposed to sell the book to my students that way—and, this is from a respectable company that put out a new textbook with the latest advances in diving instruction." Gregor says that the promotion of dive products coming to her shop still "hangs a lot

on cheesecake."

Her male business partner, Rich Gallagher, was even quicker to cite a Sportsway ad he had questioned the appeal of—a full-page color photograph of a bikini-clad woman's torso. She held a knife with the blade extending diagonally across her crotch.

Psyching the Hype

Dr. Michael H. Smith, both a diver and a therapist, wonders "what could be going on in the minds of the people who organized and permitted such an ad." There are at least three views. "The most obvious is to see the knife as phallic symbol." Another, he says, "is that the woman is being portrayed as a castrator of the male who comes close, but that intent is unlikely since a large share of the audience is men. More likely is the connection with sex and violence and an attempt to appeal to the baser instincts in men. That ad suggests rape and violent sex. Frankly," Smith concludes, "it's tasteless, insensitive and gross."

Another example of a manufacturer's direct appeal to men alone was O'Neill's glossy of a blonde model—her wet suit peeled down from its Velcro shoulder attachments and fully exposing her bare breasts—against a Hawaiian surf-and-sun background. "It's always summer on the inside," it read.

Karen Krone believes that the increasing number of women divers "is taking an unnecessary back seat" in dive equipment promotional campaigns. "They've got to get out of the old school—this diving macho trip. Year after year the manufacturers come out with equipment to make diving easier, yet the ads make it look like it's still a he-man sport. The same goes for retail outlets," she added, noting that she objected to a dive poster about to be put up in the shop because she thought it could actually discourage women from coming in. "There are no physical reasons why more women shouldn't be diving," she says, "but the companies that claim they want more customers may very well be chasing them away with the image they create."

Writer-diver Hillary Hauser, whose work is featured in *Skin Diver Magazine*, feels that the manufacturers are coming along no more slowly than the sport itself. She points to the women who have made history—Australian Valerie Taylor; ichthyologist and shark expert Eugenie Clark; Sylvia Earle, who led the first team of women aquanauts in the Tektite II expedition to St. John; Katie Garner, the first female graduate of the U.S. Navy diving school; Norma Hanson, who did some of the first underwater stunt work in Hollywood; and Zale Perry, an underwater actress who is now writing a book on the history of diving. "None of these women has ever been stopped—and they had to wear an awful lot of diving garbage at a time when male divers were voting for dive bunny of the month." Presenting what might be called a "macho-female" point of view, Hauser adds, "women who are real divers don't give a damn about ad appeal."

But, many do give a damn. Norine Rouse is tired of shots of bosomy women diving without a vest. "I think the manufacturers should never show anything so un-

safe." Rouse, who was discouraged from attending dive club meetings when she began diving ten years ago because, as she later found out, they were showing stag movies, boasts a 50 per cent female enrollment in her classes.

The Companies Speak

"It's a Man's World" was the slogan for U.S. Divers in 1968. The 1976 U.S. Divers catalogue includes one choice of wet suit for women, yet it still posts its male models alongside adoring, nondiving beach bunnies. "When you're advertising to a predominantly male market, that's good advertising," explains sales manager Grady Fort.

And what about the female consumer? "We feel there is a good feminine market. We're hoping to start trending in that direction," said Fort. "We are considering directly appealing to women, but we don't know how yet." Meanwhile, added Fort, U.S. Divers' primary concern is lightening the weight of gear, which of course would be appealing to any diver.

Up until now, the company offered only one wet suit for women, a two-piece, low-pants, quarter-inch nylon with six zippers. Men have a choice of 14 styles, "because we don't feel the demand for women's suits is that great. But this year we've come out with a nylon II wet suit—high-waisted, six zippers—it's blue. The color is the big thing. We don't make an all-blue men's suit."

The best thing that can happen to this industry is women, says Scubapro president Dick Bonin. However, Scubapro has no plans to do anything special to encourage women, other than to maintain the policy of appealing generally to everyone. Like most other manufacturers, Scubapro has some of its products available in small sizes. Bonin believes that's enough to accommodate his female consumers.

But his assistant sales manager, Rosemary Gary, feels differently. "The diving industry isn't keeping up with women," said Gary, who works with 500 dealers. "So many ads are aimed at men alone. I'd like to see ads aimed directly at women. No one's ever done it. Maybe it won't be of much significance to sales volume, but it would be noticed—it would probably create an interest in women who don't dive, just because the company is thinking of them. Honestly, many women and men—still think that diving is a man's sport."

The author, Susan Banashek, has been a feature writer for both *The Los Angeles Times* and *The San Francisco Chronicle*. She's been a certified diver for over a year and spends her time fishing for sharks in San Francisco Bay. The shark filet à la Banashek is in a class equal to that of lobster.

Correspondents located strategically in the major diving areas of the world as well as on all coasts and major inland waters of the continental United States. The editors welcome comments, suggestions and manuscripts from the readers of *Undercurrent*.