

undercurrent®

THE PRIVATE, EXCLUSIVE GUIDE FOR SERIOUS DIVERS

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Moody's Pidertupo Village, San Blas Islands

Sadly, Our Final Report

Of all the resorts I have visited in our seven years of publication Moody's Pidertupo Village was my personal favorite. Located in the San Blas Islands on the Caribbean coast of Panama, I could never imagine a more idyllic setting. On a tiny three-acre island thick with coconut palms, the Moody family--Tom, Joan and daughter Marijo--built seven thatched roof huts for guests and a central homey dining area. They provided daily diving trips across calm and clear waters to pristine reefs.

The 365 San Blas Islands are a Panamanian reserve for the Cuna Indian. Only a couple of other tiny tourist establishments exist on the islands. The Indians live as they have lived for centuries, save portable radios, and the whole setting is just superb. Hearty food, hearty people, comfortable accommodations, and true peace and quiet. Frankly, there was no other place quite like it.

Moody's Pidertupo Village is gone now, destroyed by terrorists. The story is tragic. Tom's wife Joan, who communicated regularly with her guests during the off season, has written two newsletters since they were driven from the island nearly a year ago. We decided to publish her story in lieu of our normal travel review to provide our readers with an account of just how strenuous, just how risky, and just how fragile are the lives of those adventurers who devote their lives to running remote and distant resorts.

"There were six of us on the island on the night of June 20th. Rex (the new divemaster), his father Bob and stepmother Agnes, Tom's sister Peggy, Tom and myself. Night comes early in the tropics, so by the time we finished a refreshing dip in the sea, the velvet black of night had enveloped us. As we gathered for a light supper around 7 p.m. the jet black sky was twinkling with the lights of distant stars. After dinner Tom found his sheets crawling with ants so he wandered over to the office and later fell asleep there.

"Around 4 a.m., I was awakened by a familiar Indian voice outside my bedroom calling, "Mr. Moody, wake up." I asked what he wanted (I only saw two or three faces) and he said "gasoline." When I mumbled that I would have to ask Moody,

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one of them demanded, "Moody not here?" I groggily headed out the door toward the office where I knew Tom was sleeping.

"Peggy came out of her house and saw men crouched all around. One grabbed her, knocking her to her knees and holding her at bay by swinging a sword over her head. Tom was already at the office door and asked what they wanted. I said they needed gasoline and Tom asked in Spanish how many gallons. And then in an anguished voice I heard him say, "O my God, No." I spun around to see what was going on. The scene before me will remain imprinted upon my mind forever: so many men...so many guns pointing at us...the suffocating feeling of utter helplessness...some wore masks--others did not. And Tom's voice saying, "What is this? You come like banditos in the night, hiding behind your masks and guns." "Moody, you remember our Congresso and we say "Moody go...NOW MOODY GO"...and a shot rang out knocking Tom backwards about four feet into the office. Seeing Tom writhing on the floor, his flesh and blood splattered everywhere and hearing his screams of anguish and pain, I threw myself over him screaming at the top of my lungs. It took two or three men to pull me off and they dragged me outside. One of them attempted to hold me by the wrists. Meanwhile, others grabbed Tom by his mangled leg and dragged him down the office steps and onto the sand path like a sack of garbage. Kicking and screaming and falling, I broke away from my captor again and again in an effort to get to my Tom.

"I never heard the other gunshots over my screams; they were apparently fired into the air. Indians were running here and there, throwing flaming bottles of gasoline onto the thatch roofs of the office, kitchen and clubhouse. Fires were burning everywhere. The barbarians weren't satisfied to have shot Tom...they had to torture him by throwing gasoline all over him and lighting matches in an attempt to burn him alive. One even set a burning gallon jug of gasoline next to him, thinking it would explode. Others beat Tom unmercifully with their gun butts over his head, arms and groin. Another savage swung a machete at Tom in an attempt to hack him to pieces and at each swing Tom would roll away. Still pitch dark, the flickering flames from the fires caused shadows and the drugged maniac thought he was making bloody contact with Tom's flesh...but, in reality was missing him by fractions of an inch. About this time, my captor cut a piece of our manila clothesline and tied my hands together and began dragging me down the island towards our Indian employees' house. Somewhere along the way, we joined up with Peggy and her captor. While they were dragging us down the island, some of the Indians then tied a rope around Tom's gutted leg and his neck and hung him from a coconut tree. They then threw gasoline onto the cane walls and bathroom curtains and set them afire. At this point, Tom went unconscious and they left him for dead. His last thoughts were, "Why fight it any longer, I'm dead anyway."

"The marauders then set fire to the new blue house while others boarded our launch, Island Fever, stealing gear which they threw into our cayuco, leaving one of their rifles behind on the dock. While all of this was taking place, the Indians had tied Peggy and me up on the beach beyond the employees' house and we could see some of them getting aboard their cayuco. I got untied and began running but two Indians got out of their boat and grabbed me and retied my wrists. Peggy told me to stay put as they might come back and kill us, but before they got to their boat, I was disentangled once again...I couldn't stay still. One Indian ran back and began to tie me up, so I pretended to faint. Meanwhile, the Indians on the dock had started up our cayuco engine and were coming around the point, so the man attempting to bind my hands ran for his boat. As they were pulling away, Peggy and I got up and hid behind the employee's kitchen. We then ran from building to building, making our way up the island.

"Immediately after the raiders left Tom for dead, Rex, Bob and Agnes cut Tom down and began putting out the fires. The only reason the buildings had not burned down by then was the fact that we had a heavy downpour around midnight leaving the rain soaked thatch too wet to burn.

"I had last seen Tom lying on the ground outside the office, and since it was still dark, I almost tripped over him lying on the path behind our house. I heard his weak voice say, "Joan come here. I'm fading fast and I want to tell you some things." I threw myself onto him, crying and gently caressing his bloody face. I asked him how badly he was hurt as I still didn't know where they had shot him. "They shot me in the leg"...and I touched his bloody shorts asking, "Not here?", indicating his abdomen. When he replied no, only the leg, I jumped up and began running for the office and my radios screaming, "God damnit, you're going to LIVE...no one dies of a bullet wound in the leg!" Ignorant bliss, perhaps, kept the adrenalin flowing enough to hold myself together and call for medical help.

"Leaving Tom lying where I had found him, I hurriedly connected the antennas on both my amateur radios, threw on the battery switches and simultaneously scanned different meters for voices. When I found someone talking, I broke in with a MAY-DAY call and a ham operator in Florida answered. I begged him to make an over-seas telephone call for the MEDDAC helicopter at Howards Air Base. Bob and Rex brought Tom inside the office so we could wash the gasoline off him and bandage the wound. Within 10 minutes, the amateur operator in Florida informed me that he had the MEDDAC people on the line. After giving them all the specific information they needed, I was notified that the helicopter was in the air and would arrive in an hour. It was 4:48 a.m.

"The Indian families living on Lemon Chico, the island to the west of Pidertupo, had heard my screams and seen the fires; some of the men had paddled their cayucos to the village island of Rio Sidra to report the incident, two others came to Pidertupo, then returned to their village to report their findings. Boatloads of Indians had gone to the airstrip when the helicopter landed to pick up Tom; they had personally seen the brutalities inflicted upon him by the terrorists. A couple of cayucos filled with men came to our island to speak with me and to inspect the damages; they left to return to the village to report their findings.

"Sometime later, an unmarked boat stopped at Pidertupo carrying three men. They informed me that they were "Guardia." They had guns, but wore no uniforms, and were Indians. After they inspected the damages, one stayed on the work dock while the other two said they were going to Porvenir to report their findings to the Governor. The leader seemed surprised to find me still on the island. The boat pulled away from the dock with the two Cuna men and went in the direction of Porvenir. An hour or so later, a flotilla of friendly cayucos from the village landed on the island. They rushed the lone "Guardia," confiscating his guns and transported him to Rio Sidra.

"The next afternoon, ten hours after the attack, we heard the sound of a large helicopter approaching the island. At the same time, I spotted the small boat returning from the Porvenir direction approaching the island. At the same time the helicopter was landing on the south beach (we ran to speak to personnel from the helicopter) the boat from Porvenir with two members of the "Guardia" pulled up to the main dock. There was a confrontation between the villagers and the armed "Guardia" and both the Cuna "Guardia" were shot and killed.

"Shortly thereafter I noticed a small boat drifting away from the dock with two men slumped down in it and called attention to the police. Soon, the Governor

pulled up to our dock and he identified and confirmed that the dead were indeed San Blas Guardia. As they wore no uniforms nor were there any identifying markings on their boat, the shooting was accidental.

"The National Guard helicopter departed with the dead and injured Guardia, leaving one Cuna guardsman who appointed 14 other men from Rio Sidra to stand guard.

"During the next day, we heard rumblings that the men from Nargana were drinking and gathering on the island of Masargantupo, (9 miles north of us) and planning a raid on either Pidertupo or Rio Sidra to avenge the death of the "Guardia" who were killed. Their law is "an-eye-for-an-eye," and this could go on and on. We requested additional "Guardia" protection. The Panamanian National Guard said they had no helicopters available but would send troops the following day. The United States Embassy came to our aid, American troops in Panama would provide the helicopters with the crew and would carry Panamanian guardsmen out to Pidertupo. Ham operators out of the former Canal Zone monitored us throughout the days and nights to follow.

"A year later, the hate and bitterness have faded, but the pain is still there. They say time heals all wounds, but for Tom the healing will take a long time. The entire muscle of the calf of his right leg was completely blown away along with most of the tibia. The end of the barrel of a 20-gauge shotgun was four feet from Tom's leg when the terrorist pulled the trigger. Tom entered the hospital in Panama City on the 21st of June and was released on the 21st of August. The biggest fight of all has been to save his leg; since it had been a very dirty wound (sand, dirt, leaves and rope fibers) it raged with infection for four weeks. He underwent five major operations in Panama City. Back in Pittsburgh he had two major operations, plastic surgery and bone grafts. His leg has been saved and he is walking with just a slight limp. The antibiotics which saved Tom's leg also had side effects which have left him extremely weak. Only time will heal him fully.

"We know that Brigadoon is only supposed to happen once every hundred years. We found it once and we'll do it again. We are planning to go to the South Pacific this fall to search out another location to build our next resort. After months of research, it looks as though we'll spend our time on the hundreds of islands in the Fiji group. The Moody's will find the location...only you can make this dream a reality as our Brigadoon was created by the people who came to visit."

The Moody's have never been compensated for their losses, and five days after the attack their license to do business was revoked by the Panamanian government on the charges that guests were "bathing in the nude and smoking marijuana," which Joan steadfastly denies. Having spent a week with the Moodys and hearing their political and social views, we indeed believe her. Joan writes that the accidental killer of the Cuan "Guardia" was arrested, but that "nothing was ever done about the guerrilla terrorists who brutally attacked us and attempted to kill Tom. To this day they live freely among the tribe."

The Moody's view the attack not as an isolated attack upon them or their guests, but as part of a much larger scheme. In her first report she wrote: "Quite obviously, these young attackers had spent time living abroad learning the guerrilla tactics they used. We feel that since it was one of their first operations, they bungled it badly. Molotov cocktails, for example, are not effective unless the flaming bottles of gasoline are smashed against a hard surface, causing them to explode. They simply tossed the burning bottles onto the rain-soaked thatched roofs and the fires we saw blazing were just the gasoline burning off. The marauders were also "high" on something and were not coherent enough

to do a proper job. Most important of all, they did not realize the power of a good radio communication system; radios brought immediate medical attention and kept us in touch with the world throughout this entire ordeal.

"These crimes are not the work of the "traditional Cuna," nor is it condoned by them. It is definitely the handiwork of the terrorist infiltrators. We wrote a letter in February of 1981 to both the President of Panama and the Director of the Panama Tourist Bureau for the purpose of informing them of the political changes taking place in the islands, as we felt that the tourism in general would suffer with any negative publicity. An attack under the cover of darkness by a band of armed and masked men, whose plan was to torture and kill, had never been entertained by us. All we had to base our judgment on was past experience. We had lived in the islands for almost 15 years in peace and tranquility with our neighbors. Although we had fuel and materials worth thousands of dollars stored on the docks, it was left unguarded as we have never had a problem with theft. As all our former guests know, nothing was ever under lock and key.

"All foreigners are being ousted from San Blas. What is it that they fear we might discover? Throughout the years, we ignored all the little nagging warning signals...boats traveling through reefy areas at night without running lights.. planes flying low after dark and landing on remote airstrips...tales of Columbian Indian shootouts...strange yachts passing through...We suspect that economically their new enterprise will bring them much more income than tourism."

In a subsequent letter, Joan writes that she has since viewed a documentary for television entitled Panama: Another Cuban Crisis? in which correspondent Matt Quinn investigated rumors of army smuggling and narcotics transfers by Cuban-trained Cunas operating in the San Blas Islands. The Moodys were themselves eventually interviewed by Quinn. Joan writes that "We've heard rumors that even though most of the buildings on Pidertupo have been dismantled and all machinery, tools, boats, furniture, etc., are gone, the deep-water docks Tom built make a perfect place for unloading illegal cargo."

Nevertheless, Pidertupo is no more. But the Moodys are alive, and their spirit is carrying them off to the South Seas for a new adventure. I have no doubt they'll succeed. As you might expect, Tom Moody is a tough customer. I'll never forget how surprised I was diving off Pidertupo when, at 70 feet, I looked over to see him suspended there, outfitted not with scuba, but only with a snorkel. With an occasional bubble popping from his snorkel, he hovered for a while watching me; then slowly drifted back to the surface. Later, over dinner, where Moody always held court, he said he used to free dive to 100 feet or more. "I was slowed down," he said, "after the doctors removed a piece of my lung."

I expect that Tom will be back in action shortly. No doubt, the Moody's next enterprise will make Pidertupo look pale by comparison.

Reports From Our Readers' Travels—Part VII

St. Thomas: It's been years since we've reviewed St. Thomas (see Undercurrent Sept. 1975). Then it was better-than-average Caribbean diving (through not spectacular), and the island itself was fun with numerous hotels, plenty of small and decent restaurants, plenty of shopping and local color. In the past, diving has been expensive in St. Thomas because services weren't directly connected with hotels, so the Villa Olga Hotel--in conjunction with the St. Thomas Diving Club--operates in the tradition of a typical dive resort, packages and all. Readers seem to approve of the hotel-- meals are O.K. and dinner must be eaten out in one of six neighboring restaurants. But the dive operation, which has boats also at

the Bolongo Beach Hotel and the Pineapple Beach, gets mixed reviews--very mixed. John Cummings (Baytown, TX) wrote that he dove with "famous Armando Jenik and he repeated the same wreck dive three times. After complaining, he got sent over to the Pineapple Beach with Jeff Sticklin, where beginners get no help, but it was great for experienced divers who wanted something different." C.P. Brauch (Rio de Janeiro) said he was assigned to dive from the boat "Goldilocks", piloted by an image of Captain Bligh who seemed to enjoy treating all divers as military trainees at the expense of their enjoyment. For three days running "I went to the same dive site and I'm still waiting to hear from the manager regarding some settlement." Leonard Sands (Lynwood, NJ) writes "St. Thomas Diving Club is the most disorganized I've ever run across. There were a series of errors, including a promised three nights aboard a dive boat which was cancelled the day before we were to depart-- it took me a month to get a refund; a half-day trip which turned out to be a 16-student check-out dive; cancelled night dives; several wreck dives scheduled and advertised--except the captains had no idea where the wrecks were before they even left the dock... The Villa Olga has a great location, is nice and clean and could be one of the best. They bill themselves as a diving resort run by divers; maybe that's their problem." Now for the other side of the story. Charles Feganahl (Chatham, ME) had such a fine time on a joint land-sea package offered by Villa Olga that he decided to return a second time saying that "diving variety amazing, watching tarpon, palometas and pelicans feeding on minnows from beneath was an experience for me." S. Clear (Greenwich, CT) said divemaster Armando Jenik runs a tidy dive boat and is most conscientious with regard to his divers. He's also one of the most colorful men in his profession and a treat to dive with." And W.B. Closson, M.D. (San Jose, CA) had a great time diving with Jim and Cathy Church's School of Photography, advanced course. Said "the hotel is excellent, nearby restaurants are superb, the dive service is great and the course superb." We can offer no conclusion from our readers other than to say "you pays your money and you takes your chances."...Joe Vogel who runs his small Joe Vogel Diving Company, gets continuing good reviews. For example, Neal Foster (Atlanta, GA) writes "his pre-dive briefings are excellent, covering such items as marine life, currents, air consumption. We dove as a group and came up as a group, but Joe sets a leisurely pace so that watchers and photographers alike do not feel that they have wasted time. On night dives we entered the water when it was pitch black while other groups would go in at dusk and come out before we even got wet. His attention to safety is rigorous and should a careless diver be foolish about the safety rules, he or she is given one warning; after that the dive is aborted for the group." Joe apparently is not the martinet he seems, virtually every reader who dives with him writes fine reports...Ed Granat (Wilmington, DE) dived with Gary Dearing last year at Sapphire Beach, said, "great dive shop with good organization, good guides, good boats, would usually honor requests for specific dives." Frank Davies of Scuba Tours International likes Palmer Williams at Secret Harbor and says, "he runs a good show here and it's far from the maddening crowd, tucked away from the bright lights of the main harbor, although diving on St. Thomas is 'so-so'."

Drying Off After Forty

Thoughts For The Kids Looking For Careers

There's a point in just about every sport diver's career when into mind creeps the notion that diving is an exciting and pleasant pastime at which it would be great to make a living. There are a number of ways to make small change using scuba tanks, ranging from searching for golf balls to cleaning boat hulls; but the

leap from earning pocket money to making an acceptable salary is indeed a great leap.

Most people who dream of a diving career are steeped in the youthful fantasies of being a diving instructor (where the pay averages \$3-\$5/hour) or leading dive tours in the Caymans, where hitting the

water every day, day-in and day-out, burns out all but the most amphibious of people in half a dozen years. Few people whose dive career begins in the water at age 20 will want to find themselves in the water still at 40. By then, they better have something else going for them, for bodies and spirit do indeed change; at forty that change becomes visible and, in many cases, dramatic. So the person who dreams of a career in diving, leading from shop employee to instructor, to shop owner to charter boat operator will have to pick up some business savvy along the way and that most likely means a few good years of college.

For a diver with a scientific bent, oceanography, marine biology and undersea engineering are potential fields of study. Not all schools offer these majors, but one need only locate *Lovejoy's College Guide* (found in bookstores or libraries) which lists the universities with related programs.

Many operators teach commercial diving, though it is not a career for a man over forty. Commercial

divers can command substantial fees and many earn between \$50-100,000 per year, with a substantial amount of time off. The work is difficult, dangerous, and requires great skill and stamina. Three colleges have degree programs. The community college in Santa Barbara, California, and Highline Community College near Seattle have had programs for several years. The newest program is at the Florida Institute of Technology. There, diving officer Jim Woodbury estimates a world-wide deficit of 2-3000 divers and related personnel in the offshore industries alone.

Perhaps most of us fantasize about becoming treasure divers but that should indeed remain a fantasy. For every hunter who strikes gold, scores return home washed out. True treasure hunters are trained commercial divers, skilled in advanced underwater technology. Most ventures are speculative, remuneration limited to minimal expenses unless they hit it big. Since governments claim a major share of resurrected treasure, unless the treasure seeker has carefully worked through the legal morass prior to

Diver Training Schools

Commercial Diver Training— Non-degree

Coastal Diving Academy
108 W. Main Street
Bay Shore, N.Y. 11706

Coastal School of Deep Sea Diving
320 - 29th Ave.
Oakland, CA 94601

Commercial Diving Center
272 S. Fries Ave.
Wilmington, CA 90744

Commercial Diving Institute
151-19 Powells Cove Blvd.
Whitestone, N.Y. 11357

Divers Academy of the Eastern
Seaboard, Inc.
2500 Broadway
Camden, N.J. 08104

Divers Institute of Technology
4601 Shilshole Ave. NW
P.O. Box 70312
Seattle, WA 98107

Divers Training Academy
RFD 1, Box 193 C,
Fort Pierce, FL 33450

The Ocean Corporation
5709 Glenmont
Houston, TX 77081

Professional Diving School of New
York, Inc.
222 Fordham Street
City Island, N.Y. 10464

Commercial Diver Training— Degree granting

Florida Institute of Technology
1707 N.E. Indian River Dr.
Jensen Beach, FL 33457

Highline Community College
So. 240th & Pacific Hwy.
Midway, WA 98031

Santa Barbara City College
721 Cliff Dr.
Santa Barbara, CA 93109

Foreign Commercial Dive Training

Fort Bovisand Underwater Center
Fort Bovisand, Plymouth, Devon,
England PL9 0AB

Prodiv Limited
Services Area, Falmouth Docks
Oil Exploration Base, Cornwall
England, 0326-315691

SCUBA Instructor Certification Agencies

National Association of Scuba Diving
Schools (NASDS)
P.O. Box 17067
Long Beach, CA 90807

National Association of Underwater In-
structors (NAUI)
4650 Arrow Hwy.
Suite F 1
Montclair, CA 91765

National YMCA U/W Activity Program
(YMCA)
P.O. Box 1547
Key West, FL 33040

Professional Association of Diving
Instructors (PADI)
1243 E. Warner Ave.
Santa Ana, CA 92706

Scuba Schools International (SSI)
1449 Riverside Dr.
Ft. Collins, CO 80524

Foreign Instructor Certification Agencies

British Sub-Aqua Club (BSAC)
70 Brompton Rd.
London SW3 1HA
United Kingdom

Confederation Mondial Des Activities
Subaquatique (CMAS)
34, rue de Colisee, 75008
Paris, France

his venture, he could lose everything he discovers. Today's treasure hunter then is a complex combination of commercial diver, archeologist, marine biologist, sea captain, financier and politician.

Occupations in underwater photography continue to open up for people not only skilled in using cameras, but more so for people with a range of support or related skills. Often electronic visual inspections are necessary for utility companies and boat services before repair work can be scheduled. Crawling around in storage tanks, sewage plants, tracing the course of buried pipelines in search of breaks, examining nuclear power plant structures and surveying boat and marine facilities to document damages are some of the jobs divers perform.

Some divers like Flip Schulke, Stan Waterman, Rick Frehees, and Jim and Cathy Church make a living by combining shooting for publications, writing and teaching and appearing at seminars and film projects. But for everyone who can make a living at photography there are scores more who find that underwater photography can provide only supplemental income to another major occupation usually outside of the diving industry.

Of course, there's the Federal government to con-

sider for occupations. Divers for the Navy have been trained in everything from underwater demolition to Navy salvage. Divers for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers work in construction and maintenance of canals, locks and dams of our nation's waterways. National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration conducts a variety of scientific research tests. State and local governments have police divers who are often members of the police department itself (but occasionally part of the police auxiliary—often who serve for little or no pay) who dive for victims of sunken cars or search for items used in crimes or recover "loot."

Conclusion

A career in diving, then, is for the young at heart; certainly for people under 40. By that age one who has planned a career had better find himself financially able to buy the business in which he is working, sufficiently skilled to move into management, or employable in areas altogether outside of diving.

More information about employment can be picked up by writing any of the agencies in the accompanying sidebar.

White Stag Deep V Regulator Recall

Will it ever end?

In September, 1979, Ocean Dynamics initiated a recall of the White Stag Deep V regulator (Model 51144), due to a potential hazard in the first stage. The teflon seat for the first stage piston could extrude and interfere with the movement of the piston, thereby increasing breathing resistance. If it extruded far enough, it could actually stop the flow of air to the second stage. We reported the recall in the Nov/Dec. 1979 issue of *Undercurrent*. Nearly three years later, we discovered the drama has yet to play itself out.

The Diving Company of America, a subsidiary of Sub Aquatic Systems, who made the regulator for White Stag, submitted to the United States Consumer Product Safety Commission for testing a three piece brass O-ring seat as a replacement for the teflon seat. The Diving Company of America and Ocean Dynamics sent these replacement parts to all of their dealers, along with instructions for installation. Two months later, the CPSC notified Ocean Dynamics that the replacement part was not acceptable. CPSC engineers had determined that the brass "O" ring was more of a potential hazard than the teflon seat. In an extreme case, it could cause a heavy free-flow, forcing high-pressure air into a diver's mouth. So, back to the drawing boards!

The Diving Company of America then submitted a

new seat of molded delrin, to the CPSC for testing. Delrin is similar to teflon, but much harder. The CPSC engineers accepted the new seat as a replacement for the teflon and the brass "O" ring seats.

On March 17, 1981, nineteen months after the recall was initiated, a letter went out to dealers informing them of the new seat. Everyone appeared to be satisfied that the problem was corrected.

Then, however, another problem developed. Delrin, because it is harder than teflon, required more pressure to obtain a tight seal at the seat. If the pressure was too low, air leaked. If it was too high, breathing resistance increased. In a sense, the approved cure for the problem killed the product.

The Diving Company of America went back to the drawing board and up came a new solution. They have again recalled the White Stag Deep V, this time to drill a small hole in the seat to allow the pressure to equalize, and to put the teflon seat back as a replacement for the Delrin seat, which was a replacement for the brass O-ring, which was a replacement for the original teflon.

Recall Process Ineffective

The original problem was first discovered when a dive shop operator found a "bubble" in the teflon

seat on two of his rental regulators. That prompted notification of the Consumer Product Safety Commission and the subsequent recall. Noel Brown, General Manager of Ocean Dynamics, recently told *Undercurrent* that "there have been no reports that air was actually shut off because of the extrusion, but there was a potential problem and we thought we ought to get it corrected."

Nevertheless, nearly three years later the problem still hasn't been corrected. The 1600 regulators subjected to recall are still faulty.

Obviously, the Consumer Products Safety Commission hasn't taken an aggressive posture. Relationships between the companies involved with the regulator further confuse the picture. The Diving Company of America built the regulator and White Stag marketed it, but the ultimate responsibility for the regulator is tossed back and forth. There are those who argue that White Stag drew up the specs and therefore is responsible for the design; while others argue that the manufacturer, Diving Company of America, must carry the onus of responsibility.

The Diving Company of America is a subsidiary of Sub Aquatic Systems, whose manager and sales manager at the time of the recall are no longer with S.A.S.

White Stag sold out of Ocean Dynamics (which was called Selpac at the time) in 1979. All of the 1600 regulators manufactured had been sold and shipped prior to the first reported problem and Ocean Dynamics had discontinued plans for further production.

We called several people to investigate the trouble and we were disturbed not only with the protracted recall and repair process, but also with the lack of aggressive action toward solving the problem. Regulators are life support systems. We would expect that such a problem would receive priority by the participants in the recall process, but it seemed as if our questions were the first stimulus people had to blow dust off their files and find out what was happening with the recall of the White Stag Deep V.

Elizabeth Haught, of the Consumer Product Safety Commission, acknowledged that "this recall process has been horrendous. It's gone on longer than any I've ever been involved with." Nevertheless, she claimed that "it isn't anyone's fault. It just happened." She explained that the CPSC encourages

manufacturers to move as rapidly as possible. Hence, the initial brass O-ring went out before the CPSC had a chance to test it, and after that, the second option was approved. But now the next change is dragging the process out even further.

The notion that no one is at fault is absurd. Everyone—the CPSC, Ocean Dynamics/White Stag and Diving Company of America/SAS—is at fault. But *they're* not in jeopardy. It's the consumer—in this case, the user of the White Stag Deep V—who is in potential jeopardy. No one knows how many people have been informed about the recall. The manufacturer's primary means of getting in touch with the owners of the regulator is to contact those who submitted warranty cards. Only 400 are on hand. No one knows how many regulators were repaired with the faulty replacement part under the first recall. There is no system for reporting what has been accomplished and many dealers have gone out of business since the Deep V was first marketed.

Noel Brown says, "We sent out the brass O-rings to our dealers, but have no idea how many have been repaired. We also notified our dealers of the delrin seat and sent those out to shops that asked for them, but we do not know how many have been inserted in the regulators."

Unless a diver has contacted White Stag (that is, found out that White Stag is out of business and is now Ocean Dynamics) there is little likelihood that he will have any information about the problem. We are unaware of any dive shop displaying posters calling attention to the problem, of any publication explaining the problem, or of any training agency informing shops or instructors tracking the repairs. And we, too, let it slip, assuming that everyone was doing their damndest to get the faulty regulators repaired. We should know better.

The moral is simple. The sport diver is on his own. If he buys a piece of equipment that turns out to be faulty, there's little chance he's going to find out about it. His best guarantee is to fill out the warranty card and hope that he is informed of any problem by the manufacturer. But the statistics on recalls are appalling and the concern demonstrated by the industry, from manufacturers to dive shop training agencies, is no better. And the court of last resort, the Consumer Products Safety Commission, too, failed in its obligation. Indeed, at least in this case, the sport diver is on his own.

The Son Of Sport Diver

Ocean Realm Magazine

If you have recently walked into your local dive shop, spotted the magazine *Ocean Realm* and were struck with a strange feeling of *deja vu*, rest easy.

You have been there before. *Ocean Realm*, founded and published by Richard Stewart, is indeed a resurrection of the defunct *Sport Diver*—which was

originally founded and published by Richard Stewart.

Sport Diver, initially a quarterly publication, was sold by Stewart to Ziff-Davis, who changed the magazine into a bi-monthly publication. But the costs were too high, the income too low, the subscribers too few, and *Sport Diver* soon went under.

When *Sport Diver* folded, many people in the diving industry presumed that there just wasn't enough market to support two major magazines competing for the advertising dollar. Stewart didn't listen to skeptics and jumped at the chance to get back into publishing. "The trick," he told *Undercurrent*, "is to keep *Ocean Realm* a quarterly publication. That's where *Sport Diver* made its big mistake. It published too frequently. We won't make the same mistake."

With two issues under his belt, Winter 1981 and Spring 1982, Stewart is optimistic. The first issue is paid for he says, and the second issue is almost clear. "We have about 2,000 paid subscriptions, are distributing in 500 dive shops and we're working on 300 more. It's looking good."

Stewart has made no effort to move away from the identity he created for *Sport Diver* and, indeed, seems to coddle that image. High-quality paper permits high-quality photographic reproduction, and the graphics and style are obviously reminiscent of its predecessor. Stewart simply says, "well, if it looks like *Sport Diver*, it's because we're using a lot of the same people." And indeed they are, even in editorial: Dee Mosteller, Tim Cahill, Richard Ellis, Lou Fead,

Rick Frehese, and other familiar names are back in the fold.

So far, the magazine is a bit thin on substance but that's to be expected in the early going. Survival requires lining up advertising revenue, and for *Ocean Realm*, that's obviously the priority.

Although the *Sport Diver* formula will no doubt set the direction for *Ocean Realm*, Stewart is experimenting. Articles in the first issues suggest a strange combination of *Oceans*, *Skin Diver*, *National Geographic*, and *Sport Diver*. Those in the second issue suggest a clearer direction. For the first issue, the cover was indeed a *Sport Diver* look-alike. The cover of issue number two took on a new identity, but remained in the *Sport Diver* genre.

Will *Ocean Realm* survive? We once doubted that *Sport Diver* would survive, and the same question should be asked again. Advertising revenue depends upon circulation and *Sport Diver* was never able to develop a solid subscriber base. Advertisers, hungry to find ways to get to the diving consumer, will initially pay a premium for space, but eventually the advertising rates must be in line with the readership. But Stewart learned the economics of publishing in the diving industry with *Sport Diver* and what he learned no doubt gave him the impetus to kick-off *Ocean Realm*.

We wish him luck.

A one-year mail subscription to *Ocean Realm* is \$7.99. (Newstand or Dive Shop price is \$2.35 a copy.) You may subscribe by sending your check to *Ocean Realm*, 233 Brickell Ave., Miami, FL 33129.

Wenoka Knife Blade A Danger To Divers

—A Letter From A Reader

Dear *Undercurrent*:

On a recent dive in Cayman, I decided to take along my wife's small Wenoka knife (model 8505), which was purchased in December and had not been used. When I unbuckled the sheath after the dive, I noticed that the blade was protruding about 1/2 inch from the base of the sheath through the drainage slot (which is aligned with the plane of the blade). If the blade slides down inside the sheath, it also slides through the drainage slot. Strapping a knife inside the calf of forearm could mean that the protruding blade could cause a nasty slash on the opposite arm or leg.

The silicone spray I used on the sheath may have exaggerated the problem, but many divers use silicone to protect their gear. I don't believe that the stops in the sheath should depend upon friction.

My local dealer replaced the sheath, and the replacement



restricts the downward movement of the knife firmly, but not positively.

Divers should be aware of the remote but real possibility of being injured when wearing this knife. Hopefully, Wenoka will be able to cure this problem.

Ernest Feleppa Rye, New York

Dear Ernie,

You're absolutely right. That knife and its faulty sheath could be dangerous!

We contacted Joe Zel, Wenoka President, and told him of your discovery. Zel said "this particular sheath was an early production model. It has been changed twice since production began. We have added internal stops to prevent the knife from slipping down into the sheath, and we've added a velcro strap to go around the handle to prevent the knife from falling out when the diver is in an inverted position."

Zel claims the problem is not widespread because Wenoka changed the sheath design and besides, Zel said, "the 8505 has not been a good seller. It won't be in our next catalogue."

If you have one of these dangerous models, return the sheath to your dive shop (i.e., a Wenoka dealer) for a replacement. Or, you may mail the sheath to Wenoka, 1134 53rd Court North, West Palm Beach, Florida, 33407. Explain the problem and request a replacement.