

undercurrent®

THE PRIVATE, EXCLUSIVE GUIDE FOR SERIOUS DIVERS

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S.S. THORFINN, Truk And Ponape, Micronesia

--A Price Too High For Paradise

In February 1944, U.S. forces launched Operation Hailstone, designed to knock out the vital Japanese base at Truk Lagoon, in the South Pacific. The brilliantly executed strike, a turning point of the war, destroyed the defenseless Japanese ships caught within the 30-mile-wide lagoon. Eventually, more than 60 vessels and hundreds of planes lay on the bottom.

Needless to say, war is hell, especially for the innocent Japanese merchantman or Micronesian trapped in the inferno. This April, as I sailed into Truk lagoon aboard the S.S. Thorfinn, palm trees graced the beaches where happy children played. The incident is now merely a tale on an old grandma's lips. Yet while I was at Truk, I often felt a sharp twinge of sadness and melancholy. Yet for marine life, that dark cloud of 1944 had a silver lining, in that the wrecks became the world's stellar artificial reefs.

The question for the diver is not whether to visit Truk, but how to visit Truk -- by land or by sea. So that I could dive other sites as well, I decided on the pricey Thorfinn, whose tab at \$2900 for 12 days and 11 nights is top dollar. Did I get my moneysworth? Right up front I'll say "barely," although I will quickly contradict myself by saying that I wouldn't miss Truk for all the money in the world.

The S.S. Thorfinn, a 170 foot ruggedly-built steamship which had a best-forgotten past as a whaler in the 1950s, was a welcome sight after a boring 10-hour flight from Hawaii, puddle jumping through Johnston, Majuro and Kwajalein Islands. I arrived at Ponape, the "Jewel of Micronesia," only a short time before departure, so I saw nothing of the beautiful island. Why did I let myself come half way around the world and not take a couple of extra days to visit this beautiful island and sample the local diving?

I was quite pleased at my main deck assignment. As liveaboard cabins go, it was fairly spacious -- about 80 square feet -- with ample drawer and closet

INSIDE UNDERCURRENT

Other Truk Options	p.3
Bonaire Beach Bungalows	p.4
The Multiplicity Of Tables: Part II: -- <i>What's A Diver To Do?</i>	p.5
Scuba Self Rescue: -- <i>More Critical Techniques For Saving Yourself</i>	p.6
<i>Undercurrent</i> Travel Questionnaire	p.7-8
That Lawsuit Against PADI -- <i>The Wheels Of Justice Turn Slowly</i>	p.11
Freeflow	p.12

space, a washbasin, two portholes, a place to sit and reading lights on both upper and lower bunks. The five upper and main deck cabins were similarly pleasing, but I would recommend against the seven lower deck spaces. The staircase was steep, the cabins had only skylights, and a few were somewhat cramped. At times the air-conditioning was barely working, making the salon and dining areas stuffy. The Thorfinn carries 26 divers when fully booked; luckily we were only 16 divers and four folk who came to fish.

First stop, after a rolling overnight crossing which left many sleepless and a few seasick: Ngatik Atoll. For some reason, never adequately explained, we did not follow the itinerary promised in pre-trip brochures, missing the advertised Andema (Ant) and Losap Atolls. Six days at Ngatik and Oroluk was too much. The diving was "nice," but did not offer up the Indo-Pacific splendors I have encountered in the Red Sea and the Philippines.

My favorite spot was Keltie Pass in the Oroluk area, which in the afternoons became Manta Land. I'll never forget the sight of the first manta to come my way; the huge creature appeared slowly over the crest of the reef, looking like a space saucer hovering for a landing. He then lazily circled for several minutes, before lifting his 15-foot wingspread and gracefully disappearing. Three more mantas passed by on the same dive, and the following afternoon more appeared. None was inclined to give anyone a ride.

Other than the manta dives, these sites offered a wide variety of sea life, but spread out over far too many dives -- 15 to be exact. Virtually all were drift dives, and three earned no comment in my log book. A couple presented nice macro life, including mollusks and a few small nudibranch. There were lovely Pacific tropicals -- more than a dozen species of butterflies, trumpets, unicorn fish, unusual surgeons, birdnose wrasses, angels, blue scrawled filefish, Moorish idols and many anemones with perky clownfish and domino fish companions. I spied a few monstrous groupers and good-sized turtles were often on the scene. I found large tridacna clams with mantles of many shades. Yet, a big puzzle was the rather dreary state of the coral. While I dove a couple of healthy and dramatic walls, most dives were on gentle slopes where much of the coral was dead or cloaked with algae. There were no fans, whips, or gorgonia. Below 60 feet, much was mere rubble. (Was it El Nino? A plague of crown-of-thorns starfish, of which I saw quite a few? Or the Thorfinn boatmen, only in their second season here, failing to locate the best sites?)

On one dive I saw ten large black-tip sharks. On another, I marveled at several families of bumphead wrasses, 200-pounders all. Schools of tuna, bonito, snappers and jacks drifted by. While on the printed page this may seem like

Star Chart:

Diving at Truk Lagoon:	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Diving in Ponape District:	★ ★ ★
Diving for Beginners:	No Way
Snorkeling:	★ ★ ★ ★
Overall Boat Quality:	★ ★ ★ ★
Food:	★ ★ ★ ½
Moneysworth	★ ★

★ poor, ★★ fair, ★★★ average, ★★★★ good, ★★★★★ excellent

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splendid diving, the treats came sparsely. For the price, one must have better diving.

"Visits with charming island people" were billed as a feature of the Ponape-to-Truk west-bound version of the Thorfinn's itinerary, which is planned to accommodate both diving and sport fishing. (The eastbound return supposedly features more concentrated diving experiences.) Twice we set foot on jungle atolls -- once to our great pleasure, once to some grumbles. The grumble: one day we were allowed only one dive in order to visit Ngatik, and watch a meager little dance performance. The natives were hospitable and I did freely photograph their village ways. It was National Geographic, 1949.

The high spot was a beach barbecue at Oroluk. Two natives spit roast pigs, which were served with fresh tuna and dolphin sashimi, papaya salad and coconut. As darkness closed in, flashlight fish were popping off left and right. The tropical evening was marred only by the knowledge that our Trukese dive guide, Pasi, was bringing back a huge turtle for presentation to the governor of Truk. Our offer of ransom, to save the unlucky animal from the soup kettle, was refused.

How about the food aboard the Thorfinn? On balance, quite good, but below my expectations for a trip of such expense. Breakfast was the best meal with bacon and eggs done to order and specials such as blueberry pancakes, or banana waffles. Lunches were a bit cold, with a hot dish such as soup, stew or spaghetti, plus cold fare such as cheese, deviled eggs and an invariable pasta salad. Dinners were almost always fish -- tuna, mahi mahi or snapper, and chicken appeared twice. Overall the food was tastily prepared, but often starchy and heavy. I missed having enough fresh, or even frozen, vegetables and fruits, though I appreciate the hassle of provisioning at such remote outposts. Fresh bread, muffins, cookies, and desserts help raise the meal standards. Wine was served with dinner. Liquor is sold by the bottle at reasonable prices; beer is a buck. Sometimes nachos or delicious tuna sashimi were served in the salon before dinner.

So what about Truk? That's why I took this trip. And in the first few minutes after descending to the first wreck, the Sankisan Maru, I knew it was not hype. Although the Sankisan is not intact (most of the wrecks are), I was agog. Trucks, engines, and firearms were strewn about; tropical fish darted in and out. Clusters of soft and hard corals were arranged as if by a master stylist. The scene as the Sankisan mast was incredible. It was a high-rise condominium of sea life, with all manner of critters vying for root space on the tall, yard-thick post; branching soft tree corals in strawberry, lavender and yellow tints mingled with gorgonia, whips and sponges; clouds of petite aquarium fish swirled about. At last the group had nothing to grouse about as we relaxed at day's end in sets of sixes in the Thorfinn's bubbly hot tub.

That is, just about nothing. We were supposed to dive four full days here

Other Truk Options

At least two agents in the United States book land-based tours in Truk. For information call: *Trip-N-Tour* (800/348-0842) or *Tropical Adventures* (206/441-3483).

You can book directly with the dive shops in Truk, but it's risky. We've had occasional reports of guides or boats being unavailable for some days, of the shops catering to groups that have arrived rather than individuals, and of other hassles. If you wish to take your chances you can dive two tanks for about \$60/day. Many people select the Continental Hotel for accommodation, but there are much less expensive accommodations available. Check with your travel agent. The dive operations are:

Micronesian Aquatics, P.O. Box 57, Truk Lagoon, E. Caroline Islands, 96942.

Truk Scuba Dive Center, P.O. Box 747, Moen Truk, E. Caroline Islands, 96942; tel. 547.

Blue Lagoon, P.O. Box 429, Truk, E. Caroline Islands, 96942; tel. 796.

(or was it five? the brochure was a bit fuzzy), but we arrived later than planned, leaving only three and a half days of diving for Truk. But in that time, we would dive the remains of seven more ships and a bomber. We went twice to the Fujikawa Maru and the Shinkoku Maru, perhaps the two most popular of Truk's wrecks. (Of the 60 or so ships known sunk, some are still to be found.) And two dives were too few to explore these 500 foot vessels, upright and virtually intact save for collapsed top decks, which make for easy and safe penetrations. Both lie in 110-120 feet of water; interesting bridge structures make for fascinating diving at 60 or 70 feet, but the best stuff requires an 80 or 90-foot plunge. Both wrecks have abundant life: broccoli and leather coral, soft corals in rainbow colors, white sponges, banana-shaped tunicates, fluted oysters, lionfish, tubeworms six inches across.

Ammo is in the hold of the Fuji, as well as beer bottles, china and other mundane but poignant things, such as shoe soles and a porcelain water filter, with the name of its Kobe maker still crisply visible. On the tanker Shinkoku, I floated into a room with urinals and basins, then shone my lights into a doorway to reveal a large Japanese bathtub, tiles still perfectly set. I was not keen on finding skulls or bones on the wrecks and didn't. Last year the remains were collected and cremated in a widely publicized service that was reported to have been extremely moving. Now, in this dive, it was an odd sensation to be caught in a time capsule of manmade disaster, amid such intense marine beauty.

Some wrecks, isolated in currents, had less growth than those two major attractions, but most others were so laden with creatures great and small that the steel hulks might be all but obscured within the century. Even their jagged torpedo scars might appear to heal over. (Message: if you yearn for Truk, don't procrastinate too long.) I could wax on about the incredible dives, but suffice it to say, my Truk experience, although too short, is the highlight of my diving career. I only wished I had done more pre-trip homework and history reading to enhance the memories from concentrated diving. To substitute for the nonexistent dive briefings, I relied on the Thorfinn's good collection of reference books.

Bonaire Beach Bungalows

In our April issue we provided the wrong area code for the reservation number of Bonaire Beach Bungalows. The correct number is 717/586-9230.

Despite the few highs from the Oroluk sites and magic of Truk, I must issue reservations about this charter. Many people were disappointed about the promise of unlimited diving. One must be skeptical about "unlimited" claims, when a liveaboard must cover 500 miles of open sea. But, unlike most liveaboards, we couldn't just fall off the ship and dive when the spirit moved. The 175-foot Thorfinn anchored far from most sites, and it was often a rough runabout trip of 20-30 minutes to dive. I was satisfied with my 27 dives, but a few others had expected to log half again as many. In our 31/2 days at Truk, I made 12 day/light dives, as many as could be made in six days of some land-based stays.

The mostly Canadian crew, including charming hostesses Joanne and Bonnie, were quite accommodating to the guests. Boatmen Peter and Robbie were efficient and helpful. But Divemaster Diana Patterson, who had been on the boat since January, had some problems. Though a competent leader, she tended to polarize her guests. Furthermore, she received poor support from the crew, due in part to her style but I speculate that sexist attitudes of certain male crew members did not work in her favor. Captain Lance Higgs is a likeable chap, but couldn't seem to do much to resolve the problems. Though I liked Patterson a great deal, she's not the right person for the Thorfinn.

The ship has its own drawbacks. Gear-up space is tight. We had to rig our own tanks, and haul personal gear up and down two levels, on narrow steps, each time the ship moved. Help was promised, but the crew was too busy when needed. There were no dip tanks for cameras (although there was a freshwater hose). Current for charging strobes was reliable, but one had to retreat to his cabin to get out of the sun to change film. All this for \$3000.

To whom would I recommend a Thorfinn trip? To the flexible, financially fit diver, who is already a fan of liveboards, and can bear some less than wonderful diving to visit this little-traveled area at the edge of the world. The trip is not for those with a critical eye and high expectations, regardless of the price. In fact, if I were to do it over again, I would opt for a land-based trip to Truk-Palau or Truk-Ponape, which can be had for about \$1,000 less. Unfortunately, I can no longer afford it.

Divers Compass: Easiest way to book is through La Mer (800/348-3669) or See & Sea (800/348-9778), who lock up some blocks in the January-April season. (They can also handle extensions and land-based Truk trips. . . .For direct bookings contact Seaward Holdings Ltd., 62 North Foot of Carrall St., Vancouver, British Columbia, V6B 2H6 Canada. Phone: 1-800/663-8746. . . .Airfare runs about \$1,500 from the West Coast ... check and reconfirm all reservations; snafus occur Truk can be dived year-round but plankton blooms cut visibility in summer and fall can be rainy ... visibility ran about 75-100 feet near Ponape, 50-75 feet at Truk ... water's warm, but wetsuits or jeans are essential for protection on the wrecks A crew tip of about \$50 per diver is appropriate, a tad more if you feel very well served Ear infections are a risk in Pacific waters; take a mixture of 50/50 white vinegar and alcohol in dropper bottle and apply after every dive ... the ship is rock-solid when at anchor, but bring medication if you're prone to trouble on rolling seas.

The Multiplicity Of Tables: Part II

--What's A Diver To Do?

In the last issue, Karl Huggins described ten different tables for sport divers to follow. Although each was unique, each was essentially more conservative than the tables that are taught to all American divers: the U.S. Navy tables.

Such an array of tables can be quite confusing to a diver. Should he follow the tables he was taught -- the Navy tables -- or should he switch to another set of tables? After talking to a number of people in the industry, we learned that opinions are fairly constant. Here are the major points to consider:

Switching tables: Unless you need to develop a consistent conservative profile, stick with the Navy tables. As Dr. Bruce Bassett told *Undercurrent*, because all of the tables are more conservative than the Navy tables, then if one feels a need to be more conservative he might select any of them. But he's not so sure that bends problems are as much attributable to the Navy Tables as to divers pushing their luck.

Stay with what you know: Drew Richardson,

PADI Training Director, says that a diver should thoroughly research a table before switching to it. That's good advice, but Richardson is also aware that not all divers would adequately research the alternate tables. Most divers, we surmise, are a little too lazy to go to the ends required to dig up the details of all the tables. Dennis Graver, training director at NAUI, seeks practicality. He says, "I'm a practical person. Since none of the newer tables are out in plastic I just can't throw them in my dive bag and go diving."

Pushing the Tables: The people who get into trouble are more likely than not those people who go to depth and stay the maximum allotted time, like wreck divers. Bassett says that most sport divers build in a fudge factor on their dives and take a shorter time at depth or move up and practice a form of multi-level diving.

The Fudge Factor: Most conscientious divers have their own way of using the tables to avoid getting bends. Graver says "I stay one group away from the

indicated group, and always put in a 2-3 minute stop at 20 feet which I add to bottom time."

The Unknown Variables: The U.S. Navy tables were developed through the participation of young, healthy men. They don't work as well for overweight people, for people who are overly tired, for people with alcohol in their system, for older people, or for out-of-shape people. Anyone with doubts needs a fudge factor.

Decompression computers: Bruce Bassett believes that the best thing to come along is the EDGE, the new decompression computer. "A diver can look at the curve being generated by the dive profile and set his own limits of safety by how close to the no decompression limit curve he wants to come." Chris Wachholz, Assistant Director, Diver Action Network (DAN), believes that in ten years or so "we will all be using computers rather than working the tables. While different computers will be using different algorithms, it won't be any different than using different sets of tables." But he adds a caveat: "there will be no reason to believe that computers are not as safe as the tables. But since a unit or its batteries can fail, it needs to be backed up with a depth gauge and some sort of timing device."

The Legal Ramifications: No doubt using the U.S. Navy Tables will offer some sort of legal protection in the eyes of the court (if that's a relevant issue).

After all, they are the recognized standard. In fact, Walt Hendrix, training director at NAUI, thinks that an economic issue may be at stake. "If we could document that a change in tables would increase the safety factor for divers, that might help us in dealing with the insurance companies," he told *Undercurrent*. Given insurance problems these days, that might give some impetus to a change in training standards.

One Table? It's unlikely that one table will ever be accepted by the industry worldwide, but Karl Huggins says that he would hope someday it might happen. It would certainly take the confusion out of multiple tables, people being taught different tables (as they now are in the U.S. as compared to Britain), meters being developed which give different readings, and buddies diving together who dive different tables. Huggins likes the DCIEM no bubble tables, and notes that the Canadians sport diving organizations may soon be adopting them. They minimize the calculations a diver has to make and have the academic credentials and the mandates to back them.

But, we're not holding our breath. For our money, just use a good fudge factor when diving with the U.S. Navy tables or a meter. Don't push anything to the limit. The price in pain and paralysis is too great to pay.

Scuba Self Rescue:

--More Critical Techniques For Saving Yourself

Albert Pierce, has been the leading American writer about scuba self rescue for more than a decade. He pioneered the technique we recently reported on -- BC rebreathing during an emergency ascent -- and has written profusely about a variety of other techniques to employ when one gets in trouble.

Pierce's most recent book, *Scuba Life Saving*, is available from Human Kinetics, P.O. Box 5076, Champaign, IL 61820, for \$15.80 per book, which includes shipping. The following material, some of which appear in this book, is a revised version of an article which first appeared in the proceedings of NAUI's recent international conference.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Although I would like to believe that if you are a subscriber to *Undercurrent* you are a confident and experienced diver, let me begin with some fundamentals.

There are two "ships" that are intimately involved in scuba self rescue: watermanship and gearmanship. (These terms, and the masculine pronouns in this paper, refer to both men and women.)

Watermanship involves being at home in the

water, confident of your ability to swim many different ways, able to relax comfortably on the surface or underwater (for a reasonable time) in almost any position, and able to breathe easily without coughing or strangling on stray droplets.

Gearmanship involves being at home with your equipment. When you first learned how to drive a car you had to think about everything you did -- how to insert the key, how the gears and pedals work, etc. Now you don't think about how to drive, but where. Your operation of the car has become habitual. You should be able to operate your scuba gear in a similar habitual fashion. Gearmanship also includes keeping your equipment in good working order, and being able to cope with any possible maladjustment, malfunction or loss.

Panic: A Positive Response

Panic, caused by an apparently insurmountable problem, real or imagined, may be either active or passive. Panic has killed many divers, even if the in-

(Continued on page 9)

Undercurrent Travel Questionnaire

Response Requested

Mail to: *Undercurrent*, PO Box 1658, Sausalito, CA 94965

Location being evaluated _____ Would you return? _____

Date of your trip _____ Hotel _____ Dive shop _____

What other resorts have you dived? _____

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
hard coral	<input type="checkbox"/> plenty and colorful	<input type="checkbox"/> o.k.	<input type="checkbox"/> kind of a bore
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 boats	<input type="checkbox"/> some of the best	<input type="checkbox"/> not bad	<input type="checkbox"/> nothing to see
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.

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 \$25	<input type="checkbox"/> \$25-\$35 for two	<input type="checkbox"/> over \$35 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
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"/> not bad	<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
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"/> none	<input type="checkbox"/> now and then	<input type="checkbox"/> too many bites

Comments and comparison to other places visited: _____

Circle the number of stars applicable to your experience, from 0 to five (for the tops)

Diving for beginners	★	★	★	★	★
Diving for old pros	★	★	★	★	★
Beach snorkeling	★	★	★	★	★
Hotel meals	★	★	★	★	★
Hotel otherwise	★	★	★	★	★
Moneysworth	★	★	★	★	★

Location being evaluated _____

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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
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"/> none	<input type="checkbox"/> now and then	<input type="checkbox"/> too many bites

Comments and comparison to other places: _____

Circle the number of stars applicable to your experience, from 0 to five (for the tops)

Diving for beginners	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Diving for old pros	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Beach snorkeling	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Hotel meals	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Hotel otherwise	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Moneysworth	★ ★ ★ ★ ★

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(Continued from page 6)

initial panic-inducing stress was minor and not life-threatening.

A diver's mask floods. He inhales a few drops of water through his nose, sputters, and streaks for the surface, holding his breath. Result -- a ruptured lung.

Another diver, out of air, negatively buoyant, and completely fatigued by a long post-dive swim, gets a mouth full of water. Paralyzed with fear, he gives up and silently sinks to the bottom -- weight belt in place and BC not inflated.

The *actively* panicked diver unthinkingly takes the wrong action. The *passively* panicked one takes no action at all.

Rescue yourself by thinking positively. Determine the cause. Weigh alternative solutions. Keep trying them until one works. Don't give up. You have more emergency energy than you may think. A man was working under his car when the jack broke. His mother, seeing the car fall on him, rushed out and lifted the car, allowing her son to get out. She used her emergency energy. You can too.

Underwater Blackout

Many diving problems can cause an underwater blackout -- excessive hyperventilation before breath-hold dives, carotid sinus reflex, rust in your tank (or in a wreck) that has used up all the oxygen, etc.

But do you know the symptoms of approaching unconsciousness? Euphoria should be suspected because it frequently occurs before a blackout. But it is often not recognized because feeling super-great is not normally associated with impending doom. Other symptoms are a changing heart rate, weakness, dizziness, confusion, and clumsiness. If you do notice these symptoms, make yourself buoyant so you'll be found on the surface.

Buoyancy

Too little buoyancy, too much buoyancy -- both can cause problems. If you are struggling, and flapping your arms to stay afloat, you may not be able to stop and reach down to inflate your buoyancy compensator (BC) or drop your weights. But you can get

about 17 pounds of positive buoyancy if you simply immerse your head. Lie on your back, with your ears in the water.

Too much surface buoyancy can also cause trouble. In a full wet suit, or especially in an inflatable dry suit, if your weights are dropped, the excessive buoyancy in your legs can make them pop up. Control may be extremely difficult. You may flounder, attempting to keep your legs under you while treading water, or from breaking the surface while swimming. Avoid this by inflating your BC before dropping weights.

Too much air in a BC will slow your swimming process by increasing drag. Deflate your BC to the minimum needed for buoyancy.

An undesirable tendency is to purposely overweight oneself and depend upon adding air to the BC to compensate. Extra air and weights increase drag, and air in the BC can cause an uncontrolled ascent. You can easily add or subtract four to five pounds of buoyancy by simply changing your way of breathing. Shallow breaths subtract buoyancy. Breathing more fully adds buoyancy. This way is much easier and safer than overweighting.

If you find yourself too buoyant on the bottom, and no air in your BC to deflate, you can pick up a rock of the right weight, or hold to the bottom by grabbing a part of a wreck, a coral head, or grass. If this doesn't work, ascend and correct your buoyancy on the surface.

You can avoid stirring up the bottom silt not only by increasing your buoyancy so your fins aim up, but also by using the shuffle kick. Bring your fins together like clapping hands but keep the bottom one still. It will then deflect the water sideways -- away from the bottom silt.

Coughing

A coughing spell on the surface can be a problem not only because you have trouble getting air, but also because you lose buoyancy every time you cough out air and get none back. If, as a result, you are fighting to stay afloat, try submerging your face. In addition to gaining about 17 pounds of instant

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buoyancy, you will be helping gravity to expel those stray drops tickling your throat. Stay near the surface so you can lift your head as soon as your coughing spell is over.

During a dive, water in your regulator could cause a coughing spell. If you are an experienced diver you will sense the presence of water, and will breathe slowly and cautiously with your tongue against the roof of your mouth. This will minimize the possibility of water drops entering your throat and causing a laryngeal spasm or coughing spell. You can cough into your regulator. Just aim your mouth down to help gravity expel the drops.

Gear Problems

If you lose a fin, you can use the power of both legs to propel the remaining fin, and obtain almost as much thrust as with two fins. Simply cross and lock your legs at the ankles and use a dolphin kick.

If both fins are lost, use a scissors kick, or a breast stroke kick (sometimes called a frog kick), and both arms for propulsion. A flutter kick while wearing booties is almost useless.

If your mask strap breaks and you carry one or two rubber bands on your wrist, you can use these to hold the face plate on and continue your dive.

Your mask drops to the bottom and disappears among the sea urchins. Without your mask, you can't see well enough to find it. If you use your head (literally) and your hands, you can make a "mask" from a bubble of air. The bubble lets you see clearly enough to retrieve your mask. Look straight down and trap some air in your eye socket(s) with one or both hands pressed tightly against your face. Try the different ways shown in the flounder's-eye-view drawings.

If the purge valve in your mask leaks and you can't fix it, just exhale through your nose and keep your face aimed so that the valve opening is at the bottom of the mask. Block the opening as you inhale.

If your regulator leaks, inhale cautiously, exhale frequently, and aim the exhaust ports down. Cover them while inhaling.

Some BCs have CO₂ activators that are designed so



Two Hand Method for Making a Bubble Mask.

"Reprinted with the permission of the author"

that a pull in the direction away from the cartridge and in line with it will make it fire. If you pull the cord of a horizontal cartridge down (as most divers would) the firing pin may only nick the cartridge, making a hole so small that it will take minutes to fill the BC, or not make any hole so the BC won't inflate at all.

Most inflator mechanisms are hidden by a flap or pocket with only the activator cord hanging in view, frequently threaded through a grommet. If you pull the cord of a horizontally mounted cartridge correctly away from it, the lever may be prevented from moving in that direction by the grommet. If yours is so restricted, unthread the cord from the grommet and attach it so it hangs free. If you can't remember how your cartridge is mounted, pull the cord down, then swing it back and forth like a pendulum, covering all possibilities.

Conclusion:

Regardless of who you are diving with, you, yourself, have the ultimate responsibility for your own safety. You can't expect that someone else will be able to respond quickly enough to bail you out. By understanding and practicing these techniques for self rescue, you'll be able to take care of yourself in situations where others will be of little help.

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That Lawsuit Against PADI

--The Wheels Of Justice Turn Slowly

Last year, PADI instructor Don Dibble and several others filed both a federal and state (Texas) lawsuit against PADI, the Professional Association of Diving Instructors. Since then, the suits have taken their own twists and turns, focusing more and more on the way that PADI does business.

No one at PADI headquarters has been willing to talk with *Undercurrent* about the suit, but a number of people knowledgeable about PADI and the suit have been willing to speak off the record. Their comments, coupled with public court documents provide some sort of picture on the current status.

Until 1983, PADI was a nonprofit corporation registered under California laws. Apparently it has not been adequately registered to do business in many other states.

Court documents reveal that in 1983, PADI was sold to a profit making corporation, International PADI, Inc., for \$200,000, payable through a 20 year note carrying a 10% interest rate. The note apparently carries no payment schedule, so one may presume that it need not be paid off for 20 years. The terms are particularly interesting because they are between International PADI and PADI and need to be viewed in light of the ownership of those two organizations.

The plaintiffs allege that the Directors of PADI at the time of sale were Craig Carlson, John Cronin, and Ralph Erickson. They allege that the Directors of International PADI were Craig Carlson, John Cronin, Ralph Erickson, Al Hornsby and Gary Prenovost.

PADI bylaws and Articles of Incorporation carry language fairly standard to nonprofit corporations indicating that the assets cannot be sold to private parties or to "any member or director of this corporation." The plaintiffs are claiming that "the sale of all of PADI's assets to IPI, on its face, violated the . . . by-laws of PADI." They allege that the transaction was self-dealing, designed to benefit the individual defendants and not the corporation.

In the agreement to purchase PADI, IPI assumed existing liabilities. Court documents list twelve lawsuits in which PADI had some involvement at the time of sale. PADI was named as defendant in three fatality suits seeking a total of \$12,000,000.

The plaintiffs also allege irregularities in the manner in which the decision to sell PADI was determined. They argue that:

"A nonprofit public benefit corporation may not

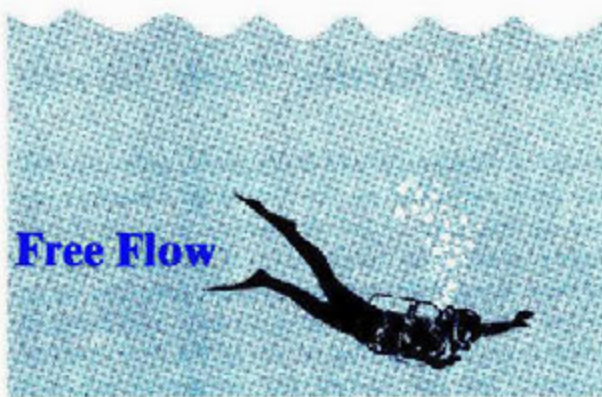
sell all or substantially all of its assets, unless the sale has been approved by the Board of Directors and also its members, if the transaction is not in the ordinary course of business.... This sale was the farthest thing from any of PADI's purposes or activities. Despite this, Carlson, Cronin, and Erickson failed to get the approval of any of PADI's members regarding this sale. In fact, the sale was actually concealed for nearly two years and no one knew of it outside of the defendants until this suit was filed."

PADI, of course, denies all charges. We can expect that their defense will take several tacks, including and attempting to prove that the sale was legal because of the special nature of PADI. Nonprofit corporations in California take many forms; the plaintiffs are trying to prove that PADI is a so-called "public benefit corporation," and therefore can't be sold. The defendants no doubt will try to prove otherwise.

Furthermore, the defendants will most likely argue that the members had no voting rights because the bylaws had been amended twice to eliminate the rights of members to vote on certain matters, including the election of directors (in the not for profit world, members do not necessarily have to have voting rights). PADI (or IPI) is sure to argue that the member vote was no longer valid, while the plaintiffs are arguing that the directors' "ability to perpetuate themselves in office by depriving members of the power to vote would be contrary to one of the more basic tenets of California corporate law."

It's unlikely that the court will hear arguments until October. And many other issues abound, most of which may never get addressed in court. It's a complicated case which reaches into the deep recesses of PADI and many other organizations as well. Whether the plaintiffs will cause PADI to reorganize or win their multi-million dollar damage claim is anybody's guess.

One aspect we find most interesting is the level of anger among long-time PADI members regarding the sale of PADI to a profit making corporation. Most claim that PADI kept the sale secret and they don't like it. Regardless of the ultimate disposal of the PADI case in the courts, we have no doubt that the internal repercussions will be felt in PADI for some time. There are just too many long-time PADI people pulling for the plaintiffs and not the parent organization.



For summertime reading, let us recommend a collection of short stories set mainly in the Caribbean: *Easy in the Islands* (Penguin Books, paperback), by Bob Shacochis. Here is an author who knows the islands like no tourist. He writes of the romantics, of the bureaucrats, of the locals who live far from the glitter. Each story is touched with humor and pathos, and each story gives anyone who has been in Barbados, to Jamaica, or to the Bahamas, a glimpse of his own experience. Shacochis writes of reggae bars, of yacht-filled marinas, of tin houses. His ear for the local dialect and dialogue takes us directly to the people. You can enjoy *Easy in the Islands* whether tucked safely in bed or spread joyously on a remote beach.

Divers in Fort Lauderdale are raising a big stink about the freighter which dragged its anchor through the 1945 DC-4 which had been sunk just last year to develop as an artificial reef. And, not long before that, five divers were visiting the plane when another freighter dropped its 500lb anchor within 50 feet of the groups. Freighters waiting to get into port drop anchor in shallow water on the natural reefs, when they could just as easily head to deeper water. Granted, such destruction is unnecessary. But what about the destruction from the dive boats as well. Our Fort Lauderdale correspondent reports that plenty of local dive boats daily drop their anchor on living coral and don't think twice about it. Isn't it time for anchor buoys -- or riding the anchor down for careful placement? It's too easy to point the finger at the other guy, isn't it?

Restaurants are coming up with plenty of fancy names to sell fish that could never be marketed before. In case you're curious, here's just a sample of what you're getting: sea squab (puffer), Anglerfish or lotte (the ugly monkfish), swordfish (too often its Mako shark), Orange Roughey (a deepwater ocean perch from New Zealand), Rouget (a red mullet from the Mediterranean); coho salmon (a small salmon made available to restaurants through aquaculture in Washington State); white fish (whatever is cheap at

the market), Tilapia (a farm-raised white fleshed fish also marketed as St. Peter's fish).

The Underwater Medical Society has reported the results of a year-long search by a national gardening magazine to find a way to cut up onions without tears. Among the more than 400 suggestions were to chop onions while dangling a burnt match from your lips and to chop after placing a vacuum cleaner hose next to the chopping board to suck up noxious fumes. The winner? Well, why not simply wear a diving mask while you apply your scalpel to the scallions? No doubt, you'll be able to shop for your next Scubapro silicone special in the culinary section of your neighborhood Macy's.

Seventy-five percent of the aquarium fish in the U.S. come from the Philippines. According to *Outside* magazine, investigator Steve Robinson joined Philippine fish collection trips and found that 80% of all the fish caught were collected using sodium cyanide, squirted into crevices to daze the fish. Robinson reports that Manila buyers reject torn fins, but "burned gills, damaged livers, and ulcerated intestines are ok." By the time the fish reach the U.S., only half are still alive. Autopsies suggest that cyanide poisoning is a major cause of death in the fish that die months after retail purchase. Cyanide also kills the reefs. Robinson says that "80% of the reefs in the Philippines are no longer worth diving. You have to go to remote places to catch fish when you used to catch them right off Manila. Those reefs are dead now. And the tourists who are taken to the beautiful reefs to dive have to go way out into the ocean. But the collectors are starting to hit those reefs too."

If you have flown across the Bahamas, then perhaps you have noticed the great, milky white patches in the water which appear to be shallow shoals or even great clouds of mud. Well, great clouds of mud they are. Locals call them "whittings," because for as long as anyone can remember it was presumed that they were caused by a small fish, the whiting, digging in the bottom. As it turns out, that's not the case. In fact, no one knows what causes them, reports Eugene A. Shinn, in *Sea Frontiers*, even after exhaustive research. None of a dozen theories have panned out, including fish disturbances, algae growths, or calcium carbonate formations. Even though the source of the whittings remains a mystery, they indeed exist. And within the whittings live several species of tropical fish which have lost their normal coloration to become pure white. Most interesting find? Schools of normally gray black-tipped reef sharks, still with the black tip, but with bodies the same milky white as the water around them.