
Before I hooked up with Ben Davison, he had already visited Rum Point. When I saw his name on the guest list at Rum Point I was cursing — the @#%&*@ had beat me here by a month. He did get to take the fast boat to the barrier reef on his trip and reports it's worth the ride, with the coral especially virgin and beautiful, rating it up there with many of the dives further north in Belize.

J. Q.

And, J. Q., when I beat you again to the next "undiscovered spot," I promise that you, not the other newsletter guys, will get the story.

Ben Davison

to attract to Rum Point. "The experienced diver," he replied. When I mentioned that most experienced divers like to make more than two dives a day, his reply was that multiple dives of more than two were dangerous. Most of the world's live-aboards that cater to American divers allow four or more dives a day, I pointed out. "Then they're diving dangerously, aren't they?" he retorted.

In Essence

The diving inside the reef was not good enough to keep me a happy diver for a week. The Pro 42 was not available for most of my visit, which altered the usual diving pattern, but even that boat takes more than an hour to get out to the barrier reef. If the Pro 42 is not running while you're there, consider it a problem.

Brian runs a by-the-book, safety-oriented dive operation. Beginning divers should appreciate this, but experienced divers will find his procedures restrictive. For one reason or another, we never made a dive longer than 40 minutes and I never surfaced with less than 1,300 psi left over in an aluminum 80.

Having made this trip as a compromise destination, I found the land activities excellent and Placencia an off-the-beaten-path (for now) destination that was a pleasure to explore. Rum Point Inn is comfortable; it has a good staff, and its art-colony-looking cabañas add a new twist to tropical resorts. All in all, an excellent resort that is Almost a Dive Resort. J.Q.

Accidents and Incidents

How divers get into trouble underwater

Last year, the Aussies released studies of several deaths occurring a couple of years before. Below are some cases that deserve our attention.

A Small, Dirty Room

The following tragedy illustrates that training and knowledge are not enough — one needs experience to apply them correctly.

Having taken a wreck-diving course and made several subsequent dives there, two divemasters failed to surface at the expected

time from a 160-foot wreck dive. The other divers assumed nothing was wrong. Rather, they figured that two divers of their experience must have surfaced without being observed and drifted out to sea.

None of the other divers had seen them on the wreck. Police and other divers found no trace of them, but ignored the silty water coming from the opening in the floor of the deck cabin, which led to the crew quarters, a space made dangerous by loose-hanging cables.

Friends of the missing divers, refusing to believe that both would die without ditching their weights and inflating their BCs, surmised that the bodies must be trapped within the wreck. They prepared carefully: the search diver was on a line and breathed from an air hose attached to a tank placed close to the hatchway. He found the bodies.

The victims presumably had entered the compartment with satisfactory visibility, but had become disorientated after stirring up the silt. They had failed to tie off the lines they carried, and their lights were useless in the murk. Unfamiliar with the compartment, they were unable to find their way back to the hatchway. At that depth,

nitrogen narcosis may also have contributed to their confusion.

Silent Death

On this night dive, his first scuba dive since certification, Steve was naturally tense and worried, but determined to dive. His buddy, also a novice, had taken the same course. Because Steve was 52, an electrocardiogram had been recommended as part of his diving medical certification. It was scheduled for two days after this dive.

The dive, organized by the instructor, was on a wreck lying 200 yards off a yacht club pier. They were to snorkel out in pairs. All had their air turned on and each carried a light. The sea was calm.

The buddy looked back once to see Steve fiddling with his mask and snorkel. He heard a sound like someone clearing a snorkel. The next time he looked, there was no sign of Steve.

The instructor made an unsuccessful underwater search, then took them all back to shore and organized a systematic search of the area. They found Steve's body drifting just off the sea floor, all equipment on, regulator hanging loose.

The autopsy revealed coronary atherosclerosis. Steve had died quietly at the surface. He had not called out, ditched his weights, or fully inflated his BC. He may have inhaled cold water and suffered a sudden cardiac arrhythmia. This is not an uncommon diving death, for the stress of diving leads to heart attacks in many older divers.

Solo to Oblivion

A film on crocodiles and sharks required some additional shots of sharks feeding. The filmmaker, an underwater photographer, took two experienced divers as his team and another experienced diver, George, who was a friend.

The plan was to stay above 30 feet and beneath the boat, which was anchored in calm, clear, 30-foot water near a dropoff to 1,200 feet. They let down a shark cage, spread bait, and waited for sharks. One diver was in the shark cage with the camera; the other two took turns on guard with a hand spear. George stayed near the cage.

After a time, George swam toward the dropoff and over the edge, looking at the fish and corals and checking his gauges. The two crew members were surprised to see one of the group diving solo, but assumed it was with the group leader's approval.

After the film group completed their task and surfaced, they realized George was missing. Two divers descended beyond 150 feet

to look for him, but could not find him; they later needed recompression therapy. Neither he nor his equipment were ever found.

While we can never know why George disregarded the dive plan and made a solo excursion over the edge, we can presume that he did not consider himself part of the film team and could therefore leave them. Perhaps the clear water made him unaware of his true depth and he misunderstood the digital display of his borrowed depth gauge, reading his depth in feet rather than meters. An experienced, confident diver and a flying instructor, he would have considered a solo dive completely safe in such ideal water conditions. Nitrogen narcosis probably affected his judgment.

Ben Davison

Subscription Raid

Whole lotta shakin' goin' on

When Rodale, publishers of *Organic Gardening*, *Prevention*, *Men's Health*, *Backpacker*, *Bicycling*, and more, entered the dive publication market with their startup *Scuba Diving*, they wanted to rush to the top. One of the tactics used in their pursuit of the number-one position held by *SkinDiver* was to cut a deal with the Divers Alert Network (DAN). With every membership, DAN would include a year's subscription to Rodale's *Scuba Diving*, giving the magazine an instant circulation of around 90,000. DAN has now ended this giveaway, and those 90,000 subscribers are coming up for renewal. As ad rates are based on subscription numbers, *Scuba Diving* has reason to hustle.

How to replace those subscribers? Reach into deep pockets and buy them. Rodale has purchased *Underwater USA* and will now roll those subscribers over to *Scuba Diving*. Unfortunately, this is a loss to the dive consumer. *Underwater USA's* newspaper format filled a different niche; the diversity of dive publications has been reduced.

Others things are shaking at *Scuba Diving*. Both the executive editor, Steve Blount, and the publisher, David McAfee, are no longer there. Managing editor David Taylor told me he was at the helm for the time being. A frequent contributor to the magazine, who wishes to remain anonymous, told me he had been