
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

informed by *Scuba Diving* that they would be significantly cutting the number of editorial pages in each issue

of the magazine. It sounds like we have not only one less choice in publications, but fewer pages as well. ■



FISHY FRIENDS & FEW SHARKS. “A man who prefers the society of sharks to that of men cannot be totally media-crazy.” That’s what the daily *Le Monde* said of Guy Delage, the Frenchman who this winter swam and rafted (about two-thirds of the time) across the Atlantic. Just before he landed in Barbados, locals clubbed dozens of dolphin fish that had circled his raft during the voyage. “They were my companions, my friends,” he said, and they had eased his fatigue, loneliness, and fear. He was unable to save them even by threatening the fishermen with the gun he carried to ward off sharks. As for sharks, he only saw two. One surprised him: “At first I did not see him, but there he was with his mouth open. I kicked him on the nose and managed to make it to the raft,”

he said. Scientists said his trip provided evidence that sharks were fast dwindling in the mid Atlantic.

DON’T TOUCH THAT WHALE. Responding to reports of people jumping out of their boats and trying to ride a whale, the Coast Guard has decided to place undercover agents aboard commercial whale-watching boats in California. Harassing a marine mammal is punishable by a fine of up to \$20,000 or a year in jail.

NAUI HEADHUNTERS. Word is that Sam Jackson, executive director of NAUI, is set to take over at the Diving Equipment and Marketing Association (DEMA). NAUI headquarters has hired a headhunting firm to find a replacement for their executive director position. Interested?

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