
... You may have a hard time believing me when I say that I had a wonderful time and that the Lammer Law is a magnificent vessel.

the *Lammer Law* is a magnificent vessel. For the most part, the crew did whatever they could to make our trip as pleasant as possible. The passengers were a fun-loving group, and the guides pulled everything together nicely. Of course the diving was five star, but the *Lammer Law*, the grand old lady, could do with a bit of troubleshooting to bring her up to the five-star class she absolutely deserves.

G. S.

Hanging by a Thread

Hookers on the reef

In our March issue we printed an article by an In Depth reader who described his method of dealing with the strong currents in Palau — by hooking himself to the reef with a hook and line. Is it safe? Is it ecologically correct? Is it crazy? Other readers respond:

Dope on a Rope

Dear Editor:

I'm shocked and outraged that any responsible diver (or dive newsletter) would recommend using a hook rather than let a diver be swept away into the blue clutching handfuls of sea fans, coral, and sponges torn from the reef in desperation. Why? Because

1) Some enterprising soul (probably not a Palauan, unfortunately) will try to patent and package the hook idea as the latest whizz-bang: "Diver Kite — you too can fly like Superman! Only \$99.95!" [Ed. note: They're already on sale at the Palau Pacific Resort for \$18.]

2) Everyone (and his dog) will buy and try to use the hook without having had the (consider-

able) current experience necessary to deal with the multitude of possible "bad trips."

3) PADI will seize on the idea to market yet another "merit badge course."

However, having used a hook for many years in strong currents, especially on exploratory dives, if anyone is foolish enough to use a hook, I suggest the following:

1) Get a small shark hook, file off the barb and blunt the tip (so you don't hook your BC or something more painful as you try to unravel doing 3 knots down the reef). Get 15-30 feet of prepackaged spear gun line, which is stiffer and doesn't turn into a fishing line death knot.

2) Don't use your BC waistband or weight belt, but rather a separate belt, and use two (not one) quick release mechanisms (such as stainless snap link and a plastic quick release) — just in case!

3) Hook on to a DEAD coral head (which, unfortunately, is getting easier to find). Find one that projects up or out from the

reef so that when you have finished your "Man of Steel" demonstration, you will be able to duck into the lee and retrieve the hook and line for another dive.

Summary: Hook? What hook? Seriously, it's probably better to keep it that way so we don't have to read about "The Hook" in your "Accidents and Incidents" column.

P. J., aka Captain Hook
Jakarta, Indonesia

Asleep at the Hook

Dear Editor:

I just returned from Palau, where I used a reef hook for the first time and I loved it! I've been diving for 23 years and the only contact I have had with the reef in the past 15 years has been a gingerly placed fingertip. But when the current is ripping and you want to stop and take in the action, the choice is a reef hook or wholesale coral death.

I never felt any risk of entrapment, disengagement from the reef was simple, and having two hands free for photography was great! A puff of air into the BC, cross your arms, and current surfing is so relaxing you could fall asleep. I'm toting my hook with me everywhere! It's definitely a better mousetrap!

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