
Postmark 9/96

Feedback from readers

Regular Regulator Receipts

Dear John Q. Trigger:

One thing you forgot to mention in your article on regulator overhauls and service is keeping your receipts.

I bought my first regulator in 1978, one of Dacor's top-of-the-line models at the time. It included free parts with annual service as long as you kept it up on a yearly basis.

I lived in Ohio then and had it serviced annually at the shop where I bought it. Then I moved to Florida and had it serviced

there. All the Florida shop asked me was if I'd had it serviced annually, and when I replied yes, they didn't charge me for parts.

Then I moved to California, and when I took it in for service they wanted to see receipts from all the previous services. All I had was the handwritten entries I'd made on the warranty card, which wasn't good enough for them.

After I paid for parts and labor on that first California overhaul, I switched to the "every second or third year" service plan. After that, I only had two problems in seven years: (1) before my first dive after

an overhaul, the second stage fell off in the dive boat, and (2) the high-pressure hose developed an air bubble and blew out.

Dr. Michael L. Nelson
Edinburg, TX

That's Perry Hughes, Not Peter Hughes, and He's Cheaper than Bill Tewes

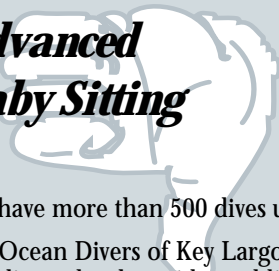
Dear John Q. Trigger:

I just finished reading your piece on St. Vincent. It was nice to see Mr. Tewes receive the accolades he deserves. However, there are other operators on St. Vincent. St. Vincent Dive Experience (SVDE) is owned and operated by a Vincentian, Perry Hughes. Perry has a fabulous operation where boats are limited to four to six divers. His boats are sleek, fast, and protected with a Bimini cover top.

While Dive St. Vincent does provide great service, it's at a grand price. Perry's 10-boat dive package start at \$275, and Bill Tewes charges \$400. Lastly, through September 30, SVDE is offering a deal: buy a 10-dive package and your buddy dives free.

Dennis Sabo
Landfall Productions
Dive and Adventure Travel
(800-525-3833)

Advanced Baby Sitting



and have more than 500 dives under their weight belts) but ripped off as well.

Ocean Divers of Key Largo insisted that her buddy could not do the 100-foot dive unless he paid an additional \$35, because he didn't have an advanced certification. They paid the money and made a 20-minute dive with a divemaster accompanying them for safety.

I called Ocean Divers (800-451-1113) anonymously, told them I was traveling to Florida and wanted to dive the *Duane*, and asked about pricing. I was informed that the cost was \$45 unless I needed a tank (an additional \$8 per dive) or weights (\$3 more). It was two-tank dive, I was told, and the boat held 45 divers but generally had only 32 aboard. No mention was made of an advanced diving certification until I brought it up at the end of the conversation. Her reaction to my question was one of disbelief: "You mean you're not a certified advanced diver?"

"Does everyone have an advanced certification? Doesn't experience count?" I asked.

"Well, unless you have a signed logbook with two dives past the 80-foot depth, we can't take you. Unless maybe we send an instructor along with you."

I'm out of luck. I'm the only one who signs my logbook, but at least I didn't go to all the trouble to get up in the morning, lug my equipment down to the shop, then find out I needed an additional 35 bucks and someone to hold my hand.

J. Q.

When E. McGlone (Hunting, New York) and her dive buddy made a trip to Florida, they wanted to dive the wreck of the *Duane*. Dive it they did, but they walked away feeling not only treated like children (both are over 50

Loma Loma Understated

Dear Ben Davison:

I just returned from 10 days at Loma Loma and wanted to tell you that I went there specifically because of your recommendations. All the years I've been a subscriber to *In Depth*, I've found your information to be completely reliable — until now. Your glowing report underrated the resort.

My first dive was to a site called Outer Limits. On this dive I saw two very large schools of both

dogtooth and yellowtail tuna, six or seven whitetip sharks, and three very large gray sharks. Towards the end of the dive, Dan pointed frantically to a deeper depth, where I saw swimming six or seven abreast a huge school of hammerheads; they looked like a freight train moving down a track.

The next day, we went back out to Outer Limits and saw a school of six eagle rays, the usual schools of tuna, and more whitetip sharks. At the end of our second dive, as I was getting ready to pull myself onto the boat, Ben started screaming to look down. I did, and saw a minke whale suspended next to the boat, observing us.

Now it's back to diving in the Northeastern U.S. with five-foot viz and 65° water. Ouch.

Jeffrey Falk
Flushing, New York

Recycled Water Bottles: The New Environmentalism?

Dear John Trigger:

I was intrigued to see the item about the *Galapagos Aggressor* in the July issue of *In Depth*. I was on the *Aggressor* on an 11-day cruise in March. While we had a wonderful trip, there were a lot of small things that went wrong, consistent with your other reader's experience in February. On the 6th day of the 11-day cruise, we ran out of beer, some sodas, and bottled water. (For the record, we had a group of very light drinkers — the people who did drink had only a beer or two and only at the end of the day.) We didn't actually find out about the water for a couple of days, since they were fishing the empty water bottles out of the garbage and refilling them from the tap without telling us. Needless to say, this caused a near-mutiny among the passengers since, among other things, a

couple of passengers had been sick. In addition, the air conditioning in our cabin went out on the 6th day and was not fixed. (One of the other cabins lost its A/C around the same time and theirs was not fixed either.)

On balance, we did have a great trip and I would go back in an instant, but I couldn't resist responding to the strangely familiar story of shortages on the *Galapagos Aggressor*.

S. Douglas Borisky
New York

Random Scatterings

News on line and in letters

Only in America: Subscriber Dennis Munden spent a June week in St. Croix in the U.S. Virgin Islands. While he got the best of service from **Virgin Island Divers**, he was not comforted by what he saw underwater — and in the markets: "I had been told that the dive sites had little damage from last year's killer hurricane. If that's true, then they have been in poor shape for a while. There was much broken coral and silt on the reefs, and the fish life was disappointing. I saw three angelfish the whole week. Then I visited the local supermarket and understood why: they were selling French angels and even trumpet fish. . . ." Trumpet fish? I wonder if they sell foot-long hot-dog buns along with them.

If I have to read about a shark-bite incident, Martin Richardson's story is the kind I like to see — the shark gets punched, the diver survives, and dolphins come to the rescue. As he was diving in the **Red Sea** off Egypt's Sinai peninsula, one or more sharks hit Martin, taking a big bite of rib and muscle and puncturing his lung. While he screamed to his friends in the boat to help him, the shark(s) returned for another bite. Catching sight of a shark's head in the

bloodied water, Martin punched it as hard as he could. Undaunted, the shark returned for a third mouthful and extracted another pound of flesh. From here the story gets more upbeat. Martin's friends in the boat say that a pod of playful dolphins warded off the shark for two vital minutes, giving them time to pull him aboard the dinghy. For those who want to believe it, the dolphins seemed concerned about the welfare of the planet's master species; skeptics say that this defensive behavior is common when mothers are protecting their calves from predators. Martin survived.

If you have a flexible travel schedule and get e-mail, check out **Island Dreams' Electronic Diver list**. It's an alert on last-minute dive travel deals and specials. The last posting listed *Wind Dancer* in Honduras, a \$200 discount; *Rembrandt Van Rijn* in Belize, second person, half price; *Turks and Caicos Aggressor*, \$200 discount. (800-346-6116 or 713-973-9300, fax 713-973-8585, info@islandream.com or http://www.islandream.com/island/index.htm)

Imagine that on your next dive you come across 700 divers lounging around the reef listen-