

THE SCUBA SPORTS CLUB



1975 - 2015

OF WESTCHESTER, NY

Special 40th Anniversary Issue
June 2015



Welcome to the Special 40th Anniversary Issue of the TSSC SeaSwells Log! We are celebrating 40 years of diving, camaraderie, environmental stewardship and community service. This issue contains a plethora of your impressions and memories over the years. Enjoy and become inspired for the next 40 years!



40 years from now? I confidently say "Yes". Why? Because of each of our members and what we collectively bring to the club. Following what has worked in the past, we will keep the Club together by our friendships and continuing to attend interesting Club events. Like every organization, there will be changes and different ideas of what to do. We can not survive on Dive trips alone. Our bank accounts and our jobs prevent monthly trips to exotic places in search of clear blue water. The Directors will keep asking your thoughts on what activities you like to do; please help us keeping the Club an interesting and fun group to be with. The diving industry has changed a lot over the past forty years. The biggest change is the Internet, this is both a blessing and a curse to diving. The Internet

TSSC – A Look Ahead

By Tom Butcher

I have been asked to provide some thoughts for the future of TSSC. I wish I had some "future predicting" skills. I know what stocks to avoid (the stocks I purchased), so I know my "future predicting" skills stink. TSSC has been together for 40 years. Will it remain active

On the Leading Edge of Positive Change

Interview with Armand "Zig" Zigahn and his wife JoAnn; by Gary Lehman

On the occasion of the 40th anniversary of The Scuba Sports Club we decided to circle around, get back to our roots, and spend some quality reflection time with our Founder Emeritus, Zig Zigahn. I was favored also to spend quality time with Zig's wife JoAnn. It was an inspiring and spell-binding interview which shined light on the past, present and future of our Club - and the sport of scuba diving. We met at Pete's Saloon in Elmsford. Proprietor Pete Riekstins is a long-time Club member, runs a great restaurant and saloon, and as many of us know, is a supremely skilled underwater (and topside) photographer. I suspected we'd be in for a treat when I spied a Nikonos underwater camera and Nikon D2X digital SLR on exhibit up on the mantelpiece!

Before the interview with Zig and JoAnn got underway, Pete, his wife, and Zig, JoAnn and I spent some moments greeting each other and chatting. We were then treated to an impromptu photo show of some prints of Pete's riveting underwater photography. Breathtaking and inspiring are the other adjectives which come to mind! Pete has a portrait of a white shark from Guadalupe Island (Mexico) which is arrestingly beautiful and at the same time brutally honest about the form, function and life of this apex predator. One has to just see the portrait;

truly - it is beyond description. The hallmark of a fine portrait photographer is mastery of the art of conveying the spirit of the subject. In this, Pete succeeds brilliantly. The artistic merits and emotional impact of Pete's underwater images are matched by the sensitive and informed marine environment advocacy emanating from his images, and by the towering technical excellence of the photographs. Pete maintains direct artistic end to end control by meticulously printing all his own photographs. Following some insistent urging, Pete will consider founding a website of his photographs, and has decided to exhibit some of this work at the Saloon - magnifying for all of us the draw of this special place!

The photo show granted by Pete was actually a perfect on-ramp to the conversation with Zig and JoAnn, because the unifying theme was respect, love and concern for the future of threatened marine environments, their inhabitants - and all of us who ultimately rely on the oceans for sustenance. Zig is disturbed by the damage and destruction of the waters he has experienced and cherished over the years, and is dedicated to restoring and preserving them. Protection of marine areas was a big part of Zig's motivation to found Beneath The Sea in 1976. But first things first! *Cont. on page 2*

has opened many diving options for trips, purchasing gear, even training. The Internet has helped us make our Club more available, but it can also make the Club "un-necessary" if we don't evolve. Interesting events will keep the Club alive. Looking forward to diving and attending Club Events with each of you, ten to twenty years from now!

Tom Butcher, President

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On the Leading Edge...

continued

Zig grows up in Utahand a Life Dedicated to Advancing Scuba Diving and Marine Environments

Zig hails from Utah where he was an athletic youth engaged in all kinds of sports - skiing, tennis, hiking...and being a rascal. Utah however is a location in the continental United States which is just about as far away as you can get from the ocean environments which he is now so committed to protecting! So how did that happen? Maybe he learned the love of the oceans during his youth, perhaps in the Navy? Nope: Zig served in the US Air Force after high school, where he learned the mysteries of the growing, vital field of telecommunications. Anyone who has ever flown over Utah and looked out the window will have been inspired by the soaring, multi-colored and dramatic landscapes of Utah. Zig must have been as well, because he chose to study geology in college. Upon graduation, Zig was commissioned as an officer in the Air Force. Because he was a telecommunications whiz, Zig was ordered to report as Telecommunications Instructor to his Air Force comrades. Thus in Zig's early adulthood, he mastered the sky and its ways and means as an Air Force officer - and he also understood the Earth below his feet as a geology major. Throughout his scuba diving career and through his travels all over our world, Zig's knowledge of geology has served him well, deepening his understanding of and connection to our Earth and its oceans.

Upon discharge from the Air Force, Zig was grabbed by a rapidly growing IBM Corporation hungry for the very best technical and business talent. Zig served twenty five years as a systems engineer, designing / building / operating IBM's challenging, rapidly expanding internal systems during the period of IBM's most prodigious business growth - and spanning a period of the radically increasing technical complexity of online interactive systems (like online banking and instantaneous worldwide airline reservations, which today we blithely take for granted). Generations of IBMers who followed Zig (...myself included) owe Zig a very deep debt of thanks for building the business that bought us our homes, educated our children, and provided gainful employment for us over so many years.

So now Zig finds himself in the inner sanctum of IBM internal IT operations here in the Northeast US - very far indeed from the freedom of the crisp air of his beloved western deserts and mountains. Instead, he is buried deep underground inside datacenter bunkers,

bathed in fluorescent lighting, surrounded by humming display stations, rattling printers, gray connecting cables, blue connecting cables, yellow and orange connecting cables, datacenter raised floors, big blue computers twenty foot long and seven feet high (along with plumbing to keep them from melting down), acres upon acres of nondescript gray disk drives storing corporate data, rows and ranks of communications equipment, slightly foul programmers who need some fresh air (and a bath), and their ill-tempered supervisors. But we can count on Zig to find a way to stay sane; so Zig found a sports-based social club called Single Grapes.

Single Grapes : Sure Beats the Decadent Nightlife... (Or More Accurately IS the Decadent NIGHTLIFE ?)

Single Grapes was a fun and happening place in the early 1970's! Members enjoyed being together hot air ballooning, playing tennis, enjoying invigorating white water canoeing and rafting, hiking, and decompressing with frequent DJ'd dances, and just generally raising <fun> cain all over Westchester and the Northeast! Stratton Vermont was the winter hangout for skiing, the Delaware River for white water canoeing in the summer, and West Hampton, out on Long Island for reportedly epic beach parties! ... and year-round, legendary 'Purple Toes' dinner parties!

And... Single Grapes was... SCUBA DIVING. Zig certified in 1972. After all, this was generally in the era of Lloyd Bridges playing Mike Nelson in Sea Hunt, and the captivating adventures of The Undersea World of Jacques Cousteau - which revealed to all of us landlubbers for the first time the wondrous undersea environment; and it was also the era of the groundbreaking film Blue Water, White Death by Peter Gimbel and Stan Waterman (which presaged the genre of the 'summer blockbuster' movie, the first of which soon followed BW/WD - and which was called... Jaws).

Zig and the Single Grapes did a lot of challenging but rewarding northeast diving in the early 1970's. Zig attended the Boston Sea Rovers consumer scuba diving exposition, and the resulting relationships between him and the leaders of the Boston Sea Rovers (as well as the companion Chicago-area scuba Expo) combined to start a fire in Zig to create a similar Exposition to serve the greater NY metropolitan area headquartered in Westchester. Thus was founded Beneath The Sea in 1976. Early BTS Expos were held at the State University of New York /Purchase campus, and later at the White Plains Marriott, the White Plains Hotel, the Crowne Plaza and then ultimately at the Westchester County Center when BTS

outgrew all other Westchester exhibition venues.



Zig and JoAnn - a Transformational Collaboration!

1980 witnessed the stirrings of great things happening resulting from the transformational collaboration of Zig and JoAnn. That year Zig, JoAnn, Soliman and others sojourned to Sharm El-Sheikh near the southern tip of the Sinai Peninsula which at the time was almost devoid of hotels; Howard Rosenberg had a lonely motel there and a dive boat, and he pioneered what has now developed into one of the major world dive resorts. The lucky participants in this historic dive included Vreni Roduner, Bob Abrams, Hester Abrams, Luba Fineson, Eileen DiRuocco, Lila Perry, Med Fernandez, Tina Barros, Peter Richter, Tina Martinez, Pat Pruitt and Soliman Shenouda. The team also went to Ras Mohammed at the southernmost tip of the Sinai Peninsula, just a little south of Sharm El-Sheikh, with Egypt to the west across the water and Saudi Arabia across the water to the east. The diving was spectacular, an impressive sight were the huge amphorae from a 500 yr. old Turkish Cargo ship, some with mercury and we plaid with it in the sand. (JoAnn was NOT certified at that point but was supported on her dives by some of the very best divers, and she was captivated for life. Upon return, she was instructed by Leroy Bonapart at the Mount Kisco YMCA; this must have been something of a letdown; it is tough to imagine going from the virgin, undived paradise of Sharm El-Sheikh to the Mount Kisco YMCA, but it was critical for JoAnn to get properly trained and so she did!)

Wetsuit Fashion... "You can have any color :-) as long as it is black... :- (or JoAnn and the Amazing Technicolor Women's Wetsuit"

All of this 'dive stuff' was new to JoAnn; her professional background was garment/textiles, women's fashion, and showroom sales including modeling of swim suits. Back in

On the Leading Edge... *continued*

the day, you could get a wetsuit in ANY COLOR YOU WANTED, as long as it was BLACK. Scuba diving was a heavily male-dominated sport. JoAnn – with Zig’s support and encouragement, took the world of scuba diving by storm and brought it into the world of fashion! Dive attire including wetsuits for women transformed – and the world saw the introduction of lime greens, hot pinks and yellows! “...Lites, brites and Innovation for the 80’s”!! NO LONGER was a wetsuit strictly black! All the industry leaders got on board, and Zig and JoAnn had unprecedented and first-name easy access to the leadership teams at Scubapro, Dacor, Henderson, Oceanic and Solar Swimwear. These collaborations produced a sea-change (no pun intended) in color schemes, and introduced the concept of FASHION into the world of scuba diving. Now, wetsuits could be pretty – and so could the women divers be pretty even inside their facemasks! JoAnn organized at first fashion luncheons; then later full-fledged fashion shows; and she wrote the narratives for the shows. These show helped accelerate the ‘lite and brite’ fashion tidal wave, which soon become the standard in women’s aquatic swimwear.

And it was not long at all before children’s swimwear for aquatics and snorkeling also started benefiting from this transformation. ALL the best dressed aquatic kids were sporting snappy, appealing swimwear fashions in wetsuits, snorkels, fins, booties, and dive skins. This was a direct result of JoAnn’s professional background in women’s wear fashion merging with both her own and growing women’s active participation in the sport of scuba diving. Harvard Business School could write an enthralling case study of JoAnn’s entrepreneurial inspiration and phenomenon!

Positive Change for the World via Beneath The Sea’s Ocean Pals Initiative - One Child at a Time

Zig, JoAnn and Beneath The Sea are inseparable concepts; the good work of BTS is the frame of reference for this couple. For Zig and JoAnn, it was surely never about just swimsuit ‘fashion’. BTS always has had a social conscience as well as commitment to environment education and advocacy; many of us know that this BTS team has been working long and hard to achieve positive change not only for marine environments, but also for our world on a global scale through their work. It is inspiring to first consider two aspects, before turning to other, operational aspects of BTS.

Ocean Pals is JoAnn and Zig’s initiative to involve children into the world of marine

environment advocacy through art. Ocean Pals was started in 1986 when Zig and JoAnn were invited guests of Daniel Mercier, who was organizing the Antibes (France) Film Festival and the formative concept of marine environment awareness through art was born. JoAnn and Zig developed the concept and brought it to life here via BTS. Luminaries in the world of marine environmentalism and the scuba dive industry have all given their heartfelt endorsement to this initiative. Dr. Sylvia Earle in particular has advanced Ocean Pals as a ‘hope spot’ analogous to the others which she draws upon. Many cherished awards have been conferred on the program, including PADI’s Environmental Awareness Award. Artists of the towering international stature of Wyland have also been drawn to Ocean Pals and hold the initiative dear. Currently this effort involves thousands of children across the world whose awareness is drawn to marine conservation and protection through the Ocean Pals Program. Those of us who have been to the Beneath The Sea Expositions have seen the children’s wonderful posters; marine conservation through the eyes of kids. We all remember our own childhood’s most cherished art projects and thus it is easy to understand how these children’s projects will in the future forge a frame of reference for these kids; heaven knows that protection of our marine environments is proving a formidable challenge and it is good to know that Ocean Pals is creating a future annuity of awareness and concern into the fight. It is also amazing that we too, can learn from the children. The theme in 2015 was “My Wetlands - Water Is Life!”; JoAnn aptly observes that the kids are portraying wetlands all over the world, bringing new understanding for the rest of us by showing us things about wetlands that we never knew. After all, children are participating from Africa, China, India, The Philippines, Turkey and Japan! And so the kids brought their understanding of wetlands in their countries -- to all the rest of us!

JoAnn’s other initiative involves the Maria Ferrari Children’s Hospital at Westchester Medical Center. Aquariums with colorful fish and sea life can be greatly soothing during times of illness and resultant stress; some of us know that only too well from our own personal experiences and family circumstances; and there is surely no greater anguish to family than when children are in hospital. Thus, I will just say that big-hearted JoAnn – by virtue of having conceptualized and created the BTS/ Bed Bath & Beyond’s Aquarium at WMC, has provided comfort, light, emotional warmth and support - and enjoyment under the most trying circumstances - to those families who must visit their kids at The Children’s Hospital

at Westchester Medical Center. Deepest respect, and thanks to JoAnn - and to the financial sponsors at Bed Bath and Beyond - for this sensitive and deeply humanitarian outreach.

The BTS leadership team does not stop there! Those of us favored to have connection with BTS know that their work includes close to ten different scholarships for youngsters and young adults who are embarking on a marine career! What better way to engage young people into marine environment advocacy, ecology, conservation and research than to recognize their efforts and support their marine-related endeavors, including also photography, marine and diving technology. Allied with BTS’s program to provide scholarships is the BTS Marine Careers Program, and this is a very exciting initiative. Marine Careers is a component of the Ocean Pals program and was established in 2008 at Beneath the Sea. The objective is to introduce kids and young adults to the marine community and careers. High schoolers who have an interest are teamed up with BTS-member marine industry careerists who can mentor, guide and counsel the kids (and up to college-age students) into different marine career paths. Being mentored by experts committed to helping guide the students will help the kids further define their interests. Many of us remember the guidance we received during our youth with great respect and admiration, and BTS is facilitating this process in this unique and personal way.

For BTS’s Marine Careers, for the Marine Scholarship Program, and for the Maria Ferrari Aquarium at Westchester Medical Center --- and for BTS’s Ocean Pals Children’s Marine Environmentalism Through Art Program, we all owe a heartfelt and big thanks to BTS’s leadership!

One the of the preeminent contributions to scuba diving is the recognition of women divers which Zig initiated and forged. Zig (in collaboration with other sponsoring organizations and individuals) founded the Women Divers Hall of Fame in 2000. The WDHO is international in scope, and has recognized women who have significantly contributed to advancing scuba diving in multiple dimensions including exploration, diving education, safety and sheer enjoyment. Women divers have enriched the sport immeasurably and now over 1/3 of all divers are women. WDHO members provide leadership role models for young women the world over. The WDHO hon-

On the Leading Edge...

continued

or is conferred upon exceptional women divers who have broken new ground in the arts, marine science, medicine, aquatic sports, exploration, marine archeology, media, community service, dive education and safety, business, marine environment stewardship, free diving and tech/wreck/commercial and military diving. WDHOFF offers scholarship, mentoring, internship and marine career opportunity building for exceptionally qualified women and men. In addition to recognizing women for their scuba diving achievements, ZIG and JoAnn have themselves been the recipients of multiple prestigious scuba diving industry awards.

Most notably, JoAnn and Zig both were inducted into the International Scuba Diving Hall of Fame in 2012, joining ranks with legends in scuba diving history. The award recognizes people who have contributed to the success and growth of recreational scuba diving in the fields of dive travel, entertainment, art, equipment design and development, education, exploration and adventure. Zig was also recognized in 2004 as an Academy of Underwater Arts and Sciences ("NOGI Award") recipient. This award is the foremost award in the scuba diving industry. AUAS's mission is to recognize pioneers and leaders who have had a significant impact on the exploration, enjoyment, safety, and preservation of the underwater world. For these contributions and for these rewards, we tip our facemasks and extend our fins in honor of Zig and JoAnn!

BTS of course is best known as the United States' largest consumer scuba dive and travel

show, and we all LOVE to patrol the highways and byways of BTS at the Meadowlands Exposition Center. Of COURSE we all need new gear and of COURSE there are show specials and of COURSE the guys all have slush funds to use on new stuff and of COURSE the dive travel vendors have to welcome crowds of admiring prospects, and of COURSE I am going to need an underwater housing for the new prosumer digital camera that I am going to need to bring with me on that 'once-in-a-lifetime' dive adventure. And BTS also provides exceptional advanced dive education opportunities, and enriching, awareness-raising presentations. Not to mention the opportunity for inspirational encounters with the luminaries in the dive world; and the Film Festival, which brings the world of diving in exceptional locations to those attending the Film Festival. We can thus 'visit' and experience thrilling dive spots the world over which would be unattainable in several lifetimes. And so THESE are the reasons that for so many us, the BTS Expo is one of the top shelf events in the yearly lifecycle of scuba diving. Brought to you by Zig, JoAnn and all the volunteers at BTS – a good number of which are in fact members of the very scuba diving Club (one and the same,) founded forty years ago by Zig!

Zig's Optimistic Counsel for The Future for Our Scuba Sports Club!

Our interview together for this article was engaging, enriching, exhaustive... and exhausting. But with the final subject, we all found a burst of renewed energy for the crucial subject: What is the direction for The Scuba Sports Club's NEXT forty years! Zig quickly had several earnest, heartfelt recommendations for our Club going into the future.

In alignment with BTS initiatives, Zig is advocating MORE DIVING, and specifically more local diving to build fellowship, camaraderie and shared sense of community amongst the divers of The Scuba Sports Club and other dive clubs in our area. Zig further believes that an active training program to skill-build, using perhaps Squantz Pond or Dutch Springs, can initiate increased, active diving and Club relationship-building. Zig furthermore is a HUGE proponent of safe diving, and would look with great favor upon our efforts to advance the safe diving skill base.

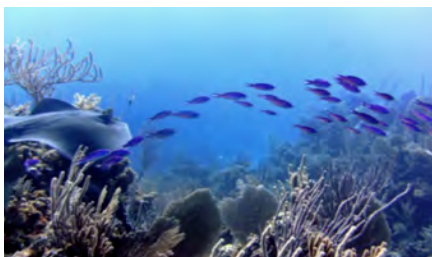
Zig is deeply concerned about the marine environments of today and tomorrow, but actually is optimistic metaphorically about the day AFTER tomorrow – because Zig believes that there are indeed 'hope spots'; and that BTS has helped light the path forward for future generations of kids and young adults committed to a better future for the world's oceans. Zig supports the idea of photography and art to get the word out about the marine world and environmental activism; and he and JoAnn strongly endorse and encourage our Club's beach cleanups and community awareness building to cleaner waters. Finally, Zig encourages a renewed partnership between BTS and The Scuba Sports Club to achieve these and other important goals, and looks with confidence to our shared future. To which I and so many of us at The Scuba Sports Club wholeheartedly agree!

Gary Lehman, Vice President

Divers' Forum: A Legacy of Forty Years of Adventure and Joy Together ... Underwater and Topside !

Denise Kurz:

AquaCat 2010: Over 30 TSSC members travel to the Exumas. On one of the dives there were sharks, stingrays, turtles, and hundreds of colorful fish!



Vreni Roduner:

Years ago I got snagged on nylon ascent lines and lost my buddy. I cut the lines with my knife. Visibility was poor and I had no hope of finding my buddy. I ascended to 75ft. only to discover my fins were still snagged. There was considerable current and this was not a good situation at all; I was very worried about being swept to the surface on an uncontrolled ascent. I managed to free up my fins and fortunately was not in danger as I had feared of the uncontrolled ascent; I dropped down to 90ft -- and enjoyed a huge school of jacks on my leisurely ascent!

Joann Bohannon-Sacci:

My favorite event for TSSC was reuniting with Pat Forgacs, whom I went to school with as a youngin' ... I treasure the "elders" in our tribe: Fred, Vreni, Soliman, Don Reynolds (may he rest in peace) and especially Lada from whom I learn something every time I talk to him!



Divers' Forum....

Continued

Al Miller:

A few years ago, my dive buddy did not need to use too many words trying to convince me to dive on the "Atocha Trail" out of Key West, FL with Mel Fisher Enterprises. The Spanish ship carrying gold, silver and emeralds sank during a hurricane in the 1600s. Only a portion of this ship was found as it broke apart during a second hurricane after the sinking. What fascinated me was that we had the opportunity to scuba dive as we dove into history. Unfortunately, we did not recover any physical treasure but, the experience went into the treasure chest of memories.

Nick Lappano:

I still fondly remember my first trip to Roatan with the Club in September 2007. That was when I found out how much fun it can be when you travel with a group of great people with the same interest as yourself. It is especially cool to be on a dive boat with 13 other people and you know all of them. In addition, you get to relive those memories over and over again with those with whom you originally shared them.

Lada Simek:

When it comes to diving accidents, it is often the little things that get you. Some ten years ago, a highly experienced wreck diver in New York jumped in the water with his air not turned on. He died. When I attach my regulator to the tank, the air is smelled, the pressure noted AND IT IS NOT TURNED OFF UNTIL THE DIVE IS OVER. Once, a well meaning dive master checked everybody's tanks on the boat and left them shut off. Bad move. I noticed it, but I might not have. It is not a bad idea to take three breaths from the tank before you jump in. This checks both the air being on and the regulator performance. Two breaths will not do. Obvious? Yes. Troublesome? No.

Rick D'Amico:

A Look Back...How I Was Introduced to the Club: Back around Thanksgiving of 1978, I went to a social called "The Single Grape," a function run by a group called The Sports Rites Club, which was the parent organization of The Scuba Sports Rites Club (the original name for TSSC). As I was at the entrance, I ran into Zig, who noticed my

dive watch (they were big, clunky things back then) and my dive flag belt buckle. He asked if I was a diver, and when I said yes he introduced himself and told me about the club. The only problem was that I was in my last semester of grad school and had classes on Tuesday nights (note: at that time we met on the second Tuesday of the month). Therefore, I wasn't able to attend until after the semester ended. So in early 1979 I came to my first meeting and promptly became a member. Thirty-one years later, I'm proud to still be a part of the club.

Vreni Roduner:

Some of my land-locked family and friends were worried that I picked diving, a "dangerous" hobby. But I explained to them that education and practice were very important and make diving safe, and this put them at ease.

Bob Bak:

I have been diving a few years now and have had many great experiences diving. Some good, some bad. I have tried to think of which one was the most memorable. This was quite an exercise. How do you describe how you feel when you are in the mist of a hundred sharks in North Carolina, or with a 50 foot whale shark in the Galapagos, or having mantas dance over your head in The Maldives. How about during a 36 hour crossing to Cocos jumping in with a pod of pilot whales or seeing your daughter go on her first dive. These are just a few experiences I have had.

There was one however that edged the others out. During a trip to Cocos it was revealed to us that on this first trip out of dry-dock that the owner was on board. He gathered us in the salon that evening to let us know that this would be the first voyage where guests would be able to participate in the experience of diving on The Deep Sea submersible. There was a hefty cost involved. That night knowing I could not afford it lay awake all night thinking about what it would be like to explore places where only a handful of humans had ever been in the history of the world. What a life changing experience. The next morning the bell rang. I headed to breakfast through the salon, PAST the coffee pot to the board. I took the marker in my shaking hand and put my name first on the board. It was decision I would never regret.

That day we were put through a briefing of procedures. I entered the Deep Sea along

with Nikko and Avi. Then the bubble was sealed and we headed to the sea mount. We descended past 330 feet. There was black coral with fish galore. Large Tuna filled the sea above me, then the silky sharks came in, grouper pressed their noses to the acrylic dome and then was a sight I will never forget. Hundreds of hammered sharks circled above us. They looked like tetras in an aquarium but in reality were ten to fourteen foot long. We explored for hours but it only seemed like only a few minutes. For once all I could do was ratchet my head back and forth looking in all direction. I was speechless. No witty remarks. No stories. All you could hear coming from me was my breathing. I listened to the sound of Avi's voice telling me, isn't this great. Laughing out of pure enjoyment. His enthusiasm intact after hundreds of test dives. He pointed out the different species. Nikko called out numbers on depth and checked the levels of carbon monoxide. Soon we floated to the surface downward thrusters turned off. My adventure under the sea in the Deep Sea was ending and ten days of diving with hammerheads was about to begin. To think I had traveled to inner space looking through a window into mans past and future. I was truly blessed.

Carmine Petracca:

My first dive is still my most memorable dive. Why? Because it was such a joy, I couldn't have been more relaxed. The feeling of weightlessness was just so incredible. The crystal blue water with 150+ feet visibility, the beautiful white sand bottom, the marine life, the sound of the regulator and air bubbles.

But I did so many things that were so stupid, both out of ignorance and that adolescent attitude of invincibility. But I was no adolescent, just an adolescent mind set in such matters. I was living on a Caribbean island having the time of my life. I loved the Grenadians and spent every spare moment of time I could find, socializing and drinking with them in the rum shacks alongside the road. They are such a loving people, so inviting and have a wonderful energy about them. I'd spend hours BSing with them in their rum shacks, porches, homes, boats and road side.

On this particular day I was to meet my friends at the Grenada Yacht Club to go out on a sail boat and do my first dive.

Divers' Forum....

Continued

Did I read or do research about diving, the boat or the captain? Absolutely not. Regardless, I had some time before the dive so I was at one of the many local rum shacks socializing, sampling local delicacies (Clocks Court) followed by shots of softdrinks to wash it down (yes one to one, colas were just as expensive to the locals as the rum, so...) discussing politics and the broader portrait of life. At the appointed time, I left the rum shack, considerably relaxed, wasted, and got on my motorcycle (which was questionable on my part...) and drove to the Yacht Club. As I drove up into the gravel parking lot and proceeded to "park" my bike, the rear wheel skidded and the bike went down on the right side. I managed to pull my right leg out from under before being crushed between the bike and gravel, but at the same time I had placed my bare left ankle onto the hot muffler. Wow the pain! No actually there was no pain, just a 4 cm x 3 cm burn. No way was that to deter me. My friend - who was dating the captain, introduced us, and he looked at my friend and his facial expression spoke very clearly, laughing as he shook his head, then turned back to me with that broad, bright white, warm inviting smile - I knew I was in very capable hands. I boarded the boat. This was a long time ago when things were quite different, and Grenadians were very lax and open on just about every subject.

So off to the dive site we went receiving instructions and the dive briefing in route. As I splashed into the crystal clear blue water the salt water engulfed my fresh weeping wound on my ankle, oh the pain! (Nope, no pain. Later when I sobered up and thought back on the dive, did I then realize that Clocks Court was not an alcoholic beverage, but had narcotic qualities!)

As I descended with the group my buoyancy and trim were surprisingly good, and I was soooo relaxed, I was realizing what an amazing place the underwater world was. Shortly after that I managed to entangle myself in mono-filament, did I freak out? No, like I said I was so relaxed, even more so in the water becoming more relaxed with every minute under the surface. Well the dive master (aka captain) came over and shaking his head, chuckling through his regulator, calmly cut me free. Well at the end of the dive I knew, I needed to know more about diving, no not get educated, just rather to find out how to do more of it!

30 years later I love diving just as much, but my approach is completely diametrically different. These days, I can't know enough; I read everything I can about every aspect of diving, especially the equipment, the medical and physiological aspects. I never said I was a quick study!

Fred Gambino:

It was a great day for diving. We were on a Club dive on July 12, 1980 out of Pt. Pleasant NJ aboard the dive boat Bottom Time, captained by Charlie Stratton. My dive partner was Soliman Shenouda. We arrived at our dive site at 11am. It was an old wooden wreck known only to Captain Charlie.

As we were suiting up, one of our members Roger Sinasse, leaped over the side!

There was a watery commotion and splash, and then we distinctly heard loudly exclaiming "OOOhhhhhh SSSSHH(ucks) through his snorkel. We all rushed to the side to see what was happening!

Roger had landed directly on an ocean sunfish (mola mola)! Roger had quite a scare until we figured out what had happened! None of us had seen the fish slowly swimming up to us. We all had a good laugh and a most memorable on THIS dive trip !



Melissa Lonquich:

I guess a good place to begin would be the beginning? Even as a child I remember being quite the water rat in every sense of the word, my happiest times were splashing around. When I started to travel in my late teens I discovered snorkeling... and it was amazing! Seeing those beautiful fish swimming around me felt like I dipped my head into the most exotic fish tank I had ever seen! I tried this over and over through the years and what I once thought of as being exciting I eventually saw as being limiting. I knew there was more where that came from... more beyond my grasp! I would see beautiful fish ... and they inevitably would

swim gracefully by me and out of distance and there was nothing I could do about it! Of course I would take off my life vest and free dive following the fish as best I could, for as long as I could and I would get yelled at by the snorkel guides for doing it. I knew finally that the next time I went away I was getting scuba certified!! Only problem is the person I used to go away with didn't even swim, never mind have an interest in diving! I had no clue what getting certified entailed but I knew I wanted to do it. Finally I went away with my non swimmer friend and said okay I'm going to have to leave you for a bit to get certified but I'm sure it won't be for long. The next day the concierge at the hotel called me over to hand me a textbook and said "okay your dive instructor left this, you have until tomorrow to collect it"...mind you as I was on vacation with a margarita in hand!! My friend found this quite hysterical that I had no clue this was going to happen. I rose to the challenge and completed the task.. left my poor non-swimmer friend from 6 am-7pm for 5 days straight, alone in Aruba (and still had to entertain her at night since I left her all day). The first time I was under water and it was scuba and not snorkeling I knew I would never snorkel again! Finally the fish were near me long enough that I could get a good look at them before they ran!! When we landed she made me aware that she was getting married soon and this was the "last of the single vacations"... I realized pretty quickly that if I can't go away with my friends anymore but I really loved this new found hobby I better get used to diving locally or at least finding new friends that dove pretty quickly! We are after all lucky enough to live in an area surrounded by water (granted not pretty Caribbean water but water filled with life and a new world to explore none the less).

I have since continued my journey along the ranks to currently certified as a master diver. Perhaps the coolest thing I do with this sport is explore sharks as much as possible. I am lucky to say I have been with about 10 different species in the wild and volunteer at the Maritime Aquarium in Norwalk in the shark tank. Not many people can say they get paid in teeth for their job! I have also helped out shark angels as well in their quest to promote shark education and I hope to continue to do work with that. As a career I am an English as a second language teacher in two middle

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schools in the Bronx. I have the freedom to teach how ever I want so long as the kids learn English. So needless to say my kids learn English by learning about the ocean and why it's so important to everything on Earth and I wouldn't have it any other way. Of course diving comes with risks, I was unfortunate enough to go on a dive trip where someone in my group (coincidentally while getting their advanced open water certification, first ever deep dive and first ever dive outside of Dutch Springs) died while on a dive with us. It was a crazy, sad, humbling, and life changing experience. An experience that also made me life long friends with the other people in our group that I would have never been friends with before. Through the ups and downs I continue to strive to further my dive education and experience, knowing all the while that it has been life changing, and I have made some amazing friends along the way that have similar interests that my "outside" friends don't understand, but above all the feeling of being allowed and welcomed into a world that isn't mine... with open arms is something that I will never take for granted and always brings me back!



Allan Rios:

I joined TSSC to gain access to more diving opportunities and to meet fellow divers. TSSC has definitely made that happen for me! The real surprise that joining this club has brought for me is to provide opportunities to meet the people and personalities of diving adventure and ocean exploration. I have met people such as Hans Hass, Jean-Michel Cousteau, Dr. Eugenie Clark, Ron and Valerie Taylor; in fact, too many to name. Meeting these legends and being a member of this Club inspires me to keep diving, in as many different and interesting places as possible. Thanks TSSC!

Bernie Schmitt:

All dive boats look the same underwater. I was not alone in making the mistake; 4 or 5 of us found ourselves on the wrong boat, with a totally new group of divers! We all had a good laugh hitching a ride!

Donald Brown:

Ever since I was a little boy, I dreamed of exploring outer space. As I grew older I realized that was unattainable and set my sights on exploring inner space. After more than 30 years of scuba diving I still marvel at the experiences I have underwater.

Donald Brown,

PADI Master Instructor

*Owner of the Ski & Scuba Connection
Greenwich, CT*

Patrick Considine:

I have been scuba diving for eight years and have fallen in love with all facets of scuba diving -- from recreation to technical diving to teaching. I am currently a candidate for my Padi Open Water Instructor rating. I have been a member of TSSC for 6 years and have cherished the new friends I have met and have gone diving with; to me this is why I love TSSC so much: the opportunity to meet and dive with other local divers and to learn from speakers at our monthly meetings. As divers we have to remember that we are always in the process of learning more about diving, and that once we think that we know everything about diving, then it is time to retire! I have been diving throughout the Caribbean, have enjoyed multiple trips to Thousands Islands, and have braved the refreshing waters of Gloucester, Mass. And have been diving in December in Long Island Sound, and have experienced beautiful visibility at Orchard Beach, and have been diving on many trips to Dutch Springs. To me it would be hard to pick my best dive, since as long as I in the water, life is good -- and adding some good friends to mix like other TSSC members makes it even better! Congratulations to the Club on its 40th anniversary, and hoping I will be around for the 80th!! Happy Anniversary!

Vreni Roduner:

The funniest thing that ever happened while diving was sitting on a vertical toilet on the sideway laying wreck, the Yogala; everybody tried and fell off! Bicycling on the ocean floor around a wreck in NC was great fun in the loose sand.

Nick Lappano:

One of the things all new divers wonder about is sharks. How will we react when we encounter one? I didn't have wait long since I encountered my first "real" shark, A Caribbean reef shark, (nurse sharks don't count) on my ninth open water dive (November 2004: one month after my certification) in the Florida Keys. I wasn't frightened but I was excited and fascinated. My buddy and I observed it from a distance of about twenty five feet for a couple of minutes before it swam away. From then on, I have always looked forward to diving with these magnificent creatures.

Michael A DeAngelo:

Since my first Dive certification class in 1985, I knew I was hooked. I immediately found adventure, travel, friendships and a nearly unexplored world. Peacefully quite, yet excitingly dangerous. To pick a favorite place is just not fair, I have encountered and seen creatures and places that some can only imagine.

Jim Sacci:

For me SCUBA was love at first dive. It opened up a new world for me that few people have a chance to experience first hand. SCUBA diving has made me appreciate our oceans and its marine life to the point I am passionate about ocean conservation. SCUBA divers all share a unique bond that brings us together easily. By becoming involved with The Scuba Sports Club, I have made life long friends that I treasure knowing, and traveling with to explore our world underwater around the globe.

Cindy Fisher:

Ever since I was a little girl, I've always loved the water. I used to hold my breath with open eyes, I swam under water trying to stay down as long as I could before I needed to take my next breath. So imagine my joy when several years later I met a guy who was a certified scuba diver. He encouraged me to become one too. Though, our relationship didn't last, my love of scuba diving sure did. I was certified at Ft. Wetherill in RI and at the same time our president, Tom was also getting his certification. Little did we know that several years later we would be good friends and dive buddies. My most terrifying moment happened at Beavertail in RI. My dive buddy and I

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checked the conditions. It looked very calm so we decided to go for our dive. Unfortunately, my dive buddy started feeling sick during the dive, so we surfaced. During the time we were under water, the waves against the rocks had picked up significantly. When I surfaced, a wave came grabbed the regulator from my mouth and threw me up on the rocks with my weight belt at my ankles. I saw another wave coming and I knew I had to get out of its way before it hit me. I crawled further up on the rocks still with the weight belt around my ankles and looked up to see people looking down at me. In the meantime, my buddy was carried between the rocks and was fine. Needless to say we got out of the water as quickly as we could. I thought I was a goner that day, but the one thought that went through my mind is at least I was doing something I loved.

I have had lots of great moments diving with friends (many who I met through TSSC). The one moment that stands out for me is when I was in the Maldives and a giant mantra ray swam right above my head and I looked up as he passed. Another moment that stands out is when I was in Indonesia: I was "muck" diving. On every dive, there was a new creature or fish that really did not look like fish, but when the dive master pointed them out and touched them they would swim away. I made sure I did all of the dives I could so I wouldn't miss a thing!

Dennis Orlowski:

TSSC has opened a whole new world to me. With the support, encouragement and coercion of members, I finished by certification in 2009, having started it in 1969! My first club trip was to Utila where in the first few days, I swam with whale sharks and got to play inside a pod of dolphins. Talk about beginners luck! I will never forget the dolphin who stopped, turned around and scolded me when for getting too close to him. You've never been scolded until you have been scolded by a dolphin. My gratitude to the club for these memories and the many more come.

Vreni Roduner:

Scuba diving created many lasting friendships for me, generating incredible camaraderie. Divers like to chat about their wonderful dive experiences wherever they dive. All of us Club divers in the early days of the Club were encouraged by Zig to volunteer at BTS,

and we did. Over time BTS became THE place to be offering the opportunity to meet the best known divers, speakers and top underwater photographers from all around the world, which was and is a huge and wonderful benefit of participating

Joann Bohannon-Sacci:

In 1998, Jim and I were relatively new scuba divers despite our Advanced Open Water Certification. We decided that Cozumel was in our budget. Unsure of what we would be seeing underwater, we were eager to try the drift diving. Our first dive was pure ecstasy, fish everywhere, 100 foot visibility, a gentle current and 86 degree water, a bipolar change from Long Island Sound where I could barely see as far as my nose in my mask. I was in heaven, how could it get any better than this I wondered to myself. About 40 minutes into the dive a humongous dark shadow loomed in the distance. I started banging on my tank to show Jim and the others the huge shark or may be even whale in the distance. Excitement overtook me as I tried to signal what appeared to be something out of Jurassic Park moving slowly and getting bigger and bigger the closer we got. Jim was shrugging his shoulders as if he could not see this sea monster. A sense of pride overtook me for I was seeing something no one else has spotted. My ego quickly deflated when we reached the behemoth and discovered that the "whale" had passengers staring and waving at us. Alas, my discovery was the tourist submarine gently hovering around a beautiful reef. Lesson learned, I now wear contacts when I scuba dive.



Lada Simek:

I have found lots of things diving Long Island Sound, including a BC with a tank attached, about 30 dive knives, heaven knows how many weight belts and I stopped collecting anchors when the pile got four feet high. But one is most puzzling. I was in 18 feet of water, off Hen Island in Rye

harbor. Visibility was very good, about six feet and in front of me I saw a US Divers regulator. I was absolutely taken aback when I saw it still attached to the tank valve! Naturally I scoured the area at least fifty feet surrounding the spot, but could not find any more scuba gear. Did the tank rust? No trace was found. Did the valve blow out? Cleaning the threads with a wire brush showed the threads to be sharp and undamaged. The regulator was a US Divers Calypso, probably less than ten years old. Who the heck attaches a regulator to a tank valve NOT on a tank and then throws it overboard? I took the item to three dive shops in our area but no one knew anything about this case, they just shook their heads.....

Gary Lehman:

Part of the total "diving experience" is of course, BTS... it is great being at the booth, talking to fellow Club members, speaking with prospective new members, joking around with the booth neighbors, and feeding Tabby treats! The film festival is terrific and really opens our eyes to the subsurface world out there; and it is wonderful helping our fellow Club members celebrate their special achievement awards including the Diver of the Year recipients! The other part about BTS which is life-enriching is to meet and hear the luminaries. Having met Stan Waterman, and meeting/ speaking with Bret Gilliam, Dr. Eugenie Clark, Valerie Taylor and Jean-Michel Cousteau and I could go on and on. And meeting the folks at DAN face-to-face. It is always great catching up with friends from other Clubs and collaborating on future dives! Another great experience is going to the Maritime Aquarium at Norwalk, meeting Carl Safina, and hearing Dr. Sylvia Earle's presentation on HOPE SPOTS! The people we meet and the things we see! I remember being astounded at the artifacts including reliquaries and rosaries and china taken from DEEP inside the Andrea Doria by my dive instructor Tad Masotti from former Ocean Dwellers dive shop in Hillsdale, NJ. And Dick Smith has 20mm rounds from the anti-aircraft guns on German submarine U853! It was an indescribable feeling, holding those shells. And he also has a section of the life raft from U869 sunk off Barnegat out in Hudson Canyon... the subject of

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the book *Shadow Diver* and Bernie Chowdhury's book *The Last Dive*.

Another great part about diving is the experiences we have together -- AFTER the day's dives. At Gloucester during dinner we spoke about the seals of course, and at Dutch Springs it was great to just hang out, having dinner together, talking about the training dives and the somewhat strange underwater structures and landscapes, having a Cuban cigar (some of us at least!), and when I was in Roatan, just watching sunset from the restaurant. (I don't do that NEARLY nearly nearly enough.) May we all make the time and have the chance to do more of it. Photo on dive trip to Roatan before joining TSSC.



Vreni Roduner:

When I joined TSSC (formerly called SSRC) in 1975 I met Zig, as he was forming our dive club. I soon recognized that he was a dive leader with a purpose. He encouraged us to take more classes and educational programs in order to become better divers, and to keep the club accident free. He also advanced the idea of equal treatment for all divers in (at that time) a very male-dominated sport. Zig was an inspiration to me and for thousands of other divers over many years - first with the Club and also through decades of "Beneath The Sea". Our 1st big TSSC trip was to the Red Sea and Egypt in 1980, and it was a lot of fun! We marveled at the gorgeous, huge and colorful nudibranchs and gorgonias! We briefly played with mercury from ancient amphorae that had tumbled from a very old

wreck at great depth..... and marveled at the pretty patterns and sharp, poisonous spines of the many lionfish etc.

Rick D'Amico:

A Look Back...Night Time is the Right Time (For Diving, That Is)

Back in the 1970's/early 1980's the Club used to go out on night dives in Long Island Sound. For those who have never done it, the obvious question might be "why?" Isn't the Sound murky enough without diving it in low-light conditions? True, but marine critters that normally take refuge in crevices and holes by day come out at night, making excursions in clear visibility of divers who visit at night.

A lot of species of fish (e.g. blackfish) are generally sleeping, so one can get right up to them without spooking them. Perhaps the greatest incentive to dive at night is that lobsters are out in the open, where they can be relatively easily captured by divers. Most of the time our dives were made aboard the Shamrock II, which by day was a fishing party boat off New Rochelle. We would go to local sites such as The Maine, Huckleberry Island, and the Execution Rocks Lighthouse. Compass navigation and using natural features as guides to assist in finding one's way around became essential skills. The beam of a dive buddy's light made it relatively easy to observe the buddy system. Chemical light sticks affixed to the divers' tank valves made it easy for the boat crew to see the divers when they surfaced. The Club no longer runs night dives in the Sound, but what a time it was.

Gary Lehman:

It is so hard to know where to even start! I remember the first time I saw a shark, it was a blacktip reef shark off Cozumel; no fear on my part... but just I was in awe at how graceful. Similarly the first time I ever saw a manta ray... it saw us and glided and assessed us and then just gently turned to starboard and flew away from us...WOW ! I remember stark terror and self-recrimination about losing my buddy once, because I was so captivated looking at a stonefish. And how *stupid* I was on three dives, because I continued these dives with intense pain due to being unable to equalize - I continued those dives because I didn't want to disappoint my dive buddies or be a killjoy - and we had so much trouble coordinating our schedules and we were finally in the water, I did not want to be the one to screw things up.... (... and as a consequence, I lost three years of

diving because of that stupidity...). On the other hand it was intensely exciting to see that manta ray and to tour the outside of the Confederate gunrunner wreck, just pulsing with history! And I remember the time I was diving at 80+ feet in Cozumel without having AOW. That operator was criminal. If something had gone wrong I might have been killed...Another practically criminal operator in Costa Rica gave me a BCD that didn't fit, a tank with only 2,000PSI, and a dive computer on which the depth gauge didn't work... Lesson? BE VIGILANT!

Rick D'Amico:

Regattas

One of the events that TSSC would run that truly distinguished it from other dive clubs was the Regatta. No, it wasn't a boat race. During a summer holiday weekend, a group of boats with TSSC members would leave in the morning to dive various locations in the western portion of Long Island Sound (e.g., Captain's Island, Huckleberry Island, etc.) and around noon would raft up together off of Rye/Playland Beach for an afternoon of revelry, as well as the mother of all on-water cookouts. For a time, TSSC would hold Regattas over Memorial Day, Independence Day, and Labor Day weekends. One year, we had 14 boats participating in the raft up. Some of the boats were owned by members, and others were local dive charters. It was so much fun that charter captains didn't mind hanging out with us for the rest of the afternoon.



Debbie Barry showing how it's done during an on-water cookout.

We'd spend the rest of the day enjoying the cookout, soaking up some sun, knocking back a few, snorkeling, swimming, rafting and just having a great old time with plenty of fellowship. Finally,

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as sunset approached, the raft up would untie and the boats would return to their home ports. "Time it was and what a time it was..."
– Simon and Garfunkel



Gus Barry signals that all's okay during this Regatta.

Tom Butcher:

Best Dive

After 22 years of diving and over 1,000 dives, it is hard to find one dive that stands above all the others, to be named the "Best Dive I have ever made". It could have been the 1 day on the Iberia where I had 300ft. visibility down to 50 ft. Since I have to pick one, I will choose my first dive off North Carolina on the Papoose. Seas were rough, 6-8 ft rollers, but the water was amazingly clear, the clearest I have ever experienced. The Papoose is a freighter sunk during WW II, 110 ft deep, sank upside down. On the surface, I could see the entire wreck and the residents, many sand tigers and one nurse shark. This was my first shark dive so I had no intention of getting close to the sharks or the wreck. I noticed that as the other divers reach the wreck, and the residents moved off the wreck. They were afraid of us. I eventually reached the wreck and the sand, swimming with the residents and the other divers. I have been back several times since, never seen conditions remotely similar. If you ever visit this wreck, you can easily find shark's teeth in the plate lines of the hull!

Dick Smith:

(as interviewed by Gary Lehman)

Dick had dozens of recollections and it would require a whole encyclopedia to relate even a portion of them, but the one experience that he called out to me during our interview meeting was related to wreck diving off the Southern shore of Long Island many years ago.

Dick has a penchant for collecting things (Dick's home contains amazing collections!) and Dick during this dive had deeply penetrated the wreck, and was on the way out with armloads of booty (a nautical term for treasure!). Unfortunately, unknown to Dick at the time he penetrated the wreck was that an uninvited guest (another diver) had followed him in and was obstructing Dick's egress. Suddenly a successful treasure hunt had turned into a potential catastrophe for both of them. We all know the risks of getting stuck in confined spaces with a panicked diver with silt outs. Dick's situational awareness took hold and he dropped his armloads of treasure, guided the other diver out of the wreck, and both surfaced. At which point Dick 'gently counseled' the other diver about wreck diving protocols!

Vreni Roduner:

The highlights of my diving included watching wobbegong sharks and huge potato cod being fed on the Great Barrier Reef, as well as diving the North Carolina wrecks with a TSSC group, where we saw many sandtiger sharks in the open ocean. We all thought it was awesome. It was one of my best dives; it was so relaxing. Diver and naturalist Dee Scar has created a program called "Touch The Sea"; the principle idea is to learn about the oceans' inhabitants via touch. After careful and non-intrusive observation to build trust, I then let the sharks approach and touch me. What a magical moment!

Another ultimate diving experience was having the opportunity to participate in the 1986 National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Repeated Exposure (REPEX) project at International Underwater Contractors (IUC). Dr. R.W. Hamilton developed new repetitive air saturation tables for habitat diving for diving at different depths on the ocean floor. We were the first to test the tables; it was an incredible and valuable experience on many levels. The all-women team received a very busy dive schedule with 23 dives on air, between 140-240 ft. a total of 109 hours of dive time. We were saturated at 80 ft. over 4½ days, followed by 53.4 hrs. deco time. We did very well, exiting the chamber at the exact planned time to an energetic news conference after a week of having a blast together while locked in. We were all very proud to have significantly contributed to the advancement of habitat diving.

Gary Lehman:

Then there was the time I was chasing this puffer fish near the lava rocks. I was moving up and down with the swells and brushed against the lava. Later in the dive I was watching white tip reef sharks. The white tips didn't even know or care that I was there. There was another gray shark though, trailing the white tips. It was pretty small, but thick and fat. It seemed interested in me though, even though the others weren't. I said to myself, 'bring it on, I can take you!' It just swam off. Good thing. I later ID'd it as a bull shark. And when I got out the water, the fleshy part of my right arm was pink and raw, with some little bubbles of blood. I had given myself an abrasion on the lava rocks chasing the pufferfish and didn't even know it! No wonder the bull was interested!

Ruth Emblin:

The highlight of all my diving around the globe was diving with sharks in the South Pacific. In the last few years we twice chartered a sailboat in the Society Islands, and visited Raiatea, Tahaa, Huahine and Bora Bora, with a stopover in Moorea. The diving was amazing! "There are sharks everywhere", was Peter's exclamation when we took a mooring outside the fringing reef of Bora Bora. It was our first stop to simply snorkel and did we get treated to a spectacle below us! It was most definitely a gross understatement and diving there left us pretty much awestruck.



The variety of large ocean creatures was astounding, and we had some of our best ever dives there. I will not soon forget the experience diving with 30 gray sharks around us, closing in to check us out, only to treat us like one of them, or diving with 14-foot lemon sharks at close quarters. Blacktips were everywhere you looked. And the various types of rays, and the huge schools of bonito, so dense you could

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get lost in them, large groupers, turtles, dolphins, large porcupine puffers, octopi, squid... and the list goes on and on.... I got exhausted just looking around and around and around! These two trips will forever be my favorites, because they combined two of my favorite activities, diving and sailing.

Vreni Roduner:

We have seen a lot of changes in the sport over the decades, some good - and some not so good. Diving the Northeast wrecks is sadly not as popular as it was in the past. Warm, blue

water is what everyone seems to want. But by not diving locally, divers don't dive as often; so with less practice divers are less likely to stay in the sport.

The weekly excitement is missing; and dropping out of scuba diving inevitably results.

Divers are very caring group of people with great empathy. My wonderful male TSSC buddies 40 years ago really helped me out. At this point I am the only one still diving from that era it seems; yet I was the one who had a shaky start in diving. I am immensely proud of my 40 years of diving and being a member of TSSC and BTS for all those years. Being honored with the 1st "TSSC Divemaster of the Year award" was overwhelming for me, as well as later being inducted into the Women Divers Hall Of Fame.

A big thanks goes to all my buddies who helped me overcome my early obstacles to succeed. It was definitely worth it. Diving opened an incredible new world to me, the best time of my life. So I will join TSSC on the special Anniversary trip to the Philippines!

Tabitha Constantino:

My favorite moment is from the time I went to Fantasy Island. I was on my first night dive and so excited, hoping that I was going to see an octopus. Well, I got to see not one, but three! I followed one around the reef for a while. It was so awesome!!

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Dive Planning & Dive Destinations With Jody Brown

Interview by Gary Lehman

I recently had an opportunity to catch up with Jody from our club and cornered her to talk about her experiences planning all those great dive trips which she and her team pull together. It was a great interview and I must admit, it sure got me thinking about how soon I can break away with my gear and head out - bound for some of the world's most iconic warm blue water magnificent dive destinations!

So to kick it off for us today Jody, where in the WORLD have you led dive trips?

We have been fortunate to have the chance to lead dive trips to all the world's most wonderful locations, both near and far. Closer to home, we have explored and dived many Caribbean locations: including Bonaire, St Lucia, Grand Cayman, Little Cayman, Saba, Bequia, St. Vincent, Bahamas, Dominica, Provo, Cozumel, Riviera Maya, and Belize. These locations offer for the most part consistent and numerous travel and lodging options, minimal travel time commitment (which is important these days with our too-busy lives trying to balance so much), and we have more choices to tailor these trips - and make them exceptional price/performers!

Farther afield - and more than a few time zones away - in the Pacific (the Indian Ocean), we have had wonderful and truly life-long memorable dive experiences in Australia, Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Tahiti, the Maldives, Indonesia, the Philippines, (Micro-

nesia) Palau, Yap, Truk, and at the Galapagos archipelago! These trips are more of a time and financial commitment, and we venture out to locations with occasionally unanticipated situations which we have to work through - and that is why it is so important to select a dive planning partner who knows the ropes, the local conditions and has the knowledge, experience and depth of resource to handle whatever might happen!

Where do you repeat trips to?

We like to repeat dive trips to some "staple locations". These are trip which have proven repeatedly to be successful destinations, and the places folks enjoy the most. The places we go back to earn that trust because they are beautiful and offer abundant fish and sea life. These locations include St Lucia, Little Cayman, Saba, and Bequia. Some repeat trips work well for both experienced divers, as well as new divers who are going to earn their Open Water certifications i.e. Riviera Maya in Mexico, and Nassau in the Bahamas. These warm blue water locations complete with shoals of fish and sea life sure beat diving in a chilly quarry! Based on exuberant customer feedback, we also repeat trips to the Maldives, Indonesia, Fiji & the Philippines - each of these destinations are different and offer spectacular diving and life-long memories.

Which are your most successful dive destinations?

Little Cayman, St Lucia, Bahamas & the "exotics" Maldives, Indonesia, Fiji & Philippines have all repeatedly gotten great reviews from our divers.

What are your most exotic destinations?

I would have to say our most 'off the charts' locations would be the Maldives, Indonesia, Fiji and the Philippines and French Polynesia. All different, and all incredible underwater - and above water - adventures!

What was your scariest moment leading a tour!?

On a trip to Indonesia we were diving at three different resorts to explore those different underwater experiences. We were using a large coach bus to transfer between the resorts. Everything went smoothly, with our local guide/escort riding shotgun to get us smoothly between resorts. But on the last leg to the third, we were on our own and without the guide. It was a long drive, and in this case I had never personally been to this resort. The driver did not speak English. It was starting to get dark. The driver was on his phone, quite a bit. The road was not heavily traveled. He stopped the bus next to two cars at the side of the road. We were not expecting the stop. He got out of the bus and talked to some men who got out of the cars on the side of the road. Since we didn't know what was going on, I was a little nervous about what the next few moments might bring. Fear of the unknown! Indonesia does have some rough and tumble locations (in addition to some of the world's best diving!). And, sixteen American passports would be quite a bounty.

Dive Planning....

Continued

Well, the happy end to the story is that our driver merely needed a package of cigarettes, and after procuring those, he climbed back aboard and drove us the remaining thirty minutes in the dark to the resort. Needless to say, I was very happy when we pulled into the gates of the resort!

On a lighter note: we lead a dive trip to Papua New Guinea - which owing to Michael Rockefeller's disappearance and presumed death in 1961 by honor-killing by natives - continues to have a slightly danger-tinged exotic aura (i.e. headhunting and cannibalism). So again our group is in the van transferring through the desolate countryside of PNG, and it got dark. It got really dark. All we could see were the low fires of the bush people interspersed throughout the woods. We were driving deeper and deeper into the darkness on a potholed, treacherous road - and we then suddenly turned off this 'main' road and "bushwhacked" our way on a tiny dirt road, with trees and branches smacking and hitting the lurching and bouncing van. I thought "OK this is it, I am going to be someone's dinner. The big guy in the front of the bus will be the main course, and the little gal next to me will be their dessert." The van stopped suddenly. We couldn't see a thing. Tension mounted intolerably! And then a few lights suddenly came on, and we discovered that we had reached the dock, and we boarded the boat to the resort - all guests intact and bound for a glorious dive adventure starting the very next day!!

Do you dive on these trips when you join them, or are you only providing logistical support?

Yes I do dive on these trips, while ALSO providing logistical support and being the "go-to person" facilitating solutions. Especially on the way to/from or at the more exotic locations, THINGS HAPPEN -and ad-hoc solutions must be developed fast on the fly. We always strive for quick and positive resolution. We partner with local agencies that we know and have worked with before. We work with the best local resources - but occasionally, we can hit a speed bump. On one trip, a problem surfaced with one of the guides, and the group came to me to intervene and smooth things over. We got through it. I am also the person that couple came to when a

"critter" came into their room at night, and ate their shoes (?! Hope it wasn't a komodo dragon!). I am the last person to leave the resort, and I am the 'sweep' to make sure that everyone has all their carry-on luggage; it can happen that someone leaves it sitting on a chair by the bar - so I pick it up and carry it out through knee deep water to the launch. The customers sure appreciate that! Basically, I do whatever it takes to make things easier for my guests (and to ensure that they enjoy their dives to the max!). However, given that I am not an instructor, I don't teach any classes or conduct Open Water certifications on these trips; someone else takes care of the students.

What do you consider to be the most important planning activities when planning out a trip?

To have a full understanding of the destination and of diving; and ideally having been there before to visit and dive. Experience is crucial. If I have not had the opportunity to visit the resort/hotel I contact the managers or owners personally, and pick through all the details in depth. I have had one General Manager tell me that "you sure do ask a lot of questions!!" That's perfectly OK by me, we want to do complete due diligence before committing our dive plans to any location! I try to pick the best season (but yes, it happens, and we have been rained on in the middle of the dry season...); and I have a clear picture of the journey end-to-end involving everything from home-door to resort-door. Also knowing the managers or owners and working with them consistently has scored us with occasional upgrades, and special parties or events just for "my group". And we also provide detailed information to our divers, so that there if possible no surprises. We do encourage our divers to carefully review all documents to be informed on the details of the trip). But occasionally there are disconnects: one guest arrived in Fiji by boat, to a very remote resort, and then asked "...So, where were all the places to go shopping?"

Live aboard or resort? Or both! There are different views on this, what are your thoughts, Jody?

Not every trip is suited to every diver. Some trips (for example live aboards) are best for the "eat/sleep/dive" enthusiasts, and for those folks the boat is the best way to maximize diving in locations such as

the Galapagos and the Maldives. I tell people up front ... "This trip is not for the non-diving significant other, or for anyone who wants to shop or enjoy spirited night life after diving (although, doesn't everyone!?!?). Live aboards offer an alternative travel experience where participants pack light, and just dive-dive-dive with a small group of similarly devoted people. Birds of a feather flock together and fish of a fin form up into shoals. Or something like that! Whenever possible, I try to book the entire boat, so that it is just my group on the boat. That makes decision-making more focused on my group's desires. But resorts can be great too - although I am personally not a big fan of high-rises, looking out my window and seeing a KFC across the street, or hearing traffic noise instead of the sounds of the ocean. My basic inclination is this... "...if there is an elevator or a fountain in the pool - no thanks, I will pass". We demand quality and CLEAN Quarters -- and we like places that convey a feeling of being away from home, and on vacation. I love the feel of "Old World Caribbean" islands, and of mostly smaller-scale hotels/resorts. But I do also like a chocolate on my pillow at the end of the day, and so attentive service and comfort are key. I like to include at the very least breakfast and lunch - and better yet, the all inclusive food plan. (...We have all been out with a group and at dinner have had to deal with the bill, and we all know that the guy who ordered the surf'n'turf with 2 martinis is the exact same one that is going to petulantly and unfairly insist "Let's just split the bill" -- to the dismay of the person who had only a diet coke and a burger... not to mention that will be tax on that blockbuster dinner bill, and yes, we do need to tip... So it is desirable to my way of thinking to have as meals paid for upfront - so that there is limited need to open up wallets, and/or have big invoices slid under the door the day you have to check out of paradise.

Another consideration is that some resorts offer great multi-sport, cultural and historical sites and attractions for the non-diving 'significant others' take advantage of and to therefore be able

Dive Planning....

Continued

to join the trip - and I market the trip that way if those opportunities are there. But then I try to arrange things so that the divers are not out diving from 8am to 3pm - returning from long boat rides to spouses and friends who have spent a good part of the day staring at their watches and craning their necks looking out at the sea, wondering when will the boat be back!

I want all my guests to have a great time! Great diving is a given at these iconic locations, and we deal with the best operators and permit no 'cattle boats'. I want the divers to say "When can we come back" or "Let's do this again next year!" I want the divers to excitedly talk about what they saw on the dives over late afternoon refreshments and dinner, and to share their photos. I really am thrilled when divers see something new, or experience a magical new place! I take it to heart when someone is not happy, and try my utmost to correct the problem quickly if I can. And quite honestly, it is not until I am on that plane going back home that I do actually breathe again, and only then can I feel that I am 'off duty'!

Divers' Forum....

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Denise Blais:

I had always had an interest in learning how to Scuba Dive since I was younger. But with school and trying to start a career for myself it never seemed to happen until 2008. I had gone through the pool and classroom sessions but now it was time to do the open water dives. I attempted to do them in Cancun on a trip I was on but signed up with a dive shop where I was 1 of 20 other people getting certified. There was only one dive master to work with all of us. I was not only terrified as I knew this was my first time in deep open water but I quickly learned I'm prone to sea sickness. I really didn't think I was cut out to be a diver. But I didn't give up! I got some good advice from a Dive Master on how to handle my sea sickness and since then I have loved every minute of my time in the water! I have a whole new respect for the power of

water, the impact we have on our oceans and the amazing life and beauty they hold. One of my first awe inspiring moments was swimming with whale sharks off the coast of Isla Holbox in Mexico. We jumped into the water with them but had no idea how big and powerful they are. They seemed to move so slow from viewing them from the surface, but once swimming beside them it was really difficult to keep up. I couldn't get enough of them! Such gracefully creatures going about their business and I was right beside them! Amazing! As I was distracted looking at the few whale sharks that were around us, all of a sudden things got dark. Our guide got my attention and pointed to the surface. There above me only a few yards away was a giant Manta Ray! Swooping it's fins like a giant bird coming towards me. My eyes must have been as big as saucers. I had no idea how big manta rays are. Never mind having the pleasure of having one come right towards me! It was a great way to start out my diving career!

The second most memorable diving moment I had was doing a shark dive in Fiji. I have to say I was really nervous! Up to this point I had never seen a shark while diving. But this group was very organized and took every precaution to ensure a safe and memorable dive. I remember seeing all the divers descend to this viewing area where there was a rope we were all told to stay behind as they fed the sharks from a couple of trash barrels filled with fish that were dropped down from the surface. Then the nurse sharks came in. It was so funny to watch them. They were like little puppy dogs trying to get at the food. After they had a chance to eat, they called us over, one by one to pet the nurse sharks. I'll never forget what that felt like! On my way back to my spot behind the rope I noticed my friend had a giant green moray eel between her legs that had come out of its hiding place to eat some of the leftovers and she didn't even see it. I've never seen an area so full of sea life. On the second dive that day they fed the sharks again but this time there were different kinds of sharks that appeared. White tip, Black tip and the big Bull Sharks. I've never seen anything like it! From then on I try to explain to everyone how important the ocean is and how it's a whole other world for people to explore that we really don't know enough about! Now with each new trip I go on I try to find different kinds of fish that I've never seen before and those that are my favorites.

Ruth Emblin:

I grew up about as far away from the oceans as possible in the Bavarian Alps. Not really being a "water person" I never thought that I would end up loving scuba diving so much... Peter and I were on vacation in Antigua, and he suggested we go on a snorkeling trip. We boarded a boat and were whisked off to a reef about two nautical miles from shore. I was not sure about all this...away from land in a place so far out....and you want me to jump in here?!?! After much hesitation I did and that was it. The boat crew ended up having a hard time convincing me to board the boat again so we could eventually return to shore. My biggest frustration at the time was that I could not come close enough to that amazing life down there. So when we returned to the US, Peter suggested we take diving lessons. And the rest is history....that snorkel trip in Antigua sparked a life long fascination with scuba diving and all the oceans have to offer, and led me to seek out ocean conservation groups I now wholeheartedly support.



Floating on top of a reef just didn't cut it anymore for us...so we learned to dive.

A few years later we were looking for a contractor for our home, and guess who ended up 'talking scuba' with me...none other than our own Bob Bak. He casually mentioned that he was a member of this great dive club that met once a month, and would we be interested in coming to a meeting. He described the activities in such vivid colors that we just could not turn down the invitation. The first meeting we attended was still at Pete's Saloon in Elmsford, and after driving around looking for a parking space for what seemed like an eternity and almost turning back (the parking situation there fortunately has changed tremendously since then!) we entered the restaurant to be enveloped by a very lively crowd. Bob

Divers' Forum....

Continued

introduced us to everyone and by the end of the evening my head was spinning with all the names I was expected to remember.... Over the following months and years, I got to know many of the members more closely, and several very close friendships developed. Oh, and let's not forget, Bob also convinced me to take over the newsletter, SeaSwells, of course. My experience in marketing and promotions, and love of writing made this a very interesting project, especially because I was privileged to read about other members' experiences while traveling and diving. Several articles even prompted me to suggest diving in the described areas to Peter – and that's how it should be. The sharing of stories and experiences has always been the part of TSSC that I've enjoyed the most.

I was also happy to see that the dive community slowly began to embrace ocean (and general environmental) conservationism, which was not always a given. Our members seem to really care for what we so enjoy, and we as divers have a responsibility to educate others to ensure that future generations can have the same experiences we've enjoyed. I don't want a future where dive stories are told only on film, in books, or online. My hope is that future generations will be able to see sharks, rays, whales, dolphins, turtles, reef fishes, octopi, coral reef gardens and all those amazing marine ecosystems live and up close.



We started focusing on our beach clean-ups as one of these educational measures, and over the last few years North East Divers Unite (NEDU) has become known in the dive community as a joint event for divers, ocean lovers and environmental groups to get together, clean a beach and celebrate the community spirit. It is really gratifying to have

former participants and even sponsors come up to us (without being prompted), and ask us whether we will have another event, and whether they can help! My profound gratitude to everyone who has helped bring NEDU to life! Let's keep the momentum going!

My year as President of TSSC was yet another milestone during my membership, and I was very glad to have a very active, dedicated (and fun) board of directors to back me up. Though it was certainly not all fun and games. It did force me to take a closer look at the concept of "team work", as a volunteer-driven organization like ours can only succeed when everyone helps together. It was great to be able to draw from the experience of other past presidents, and I can only thank everyone for giving their all for the club's benefit. We can be proud of what we have accomplished and the camaraderie among our membership is only further proof that the concept is working. My year "at the helm" went by very quickly and I returned to my post as newsletter editor richer by a lot of experiences.

Of course, being the newsletter editor also had its challenges. Over the years I got better at lighting fires under people (you know who you are...!), and I was very grateful for a few "loyal souls" I could always depend on for content. In our digital age the newsletter unfortunately slowly but surely became secondary to email and message boards, and a variety of other communication methods. Because this is a very special occasion, I am once again "on duty" to produce a SeaSwells in cooperation with our VP Gary Lehman, this time for our club's 40th anniversary, and glad to do so. The content of this issue is awe-inspiring, to put it mildly!

We are very privileged to have such a great club at our disposal. Let's ensure that newcomers "feel the love" and enjoy it as much as we do. My time at TSSC brought me a lot of friendships, inspiration and more. I learned much to help me with my involvement in other organizations, as I moved away from the area a few years ago, making regular involvement in TSSC a bit more challenging. I have to admit, I really miss seeing my 'dive buddies'! We used to hang out outside the club as well, and that has become a challenge. However, I hope to be able to come to meetings every once in a while, and attend the major events. The new board of directors has a lot of ideas and is

motivated to bring the club another step forward. Please help them and every board that follows to maintain this motivation – at least for the next 40 years! Happy 40th Birthday, TSSC!



Tom Butcher:

It is hard for me to accept it is mid-June and the local dive season started weeks ago. It might be my age showing, but it feels like last week I was shoveling snow, and I now I am cutting the lawn and installing window A/C units. I trust everyone has reviewed their gear, had the regulators serviced, etc. ready for the upcoming dive season. Along with your gear, I trust you have prepared yourself for the upcoming season. Please keep your dive skills and training current. The first five years I dove, I re-read the Open Water book. As an Assistant Instructor, my reading has drastically increased, including the most recent Open Water book. Why? To keep my skills current. Most accidents are preventable, most accidents start with a diver not resolving a minor issue, as other minor issues come along, a quick poor decision to cause a major issue.

One of my many mistakes - I was diving with Regina in Cozumel - when it was time to return to the boat, my air consumption was faster than the rest of the group. After telling some of the other divers I was going to the boat, I settled in the sand at 40ft. to deploy my SMB. I got the SMB ready to deploy, took a

Divers' Forum....

Continued

big breath and let my regulator drop into by lap. The regulator free-flowed, the air from the regulator stripped my mask off my face. Now, I can't see, and I got bubbles everywhere blocking my view and my air source is in my lap. I started laughing at the mess I created. I calmly pushed the regulator to the side, flipping the regulator over to stop the free-flow, grabbed the mask, put the mask on clearing it, and then recovered the regulator. Regina looked at me in horror, all I could do was continue to laugh at myself. I eventually deployed the SMB, we ascended without issue with me continuing to laughing at myself. So, this time I created several minor issues, but did not allow myself to create a major issue. The moral? Keep calm. Assess the situation, Resolve the issues in a priority sequence. I needed the mask to see, I needed the regulator to breath. Your choice which comes first. Everyone can partially clear a mask to see enough to find the regulator and remain calm with some air left. Diving experience comes

from 2 sources, training or experiences. I recommend training over learning from mistakes. Experience training come from the saying "what does not kill us, makes us stronger". Not the best source of training. Especially if you make the wrong choice. There are many Dive Shops/Instructors to get good training from, please take advantage of your options. If you are not sure of what training you want to take, ask a club member. I guarantee, many different points of view.

Comments to newer divers buying gear - As you buy gear or plan trips, you have a vast number of choices. You can get advice from many areas, dive shops, dive magazines, dive suppliers, your friends or Club Members. TSSC membership offers over a hundred years of experience in many different areas. Please pick our brains. I will warn you, people are passionate about our decisions and advise we provide about everything. Dive Gear is expensive. You do not want to buy an \$800 BC to find out you should have purchased a different BC. Used Gear is an option, but I strongly recommend you seek advice before purchasing used gear, espe-

cially tanks and regulators. For example, you can not get parts for Dacor Regulators over 10 years old. Most Dive Shops will not touch Luxfer Aluminum Tanks made prior to 1990 (Catalina tanks do not have the same issues. ScubaPro used to provide parts for all their regulators for models 40+ years old. They changed their policy a few years past, limiting the parts they will supply. This is true for most Dive Suppliers, once a regulator reaches a certain age, parts are no longer available. This is a shame as some regulators made in 1980 can perform well if you can get it serviced. My Mk5 with an R-109 breaths as good as any new balanced regulator, can not be serviced anymore. Nothing worse than buying something that can not be used after a few years. BC's are very interesting devices. Some are so buoyant, you need 4-5 lbs extra to sink than other BCs. Back inflation vs. Side Inflation. Weight integrated vs. not, Pockets vs. None. Inflation methods, etc. You can always get an option or something to consider when purchasing new or used gear.

TSSC is...Bonaire Bound!

Our Club is going to Bonaire the week of Oct 10 - 17th 2015!

Please review following information, and let Denise Kurz or Al Miller know if you plan to come join the adventure. There are still spaces left. Deposits are coming in, thanks for being prompt; we are still holding rooms for a few more weeks – but then we will need to release the extra rooms.

*Send your Non Refundable Deposit of \$100.00 to
Cindy Fisher
6 Mercury Court
Carmel, NY 10512*

**FULLY BOOKED!
JOIN US NEXT TIME!**

Buddy Dive Pricing: 8 days-7nights (cost based on a 3-bedroom suite / 2 people per bedroom, \$1062.00 per person)

Package includes:

- *Daily Breakfast*
- *Unlimited shore diving*
- *Free nitrox*
- *Transfers, Taxes*
- *11 boat dives.*
- *Truck (3 bedroom)---3 or 4 passenger double cabin pick up OR 5 or 6 passenger van*

(Not included: mandatory Marine Park Fee of \$25 to be paid directly by the diver on the island. Airfare. Insurance on the truck.)

NOTE: Some of us are on United flight #UA1422; leaves Newark (EWR) at 9AM on 10/10/15 and arrives Bonaire at 1:37PM. Return flight #UA1420 departs Bonaire at 2:32 PM on 10/17/15, arriving Newark at 7:27pm. These are great non-stop flights.

Club Trip Sponsors: Denise Kurz and Al Miller



Always Be Prepared...But For What?

By Judy Keznord

I was never told the answer, so my guess is everything. As divers we are trained to take care of ourselves, our stuff and our buddies. We think ahead of time (or we should be doing a pre-dive plan). So, being ready applies to all parts of your life not just diving. I'm the friend that most people have that everything in the world that can go wrong does and it seems to happen to me. Because of this unfortunate luck, I've began to find out and think of things needed to make packages to protect myself in the event of inconveniences or disasters. Since, no one can fully understand nature I am add things all the time; because each situation maybe similar or exceptionally different. So the kinds of prepared kits which I have made for myself or read about or know people that have are the following: Basic Canned food & water for your house: In storage that is not already past the expiration date. However, when traveling I always carry a bottle of water because you never know if or when the next store will be open and I do not expect that I'll be offered a drink by anyone, so bring your own as staying hydrated during scuba diving is a key to staying healthy!

Mass transit items: I learned to always have water with me as the methods of transportation sometimes stop or may break for a lot longer than anticipated, and you and the crowd are stuck. Also, perfume or hand cream is sometimes needed as air can get close and if you react to these kinds of things, than you might want to put a little dab on your neck or hands to mitigate the impact. Meanwhile having an umbrella helps for the sudden changes in rain, and helps keep sun off of you; but I keep it in a recyclable bag which is better for our environments as you can always use it when you buy other things along your travels.

Car Kit: If you are renting make certain you figure out where to call if something goes wrong with the car and get insurance from your credit card or the rental company. But protecting yourself is not to just to fix a flat, but have the agent show you exactly where those tools are as they will often find out that they are not there. It is a pain - but it is about protecting yourself from possible dangers and walk along the

side roads. For your car, consider getting yourself or your kids those neon vests, and it's also a good idea to have cones that can be to set up if your car stalls, so that it helps alleviate some potential traffic accidents while you are waiting for your service truck to show up. Always stand behind the guard rail and never in between two cars. Having a working flash light helps -- but check on the batteries when you set your clocks back/forward. I've also got blankets in my car in case it is cold outside and my heat has not kicked in or it would come in handy if I'm waiting for help to get me. And it also works well if I want to go to the park, as I've already got a blanket -- no one said being prepared is always for the worst things! These blankets also help keep tanks from rolling around in the back seat and helps cover up the gear if I leave it to stop somewhere.

No Power Kit: For your house consider getting a generator and put it outside which can be used for running heat in the house and you'll need gas to run it. But realistically, most of will make do with batteries for flash lights, a crank radio, and a good old black book of telephone numbers. Who knows anyone's phone numbers anymore? Hopefully a charged cell phone no matter where I am because you always want to be able to call authorities to help in whatever the situation. Would you know the Coast Guard's telephone number? Or the Police number of the country you are in? What about DAN's medical contact number? If not, write all of these down and plug them into your phone just in case.

First Aid Kit: For cuts, bruises, aspirin for minor fevers and pain, and so on; including any regular Rx's you take and have a list of them written out, in case someone needs to read it. Last year, I bought the DAN first aid backpack and it has everything one could need with my level of O2 first aid and rescue training. I also added a few silver body heat warm blankets and they come in handy in no heat situations and I've already used it --- and I was mighty thankful.

Sickness Kit: For me includes items which are possibilities that may occur according to the Center for Disease Control based on

where I am traveling or traveled already. Many people seem to forget to tell the doctor about their previous yet recent trips that may have an affected of their health, so just keep a list. Worse than that, people forget to get the needed vaccines like Hepatitis A & Yellow Fever or Typhoid preventative items prior to their trips. Do not ever think you will not need dive insurance or travel insurance as even small things can turn into larger issues as I found out when I got sick in a Bahamas. Lucky that DAN insurance helped me for the few weeks I was there.

Travel Kit: Is a complete back up of my Identification, two passport pictures and cash; so I can go to the nearest embassy (which I write down in advance of trip) to ask them for help in getting my info back! Besides, the embassy would know I was there because I register with the State Department before leaving the country, and this makes everything much easier. Since on-line is widely available you might want to make a copy of this and store it in a file which you can access and open with a password. When I travel, I do not place my address on the labels of my bags anymore; as it just notifies potential criminals that you are not home. Therefore, I place my email and international cell phone on the tags. On the inside of the bag I list who I am and my itinerary of where I'll likely be so the bag can be sent to me if it's lost. If I've packed my dive gear into one big bag I wrote a note to the TSA "Hi - I'm a scuba diver - so I have lots of gear including a small knife, all batteries are out of my gear and some of my equipment is fragile and still might be wet from my last dive. So I thank you for being careful ". So far that little note has seemed to work.

Safety & Hotel Kit: Let's just say you need to check all exists, entries and things that can move in and out of your room and figure out ways to make it safe for you and your roommate. I've traveled a lot for work and a few times due to poor weather; missed connections or just dumb luck stayed at a less than desirable place and even caught a robber in the act

Always Be Prepared....

Continued

trying to steal things from my room and others. So I do know of several devices that will stop things from opening or alert you to any movements. If these devices gives you a better nights rest than buy it. Some people also like to have these kinds of noise makers on themselves all the time, and I used to carry a whistle to catch cabs; so it came in handy. However, that whistle is now on my BCD in case I'm ever floating far away from the vessel which can't see or hear my voice than they'll likely see my safety sausage or signals from my mirror (now my GPS works well). Whatever; makes you safer to have bring with you; as I learned you cannot expect all places to have basic things like locks on the doors; which the resort in Bega, Fiji did not. After a day or two I felt comfortable enough without one but why sleep uncomfortable even one night?

Boat Kit: I fill it with things to help keep me warm like a boat coat (which has a whistle attached to it), a brand name turtle fur hat, rain gear, or possibly a sun protective dress, lots of sun block for any exposed skin and a hat with sunglasses to get a better view of the water and to see marine life better. A waterproof bag helps keep everything dry is a plus. If you get sea sick bring whatever might make you feel better (ginger chews for me); as well as some vinegar in case of a jellyfish sting. Always have life vests and some kind of knife on board to cut with in case things get caught in your motor.

Scuba Diving Kit: Before you go on a long scuba trip and you've been out of water for a little bit call up your local dive shop and ask them for a tune up in the pool. Lots of people do this as you gear up in a pool and just practice with your stuff on and make certain it is all working. Then to see if you are working well check out some of the areas dive doctors. These dive doctors will give you a physical to test your body's responses and to ascertain if you are healthy enough to go scuba diving. Once the doctor gives you that ok, than pack that scuba diving kit with O rings, screw driver, pliers, black tape, zipper wax, extra straps, defog, extra batteries for dive lights, knives, scissors, camera, housing, dehumidify packages, watches and computer backups, and you probably have other things you like to bring as well based on your gear configuration. Here is a picture of my favorite

scuba buddy in the whole world (my nephew Anthony) doing his first ocean dive ever in St. Croix. I was proud of him that day for trying something so adventuresome and new. For me, it is exciting to watch new divers in the water and even better when they continue to dive as your buddy over the years.



Animal Care: I have a card in my wallet that says In case of emergency at home I've got a (whatever kind of pet) that needs to be taken care of if I'm unable. Please call this contact that can care for my animal in my absence. So, I always, have food on hand in case I do not want to go to the store or if something did happen to you the animal would still get the food it is used to. It would also be a good idea to have a sticker on your front window or door indicating what kind of animal(s) you have inside your house; this way anyone approaching knows as well. Pets are part of our family's now so get them spayed, get vaccinated and leave instructions with details on what kind of food, how you feed your animal and the number of where to go if the animal is not acting right. Lucky for us our pets do not dive so we don't share gear. But we should not leave our pets unattended on the boats while we are under water; as it was an issue that happened to me in Greece. I came up from a dive near the boat and something grabbed onto me pulling and scratching me. It was the dog from our boat that was swimming in the water for who knows how long but he was exhausted, scared and ripping my hair out and I was glad it was rented gear. The idiot I was diving with choose not to come up with me, so I had this dog all to myself. I had to get him and myself back on the boat safely. My point here is animals need to have proper protection by their owners. While diving you need to remember you are in the animals home and you need to treat them with respect, don't harass (even for that photo), don't grab on for a ride and certainly do no harm to the environment. As

these animals rely on you to be left alone or for those under your care if you are not available, someone needs to know about them. I carry a card with me which the front tells what kind of animal I have and the back ask that the reader contact this person to care for my animals while I'm unable.

Have a phone list prepared before you go traveling: Why because you never know when things go wrong and you need to have a backup plan. I was just on vacation and someone lost their passport and need to contact the consulate. I had the number handy for them. Same vacation unfortunately the scuba boat I was on not even a mile out turns around and the captain tells us the boat is broken. It turns out that all dives were canceled. I got off the boat and made calls to other shops as I had a list with me, while they unpacked their boat. It turns out that I got 4 of us on another boat with a different shop 30 minutes later – that would not have happened if I didn't have that list. The broken boat issue has happened to me a few times already. Most shops try to help you find alternatives, but by the time the management tries, all the other shops may have already left to go out on the water with other divers, so I no longer wait; but do it myself. It is worthwhile to have the phone number to airlines, cabs, hotels, banks, scuba shops, restaurants, US facilities in foreign countries and other places you plan on visiting as hours of operation may change or holidays pop up which we never heard of in different countries.

As you can tell, there are endless kinds of things to prepare for. So you'll never get them all, as the element of surprise, nature and just the simple wrong place wrong timing throws off things. Besides; how much stuff can one person afford to buy and where do you store these kits or as you probably are not carrying them around? So, I try to make educated choices based on what seem to be more probable events that might happen and consolidate these kits if/when traveling or when spaces is limited. Sometimes safety comes in the simplest form of common sense, in being aware of your surroundings and being able to adapt each day by protecting your own identity as well. When you are scuba diving always have some kind of cutting tool for fishing line or kelp, a flash light or two and a sausage

Always Be Prepared....

Continued

for notification purposes; some even have those GPS systems. If you have other ideas that should be placed into a lifesaving type of kit or something useful to a scuba divers let us know. If you want to learn more about safety the scuba shops offer a host of certification classes from CPR, First Aid, O2 and much more. You can also go to various non-profit organizations and learn how you can prepare yourself or possibly help others with disabilities which want to scuba dive. Stay safe by being prepared and be prepared while diving in different situations it requires a dive plan. When you go away, you want to enjoy diving and not be worrying -- so a little planning goes a long way! Get out and dive !

TSSC EVENTS

- June 14 TSSC's 40th Birthday Bash and BBQ
Glen Island Beach, New Rochelle NY
(See Tabby for admission tickets)
- July 25 R/V Garloo, Captree State Park, Long
Island NY - Wreck San Diego (70-110')
(914-589-1368)
- Aug 2 Wounded Warriors, Dutch Springs PA
- Aug 7-10 1000 Islands (tentative)
- Aug 22-23 Seal Dive Gloucester MA
Bob Bak
- Sept 12 Northeast Divers Unite (NEDU)
Beach Cleanup Glen Island Beach,
New Rochelle, NY Denise Kurz
- Sept 19-20 Sandy Hook, New Jersey
Camping and Diving Trip Allan Rios
- Sept 26-27 Ft Wetherill Tropical Fish Collection
- Oct 10-11 Bonaire - Buddy Dive Resort
(See TSSC Website)
- Oct 1- Nov 1 Philippines -JFK/Manila
2 days in Manila, 10 days/9 nights at
Marco Vincent Resort. Large dive boat,
for details Tom Butcher and website
- Nov 6-7 Polar Film Festival, Explorers Club
- Nov 14 Sea Stories, Explorers Club

Date Undetermined:

Fort Schuyler excursion with our own historian and docent Lada, an expert on the history of Fort Schuyler and so many other local historical and cultural destinations

Website: www.thescubasportsclub.org

Dive Safety:

Past... Present... and What the Future Holds !

By Tom Butcher

Gary asked for an article on the history of dive safety: reviewing the past and predicting the future. He approached DAN, but they could not respond by the deadline, so I offered to help. While I like a challenge, this topic might be beyond me. I hope you find value in this retrospective, and look at the present, and crystal ball into the future.

I got certified in 1994 with a brief exposure to diving in 1970. When I dove in 1970, the best word to describe the equipment and training compared to today is "stark" or maybe "primitive". Not surprising when comparing a difference of gear across 45 years. In 1970, a regulator had only one second stage, no pressure gauge, no console or compass. You trusted your air supply on a tank reserve valve, known as the J valve. The J valve would be in the UP position, and when the tank reached 500 PSI, your breathing got harder, so you moved the valve to the down position to get more air; and it was time to ascend to the surface. Few divers had buoyancy compensator-like devices; and those that were available looked like a bit like a horse collar! Wet suits were made by the diver using paper forms to cut sheets of neoprene, and gluing the ends together. To be a diver in 1970, the test was "military-like": my mask, snorkel, fins were on the bottom of a 10 ft pool. I had to dive into the pool, swim to the bottom. While at the bottom, I put on the mask, snorkel, fins, and cleared my mask, then ascend to the surface without lifting my head, clear the snorkel and breathe on the snorkel for a while!

Dive instruction and certification tests have improved quite a bit since then! By 1994, regulators had an extra second stage named "an octopus", a pressure gauge, a depth gauge and compass. Buoyancy compensators progressed from 'horse collars' to more comfortable jackets. Why the octopus? Because divers were not comfortable buddy breathing on a single second stage. Your chances of getting the regulator returned depended on your buddy and their stress level. (Try buddy breathing, it will be enlightening). Yes, there have been many great improvements to scuba gear and training since 1970, even since 1994. Certifica-

tions became more standardized and less "military like", and more student-friendly. Over time people realized that if you were diving using best practices, it was not physically demanding. Over the past forty five years, diving equipment has improved greatly and is easier to use. Training is a lot physically easier, and more relevant skill sets have been added. Furthermore, instructional materials have been both improved, expanded, and refined to help diving enthusiasts to learn the material more quickly with greater retention. Thus over the past 45 years, many improvements have been made to dive equipment, training and instructional materials. I expect the trend to continue with incremental improvements going forward.

We all love to buy new gear sporting the latest styles and features (provided it has features and styles we like). (Personally speaking, I am not a fan of the buoyancy compensator with the side-lever inflator). I wonder what improvements will be made to get us to open our wallets over the next 20 years! I think it will be hard to improve on what is currently available. DUI has electric-heated undergarments, even electric-heated gloves. Some advanced regulators are made from titanium (the advantage is that if salt water penetrates the regulator the parts will not rust. We currently have hose-less pressure gauges. Masks that show console information presented to the diver while looking through the mask (similar to fighter pilots' "heads up displays"). What new ideas will come into focus! I will enjoy being amazed. I can't wait to check out and buy some of the new products. We might be diving in the small devices Obi-Wan was using in Star Wars. Life has a way of imitating art! I expect rebreathers will become more available and less expensive; although the required training might prevent them from becoming mainstream dive equipment. (I want to try a rebreather, my bride keeps telling me "NO"). Regardless, I'm sure the future equipment will be exciting.

Speculating about and crystal-balling 'dive safety trends' is not a simple matter. DAN has compiled a huge database of post-incident reviews, collected from injured and other dive casualties and incidents;

Dive Safety....

Continued

but there is little data from uninjured divers making it hard to determine if diving accidents are happening at a higher or lower rate commensurate with improved equipment and training over the years. There are tens of millions more divers in 2015 than 1975. Dive training has expanded from few suppliers and small independent shops to multi-billion dollar businesses.

DAN has lots of data to consider/review in their analysis. Although equipment has improved, divers are still getting hurt; I feel mostly by having made bad decisions. I consider complacency a bad decision. If you look at the numbers collected by DAN on injured divers by training level, Open Water-level divers have the highest injury rate, which is expected. Not much of a surprise, since they are the least trained. The injury rates drop as training level increases (Advanced Open Water, Rescue, etc.). However, the injury rates increase for Dive Master, Master Scuba Diver, Instructor Levels and Technical Divers. DAN is not sure if this is age-related, physical conditioning issues or complacency, but the trend increase remains. I can understand the increase for instructors. Consider what an instructor goes through when they handle Open Water certification dive for 8 divers, they have to do eight controlled emergency swimming ascents (CESA's) within 30 minutes. I am not aware of any instructors getting bent during Open Water certification dives, but I do see the potential issues. I did find it interesting to see the accident rates increase for higher trained divers. The DAN presenter also found this interesting, but offered no explanation. My thoughts focus

on complacency. As we get better trained, we feel we know more and tend to overlook prior training i.e. "We know better". How many of us were heeding the posted speed limit earlier today?

I will focus on the divers that died on the USS Spiegel Grove a few years back. I understand, these divers were seasoned technical divers, who decided to visit the engine room deep inside the wreck, without the proper gear, and on 80 CF tanks. They reached the engine room, silted the area; 2 divers could not find the exit and ran out of air. We will never know all the details. I understand these divers dived the Andrea Doria, so they were skilled. I did not mean to single out these divers, other than to emphasize that seasoned and well-trained divers can have dive accidents.

Will diving be safer in the future? That is up to us. The gear improves every year, offering the opportunity for us to dive more safely. We can dive deeper, for longer periods of time. We can breathe Nitrox to extend our bottom times and reduce our nitrogen loading. The training material and methods have also improved. The basic training (OW) cover more topics and skills. You do not need to hold a mathematics degree to understand your nitrogen levels. Charts are simpler and computers allow us to less diligent charting our nitrogen loading (a potential issue in my mind). Fins work better; dry suits keep us warmer; regulators are easier to breathe on. With all of the improvements, diving should be much safer. I think it is, however because we don't track dives without accidents, it is hard to quantify and prove. The perception is that diving is safer. I used to have a bumper sticker that said "remember when

sex was safe and diving was dangerous?"... That is more of a year-2000 statement than a current statement!

The key point regarding dive safety is the decisions the diver makes during the dive. Consequently, dive safety is up to US - not our equipment - not our training, but OUR DECISIONS. To remain safe, dive within your training and ability. To quote an old training mantra, "Plan your dive, dive the plan". Remember, we don't have gills. We need the equipment working to safely dive. Enjoy the dive, but critique your dive to consider if something can or should be changed to be easier/safer. Just because you have the latest dive computer which is tracking your nitrogen and air usage does NOT mean that you can stop using your brain. Your brain is the most important piece of equipment you have, more effective than any dive computer or other piece of equipment. If used properly, your correct decisions will keep you safe -- and you will have a great dive.

So, to recap. There have been many improvements in dive training and dive equipment since 1970. We anticipate more improvements in the future, and we are all excited about using all the new gear! Dive training reduces your chances of having a dive accident, provided you do not become a complacent Dive Master, Instructor or Tech diver (do statistics lie?, maybe they do). The best person to keep you safe is YOU. Don't get complacent, keep your mind tuned. Know the environment, know your limitations and respect them. Plan your dive, dive your plan.

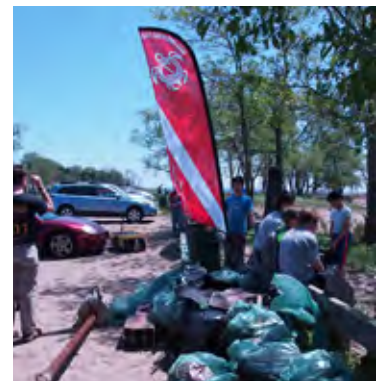
Safe Diving to one and all!

ACTION STATIONS!

NORTHEAST DIVERS UNITE SEPTEMBER 12, 2015!

The 6th Annual Northeast Divers Unite Beach Cleanup on Glen Island, New Rochelle, NY is coming up! The social event of the year! Created to meet other Northeast divers, to clean our local beaches and waters, and to have an exciting day with local dive shops, clubs, and environmental activists. Over 200 divers and their friends join us each year! Be a part of it! After the beach cleanup we all mingle at a huge free BBQ. The event includes give-a-ways such as donated dive trips, diving gear, t-shirts and more. Bring your family and friends to help clean up the beach and to learn all about what diving is like. All are welcome, and ask about becoming a sponsor and have your business advertised at the event.

The Club Sponsor for this event is **Denise Kurz**.



Ocean and Beach Trash → to Art: Repurposing Flip Flops in East Africa

By Gary Lehman

At Boston Sea Rovers in March 2015, a particular vendor exhibit really took the show by storm. Here we saw beautiful, majestic, iconic African wildlife in sculpture... the animals' faces were expressive and captivating, the postures and stances of the animals so realistic, the animals almost looked like the might come to life... and there were sea turtles and fish as well... beautifully sculpted by craftspeople of the highest order... I knew I had to get some (and I did, and not just for me but for my sister Joan who is a Pisces...) ... the animals would be a perfect complement to the animal sculptures we already have in our home made of ebony wood ... but...what material are these animals made of !?!? RECYCLED FLIPFLOPS !??

Yes indeed, flipflops... Flipflops are ubiquitous throughout Africa as foot wear but... they don't last forever and when they are discarded, they don't deteriorate quickly (they crumble and are consumed by birds and fish) and consequently either wind up as unsightly litter and/or inside dead birds and fish.

Enter OCEAN SOLE!

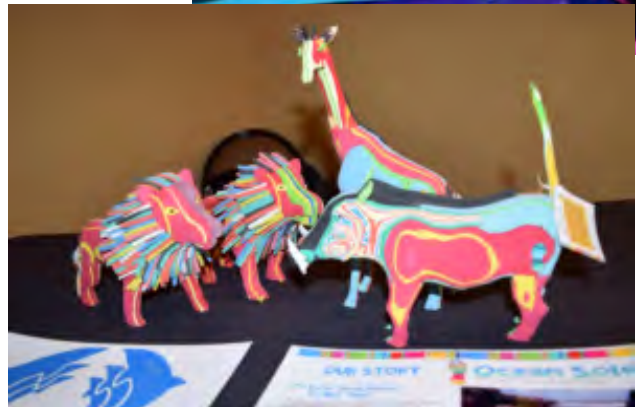
This innovative company is HQ'd in Kenya, and employees Kenyans to collect discarded flip flops, and has a cottage industry employing people to sanitize them, and artisans who then transform them into beautiful works of art for admiring customers worldwide! Talk about a win-win idea !

The beaches and landscapes are no longer littered with unwanted flipflops and the beaches natural beauty is revealed, the materials are no longer therefore breaking down and being consumed by birds and fish, folks are getting jobs collecting and cleaning up the flipflops, and artisans are creating beautiful animal sculptures for the rest of us. This is such a great idea and I hope that many companies follow this lead throughout Africa and worldwide.

So, I invite you to visit the website and check it out for yourself!

And maybe treat yourself to a wildebeest!

**Ocean Sole
Website:
www.ocean-sole.com**



Some Cardinal Rules for Safe Diving

By Lada Simek

- ALWAYS have your gear checked before diving and consider a scuba refresh course if you sense you might be rusty especially after being away from diving
- ALWAYS turn the air ALL THE WAY ON and DO NOT back it off, rotate fully COUNTER CLOCKWISE - and NEVER touch it until the dive is complete
- ALWAYS take at least THREE BREATHES thru your regulator before entering the water to detect air quality and volume
- ALWAYS check your air supply which should be @ 3,000 PSI before entering the water
- ALWAYS almost fully inflate your BCD before entering the water
- ALWAYS have a safety sausage for enhanced visibility, in case you have to surface away from the boat
- ALWAYS have line cutting scissors and/or knife just in case you or your buddy get separated and gets entangled
- ALWAYS breathe normally upon ascent
- ALWAYS do your safety stop 10 minutes at 15' (unless longer required, depending on your dive profile)
- ALWAYS beware of weight belts which might slip off at depth as a result of body compression, resulting in a dangerous uncontrolled ascent
- LEAVE the camera behind to avoid distracting task loading if you are new diver or haven't been diving in a while
- DO NOT penetrate a wreck unless trained and certified to do so, to avoid dangerous situations
- NEVER dive your 'C-Card' --- instead dive your confidence and experience level !

(RE SAFETY STOP: This aspect of dive safety has been the subject of some debate. Some time ago, the diving agencies decided it would be good to have the same rules for safety stops at the end of the dive, They hired two eminently qualified people, Dr. Bill Hamilton (REPEX Project Architect) and Mike Emmerman (DAN Board of Directors) to make recommendations. They ended up suggesting a stop at 20 and a stop at 10 feet. The agencies did not believe that the divers could handle two different stops, so they called for one stop at 15 feet. I heard Mike Emmerman say "I wish they had told us what they were doing. If we had known they had only one stop in mind, we would have recommended a single stop at 20 feet!" So there you have it. 20' is better than 15'!)

Underwater Photography 101

By Brian Rice, Scuba New York
PADI Master Scuba Diver Trainer

Many of us who have had the amazing privilege of exploring our underwater world via scuba diving or even just snorkeling have brought a camera along with us. Sometimes that camera is just a waterproof disposable camera, or sometimes we start with one of those, and then 'graduate' to an underwater 'point and shoot'. And, the favored few who go beyond that may use a digital single lens reflex camera inside an underwater housing and with an external electronic flash (or sometimes even two flashes!). The sheer beauty of our underwater world is such that we just want to share our adventure, and share the beautiful underwater environment and inhabitants, and share our love of the sport with our friends and families. That is what drives our interest in grabbing the camera and bringing it underwater with us to get those photos and bring them back topside.



Things have changed a lot in the world of underwater photography! Some of us remember the old Nikon 35mm film underwater camera, which was called the Nikonos. It was a wonderful camera and it did the job. The biggest limitation from today's perspective though was that the Nikonos only could take thirty six photos! That is because you can't change film underwater. What would often happen is that scuba divers would be very 'frugal' about they photographed (so as to not 'waste photos'), and would frequently chose to not take that extra shot of the grouper or the turtle - because the diver never really knew if or when another amazing and

unique photo opportunity might present. The only way to shoot more than thirty six Kodachrome slides was to have two or more Nikonos cameras. But back in the day, you needed a second mortgage for even one Nikonos. So, what would frequently happen is that divers would find themselves at their safety stop nearing the end of their dive with 18 pictures remaining. This would typically result in a lot of photos of the seaweed caught on the anchor line! Or, if the diver was really lucky, a sea turtle would happen by and we'd be treated to 18 photos of the sea turtle. And of course, the Nikonos couldn't take video clips. You get the drift about the Nikonos limitation. (Truthfully, there were other huge issues, such as lack of autofocus; and also the film of the day really needed a lot of light so often (if not using flash) it was too often just not possible to use a fast shutter speed - which is a problem underwater due to buoyancy fluctuations which can very easily blur a photo and ruin it.) However that was then and this is now, and the truth is that the Nikonos paved the way for so many underwater photographers and helped transform and energize our sport!

Today's digital single lens reflex (DSLR) cameras have virtually unlimited photo capacity. Those little memory cards can carry thousands of images. One memory card can be enough for a two-week vacation filled with daily heavy photo-taking, if you invest in a high-capacity memory card (and they are amazingly inexpensive these days). The new digital cameras also are far more capable in the low light levels we experience underwater. Autofocus is a huge help underwater when you can't take the time to tinker around for the best focus. The photos you bring home on your memory card can also be edited on your computer for color correction, noise reduction, cropping for improved composition, and photo enthusiasts can even use "digital darkroom" techniques to preserve highlight detail and recover shadow detail. Furthermore, most 'point and shoots' and DSLR's also offer the capability to shoot video. Video captures not only the sea life in action, but also conveys an added dimensionality of changing shadows and textures, and even through the associated audio can capture underwater sounds!



Probably the best advice for underwater photography is to move in close, say maximum three feet (the closer the better). When you think you are close enough, move closer. Moving in closer both reduces the unwelcome phenomenon called 'backscatter' (which we will cover in a moment), and also gives your photos better and brighter colors. You really have to practice with your camera as much as you can so that you can previsualize the results you are going to get. This will minimize the amount of time you have to put in to edit your photos later in your digital image editing program. You need to understand the effects of changing the settings on your camera in order to capture the image you want to bring home to family and friends. This simply demands a lot of practice.

One of the big problems in underwater photography is the splotches which result from the on-camera flash. What this is all about is that plankton and miniscule debris catch the light of the flash and that winds up as dots of light and splotches which take attention away from what you were trying to photograph. Eliminating that with photo editing software is just about impossible, so don't even try. Underwater photographers who want to take their underwater photography "to the next level" will invest in an external flash on a bracket, and illuminate the subject with the flash off axis to the camera lens. That works well to reduce or even eliminate the phenomenon known as 'backscatter'. Many of us who have already started to take photos or videos underwater will have noticed that the photos or videos can be overly green in color. This is due to the color phase shifting. Reds and yellows get "lost" as you descent below 5' to 10' and beyond, and so the photos and videos will look greener and bluer. The way to correct this is either in a

Underwater Photography....

Continued

digital photo editing program such as Picasa or Photoshop Elements or any number of other digital photo editing software packages, or... most simply... adding a red filter to the camera (or GoPro). This will restore a more natural daylight 'color temperature' and correct the color balance to match what you saw underwater. It is important to note that using an electronic flash is an excellent way to capture accurate lighting. A flash brings daylight color to your scene (within the range of the flash). So... compose your photograph, move up as close as practical, and use an electronic flash (offset as much as practical from the center of your camera lens) to get the best color and least backscatter.



The other major point to keep in mind is that practice makes perfect. Don't get upset if a fair number of your photos don't meet your expectations. You can expect that many, or even most, of your underwater photographs will not be as successful as you would have liked. That is the beauty of digital photography; no expense is associated with multiple photos and then deleting the ones you don't want and keeping the 'keepers'! So all in all, there is more reason now than ever to bring a camera underwater with you and take those photos and bring them back to your family and friends!

But before you do so, there are some important cautionary comments.

Far more important than your photography equipment is your skill as a diver. Learning to effectively control your buoyancy is the most critical skill any underwater photo-



grapher can attain. Good buoyancy control improves your chances of composing a great photograph, but more importantly buoyancy control protects both you and the environment. The ability to hover in front of your subject means you are reducing the likelihood that you will damage the aquatic environment or disturb the bottom by needlessly kicking to stay in place. If you can't get the shot you want without disturbing the environment then forget about the shot and find something else to take a photo of. If you are bobbing around like a cork up and down, you will never be able to get a good, sharp photo. Similarly, if you are bouncing around on the bottom and kicking up clouds of silt, you might ruin everyone else's opportunity to enjoy the sights, much less for them to take photos. Above everything else, safety is the primary concern. Remember that we should be divers first and photographers second. It is crucial for new divers to not overdo thought processing commitments while diving. This is called 'task loading', and the crucial importance of appropriate task loading commensurate with skill, experience and



ability can not be overstated. Task loading a diver (especially an inexperienced diver) can lead to mistakes, and mistakes underwater can quickly turn into accidents. Know how to use your camera fluently so that you don't have to spend time underwater figuring out how it works. If you are tinkering with cam-

era controls while underwater, you might find yourself very suddenly alone in the water. But there is a far worse problem than just losing your buddy. Suppose your dive buddy then gets into trouble, or that you get into trouble! Always remember, don't get so caught up in the camera that you forget to monitor your air, depth, bottom time and your buddy. SAFETY FIRST!"

With those cautionary notes, underwater photography can still be a wonderful addition to our sport. A great way to get ready for underwater photography is to just go do it, under controlled circumstances. There are always unexpected problems, such as camera control manipulation if wearing gloves. So to counter these issues, who says you can't just throw some rubber duckies and toys into the pool at your dive shop, and practice photographing them in the pool? Or at your local quarry for practice. This is a great way to skill build, so that the next time the colorful butterfly peacock bass or the surgeonfish or nudibranch happens along, you will be ready to get that shot with a minimum of fuss, and safely!

So grab your camera, charge up those batteries, format your memory card and we'll see you underwater!

Images by Brian Rice; locations: Roatan, Utila, Cayman Brac, Bonaire, Dutch Springs

Co-Author: Gary Lehman



Diver in the Spotlight

By Gary Lehman

Vreni Roduner

Recently I had the great fun and privilege of spending time with one of the leaders of our Club, Vreni Roduner. We spoke about scuba diving, environmentalism, photography and all her many and varied interests and passions. As I think back on our conversation I am again amazed at the layers of leadership and adventure that Vreni personifies! A documentary film ought to be made, and the soundtrack I already know would definitely be *Ein Heldenleben – A Hero's Life!* And thus with great joy, I bring you these notes from our meeting.



So who is that searing, firebrand environmental advocate at our Club meetings, whose fire and brimstone commentary on fracking and marine mammal rights focuses our Club's love of scuba diving and marine advocacy into broader context? Of course, it is Vreni; she is our conscience and environmental beacon - for which we cherish her. Whether it is fracking, marine mammal protection or our beach cleanups, you can be certain that Vreni is always right in the middle of the action and in the fight. So where did Vreni first acquire her passion for environmentalism? Personally I think it was during her time skiing and hiking the Swiss Alps mountains where she was nurtured, and where she experienced the majesty of the mountains 'up close and personal'. I was spellbound during our conversation together

to hear about her intrepid mountaineering and skiing experiences at high altitude in the rarified atmosphere of the Swiss Alps mountain range. Those glaciers are receding now, but only a short time ago, these Alpine glaciers were clear, clean and vibrant rivers of ice and snow at 4,000 meters (some over 13,000' +). Vreni started from the Jungfrau Joch, skiing down the Aletsch glacier, Switzerland's biggest ice-river; then over the Greenhorn gap down the Greenhorn glacier, and the next morning early up to the summit of the Fischerhorn in an epic 5+ hour bid up the icy terrain. "Gott im Himmel!" (roughly translated to ...JEEPERS! This IS an AMAZING achievement folks...)

We don't have time or space here to describe Vreni's epic journey after working in Australia for a couple of years. She traveled from Tasmania by boat across Southeast Asia to Ceylon, then on a single bus across Southeast and Southern Asia including across the rugged Khyber Pass and Afghanistan, through parts of West Asia to Istanbul, into Greece, Italy - ending in Munich, Germany. I wish we had more space to fully document this journey to adventure! (I want to hear more about it...) More recently Vreni traveled to China and Peru and sojourned to remote, off-the-beaten-track areas where there are reports of long-abandoned remote cities; and Vreni relayed accounts of a submarine settlement and temple discovered deep in the world's highest altitude body of water, Lake Titicaca. Astounding journeys - each meriting future articles!

Contrast those exalted experiences with the travesty of fracking right here and now in our own backyard, with poisoned underground water table, dynamited rock strata, questionable (if any) safety precautions and carcinogenic chemicals in our WATER SUPPLY -- and one can understand, feel and share the outrage beating in Vreni's heart over this clear and present subterranean threat by unscrupulous corporate operators. Let us join Vreni, and fall in behind her as she assists the environmental leaders here in New York State to hopefully prevent future environmental destruction or disaster.

But it was Vreni's illustrious diving career that was the main focus of our conversation. Believe it or not, Vreni was actually never really comfortable in the water as a kid! But she took it upon herself as a young adult - as her personal challenge - to learn to scuba dive, and was first certified in 1975. (In fact her instructor passed the word to Vreni to 'give it up'! Just perhaps, that advanced her diving career radically. For it was here that Vreni helped blaze a new trail for women in the sport we love; a sport which was dominated in those days by men who were skeptical of women's abilities to dive, and met their interest in diving with antipathy and obstacles. (This may be difficult to believe in the context of today, but so it was then...) Soon Vreni had conquered all fears and roadblocks, and was diving over 100' to wrecks off the New Jersey and up the Northeast coast. And soon, Vreni was Westchester's first female PADI Divemaster! She credits Zig greatly with his encouragement and support in those days, and Vreni gave Zig a huge and heartfelt shout-out in our interview for this article.

So, to all the young women in this sport who happen upon this article, take heed! And I invite you to speak to Vreni about her experiences, and to know that the success and joy you achieve in this sport traces back in part to the heroic woman upon whose shoulders you now stand, our own Vreni!

Vreni spoke with great pride about how our Club pioneered well organized northeast diving, relating how the divers were tough and undeterred by the colder Northeast waters which held secrets, treasures and experiences very different from the less challenging, warm blue waters of southern seas. But travel was a financial challenge for many, and to dive meant to brave the Northeast waters and appreciate our local dive sites on their own considerable merits. And those of us who have dived the Long Island/New Jersey wrecks, and with the seals of Gloucester

Spotlight....

Continued



and Isles of Shoals surely appreciate those early TSSC dives!

The highlight of Vreni's diving career was her participation on the women team in 1986 for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) REPEX II dive research project for the marine science

and engineering community. It included the development of tables for repetitive excursions, surfacing techniques and oxygen procedures for saturation habitat diving. The objective of the dive series was to understand human physiology in extended dives and submarine habitats. The experiment's main objective was to develop a 'repetitive excursions' (REPEX) decompression algorithm for multi-day repetitive excursions and evaluate longer, deeper repetitive excursions (some with stops), oxygen exposure and management, and saturation decompression after excursions using NITROX gas mixtures. There has been significant scientific payback for these NOAA dives, yielding groundbreaking scientific advances. And our own Vreni was an important contributor because of her diving experience and participation!

Under Zig's guidance, leadership and encouragement, in 2000 Beneath The Sea established the Women Divers Hall of Fame and inducted 72 women of valor in the world of scuba diving. Vreni was one of them, her selection influenced in part by her contributions to the REPEX project as well as volunteer longevity as a Sr. Director at Beneath The Sea, the biggest and Interna-

tional Dive-show in America. BTS has a long tradition of engaging women in diving and empowering success and enjoyment of diving by women; Vreni has been a big part of that. Her idols are Zale Parry, Dr. Sylvia Earle and the late Dr. Eugenie Clark and Lotte Hass (from Austria) – ALL of whom were told that they (as women) "couldn't" be scuba divers.

Indeed, when I asked "So, what is next for Vreni?!", she indicated that BTS figures into her plans in a big way. Vreni feels strongly that it is vital for the sport to bring kids into scuba diving. BTS is committed on that track with at this point 29 yrs. of Ocean Pals program for the younger kids, and many years of Marine Careers Program for high school and college students - with world-class mentors providing leadership for interested kids.

Finally, it just has to be said: Vreni's curry chicken is amazing and disappeared quickly at the last TSSC Open House -- exceeded only (possibly) by her rhubarb-strawberry pie which was summarily devoured without any hope that it would survive my aggressive and devoted forks!

About The Scuba Sports Club

- Informative, inspiring, fun monthly presentations - open to diver and non-divers
- Updates on dive safety; share other divers' fun and trip experiences
- Warm blue water dive trips - and plenty of local action, too
- Local dive community education/ workshops - TSSC at the center of the action
- Participation in Beneath The Sea, the premier scuba diving industry and travel show in the Americas
- Environmental activism and marine environment stewardship
- And... our world-famous DECO STOPS, monthly social get-togethers!



1975 - 2015

For a video review of "40 Years of The Scuba Sports Club", go to <https://vimeo.com/130138410>

To the next 40 years of memories!

40th Anniversary SeaSwells Log Editors:
Gary Lehman & Ruth Emblin

WHO IS WHO AT TSSC

Tom Butcher	President
Gary Lehman	Vice President
Cindy Fisher	Treasurer
Tabby Constantino	Secretary
Bob Bak	Past President
Nick Lappano	Membership Program
Allan Rios	Dir-At-Large
Mike DeAngelo	Legal Advisor
Robert Schragger	Founder
Armand Zigahn	Co-Founder
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President Emeritus Dick Smith

FRONT AND CENTER !

An Interview by Gary Lehman

As part of our 40th Anniversary celebrations we decided to stop in with Dick Smith for ...A Look Back, and a Look Ahead to the Future! Careful and close consideration of the roots of our Club can help us to understand critical success factors from our Club's past experiences, and help us take stock of current positioning and can also shine a light forward for our Club to follow. Much of what we all love and cherish most about our Club originated in the early years of The Scuba Sports Club, and Dick Smith was instrumental in many of those initiatives. He and the other Club leaders developed ground-breaking plans for the Club, guided the execution of those plans and built a legacy for all Westchester and northeast diving. The leaders would 'cross train' with each holding different offices as President, Vice President, Program Director, Director-at-Large, and other functions and thus each could really help out the others and pinch hit when necessary. We can draw inspiration from the early days - and what better way to do so than to visit with Dick and hear about the Club's early days and great achievements!

Meeting with Dick at his home, I quickly came to understand that all of us New Yorkers actually owe Dick a lot more than just those experiences related to diving and The Scuba Sports Club! Dick's career as a municipal construction project management executive spanned almost fifty years, and Dick was in the middle of the action and in leadership positions for some of the New York City area's most iconic locations and projects. Dick has worked in both private industry doing consulting for and then working with diverse City agencies, such as the Department of Environmental Protection and NYC Department of Water and several other agencies (whose names tended at times to get switched up at the whim of inbound and outbound Mayoral administrations and resultant reorganizations). Over the years tens of millions of New Yorkers in all the boroughs have been able to turn on the faucet and get what is cited to be the best urban water in the world, owing to the construction teams which over the years have connected New York's upstate water supplies to the New York City area.

Collectively, these three tunnels are among the very largest capital construction / civil engineering projects worldwide. Imagine a tunnel 70+ miles long, 500' under the ground, 20+' in diameter - going through EVERYTHING (including bedrock) to bring water to commercial and residential users throughout the five boroughs from upstate New York

So Dick has in various always been engaged with WATER, but not only just professionally. Dick related how when he was a young lad, he spent many happy summers with his family in Lake George, and it was there that Dick learned to love the Lake (especially its northern and eastern reaches) and enjoyed many hours of exploring the shorelines with a rowboat with a little engine and snorkeling. Being a collector, he collected dozens of fishing lures stuck on branches and logs! Growing up watching Jacques Cousteau and Lloyd Bridges as US Navy Frogman Mike Nelson, Dick always had a curiosity about scuba diving and finally, at age 44 decided to take the class with Leroy Bonaparte at the Tarrytown YMCA pool. The start of a legend! Leroy was a member of a The Scuba Sports Club and he recommended to Dick that he should join. From those early days Dick remembers a lot of great parties and good meeting facilities and many exciting local dives.

I asked Dick what his most magic moment was underwater. Interestingly, NOT EVERY 'most transformational moment' has to BE a 'world record' or a stunning exciting experience... This is an example... Dick's most memorable experience was simply being 45' under the surface of his childhood-beloved Lake George, just looking around at the green water in which he hovered, and just considering WHERE he was - and for him, that was the most searing and striking memory!

From that experience Dick's diving progressed rapidly, taking advantage of the many trips being conducted by the Club. Dick remembers when Vreni took him down to 95' to a wreck called the Eureka, off L.I., a former 128 foot tug boat, built in 1898. This was another transformational moment for him, because we had great visibility and there was lots to see.

Dick's Club leadership included several stints various positions: President, Vice President, Program Director, Director-At-Large, Executive Director and other positions. Dick was also recognized as TSSC Diver Of The Year, presented at Beneath The Sea. It was during these leadership roles that the Club's identity solidified, Club activities intensified, and the Club flourished with over 150 members. Dick attributes much of the Club's success to LOCAL DIVING and frequent diving locally. Dick acknowledges that local diving is more challenging than warm blue water diving, but as we all know offers many unique rewards. Dick reinforced the point that EACH and EVERY dive type and location offers unique and individual challenges and rewards and that a 'complete' diver will enjoy not only the colorful tropical fish and corals of the southern climes, but also the harsher northeast underwater landscapes and local fish, lobsters, mussels and also experience the pull of history and mystery of wreck diving (but only at the right level, and not necessarily penetrating the wreck).

Of course, NO diver ever leads a totally charmed life and Dick has had his share of dicey situations. One such experience left a lasting impression with him. For whatever reason, he went off the wreck and COULDN'T FIND HIS WAY BACK. Staying coolheaded, he realized that he could NOT spend a lot of time looking for the wreck, so he decided to ascend and do his safety stop and surface with ample air supply and not risk running low. As he ascended from his safety stop he heard and FELT CHUG CHUG CHUG... Upon surfacing, he was a mere 200' from a freighter in the shipping lane, WAY too close for comfort. He realized that had he surfaced a little sooner, he might have been at risk of being injured or killed by the suction created by the propellers! Fortunately he was far enough away, but he was ALSO a VERY far distance from the dive boat and in those days, there was no such thing as a dive sausage or other surface signaling device. He had a long swim and the boat could NOT come get him because there were still other divers in the water.

Front and Center...

Continued

The lesson Dick drew from that experience is that training, training, training is absolutely key to safe Club diving. Dick recommends that our Club recommit to training including rescue training, maybe at Squanz Pond, CT.

One of the questions I had for Dick was what HE was individually most proud about of all the Club's achievements. There was no hesitation for Dick on that response, which was that during his Presidency, the Club conducted the very first SUB SURFACE beach cleanup in New York State (and possibly the first in the northeast). This is an achievement of which the Club can and should be intensely proud, and hats off to Dick and the Club leadership who helped make that happen. Beach cleanups are terrific, but as we have seen in our Orchard Beach and Rye cleanup experiences, much work remains to be done in clearing harmful plastics, industrial and residential rubbish from all the iconic Westchester beaches and shorelines locations.

Dick was also justifiably proud of the North Carolina trips he led. On one such trip, his TSSC dive team grew from 12 participants one year to 22 the next year! Those sand-tigers and rays which were encountered probably never saw so many damn Yankees from up north at any one time before or since! The northeast dive schedule was so full in those days that Club members had to sign up MONTHS in advance for Club

dives, or they would get shut out. Club dive participation was so active that indeed, it was computerized!

No discussion about The Scuba Sports Club of Westchester could be complete without a nod to the crucial and transformative role played by Beneath The Sea. BTS was founded by our Club's original founder Zig Zigahn and the close and symbiotic connection remains strong to this day, with BTS drawing strength and staffing from TSSC and the Club in turn drawing inspiration, membership and influence from the close connection to BTS. The BTS film festival brings us to places to see things underwater that we would never to be able to see in several lifetimes and for that we are grateful. BTS also of course is the country's leading consumer dive expo, and the booths and displays and training opportunities and travel vendors all combine to make the three-day expo the anchor of the northeast dive community! Dick makes the point also though that BTS presents a singular opportunity to meet the lofty legends of our sport; the names are too many to relate, but each year the leaders and innovators in our sport have all migrated back to BTS, in their varied careers advancing the sport's reach and range in every dimension. And those are compelling reasons for OUR Club to continue to support and join hands with BTS!

In a sense Dick represents an apparent dichotomy: he advocates a monthly program more heavily devoted to diving and dive safety (and by extension less focus on environmental subjects) and more fre-

quent local Club dives to build diving best practices, teamwork and proficiency; and YET, it was under Dick's leadership that our Club first launched the beach cleanup and underwater cleanups. Dick's view really at the heart of it is that the best path forward includes PARALLEL growth; to continue our environmental activism and beach cleanups but to ALSO at the same time concentrate our monthly meetings more directly at dive training, celebrating northeast dive locations and reducing the relative frequency of environment-related monthly presentations. Dick's fundamental point being that we are a dive club and as such, should devote ourselves to our core community to diving enthusiasts in Westchester. This had been the focus in prior years, resulting in great success in increased membership rolls.

With all the OTHER travel and sports alternative experiences and life commitments which Generation X and Generation Y Westchester divers are faced with, Dick believes that the best go-forward strategy for our Club involves 1) systematic partnering with local dive shops (distribution of flyers and relationship building with the dive shops); 2) recommitting to increased local diving; and 3) teaching and training diving best practices and in particular, intensifying dive safety training for our Club's growth and vitality as we launch into our NEXT forty years!

I know that we can count on Dick and our Club legacy members to help shape, guide and advance us into the future!

A Message from Nick Lappano, Membership Director

Hello to my fellow members. I have been a member of TSSC since 2005 and it has been a most rewarding experience.

I have met some great people whom I am honored to call friends. We have had some great times together, both at local events and meetings as well as on weekend excursions and overseas trips.

I still fondly remember my first trip to Roatan with the Club in September 2007. That was when I found out how much fun it can be when you travel with a group of great people with the same interest as yourself. It is especially cool to be on a dive boat with 13 other people and you know all of them. In addition, you get to relive those memories over and over again with those with whom you originally shared them.

Weekends at Lake Champlain, Lake George and Cape Ann in Massachusetts were great

breaks from my routine activities. I have also dove with my fellow "TSSCers" at Dutch Springs in Pennsylvania, Fort Wetherill in Rhode Island and on boats out of Long Island and in Long Island Sound. All fun!

Hopefully you are also enjoying the Club as much as I have and I encourage you to continue to do so by joining us at as many events as you can. If there is something you would like to do that is not on our current agenda let a Board member know. If there is sufficient interest we can add it to our calendar of events. You can even volunteer to organize and spearhead the event, trip or other activity.

Also talk about the Club to your friends, both divers and non-divers. The more the merrier and annual dues from additional members will allow the Club to continue to exist while expanding the activities available to our

members. Invite then to join us at a meeting or event so that they too can find out what a great bunch of people belong to TSSC.

Introduce them to me and I will be happy to explain how to join the Club so that they can enjoy being a member as much as I have.

This is your Club, and we need input and participation from all of you.

Feel free to propose new ideas and give some thought to stepping up to fill one of the spots on the Board of Directors. The Directors enjoy each other's company (most of the time anyway. LOL) and have a wonderful time at the monthly Board meetings and are able to take great satisfaction in helping such a great organization to succeed in fulfilling the needs of its' members.

Bottom line: **Participate and Enjoy!**

The Depth in Orkney

By Bernie Chowdhury © 2015

I was 20 feet inside the shipwreck *SMS Markgraf* and 120 feet below the water's surface. I moved slowly -- cautiously -- methodically -- and breathed in steady, measured, rhythmic intervals. My exhaled air formed silvery, expanding bubbles that disintegrated into hundreds of small spheres upon contact with the aging steel above me. My light illuminated the darkness on the other side of a narrow doorway. As I pulled myself through the door and into a tight passageway, a fine, brownish silt stirred around me. I proceeded down the passageway and through another doorway. I was now 60 feet inside the wreck. Visibility had dropped to one foot when I turned to find my way out. I hovered motionless amid the brown silt, my light practically useless. At times like this, I think, "How did I get myself into this situation?" The fact is I planned it.

From the moment I first heard about the German Imperial Navy's World War I High Seas Fleet shipwrecks, I wanted to dive them. The wrecks rest in Orkney, a rugged, weather-washed archipelago of almost 70 islands located just north of the Scottish mainland. Orkney is closely associated with both World Wars because of its natural, deep water harbor, Scapa Flow, a bay 12 miles across and 150 feet deep. Scapa Flow became the northern base for the British Navy during both World Wars. It was here, from November 23rd, 1918 to June 21st, 1919, that the High Seas Fleet -- 74 warships in all -- was voluntarily anchored by the Germans and guarded by the British during the Treaty of Versailles negotiations to end the First World War. The internment of the Fleet was a provision Britain insisted on before it would sit down with Germany to negotiate an end to the War. The ships were disarmed and carried only the minimum number of crew to maintain them. When it seemed the Treaty negotiations were breaking down and hostilities might resume, Admiral Ludwig von Reuter realized that the impotent Fleet under his command would easily be captured by British Marines. Because all officers in the German Navy were under orders to prevent their ships from falling into enemy hands, Von Reuter made a plan to sink his vessels. He seized the opportunity and ordered his officers to act when the British squadron guarding the Fleet left Scapa Flow for military exercises.

Shortly after von Reuter's order, many of the once proud German warships slipped beneath the waves, some capsizing and crashing into the water with more force than a breaching whale. Many others were left partially submerged and jutting out of the water at rakish angles. Some ships were concealed just beneath the surface, and British ships later ran aground on them. Many masts and funnels could be seen protruding from the water. Scapa Flow had become a ship graveyard.

War changed the landscape of Orkney and later bolstered a lucrative tourist economy. In addition to wildlife enthusiasts, nature lovers, and archaeology buffs, scuba divers have increasingly discovered Orkney and it has become Europe's wreck diving Mecca.

There are countless wrecks in and around Scapa Flow. New sites are being discovered by adventurous boat skippers but most divers come to see the German Fleet first-hand. The war museum at Lyness, on the island of Hoy, and the artifact display in Stromness Museum, on the island of Mainland, are both compelling and worth seeing for diver and non-diver alike. Among the many artifacts from the German Fleet on display are dishes, cups, ornate silver bowls and a sailor's cap. The immense ship's bell and four foot high brass stand which houses a compass are striking.

The *Markgraf* is one of the largest wrecks in Scapa Flow: 575 feet long and 97 feet wide. As I descended down a line attached to the wreck, I let gravity, combined with over 100 pounds of equipment, send me speeding toward the intact wreck. I was warm and comfortable in spite of the 50° F water temperature. My drysuit, two layers of underwear that resemble ski suits and a neoprene face covering under my mask would ensure reasonable comfort for the two hours and fifteen minutes I planned on being in the water.

At a depth of 45 feet, the vague, gray outline of the *Markgraf* appeared and I soon reached the top of it at a depth of 70 feet. When the *Markgraf* sank, the heavy gun turrets dragged it completely over and up-side-down. As I swam over the side of the wreck and descended further, I could see 30 feet in either direction.

I saw the outlines of a gaping, jagged hole in the wreck's side where salvagers had blown the ship open to get at the valuable metal of boilers and engines. Extensive efforts from 1923 to 1946 raised most of the High Seas Fleet intact. These once proud warships were then sold for scrap. Seven major German warships remain, firmly entrenched in the silty bottom. Three of the remaining wrecks, including the *Markgraf*, are dreadnought battleships, a class of vessel that boasted the most powerful armament and ruled the seas in the years leading up to and including the First World War. These massive tools of destruction were armed, floating cities capable of obliterating anything within a 12 mile radius. During World War I, these behemoths clashed with their British counterparts in the major naval confrontation of the war, which the British call the Battle of Jutland and the Germans call the Battle of Skagerrak. Historians still argue about who won the Battle.

The *Markgraf* fought valiantly at Jutland/Skagerrak. Although she was hit many times, she still made it back to Germany under her own power. During the scuttling at Scapa Flow, the *Markgraf's* captain, Lieutenant-Commander Walther Schumann, was shot and killed after he refused to obey a British order to stop his vessel from sinking. Schumann's only crime, like that of the other eight German sailors who were shot and killed during the scuttling, was in destroying his own country's property, as he was sworn to do under the circumstances.

History has always intrigued me. As a child growing up in England, Canada and the United States, I was fortunate on several occasions to have been able to visit my German grandmother, who lived in West Berlin. After dinner, my relatives would frequently talk about the two World Wars and their experiences during and after these calamities. In one of my distant relative's apartment sat a polished, spiked officer's helmet from the First World War, next to a picture of the man who died in that conflict. I once gingerly -- reverently -- touched the helmet, as if it could bring me closer to the events of a

Depth in Orkney....

Continued

past age. As my relatives continued to speak about their experiences, history became a living, breathing thing; and objects became a connection to past events.

The unaltered remnants of battlefields, airplanes and destroyed cities are rare, but shipwrecks remain in abundance, adorned with the accouterments of war and scarred by battle. Although my uncles and grandfather had fought on land and in the air, the ships left littered on the ocean bottom by both World Wars were the things from their time most accessible to me.

The necessity of wearing life support equipment to visit a site from the past might not qualify as accessible to many people, but to me it seems fitting. Scuba diving equipment offers me the opportunity to see and experience Germany's Imperial Fleet. The limitations of scuba, which entails carrying a fixed air supply and staying at depth for short periods of time -- usually between a half hour and an hour -- means that it would take me a lifetime to become intimately familiar with any one of the three remaining dreadnoughts at Scapa.

As I proceed down the side of the *Markgraf*, I inflate my buoyancy compensator, a device that enables air to off-set the weight I carry and allows me to become weightless. I float down the wall of steel, at the edge of the salvager's hole. Fish occasionally dart about and I spotlight them, creating my own underwater show. I reach the seabed and hover above the silty bottom, looking up at the giant man-made fish hotel. I check one of the three diving computers I always carry. The computers calculate the length of time I have been down and the length of time it will take me to safely reach the surface. I carry several computers: in the event that one -- or two -- malfunctions during the dive, I always have the ascent information I need. An incorrectly executed ascent could cripple or even kill me.

An underwater wreck presents a duality: it is intriguing precisely because it is underwater, yet poses problems unique to humans as a result. The deeper the wreck, the less time can be spent exploring it, because of the danger of decompression illness, otherwise known as the bends. As a diver descends, biologically inert gas -- nitrogen in the case of divers breathing air -- is forced into body tissues by the increase in surrounding pressure. This excess gas

must be released by the body during the ascent in a process referred to as off-gassing, or decompressing. If the body cannot release the inert gas, it expands and forms bubbles in the blood and tissues, causing the bends, a painful and debilitating condition which may rob a person of some or all bodily functions, or life itself. Think of a soda bottle shaken and then opened and you can imagine the process of severe decompression illness. The longer one stays down, and the deeper one goes, the more time must be allowed on the ascent for off-gassing. It is not uncommon for me to spend 30 minutes exploring a deep wreck and then one or two hours ascending in increments designated by charts called dive tables, or by computer.

On the seabed, next to the *Markgraf*, I read my computers and see that I am at 150 feet. My decompression obligation will increase rapidly at this depth and it will take me a long time before I can safely reach the surface. No matter how many times a diver has been deep, dangers still loom.

Deep is a relative term and is defined by United States recreational scuba training agencies as 61 feet or greater, with the maximum recreational limit set at 130 feet. This limit is suggested to recreational divers because of the effects of breathing air at depth, which causes a person to become intoxicated, or narcosis. Nitrogen is once again the culprit, which is why the condition experienced is more formally referred to as nitrogen narcosis. Clinically, nitrogen narcosis mimics alcohol intoxication, but the mechanics are not well understood. One theory suggests nitrogen molecules block the brain's synapses, causing them to send and receive electro-chemical signals in a distorted fashion. The deeper the dive, the more severe the narcosis, just as drinking more alcohol makes for greater intoxication. Under water, a diver is always under the influence of nitrogen, even though he may not realize it, much as a person who has one or two alcoholic drinks may claim to be perfectly sober. A general rule of thumb, called "Martini's Law," states that every 50 feet of depth is equivalent to a martini on an empty stomach. In his book, *Silent World*, Jacques Cousteau called nitrogen narcosis "rapture of the deep" and claimed to be both very susceptible and afraid of its consequences.

Though I don't drink martinis, I like the calm and content that 3 "drinks" give me and I take in the sights next to the *Markgraf* at 150 feet. The odd shapes in the salvager's hole in front of me look intriguing. I swim forward, ascending at a slight

angle and enter the large hole, carefully avoiding the sharp pieces of metal and steel beams standing at odd angles. The hole is over 40 feet high, wider than the distance I can see and 20 feet deep, making a cavern of the wreck's interior. I swim to a steel wall and notice the steel has been eaten away in spots by the salt water. *In the woods close to my grandmother's, I once nervously approached a section of the Berlin Wall and strained to see through the cracks. On the other side, I knew there were watchtowers and soldiers armed with machine guns. What is that world over there? How do those people live? Can they see me?* Moving along the *Markgraf's* steel wall, I come to a doorway leading further into the wreck. I use my light to illuminate the other side and see an unobstructed passageway. *Do I want to see and experience what's on the other side?*

Although I have explored the interior of many shipwrecks, I always make sure I am completely comfortable before I enter. Too many things can go wrong in a tight space underwater. Safety is a relative term. Whenever humans explore an alien environment with life support equipment, something can and will go wrong eventually. Although exploring outside a wreck is fairly safe, penetrating far into the interior is more exhilarating, and more dangerous. It is also beyond recreational diving and falls into the category of technical diving, which requires greater training, equipment and planning. Once inside the wreck, I will not be able to make a direct ascent to the surface in the event of emergency. I have carefully considered potential problems beforehand and devised strategies to deal with them. Some of the hazards include catastrophic air failure, entanglement in netting, fishing line or cables, disorientation, and lack of visibility arising from poor propulsion technique, light failure or the removal of artifacts such as dishes, brass cage lights, or portholes.

Before I enter the doorway, I check my computers to see how deep I am and how long I have been down. I check the gauges of my tanks to make sure I have enough air to first continue onward, then to get out of the wreck and finally to decompress with.

To hedge my chances of survival inside a shipwreck, I use two, independent, primary tanks of air strapped to my back. This affords a completely redun-

Depth in Orkney....

Continued

dant set of air: if anything mechanical fails on one tank, I still have a sufficient reserve to extract myself from the wreck and gain the surface. I carry at least two lights to illuminate the Stygian darkness found in the recesses of wrecks. One light is a back-up in case my powerful primary fails. I carry two knives to cut myself out of an entanglement. To propel myself efficiently, I use various techniques invented by cave divers. My fin strokes are adapted to enclosed environments: I use the frog kick, which prevents me from disturbing the fine silt on the bottom and reducing my visibility to zero. Where possible, I pull myself along with my hands, keeping my feet together and straight behind me in a technique known as the pull-and-glide. This conserves my air supply because the arm muscles are smaller than those in the leg, and less exertion occurs when the arms are used. On my way in, a guideline is spooled from a reel and then, on the way out, reeled back in while I follow it to the exit. Too many people have not used a guideline, have become disoriented while searching for the exit, run out of air, and drowned.

Swimming into the *Markgraf*, I look for brass or ceramic wall signs and read the German writing on them. *Who were the workers who made and installed these signs?* I find a brass cage light, now covered in marine growth and sediment, no longer shiny. *What did this light once illuminate?* A sailor's personal ceramic wash basin appears, half buried in the fine, brown silt. *Whose basin was this? What were his thoughts, his feelings, his aspirations?* I enter a washroom which still has five intact sinks. *As a child, my grandmother cleaned me with a small hand towel while I stood in a basin placed on the floor. There was no bathroom or bathtub in her apartment. Two toilets were in the dark, damp basement, used collectively by the building's inhabitants. I swim past defunct, precision-built machinery. Why were my relatives capable of building such masterful tools and machines, and falling so short in governing their use? Why were they not able to dictate their own destinies rather than let madmen destroy them, their country, and others' countries?* The silt and rust particles, dislodged by my air bubbles, cloud my view.

Dark flakes fall surreally and stir up swirls of silt from the floor. Behind me, visibility rapidly drops as I swim further in. I reach out to touch a pipe, intending to pull

myself along. The top of the iron pipe disintegrates into a cloud of powder. The bottom of the pipe topples over. I turn to make my retreat and can see less than one foot in front of me. I am 60 feet inside the wreck. I have crawled through narrow doorways and swam down passageways to get to this compartment. I cannot rely on my guideline alone to lead the way out, because it may have gotten wedged under the disintegrating steel plates of the doorways. Or it may have shifted and gotten caught among the pipes and cabling that litter this area. As I reel the line in and follow it slowly, I close my eyes and swim onward. I imagine where I must be, based on a reverse image of what I saw on the way in. My forward momentum is halted as I collide with a steel bulkhead, producing a dull boom.

The collision and the noise startle me. *The first time I heard a Soviet fighter jet break the sound barrier near Berlin, I was frightened. The windows, the china and the glassware in my grandmother's apartment rattled. These windows had been shattered by allied bombings and artillery during the Second World War. This apartment, like so many others in Berlin, was appropriated by Russian troops when they captured the city at the end of World War II. My mother, aunt and grandmother were forced to live in the basement. Marshal Zhukov gave his troops three unrestricted days in Berlin after they crushed German resistance. Pillage, plunder, rape and murder ensued. The terror of a conquered city was too deep to fathom.*

The silt is all encompassing. I barely see my guideline. It has shifted and become entangled. I reach for it, fighting panic. *Perhaps this is what the sailors felt as their vessel was engaged in combat, the ship alternately resonating with the sound of their shells being fired and rocking with the impact of incoming enemy shells.* I work slowly to untangle the guideline from the cable it is wrapped around and concentrate on keeping my breathing rate steady. If I rush, I will begin to breathe hard, and my mind will become clouded with narcosis. I know a doorway must be to my right and I grope for it. Finding the opening, I pull myself through, and meticulously make my way out of the wreck.

As I ascend, I prepare for my one-and-a-half hour decompression. I attach my guideline to a bright yellow, vinyl bag, inflate the bag with air and let it rocket to the surface where it will mark my position. The dive boat skipper will see the bag and trail it at a distance. When his boat gets closer to

the bag, I can hear the familiar sound of its diesel engines -- ka-chunk, ka-chunk, ka-chunk -- and think of the boat's warm cabin and the skipper's infectious grin. I will drift with the current among a hoard of jellyfish and strange, oblong, translucent creatures whose ancestors were probably here from the dawn of time.

Decompression is as much a mental as a physical process. I enter a trance-like state. My mind wanders to the people and the many historical sites of Orkney. I think of Robert Rosie, a tour courier who engaged my dive buddy and me in conversation on a previous trip, when he saw our diving bags. "So, you lads dived the Fleet wrecks? Let me show you a souvenir." He pulled out a brass plaque. "My uncle was a salvage diver and he recovered this from a German WW I submarine." He flipped the plaque over to reveal an emblem stamped into it. "That's the Kaiser's emblem, lads. I carry it with me everywhere. My uncle used to give me plates and cups he had recovered from the Fleet. I used to throw stones at them and I invited other boys to break the plates and cups. What fun we had! Now, of course, I wish I had all those smashed plates and cups. I've only got one cup and four plates left! One tour guide offered me money for a plate, but I'm not selling!"

I think of the young barmaid who greeted me with, "Hello, weren't you here last year?" "Yes," I replied, "You've got a good memory." "No," she retorted with a grin as she handed me a draft pint of locally brewed Raven Ale, "You've got a face that's hard to forget!" I had burst into roarious laughter then and the thought made me chuckle now. *Oradians are so good-natured, so friendly. I wish I could spend more time here. It's as close to idyllic as I've seen on my travels.*

I ascend to my next stop, get comfortable and continue my decompression trance.

Visions of some of Orkney's many historical sites come to mind. I see henge monuments called the Ring of Brodgar and the Standing Stones of Stenness. *For what purpose were these slabs of stone erected in a mathematically precise circle some 5,000 years ago? Did a priestly people who possessed higher mathematical skills and knowledge of astronomy have the Circles built so they could perform rituals here?* Skara Brae, a 5,000 year old Neolithic village, inhabited for 500 years, captures my thoughts. *How comfortable*

Depth in Orkney....

Continued

and prosperous the people who built this well preserved village of six huts and a workshop must have been. The stone buildings, complete with enclosed passageways connecting the buildings, must have been cozy with the fireplaces burning. Their life must have been leisurely compared to the madness of working in Manhattan. I see the magnificent Cathedral of Saint Magnus, situated in the heart of Orkney's largest town, Kirkwall. How was it that Magnus, who was such a good, learned and compassionate man, could be killed by his cousin, who co-ruled Orkney with him in the early 1100s? The timeless qualities of jealousy, treachery, greed and deceit.... I think of the Vikings' runic inscriptions found inside the ancient chambered burial tomb of Maes Howe. These are the best preserved and most numerous runic inscriptions in the world. Did the Vikings really carry off a vast treasure from Maes Howe as they claimed in their inscriptions? Where has the treasure gone and is it still there?

When my decompression is complete, I ascend and the skipper steers the boat over to me. As I climb the ladder, my diving equipment becomes heavier and heavier as the water no longer supports it. I am assisted to a bench and sit. Physically and mentally, I am sated. I have traveled far.



Bernie Chowdhury climbs back on board



Bernie Chowdhury post-dive
Photos (C) 2003, Scott Rowan

NOTE: Divers of all skill levels can be accommodated at Scapa Flow.

Further Reading:

COX'S NAVY: Salvaging the German High Seas Fleet at Scapa Flow 1924-1931 by Tony Booth. Pen & Sword, Maritime, 2005.

Dive Scapa Flow by Rod MacDonald. Mainstream Publishers, 2011.

The Grand Scuttle by Dan van der Vat. Naval Institute Press, 1986.

Internet links:

Brief history of the scuttling and salvage of the German World War I High Seas Fleet at Scapa Flow, complete with historic images:

<http://www.naval-history.net/WW1z12aCox.htm>

Some excellent underwater images of wrecks at Scapa Flow created using multibeam sonar system, complete with explanation of how it's done: Article from DIVER magazine, January 2007.

Scapa Flow in 3D

http://www.divernet.com/Wrecks/159269/scapa_flow_in_3d.html

*Bernie Chowdhury is the author of the international top selling book, **The Last Dive** (2000, non-fiction, HarperCollins), which has been published in eleven languages. He is an Explorers Club Fellow, past-president of the NYC Sea Gypsies, 2001 Beneath the Sea Diver of the Year (Education), and an active technical diving instructor.*

HAPPY BIRTHDAY, TSSC!!!

It is fantastic to be part of the club as we prepare to celebrate it's 40th Anniversary. TSSC is a great group of friends focused on diving. It is a great testament to the club and it's members for this club to celebrate it's 40th anniversary. Sadly, I am old enough to remember what things were like 40 years ago, when Recreational Diving was not as common and safe as it is today. Lets take some time to reflect on the past, and start planning and enjoying the events and trips we plan for the future. More Diving, More Fun. I hope we all can dive or play together soon.

Tom Butcher, President

Everyone in our Club has so much to offer. So many of our divers have had similar experiences, all testimony the joy of diving and the fellowship shared by all scuba divers across the world! The diversity of our collective dive (and topside) experiences is amazing: warm blue water; Northeast diving; wreck diving; diving in the Caribbean, Indian Ocean and South Pacific (and Pacific Northwest) oceans; our informative and inspiring monthly TSSC meetings and speakers; our TSSC field trips; BTS participation; diving at Maritime Aquarium at Norwalk and attending lectures there; environmentalism and awareness raising; our beach cleanups; and finally attending the Explorers Club lectures and presentations which are ongoing to name but a few. All these learning/doing/personal experiences taken together ensure that this sport is a wonderful and engaging lifelong activity with inspiring experiences, both under the water and topside! It is an honor for me to have facilitated bringing together these recollections in tribute to our Club on the occasion of the 40th Anniversary - and thereby tap into the vast reservoir of experiences and fellowship amongst all of us here in our Club!

Gary Lehman, Vice President