



The Scuba Sports Club of Westchester, New York, our 41st year!



The Scuba Sport Club's Winter/Spring 2016 Newsletter
www.thescubasportsclub.org

Welcome to the Spring 2016 issue of The Scuba Sports Club Sea Swells Log. Our goal in 2016 will be to publish at least three issues with articles of interest to the diving community in general, and to our Club membership. We welcome all members of the diving community to contribute, so please contact Gary Lehman at gary.a.lehman@gmail.com with your article! Our Newsletter includes articles and features about our Club's diving and social calendar; diving adventures, social/educational events, equipment discussions, and some of the more colorful and intrepid characters in our local diving community (two of whom are featured in the current issue)! This issue also includes a tribute to Beneath The Sea with BTS's many contributions to our world of diving, and several wonderful and captivating articles by our Club members and friends about the Club's incredible dive adventure in the Philippines last year! So grab your gear and jump in, the water is getting warmer every day!Gary



The Spring 2016 ANCHOR LINE

By Tom Butcher



Trust everyone is in good health and in good spirits as we begin March 2016. 2015 was a great year for the Club: we celebrated our Club's 40th Anniversary; we supported the Wounded Warriors; we scuba dived with seals in Gloucester; we cleaned up the shoreline and waters around Glen Island; and most of the Club either dove The Philippines or Bonaire in October. The Program speakers were also great, covering many topics. Not to pick out one program over another (in a feeble attempt to make this brief), but it was great to hear that whales are returning to the NY area, and boat trips are available to see them. Lots of great memories for one year.

The Directors and Officers are trying to make 2016 even more enjoyable, and we look to the membership to help us. This is our Club! We need to have your feedback with the events we plan. The past two years, we have tried many social events to bring the club together, aptly named "Deco Stops". They have been working well, but the attendance is spotty. Please provide any recommendations you may have. We want everyone to enjoy our events together. Let's try to make this the year where we are complaining that *we had too much fun!* Along with more Deco Stops, there will be more dive trips planned during the year. We cannot join all of them; we can join some of them so we can enjoy "mini escapes" from our daily lives.

At the members' request, we are changing the Meeting Programs for this year. We are mixing in some more speakers on dive knowledge, training and safety. The membership will have a chance to show photos from their trips. I hope you take advantage of these sessions.

There is not much diving in the winter season, unless you ice dive or travel to warmer places. This is the ideal time to have your gear serviced or take a class to improve your skills. I want everyone's dive to be enjoyable, without incidents. Un-serviced gear can ruin your day. I almost had a bad day last year because my BC inflator was corroded, filling my BC slowly. I flush my BC regularly, but this still happened. Training helps you respond rapidly and effectively to address/resolve those "unplanned" events that can arise during a dive. The Club needs dive shops, and the dive shops need divers! There is much more to learn after completing your Open Water certification. We should support our shops where we can. Wishing everyone has a fantastic 2016 where everyone attends more Deco Stops and Dive trips we plan for the 2016 Diving Season.

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**The Scuba Sports Club CONGRATULATES BTS
for 40 YEARS of EXCELLENCE and Leadership!**

By Gary Lehman



The Scuba Sports Club (TSSC) extends heartfelt 'JOB WELL DONE' to the staff and leadership of Beneath The Sea (BTS) on the occasion of BTS's 40th Anniversary! TSSC has a unique relationship with BTS, because BTS's founder Zig Zighahn also founded TSSC the year before. Thus the TSSC Club members feel doubly lucky owing to this connection. Many of us have known Zig and JoAnn for years, and gratefully extend our congratulations to this charismatic and big-hearted team with warmth and appreciation. Many TSSC members are also part of the BTS organization, and those folks have earned a victory lap as well for all their sustained contributions to BTS's success. So, to everyone at BTS, including our own TSSC members who have worked hard at BTS for many years, you can be proud of your accomplishments!

BTS has been serving the diving community since 1976, and is growing each year. BTS was spun off by Zig from TSSC and soared into history! The BTS Expositions were originally held at a college in New Rochelle, then moved to various venues including the State University of New York/Purchase campus, then later at the Westchester Marriott, the White Plains Hotel, The Crowne Plaza; the BTS Expo outgrew all of these and was moved to the Westchester County Center. BTS is now held at one of the biggest venues in the entire Tri-State area, the Meadowlands Exposition Center where it has been ever since. Zig and JoAnn Zighahn have built the show into the biggest Scuba, Travel and Ocean Exposition in the US. The Northeast dive community in general – and in particular the members of TSSC – have benefited from the many advances in our sport initiated by BTS.

The BTS Expo offers the opportunity for conversation with many of leading lights of this sport we love. Each of us has differing diving backgrounds, interests and diving histories. Thus BTS participants each have their own individual "top moments". Whether it was meeting and learning from revered experts in marine biology, or meeting our personal favorite diving legends, or viewing the work of so many gifted photographers with their stunning underwater photography and video, or conversing with dive historians and dive-related jewelers and artisans – BTS 'makes it happen' for all of us in unique ways. The BTS educational offerings are important contributors to our sport's yearly cycle of dive education, advanced diving topics and underwater exploration. (Cnt'd P.3)

TSSC's Philippines Adventure !!

November 2015



Here at long last we see the various trip reports from some of our lucky Club members who participated in The Scuba Sports Club's 40th Anniversary Club trip to the Marco Vincent Dive Report at Puerto Galera, Philippines. This was not only a supreme dive adventure located in the heart of the biodiversity hot spot Coral Triangle, but a cultural and historical journey and adventure par excellence! It was a great bonding experience for all the members of our Club who were able to participate, PLUS everyone made new friends too! The staff at Marco Vincent was terrific, excelled in customer service in every respect, and earned the trust and confidence of our whole team at their resort. Here you will find a variety of articles covering different aspects of the trip, including not only the superb diving and underwater discoveries and adventures, but also the shore excursions; and marveling at the local cultural treasures, natural wonders; gaining historic perspectives and making some truly personal connections across time and space.

Trips like these truly are the ties that bind, sealing our friendships, and expanding our wealth of diving experiences individually and together. Memories like these are magical and lifelong, and our Club extends a heartfelt 'Thank You' to the Club leaders and our Club partners at Ski and Scuba Connection for crafting this milestone adventure! Strap on your gear and let's go diving, hiking, exploring and marveling at the wonders just around the next



TSSC – 40th Anniversary Dive Trip to the Philippines - Oct.18 – Nov.1st, 2015 / Day 1

By Vreni Roduner

Planning started soon after BTS Exhibitors Mel and Merci Agudo from Vincent Marco Dive Resort in Puerto Galera, presented to our Club by invitation at the November 2014 TSSC meeting. At the presentation we learned about diving around the Island of Puerto Galera, as well as Anilao, Apo Reef and Verde Island, with its endemic ocean life species -- and very pretty ocean critters! The Philippines, the "Nation of 7107 Islands", became the club's preferred destination for our 40th anniversary trip. By end of January 2015 most in the group were booked to go, as we found favorable airline rates on Korean Airlines (much better fares than on Air Philippines). Most of us planned to spend 2 days in Manila and surrounding areas before our 9 days diving from Puerto Galera. Kenny left a week before us, and some stayed on a few days after the diving.

Fast forward, Sunday, Oct. 18th arrived. We heard the bad news that the Philippines had 1 day before the 2nd typhoon within days apart, but in the North of Luzon Province, (Cnt'd P.3)

Congratulations to BTS on 40th Anniversary !

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The BTS Expo thus is not only the East Coast's leading dive education venue and the focal point for continuing education for so many divers looking to expand and enrich their diving endeavors with utmost safety always first in mind, but BTS has grown over these four decades to the biggest Scuba Travel, and Oceans Exposition in America.

And...all those breathtaking Dive Destinations all over the globe, and all the leading edge, alluring dive gear, Oh My!!! (Thank goodness for financial slush funds which help insure that our misguided non-diving spouses will not be able to detect changes in family financial liquidity! *NOW is the time to replenish those slush funds in advance of BTS!*). Just walking through BTS's aisles and exhibits of gear, destinations, and 'ways and means' combine to set the stage, whipping up excitement for a whole new great year of diving! The March/April timeframe is perfect because it puts our diving plans into focus for the rest of the year. BTS reminds us to start preparing and upgrading our dive gear, and step up our skill building in advance of the upcoming dive season.

Wonderful things happen when friends reunite in the warm fellowship and excitement at BTS. We get reacquainted with our diving friends from all over the region, our former dive buddies with whom we have shared the indescribable joys of underwater discovery, our vendor partners from adventures past, (and maybe we even encounter some former romances!) --- basically: *magic things happen!* Who can forget the spirited, riotously fun and totally spontaneous bagpipe concert at BTS 2014 which had the whole Expo rocking to the blast of the bagpipes! (and yes there is excellent diving in Scotland – and definitely not just the historic wreck diving at Scapa Flow, but at many locations - where surprisingly warm Gulf Stream water has fostered abundant, diverse sea life. YES, the information is from a BTS vendor, but also from personal knowledge!)

All the BTS experiences – the reignited friendships, the dive education, the enticing dive destinations, all the new and alluring scuba diving gear, the vendor exhibits where we get to meet 'the voice on the other end of phone', the historical exhibits, BTS's compelling marine environment advocacy, the FILM FESTIVAL, the ocean artisans, and the community outreach – combine synergistically to create engaging excitement from every direction for the sport we love.

The community outreach initiated by the BTS leadership deserves special recognition and approbation by all of us. The 'jewel in the crown' is the Ocean Pals initiative which was founded in 1986. Ocean Pals is JoAnn's program to involve children into the world of marine environment advocacy through art. Luminaries in the world of marine environmentalism and the scuba dive industry have all given their heartfelt endorsement to this initiative. Dr. Sylvia Earle has praised Ocean Pals as a 'hope

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TSSC's Philippines Adventure, by Vreni

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while the capital Manila, our first destination was in the South of that island; no damage there. I was already concerned that Mother Nature had stirred up the visibility in the ocean for the duration of our diving.

We met each other before 12 noon at different points in the check-in line at JFK's Korean Air Terminal. Once we arrived in the pre-flight passenger waiting area we saw the huge double deck plane, an airbus A380-800 waiting for us to board. It can accommodate a max. of 525 passengers with first, business and economy class passenger set-up, or 800 if all is economy seating - per info. However, our aircraft was configured for fewer passengers, (happily) providing us all more legroom -WOW! We started boarding just 35 minutes before scheduled departure, and everyone was seated on time in a very quick and orderly fashion. The very slim, tall and very nice flight attendants easily assisted shorter folks like me with the carry-on, putting the bags in the high up luggage bins some could not reach. Those ladies were very attentive and accommodating, even played with some toddlers, found toys for them, keeping all ages happy. We were well-fed through the 15 + hrs. flight. They served great meals with Korean and Western selections. We also could pre-order from many special diet requests. We noticed that there was more legroom than the American air carriers give you, plus the seats moved forward a bit for extra comfort when reclining. First and business class had seats folding down as cots to sleep comfortable and a little privacy divider around it, very spiffy. Business class was upstairs, no visitors from downstairs permitted or vice-versa.

We had a flight change in Seoul, had to go through immigration while in transit and had almost 3 hrs. stop over which passed quickly. They had 2 lounges with daybeds to lie down and rest, but we did not even have time to have our legs up, as we were checking out the very nice, modern airport with thoughtfully laid-out facilities in every respect. (The Seoul Airport even provided separate, special low-seating in restrooms for small kids to be comfortable, and easy access for mothers or fathers to be with them!)

Off we were - to Manila. We were scheduled to land at 11 PM, but the pilot had to circle for at least an additional hour to get landing permission, due to the fact that the Southern Luzon Island had just experienced a 5.4 Richter scale earthquake, and the Control Tower wanted to be sure as possible that there were no more rumbles. Kenny felt it in Olongapo City where he was, about 50 km north on the W. coast. There was no damage in Manila and surrounding areas. As soon as we had landed, we went

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Congratulations to BTS on 40th Anniversary !

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...taking a place of honor with the others which she calls out for special attention, approval and support. Many cherished awards have been conferred on the program, including PADI's Environmental Awareness Award. World-renowned artists have also been drawn to Ocean Pals and promote this initiative. Literally thousands of children from Africa, China, India, The Philippines, Turkey and Japan and all across the world have been drawn into the endeavor of marine conservation through the BTS Ocean Pals Program. Those of us who have been to the Beneath The Sea Expositions have seen the children's wonderful posters portraying marine conservation through the eyes of kids. We all remember our own childhood cherished art projects, and thus it is easy to understand how these children's projects will in the future forge a frame of reference of marine advocacy for these kids as they grow into young adulthood. Thus BTS via Ocean Pals is creating a future annuity of awareness and activism towards our marine environment.

BTS's other initiative led by Zig & JoAnn involves the Maria Ferrari Children's Hospital at Westchester Medical Center. Aquariums with colorful fish and sea life can be very soothing during times of illness and there is surely no greater anguish than when children are being treated in hospital. BTS has collaborated with Bed Bath & Beyond to create the aquarium at WMC, and this has provided comfort, light, emotional support - and enjoyment under the most trying circumstances - to those families visiting their children at The Children's Hospital at Westchester Medical Center. The leadership of BTS, JoAnn and Bed Bath and Beyond is most laudably represented there.

For the new millennium Zig inspired the founding of the WOMEN DIVERS HALL of FAME - 'WDHOF', to become an international organization with the mission of recognizing the most highly accomplished women divers. Zig enlisted the support of five leading women divers and this team of six founders together set the course for WDHOF. WDHOF brings recognition of pioneering women divers both to the dive industry and whole diving community. By establishing WDHOF, Zig and JoAnn dismantled the gender barrier. Outstanding women divers have risen to excellence in every industry including commercial and military diving, as well as the medical field and underwater cinematography. Many of these women have been presenters and educators at Beneath the Sea, and are inspiring the next generation of divers in the Marine Careers program (see below). WDHOF then established scholarships which grew into an extensive scholarship and mentoring program for young divers to learn from the professionals and expert divers, which paves their way into exciting underwater careers. WDHOF was originally founded by Zig, but now operates independently.

BTS extends its community outreach to encouraging young people to explore marine careers, and based on that many choose this field for their career. The Marine Careers initiative includes close to ten different scholarships for those embarking on a marine career. What better way to engage young people into marine environment advocacy, ecology, conservation and

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TSSC's Philippines Adventure, by Vreni

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thru immigration and had collected our luggage; we spotted the very attentive Arnold, sign in-hand held high. Arnold was assigned from the Manila office of Marco Vincent to collect us all, and he handed out prominent luggage tags. Then he ushered us through the masses of people to the pre-arranged waiting bus, and he kept all "the want-to-be-porters" out of the way. We got to our Hotel in about a half hour, and we were checked in quickly. By 2AM I was in my room. Jody rescheduled our morning tour departure for 10 AM, so we could get enough sleep after our very long travel day. It was well appreciated by all- Thanks Jodi !

Submitted by Vreni



TSSC's Philippines 2015 Adventure, by Tom Butcher

This is a short diary of the club trip to the Philippines to visit the Marco Vincent Resort. We were in the Philippines for wonderful 13 days. Feel free to contact anyone that was part of the group to hear more about this trip as this write-up is just a taste. To adequately describe the trip would require me creating a small book. Everyone on the trip promised to write-up each day, there were many holes in the trip, I hope this gives a better description of the great time we had.

Day 1 - We extended the trip by staying in Manila 2 days before reaching the Marco Vincent Resort in Puerto Galera to help us get acclimated to the time zone change and see the sites. Manila was 12 hours ahead of NY time, to enjoy the trip we had to convert fast, agreeing to tour Manila helped us. After arriving at the hotel around 1 AM after 22 hours of traveling from JFK, we met the tour bus around 10 AM and saw Manila traffic first hand. Glad I was not driving. Roads were narrow and full of cars, motorcycles and Jitneys. Our tour guide did a great job of describing the sites we saw and visited and provided lots of Filipino history. Manila has structures dating back to the 1500's when Spain colonized the Philippines. We visited a church dating back to that period that still holds daily Mass, San Augustine church. After visiting the old city "Within the Walls", we visited the largest US Military Cemetery outside the US, second in size to Arlington. The US created a stunning memorial to the fallen personnel from the WW II US Pacific military campaigns. We finished the tour with a visit to a unique Philippine museum. This museum was geared to Philippine history, and displayed Philippine artifacts dating back hundreds of years, lots of gold, jewelry and clothes. I think the gold got more attention than the other items.

Day 2 - The tour guide planned to take us up north, but the area was heavily damaged by the slow moving typhoon, so we changed our plans to visit a Eco Village commune. A large number of Filipino's live in poverty. This village was created to offer them a better choice and have an opportunity to improve their level of living. Folks are offered to build a house on the grounds provided they work at the commune,

Congratulations to BTS on 40th Anniversary !

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...research than to recognize their efforts and support their marine-related endeavors, including also photography, marine and diving technology. Allied with BTS's scholarship program is the Marine Careers Mentoring Program. The objective of the Mentoring Program is to introduce young people to the marine community and careers. High schoolers who have an interest are teamed up with BTS member-s who are marine industry professionals who mentor and advise them about different marine career paths. Many of us remember and treasure the guidance we received by our respected and admired teachers and mentors during our own youth.

For all that BTS does for the dive community – from education, fellowship, bringing us all those great dive destination planners and equipment vendors together in one place, the breathtaking photography and filmmaking, and for Ocean Pals, marine careers and the Marine Scholarship Program for aspiring divers, and for the children and the families at The Maria Ferrari Aquarium at Westchester Medical Center --- ***we all owe a heartfelt and big thanks to BTS and extend Bon Chance for forty more years! Hope to see you at the show, TSSC welcomes you to Booth 107!***

With Grateful Appreciation, Officers & Directors of The Scuba Sports Club

TSSC CLUB OFFICERS and DIRECTORS 2016

Welcome to our newly-appointed and elected team here at TSSC. Please reach out to us with comments/recommendations.

President	Tom Butcher
Vice President	Al Miller
Treasurer	Cindy Fisher
Secretary	Denise Blais
Past President	Bob Bak
Program Director	Allan Rios
Environment and Legislative	Judy Dronzek
Education, Safety	Bob Bak
Membership	Nick Lappano
Direct At Large	Mike D'Angelo
Social Director	Melissa Lonquich
Executive Director	Katelynn Krack
Dive Planning	Jack Ricotta
Newsletter	Gary Lehman
Legal Advisor	Robert Schrager
Founder	Armand 'Zig' Zigahn
Co-Founder	Soliman Shenouda

TSSC's Philippines Adventure, by Tom

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Day 2 - either by farming the land, or creating items to sell. On the trip to the commune, we drove through several farming areas. To harvest rice, people would dry their rice on the concrete road. They would setup a single lane barricade, lay the rice on the concrete road to dry between the barricades, occasionally stirring the rice to dry it evenly. The cars and buses maneuvered around the rice, no horns, no hand signals. The locals were very understanding of each other. It was nice to see this type of behavior. I doubt I would see that in NY.

Day 3 - We left Manila to visit the Taal volcano on the way to Puerto Galera. To get to the volcano, we needed to take a boat ride; the volcano is also an island. The boat ride was very interesting. The boats are oversized canoes with outriggers on both sides, basically, a mini panga. You walked a thin plank of wood to get to the boat. I was surprised no one in the group complained about the boat or "walking the plank". More amazed when I noticed the gas tank was a 16 oz open water bottle with a hose, with 6-8 oz of gas. More amazing, the "captain" shifted gears after we left the shore and got up to speed. I have never heard of a boat with a 2 gear transmission. We eventually reached the island, and were directed to the horses to ride to the volcano ridge. The horses were oversized ponies. Kenny and Vreni wisely walked to the ridge. I rode, which was an amazing experience as my feet were close to the ground. The stirrups were tied with 1/4" poly rope. The volcano is still active, we pasted several volcanic vents on the ride up. The view from the rim was amazing, well worth the ride or walk. The water in the volcano was boiling in the areas over the vents. The locals were rather entrepreneurial, they offered us a chance to hit a golf ball from the rim. For me, the ride down was more painful than the ride up. My butt was sore for days. After another hour in the tour bus, we reached the dock for the ferry to Puerto Galera. This was a large Panga, where you have to climb over the 3 ft. high outriggers struts that went thru the boat. This boat did not shift gears, but they did refill the diesel tank from a 30 gal plastic container while under way. Interesting to watch, but it would never get past an OSHA inspector in the states. After reaching the shore, we got our first Jitney ride. A Jitney is a oversized Jeep, where the passengers climb in the back, sit along the bench seats that run over the wheels, facing each other. Basically, making the passengers feel like cattle. It was a fun experience every time I climbed into one.

Day 4 - Puerto Galera - First Dive Today was a big day, we finally get to dive! Thanks to the slow moving typhoon, the surf at the beach was too rough to board the boat from the beach. We boarded the boat at a nearby harbor which we used several times during the week depending on weather. I did not have high hopes for the first day of diving as the dive masters had no idea of our skills, I could not have been more wrong. This was my first dive in the Pacific, it did not disappoint.

We stepped off the boat, saw many things for the first time: false clown fish, mantis shrimp, white eyed eels, many multi-colored Cricknoids, and an electric clam, to name a few. The electric clam was the weirdest critter I have ever seen up to that point. I was not sure if I was narced or if they slipped me some acid with breakfast! I had a Deja Vu "narced" moment when I saw a Cricknoid walk across the reef. Until then, I thought they were soft coral. I was convinced my eyes were playing tricks on me. Once it realized I was watching it, it froze.

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TSSC's Philippines Adventure, By Tom

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I wished the boat remained at the same site for the second dive, but we moved the boat around the point and introduced me to a new set of ocean critters. Elephant ear coral, doughboy starfish, a large frog fish, and my first pygmy seahorse. It was an excellent first day. I can not say enough about our terrific crew. The dive masters did their very best to make the trip more memorable with every dive, pointing us to the critters known to be in the area. The boat crew were outstanding, trying to spoil us every day we were there. After every dive, we were greeted with a hot face towel, a hot cup of ginger tea and a dry towel.

Day 5 - First Muck Dive The dive sites were similar to the first day, except nudibranchs were appearing everywhere in groups of two. I realized later, this was due to the upcoming full moon. The first two dives were on the reef, the third dive was my first pacific muck dive. I have done many muck dives in Peach Lake and Candlewood. Not much to talk about. Pacific muck diving is much different, and these dives are well worth the effort! Muck in the Philippines diving means the bottom is plain, sandy. But this means you will see weird critters. Today I saw a dragon moth fish. At first, I had no idea what I was looking at, or how I could be narced at 20 ft. I was trying to get my dive buddies attention, decided to get a video instead. Hey, without a picture, you never saw it. Glad I also took some photos, as the card in my GoPro was full, and no longer recording. That dive, I was introduced to chocolate chip star fish, a group of sand feeding fish that acted like a "bait ball" and my first Sea snake. Another exceptional day!

Day 6 - Volcanic This day we set out to visit a volcanic dive site. Definitely a great time. You would expect the water would be very warm, which it was in some areas. But the volcanic area draws water from the depths, so this was a mix of very warm, or cool water, not much in between. As we swam along a sandy bottom, we would come into areas with bubbles rising out of the sand. You put your hand on the sand to warm them. If you bury your hands in the sand, they start to burn. I did not see many critters in this area. On the following dives that day, I saw my first cuddle fish, the first of many I would see this trip and this day. I got some great shots of ribbon eels and nudibranchs.

The boat ride today was longer than the prior rides, so the crew made sure there were plenty of beverages on the boat to make the trip more enjoyable. Remember, we need to hydrate after diving. The younger crew members brought their iPads, and enticed a few of us to dance. To my surprise, the Village People are very much alive in the Philippines, YMCA became a common theme. I vaguely remember someone pole dancing on the bow of the boat. Since no pictures were taken, I guessed it never happened. What happens in the Philippines, stays in the Philippines.

Day 7 - Giant Clams This was a special day, we got to see giant clams. These critters were 6 ft. long, 3 ft. wide and rise 4 ft. off the bottom. They were brought into the area a few years ago. After visiting the clams, we went on a muck dive, we located a sea horse, and another large frog fish. Our dives around the clams were monitored by someone on shore. A few years back, a diver was harvesting the giant clam. He was arrested and convicted, and someone was monitoring all the diver activities from that point onward.



Philippine Giant Clam

Night Dive - We only had one opportunity for a night dive. Eight of our group participated. We boarded the boat on the beach, geared up, took the stairs off the boat into three feet of water. This was the only dive I did with an exposure suit. Our group swam in line with the stern of the boat to deeper water. We only saw a sand bottom for the first 15 -20 mins. As we got deeper, the current increased. I was getting close to ending the dive short, when it got very interesting. We found a spider like critter, huge snail, sea snake, and a garden eel. We cornered a small octopus which eventually backed into a broken bottle. We found a cuttlefish who acted like a possum. This ended as a really nice dive.

Day 8 -Verdi Island Drop Off - Clearly the best dive site of the trip. Also, the most challenging. The current was fairly strong, and very 'surgey'. The dive site was a mini atoll, where the reef rises from the depths to only a few feet above the water. The atoll was mid-channel, the current in the channel was strong at times. The first dive was on the current lee side, the atoll blocked the current. The reef was loaded with small fish that were being pushed around by the 'surgey' current. It was like swimming in an aquarium. This day was a full moon, so the nudibranchs were "hooking up" everywhere. The second dive was on the current side, we stayed close to the reef and drifted with the current until we got close to the edge of the atoll, where the current drastically increased. When you reached the edge of the reef, you had to quickly swim to the leeward side of the reef, or chance getting pushed out into open water. I wish we could have stayed longer. On the surface interval, a group of dolphins were in the area, allowing us to get some great photos.

Day 9 - 11 In an attempt to move this diary on, I will merge these days into one. All the dives were great, but I was becoming more acclimated to Pacific diving. I was getting used to seeing amazing critters every day. I watched a divemaster push a sea snake out of his way, and the snake moved on, did not attack the divemaster. Something I would have never considered. We did celebrate two birthdays on this trip and the staff put on a show for both of the celebrations. For the second birthday celebration, we moved to the Marco Vincent beach bar. They put on a PowerPoint presentation for the birthday boy, then tried to get us to a Karaoke room. Regina and I agree, for us, alcohol and singing is not a good combination!

Day 12 - Our last day diving, everyone but Steve was bummed as Steve was staying another week. I did not miss any dives on this trip.. Regina wanted to see a frog fish. I had seen at least four during the trip, and she was jealous. Marlin accepted the challenge. The first two dives were sites we visited earlier in the week. Marlin searched and led us around to see more great critters, pigmy sea house, sweet fish, no frog fish. Down to the last dive, our divemaster was committed to finding a frog fish. Marlin knew there weren't any frog fish at the site the boat stopped at. He had the boat drop us mid-channel, so we could swim to an area frog fish were seen. We had no idea what we were in for. I think we swam over a mile. The current was challenging at several times across the channel. The dive was predominantly a muck dive. We saw more critters in this muck area than prior muck dives, but we covered a lot of ground. Saw at least 2 dozen pipe eels, many puffers. I saw something I have never seen before: several clams were living inside of a soft coral head. It looked like the coral had a mouth. We found a large turtle who we swam with for a few minutes. As we were heading up, we found lots of great coral. I did not want to leave, but I was running out of air and the rest of the group surfaced. When I surfaced, the boat was no where to be seen. It took a while before they found us.

After dinner, we were given a rare treat. First, we saw a professionally prepared 20 minute video of our trip. I was going to delete all my photos and videos as I could not come close to Kris' presentation. This set us up for the second presentation. Mel (the owner) had arranged for a Philippine Dance troupe to entertain us with traditional Philippine dancing. The young kids put on an amazing show for us. I could not video the performance as there was not enough light. They tried to teach us

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TSSC's Philippines Adventure, By Tom

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Philippine dancing. The young kids put on an amazing show for us. I could not video the performance as there was not enough light. They tried to teach us how to dance with a glass on our heads. Their confidence in us did not prevent Ray from breaking one of the glass containers placed on his head. The final event was Fire Dancer who put on an amazing show. Ask anyone who went on the trip to see a copy of that performance. What a day.

Day 13 - Last day, time to pack up, do some last minute shopping and start the 30+ hour trip home from the hotel. Some of us visited a local Aborigine village and bought some of their wares. The hotel staff and crew were sad to see us leave, some were crying, which was very touching. I hope one day to return to Marco Vincent. The staff was exceptional and lots of fun to be with. I suspect Regina will plan the return trip for me, so she could find her "elusive" frog fish. Was that by design? Time will tell.**Tom Butcher**

TSSC Dives the Philippines

By Dave Henry

Transit to Manila and Day 1

The trip to the Philippines started at Kennedy airport in NYC. We endured a nonstop flight to Seoul, Korea, and then on to Manila. We were given two meals, a snack and all of the liquid refreshments we were inclined to! We were given slippers, toothbrush and toothpaste, mouthwash and blankets. Then another meal on our way to Manila. I saw at least 4 full length movies, and got no sleep for 18 hours.

We arrived and had a delay because of a Major storm! We found out later that we missed the earthquake that gave our hotel a nice shake. Our greeter was easy to find, and we got through customs handily. Luggage was retrieved and our bus wasn't too far of a walk.

The check-in at the hotel was a little complicated, because the hotel wanted to put 2 non-spouses together in 1 bed, but we got it all worked out in the end! We were all ready for more liquid refreshments!

We went to sleep and got up the next morning for our Manila city tour. Oh, and that breakfast buffet was all that one could ever want. We enjoyed a BIG comfortable bus with Tweedy on the front along with our scuba sign, and we took on Manila! Our tour guide was Dennis, he knows the city like the back of his hand and our driver KNEW how to maneuver that big bus in those narrow streets.

We toured Intionoras, Fort Santiago, the St. Augustine church, the Manila American Cemetery and Memorial, Ayola Museum, Forbes Park (a gated community), toured around Manila, Pasay City, Makati (Business District). We saw the Metro, US Embassy, Mall of Asia, Hero of Philippines, Manila Cathedral, Charles 4th Monument, Narrow Rows-where we saw horse drawn carriages, Parc City and Ayala. We had lunch at "Ristorante delle Mitre," which was nice. And my luck, I was able to get a photo next to the Pope there.

Most inspiring and heart-stopping stop was the US Cemetery Memorial. We solemnly observed thousands of graves with crosses, and every now and then the Star of David. The names were on the many walls that were there. Almost 20,000 interred there. And over 36,000 Missing In Action whose names are



(Philippines Diving with TSSC by Dave, continued...)

inscribed on the Walls of Remembrance. And we wondered in personal reflection about "why so many lives were cut short?"

We saw all kinds of rebuilt US Army vehicles which were converted to civilian use. Many streets honored the American heroes and Generals from WW2. We saw a street that used to be an airplane landing strip. We passed by the Muslim section, auto dealers section, business section and just the normal kinds of places and spaces which every city has!

Well I don't have to tell you what was the first thing we did when we got back to our hotel! Yes, we conducted a spirited raid on the purveyor of liquid refreshments with the objective of easing into the evening!

This ends transit day and day ONE!

By David Henry



Dateline: Marco Vincent Dive Resort, White Beach, Puerto Galera, Philippines

By Charlie Nichols

I've been asked to write a little about the TSSC Anniversary Dive Trip from the point of view of the trip's only official snorkeler. Let me say first that the hotel staff, boat and dive crew have been wonderful, helpful, and attentive. From the moment we arrived, we have been called Mr. or Ms. (First name here) by all the staff here. I am trying to reciprocate by learning the names of everyone on the staff. Every day you are greeted with enthusiasm.



Meals have been very good. Everyone here is complaining about putting on weight. They put out several kinds of dishes based on local cuisine, using rice, pork, chicken, fish, and occasional beef. Soup is included with lunch and dinner. Breakfast has in addition to the rice and local entrees, made-to-order eggs, occasional pancakes, and bread for toast. Similar to other places I've dived in the Pacific and Indian Ocean.

The snorkeling.... I go on the dive boat every day to the dive sites. Usually when all the divers are in the water, I'll suit up and enter the water with my trusty dive guide. Giant stride off the dive boat, with occasional trips in the small chase boat. Then, it could be a short or long swim to the shallow area where I will snorkel, which may or may not be next to the dive site. One place was a pinnacle, where there was nothing shallow to see and conditions would have been too rough to enjoy, so no snorkeling there. I needed a nap that morning anyway. Exits would require a swim to deeper water where, depending on conditions, I would enter the chase boat to be returned to the deck of the main dive boat or swim to the climb ladder and return to the main dive boat that way.

The snorkeling II.... Every site they took me to turned out to be good with the exception of the muck diving area, where wind and wave conditions were not conducive to seeing much and a surge that made photography very difficult. The night snorkel, for the depths I was at, had mostly sand bottom with little activity. My trusty guide found one shrimp and one crab crawling across the bottom, and near the end we found several spotted rays. The divers who were able to go deeper saw some good creatures where they went.

(...continued page 8...)

Dateline: Marco Vincent Dive Resort, White Beach, Puerto Galera, Philippines, continued

The snorkeling III Every other site had a variety of sea life and coral. One area where a lot of the afternoon dives are held is in a harbor of a village. There is lots of boat traffic there, but over four trips there around the numerous coral heads and patches I have seen anemone fish, three star puffers, nudibranchs, a wasp fish, several mantis shrimp, baby giant clams, sea cucumbers, razor fish, lionfish, small scorpion fish, and mostly hard corals of various types. A couple of other sites have had a few creatures, but in parts an abundance of the usual reef fish and lots of various beautiful, healthy looking hard corals. Oh yeah, crinoids everywhere. One site had the beautiful healthy corals and more of one kind of sea cucumber, (I stopped counting at 20), than the cucumbers in your garden at home. One snorkel ended following a sea snake for three minutes, a longer and darker looking variety, than I remember seeing in Palau. I have been impressed with the amount of healthy coral I see even in sites like the harbor and others that have wave and storm damage.

My guide always finds me something to try to photograph. Some like the mantis shrimp which I've only seen on one or two previous Pacific trips, I've now seen several out in the open. At the site of the giant clams, there were numerous gobies in the sand and there was a large school of coronet fish, something I've only seen singly before. Overall I've been impressed with the snorkeling. Every area has impressed me with what I've been able to find or the beauty I've seen. After seeing their pictures and hearing their stories, I do miss diving with the divers. I highly recommend the snorkeling here. 4 ½ stars / 5. **"Meester" Charlie**



TSSC's Diving Adventure to Philippines... and a Personal Historic Journey *By Kenny Salstrom*

It's Wednesday, October 21 and I've just joined TSSC at the Pan Pacific Hotel in Manila. They arrived a few days ago, but I've been here nine days already. As soon as I heard about the trip I knew that I not only wanted to go, but also stay longer as there is a lot of history here.



I arrived on a Monday and after taking a taxi from the airport I checked into the Manila Hotel around noon. It had been over 24 hours since I left home so I took a nap and a shower. Later I went and changed some dollars into Philippine Pesos.

The next day I walked to Intramuros which was a few blocks from the hotel. This was the original walled city of Manila dating back to the 16th century. I saw Fort Santiago, the Manila Cathedral, and a lot of other sites. Traffic was horrendous but I got the hang of crossing the street. The trick is to just walk out. If you wait for space to clear you'd never leave the sidewalk!

On the fourth day I went to Corregidor, also known as The Rock. This is a small island guarding the entrance to Manila Bay and is home to the Malinta Tunnel which was the last US holdout in WWII until the surrender of the Philippines on May 6, 1942. The island is protected and contains a lot of bombed out ruins, many which have been shored up because they are falling apart. Corregidor was invaded by the U.S. on February 16, 1945 in an airborne assault. My Uncle was a paratrooper in WWII and was one of those who assaulted and liberated the island from the forces of Imperial Japan. I found a group photo with his name on it in the museum. I stayed overnight at the Corregidor Inn, the ~~best~~ only hotel on the island.

TSSC Takes the Philippines !! *By Kenny, Continued...*

My next stop was Subic Bay for four days of diving. I had arranged to be picked up when I got off the ferry from Corregidor for the three-hour drive. The next morning we were on the way to the first dive when we had to return. Due to a typhoon coming in diving was cancelled that day and for the next few days. Power went out for a few minutes until the hotel's backup generators kicked in. There was so much wind and rain that I hardly felt the earthquake. I finally dove on the last day doing four dives ranging from 64 to 114 feet. I did two dives on an LST (Landings Ship Tank), one dive on an LCU (Landing Ship utility), and the final dive on El Capitan, a freighter sunk in a storm in 1946. Visibility usually isn't that great in Subic Bay but it was only about ten feet due to the typhoon that had just blown through. It was a lot like North-east Diving except I only needed a bathing suit and a t-shirt.

On my fifth day in Subic Bay I was taken back to Manila where I checked into the Pan Pacific Hotel where the rest of the TSSC contingent was due to arrive that night. I wasn't expecting the others back until the evening so went out to wander the neighborhood to look around and do a little shopping; once more braving the horrendous traffic. Surprisingly there are very few horns blowing, dented vehicles, or accidents. When I got back to my room about six that night Jody and my roommate Parag were already in the room. We joined the other at the pool and then went to the restaurant at the hotel. I joined them but wasn't hungry as I had already eaten at a local place.

The next morning we were off to Puerto Galera. We were supposed to meet downstairs at 8:00 to get on the bus and surprisingly all fourteen of us were there on time so we left a little after 8. We headed south and our first stop was an hour later to pick up our lunch to take with us. I got takeout at Jollibee, a chain restaurant that is all over the Philippines. After about another hour we arrived at Lake Taal to see the volcano.

We got into several boats to cross to the volcano in the middle of the lake. Vreni and I decided to walk to the top of the volcano while the ~~wimps~~ others rode horses. The beginning of the walk was easy but soon got steeper and more difficult. I should have worn my hiking boots. The guide was wearing flip flops.

I thought that I was making decent time but Vreni disappeared into the distance; she got to the top before some of the horses did. The guide said it was 3.2km each way, which makes a round trip of 4.2 miles. I finally got to the top and immediately sat down to rest. After a few minutes in the shade I went the last few feet completely to the top where there was a nice view of the lake in the crater of the volcano. After another rest I headed back down. During the trip up and down we passed several steam vents emitting sulfurous smells, much like some of the TSSC group. We loaded back into the boats and headed to shore where we got back on the bus. Next stop, Batangas.

After about another hour we arrived in the port of Batangas. There was a huge line of traffic as the ferries had not been running during the typhoon. Luckily we had a private boat waiting for us and went right in. As soon as we entered the ferry terminal we were met by people from the Marco Vincent resort holding a large TSSC banner to guide us in. Once off the bus we got our luggage and went into a zoo; there were mobs of people all over. Our large bags went one way and we carried the small ones with us. After a short wait we were able to board our boat. It was a banca, with a long narrow hull and two outriggers for stability and was run by Father and Son Shipping Line. Luckily we did not have to carry our own bags up the narrow gangway. After an hour we finally arrived at the north shore of the island of Mindoro.

We were met by the Marco Vincent jeepney. Jeepney's are vehicles unique to the Philippines. Since there were a lot of surplus jeeps left after World War II they were used as taxis; later some enterprising guy had the bright idea of extending the chassis and adding two rows

(...continued page 9...)

TSSC Takes the Philippines !! Continued...

By Kenny...

of seats facing each other. Jeepney's usually run regular routes just like busses but since our jeepney was owned by Marco Vincent it took us straight to the resort. A second rented jeepney took our luggage.

We finally got to the resort and they knew who we were! I don't mean as the people from TSSC; I mean they had found our faces and names on the internet! When I walked in they said "Hello Mr. Ken!" They also greeted "Miss Donna", "Mr. Mark, "Miss Jody", and everyone else. After checking into the rooms we had a welcome drink followed by dinner. Tomorrow we start diving!



TSSC's Dives The Philippines !

By Steve Reichenbach

The Diving

The diving was superb, as was the whole operation which featured at least a one-to-one ratio of divers to staff on the boat. All diving was from the boat; we enjoyed three dives a day. Beach diving was available within walking distance to the resort. We were teamed up into groups of four or five, and assigned a dive master. We stayed as a group the whole time, which made everything easier. Our dive master was Chris and we were usually the first group in the water, accompanied many times by Kris the photographer.

Chris had amazing eyes and could spot the smallest critter from yards away. He carried a slate and wrote down the names of whatever we were looking at. A veritable encyclopedia of underwater knowledge! I won't begin to list the marine life we saw, because it goes on and on -- but I will give you a few highlights. Giant clams three feet across, Frog fish that were a foot and half long, pigmy seahorses about the size of a dime, electric clams that looked like neon signs, Cuttle fish over a foot long, and the list goes on and on.

Most of the dives were fairly shallow and mostly critter hunts, but we did have some more challenging ones. We were going through canyons pushed by the current as we flowed through swim throughs, and one time were swept along by a four knot current from one side of the bay to the other.

The boat was an 82' Banca Dive Boat. Features: Capacity: 22-28 divers. On board compressor, Nitrox, 2 Bathrooms, 4 Shower Stations, Camera rinse, Wi-Fi Internet on board. It was very comfortable and we spent all day on it. Our gear was left on the boat and taken care of by the crew.

The entire staff learned our names early on and became more friends than staff. We kept the same staff for the entire stay.

(... Continued next column...)

Steve R's Dispatches from the Philippines, cont'd

The Food

The food was buffet style with a lot of chicken and pork. There were always vegetarian selections and plenty of rice. Depending on where we were going to dive, breakfast was at 6 or 7; it was always good with a made-to-order egg station and the other usual choices. Lunch was buffet-style served on the boat after the second dive, and the boat bar was opened after the third dive which made for an enjoyable cruise back home. Dinner was either at the resort or at a restaurant owned by the resort on the beach, a five minute walk from the resort. My favorite was the hot tea we were served after every dive along with a hot face cloth and a clean towel.

The Shore Excursions

I did the Corregidor tour during my stay in Manila, after the Marco Vincent stay. Very interesting, beautiful, place, a lot of heroics using WWI era equipment against a modernly equipped enemy. Malinta tunnel was a very interesting tour and well done with the light and sound show. Hard to believe the hospital in the tunnel could hold 1000 patients. It is a beautiful island and you get to see how large Manila Bay is. The size of the American Army detachment before the war was quite large and the buildings that housed them were very impressive. I enjoyed the museum that had a lot of personal artifacts in it.

While most people think of Corregidor as being an Army action it was the 4th Marines who had just been shipped from Shanghai to the Philippines that did much of the beach defenses and were decimated in the process. The 4th Marines ceased to exist till they were reactivated later in the war. I was interested in this historical tale as the 4th Marines were the first unit I was stationed with after boot camp.

By Steve Reichenbach



Magnificent Sea Life, Mysterious Wrecks & other CHARACTERS of the Deep in the Philippines !

By Parag Joshi

There I was, hanging on to the rope with both my hands, as the current tried to pry my fingers open and drag me away. 'How did I get myself in this situation', I asked myself. The lovely early morning breakfast seemed a distant memory....

This was day six of my diving vacation in Philippines. All the previous diving had been pleasant, though due to the storm which had passed by the area we were diving in a week back, the visibility left a lot to be desired. But I had seen so much new stuff and made a lot of new friends already, that the poor visibility was not a complaint. In any case, I love diving so much that my wife jokes that if our bath tub was a little deeper, I would be donning the gear and going underwater in it!

On this day, we started a little later than normal, as the dive sites were closer to the resort. What a difference an extra hour of sleep makes! We had our breakfast and then gathered in the lobby to proceed to the dive boat.

(...continued page 10...)

Characters of the Philippines Deep !

(By Parag, Continued from page 9)

As we waited in the lobby, Chris said that the visibility prognosis was not too good, and he thought it was going to be 2-3 meters...

The day was sunny. We reached the first dive site. It was named the Alma Jane wreck. As in most cases, it was a boat deliberately sunk in order to make a nice wreck dive site.

Dive briefing ensued. I could see the water was very choppy, and there was a strong current. We were asked to jump in and grab the line going down. And also use the line to come up.

The talk of strong current made me a wee bit nervous. It reminded me of the time in Maldives where the current was so strong that one of my most abiding memories of diving in Maldives is the sight of Tom Lopatin grabbing a rock with both hands and fluttering like a flag on a windy day! This on a night dive too!

And then in this case, there was the additional pressure of me diving on air and hence having to surface sooner than the rest of the gang.

During the dive briefing, it was mentioned that the hold of the boat was large enough for divers to enter from one side and come out of the other. I exchanged glances with Jody and raised my left eyebrow as if asking "Do you want to do that?"...She read me correctly and by raising her right eyebrow and a slight sideways nod of her head said "No way!"

It's my practice to go to the bathroom before jumping in the water...I mean, one does try to avoid peeing the wet suit and so I have made it the Standard Operating Procedure. Pee once, make dive, get on boat, pee again; that's the SOP. This one was shaping up already to be a two pee dive. Twice before and twice after!

I sidled up to my group's dive master, and told him to stick very close to me. Here is how our conversation went:

Me: "Do you know what Siamese twins are?"

DM: "Umm...no".

So I explain in graphic detail what it meant.

Me: "So, am I clear how close I would like you to be while on the dive? To anyone watching, we have to look like Siamese twins "

DM: (surely wishing I was part of some other group) "Hmm..I'll be close. But not that close."

He jumped in first, and I immediately followed him. I felt the current tug viciously at me but made it to the line and grabbed it. And Soon, I was underwater, one hand over another, going down the line to the Alma Jane wreck!

Bubbles, bubbles and more bubbles. From all the divers on the line below me. Barely could see anything. They say that when your time comes, your entire life flashes in front of your eyes. Well, while this was definitely not my time to go, for a reason not known to me, disjointed fragments of scenes from recent past started flashing past my eyes.

(... Continued next column...)

There I was, walking in with the group into the reception area of the Marco Vincent Dive Resort and the staff greeting us, each one of us, incredibly, by our first names! "Hello Mr. Parag! " "Hello Miss Regina" they went!

Then there I was, getting a massage from a lady who had never heard of the term "less is more", and went about the whole business like it was an act of revenge. Kill Bill level of revenge! From a misplaced sense of male fortitude, I didn't complain initially, and that she took as a slight .Finally she did something to my shin which was straight out of the innermost sanctum of human evil, and I cried out in pain. I wanted to say "Stop, Charlie, and Help!".... but it came out like "Stoblahcharlllyeellppp".....Charlie not having on his hearing aid, didn't come to help when his roomie needed him the most .

There was Fuzzy, laughing his infectious laughter!

And Vreni, concerned about my ear ache and kindly offering me Vicks Vaporub!

And there I was, having red wine with Jody, a ritual we established right from our first diving day in Maldives....

A small voice in my head spoke up "Keep it together, Parag"....

I looked down, and could see the wreck looming below. We were almost there. And so were a lot of others! The wreck had so many divers from different groups that it looked like the paparazzi surrounding a celebrity.

I was on the deck. Quick check with the dive computer. Check where the other members of the group are. Check where the DM was... Everyone was where I expected them to be. All was OK.

Time to explore and enjoy the wreck. I had only twenty minutes. It was bigger than I thought. 100 feet long! The deck was at 30 meters, and the bottom of the wreck was even deeper. There was no question of me trying for the bottom.

I could see the gaping hold entry, and a few divers go in. A couple of lion fish were floating in the corner. The DM drew my attention to a very large stonefish. I widened my eyes and made the OK sign with my hand to let him know I was impressed.

Another huge solitary fish went gliding by. I later discovered it was called Bat fish. And then there were sweetlips. They always remind me of my first girlfriend, because she used to call me sweetlips. But I digress!

We were at the hold entry. The DM asked me if I wanted to go in with sign language. I looked around. Jody seemed ready to go in. So, I nodded yes to the DM and followed him and Jody into the dark abyss.

Taking care to proceed very gingerly and maintain buoyancy, I followed the DM to the other end of the hold. It was broad and I had no problem negotiating it. In fact, it was so much fun that I chided myself for being nervous about entering it.

We came out on the other side, back on the deck. I then proceeded to float around gingerly over the deck, taking in the wreck, looking at the other divers do their stuff and keeping an eye on my group's whereabouts. For me, when I am underwater, time stops and flies by at the same time. Stupid sounding statement, and I can't explain it. I guess fellow divers will understand what I mean though. The whole experience of diving has such a calming effect on me, it's almost like meditation. And I can't even begin to describe the beauty of the reefs and its creatures. Vocabulary fails me. I remember, seeing the Mantas for the first time and when they came within touching distance, they became

(...continued page 11...)

Characters of the Philippines Deep ! (By Parag,

Continued from page 10)

blurry – I first thought my mask had fogged up; till I noticed that my eyes had welled up!

Twenty minutes passed by like twenty seconds. It was time to go up. I went ahead on the line before the DM this time. Using a line to surface is so easy! Up I went, merrily whistling into my regulator, till I felt a tug. I looked at the DM with consternation. What now?

He indicated that a safety stop was due. I checked my DC. We were still at ten meters. I pointed it out to him, to which he nodded and indicated that he was planning on two safety stops. Since I have no issues with authority and am a great team player, I made an OK sign immediately.

And so it came to pass that we had two safety stops – one at ten meters for two minutes and one normal one at five meters for three minutes.

We were soon back on the boat, with lunch and a siesta beckoning!

The second dive of the day was mildly interesting too! The dive briefing told us that we would go through the Hole in the Wall and then to Canyons followed by Shark Cave, Atoll and Pink Wall. That was if the current allowed us.

We jumped in uneventfully and were on our way. Soon, the DM made a big 'O' sign with both his hands outstretched, indicating that the hole in the wall was coming up. There was an option of going around this hole along the outer side for those who didn't want to go through the hole.

Well, after the morning experience, I was feeling brave, even reckless! I wanted to tell the DM – "just you point me towards the hole and watch me go like a barracuda", but since it was tough saying all that in sign language underwater, I settled for pointing a limp finger towards the hole to indicate I was going through! Turns out it was not the attraction it was built up to be. It was about two meters in diameter and all of three meters in length! Much ado about nothing. Making a mountain of a molehill. Storm in a tea-cup. I guess one of these three applies here. Not sure which one. Still, Harrumph!

The DM pointed out a small school of big jackfish. First time I saw such big JF! Visibility was still poor. About 15 feet -20 feet tops. Immediately later, I saw a solitary bumphead parrotfish!! He was HUGE! I had seen a few in Borneo, but this one was the largest I have ever seen. Aren't they always in a school? I found it odd that this one was alone. Next item was a large sea snake. Slowly we reached the coral garden. The current subsided. Just kept floating there aimlessly, watching nudibranchs and messing with the Clown fish (slowly extending the finger towards the sea anemone till the Clown fish came out and snapped at it! What must it be thinking? Do they think?)

Just floated around, totally relaxed. Got reminded of Dori in 'Finding Nemo' going "just keep swimming, just keep swimming" and smiled to myself!

Before I knew it, it was time to end the dive. Customary safety stop hence, we were on the boat!

Thus ended my sixth day of the great diving vacation in Philippines!

By Parag Joshi

Good Morning, Verde Island Philippines !!!

By Jody Deevy-Brown



5am wake-up call for the first of our three special day trips. 6am breakfast, 7am board the Jeepney to the pier. All of us piled in knee-to-knee! Happy 60th Birthday to Kenny S. No better place I can think of to spend a big birthday surrounded by friends and one of the most amazing dive sites in the world, Verde Island!

Dive site: Verde Island Drop-off, numerous exotic nudibranchs, white-eyed moray eels out in the open hunting for their breakfast, and many scorpion fish. There was quite a large one in a white barrel sponge with a great vantage point. The reef was alive - always feeding and moving. Anthias galore. The visibility was low due to the recent storm (which is probably the resounding theme for each dive day) but the visibility was better in the shallows. We started at three rock outcroppings which was where the current was at a minimum. During our surface intervals on the boat we all examined the fish identification books the crew provided on board, because after every dive it was "what was that thing" or "I don't know what you call the thing in this picture". During lunch I spotted a pod of dolphins off the starboard side - which is always a good luck sign! We all delighted to watch them swim around the boat and share our surface interval with us.

There were three dive groups and thus we all saw different things on our dives, and we really enjoyed comparing notes after each dive while still in our gear and dripping on the deck! Tom & team saw mating nudibranch. It seems there was a "blue moon" while we were there so the stories of matting's and "attempted hookups" were abundant. Second site was the Verde Island Drop Off – which featured much stronger currents. For our third dive site we moved to a site with less current. There were just so many nudibranchs, eels, and vibrant colors! On the long ride home, Nathan cranked up the tunes after our complimentary round of beer (and optional cash bar for other cocktails) for some beloved Abba and Village People. Jody and Donna joined in while Parag impressed us all with his ability to "get down with it". (Parag would later impress some with his own rendition of a fire dance). And Charlie cheered us on boisterously!

A special dinner that night was at the beach front restaurant and bar that the resort owns, the Aqua Bar. They have a pizza oven and we all sat at one long table under the moonlight. We had special dinner of nonstop pizzas in numerous varieties, chicken Alfredo, soup and salad. For those who still had room, dessert was a creamy panna cotta – vanilla pudding. (As if homemade cookies were not enough of the dive boat daily – they saw we had quite a sweet tooth, and the Chef baked dozens of cookies daily for us to have between dives). All desserts were homemade and delicious. And I must not forget to mention our Chef who joined us daily on the boat and tirelessly prepared food to keep us fed and happy – had some radical dance moves of his own!!

The "blindfold!" Kenny was blindfolded by the ladies and he followed their giggles as they lead him upstairs to a special terrace decorated just for his birthday. We all followed to find a large photo of Kenny and a birthday banner was hung as the center attraction while "Happy Birthday" was displayed on a large screen. Streamers, balloons and confetti and a dance around with clapping and singing to celebrate the day. They had made special cupcakes with photos of Kenny adorning each cupcake on a stick for decoration. What a wonderful gesture and tremendous effort by the delightful and caring staff. They continued to clap and dance exuberantly and snapped endless photos of the quiet and shy (and stunned) birthday boy and the group. They also took videos to document the occasion.

(...continued page 12...)

Good Morning, Verde Island Philippines !!!

(Continued...)

Then came the Karaoke!!! GTHBA.... A little Sonny & Cher, Karen Carpenter & Blondie. The 7am breakfast comes early and the 8am boat departure had many to bed soon after so a few stayed sang a couple, (Chris the divemaster being the most impressive, gifted with a beautiful voice) laughed and made our way back to the resort to dream of another wonderful day of diving queued up for us!

PS... I wonder how many men can say they were blindfolded by a group of young ladies half his age on his birthday, and led along willingly for a wonderful birthday surprise – and not be too shy to talk about it!

By Jody Deevy-Brown





Dive and Event Planning 2016 -- What Is On The Radar !!



Every Great Scuba Diving Club like OURS has a full lineup of fun adventures and membership events queued for the year ahead. As your dive trip planner, I've focused on bringing multiple trips to you, throughout the year. Of course, we all can't get on every trip, however having more options will allow additional members to participate. Thus far, we have had a positive response to our Key Largo trip, April 21-April 25. If you haven't experienced the beauty of the Florida Keys, this is a great long weekend to test the waters. I will replay a short Key Largo trip slide show at our next general membership meeting for those interested. Some of these events are currently in the planning stages, so be sure to check in at www.thescubasportsclub.org and on our Meetup page for the latest dates as they develop and come closer into focus.

Also, we have a great opportunity to dive Cuba! This trip, June 5-12, 8 days/10 dives, includes historic tours of Havana, flight from Miami, and all meals. In addition, to the above, we will schedule local day trips, as well as, our yearly seal dive trip. Suggestions always welcomed and encouraged! I am awaiting to attend BTS to gather more info and better pricing for our October trip. With the warmer weather nearing, I hope to see more of you at the monthly meetings. This is your (our) Club, member participation and support is vital to its growth and longevity.

Regards. Jack Ricotta

Event	Date	Location
Deco Stop	March 19th	One World Observatory, 9/11 Museum, Club convenes for dinner
Beneath The Sea Scuba Expo	Saturday & Sunday April 2-3	Meadowlands Exposition Center Secaucus, New Jersey http://www.beneaththesea.org/
Ponus Yacht Club Leukemia and Lymphoma Society	April 9	Raffle Benefit to be held at Ponus Yacht Club Stamford, CT.
Aquatic Explorers Saturday, Canoe Races	April 23	Wappinger Creek, NY http://aquaticexplorers.org/
Key Largo Diving Spring Fling!	Thursday – Monday April 21-25	Key Largo, Florida Rainbow Reef Divers
Brotherhood Winery Mac 'n' Cheese Festival	April 30	100 Brotherhood Plaza Dr. Washingtonville NY 12:30-4:30
Orchard Beach Cleanup	Sunday, May 22	Orchard Beach, Bronx http://www.captainmikesdiving.com/about/
Dykes Point Memorial Day Dive & BBQ	10AM to 6PM Sunday May 29	Dikes Point, Candlewood Lake, CT
CUBA DIVE TRIP!	Sunday to Sunday June 5 – June 12	Maria La Gorda http://www.hotelmarialagorda-cuba.com/hotel_details.asp
Girl Scout Camp Cleanup	June 25 (?)	Mahopac
Judy Dronzek's BBQ/diving	July 2	Judy's House for BBQ and diving
Gloucester Seal Dive	Aug 6,7 Sat & Sunday	Gloucester, MA
Thousand Island	Aug 26-29	Thousand Islands, BY
Fort Wetherill Diving	September 18	Fort Wetherill, Rhode Island
Fall Fling!	October TBD	<i>Domenica, Abaco, Belize, Sea of Cortez, Roatan, La Paz, St. Croix !!</i>

Diving the Exumas with Blackbeard Cruises

By Nick Lappano

Having won a week on Blackbeard's cruise at the September Glen Island NEDU clean up event, I arrived in Nassau, Bahamas on Saturday December 12th. I had booked a 6:50 AM flight so that I would be relaxed and not rushed when I arrived at the Nassau Harbor Club Marina where my home for the week, the Sea Explorer, and her sister ship, the Morning Star, were berthed.

I met my driver for my transfer to the boat at the Nassau airport. The only other person on the transfer vehicle from the airport to the Marina was Geoff G. who, unbeknownst to me was also on my JetBlue flight from JFK. Geoff is from Yonkers and is on the volunteer dive team at the New York Aquarium.



We got to the Marina and hung out for about 90 minutes, meeting some of our fellow travelers, before we could board at noon. Our group included American, Canadian, German and British divers.

After boarding I provided the crew with my paperwork which I had prepared in advance and was assigned one of the lower bunks in the Salon area which meant although there would be more traffic in the area due to the proximity of the galley and the dining area, I also would have one of the wider 36" bunks. We assembled our dive gear on the deck and stowed our other supplies in our bunk areas. Once assembled our gear would remain set up for the week and our tanks would be refilled though use of whips from the boat's compressor. No nitrox is available on Blackbeard's so all fills were air (21% oxygen).

After that we had plenty of time to kill since two of the guests' luggage had been misplaced by Delta. Although we were scheduled to leave at 3 PM we didn't actually leave the dock until almost 5 PM. I popped a Bonine (anti-motion sickness pill) upon the crew's advice regarding a probable rough crossing to the Exuma Cays where we would be diving. Since we were so delayed the captain and crew gave us our briefing which discussed the operation and facilities available on the boat. We met the crew who consisted of our Captain - Tom, First Mate - Ian, Engineer - Lulanna (Lula), Dive Master - Gwen and most importantly Cook - Gladys.

As many have said, a trip on Blackbeard's is like "camping at sea". The sleeping arrangements are dormitory style and we shared each of the three cabins with six or seven people. Fresh water for showering was limited to a 30 second rinse, although we could use as much salt water in the showers as we liked. In addition, when it was available we were able to use a hose to rinse off on deck which was supplied with fresh water supplied from the condensation from the AC and refrigeration units. Although not potable this would help us to rinse off the salt between dives. (Unfortunately the pump which was used for this purpose broke and the hose was only available for use on the first two days.) There are no flush toilets and we used one of the two marine heads on board. These can be a little tricky to use and about 10 minutes of the briefing was devoted to the correct use of the heads to prevent a "messy" situation during the week on board. I guess everyone was paying attention as there were no mishaps while we were on board. The lines running around the boat would be used to dry gear and clothing as needed, so for the entire week the boat was festooned with a colorful assortment of towels, wetsuits, swimsuits and clothing. We were encouraged to take down gear as soon as it was dry so that everyone would have an opportunity to dry their stuff as necessary.

When we got to open water and I saw the six or seven foot seas which we would have to endure during our six hours crossing (with rain as an added bonus) I took a second Bonine pill. It was good that I did since the boat was rocking and rolling all the way and about half of those on board got seasick. Luckily I avoided that fate and after spending the first hour on deck I managed to find a comfortable position in my bunk and "sort of" slept most of the way.

Captain Tom found a safe haven for us to spend the night and we woke up the next morning in calmer waters. Although the skies were partly cloudy the seas were okay as long as we stayed on the sheltered side of the Exumas. This meant that for the first day or two we would not be able to dive the sites on the Atlantic side where most of the walls were located. There were however enough good sites available to us on the leeward side of the Exumas to occupy us until the seas calmed down a little.

We had the first dive briefing on Sunday morning at about 8 AM. ("Dive briefing in 10 minutes..." was a phrase which would be repeated throughout the week.) Since Geoff and I were both traveling alone and had no buddies we mutually agreed to buddy up. We would be buddied for all of the dives that week and worked well together. Usually it was just the two of us, but on occasion we teamed up with another diver as part of a three person team if that person's buddy didn't make the dive. We made 19 dives over the six days.

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Divining the Exumas with Blackbeard Cruises (...Continued from p.14)

Our first dive was made at the site known as Lobster/No Lobster. On this occasion another diver, Mike, joined us. We saw several barracudas and nurse sharks as well as a large southern stingray. The water temp was a nice 80 degrees but the visibility was still a little low (about 40-50 feet) due to the previous day's rough weather and overcast skies. Unfortunately we were a little too aggressive regarding our navigation and went too far in one direction before reversing our course. As a result with the current affecting our heading by about 30 degrees we missed spotting the mooring line and went past the boat. We ascended and found ourselves more than 100 yards down current from the boat. The bottom current was quite strong, so after swimming on the bottom for a few minutes we surfaced and the boat sent a dinghy to pick us up. While the dinghy was picking up Geoff and Mike, I noticed that there was a problem in starting the dinghy's outboard motor so I rolled over on my back and made a surface swim to the Sea Explorer. I got back to the boat only a few minutes after the dinghy. I apologized to Captain Tom for the miscalculation, but he assured me it was okay. Lesson learned, for the remainder of the week we tended to limit our forays to more conservative distances from the mooring.

We made 4 more dives the first day to get us back on pace to make 19 dives for the week. One more at Lobster/No Lobster followed by a mid-afternoon dive at Barracuda Shoals where there were two large pufferfish one of which was constantly chasing the other. I don't know if it was a territorial dispute or if one was a male pursuing a potential mate. There were also a few large stingrays free swimming around the site. We finished the day off with two dives at Avalon, one at dusk and later with a night dive. There were at least 10 divers on the night dive and several octopus were sighted.

On day 2, Monday, we made 4 dives. The seas had calmed enough for us to venture to the eastern side of the Exumas where we dove Pillars wall at 8:30. It was easy to navigate as the mooring was only about 50 feet from the drop off so we simply swam along the wall for about 20 minutes before turning around and swimming back along the top of the wall. This was pretty much the tactic which we would employ for most of the wall dives. We encountered a reef shark which was only about 10 feet from us as soon as we dropped over the wall. We then motored to Cracked Coral Head. This site had quite a few nice swim-throughs, although there wasn't too much life in the swim-throughs themselves. After lunch we dove at Danger Reef which is supposed to be a pretty "sharky" dive. We did see a few sharks on the bottom at about 60 feet, but not as many as expected. Lo and behold when we were returning to the boat we discovered that there were about half a dozen sharks congregated RIGHT UNDER THE BOAT! They were seemingly attracted by the smaller fish which were seeking refuge in the shadow provided by the boat. Unfortunately both my remaining bottom time and air dictated that I had to end the dive at that time. We also did our night dive at Danger Reef, the highlight being a large nurse shark swimming right under me only about 3 feet away! Geoff and I had to end the dive early to assist another diver to the surface who had become separated from her buddy and was a little nervous and scared.

On Tuesday, our third day of diving, we made four dives starting at 8:30 AM. The first two dives were at 88 and 90 feet, respectively and I had to cut the dives a little short due to limited bottom time. As my air consumption has gotten better over time my dive time on repetitive dives is often limited by my no deco time rather than my air supply. This was especially true on this trip since, as previously mentioned, Nitrox is not available on the Blackbeard cruises. Our afternoon dive was shallow at 24 feet on Hawksbill Reef. This was primarily a recon dive for the night dive which we would do that evening.

On the night dive another octopus was spotted. Unfortunately however, we still had a rather large contingent on the dive which was with us most of the time. I say unfortunately since I like to use minimal light and some of the other divers in our vicinity did not share this philosophy. In fact one of them was using TWO large lights, one in each hand. For every creature he spotted, he probably scared away ten others.

Wednesday was the last full day of diving (four dives, including a night dive). Our 8:30 AM dive was a drift dive at Wax Cut. It was really fun getting ready for the entry since we had to go off in rapid succession to stay close to Ian who was tending the float (with attached line) which the boat would follow. Captain Tom cranked up "Thunderstruck" by AC/DC and our adrenaline was pumping before we even splashed following a countdown and the "DIVE, DIVE DIVE!" command. On the dive itself we saw some large barracuda, a nurse shark and a couple of turtles. At the end of the dive we congregated together for our safety stop and ascended together and grabbed the line. Lula then secured the line to the dinghy and the boat came to pick us up. To avoid the mass confusion which sometimes occurs in this scenario, I took up the last spot on the line so that I had plenty of room to relax since most of the other divers were closer to Ian at the front of the line.

The next dive was a shark feeding dive on the *Austin Smith* wreck. Gwen brought down a frozen chumsicle which was suspended off the port side of the wreck while we all hung onto the railing along the starboard bow. A large number of sharks were attracted to the feast and for the next 10 minutes proceeded to reduce the frozen concoction to nothingness. We spent the remainder of the dive free swimming over the area of the feed, looking for sharks' teeth or trying to get up close and personal with the sharks which were still in the area. I managed to get a couple of pretty good photos of some sharks who came within a few feet of me.

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Diving the Exumas with Blackbeard Cruises (...Continued from p.15)

After lunch we made a dive at Barracuda Shoals, spotting several more sharks, a large barracuda and two turtles. The dive day was completed with our final night dive at Close Mon Reef. The dive lasted over an hour and we observed the reef fish as they prepared for the night. Although nothing dramatic was encountered it was a relaxing, easy to navigate dive. The group was a little smaller than previous evenings and more spread out so Geoff and I were often off by ourselves allowing us to observe creatures without stressing them as much as when we were with a large group of divers.

We finished up the week with two dives on Thursday morning. Before 8 AM we did our second drift dive at the site known as the Washing Machine. The current has cut out a gully which the incoming tide rushes through, tossing divers head over heels and every which way. After about a minute or two in the Washing Machine the current relaxed somewhat and we spent the next 25 minutes drifting along, enjoying the sights before ascending as a group to be picked up by the Sea Explorer.

We motored about two thirds of the way back to Nassau to our final dive of the week which was at the site called the Blue Hole. Since this was my last dive before flying out the next day, I kept my depth to a maximum of 70 feet. There was a small cave like hole at about 120 feet but I decided exploring it was not worth the risk of DCI so I kept to the upper lip of the hole. Even at that depth we saw several sharks, a few stingrays and quite a few smaller lionfish. I suspect that this area provides a sort of nursery for the juveniles of this invasive (and unwanted) species.

Our diving now completed, we proceeded to try to dry out our gear as much as possible. All week the lines along the boats perimeter had served as laundry lines for our wetsuits and apparel. Now everything was hung up without an inch spared. Although we had an option to rinse our gear in fresh water after docking at 4 PM, none of us used this opportunity to rinse our wetsuits or BCDs since we knew they would still be soaked the next morning so we let them dry "salty" and would give them a good rinse after returning to our homes on Friday.

We ate on board Thursday night and then hit a few bars on shore before returning to the boat for the night.

At 9 am on Friday we disembarked from the boat and boarded our transfers to the airport or the hotels where some of my fellow adventurers would spend some additional time.

Upon arrival at the airport I checked my bags and proceeded through US immigration. One of the great things about traveling to the Bahamas is the presence of US immigration at the airport in Nassau. This means that you are technically on a domestic flight so upon arrival at home in the US you simply grab your bags and go. Getting through immigration in Nassau only took a few minutes.

When my flight was called for boarding I was surprised that they called all rows for boarding at once. Upon seeing the "rush" to board I understood why. There were only eleven other passengers on my flight! Everyone was able to spread out in a row and there crew was very liberal in dispensing snacks, etc.

It was a fun trip and I met some great people, had a wonderful, friendly crew and got in plenty of diving in warm blue water. This was my second trip on a Blackbeard's cruise and both were very enjoyable. To enjoy the experience you should be looking for adventure and be willing to overlook the absence of the more luxurious accommodations and amenities which are available on other pricier liveboards. If so, and if you are looking for an inexpensive week of exciting diving Blackbeard's may be right for you too.



Photographs by Doug Ebersole
(Courtesy S.Reichenbach & kissbreathers.com) http://www.kissrebreathers.com/images/uploads/news/updated_reichenbach__my_journey_to_kiss.pdf



It all started in 1975 when as a member of the NY State National Guard 19th Special Forces Group (Airborne), I was given the opportunity to attend the US Army's SF Underwater Operations Reserve Qualification Course in Key West Florida. It was a two-week course designed for members of the reserves and National Guard who were civilian certified scuba divers but had no military diving experience.

I had been certified in 1970 and was eligible for the course in lieu of summer camp. The pre-requisite training was fun as we had the chance to try out the Navy's submarine escape tower, and take a chamber ride on pure O₂ (they use to check your O₂ tolerance by doing that in those days) in New London.

The Program of Instruction included water survival, open-circuit twin-80s SCUBA (no manifold, no BCD, one regulator), closed-circuit SCUBA (using the Emerson Rig O₂/Beryllium Rebreather), submarine lock-in and lock-outs, ship bottom searches, underwater navigation (compass swims). The course included boat operations with Boston Whaler skiffs.

The rules were different then and if I remember correctly we could go to 30 feet for a short period of time. I had never heard of a rebreather before and enjoyed the silence and procedures of preparing and diving the unit. I never again dove in the National Guard after attending the school.

Fast forward to 2010 and I am an Instructor on a dive trip to DiveTech on Grand Cayman with Rex Dive Center from Connecticut. One of the girls on the trip saw a bucket with the sign "Place Scrubber Here" and asked Steve Tibbetts what scrubber was.

The next thing you know she is signed up for a re-breather experience dive if she can find one other diver to make the minimum of two required for the package. As I was along to help the clients on the trip and had actually dove a re-breather many years ago, I signed up to accompany her. Steve showed us the Sentinel rebreather, gave us some basic directions, and off we went. It was a fun dive despite the buoyancy issues and once again I enjoyed the silence and procedures involved.

The next year 2011, I met Mike Young at the KISS Booth at the Beneath the Sea exposition in NJ. He was showing off his new GEM Semi Closed Circuit Rebreather (SCCR). He explained it in detail and impressed me with the design, simplicity, safety, and cost of the unit. I bought one and immediately got in touch with Steve Tibbetts who I believe was the only GEM instructor at the time. Back to DiveTech and GEM certification.

I loved diving it and never had any issues with it. I travelled to the Caribbean and the Philippines with it; I used it on a live aboard in Palau; and drove down to the Florida Keys and North Carolina and used it there, diving on the wrecks of North Carolina in the chilly Atlantic. I put close to 200 dives on it.

In 2014 I brought it on a trip to the Philippines and dove with other KISS divers that were on the new KISS Spirit Lite Closed Circuit Rebreather (CCR). I decided that a CCR was the way to go after making a Thresher Shark dive with them and having to do my deco while they were on the boat having breakfast. I looked the units over carefully at DEMA and liked what I saw, but Mike just could not quite sell me one.

This year (2015) I again went to Beneath the Sea and who else was there but, Mike Young and his KISS Spirit Lite. This time he made me an offer I couldn't refuse and I walked out with a new KISS Spirit Lite for my 70th birthday and a buyer for my KISS GEM. Mike walked out with less baggage for his flight home.

Immediately I called my friend KISS Instructor Trainer Doug Ebersole to check on his availability for a training class and found him getting ready to go to DiveTech on Grand Cayman, while his daughter Kim taught a KISS Spirit Lite class there. There are not too many father daughter re-breather instructor teams out there. I talked my way in and was certified this past April. Since then I have moved to Florida and used it extensively here.

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I went to Bonaire for TEK Week and made a couple of deep dives with it and many not so deep. I have done the Spiegel Grove going down with the first group of OC divers and coming up with the second. I am scheduled for my trimix course with Doug in December. Currently working on my dive plans for next year, which already include an April trip back to North Carolina.

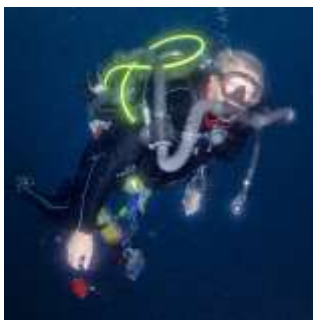
The best part about travel with the Orca Spirit is that it is light and easy to pack at about 20 pounds; it fits in my 24-inch suitcase with ease. The maintenance and prep time on it is minimal and requires no special tools. I get a lot of questions from curious OC divers on the dive boats and enjoy telling them all the benefits of diving a KISS CCR. The reliability and safety of KISS systems shows in the over 250+ hours logged without failure or an aborted dive

What is a 'rebreather' and why use this technology?
(from Jill Heinerth's book *The Basics of Rebreather Diving*)

"Open circuit SCUBA is inefficient and time limited. Much of every exhaled breath from a SCUBA tank is wasted. Our bodies only use a very small portion of the oxygen component of air or nitrox. We metabolize a tiny bit of the available oxygen and expend the rest into the water column in a stream of bubbles. A rebreather is designed to recapture all or part of that exhaled breath and recycle as much as possible for the diver to use again. As a result we are offered many advantages over traditional SCUBA such as longer bottom time per unit of gas, reduced bubbling that might frighten away marine life, as well as many other positive features."

Advantages over Open Circuit Scuba?

Some of the benefits I enjoy with my rebreather are the lack of bubbles scaring away the fish, the air I am breathing is warm and moist. It is light and easier to transport than the equivalent number of tanks I would have to carry. I don't have to worry about my air consumption or carry doubles. I do have to be aware of my PPO2 (partial pressure of oxygen) levels and ensure everything is working properly before I get in the water. I do have to be aware of my dive times, so that I do not push my scrubber (Carbon Dioxide Absorbent) past its limits.



TSSC's Monthly General Meetings and Presentations

Allan Rios, Program Director

'Good divers are always learning.' Here at the *Scuba Sports Club* we take this motto to heart. For the past decade the club has sponsored a speaker series; 'Safety Stop Stories'. These live - and lively - events take place at the casual setting that is the site of our monthly meeting. They are open to everyone, and feature an engaging conversation with a personality from the world of diving and the underwater world. These are not long lectures with a passive audience listening to an expert. Rather our monthly meetings welcome people who may or may not typically participate with scientific discussions. All you need is a passion for diving and a willingness to reach out and talk with people. We are all avid divers and we have as our focus the vast breadth of the underwater world. Past speakers have included national geographic explorers, scientists, underwater photographers, filmmakers, authors, and ocean conservationists. Please see our list of past presenters at the link here provided: <http://www.thescubasportsclub.org/pastmeetings.html> . So -- please join us and remember, 'Good divers are always learning.'

TSSC'S Monthly General Meeting Presentations



One of the fantastic features of our Club are these spellbinding presentations which we enjoy each month. **ALLAN, THANK YOU !**

These presentations have included equipment usage and reviews, dive destinations, northeast diving and events, local environment news/activism, marine biology, shark conservation, and member diving presentations and experiences.

Over the years the lineup has been terrific and to all those on distribution of this Sea Swells newsletter, the Board and Directors of TSSC welcome you to check out our website www.thescubasportsclub.org periodically to see what we have going on in general and specifically with regard our monthly presentations. **Great chance that you will see something that really grabs your attention on makes it onto your short list to attend and dive into things (ahem) with us!**



Our Club's legacy of monthly presentations stretches back literally 41 years. Just check out this list of just *some* of the *most recent*, riveting presentations which our ever-intrepid Program Director Dr. Allan Rios has arranged for us by luminaries of the dive world and leading area experts in local diving and environmental activism:

- Tim Thomas on *Cave Diving and Local Wreck Diving*
- Vincent and Debra Canabal, on *Diving with Pelagic White Tips at Cat Island, Bahamas*
- Rick Morris with a spellbinding presentation re *the sperm whales of Domenica*
- Rick Bayreuther on scuba equipment maintenance and storage
- J. Gessert and L. Ullman on *Diving Jamaica Bay with the NY Harbor School*
- Christina Zenato *The Shark Whisperer!* (fasten your seatbelts for this...)
- John Hargrove on *controversial marine mammal exhibits at SeaWorld*
- Jamie Pollack, Shark Angels – *Diver and Conservationist on fish stocks and Ocean Conservation*
- Krishna Thompson *On Being attacked by a 10' bull shark and becoming a pro-shark activist*
- Dr. David Charash presented on his visit to *Fabien Cousteau's Mission 31*
- Dr. David Charash on *Diving Emergencies, What Every Diver Needs to Know*
- Dr. David Guggenheim discussed the *Cuba Conservancy Program and diving in this pristine environment*
- Dean Fessler Education Director from *The Shark Research Institute* on *Great White Sharks*
- Amanda Brewer on *Great White Sharks*
- Paul Sieswerda on *Gotham Whales – a guide to NYC area whales*
- Polina Reznikov on *Papua New Guinea – Great Diving and Culture and Adventure!*
- B.Cantrell/J.Fain on their *73-day experience aboard Jules' Undersea Lodge*
- Dr. K. Woo/Dr.Biolsi seal research and discussing *Pinniped Ecology and Cognition*
- Gerard Barord discussing *Saving a Living Fossil, the Chambered Nautilus*
- L. Guarneri, K.Reynolds, J. Ritterhoff. Love turtles? *Thank the Central Caribbean Marine Institute/Coral Reef Conservancy!*

...FAR TOO MANY MORE TO CALL OUT HERE... GO ON LINE AND CHECK IT ALL OUT!

<http://www.thescubasportsclub.org/pastmeetings.html>

So you want to get in on this action??? GREAT! Good decision! So come visit our Club at one of our monthly meetings, or reach out to Nick Lappano at nicklapp@msn.com He is our Membership Director, has been a frequent contributor to this Newsletter – and we all agree Nick is not only a greatly skilled diver - but absolutely generous with his time and knowledge helping out and assisting both all 'our' divers at all levels, and lending a hand to ALL divers everywhere!



Happy 40th Anniversary to Beneath the Sea!

By Vreni Roduner



As a member of TSSC and active volunteer with Beneath The Sea (BTS) since almost the beginning (1976), the year after Zig founded our club as "Scuba Sports Rites Club". It later changed to the current name, "The Scuba Sports Club" [TSSC]. BTS's humble beginnings at a college in New Rochelle, when still part of SSRC, started to grow annually and in 20 years outgrew the space availability in Westchester. They found a new location in Secaucus, NJ with the Meadowlands Exhibition Center and surrounding hotels, where Zig and JoAnn Zigahn built the show into the biggest Scuba, Travel and Ocean's Exposition in the US.

Several top dive industry folks told us in recent years that BTS is recognized as one of the three **TOP** dive shows in the world. What a wonderful recognition from the Dive industry! For these immense accomplishments JoAnn and Zig deserve HUGE CONGRATULATIONS FOR A BIG JOB WELL DONE, for all the hard work they do year round.

Zig has provided executive leadership and strategic vision for many years as the Executive Director of BTS. In 2005 he was awarded the prestigious NOGI Award at the NOGI Gala in Las Vegas. This award is conveyed to leadership individuals by the Academy of Underwater Arts and Sciences and is "considered the Oscar of the ocean world." This honor was followed up in 2008, when Zig received Bonaire's Accolade Award at BTS; and then in 2010 Zig's recognition in the world of diving soared brightly once again as the 100th recipient of the BTS Award as the Founders Award for his inspired commitment to the Exposition. In 1987 he received the NY State Divers Association (NYSDA) Award. In 1988 Zig also received the TSSC "Diver of the Year" Award for his continuing guidance to our Club. He was honored with a long list of other wonderful awards for his dedication to diving and the oceans.

In 2001 JoAnn, BTS President, was inducted into the Women Divers Hall of Fame, and in 2012 she was awarded the Wyland Icon Award at the NOGI Gala. In 2012 this leadership couple were inducted into the International Diving Hall of Fame in the Cayman Islands, in recognition of their contributions for developing and leading the Beneath The Sea Diving Exposition - America's largest non-profit diving show.

For the now big team of terrific volunteers, many of them from TSSC, who all contributed to BTS over some of the 40 years, have all "become part of the BTS Family". This is a rewarding experience, as well as a unique opportunity to meet many greatly accomplished divers from this diverse industry from around the world, and getting many thanks along the way. A very special recognition includes the annual BTS President's Award to a top volunteer. I experienced BTS growing over the decades; it gives me a unique perspective from both sides. My personal very special thanks for the opportunity and experience and to be part of the BTS Family!

Vreni



Long Island Dive Association Annual 2016 Film Festival

By Gary Lehman

On Friday, January 8 our colleagues at LIDA hosted their annual Film Festival at the Hofstra University Student Center, and several members of our Club were in attendance. This film festival is always a great way to renew acquaintances with our friends and diver pals from our neighborhood areas in the Greater Metropolitan Area. So the show frequently has the character of 'old home week' and it is always great to catch up and spin some scuba yarn!

What is great about the Film Festival is that it helps put us all into a frame of mind to set our own personal objectives and scuba diving yearly plan in gear, and the show this year at LIDA was particularly relevant towards that end.

The following Club members were in attendance: Vreni Roduner, Denis Blais, Jack Ricotta, Tom Butcher, Nick Lappano, Regina Butcher, Bob Bak, Judy Dronzek, Cindy Fisher, and Gary Lehman. In addition, we encountered lots of friends at the show including Barry Lipsky, Chris Weaver, Jody and Don Brown, Chris Mazz, David Charash, and Rick Morris. There were lots of other folks around too whom we know but I just didn't capture all the names!

Barry offered the sobering assessment that diving on Long Island was declining, with fewer younger divers entering the sport. Of course this is mystifying to us; how can a kid possibly prefer a video game to watching a seal or chasing a lobster around or exploring a wreck! But whatever the reason(s), part of the solution assuredly is more diving, right here in our own green water. So the theme of the LIDA film festival this year was *local diving!* By many accounts are waters are cleaner now than they have been in recent years, and there are lots of great dive locations in the Northeast and off Long Island. Many dive sites which have been off limits for some time are now increasingly available to us, as a result of committed advocacy by Barry and his team at LIDA. So hats off to LIDA for that!

The meeting started with a moving tribute to Hank Garvin by Paula Jerman (attended by Mike Carew); Hank Garvin passed to the stars in 2015. Captain Garvin of *The Garloo* was revered by many Long Island and Westchester divers, was a big part of many divers' lives and truly was a plank owner of Northeast diving. His ashes are in the bow of the USS San Diego, offering guidance and encouragement in perpetuity to the community of divers who held him in such high esteem. When the 2016 dive season gets underway, he will be sorely missed.

Returning to the theme of local diving, LIDA presented a novel approach to stimulate local diving exploration. All participants were issued a "Long Island Divers Dive Challenge Passport". This passport is similar in concept to the US National Park Service's passbook. In this passport, 19 dive sites including wrecks, jetties, and beach dives are listed and the LIDA Challenge is to complete six wreck dives and seven of ten shore dives to qualify for a prize. A wonderful contest in pursuit of increasing diving for Long Island residents and all of us, and Good Luck to all challengers!

The presentations were inspiring! L. Cohen/O. Torrey toured us around local wrecks in their presentation "Cold-Water Wonderland". M. Salvarezza and C. Weaver transported us to "Norway – Diving In The Land of the Vikings". This in one intrepid team, let me tell you. Rappelling down cliffs to get to the water at the bottom of the fjords! With equipment no less. Hardy group of gents, let me tell you... Photographed WWII wrecks, dense kelp forests, nudibranchs, medusa jelly fish and even a chimera shark! Captain Tom McCarthy gave us underwater circum-navigational tour by a water propulsion scooter jet of the USS San Diego. A lot of people have dived the San Diego but few had circumnavigated all 500' (each way...). Rick Morris gave us insights to the challenges of Arctic diving and life aboard a NOAA research ship *USCGS Polar Sea* for 100-days with multiple National Science Foundation scientific missions underway. (...Minus 40 °F... ummm...yikes...) And finally M. Labrecque and J. Ouimet took us diving in the St. Lawrence Seaway where we discovered a surprisingly diverse and vibrant ecosystem. In a way, hardly surprising to see for ourselves the explosion of life in those waters, given the healthy marine mammal population which are at the top of the food chain in the St. Lawrence Seaway. The luminescent jellyfish and crab populations were riveting!

And of course, the last order of business was conducting the raffles and the 50/50! Suffice it to say that one of the Club Directors got **VERY lucky!** And this Director will be headed to Sri Lanka aboard the Aggressor liveaboard in 2017 with his wife, and they will combine the liveaboard experience with a week-long tour of Sri Lanka -- which has more World Heritage Sites than any other location on Earth, so that will be an incredibly fascinating and exciting trip no doubt! The individual in question has been exploring local Sri Lankan restaurants (of which there are quite a few, and quite excellent!) and so will no doubt be comprehensively gastronomically trained for the experience.



All told, this was an inspiring and wonderful evening. Your TSSC Directors and Officers highly encourage participation in this yearly event and... take it from me... *throw some money into the raffle...* ;-)



SEA STORIES @ Explorers Club 2015!

By Gary Lehman

Every November members of The Scuba Sports Club make an annual pilgrimage to Manhattan's Explorers Club to participate in the Sea Stories program. Every year is a thrill with presenters on a wide variety of marine subjects. These far-reaching, wide-ranging presentations have included subject matter experts bringing us up to date on world fisheries protection; protection of signal species such as apex predators; marine archeology; wreck diving; undersea exploration; marine earth science phenomena; exquisite topside and undersea photography; and breathtaking travel destinations! The 2015 session of Sea Stories was no exception and offered "edge of your chair" presentations with insights and memories to last a whole year – till the *next* Sea Stories. This isn't the first time in this newsletter that Sea Swells readers have read about Sea Stories – nor will be the last time! Not only are these presentations spellbinding, but the venue itself is vibrant with the drama and exalted history of human achievement and exploration, with artifacts from the field, fired with the glory of "first-there" human discovery! For a discussion of the artifacts and the Explorer Club's home (formerly Lowell Thomas's home) turn to a prior Sea Swells article http://www.thescubasportsclub.org/seaswells/SeaSwells_2012-01.pdf



The 2015 Sea Stories was held on Saturday November 14th and was attended by a number of TSSC members. At least two presenters were familiar personalities to our Club and conducted fascinating presentations. Bernie Chowdhury and Dr. Nasreen Haque shared research on marine organisms in the development of new medications and cures for various diseases. Richie Kohler (who wrote Shadow Divers about the discovery of U869 off the coasts of NJ) presented on the exploration of HMNS Britannic, which was the sister ship of the Titanic; marine conservationist Anna Cummins and founder of the 5 Gyres Institute spoke about endeavors to reduce the impact of plastic pollution on the world's oceans; Florida Atlantic University's Dr. Stephen Kajiura presented on status to preserve the world's embattled shark and manta populations; and Dr. Demian Chapan presented on DNA detective work on sharks, rays and the global dried fin trade. All told, a riveting lineup with much to consider and reflect upon, as is always the case. Personally I find these Sea Stories to be invaluable assists to keeping current on the state of the art of research methods and the contemporary themes in marine ecology, interaction of the marine environment with humans worldwide, and rely on Sea Stories to develop a holistic appreciation - in the whole diversity of themes- of the oceans we love.

There were many highlights of the presentations. We know that long line fishing is highly destructive with huge by-catch of fish not intended to be caught. This bycatch dies needlessly, including endangered sharks and rays. Dr. Kajiura discussed the testing of very small, cheap electrical field generation units which can be placed on longlines. These units, if testing holds up successfully, can deter sharks and perhaps rays from taking the bait and thus surviving the long line networks. We hope to get an update on this promising work and wish it Godspeed!

Bernie and Nasreen collect silt from all over the world examining it for microbes (I think!). The purpose is to build understanding of microbial profiles. The samples come from places as diverse as the Andaman Islands and old quarries used for a hundred years as town dumps with all manner of inorganic (and organic) contents (like bodies...). Global warming is reintroducing microbes hidden for 20,000 years back into circulation with unanticipatable consequences. Dr. Haque had an astounding discovery which is under development that none other than the Gowanus Canal in Brooklyn (former superfund site) may contain clues to curing disease! Dr. Haque's work on microbes and evolution led her to that hellish body of water to take water and silt samples. (She probably sent Bernie into the water!) From what I could discern from the highly technical discussion, nothing should be alive in the carcinogenic Gowanus Canal... and yet... there is rich microbial life. They excrete something akin to anti-biotics which enables them to not only survive, but thrive on food sources. The flip side though is that there is a risk that anti-biotic resistant agents might have escaped from the Gowanus Canal into the broader environment during Superstorm Sandy. Will this accelerate the already considerable problem of anti-biotic resistance due to over prescription of antibiotics? Time will tell... Good luck to Nasreen in her important research!

Prior to 2001, no one was talking about plastics pollution in the water. Which is tragic because the concern was not noted until the problem had reached near-catastrophic proportions. When Thor Heyerdahl crossed the South Pacific in 1947, there were no 'plastic gyres'. There are 5 trillion pieces of plastic in the oceans. The oceans are a plastic smog in places. It is impossible to identify culprit countries or companies. The problem built to unimaginable proportions in the post war era with throwaway plastic containers. The newest threat is microbeads, which absorb toxins and are eaten by sea life which will mistake them for fish egg (a food source for them). The consequence is devastation - not only to seashores but to all manner of sea life and bird life. We bid bon chance to Anna Cummins for increasing success in the missions of the 5Gyres Institute <http://www.5gyres.org/> and trust that their efforts and that of their partners and supporters will turn the tide, and that new technologies to clean up the oceans of deadly plastics will emerge.

(...CONTINUED NEXT PAGE...)

Richie Koehler has a book coming out soon about the Britannic with the answer to why this huge ship, the sister ship to the Titanic, sank three times as fast as the Titanic did during WWI after striking a German mine off the coast of Greece. She is the largest vessel on the Earth's ocean bottom, and is 400' down. And Richie Koehler has been aboard her. So stay on the lookout for that book *Mystery of the Last Olympian*. The last presentation examined and investigated the DNA of shark fins and rays all over the world, yielding decisive forensic evidence as to the sources and uses of these items. A damning investigation and let us just hope that Dr. Sylvia Earle's shark fin 'hope spot' of Asian youth rejecting the slaughter of sharks for their fins gains strength and energy soon and in sufficient time to enable some measure of rebound of these critical apex predators.

With presentations of this caliber and scope, and with the opportunity to attend and learn with your friends at The Scuba Sports Club, we look forward to seeing you at the next Explorers Club Sea Stories !

Legends of TSSC: Lada Simek, FRONT AND CENTER !!

Interviewed by Gary Lehman

I recently had the opportunity to catch up to our venerable legacy member Lada Simek at his home in Croton-On-Hudson. I knew right away that I was in for a real treat spending time with Lada as soon as I approached his house, because of the appealing and engaging garden sculptures on the property. I was to learn that Lada is even more of a Renaissance man than I could have imagined!

Lada is not only our friend here at The Scuba Sports Club, but he personifies the adventurer, the explorer, the artist, the scholar, and what we can call The Apex Educator. He is also a humble, down-to-earth person; getting to know him better is an adventure in itself, revealing layer upon layer of interesting aspects to his ways and means.

But first about those sculptures. The most impressive one was the one which I did not see; Lada's life-size pteranodon (like a pterodactyl only no teeth) (18'wingspan!) - which he suspends over the trees on the front of his property. But our reptilian friend is safely sequestered for the winter and will make his (or is it *her?*) return in the springtime! I will sojourn back to Lada's house in the spring time and take some pictures of this life-size pteranodon, which must be quite a spectacle. The front yard also includes a pair of old jeans repurposed as a planter. It will definitely stop passing motorists who see this, because at first glance it seems a little ominous. Especially if viewed in connection with the pteranodon - kids will probably think it is really cool that one of the pteranodon flew all the way up north from Jurassic Park (off the coast of Costa Rica) and snacked on the hapless wayfarer on Lada's road, leaving just the jeans by the roadside!

There is also a beautiful stained glass lighthouse powered by a solar panel near the driveway. The primary colors of the stained glass panels catch the late afternoon sunlight, and is very pretty. The best part is that our friend Lada designed and constructed this sculpture for all to enjoy. Hats off to Lada for that among all the other sculptures, including the stainless steel mesh spider's web. And the egg plant (YES, it IS a whimsical egg plant...fried sunny side up no less). Lada's creative outlets thus extend from stained glass to sculpture, tinkering with solar panels to power components in his sculptures, wood-carving, and ceramics. His workshop is professionally equipped with compressors, welders, and an extensive collection of power tools for every situation and purpose.

One of the other marvels in Lada's yard are his bees. Lada keeps two beehive enclosures on his property, and keeps the bees nourished and warm all winter. Lada shared quite a bit of information with me about the plight of bees these days, and the importance of local bee keepers who are trying to stave off a further, disastrous collapse in bee population. This is an example of where Lada's scholarship comes into play. The fact is that without bees, our agricultural production would be severely impacted; bees play a crucial role in pollinating plants. But their numbers have been seriously reduced due to persistent pesticides in the environment which are threatening bees' very survival. Lada's beekeeping is just an example of how much he loves animals. Lada is also an occasional taxidermist and uses his own proprietary and ingenious techniques to preserve the sea life for eternity. Examples are mounted on the wall of his man cave (of which he has several...). Lada has preserved and has on display a gar, a couple of bass, a grouper, a juvenile giant clam, a nautilus shell (did you know that the nautilus uses air for buoyancy control like we do with our BCD's?), a horseshoe crab, a tulip snail (from Australia, the tulip snail is the primary predator of starfish, and the decline of tulip snail numbers imperils the reef systems off the coast of Australia owing to uncontrolled predation on coral by starfish) -- and finally the collection includes a very large lobster. He asked me if I knew how to distinguish a male from a female. I just asked him if they tasted different. Lada (nonplussed and with dignity and élan,) patiently explained that the female has a flared tail to protect her eggs, and the male has an oversized claw used for mating rights, predation and predation. (Referring to his lobster on his wall, Lada quips that he 'gets to have his lobster and eat it too!') Just beware Lada's piranha. It looks like it is still alive. (Actually I am not sure which I am more wary of, the piranha (it



Legends of TSSC: LADA SIMEK, continued...

it is a big one...) or Lada's mantis shrimp. Both look pretty, and also pretty ALIEN. Lada explained how the mantis shrimp impales its prey with a series of razor sharp under and over claws. Yikes. Always more to learn: Lada explained that the age of a clam can be determined by counting the rings on the inside hinge used to open and close the shell. The den also contains an impressive collection of conchs, including a rare species. There is always a biologist's observation with each unique shell. And the Latin name of each species. More power to you Lada for your animal advocacy!

Lada gets a twinkle in his eye when offering his insights; his ready and easy facility with conveying knowledge on chemistry, biology, and maritime history finds its source in his high school teaching career which spanned over thirty years, most of that time in Valhalla, NY. Some of his students still maintain contact with Lada, a testament to the excellence of his relationship building and the esteem his students have for him. A visit to Lada and Judy's house in fact is like a visit to both an art museum, an ethnographic museum, a maritime museum, and the Lada Museum of Natural History! Judy is an accomplished quilter and painter. Her collection of masks from all over the world (in particular the Himalayas, South East Asia, and the South Pacific) is captivating. Masks play an important cultural role with traditional peoples, and Judy's collection is world-class. Also arrestingly beautiful were several hand-painted paintings on canvas from Luxor, Egypt. These are likely irreplaceable given the current political climate in Luxor in particular and Egypt in general.

Now on to diving! Lada first got his maritime and marine start at the tender age of 14, right here in our Westchester waters. He recalls borrowing a mask and dunking his face under the water and seeing a clam. He was so enthralled by that sight that it initiated and defined the maritime trajectory of his life. We owe it all to that solitary clam right there on Rye Beach... Soon he bought his OWN facemask, snorkel and fins, and was freediving - sometimes down to 50' - and enjoying the marvels of northeast diving - at this point still without tanks. He was also helping feed the family with tautog (blackfish), blowfish, flounder and the occasional striper. One of his most memorable experiences was in a quiet jetty area on the Westchester shore where he suddenly came face to face with a huge blackfish whose head was as big as Lada's head.

In Lada's house "diving" actually comes in two flavors... SCUBA diving and... SKY DIVING. (Yes, you read that right). Lada is one of those individuals who jumps out of perfectly good aircraft. He has combined his love of teaching and skydiving by becoming a certified skydiving instructor. He has an extensive jump history, at best estimate 700-800 jumps. INCLUDING one in which his main chute tangled on the way down. When that happens, the parachutist needs extraordinary presence of mind to manage the often-fatal situation. This usually involves detaching the malfunctioning parachute and deploying the reserve. Easier said than done when falling through space at 100+ mph... Some people freeze up, panic and auger into the ground at 200+mph. Lada successfully accomplished this critical maneuver. And so glad that he did, so that he could share his experience and observations regarding emergency management and the need for training to ensure correct, autonomic responses. But more on that later.

Lada first connected with the world of scuba diving after joining the social club Single Grapes. Single Grapes was a fun and 'happening' sports-based social club founded by Zig Zighahn in 1972. Members enjoyed skiing, hot air ballooning, tennis, white water canoeing, rafting, hiking and decompressing with frequent DJ music dances and epic eastern Long Island beach parties. *And... Single Grapes was... SCUBA DIV-ING!* Zig certified in 1972. After all, this was 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 landlubbers for the first time the wondrous undersea environment! Zig went on to found our Club in 1975 and Lada joined sometime after that. Already being an accomplished free diver, Lada readily adopted scuba diving, became certified in 1981, quickly excelled, and rose through the PADI ranks to Master Scuba Diver Trainer. (Lada's other official titles are USCGS Master, published author and Senior Director at Beneath The Sea. Lada is a full master, authorized for 50 ton vessel, and up to 100 miles offshore (Lada's license has however expired).

Lada's experiences in Long Island Sound are among the extensive anywhere. He has forgotten exactly how many wrecks he has dived on, but the number is in excess of twenty. He has participated on NOAA shipwreck mapping exercises aboard the NOAA vessels Rude (S590) and sister ship Heck (S591). These ships had various missions including side-scan sonar wreck mapping and environmental missions. These ships were collecting data for AWOIS which stands for Automated Wrecks and Obstructions Information Service. It was on one of these missions that Lada discovered the wreck of the Poling Brothers #2. The Rude located the TWA flight 800 wreckage off of Moriches, NY in 1996, and also located John F. Kennedy Jr.'s plane off Martha's Vineyard. One interesting phenomenon was mystifying circular rings which would be spotted from time to time on the bottom. NOAA finally sent divers down to investigate, and discovered that the mysterious shapes were formations of crabs. Which speaks to the wonders evident and present right here in our own cold green waters!

<https://noaacoastsurvey.wordpress.com/tag/awois/> <http://www.moc.noaa.gov/Decomm%20Ships/ru-index.html>

Legends of TSSC: LADA SIMEK, continued...

Lada's home museum features two beautifully restored brass portholes from the Poling Brothers #2. She was built in 1863 during the American Civil War as a light-duty cargo ship in Renfrew, Scotland and served as a blockade runner for the Confederacy. She was sunk once during the war, only to be rebuilt and enter active service as a light tanker. However her fortunes ended in 1940 after striking an ice flow off Cos Cob, Connecticut, where she remains on the bottom at around 65'. Minus some of her bronze portholes, two of which are now magnificently restored in Croton-On-Hudson, and other portholes are scattered all over the world, with at least one as far away as Japan!

I asked Lada how the water here were compared to twenty or more years ago. He explained that the water clarity and cleanliness is greatly improved. Back in the day, raw sewage was dumped directly in to Long Island Sound. (Lada has some horrendous memories related to that). Happily those days are long gone. However, gone *also* are many of the fish traditional to the area. (Personally, I remember blowfish and sea robins in abundance. I used to enjoy catching the former and bringing them home for dinner off Mamaroneck's Harbor Island...) But sadly those are now gone, along with the lobsters and tommy cod which used to inhabit these waters.

That said, diving conditions here in Long Island sound are daunting. Visibility can be slim to none. Lada has experienced instructor-level diving professionals from warm blue water get extremely disconcerted by the murky cold green water here, and unable to successfully dive. But the rewards are eminent! Lada has conducted many dives on wrecks for exploration with members of our Club. The 40th Anniversary Slide Show has many photos of these wonderful expeditions and hats off to all who conducted these dives. Those individuals will all cherish the extreme elation of discovery and personal growth they all thereby experienced! But it wasn't always just about the joy of discovery; there were also a lot of fun times. Lada has proved time and again to be an *incorrigible rascal*. One of his favorite pranks was to place gold (aluminum foil covered) chocolate coins near a wreck, and once topside enjoy the dismay of the hapless diver who *thought* they had hit the big time discovering gold coins!

But it wasn't all fun and games all the time. I asked Lada the standard question about what his scariest moment was. He set his jaw, and proceeded to answer. Somehow I felt there would be an important insight at the end, and there was. Lada was exploring a tanker. It had a flat deck. Visibility was very low. He inadvertently swam into and penetrated the wreck. That had not been his intention. When visibility is very limited, (and made even more so by disturbed silt), and when flashlights are made temporarily useless by swirling silt, things can get very scary, very quickly. Lada discovered that he was boxed in on five sides – ahead, above, left, right and below. He had the presence of mind to slowly back out of the enclosure which he had entered. In the event, three feet backing up was all he needed (between life and death) and he found his way out of the bridge (which had partially collapsed which had caused the cul-de-sac in which he found himself). Lada resolved that he would never penetrate a wreck again without a reel at an absolute minimum. This experience also opened a line of investigation in Lada's mind about the nature of human response to stress and the lapse into panic; Lada has shared his views with PADI on this matter and he is in a unique position offer insights given his skydiving experiences and scuba diving training expertise.

Lada has studied human psychology and in particular, the varied responses to stress. In part, his experiences as skydiving and scuba diving instructor have informed his insights into this matter. He has also consulted with experts and will hopefully share with us at a future Club general meeting the factors contributing to panic, and how to respond and, better yet, how to avoid panic situations in the first place. Lada is a regular presenter at local high schools, libraries, community centers, Scout meetings, yacht clubs, and other venues. A presentation by Lada on maritime history, local cold green water diving and the treasures right here in our own waters, marine biology and hopefully human stress response scenarios will be captivating. We are so lucky to have a Club member with such a broad and deep reservoir of knowledge in so many areas, and willingness to expertly share his knowledge with us!

Lada is a Senior Director at Beneath The Sea, and has presented frequently to the classroom attendees over the years. Lada joined the BTS team close to the inception of that organization, which is America's largest consumer scuba diving and dive travel exposition. It is only natural that as a veteran teacher, Lada is a pillar for BTS and deeply committed to that august organization. BTS is engaged in marine environmental advocacy, supporting marine education for youth, supports marine careers, and is a powerful force for diving education and dive safety. BTS also supports outstanding underwater photography; this is a great match with Lada who has photos published with his article on diving Long Island Sound in Offshore magazine which brings to us topside in photos the diversity of life in Long Island Sound.

When asked what advice Lada would have for a young person interested in scuba diving, Lada said he would wholeheartedly welcome them to the sport, and explain that the sport offers unbounded opportunity for exploration and joy for those like-minded intrepid souls who wonder 'what is around the next curve'. At the same time, Lada is the strongest advocate for safe diving, and he places that above all else; he laments that divers are not required to go through recertification. So he is all about safety, and we can look forward to a presentation by Lada on this subject and other topics of captivating interest delivered by our Club's apex educator and ultimate presenter!

For a slide show, please visit: <https://vimeo.com/158363690>



IN THE SPOTLIGHT —
LIEUTENANT BILL PFEIFFER !!!!

Interviewed by Gary Lehman



One of the best parts about being Editor of your Scuba Sports Club's *Sea Swells* newsletter is that I get the opportunity to spend some time with leaders in diving, getting to know them a bit and the bringing to you (our readers) insights about these amazing folks. One such person is Lieutenant Bill Pfeiffer. I had the chance to meet with him at the Nesconset Fire House for an afternoon, see for myself Bill's world out there, and learn about Bill's Public Safety/Water Rescue activities. I also heard first-hand about the amazing projects he is leading. Many of us have met Bill, and we knew he was a Fire Department diver (or something...) – but no one really seemed to have any details. We DID know that he was always there for our Club and Captain Mike Carew's beach cleanups, cheerfully manning the BBQ as pitmaster with delicious burgers and bratwursts, expertly cooked to perfection. And Bill always provides a big smile, a warm welcome, a boisterous and rousing presence and playful, good-nature ribbing (and roasting!) of whoever happens to be in range. (and he is a good shot, because every Marine is a rifleman first, front and center) (...And that son-of-a-gun always seems to attract the attention of the ladies...J)

But there are also clues suggesting a far-ranging, extensive diving and public safety wealth of experience, know-how and personal commitment to excellence. Interviewing Bill I had the privilege to learn a bit about Bill Pfeiffer, and I still feel like that I only just tapped into a small fraction of this individual, so let me invite you to strap on your gear and follow me!

Bill's deal begins with his larger-than-life Cold War warrior father, who was an Air Force flight crew member on board intercontinental bombers for Strategic Air Command, where he served as navigator, inflight engineer, and electronic countermeasures engineer. (Given that heritage, now we know why Bill is an expert on his motorcycles and engines! And why Bill has "a need for speed" during his misbegotten youth racing cars, boats and motorcycles!) So we now know that Bill was an 'Air Force brat', always moving around as a kid from one Air Force base to another, as the family moved with their Dad. Of course there is not much diving in Columbus, Ohio (some, but not much...). So where did diving enter the scene? Eventually his Dad retired to Long Island, and Bill's parents gave in to his constant pestering and bought him a mask and fins when he was eight years old -- and at that point this kid was **HOOKED**.

So what is Bill up to these days other than driving regular folk to distraction and expertly cooking up the best food east of the Mississippi?

It is tough to know where to start, because he is into so many directions and ventures and *Adventures!* First to report is that Bill is still buddies with some of his chums from high school, and hats off to him for maintaining those enduring friendships - which speaks to Bill's connectedness and loyalty to those close to him. We'll continue with Bill's service to our country, where Bill was in the US Marines in Paris Island, Quantico, and finally Jacksonville, Florida. He served three years and somehow managed to avoid the stockade. (Or so he says. But we won't go there...). The training that Lance Corporal Pfeiffer earned in the US Marines has served Bill throughout his life in public service, by developing his cool-headedness under pressure, situational awareness and emergency response and communications instincts. Bill served

(...CONTINUED NEXT PAGE...)

IN THE SPOTLIGHT — LIEUTENANT BILL PFEIFFER !!!! (...continued)

headedness under pressure, situational awareness and emergency response and communications instincts. Bill served with distinction and honor, and continued and extended the proud legacy of his family and his Dad in the Armed Services. We thank Bill for his service to our country.

We will explore later in this article Bill's public service diving and dive instruction for his team and other undersea work. But I was eager to ask him if he does any *recreational* diving, and if he had any dream dive locations. After all, a lot of us want to dive Raja Ampat and the Andaman Islands and exotic foreign locations. As for Bill, *nope!* His answer is revealing about his character and commitment. His ideal dive locations are right here in Long Island Sound and Lake Ronkonkoma - with his students, friends and with the Water Rescue teams that he trains; and with the Handicapped Scuba Association (but more on that later...). For Bill, the best diving experience is showing a student diver or water rescue diver what to do, instructing them, assisting them, training the daylights out of them, and then watching for and seeing that look of satisfaction on their face when they '*get it!*' (He would have a long haul to get *me* there, but I have no doubt that under his instruction, I would...and I intend to...). Bill has no bucket list dives... He enjoys all local diving with his students, and recalled to me memorable dives on the U853 (a German submarine sunk by US Navy combat action at the very end of WWII on May 2, 1945, now resting in about 130' off Block Island); the U.S.S. San Diego (sunk by German ocean mine in WWI on July 19, 1918, resting in 66-110' 13 miles off Patchogue); and tanker R.P. Resor in about 50' off the coast of New Jersey (she was torpedoed by U-boat [U-578](#) during WWII on 28 February, 1942) - among many other dive sites in our cold, green waters.

Speaking about cold water... ay caramba. Bill Pfeiffer brings new meaning to THAT term. In the winter he regularly dons his dry suit and cold water gear with his students and water rescue divers; he teaches them how to safely dive under the ice and how to succeed in their icy water missions. There are techniques for success and for keeping things like regulators from freezing and such, and this expert body of knowledge is crucial to *get right*. Bill has that covered. So if that is what you are looking to do, look no further than Bill to learn the safe techniques and ways and means for this highly-specialized form of diving.

But Bill also spent a year and a half in St Thomas after his tour of duty in the Marines, so he knows all about warm, blue water. Rumor has it that the constable there is still on the lookout for him. (And I *thought* that was a photo of Bill in the Post Office there!) And Bill's scariest moment underwater did not have to do with any man-made situations, but with a 6' -7' barracuda – the BIGGEST he has ever seen before or since. (Anybody ever looked closely at the teeth of a barracuda? They are awe-inspiring, not to mention fear and respect-inspiring!) So the situation was like this...Bill was exploring a wreck around 100' down, searching for lobsters and octopus to sell to the local restaurants on St. Thomas. Soon an inner voice called out "*Heads Up!*" - instinct from his Marine training - and suddenly a shadow shrouded the scene. Bill related that he looked up, expecting the worst, and his blood ran cold looking at this huge barracuda not ten feet above him, with a gaping wide mouth with those frightful arrangement of razor sharp incisors poised for a deadly, shredding attack. The fish was agitated given its posture with gill plates all flared out, and this fish was already at general quarters/battle stations. Bill was somewhat safe for the moment where he was from attack, but he was also running low on air -- and all things considered he was *not* in a good or comfortable situation *at all*... But he then figured what the situation was... he realized that he was at a fish cleaning station (!), and that he had inadvertently cut in front of line and ahead of this *monster* barracuda which was now in full 'territorial aggression mode' and ready to shred Bill. He slowly backed out, maintaining eye contact and situational awareness, and egressed the area with purposeful deliberation (not wishing to trigger an attack, or in any way to further provoke this agitated apex predator). Which was a good plan under the circumstances...

Given his long experience in the waters off Long Island, I asked Bill his opinion about the health of our waters here in our area. His immediate response asserted that the waters are cleaner and healthier now than they were twenty years ago. He cites more abundant striped bass, lobsters, seabass, blackfish, and fluke. He speaks with considerable agitation about the Maine lobstering industry which takes the position that local NY conditions are contributing to the collapse of NY lobstering. This of course diverts lobster fishing to Maine, protecting the Maine lobster fishermen. Bill's point here is that science needs to be rigorously conducted with due diligence to determine as best as possible exactly what is happening, in order to avoid circular logic (and too frequently self-serving interests). For example, some sources cite declining lobster hauls as evidence of a collapsed lobster population. There *just might* be another reason though, and in this case it is because the Long Island fishery industry is deeply in trouble with far fewer lobstermen able to make ends meet with insurance and regulatory restrictions due to alleged lobster stock pressures. Which is not to say that there are no overfishing challenges, but merely that there are frequently multiple 'behind the scenes' inputs to these issues which warrant closer investigation and determination of motives (i.e. *follow the money*...).

Bill's standing in the dive community is established by his position as Lieutenant in the Nesconset Fire Department, in charge of the multi-jurisdictional Water Rescue Unit. His team cross-trains with numerous surface and underwater rescue teams on Long Island, and Bill is called upon for the most urgent and complex underwater rescue and recovery operations in the area. His unit is at the ready continuously for action, and the calls come in 24/7 at any time of the year for all manner of emergency response. Bill and team are at the highest state of operational readiness for cars off bridges, downed aircraft, overturned canoes and kayaks, overturned boats, marine injuries, flooded structures, marine hazmat emergenc-

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IN THE SPOTLIGHT — LIEUTENANT BILL PFEIFFER !!!! (...continued)

ies, trapped or missing persons -- and whatever else presents. But if the situation is particularly complex with higher than usual risk, Bill is first in the water and sometimes the only one in action in order to protect his team. But for more routine actions, Bill is responsible for developing the emergency services courses, personally conducting the training, and certifying his team (and his responsibilities are multi-jurisdictional throughout Long Island) to his personal satisfaction as to their readiness. His team's gear features full face-masks with underwater wireless communications, videocam support and subsurface receivers/repeaters providing both peer to peer communication between the divers and situational awareness to the situation commander who remains topside. (...I think it would be awesome to dive recreationally with gear like that, with that kind of instructional ability and enabling full exploration and underwater communications!)

Bill served for several years as President of the Long Island Dive Association and in that role forged relationships with service providers all over Long Island, working to expand and improve diving locations and conditions all over Long Island. And in fact, that is how our Club, the Scuba Sports Club, became acquainted with Bill. Captain Mike was running beach cleanups for years at Orchard Beach, and TSSC started participating in those cleanups. Bill and Mike have been professional coworkers and personal friends for many years and their work together in beach cleanups at Kaiser Park, Orchard Beach and many other metropolitan area locations has been a wonderful collaboration. While TSSC will not be running a beach cleanup in 2016 in the same way as we have been in prior years, we are looking forward to supporting Captain Mike and getting out to do some diving and cleanup and some shore support as well in this wonderful endeavor, and 'giving back' to the Bronx which we all know and love.

With the expertise, leadership and name recognition that Bill has in our region, it is no surprise that nearby Stony Brook University (part of the State University of New York system) approached Bill to assist on their marine science and underwater projects. One such project was under the direction of PhD candidate Keith Dunton, a researcher working with Professor Mike Frisk of the School of Marine and Atmospheric Sciences in a population survey of the Atlantic sturgeon. (Keith was a former scuba diving student of Bill). The objective of this ongoing study is to get to better understand the life cycle and ways and means of this endangered and ancient species so that we can get to know them a little better. Hopefully this will help ensure that this species survives long enough for us to get to know it, and protect it from extinction. The research is being done in conjunction with the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and US Fish and Wildlife Service. Bill directs both shipboard and underwater operations; supervising safe diving practices, boat operations, and surface support. SUNY Stony Brook does not have that expertise, so Bill was called upon to step in and consult on training, safety measures, equipment, procedures and diver/surface support roles and responsibilities.

Among the Stony Brook University vessels involved is the R/V Seawolf, an 80ft vessel designed for scientific missions <http://www.somas.stonybrook.edu/about/facilities/researchvessels/rv-seawolf/>. As the project has evolved over the last six years it has become important to be able to deploy a dive vessel with little notice, as weather permits, so dive operations are currently being conducted from Bill's dive boat "Island Diving", allowing mobility and flexibility not possible with a vessel as large as the R/V Seawolf, and the R/V Seawolf is used for the trawling of Atlantic sturgeon for the purpose of implanting acoustic transmitters in them, as well as performing the "heavy lifting", placing the 700 pound pedestals that secure the acoustic receivers in position.

The research methodology is fascinating: the fish are tracked underwater with implanted acoustic transmitters with the objective to understand what "a day in the life" of an Atlantic sturgeon is all about; what migration patterns are like; what their littoral movement patterns are, and the like. This level of information has never before been available about this species. The technology is amazing; there are hundreds of subsurface receiver arrays at carefully selected intervals attached to chains secured to 700lb concrete blocks at progressively-staged inshore sites which detect the movement of these sturgeon by comparing the signals received by the fish as they swim around. Bill developed proprietary underwater search techniques which have had significant collateral benefits in other areas of subsurface investigation, including law enforcement. The receiver arrays actually pick up OTHER tagged species as well, and thus describe the fabric, life and times of multiple marine species. For example, white shark migration patterns are discernible through the signal intelligence, and individual animals can be thus tracked; other species trackable include striped bass and pollock ranging all along the Eastern seaboard from Nova Scotia to North Carolina.

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IN THE SPOTLIGHT — LIEUTENANT BILL PFEIFFER !!!! (...continued)

One of the findings, amazingly enough, was that a major aggregator area for Atlantic sturgeon was discovered near the Far Rockaways. This was significant because this is also a major squid spawning ground, and this puts the Atlantic sturgeon at grave risk owing to aggressive squid, fluke and clam harvesting in that area. The sturgeon bycatch can cripple the species to a point where the stocks might not be recoverable. Thus Bill's findings are leading to policy changes. Will the world be significantly worse off without Atlantic sturgeon? I believe so. I believe in the sanctity of the diversity of the species of life on this Earth. So we should thank Bill Pfeiffer and the teams working to preserve this endangered species, so that it will survive a bit longer; it has been around since the time of the dinosaurs Triassic era 250 million years ago. It would be tragic for the Tappan Zee bridge replacement or greedy squid or dragnet bottom trawling to spell doom for this animal which looks (and is) prehistoric and can live to 60 years of age and grow to 14 foot. For further information, please read http://www.nytimes.com/2015/07/22/nyregion/group-petitions-to-save-a-prehistoric-fish-from-modern-construction.html?_r=0

Bill's notoriety is not just in the scientific realm however! Many of us have heard about his exploits in the Amityville murder weapon discovery. One day in 2011 Bill got a call from a Hollywood producer about underwater search techniques. One thing lead to another and... suffice it to say that Bill's investigative acumen, underwater expertise and contacts in the industry, equipment knowledge and proprietary underwater search methodologies all collaborated for Bill to make stunning discovery – a large section of what may be a murder weapon used in the Amityville Horror murders. For those who are not aware, mass murderer Ron Defeo killed his parents, two sisters and two brothers in 1974 in Amityville; he then broke apart the weapon, and disposed of it in a tidal creek. Which (incredibly) Bill then found. That Bill was able to find part of the gun is astounding, given the 38 years which had since elapsed, with a buildup of five feet of silt, mud and muck which concealed the evidence. The search was epic in itself with hundreds of metallic objects identified, which were then winnowed down and until the 'most likely' were investigated... resulting in the find. The movie producers went to interview the murderer in jail who, chillingly, looked right at the camera and advised "You found the gun that killed my mother...".

Bill is all about preparedness and training. This stems from both his military experience and his professional firefighting and water rescue professional background. There is a saying in the dive industry "dive your *experience*, NOT your "C" card..." In general Bill agrees with this point of view. A diver's experience and ability to handle adverse situations underwater are directly related to the diver's experience base. The old saying "calm seas do not a sailor make...". So with that in mind, no matter what "C" card the diver holds and has certified for, the ability to recognize and respond to circumstances are a function of time in the water, attentiveness and learning from one's own dives and from discussions with other divers.

But Bill would a slightly different view. He is a NAUI instructor, and he has designed a dozen different courses for NAUI, many of them public safety diving related. He personally trains his students in both the courses he has designed and in other NAUI standard courses. Reports are that he is a stern task master, and is demanding of his students. However, training with Bill means a rewarding learning experience resulting in solid performance and excellent learning. After training his students, he personally certifies them. If they are not ready, they are not certified. That simple. There is tomorrow or next week to try again. And a chance to previsualize the situation and redo after some more mental training to master the skill.

With that said, and with that commitment to vital training, a NAUI "C" card signed by Bill Pfeiffer means that the student really knows their stuff. Bill does not take a student unless the situation indicates it is appropriate. He has seen instances where parents who are divers try to force diving upon their kids. Bill picks up on this quickly, and will decline youthful students if it is apparent that they are unduly anxious or truly disinterested. There are always telltale signs when this is the case. This is the right thing to do, because it is not a safe condition to put a kid into the water if they are irreconcilably anxious, and they really do not want to be there. On the other hand, if the youthful student is bright-eyed, enthusiastic, engaging in conversation, asking appropriate questions, has the right mix and level of anxiety but measured with excitement over the prospect of being under the water, Bill takes that student with great enthusiasm and personal commitment to make a safe diver, who truly enjoys the underwater environment. His commitment to the men and women on his Water Rescue team similarly features repeated training exercises to keep skills, equipment, procedures and practices sharp and ready for immediate action. Bill is also Co-Chair of the Public Safety Diving Committee at NAUI and thus part of the leadership team at NAUI participating in policy making for diving in his direct area of greatest expertise.

Bill is trained to keep cool under fire. Literally. Turn up the heat and the pressure and the gnarliness of the situation -- and the worse it gets, the cooler Lieutenant Pfeiffer is with expert efficiency and effectiveness to take command of the situation, lead the team, restore order and safety and successfully conclude the mission – and then get everything squared away ready for the next incident.

But there is another side to Bill, and in seeing this side, we get a view to the inner character inside this bold, intrepid, devil-may-care and dashing rascal. Bill spoke to me with great emotion about his work with the Handicapped Scuba Association of New Jersey <http://www.hsanjscuba.com>. This is all about empowering those with disabilities to know no limits to what they can accomplish. (Not to mention it is WAY COOL to dive! And a whole lot of fun). Everyone can behold the beauty of the ocean, and discover (for themselves, and sometimes with the assistance of some friends who can help guide them on the way) ...the mysteries under the surface. **(...CONTINUED NEXT PAGE...)**

IN THE SPOTLIGHT — LIEUTENANT BILL PFEIFFER !!!! (...continued)

Conventional thinking says that 'no way' can a handicapped person scuba dive, with all the issues of equalization, face masks, buttons to push, buoyancy, situational awareness... but ... guess what... with warriors of the human spirit like Bill Pfeiffer, 'no way' becomes **WAY**. How about transforming other peoples' lives in the positive! How about giving people freedom, which they find underwater without the burdens of gravity! How about earning smiles of joy and wonder which last a lifetime! How about... "TO LIFE!" How about inspiring young people with challenges that they can achieve everything in their lives that they want? Are there particular techniques and some extra steps? Maybe, but isn't there is always the need to be prudent and challenges and need to be aware to situations for every person on this planet? Bill says with certainty and reverence that his work and those of his teammates there with HASNJ, is without comparison the most personally fulfilling endeavor that he has ever had in his life. Highlights for him include the work he did with kids living with autism, Downs Syndrome and cerebral palsy. Bill advised with great emotion and with all energy that the looks of joy that came over their faces will live forever with those kids, and therefore with Bill. The students Bill teaches also include our Iraq/Afghanistan veterans with a variety of injuries, both inside and outside. The challenges might be spinal injuries, PTSD, loss of limbs, and neurological illnesses. The veterans together with Bill *searched for - and together they found - the way to make it happen*. The compounded and annuity of people-benefits to everyone -- assures this mission's enduring success.

There are no words enough to thank and honor Bill and his Handicapped Scuba Association teammates for his and their leadership in these endeavors. The Scuba Sports Club recognizes with heartfelt appreciation the powerfully positive impact this gentleman has had for many years on the lives of so many kids and adults in these aquatics programs. This is the highest form of direct caring, kindness, empathy, reverence and love of life. Bill Pfeiffer is one in a million. Thank you Bill.

*Note to Lieutenant Pfeiffer: it was a privilege to spend an afternoon with you, learning about your world in Public Safety Water Rescue and the amazing projects you are leading. Thank you for your service to our country, to scuba diving, to our local and national dive community, to the public safety community out on Long Island, and to The Scuba Sports Club and so many Northeast diving groups, and to your students both in Long Island and at HSANJ. Our community near and far is a lot safer with you and your team. **On behalf of the members, Board and Officers of The Scuba Sports Club, we salute you -- and wish you and your team success on every mission, and that you and your squad always return safely to your families and friends.***



My Turn...

The Scuba Life

By Ruth Emblin, President and Editor Emeritus



Face it, we are all pretty lucky. We have the opportunity to enjoy an amazing sport and share our experiences with other, like-minded individuals to boot. While scuba diving is considered an individual sport, it seems to engender a special community that only a few other sports enjoy. Years ago I used to be a member of a ski club, too, but we didn't have regular meetings or listened to interesting lectures about adventure and wildlife. It was mostly planning ski weekends and après ski get-togethers (okay, I hear you, we plan social get-togethers, as well, but they are part of a greater scheme, if you want to call it that!). Any other sport I played was pretty much limited to the day of the activity and maybe a little bit of social action afterwards. Scuba diving is a bit like boating, or sailing in particular, it comes with a whole community attached, people who don't limit themselves to a season or time when they are active in their sport. I guess that's why I enjoy both of these sports so much. Well, it doesn't hurt that both have the element of water in common, creating a close awareness of nature. Neither sport can afford to ignore the power of nature, so there is no way around a healthy respect for and awareness of the natural world and the impact of its condition on our chosen activity.

I learned to dive first, then went on to learn how to sail. Diving gave me an intimate insight into the power of the ocean, and taught me to recognize currents, tides, wind and other conditions that affect a diver. So it wasn't a great stretch to apply this awareness to sailing as well. I also believe that knowing what is below us made me a more thoughtful, more caring sailor, trying to protect the underwater world from the possible negative effects of boating. Since also joining a yacht club in Eastern Connecticut I have added my voice to the (fortunately) ever-increasing choir of conservationists who try to do their best to educate boaters about what can be done to protect our favorite "playground". I have noticed that people tend to respect the opinion of scuba divers like myself, simply because we have such a deep and close connection to the oceans. We see the changes first-hand, and sometimes these changes are extreme. Considering what Caribbean reefs looked like when I started diving in 1991, and what they look like now, it makes me more convinced than ever that we have to act now and act decisively. Unless people have first-hand experience, they generally believe that issues like the depletion of fisheries or coral bleaching don't really affect them. This is where we as divers have to make our voices heard! Shark conservation, in particular, is a tough sell among many boaters, as shark fishing is still a very dominant activity in the Northeast. Fortunately, more and more organizers are beginning to change the format of their tournaments to catch & release, which, while not perfect, is at least a step in the right direction. Whenever I show one of our shark diving videos to one of our new friends they are amazed at the peaceful nature of these animals, and bit by bit we have begun to convince people that sharks should be protected rather than seen as a menace to be eradicated. I consider it a great success when people actually reacted positively to recent shark sightings off the Rhode Island shore, instead of succumbing to mad fear! The marine debris problem is also beginning to reach people's awareness, and an increasing number of organizations have embraced programs to help reduce the immediate trash problem. There is still a lot of work to be done, but there is hope that we will at least be able to make a small (positive) dent into the problem instead of letting it grow into an even bigger issue. Baby steps...but these baby steps have to be consistent...this is the only way we can show people that we cannot take our oceans for granted, that we have to consider the impact we have had on them in the recent past.

Yes, these are deep thoughts and may not be first and foremost on your mind when you get ready to dive... but our activity as scuba divers makes us responsible. We are responsible to protect our favorite playground the best way we can. If you have kids, I bet you are going to introduce them to diving at some point if you haven't already done so. And I bet you would like them to have the same experience (or as close as possible) you had – and not have to tell them something like: "this is the place I used to see sharks"...!

Our favorite sport is pretty amazing. Yes, you'll need the right training and a set of rather elaborate gear plus preferably a dependable buddy, but once you have all that, you are ready to explore pretty much anywhere there is a body of water. Scuba divers are not dependent on stadiums, gymnasiums, playing fields or other sports facilities, we have a three-dimensional playground with lots of interesting "characters" (and I am not talking about your dive buddy...!) at our disposal. How cool is that?

We can dive and be responsible at the same time – and instill a sense of responsibility in others. The camaraderie among scuba divers goes beyond the sport itself and lends itself to great friendships, sharing stories (sometimes just a little enhanced by the effects of diving itself and maybe a few drinks...), and inspiring others to care.

See you in (or on) the water!

Ruth

LOCAL DIVE SHOPS.....AT YOUR SERVICE!

Looking for dive-related gifts? Need to upgrade your gear?

Here is a list of shops that may just have the right one for your best dive buddy or for yourself!



Ski and Scuba Connection

26 Saint Roch Ave
Greenwich, CT 06830
Tel. 203-629-4766
www.skiandscubaconnection.com



**SCUBA
NEW YORK**

2037 Central Park Ave
Yonkers, NY 10710
Tel. 914-779-2966
and

2672 Gerritsen Ave
Brooklyn, NY 11229
Tel. 718-769-0099
www.scubany.com



Abyss Scuba

222 E Main Street
Mt. Kisco, NY 10549
914-244-3483
www.abyss-scuba.net



**Captain Mike's
Diving School**

530 City Island Ave
City Island, NY 10464
Tel. 718-885-1588
www.captainmikesdiving.com



OCEANBLUE DIVE CTR.

144 Water Street
Norwalk, CT 06854
Tel. 203-853-4148
www.oceanbluedive.com



**.....And
Counting !!**

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