

undercurrent®

THE PRIVATE, EXCLUSIVE GUIDE FOR SERIOUS DIVERS

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The Clubs Mediterranee

Best For Beginners And Diving Dilettantes

The Club Mediterranee--and there are 80 or so--is not a diving resort. It is a total vacation resort, offering such a dizzying array of sporting and social activities that most vacationers return home exhausted--albeit happy. Ten Clubs currently offer scuba diving. We doubt that our readers would put up with a string of reviews covering each of the ten, but we receive so many inquiries about the nature of Club Med diving that a review of the overall diving operation will be useful to many subscribers.

We have received letters from serious divers who have returned home from a Club vacation, deeply disappointed in their diving experience. Had they known how the Club operated, they would have gone elsewhere, they say. Nevertheless, the Clubs seem quite suitable for other divers--those who would be satisfied with a tank or two a day, those who have non-diving spouses or kids to please, those who want a highly-charged social atmosphere where the cocktail hour never ends, those divers who have been out of the water a long time and need reeducation, and those single people who might hope to pair up after hours. For these divers--and don't be embarrassed if you're one of them--this is for you.

The author of the following article has been a consultant to the Club, but he is no longer employed so there is no conflict of interest. He has visited most which offer diving. In keeping with Undercurrent policy, he remains anonymous.

Although scuba diving is only one aspect of Club Med sports, a worldwide staff of 86 scuba instructors, not counting boat crews, compressor and equipment specialists, diving physicians and hundreds of snorkeling instructors, makes the French-run Club Med one of the most important and consistent diving organizations in the world. The concept behind a Club Med vacation can only be understood when one has a conception of the importance the French people put on their annual holidays. Most French people save throughout

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the year, carefully planning and anticipating "les vacances." Vacation is a time to unwind, to practice their favorite sports, learn others, to eat well, make new friends, and enjoy life to its fullest. The Club follows that vacation formula carefully: plenty of good food and wine, plenty of sports and, where there is diving, plenty of tropical sunshine and warm waters. The modus operandi from Club to Club is indeed consistent.

Ten Clubs offer scuba. English speaking divers may feel most at home in those Clubs where both French and English are spoken: Tahiti, in the South Pacific; in the Caribbean, Buccanneer's Creek on Martinique and, on Guadeloupe, two Clubs, Fort Royal and La Caravelle; on Mexico's Caribbean Coast there is a Club at Cancun and on the Pacific side there is Playa Blanca, near Puerto Vallarta. In Europe Club Med operates diving centers in Spain, Sardinia, and Italy. In November a new Club offering scuba opened in Egypt, at Hurgada, south of the Gulf of Suez. Scuba instruction and diving, like all sports at the Club, are free. All equipment is provided. Although an Israeli Club does not offer scuba, it can arrange diving with local tour operators for the normal rates. Diving with the Clubs Med is much different than Americans are accustomed to at popular resorts. Here's what to expect:

The Medical Examination: Prior to participating in any scuba activity, certified divers or students must pass a medical exam given by the Club's diving physician. It is a routine exam, with special emphasis on those aspects of a vacationer's medical history and health that relate to underwater activities. Regardless of whether you bring a medical certificate, the exam is still required. Not all divers pass. High blood pressure, ear infection, or a history of heart problems are disqualifying conditions. If you pass, you receive a blue card which serves as your diving log. The Club's physician is present at all diving operations.

Dives for Certified Divers: Divers without a certification card (PADI, NAUI, NASDS and YMCA are accepted) are required to attend a basic training course. Divers with certification take a check-out dive, which begins with an orientation to the equipment and a review of international hand signals which differ from those used by most American divers. The check-out dive is generally in 15 feet of water and requires one to enter from a dive boat, with mask in hand, put on the mask and clear it underwater, use a BC properly, surface swim with a snorkel, use hand signals, buddy breathe, practice responding to an ailing buddy, and, at the discretion of the instructor, perform a ditch-and-don exercise. Some certified divers who are rusty do not pass the first time and are required to take one or two lessons.

No one is permitted to dive outside the organized dives. Depths and decompression are carefully controlled by the accompanying instructor who leads the underwater tour. At most resorts dives are in the 50-90 foot range, but occasionally divers who have for several days demonstrated advance skills may have the opportunity for deeper or special dives, although no promises are made. At the end of every dive a decompression stop is required; a safety regulator hangs at ten feet, where a weighted decompression bar is suspended. Divers who deviate from the plan or leave the group are warned to follow the rules; those who ignore an admonition are no longer permitted to dive.

Equipment and Boats: Spirotechnique equipment is provided for all divers. The Spiro regulator goes over the left shoulder, the preferred French style, and does not have a submersible pressure gauge attached. For that reason, many American divers

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bring their own regulator, but to fit French tanks most American regulators require an adaptor which the diver must bring with him. Tanks are equipped with j-valves and are mounted on a diver's back with shoulder and crotch straps--not the standard American backpack. The weight belt accommodates the crotch strap in a handy, quick release manner. Some divers balk at the arrangement, but then find it convenient once they adapt.

The French require special instruction for divers using buoyancy compensators with automatic inflation. Therefore the Fenzy is not permitted, cartridges must be removed from personal BC's, and for the most part, tank-to-BC inflator hoses are not permitted. The Club's rationale is that instructors accompanying a group of divers underwater would find it impossible to manage an uncontrolled ascent if a diver's BC were to inflate inadvertently. You need not bring your own BC to the Club, since good French BC's are provided. You may wish to bring your own mask, fins and snorkel, although this gear too is provided.

Dive boats are generally large, solidly-built vessels with plenty of room to dress and spread out gear. They are equipped with emergency medical equipment to cope with most diving emergencies. The main boat is always accompanied by a small, high-speed security boat, with an instructor, for emergency rescues or to evacuate a diver to the Club's infirmary or medical evacuation point, should the need arise.

Snorkeling and Scuba Lessons: For nondivers, snorkeling lessons are offered daily. Snorkeling boats head to the shallow reefs for practice, picture taking, and picnics. Novices who wish to learn scuba must first pass a snorkeling test, which includes jumping into the water with equipment in hand, donning it, performing a surface swim without a mask, making a surface dive to recover a weight, and holding the weight overhead while treading water for one minute.

The Club offers five lessons for those who wish to learn scuba. On the first lesson, one gets a lecture, then an easy introductory dive in 10-15 feet of water; the second lesson focuses on the use of the equipment and includes water exercises; the last three lessons are in the water, each to provide the diver increased confidence. One lesson a day is offered; if it is not mastered it is repeated the following day. When five are completed, the diver takes a check-out dive. If he passes, he may join the regular dive trips. A person wishing to learn scuba should take a couple of weeks at the Club, since a minimum of five days are needed. The Club Med certification is not accepted in the U.S., although many tropical resorts permit the card holder the same privileges as any diver with standard American certification.

And all the rest: Clubs Med are legendary for their consistency; just as a Big Mac is about the same at any of hundreds of MacDonaldis, the full Club Med experience repeats itself daily at the 80 or so Clubs throughout the world. Big Mac's aren't served. Meals are Roman banquets with tables piled high with French cheeses, pastries, fruits, cold meats, grilled native specialties, and perhaps broiled lamb chops, steak brochette and local fish. Lunch is buffet (as is breakfast) while dinner, a four course meal, is sit down; wine is complimentary. Most Clubs offer tennis, volley ball, sailing, and water skiing, with free instruction in any sport, including swimming and even fencing. There is plenty of organized and unorganized socializing, dancing and partying, and opportunities for solitude for those who wish to get away from it all. Club settings are picturesque, the accommodations nearly luxury, and the service normally superb. Rates throughout range from \$380/week at Moorea, Tahiti, to \$545/week at Martinique. You may get more information or make reservations by contacting any travel agent, by calling toll free (800) 528-3100, or by writing the Club at 40 West 57 St., New York, NY 10019.

In response to our reviewer, we would like to quote Undercurrent readers Al and Barbara Jones, who wrote to us about their experiences at Tahiti (July, 1978) and

Cancun (July, 1979): "Club Med is a great place for a casual vacation where you can go diving. It is not the place for a diving vacation. Due to the number of people they take diving, you must dive their way, to their rules, or you don't dive. The diving is strictly directed. If you establish rapport with the instructors, then you should have a good dive; a condescending attitude will turn your diving sour. The guides at Cancun were watchful, but herded people at all times. A Divers Do It Deeper bumper sticker or similar item is worth its weight in gold in getting on the right side of the guides." Most readers who have shared their Club Med experience with us would seem to agree. Many readers also find the French equipment difficult to grow accustomed to, and some comment that it does not appear to be well-maintained. You may be well advised to bring your own, particularly if you are queasy about diving without a submersible pressure gauge.

Here, now, are comments about each of the resorts, compiled from the comments of our reviewer, readers of Undercurrent, our staff and correspondents. Unless indicated otherwise, divers are permitted only one tank a day.

Tahiti: The unusual marine life of the Pacific provides unique experiences for divers who have only visited the Caribbean, although the quality of diving here is not comparable, for example, to Micronesia. Occasional reef sharks cruise the dive sites, providing novices with plenty of stories for the folks back home.

Guadeloupe: Fort Royal and La Caravelle: Both Club's take divers to Pigeon Island for two tanks each day. In our August, 1978, issue an Undercurrent staff reviewer wrote: "Among the best 25% of the dives I've had in the Caribbean in terms of the creatures, but surely not in terms of visibility and variety." There may be enough variety for a week here, but most experienced vacation divers get a little tired going back to the same general area each day.

Martinique: Average Caribbean reef diving, but occasionally divers are taken to Diamond, Rock where underwater caverns provide unique dives. The Martinique Club has a well-documented reputation as a haven for single swingers.

Mexico, Cancun: Compared to neighboring Cozumel, the reef and variety is not as interesting, although divers usually see larger fish here since spearing has not eliminated them. Divers writing to Undercurrent call this "average" diving, but some have less regard. About the overall experience, R.T. Ray of Lemon Grove, Ca., writes: "Strange rules; not a place for a senior diver, but everything else about the place was great."

Mexico, Playa Blanca: Water along Mexico's Pacific Coast is rich in nutrients. The result is low visibility most of the year (10-40 feet) and larger than life fish, if you can see them. The enormous Mantas which jump from the water near the dive boats might be missed underwater, but large tame groupers can be fed by hand.

Critical Review Of World Wide Diving: Part III

Reports From Our Readers

Spanish Bay Reef, Grand Cayman: We waxed profoundly about the problems at Spanish Bay Reef in our October issue but once our words appeared in print, we received a number of letters explaining that the problems had been resolved by new management headed by Vinson Givens. Jim Lott writes this of his mid-November trip to SBR: "Unfortunately the described deplorable conditons evidently did exist for

a period during part of 1979. . . .but a new sole owner has gotten everything back to the fine standards that existed in prior years...Two dive boats adequately handled the 30-35 divers on two dives/day and, with one exception, operated precisely on schedule. The boat crews were knowledgeable and friendly. The meal menu selection and preparation was great, although the service could be a little faster. Rooms were well maintained. . . .and overall I noticed many improvements." A number of other writers echo Lott's comments so we're pleased to take SBR off our bad list and once again recommend it heartily for divers who wish to visit a bonafide dive resort with a few more amenities than they'll find on other islands.

Cayman Brac: We reviewed the Buccaneer Inn in July, 1977, and found serious problems, which subscribers continued to report on for sometime thereafter. Now reports are that conditons have improved at the hotel and the selection of dive sites is better. Bonnie Brown of Birmingham, Alabama, writes: "Top of coral wall begins at 60-75 feet; impressed with colors and diversity of vertebrates and invertebrates; no dive shop--Buccaneer Inn supplied a bus to get to the dive sites and the dive boat; trip cost \$350, which included round trip air fare from Tampa, hotel, three meals a day and all dives."

Bonaire, Netherlands Antilles: We get scores of reports and nearly all echo the thoughts of Randall Smith, Summerdale, Alabama, who wrote: "Overall a very enjoyable dive trip; water was great, fish plentiful." Mike Scott (NYC) writes: "The absolute tops; better than USVI, BVI, Keys and Bahamas." Steve Bower of NYC was a bit less exuberant, noting that he didn't find the canyons and cuts he likes in a reef, but concludes by saying, "damn good diving, but not the Western Hemisphere's underwater nirvana." Year round visibility at Bonaire is generally good because the weather is consistent. Lush reefs right off the shore make unlimited diving a reality wherever you stay. There are three choices. Divers who want to cook in their own bungalows can select the Aquahabitat and dive with the legendary Cap'n Don Stewart, who came to Bonaire nearly twenty years ago. For those wanting the amenities of hotel living, the choice is clearly the Flamingo Hotel and diving with Peter Hughes' Dive Bonaire. Where honeymooners Gayle and Richard Todd found "a little bit of Paradise" in July, not only in pleasant accommodations, but also in the "excellent selection and preparation of food, . . .attentive hotel and dive staff." The Hotel Bonaire continues to slip in cleanliness and amenities and in the last year no reader has recommended it. Some of the best Caribbean diving dollar value is on Bonaire, and right now the Flamingo is the place. For a complete review see Undercurrent, April, 1978.

Thailand, Pattaya Beach: Subscriber John H. Boyd of Ahahran, Saudi Arabia, says the diving is "fantastic," with plenty of fish, coral, and a couple of curious sharks. Last year he spent less than \$20 for each two tank boat dive with Dave's Dive Den and the Wongsee Amat Hotel. Rooms were \$30 double and he says to buy only a one-way ticket, since one can get substantial savings by purchasing the return ticket in Bangkok, where prices are not controlled by governments.

Treasure Hunters, Inc.

Financing A \$900 Million Venture

Embedded in coral 60 feet below the Caribbean, blackened, bent, and encrusted with the accumulations of three centuries under water, is the stuff treasure hunters' dreams are made of: Hundreds of millions of dollars' worth of gold and silver, pearls, emeralds, Ming and Mexican china, indigo dye, pot-

tery, and rare navigational instruments.

It was the vast store of riches that had sunk with the Spanish galleon *Nuestra Senora de la Limpia y Pura Concepcion*. The ship had foundered in 1641 during a violent hurricane on the ominously-named coral reef *Abreojos* ("Open your Eyes"), 85 miles

north of the Dominican Republic. The wreck had become the Holy Grail for generations of grizzled divers, but only one had found it. William Phips, a 17th-century Massachusetts shipbuilder and merchant, combed the area only 46 years after the wreck with Indian divers who held their breath for prodigious lengths of time, and recovered 32 tons of silver. Phips had hauled up only 13% of the *Concepcion's* treasure. And no one else—not Jacques Cousteau or veteran treasure salvor Melvin Fisher—could locate the rest of the treasure.

Until last November. The crew that finally rediscovered the *Concepcion* was a highly professional business organization adept at raising venture capital and diving for treasure. Diver Burt Webber and investment bankers Warren Stearns and Stanley Smith, created Seaquest International, Inc., Chicago, to fund and administer the search for *Concepcion*.

"The lone treasure hunters of the past, who scraped up what money they could and dived for as long as the money lasted, have been replaced by investment bankers, tax experts, lawyers, historians, cartographers, and geologists who can pinpoint the location of a wreck."

This deep sea diving venture should bring a return-on-investment of at least five times after taxes and expenses are paid. Using the Boston investment banking firm of H.C. Wainwright & Co., Seaquest raised \$450,000 for its search. How much treasure is there? Estimates vary wildly, and, say Seaquest officials, will be determined by what prices the treasure can fetch when it is marketed. The minimum, they say, is \$40 million. The maximum: \$900 million.

These high stakes are turning treasure diving into big business. The lone treasure hunters of the past, who scraped up what money they could and dived for as long as the money lasted, have been replaced by investment bankers, tax experts, lawyers, historians, cartographers, and geologists who can pinpoint the location of a wreck. The new treasure hunts are routinely financed by limited partnerships; the diving crews, the boats, the sand blowers, and magnetometers, and the ambitious marketing programs once the treasure is found, all require big money—a minimum of \$750,000 to search for a shipwreck and another \$50,000 a month to salvage its contents, according to treasure hunters.

Burt Webber is president. The 36-year old treasure hunter had learned to dive in stone quarries near his home in landlocked Pennsylvania, and had sold encyclopedias and worked in a brick factory to support his treasure hunting habit. After 17 years of diving for treasure, he had never done better than break even. But he and a rival diver, Jack Haskins, joined forces and began researching the logs of *Concepcion* hunters before them, Haskins making several trips to study the Archives of the Indies in Seville, Spain. Webber thought the wreck and its treasure could be theirs if on-

ly he could find backers to finance his research and several months of diving.

When Webber hooked up with the Chicago investment bankers Stearns and Smith, it occurred to them that treasure salvaging could be more than a string of separately-financed ventures. It could be a business, a smooth-running, moneymaking machine of historians poring over ships' logs and nautical maps in search of promising wrecks; scientific committees analyzing the probabilities of success; company administrators overseeing the salvaging of several wrecks simultaneously and signing contracts with various Caribbean governments; and divers setting out on new expeditions even as the coins and treasure were being hauled in from others.

"The company we founded decided to go after targets of opportunity, much as an oil prospector would do," says Stearns, using what has become a frequently-cited analogy to wildcat oil exploration.

Skeptical, but intrigued by the investment possibilities, Stearns sent a geologist friend on a visit to Webber's Annville, Pa., home, "to see if he was a nut, or what." When the friend returned, giving Webber a clean bill of mental and professional health, Stearns and Smith decided to help Webber raise the money—and to create Seaquest International, Inc. as a limited partnership.

It took two tries to find the ship. Webber first set out from Puerto Plata in the Dominican Republic in January, 1977, backed by \$250,000 from 25 investors—raised by Stearns, Smith and Wainwright & Co. The investors were primarily Chicago businessmen, and most were as skeptical as Stearns had been: "Everyone thought it was a big risk, and so did I," Stearns says, "but I think we all have a little bit of Long John Silver in us."

But Webber's first search was in vain. The divers found 13 other wrecks, considered none of them commercially salvageable, and turned the few artifacts they did find over to the Dominican government. The partners in the expedition lost everything they'd invested. Stearns says he was philosophical about the loss: "Nobody should get into this game unless they are willing to take the money they put up on the first day and say it's lost," he says.

"Most people who are into this are 70% bracket tax payers."

Far from discouraged, Webber and the bankers were more determined than ever to transform Seaquest from a sponsor of a single treasure-hunting venture into a business. They hired the former president of Allied Van Lines, Jack Schang, as vice president and general manager. They added scientific experts, bought a larger vessel, and raised more money—\$450,000—for a second try. The group's determination to use expanded research and technology paid off. This time they set to sea with a 112-ft. converted British minesweeper. Webber carried with him the precise compass points at which Phips had found the *Concepcion* in 1687, which a British historian had found when he unearthed

Phips' ship's log.

Webber also had a sensitive \$16,000 Cesium magnetometer that he had helped modify so it could be used underwater to detect metal from the ship, giving a far more precise reading than surface-towed devices. The five ft.-long rod, with its magnetic apparatus sealed in a plexiglass housing, proved invaluable. Maneuvering through the jagged coral, Webber says, was "like trying to fly an airplane through a pine forest." No one had ever been able to bring a magnetometer close enough to the *Concepcion* to find a ship that had lost its anchors, had only nonmagnetic, bronze cannons, and whose only detectable metal were ship fittings and assorted armaments.

Webber and the investment bankers were so sure of success this time that they persuaded most of the investors who had lost their money the first time to invest again, many doubling their shares to \$20,000 each. This time, the risk paid off.

Webber found the *Concepcion* on November 27, 1978, two days after his second search had begun. The first item found was a nondescript, to the inexperienced eye, shard of pottery. Webber immediately recognized it as a piece of a 17th-century Spanish olive jar. Next came pieces of ballast rock, iron rings and fittings, more rocks, more fragments of olive jars, and finally a silver incense burner, china coins—enough treasure to move the usually matter-of-fact Webber to shout to his

fellow divers, "It's just like Christmas every day."

"Investors will probably receive a return of five times their investment when the operation is over"

Webber radioed the good news, in code, to his lawyer in Palm Beach, who called Smith in Chicago. Neither had the code sheet that would have told them the "Z1ZG2" meant "Positive identification of wreck; treasure already recovered," but, says Smith, "There was not a doubt in our minds. I went to Warren Stearns' apartment, and left a message taped to his front door," Smith recalls. "It said 'Z1ZG2.' And when he came home that night, we sang and danced and chatted till sunrise, and made plans to fly down the following day. We greeted the ship along with a group of investors as it pulled into Puerto Plata, and within hours we were looking at what appeared to be thousands of pieces of eight, silver artifacts, and Ming porcelain. Half of us were walking on air."

Schang says the investors will probably receive a return of five times their investment when the operation is over, but that's still a while off. Webber estimated that the salvaging won't be finished until the end of 1980. And then the task will begin of assessing for tax purposes the value of the treasure stored in a Santo Domingo armory, which is sure to be a delicate

When Salvage Is Destruction

When is salvage of underwater relics "legitimate" and when is it simply "self-serving destruction?" The answer no doubt is as murky as the waters of the New York bight, however the salvage effort conducted by Burt Webber (described in the adjacent article) surely qualifies as "legitimate." Webber was the modern day discoverer of the wreck. It was buried beneath centuries of coral growth, 85 miles from the nearest land, and the treasure aboard will indeed be of interest to historians, geographers, and the average guy on the street.

Conversely, we would classify salvage as "self-serving destruction," when a diver cuts up a wreck which he did not discover, when the pieces he retrieves have limited historical value or public interest, and when the wreck had been visited previously by interested sport divers who had come only to observe. Recently, we ran across an article from the *Washington Post* which described a salvage effort fitting this classification by a Virginia sport diver, Dave Bluett, who spent a year pulling off the propeller of one of the German U-Boats at rest off the coast of North Carolina. Other divers complained about his defacing the wreck, but according to the *Post*, Bluett defended himself by claiming that he was performing a service for those who can't dive to see such treasures: "Now instead of just a handful of divers," he said, "almost anyone can see it."

There are probably three billion people in this world who will never get the opportunity to see the Washington monument either, but so far the government has prohibited public-spirited citizens from cutting it up piece-by-piece to tote around the world for exhibit. Aside from a few closet Nazi freaks, there can't be too many people who would drive across town to view a five-foot high, three-bladed propeller that looks the same as any other five-foot high, three-bladed propeller. Had Bluett brought up the entire U-Boat, intact, we would have no quarrel. But Bluett, and hundreds of other divers who believe they have the right to cut up anything they find underwater, regardless of how other people feel about it, are in the slow process of destroying a marvelous piece of history of the North Carolina Coast as well as in other parts of the world.

We must be thankful that our sport divers-cum-salvors have never been permitted to charge into the waters of Truk Lagoon with their acetylene torches and power chisels. Only a junk pile would remain. Surely, but a handful of divers will ever get the chance to visit Truk's World War II relics, but those who do will be sure to see them touched only by the gentle hands of Davy Jones. The rest of the world will have to be content with viewing the haunting films and photographs of Truk's graveyard for the Japanese Navy. To sensitive souls, the skilled shots of Al Giddings or the Cousteau camera crew is far more impressive than a torched propeller on the wall of an obscure Virginia museum.

act of balancing the estimates of the Dominican assessor, Sequest's assessor, and the third assessor that probably will be called in to reconcile the differences.

The wreck was found in what American and British law consider international waters, but the Dominican Republic didn't see it that way. "We thought it best not to argue," Schang says, and Sequest agreed to pay taxes of between 46% and 52% depending on the assessed value of what they salvage, in exchange for exclusive rights to salvage the *Concepcion*. They also received the protection of a Dominican gunboat, a handy asset that has more than once dissuaded other ships from joining in the treasure-salvaging. The Dominican Republic also reserved the right to buy as much of the treasure as it wants for display in the national museum.

Sequest expects the current tide of publicity to help market the *Concepcion*. The *Concepcion* expedition will be the subject of an hour-long CBS documentary and the treasure will be exhibited in Chicago's Shedd Aquarium from June to September 1980. Webber says there are plans for a traveling museum exhibit, "similar to King Tut."

But the future of treasure-hunting is clouded by heated struggles over possession of wrecks that lie within United States territorial waters. Treasure hunter, Mel Fisher, who spent millions of dollars and witnessed the loss of four lives, including those of his son and daughter-in-law in search of the galleon *Nuestra Senora de Atocha*, has battled both the state of Florida and the federal government for possession of that sunken ship's treasure.

A U.S. federal judge and a federal appellate court in New Orleans have ruled that a redrawing of the federal/state sea borders off Florida's coast, which placed the *Atocha* in federal waters, invalidated the contract Fisher had signed with Florida years earlier. In that contract, Florida had agreed to give Fisher 75% of the artifacts in payment for salvaging the wreck, and keep 25% for the state's museums. The federal court ordered the state to return the 25%, valued at \$2.5 million by Fisher and \$250,000 by the state (giving an idea of the vast differences in treasure assessments), to Fisher; and appeal by the state is still pending.

Fisher says he believes the state and federal governments are trying to get in on the treasure he has worked long and hard to salvage. But the state, in the person of Sonny Cockrell, a state underwater archeologist in Florida's Underwater Archeological Research Section, says any wrecks found within state limits—in Florida's case, three miles into the Atlantic and 10.4 miles into the Gulf of Mexico—belong to the state. "Anyone who wants to work a shipwreck can contact the state," he says, but they must be willing to leave Florida its 25% share. To make sure no one pockets souvenirs, Cockrell sends trained technicians out on every state-contracted salvage expedition in state waters.

The federal government considers all wrecks within its territorial waters—between 3 and 12 miles out—to

belong to the public. Until the appellate court ruled in favor of Mel Fisher, the government assumed that the 1906 Antiquities Act protected them as historic sites. There was no precedent to support such an application of the act, the court said; the government would have to get itself a new law dealing specifically with the shipwreck issue.

That's exactly what the Interior Department intends to do with the National Historic Shipwreck Act it hopes to have before Congress in the spring. The bill would place all wrecks of U.S. origin (Spanish galleons would be excluded) found in U.S. territorial waters under federal jurisdiction, giving the government the right to decide which would be salvaged and which protected.

The Carter Administration opposes another bill introduced by Rep. Charles E. Bennett (D.-Fla.) which would give the federal government jurisdiction over state waters, too. But the debate over whether sunken wrecks are sites ripe for prospecting, or irreplaceable repositories of archeological information, is sure to affect hopeful treasure entrepreneurs.

Smith angrily repudiates any hints that Sequest is pirating antiquities. "We have excavated our site more carefully than any government team could," he says. "We have the site so well gridded and documented that if it were worth it, we could probably put it back the way it was."

None of the jurisdictional haggling affects Sequest, which is salvaging the *Concepcion* outside U.S. waters. "The wrecks we are contemplating salvaging would not be within U.S. territorial waters either," says Schang. "We are going after the highest potential wrecks, and other salvors have gotten to those wrecks around the U.S. first."

Sequest officers say their relationship with the Dominican government has been excellent; there has been just one rumble of dissent, when a communist

When Should My Issue Arrive?

We get letters wondering why issues don't arrive "on time." Now and then we're a little late, now and then the Post Office gets backed up (as it is right now) and now and then someone forgets to renew.

But, the "normal" arrival date for *Undercurrent* is different than for other publications. Check the cover month. The arrival time, depending upon in which part of the United States or Canada in which you live, should be the first two weeks of the following month. This issue (January) is being mailed a couple of days late. Nevertheless, if it arrives in your hands by mid-February it is on time. Of course our mailing schedule doesn't affect your subscription; you'll receive eleven issues (November and December are combined) regardless of when they arrive.

newspaper accused the Americans of profiteering off the Dominican wreck, and the Dominican army colonel who is their liaison was charged with pocketing gold.

Sequest officers admit that treasure hunting still is highly speculative, more so than oil wildcatting. "More money has been lost than recovered, in the aggregate," Smith conceded, "because nobody ever approached it as a business until Seaquest. Everyone else

structured it like a weekend club: 'Let's get together and do something.'

"But I believe there have been a number of successful treasure hunters," he said. "We certainly are among them."

This article, written by Barbara Brotman, was reprinted from the November, 1979, issue of Venture, the Magazine for Entrepreneurs, by special permission. © 1979, Venture Magazine, Inc.

Wishes For The Eighties:

From The People Who Make The Dive Industry Go Round

The 1970s have been dramatic years of change for sport diving. Regulator quality has leaped forward. The percentage of women in the sport has increased markedly. Wet suits come in colors. Buoyancy compensators have replaced snorkling vests and automatic inflation is commonplace. The certification agencies now talk to each other. Two new national publications have become established. The J-valve has given way to the submersible pressure gauge. Spearfishing is out and photography is in. What was once only a fantasy of most divers—to dive tropical reefs—has become a reality for thousands—perhaps hundreds of thousands.

Indeed, it's been quite a decade.

But what are the wishes for the eighties? We decided to telephone a few people with a stake in the diving industry and ask the question, "What would you like to see happen in the dive industry in the 1980s?" Here's what they told us:

Bob Smith, National Scuba Training Director, YMCA: "How about an effective bail-out system for less than \$125. That would eliminate the need for any emergency ascents."

Ernie Krumbein, Owner, Diver's World, Key Largo: "An increase in the number of open water dives from two to four before certification. I would also like to see permanent buoys established in Pennecamp so that the reefs would be protected from dropped anchors."

Steve Blount, Editor, Sport Diver Magazine: "More women in the sport, more comfortable equipment, more respect for the environment and a more humane attitude toward sea life."

John Gaffney, Executive Director, NASDS: "Eliminate cross-over certification for instructors, eliminate any advertising or sales of life support equipment by mail order and require a safe second stage (octopus rig) in all instruction."

Sam Davison, President, Dacor: "Continued growth in the diving industry. More resorts promoting, teaching diving, instead of just renting equipment to vacationers."

Kevin Wong, Owner, Anchor Shack, Hayward, CA: "Diving instruction is too drawn out. I would like to

see open water classes earlier in the instruction with the technical aspects of the theory to be completed only after the open water experience. I would also like to see new leadership emerge, on all levels, of people who grew in the sport in the 1970s rather than those from the 1950s."

Dave Brock, Owner, Go Diving Tours: "I'd like to see less politics and greater cooperation in education between the training agencies."

Dennis Graver, Director of Training, PADI: "I would like to see the elimination of the basic card and have the open water certification as the minimum. And, if we can learn to keep people warm when diving—we need to provide warmth rather than just maintain body heat—we will increase safety."

What About Sport Divers? An Undercurrent Contest

In the accompanying article, you'll note that all the people we've quoted make a living at diving. What about you sport divers who pay the bills?

What would you like to see in the 1980s? What are your wishes for travel? Equipment? Training?

We're going to send a \$25 check and a year's subscription to *Undercurrent* to the subscribers who send us the best answers. One award to a serious response and one to a humorous response. For the three runners-up we'll also extend your subscription for one year. The winners will have their answers printed, along with those of the runners-up and any honorable mentions we award.

So, if there is anything you want to tell the industry—in 50 words or less—let us hear from you. The contest is open only to subscribers, their spouses and children, and entries must be received by March 25, 1980. Send them to Ben Davison, *Undercurrent* Editorial Offices, Post Office Box 1658, Sausalito, California, 94965.

Paul Tzimoulis, Editor and Publisher, Skin Diver Magazine: "I'd like to see someone come up with a pocket calculator for doing repetitive dive calculations."

Capt. Steve Klem, Owner, Key Largo: "More emphasis on safety with more open water instruction before certification."

Ken Brock, Executive Director, NAUI: "A change in basic attitudes toward an awareness for continued training in and out of the classroom. If a diver goes to a new area, I would like him to check with local divers to learn about the conditions and, if possible, dive with a local diver. Just because you are certified doesn't mean you can handle every situation. There is a big difference between shore diving in California and boat diving in Florida."

C.C., Travel Editor, Undercurrent: "Ten more years of anonymity."

Dick Bonin, President, Scubapro: "Increased diving travel and emphasis upon the social activities of the sport; more public exposure through all media to the inimitable excitement of diving; and increased diver safety and comfort through equipment simplification."

Elmer Munk, Owner, Elmer's Watersports, Evans-ton, Ill.: "I'd like the certification groups to get together and have a standardized program. Also a time limit on C-cards like driver's licenses. If you haven't been diving for 5-10 years you should have to brush up on the skills."

John Cronin, President, U.S. Divers: "Expanded and more comprehensive training, but training that is more interesting to the student. Less emphasis upon formulas and more on the skills and fun of diving. More resorts with training capabilities and good facilities. Lighter equipment for easier portability and use."

Bob Hollis, President, Farallon/Oceanic: "I don't want a repeat of the 74-75 business year. I would like to see some way to promote diving to attract more people, and then somehow to keep more people in the sport once they've started."

Cathy Church, Photographer: "Much more conservation: protection of the reefs and less picking up of goodies by divers."

Jim Church, Photographer's Model: "A submersible strobe light, with modular repair units, so it can be repaired quickly in the field."

Carl Roessler, President, See and Sea Travel: "I'd like to see the market expand, although I'm pretty happy with our phase of diving; I would like to see less military action around the world, especially near the good dive sites."

Ralph Shamlian, President, Tekna: "Streamline instruction to minimize the time it takes to certify a safe diver; simplify and create a systems approach to equipment to reduce the number of individual items a diver has to contend with, and manufacture lighter and smaller equipment."

Ed Brown, Publisher, Undercurrent: "An end to xerox machines."

Inflatable Dive Boats

Advantages, Disadvantages and Tips on Buying

Inflatable boats are naturals for sport divers. Most, when deflated, can fit in the trunk of a car to be transported to a dive site. Most are light enough to be carried easily. In the water, they are stable and safe. They are tough enough to withstand rugged conditions, but can be patched easily if one of the compartments ruptures. And when the trip is over they can be deflated and stored in a hall closet.

Determining which is the best model for you is not easy. At last count, 134 different models were available in the United States and new models are being introduced regularly. No one can keep abreast with the changes and no one can test them all. Not long ago an *Undercurrent* staffer had the opportunity to spend the good part of a day testing, in one fashion or another, fourteen inflatables that seem particularly suited to scuba diving. Here is his report:

Although my editor was quick to list the advantages of inflatables, I must temper his enthusiasm by listing a few disadvantages. A small inflatable takes about 10-15 minutes of foot pumping to fill and assemble,

while the larger ones may take a half-hour or so. They give a wetter ride than hard boats and do not row well if a motor fails. But they indeed have advantages for local diving, and I know divers who take their own inflatables to Cayman, rent a small motor, and avoid the cost of guides and the hordes of tourists—not to mention getting themselves to those out-of-the-way virgin dive spots the tourists never reach.

When determining the size of the boat you need, remember that two divers carry equipment whose weight and bulk add the equivalent of two more divers. And you ought to have the space for another person who stays above while you're below, a cardinal rule of diving, not only so the boat doesn't drift away inadvertently, but also to prevent pirateering. (If you still scoff at keeping someone in the dive boat while you dive, go back and read "Lost at Sea in the July, 1979 issue of *Undercurrent*"). For maximum safety and comfort, two divers will find that a boat designed for five passengers is the optimal size.

Inflatables come in two basic models: the dinghy and

the sportboat. The dinghy, about 8 to 14 feet, usually has a soft floor, with provision for an optional motor mount to hold up to a 10 hp motor. The dinghy is suitable for divers with limited storage space, for those who wish to stay within five-or-so miles from the point of launch, or for those who intend other uses, including river-running or using it as a sailboat tender. Because the dinghy has smaller chambers than the sportboat, it is usually much easier to enter from the water. Most sport divers find that a larger dinghy is adequate for their needs.

"Money-wise divers organize a partnership to purchase their inflatable, charging the users a \$5-\$20/day fee to cover maintenance, licensing, and depreciation."

The sportboat, normally between 14 and 17 feet long, has both a keel, either an air chamber or constructed from marine plywood, and a fixed transcom which, depending upon the boat and manufacturer, may hold a motor as large as 100 hp. The larger the boat (they may weigh more than 300 lbs) the greater the storage problem and the more time it takes to get it ready for use. Some inflatables are so large, they are inflated prior to departure and taken by trailer to the launch site. The sport boat is suitable for large groups of divers or divers with excessive photographic or salvage equipment, for those who need more powerful motors to travel long distances to dive sites, and for those who wish to tow water skiers.

Although the price of dinghies begins at \$700, most find that they require a 10-12 foot minimum length, at a price of \$1,200 and upwards, and that with the addition of a motor and accessories the price quickly reaches \$2,000. The large Zodiac, at the top of the price list, retails for roughly \$5,500. Money-wise divers organize a partnership to purchase their inflatable, charging the users a \$5-\$20/day fee to cover maintenance, licensing, and depreciation. Well-maintained used inflatables seemed to sell for roughly what the owners originally paid. By charging partners a users fee, the more one uses a boat the more one pays for the depreciation or the loss of value due to inflation.

Of the fourteen boats I was able to preview, the Campways seemed to be the best of the lower-priced models. It is readily available at sportshops throughout the country. Bonair Boats seemed to be a good bet in the middle range; they are available only by mail order and major repairs can be handled only by shipping the boat back to the factory. One advantage of the Bonair Boats was their suspended seat construction which,

Inflatable Boat Construction

An inflatable boat is made of impermeable fabric fashioned into air-tight chambers. When pumped full of air, the boat is sufficiently rigid to hold passengers gear, and a sizeable outboard motor. The fabric, of course, must resist cuts, punctures and abrasions, not deteriorate under the ultraviolet rays of the sun, and be unaffected by chemicals, including gasoline.

Many inflatable boats are manufactured in Europe, where coated fabrics originated with tire manufacturers. Nylon, coated with neoprene, is the most common, but nylon tends to remain stretched if the boat is over-inflated, destroying the shape and handling of the boat. Some manufacturers have solved this problem by putting an over-inflation valve on their boats, while others use a polyester fabric, which tends to return to its original shape.

Neoprene is highly scuff-resistant, but Dupont claims its "Hypalon" has six times the resistance, so some manufacturers use Hypalon both as a coating and fabric. Nearly all inflatables in this country are manufactured from polyester fabric coated with poly-vinyl chloride (PVC). Inflatable boat users find that PVC has a tendency to crack, but a little sanding and an application of a PVC paint quickly restores the surface.

Seam construction is the critical point of inflatable manufacturing. Two techniques are acceptable. For a butt seam, the material is pulled together at 90° to the surface, for the lap seam the material is overlapped; both are sealed with heat or glue or a combination of the two. The edge seam is simple and inexpensive, similar to the seam on wet suits; the edges are pulled together and glued. It is unsuitable for a heavy-duty boat. Because many of the manufacturers cover the seams with tape for additional support, it may be difficult to determine the exact seam used, although the butt seam leaves a fringe and the lap seam is raised and can usually be felt through the tape. One should ask the salesperson for specifics, especially if buying an inexpensive model.

when compared to inflated seats, provided more comfort and storage room beneath. Avon and Zodiac, top-of-the-line boats, have earned their handsome reputation. Both have an extensive service network. These are the boats for the professionals.

Dear Undercurrent:

A New Service For Our Subscribers

Each week we get letters from our readers complain-

ing that a product they had purchased has not lived up

to their expectations, that it malfunctioned, that a repair took an inordinately long time, or that they felt mistreated by a manufacturer. Sometimes the writer overstates his case, but often he uncovers a problem which has a general interest to consumer/divers.

We've decided this month to kick off a column which will appear as often as we receive letters of general interest to other divers. If you have a problem or complaint about a dive product or a dive service, send us the facts. We'll contact the company and get their end of the story. When appropriate, we'll publish your letter and the response—and extend your subscription to *Undercurrent* for a year for taking the time to raise the issue.

We won't be able to handle all letters, and if the manufacturer comes out on top we'll publish that too (Oh, you should hear the complaints from the company about the unreasonable demands of turkey divers!) But if you have a bitch, let us hear from you. Here is this month's letter:

Dear Undercurrent:

I am writing concerning an equipment flaw about which you might want to alert your readers. The design defect is in Oceanic Farallon #2000 strobe. Via a micro-leakage, the screws on the front port eventually corrode with subsequent expansion. This is followed by "cracking" of the lexan allowing flooding on the front port.

In an accompanying letter to Oceanic, I addressed myself to the problem and asked for their comments. They returned the strobe, repaired, at no charge, without answering my note. I have no real gripes with the company; their service is reasonably good and most

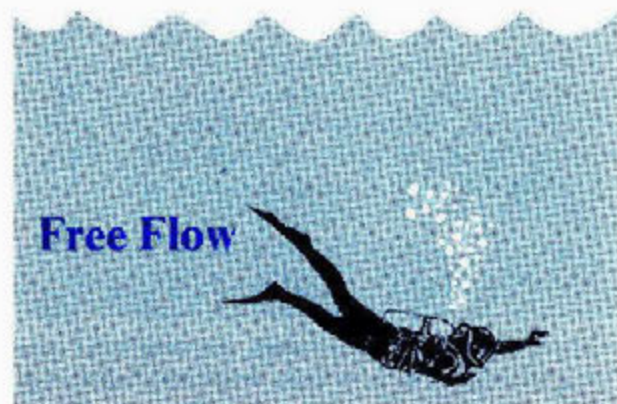
of their equipment holds up well. I feel, however, that they, as a responsible manufacturer, have an obligation to inform the owners of the 2000 strobe defect and to correct it.

Sincerely,
Bob Bachand
Norwalk, Conn.,
September 25, 197

We called Oceanic and spoke with Production Manager Rick Fisher, who acknowledged the problem with the 2000, and said Oceanic did not know how many of the defective units had reached the public. Fisher explained that the automatic screwdrivers used to assemble the front port had inadvertently applied too much pressure when tightening the screws, thereby slightly cracking the lexan port. Water could seep into the cracks, corroding the screws and causing them to expand, further cracking the lexan and permitting water to flood the front port. Once the problem was discovered, Fisher said, they replaced the errant screwdrivers with automatic screwdrivers which applied appropriate torque.

Fisher apologized for not explaining the problem to Bachand, saying that it was an oversight of the Customer Service Department, and noted that Bachand had himself indicated the repair was satisfactory. Any diver with cracks in his Oceanic 2000, Fisher said, can return it for free repair. Their address is 133 Old County Road Belmont, CA 94002.

Send your complaints to *Undercurrent*, P.O. Box 1658, Sausalito, California, 94965. We may not have the staff to check out every complaint, but we'll do our best.



If you're a visitor in Los Angeles and don't care to brave the cold and murky water off county beaches, you might find pleasure breezing through a little snorkel run within the confines of Marineland. Snorkeling with a guide is permitted along an 80 yard course in their tropical aquarium where, in the 72° water, you may see bat rays, nurse sharks, guitarfish, garibaldi, yellow tail, and other residents of the reefs of the Caribbean, Hawaii, Sea of Cortez or California.

Nearly 2,500 fish swim about artificial staghorn, elkhorn and brain coral. Though it's no substitute for a tropical dive, it's a great way to introduce a child to the marvels of the underwater world. For a \$2.75 fee (admission to Marineland is additional) one gets snorkeling instruction, equipment, swimsuits, wet suits, and afterwards, a shower and a towel.

Would you like a footnote in a new book on underwater critters? If you have heard seals converse with each other, seen crabs raising their claws to communicate to their brethren, observed unusual behavior at cleaning stations, or had a fish direct you to a hidden treasure, than author Robert F. Burgess would like to hear from you. Burgess, who has already had nine books on underwater topics published (*The Man Who Rode Sharks; Man, 12,000 Years Under the Sea; Gold, Galleons, and Archaeology, et. al.*), is collecting data for a new book on the secret languages of sea life. If you've observed underwater communication between marine life, send the details of your experience to Burgess, POB 485, Chattahoochee, FL 32324, and if he uses the material you'll get the credit—right there for all your friends to see.