

## Forward

The first book about Diver Down, *Diver Down: A Sailing Saga*, was published in 2009. It was offered as a history of the sailing Vessel Diver Down and the crew who sailed aboard her. My hope was to prepare the reader for the realities of outfitting a blue water sailing craft, keeping her fit enough to survive Mother Nature's worst and then negotiating the hazards of approach to an unknown anchorage. I can assure you reality smacked the crew of Diver Down square in the face more than once and it was that reality I wanted to share. As it turned out, our reality may have been too much for some readers.

One reviewer, expecting stories of great diving adventures, accused me of shattering her dream of sailing the seven seas. Among other things, I was accused, perhaps correctly, of complaining about the "routine maintenance" of a cruising sail boat. In my own defense, my complaints were about breakdowns that became entirely too routine but the reader had made her point and given me the inspiration for another book.

This effort will forego the smack in the face reality of breakdowns on lee shores, un-forecasted storms at sea, incorrect charts, and noseums. Instead it will offer what at least one of my readers was looking for. Diver Down and her crew did, indeed, experience a great many wonderful diving experiences during our eleven years together. We dove in as many places as we could fly, swim and sail; as far north as Desolation Sound in Canadian British Columbia, as far south as Mazatlan, as far East as the Bahamas and as far west as the Great Barrier Reef (even further south than Mazatlan).

For the dreamers I now offer a glimpse of what you can look forward to after you survive the storm at sea, make your repairs, and carefully pick your way through the hidden and uncharted rocks to a new dive site. Please enjoy.

Arthur Thompson

In the motor coach, "Clyde", land yachting somewhere in North America.

## Contents

Forward .....	1
Chapter 1 –Monastery Beach .....	2
Chapter – The First Diver Down .....	10
Chapter –Food For the Table .....	18
A Very Brief Note on Underwater Cameras.....	22
Santa Cruz and the Pinnacles.....	25
Puget Sound to Desolation Sound .....	38
San Diego to Cabo.....	40
La Paz .....	41
Isla Rokas.....	41
Isla San Francisco .....	41
Honeymoon Cove.....	43
Spearing Vicki’s Bug .....	43
Other Baja Dive Sites.....	43
Palmyra .....	44
Pango Pango .....	47
Western Samoa.....	47
Fiji.....	47
New Caledonia .....	47
The Great Barrier Reef .....	47

## Chapter 1 –Monastery Beach

I have owned three boats in my life, not counting various dinghies and skiffs. The first was a truly ugly, very used 16 foot runabout. I water skied behind it as much as I dove under it. Taking it out to sea was done only on the calmest of days and then only when the forecast was for minimum winds. To be

caught even in the normal afternoon winds off any coast in a small open boat is to invite waves and spray into your vessel.

But on the calm days just off the coast of practically anywhere, one can find a good place for a scuba dive. Much of the time the closer one gets to the shoreline the more the water is churned up and the visibility diminished, even on a calm day. But with a boat, one can easily reach the dive sites that only Navy Seals are fit enough to swim to.

My first scuba lesson was done by a friend who, although a certified diver, was very much not a certified diving instructor. Neither he nor I thought that anything to be concerned about and since I am still around telling this tale many years later, it is obvious that both of us were capable of learning from our mistakes.

I possessed life saving certificates, had done a great deal of free diving in Panama and was very comfortable under water. I practiced breathing through a regulator in a swimming pool until I was reasonably comfortable, then off to the ocean we went.

A very picturesque Monastery run by the Carmelite Nuns sits on the side of a hill overlooking California's Highway 1, just south of Carmel. The highway passes directly by the beach and the cove is full of kelp beds in relatively shallow water that are a very short and easy swim.

Officially the beach is named Carmel River State Beach but divers have appropriately named it Monastery Beach. It is a very popular weekend dive site and in most years the site of at least one diving accident.

Carl and I put on our gear and headed for the nearest kelp bed. I was fascinated and probably addicted to diving from that day onward. Visibility was 30 or 40 feet, excellent for that location and I got my first look at a bed full of *Macrocystis*, otherwise known as giant kelp.

It seemed a very short time before my buddy grabbed the pressure gauge on my scuba rig, pointed to it to get my attention and pointed to the surface. The dial was in the red zone near zero and it was obvious that the air in my tank was running low and it was time to return to the beach.

In this kelp bed the author does his first scuba dive.  
Photo courtesy Carmelite Nuns



On a normal day, the wind and surf are calm in the morning but as the winds begin to build in early afternoon, the waves and surf begin to build as well. There was a small surf running when we entered the water around noon but during our dive the wind had begun its predictable rise.

Anyone who has experienced the surf line at Monastery beach will tell you that the beach is quite steep and that the incoming waves can become quite steep as well. When they break, the waves very nearly fall straight down upon the unsuspecting diver. That is, of course, what happened to me.

I dutifully inflated my buoyancy compensator and swam straight through the surf line. At my stage of training, being on the surface seemed the safest thing to do. Of course, that also meant being dumped nearly on my head as the wave broke straight down. Your's truly did a face plant in the gravel beach, had his diving mask ripped off and the regulator torn from his mouth.

To add to my indignity, the surf immediately began dragging me back out to sea. That might have been a relief had it given me time to find my regulator and catch a breath of air. But the next wave was already breaking directly on top of me and I was now being rolled around underneath it. I could barely see; no mask, nor could I breathe; no regulator. I was beginning to close in on panicsville.

Luckily there was just enough time after a wave dumped on me and before it drug me back down into the bottom of the surf line to enable a quick breath. During one of those breaths I managed to find my regulator and jam it back into my mouth. The truth is probably more like the regulator banged me on the nose hard enough to get my attention and I got lucky and grabbed hold of it.

Eventually, the small wave in the sets came through and was not quite big enough to drag me all the way back down the beach. Very tired, badly battered and thoroughly frightened, I crawled up the beach, took off my equipment and began to wonder why it was I really wanted to do this diving thing. My diving mask soon appeared, rolling around in the surf line.

Not being an instructor, Carl could offer little help. Neither of us really understood why I had had so much trouble. I remember sitting on the beach staring at the surf and trying to work up the courage to try it again. I finally decided to just go back in with only my wet suit, mask and fins. If nothing else, I reasoned, the buoyancy of the wet suit would pop me up to the surface often enough to breathe.

Screwing my courage up, I went back in and managed to do a few exits and entries without all the rolling around under the surf. At the end of the day, I had at least a small part of my confidence back but the following week I signed up for scuba classes at the shop a few blocks away from my apartment. Faith in Carl's instructor skills was non-existent but I had survived a violation of lesson number one: Get lessons from a certified diving instructor!

It took a few years to master scuba diving but I eventually became a NAUI Assistant Instructor and a YMCA Instructor. I never forgot my first experience at Monastery Beach; it had been pummeled into me. Every basic dive class I taught did their last dive at Monastery Beach and I made certain they knew exactly how to do the entry and exit without having to experience the bash and crash under the surf line!

If you have never been to a steep beach with a breaking surf line here is the procedure that will give you the easiest entry and exit:

Rule #1: Crawl! Crawl in and crawl out. As little as one foot of surf can easily knock down a diver laden with 50-60 pounds of equipment.

Rule #2: Stay on the bottom! If you are firmly planted on the bottom, you can continue crawling and prevent being rolled over in the surf line. If you are on the bottom when the surf breaks over you, you can't be slammed into the bottom, you're already there; much less damage to the body.

Rule #3: One hand for your regulator, the other for your mask. If you can see and breathe, rational though is still a possibility.

Rule #4: Know your limits. Surf can kill. I would not consider it safe for even an experienced diver to attempt a steep beach with more than a six foot high break. That is a huge amount of force. While the

entry may be safe enough, the exit is more difficult and what will you do if the winds and surf increase while you are out diving?

On entry, try to time your swim for the time when a wave breaks over you. Kick hard and swim out under the surf. On a steep beach you will have less than a ten foot swim to clear the surf line. Three or four hard kicks with fins on and you can safely surface and hook up with your dive buddy.

When exiting through a surf line try to time your exit for the smallest waves in the set. There will usually be 5-7 waves in a set. As soon as the largest wave passes by, head for the bottom and kick as hard as you can toward the beach. Grab your mask in one hand and your regulator in the other. You are about to have a wave break over you but if you time it correctly it will be the smallest wave in the set.

As the breaking wave washes up the beach, start crawling as much and as fast as you can up the beach. Worry not, another wave is coming and it may well break over you just like the first one. Be certain to keep hanging onto your mask and regulator and keep on crawling. Rarely will you be hit with more than two or three waves. Be certain to continue crawling until you reach the dry sand. That way you will know for certain you are completely out of the surf line.

Some years later, Carl, his wife Esperanza, who is probably a stronger swimmer than either of us, and I were doing a dive at Monastery beach. We had finished our scuba dive and were hanging out on the beach doing a little body surfing and watching the afternoon swells begin to rise. A number of dive teams had entered and exited but the break was growing in size and becoming much more difficult to negotiate.

Two young men in their twenties attempted an exit. Both failed to exit but managed to make it back out beyond the surf line. It soon became obvious they were in trouble. All three of us donned mask and fins and swam out to offer our help. I approached the first diver who immediately accepted my offer. I instructed him to drop his weight belt and hand his tank to Carl. He did so and with Esperanza on one side and me standing in the surf line, we quickly got him back through the surf taking care to time his exit at the smallest wave in the set. Carl took his tank and regulator in and handed it to him.

With diver one safe on the beach we swam back out. Esperanza approached diver two who refused her help but demanded that we take his equipment in for him and was indignant when we suggested that was not the safest thing for him to do. This fool though his equipment was worth more than his life.

“OK buddy, hand me your weight belt,” I told him.

He handed me the belt and oops, it fell right out of my hand and landed on the bottom. Damn if I was going to carry a 30 pound weight belt through a surf line with no tank to breath on, silly me. The guy got red in the face so Esperanza told him to deal with it by himself. If he didn't want our help, that was OK with her. We three headed for the beach.

It took maybe three seconds for the diver to realize he was helpless and call us back. We took him and his tank and regulator in tow and quickly had them up on the dry sand. We offered to go look for his weight belt but never found it. I don't recall any thanks for helping him but hey, success is its own reward. Sometimes the macho stuff just doesn't work.

I noticed some time ago that a smart inventor developed a weight belt system that just uses sand. If you need to dump your weight in a hurry, the system has pulls that open the sand bags and dump the contents. No fear of the bill for a new weight belt, just collect some more sand from the nearest beach.

## Chapter – The First Diver Down

As with all old machinery, my first boat, despite much TLC, began to develop problems. The seals in the outdrive began leaking and the water pump impeller slowly reduced the amount of cooling water it would pump into the heat exchanger. I dutifully replaced the seals and the impeller and thoroughly tested the entire system in my driveway. All temperatures were normal and the water pump seemed to be doing its job.

We now felt confident enough to plan a week at Lake Tahoe. It was a long day's drive to tow the boat across northern California but well worth the trip. We got a bit of late start but Carl, my first diving non-certified instructor, his wife Esperanza, their new son Steven, my godson and I hitched the boat to my van and off we went.

It was too late to launch on arrival but first thing in the morning we got the boat into the lake, parked the van and set off out into the lake. In less than 10 minutes steam was coming out of the engine compartment and the temperature gauge was off the scale. Something was dreadfully wrong.

We had barely cleared the no wake area around the launch ramp so it was no big deal to shut down the engine and paddle back in. Sadly, the week of diving and water skiing was shot almost before it began. It was my first effort at blue language toward a broken boat. It would not be my last.

We hauled the boat and tied it down on its trailer and spent a day playing penny slots in the casinos on the Nevada side and the following morning headed back to Silicon Valley. Just to ensure everything was

going as well as the boat engine, a CHP pulled us over for speeding. At that point our luck turned for as soon as the officer looked in the window, Esperanza propped her baby up and he turned on one of those brilliant baby grins and the officer's resolve melted on the spot.

We got a well deserved warning to slow down and finished our rather downbeat trip on an upbeat stroke of good fortune. I suggested renaming the baby "Lucky" which earned me a very dirty look from Esperanza.

Home again, I hooked the outdrive up to a garden hose and fired up the engine. Water came shooting out the side of the heat exchanger. It seems that the lining of the heat exchanger was eroded and paper thin. The pressure of the new water pump impeller was just enough to burst the lining. Unfortunately that also meant that water had flooded the cylinders.

I took the engine to a boat repair place in Mt. View and they left it sitting on their lot with the head off for nearly three weeks during which it rained several times. The service supervisor seemed very unconcerned. I hitched the boat to the back of the van and towed back home.

It took a couple of days but I got everything disconnected, pulled the engine out of the boat and loaded it and all its parts into the van and took them to a machine shop in my neighborhood. Three days later the lot were returned without the rust from sitting in the rain and with newly honed cylinders, new rings and freshly ground and seated valves.

A week later the engine and a new heat exchanger were back together and running as though nothing had ever happened. A for sale add was placed in the San Jose Mercury and that was the end of my first boat.

A new boat became a necessity or at least that is what I convinced myself of. This time, I told myself, something nearly new and thus more reliable was required. I also determined that an enclosed cabin would be much safer in open ocean and if it had camping facilities for a weekend or more, so much the better.

I began my search only to suffer a severe case of sticker shock. Boats of the kind I envisioned were well beyond my budget and I was determined not to borrow money just to have a nice boat. I continued looking.

It took a few months but an add in the paper for a foreclosure on a boat caught my eye. I took an afternoon off work and headed for a boat yard in Mountain View. There sat a nearly new 1969 Bayliner, trailer and all.

I went down my checklist: Enclosed cabin, check; camping facilities, check; command bridge with dual controls, check; inboard, outboard, check; damage, nothing obvious. My adrenaline was beginning to build. The boat met all the needs I had determined I had to have and it was in excellent condition.

The asking price was \$18,000, about \$3000 more than I had in my savings. I figured I had nothing to lose and offered \$12,500 on the spot.

“No way,” the salesman replied firmly. “This is a bank repo and no way they will let it go that cheap.”

“Well,” I drawled, “You give them my offer and let me know what they want to do.”

I had recently finished a seminar in negotiations and was trying out the “good ole boy” style. This is the one where you let them think you are some kind of hick. It is supposed to keep them off guard thinking you are a pushover.

Anyway, I handed the salesman my business card and walked off the lot. I figured my low ball offer would either be so low I never heard anything back or I would get a call with a counter offer. A couple of days later I got the call. If nothing else, I now knew the bank was willing to negotiate. I had time on my side so the odds were fairly good I could get this boat at my price.

Now I could have employed Russian negotiating tactics at this point. You know, “Nyet!” is the answer to everything that isn’t exactly what you want. But sales professionals and probably bankers know all about the Russians so I just told them exactly what I wanted.

The bank’s counter offer was for \$16,500 and I countered with \$14,500 cash on the spot. I think the word cash did the trick because we all signed the agreement and I hauled that Bayliner home.

Now the Bayliner brand may be one of the largest recreational boat builders, but they don’t necessarily make the finest quality equipment. I knew that but I also knew how to care for machinery and baring accidents over which I had no control, this boat would give me a great many good dives.

It did. We dove every good spot from Carmel Bay south to well north of Santa Cruz in Monterey bay. At least once every year in October we would trailer the boat down to Santa Barbara for the opening week of lobster season. The Channel Islands are roughly 20 miles south of Santa Barbara and I now no longer needed to pay for a berth on the Truth, the dive excursion boat we had used for many years to dive the Channel Islands. I could go where I wanted, when I wanted, Ma Nature permitting.

Before the astute and knowledgeable reader casts a cocked eye at me, let me explain what taking my own boat out to the Channel Islands meant. To get from Santa Barbara to the Channel Islands, one must cross one of the busiest shipping lanes in southern California. To do so in a single engine recreational craft might be considered a bit foolhardy though many a fool will be found anchored in and around the Channel Islands.



I usually went with a fellow boat owner who had a Penyan of a size similar to my 24 foot Bayliner. Should one of the boats develop a problem, the other was there to render assistance. A wise decision as both vessels would at one time or another have the other under tow. I even towed a very expensive commercial fishing boat, a Faralon Fisherman, whose diesel engine destroyed a valve one morning. Besides, there is comfort in numbers.

We pulled many a lobster and abalone out of San Miguel, Santa Rosa and Santa Cruz Islands. We found true black coral off the north east corner of Santa Catalina. The first Diver Down made it to all of the Channel Islands except San Nicolas and only missed that island because the Navy was there and didn't allow private vessels.

On one memorable trip nearly put the Bayliner on the rocks off Ana Capa. You can read about that night in Diver Down: A Sailing Saga. While the Bayliner was strictly a power boat, on the back side of Santa Cruz Island it lost most of the power to its propeller and was caught in winds trying to limp back to Santa Barbara. Any vessel navigating by wind is sailing, is it not?

The Bayliner got its name coming back from a dive trip to the Pinnacles. I had several of my assistant instructors on board and for something to do invited them to think of a good name for the boat. Since we were all divers, one of the assistants suggested painting the diver down flag on the stern and just calling the boat Diver Down. I don't think there was a dissenting vote, Diver Down it would be.

The first Diver Down ended its life in the middle of the Santa Barbara Channel. Well, not its entire life but certainly its life under my ownership.

Larry, the owner of Sunda, and I were headed out to the islands for the opening day of lobster season. We made a night crossing to put us on the spot we had chosen at sunrise when the season opened. Night is also a good time to find calm winds and in calm winds we made our crossing.

In the middle of the south bound shipping lane, the engine temperature began to rise. At 200 degrees I slowed the vessel and at bare steerage put the transmission in neutral, hoping to see the engine temperature go down. It did not and at 210 degrees, fearing permanent damage to the engine, I shut it off and made a radio call to Sunda.

Larry took us in tow and we finished the crossing anchored in the lee of Santa Cruz Island. Following our first lobster dive I tried to start the engine. It would not turn over at all although the starter did engage and attempt to turn the engine over.

So much for trying to save the engine, I thought, it seized anyway. Damn and double damn, we didn't find and lobster either. I began the search for the source of the engine problem by pulling a spark plug. It was wet, but not flooded by gasoline, it was covered with sea water! I pulled all 8 plugs and they all showed the same sea water.

I reinstalled the plugs and we all determined to continue our lobster hunt but on Larry's boat, not mine. Diver Down was ignominiously towed back to Santa Barbara and put back on her trailer to be deposited at the mechanic's shop in Santa Cruz. A few days later, I got the word that, indeed, all 8 cylinders had flooded with sea water due to a defective check valve in the out drive.

A couple of grand later, Diver Down was again running but events were conspiring against her. The Arab oil cartel had forced the price of gasoline through the roof. Operating a power boat was becoming a big expense. Between the cost and a growing mistrust of Diver Down's seaworthiness, I began looking for alternatives.

At the San Francisco boat show I found it. A brand new 1983 Catalina 36 sailboat. No more used boats for me. I could use the wind to reduce the cost of making a passage and theoretically could sail anywhere on the map that had access to blue water. I began to think about boats and diving from a different perspective mostly because the Catalina was big enough to live on.

The Bayliner was given in trade and a contract signed to buy the Catalina. The Bayliner was trailered to Santa Cruz and parked on the boat dealer's lot, there to sit for most of a rainy winter. I had pulled the plug in the cabin floor to make certain any rain that might enter would be drained away and gave the dealer instructions to ensure the bow was parked higher than the stern.

For whatever reason, he parked the boat bow down and put all the plugs back in. By the end of the winter there was 6 inches of water in both the engine compartment and the cabin. The bugger had the nerve to ask me to pay for repairs to all the electrical connections when it was discovered none of the electrical systems would work. I showed him a copy of the written instructions I had given him and declined to pay for his error and that is the last I ever heard of the Bayliner. It eventually disappeared from the boat dealer's lot, I know not where it went.

## **Chapter –Food For the Table**

Strangely enough I am not overly fond of eating either abalone or lobster but diving for them is one of life's great pleasures. Abalone hide on rocks and in the cracks between rocks. Lobster hide under the rocks. The sea is an abundant food source and diving for food provides for two of life's pleasures, eating and recreation.

Abalone, a mollusk, has a hard shell cover and a soft underbelly that can suck down on a rock so well that you would have to chisel the shell apart to get the ab off the rock. To catch the abalone before he glues himself to his rock, you must slide a long flat iron under his belly and very quickly pop him up off the rock. Once off the rock the abalone is defenseless and easily gotten into the catch bag.

How can an abalone hide on a rock, you ask? Let me just say that I have watched novice divers swim mere inches past many an abalone and never know it was there, even when that was exactly what the novice was looking for. It is amazing how well the abalone's shell blends into the surrounding environment.

Lobsters, on the other hand, cling to nothing. Instead, the lobster's defense is flight and a set of spines that can poke you badly if you try to grab hold of him, which, in most areas is the only legal method for a sport diver to take lobster.

There are great many species of abalone, often referred to by color. In California there are only four that are normally harvested. The biggest species is red (*Haliotis rufescens*), running to as much as 12" across the back of the shell. There are also green (*Haliotis fulgens*), pink (*Haliotis corrugata*) and black (*Haliotis cracherodii*) abalone, generally much smaller than their red cousins but to the connoisseur, better tasting .

Along the California coast, the most plentiful species of abalone is the red. In the 70's and '80s, when I dove there, you could use scuba in Southern California but only free dive in Northern California. Today, California abalone may only be taken north of San Francisco. Sad that the numbers have declined sufficiently to make it necessary but we had already noticed in the '80s that the only abalone left in Monterey Bay were very small and hidden far into cracks in the rocks. The primary cause of their decline there appeared to be the sea otter. Mollusks are a favorite food of the sea otter and with few natural predators and government protection, their numbers had increased significantly.

The *Macrocystis* plant has built in “life preservers” in the form of small bulbs that are filled with air causing the the plant to always point its leave toward the surface and sunlight. *Macrocystis* cling to rocks with their roots often called hold fasts. It is the hold fast growing tightly around a rock that keeps the giant kelp plant from floating away or being uprooted by large waves. On rare occasions, you will see a large kelp plant floating on the surface with a rock hanging from it, the poor kelp having chosen too small a rock for its anchor.

I once heard a lecture that hypothesized the reason for all the huge kelp beds in and around Monterey Bay. In the forties and fifties, when sport diving using scuba was getting its start, the kelp beds were rather sparse and the older divers will tell you that visibility in the water was much better than it is today.

The theory goes like this. In the fifties, the coast line from Santa Cruz south to Monterey and from Monterey south to Point Conception was sparsely populated. Sparse population meant that there was a fairly large population of large birds of prey who kept the sea otter populations down. Now one of the things that we know is that sea anemone love to eat the hold fasts of *Macrocystis* and in the fifties there were a lot of anemone because one of the favorite foods of Sea Otters, along with abalone is the sea anemone and there were not a lot of sea otters available to keep the anemone population down. Lastly, we know that the more *macrocystis*, the more detritous will be sloughed off to mix with land runoffs and all that detritous clouds the water, provides food for plankton blooms which also cloud the water creating poor visiblity in the water for us divers.

Tying all this together, as the human population increased along the coast line, the birds of prey migrated to the less densely populated areas, their numbers reduced to fit the food supply of the smaller areas they were in. Fewer birds of prey plus government protection meant more sea otters which resulted in a greatly diminished anemone and abalone population which, in turn, resulted in the macrocistis having an explosive growth rate. More macrocistis, less visibility.

On one memorable trip out to Santa Cruz Island with Carl, we found a spot off Gull rock and dropped the anchor. Over the side with our ab irons in hand, we found ourselves on top of one of the most prolific abalone beds I have ever seen. In less than half a tank of air we had limited out on reds. My catch bag was so full I had to tie it off to the swim platform on the back of the Bayliner. It was too heavy to lift up out of the water.

Now I am well aware that some folks reading this will accuse me of pigging out. But the truth is that abalone, like beef, can be frozen and kept for quite some time. There are usually many more dives that result in no or little catch as there are in one's legal limit. The abs were food for the table and I never took more than the game laws allowed. I was taught at a very early age not to take any animal that was not going to be eaten. Killing for fun is not fun for me but I enjoy the hunt on land and under the sea. Food for the table is a necessity and I see nothing wrong with finding a way to enjoy providing it.

Enough with philosophy, this book is supposed to be about diving. If abalone diving is your thing, the northern California coast from Point Reyes north is full of rock piles where abalone may be found, if you can get down the cliffs to the water. The area around Salt Point used to cough up an ab or two if you

could hold your breath and dive to 30 feet or so long enough to find and pop one off a rock. As I recall, we got a lot of exercise diving but never more than two or three abs. Still, a great lot of fun and wonderful way to spend a weekend.

A note of caution: follow the game laws precisely. California is full of the self appointed guardians of the sea who like nothing better than to turn a poor diver in to the game warden if they think he hasn't done it correctly. The game wardens are mostly the good guys, though I suppose they have their ten percent. Still, the hassle, a fine and confiscation of your equipment just isn't worth it. Besides, you wouldn't break the law, would you?

### **A Very Brief Note on Underwater Cameras**

About the time I acquired the Bayliner, I also acquired a clear plastic Ikelite box for my very cheap Kodak 110 camera. It was all I could afford and since I knew nothing about underwater photography, if I destroyed it, I wouldn't be out a lot. A few of the photos I took with that rig show up early in this book. I will apologize now for the poor quality but use them anyway in the hope that the reader might obtain a glimpse of the awe and beauty that is found under the sea.

My second camera showed up in the used equipment display at Steel's, a well known dive shop on El Camino Real in the heart of Silicon Valley. Steel's in Santa Clara changed its name to Wet Pleasure, moved across the street and south a few blocks and is still in business, now known as Diver Dan's Wet Pleasure. I would like to think that a good part of their success may be due to the dollars I and my many diving students spent in their shop.

The camera was a Nikonos I, the very first model that Nikonos made. I took a few photos with it and was beginning to get the hang of how it worked. Then, as it turned out, I foolishly loaned it to a “friend” who took it to the Red Sea on a diving vacation.

I gave very explicit instruction regarding the camera’s care and feeding. In particular, I cautioned the “friend” to use silicon grease on all the O rings but even more importantly to use it sparingly. I recall using the phrase, “A little dab will do ya.” I carefully demonstrated the application of silicon to the O rings. Lastly, I handed my “friend” a small tube about half the size of your little finger and told her it was enough silicon grease for a years worth of diving.

I then eagerly awaited the outrageously great photos the young lady would return with. She was a professional photographer and my expectations were high.

Some time after her return from the Red Sea, I got the long awaited call to come get my camera. Nothing about photos or anything about her trip, just come pick up the camera. On arrival at her apartment I was handed my camera and a now nearly empty tube of silicon grease.

“Your camera ruined my trip!” I was informed. “It leaked on the third dive and destroyed an entire roll of film,” she pouted.

I opened the camera to find that it still had sea water in it. It was obvious at first glance that she had completely failed to follow the instructions I had given her. Massive applications of silicon grease had cause the camera to leak. I was furious.

I took the camera and headed for the door, too upset to say anything.

“What are you going to do about it?” she demanded.

I turned to face her, my hand on the door knob and said, “First I will see if it is possible to repair the camera. Second, I will remind myself never to loan to anyone who is incapable of following even the simplest of instructions.”

I left and don't recall ever seeing or hearing from the woman again. The camera, sadly, was not repairable. I suppose a valuable lesson was learned but the cost was high; both an expensive camera and a friend were lost.

My third underwater camera was not purchased until after I had moved to Seattle. The first models of Nikonos were prone to problems and I didn't feel like I could really afford them anyway. But when the Nikonos V was released, the problems that I knew about had been dealt with and I decided to make the plunge.

A brother-in-law who lives near Portland, Oregon reported a Nikonos V on sale at a local camera store. Vicki and I used a visit weekend to buy the camera. I got several close-up lenses to go with it, completely blew the budget but came home with the underwater camera I still own and that still takes as good a photograph as I am capable of taking.

My Nikonos V has photographed the Baja, several dives in the Caribbean, Western Samoa and two dive trips to the Great Barrier Reef in Australia. My only fear is that I will soon be unable to find film for it.

Should that day arrive, I have a very nice Nikon digital camera. On our last trip to the Great Barrier Reef I noticed three of the divers had digital cameras inside clear plastic boxes just like my old Ikelite case. They were touting the ability to delete unwanted photos during a dive which seems like a very good idea. If one of those clear plastic cases is available for my camera, that will be the way I go. Back to the future, as they say.

## Cozumel

My first dive trip to the Caribbean was to the island of Cozumel of the tip of the Yucatan Peninsula. It is tropical diving with all of the variety of marine life that a coral reef can supply. Palencar Reef is quite well known as the major attraction for divers.

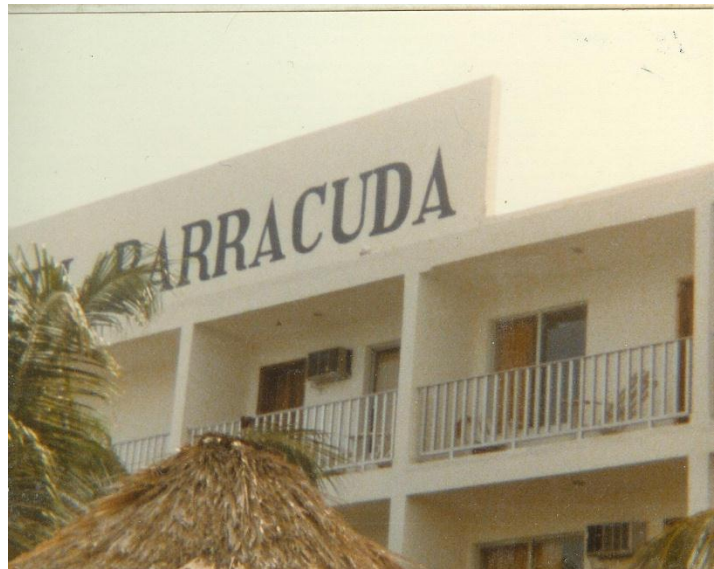


Our trip to Cozumel was one of the first organized trips outside of USA that Bill Finstad put together. Today, you can find Finstad Worldwided Diving at [www.finstad.com](http://www.finstad.com). Bill hasn't changed much, just older, like me.

I took my Ikelite case and Kodak 110 camera and got at least one photo worth remembering. Its quality reflects the amateur operator and low quality equipment, but as you can see, it is of a Mexican dive master hand feeding a spotted Morey Eel.

If you look closely, you can see the clear plastic glove the dive master is wearing. He told us that the eels didn't like the plastic and would only bite at the food. It seemed to work.

Finny had arranged accommodations at Hotel Barracuda, one of the most affordable places he could find. It was affordable because it was across the street from the local electrical generating plant. The plant used diesel engines to turn the turbines that produced electricity for the island. That, of course, meant that we



listened to the sound of diesel engines most of the night and when the wind was out of the east, breathed the exhaust. No offense Bill, I got what I could afford to pay for but sometimes affordable stinks!

The diving, however, was excellent. We made at least 3 dives every day. At noon, the dive boats stopped along the beach and anchored. We would all wade ashore and find a fish lunch waiting for us.

For the most part the dive masters were very professional but on Palancar Reef, one dive master dumped us on the deep side of the reef. Visibility was not as good as it might have been due to some higher than normal winds and the bottom could not be seen.

I was in a group of four divers. As we descended, I kept looking for the bottom and it seemed like it was a long time before we finally saw it. As soon as I saw the bottom I glanced at my depth gauge and was astonished to see it read 150 feet. For a second, I was certain I just wasn't seeing it correctly but it wouldn't change its mind.

All properly trained divers know that 150 feet can be genuinely dangerous. If you stay more than a few minutes, you must do decompression stops on the way back up and even more dangerous is the possibility of nitrogen narcosis. Nitrogen narcosis presents symptoms very much like alcohol. Vision and mental acuity are distorted. Narced out divers have been known to smile and hand their regulators to a passing fish. Nitrogen narcosis is both insidious and deadly.

I very quickly got my dive buddy's attention, pointed to her depth gauge and signaled her to follow me. She was a little slow to respond but did as I requested and I immediately swam over to the other buddy pair and pointed to their depth gauges. One just smiled at me through his regulator and the other shrugged his shoulders. Both divers were fumbling with equipment and presenting all the visible signs of narcosis.

I vigorously signaled to ascend and started up. My buddy followed and the other pair, after staring at me for a few seconds also started up. I heaved a mental sigh of relief and began monitoring ascent rate and depth gauge.

At 60 feet, we found the dive master. I think he had spotted our bubbles but no way was he going down after us. I recall being rather upset at his apparent unwillingness to go get us. I really thought he would have just waited for the bubbles to stop and then go report us missing. On later reflection, were he to also narc out trying to rescue us no good would have been accomplished, only another dead diver.

As soon as I had discovered we were as deep as we were I check my Timex Marathon watch. Surprisingly it was still working. I had the no decompression dive table memorized to 110 feet and I knew the five minute maximum was good to that depth but I didn't know what it was for 150 feet.

If figured that a decompression stop couldn't hurt and so determined to decompress for the rest of air we had in our tanks. I signaled my fellow divers to ascend to 20 feet and we swam at that depth for 10 minutes. I then went to 10 feet and stayed there until I was down to 500psi, about 12 minutes.

As soon as I started the 20 foot decompression stop, the Mexican dive master signaled me to ascend. I shook my head no and he tried again to get me to ascend. I shook my head even more vigorously no and stayed right where I was.

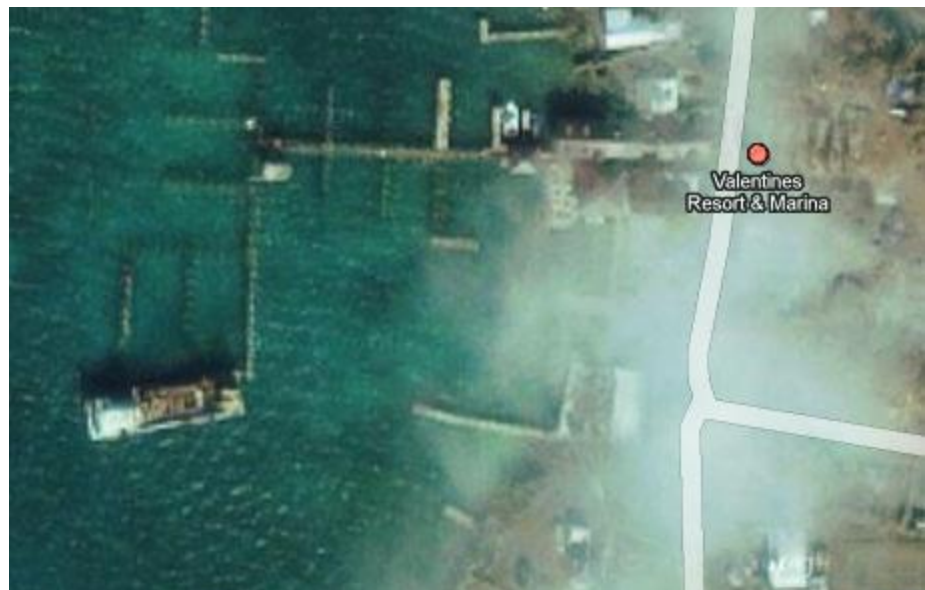
At 500psi we headed for the surface, apparently unaffected by our experience. I must admit, however, that for the next couple of days, every itch made me wonder if I had the bends and it seemed like I itched an awful lot!

Back in the boat, I checked the dive tables and we had 5 minutes at 150 feet without decompression but it took us more than 5 minutes to descend, collect our wits and ascend back up. At least one decompression stop at 10 feet would have been mandatory for us. We were lucky. At least one of the four of us was noticeably narced and all four of us undoubtedly had some narcosis. I honestly didn't feel any of the effects but that doesn't mean I didn't have them. I have never gone that deep since and never needed or wanted to.

## Valentine's Yacht Club

Finstad's dive expeditions were catching on. One of the assistant instructors, a guy named Dave Faught, sold his insurance business and announced he was going work with Bill full time. I never heard how that worked out but I was doing pretty well in my Silicon Valley job and signed up for my second trip with Bill.

The destination was Valentine's Yacht Club,



now called Valentine's Resort, on Harbor Island off the northern end of North Eluthra. Bahama Mama's here we come.

For the uninitiated, I am not referring to the ladies of Harbor Island, rather to the infamous local concoction requiring shots of light, gold and dark rum. Add a shot of coconut liquer and a dash of pineapple juice, if there is still room in the tall glass, a little island music and you're good for the night.

Take care, Bahama Mama can sneak up and lay you low.

At Valentines, anything we caught, they would cook for dinner. They had at least 100 ways to serve conch.

On one very memorable dive, Bill and his wife were using scuba in about 60 feet of water. I was between dives so put on a small weight belt and went free diving. I made it down the 60 feet, waved at the divers and headed back up. On my second attempt, Bill's wife handed me a lobster and a breath from her regulator.

I dutifully grabbed the lobster, took my breath, flashed a thumbs up and a big smile and exhaled those tiny little bubbles all the way back to the surface. As soon as I hit the surface I started waving the lobster in the air and shouting my head off.

Everyone thought I had snared a lobster from 60 feet on a single breath of air and I just kept my big mouth shut and let the folks think what they wanted to. Of course I shared my lobster with Rita that night and I am not sure anyone was ever the wiser.

All of the divers on that trip snagged their limit on conch and the good folks at Valentines taught us how to clean and preserve the shells. They also pooled the conch catches and made a feast of them for one of the dinners.

We dove on wreckes, through arches at 110 feet and saw more variety of fish than I had ever seen before. One of the dives was a current dive through a cut between two islands. The current was very fast so you just hung in the water and looked around. The boat dropped us off on the outside reef and made a mad dash to the other end of the cut to pick us up.

During that single dive we saw the largest barracuda I have ever seen. He had to have been six feet long and was so old he was more of a brown color than silver. A white tip shark poked his nose up over a sand bump, took one look at 10 divers racing past and lit out for parts unknown. I was able to get within about three feet of a huge bat ray.



Visibility in calm weather is usually 20 feet or more but a good spear fisherman can find his prey in only 2-3 feet. The secret is to put your nose on the bottom and peer into every nook and cranny until you find a fish staring back at you.

On one particularly memorable dive the visibility was a barely one foot. For safety, it was almost necessary for dive pairs to hold each other's tanks, just to keep from losing site of one another.

In those days I chose to use a simple pole spear with a three pronged tip. They were cheap, durable and I had a source for free surgical rubber when the sling needed replacement. Thirty years later, I still have that spear although the tip is mostly rust now due to Western Washington weather. That spear, rust and all, has earned its place in my shop. It has fed us many fish and even a lobster or two where it was legal to spear them.

On this particular day, my dive buddy and I hugged the bottom and began searching the hidey holes for Ling Cod. We could barely see into any of the crevices and were coming up empty as our air supply dwindled. When we couldn't see into a hole we poked a spear in just to see if we could stir something up. One of us would poke and the other ready himself to shoot whatever darted out of the hole.

I remember glancing at my air gauge and seeing the needle almost touching the red zone that warned it was time to surface. A quick glance at my dive buddy's gauge confirmed he too was getting low on air. We had just approached a new pile of rocks and I knew we had barely enough time to search them before it became mandatory we return to the boat.

At the very first opening I came to, with my mask pressed against an opening in the rocks, I saw what I was looking for. It was only the tail of a fish but it was clearly a Ling and big enough to be legal. I let the spear fly and a cloud of silt rose as the fish darted out of his hiding space. The biggest mouth full of teeth I had ever seen up close came straight at me!

My first instinct was to jump back away from those teeth and my second to jam the spear into bottom as hard as I could. A monster of a Ling Cod was thrashing around on the end of my spear and I had, indeed, speared him in the tail. If I let that spear tip move the slightest bit, that fish would be gone in an instant.

I swam at the bottom as hard as I could in an effort to keep the fish pinned to the bottom. In desperation, I frantically signaled my buddy to spear the fish before we lost it. Fortunately, he hesitated only a second or two before figuring out what was needed and the Ling Cod was quickly in my catch bag and we were on our way to the surface.

Back in the boat, we removed our gear and noticed both of us had less than 100 psi of air left. The excitement of that crazed monster on the end of my spear had us breathing pretty hard. What had been a safe reserve of air when I first speared the fish was nearly exhausted in the scant minute or two it took to subdue it and make our way back to the surface.

Not a terribly good example of safe diving practices for a couple of assistant instructors but we were vindicated when we measure the Ling Cod. It was every bit of 34 inches. We measured it and took a photograph of the measurement to be certain our fish story could be proven. Back on the beach, a boat full of divers had a delicious Ling Cod dinner.

A little more history: I became a NAUI assistant instructor under Bill Finstad. Bill had a master's in marine biology and taught at West Valley Community College in Los Gatos. Bill also used the college pool to teach sport diving classes. I took Bill's marine biology class and earned a 4.0 but it was a lot of evenings memorizing Latin names for all the phyla.



A fascinating class but it convinced me that I did not want to continue memorizing Latin for a living.

The class did fill a natural science requirement for my degree in computer systems for which I spent a great many hours memorizing the terminology of computers and networking. I went from memorizing Latin to memorizing Geek. Go figure.

Finny didn't appear to have a lot of money, perhaps because he owned a house on West Cliff Drive in Santa Cruz that was across the street from the beach cliffs on the south end of Steamer Lane. From the front windows of the house one could look out over all of Monterey Bay. I expect his mortgage was rather steep.

At any rate, when Bill bought his boat it was a very old, not well maintain wooden vessel of unknown vintage. If Bill ran it too fast through the water, a crack would appear in the keel and you could peer through it to the water below.

Non of us were very much concerned as we all were strong swimmers and had wet or dry suits, and all of the other floatation and swimming devices needed to survive until help arrived. The boat had a good

radio, all we needed to do was make a call and wait. Help would be there shortly. Best of all, that old wreck got me to my record Ling Cod!

Finny's old boat convinced me that I needed to have my own. In short order I found a used 16



foot inboard outboard that could get me to the cod holes and other diving sites. The Cod Hole on the Great Barrier Reef was, for me, a world class diving site but you will have to read a lot further to find that story. My little runabout would only get us around in Monterey and Carmel Bays.

Foreground: Sunda -- Background: Finstad's Old Wooden Boat

Photo taken from Diver Down on a whale watch in Monterey Bay

For the golfers who might be

reading this, there is some world class diving in Carmel Bay that stretches from the golf course near

Cypress Point to Stillwater

Cove under the 17<sup>th</sup> hole at

Pebble Beach. Massive kelp

beds line the shore and

further out there are isolated

beds in up to 100 feet of

water.



Near Cypress Point there is a rather large home that has a squarish tower rising above it. You can see it in the photo near the top middle just under the 17 Mile Dr label. A mile or so off the beach there is an isolated pile of rocks called the Pinnacles. You can see the green masses toward the bottom left.

The one and only time I have ever done a free ascent, outside the practice done in diving classes and in very shallow water was at the Pinnacles.

Visibility was excellent which meant the fish could see us coming from a long way off. We swam our legs off but weren't having much luck. In those days I dove with just a single 50 cubic foot aluminum tank. That was all I needed to keep pace with students who wore steel 72 cubic foot tanks.

That day I blew through 50 cubic feet in record time. In the middle of stalking a red snapper. I inhaled and only got half a breath. I grabbed the gauge and the bloody needle was on zero. My dive buddy was right in front of me so I slid my hand across my throat, the signal for out of air, pointed my thumb up and started my ascent from 80 feet.

This is dangerous folks, don't try it if you don't have to. Practice in the pool and in less than 30 feet in the ocean but trust me, if it isn't done exactly right, it can kill you. It was a rookie mistake and I damn well should have known better but there it was. I could have chosen to buddy breath but if I was out of air, how much did my buddy have? Better one of us in trouble instead of two.

Every few feet I swept my open hand from above my head down in front of me. The purpose being to make tiny bubbles. The smaller the bubble, the slower it will rise and it is critical that you not rise too quickly or you risk the bends. I timed my ascent to the rate of the smallest bubbles.

Every 30 feet or so, if you stay calm and relaxed, the air in your tank will expand enough to get at least a small lung full of air. One must also continuously exhale while ascending to prevent an embolism. The trick is to exhale a continuous tiny airstream so that you can have enough air to make it to the next breath and not hold your breath.

My free ascent was entirely normal with no side effects whatsoever. I was lucky, very lucky. The countless hours preaching the techniques to students and helping them practice in the pool paid off. I hope I am never foolish enough to have to do it again.

## **Puget Sound to Desolation Sound**

The water in California is cold, even as far south as San Diego. Water temperatures rarely are higher than the mid sixties, even in El Nino years. Wet or dry suits are mandatory.

Water temperatures in Puget Sound rarely reach sixty degrees and in most years 50-55 degrees is the norm. That is cold enough to shrivel your body parts. Vicki and I both had dry suits which, in California, were warm enough with just sweats underneath. For Puget Sound, Vicki made us thick fake fleece underwear. If we kept moving during our dives we stayed reasonably warm.

The biggest problem was that by the time you got suited up and got your tank and weight belt on, you were getting very close to heat exhaustion. I used to pour a bucket of cold sea water over Vicki's head just before she put her tank on. Otherwise, she did overheat.

Puget Sound is also plagued with some serious current. There is a lot of water that is exchanged at every tide and there are only two relatively small openings for all that water to pass through, the Straits of Juan de Fuca and Queen Charlotte Straights at the north end of Vancouver Island. Add to those venturis, all the bends and twists that islands in the Sound force the water to make and treacherous becomes the watchword of the day.

Because of the currents, dives should be planned for slack tide and even then one must be certain there is an exit from the water at the end of the dive. If there is any risk that a current might prevent you from swimming back to land, a pickup boat should be standing by. Every year, it seems, a diver is swept away from what should have been a safe shore. On occasion, the diver is not found alive.

The above cautions notwithstanding, there are some spectacular dives in Puget Sound. Along the banks underneath the Tacoma Narrows Bridge live some rather large Octopi. A pickup boat is absolutely required because of the currents but the scenery can be spectacular.

Around almost all of the islands in Puget Sound, one can find kelp beds, usually full of small fish and other sea life. The water is too cold to support giant kelp but the bull kelp (*Nereocystis*) abounds. Bull kelp is considered the fastest growing kelp and can be found in water up to 100 feet deep. If you ever find yourself starving, bull kelp is considered edible but as the French might say, it is in the sauce.

## San Diego to Cabo

Diver Down had crew aboard for the passage from San Diego to Cabo San Lucas at the southern tip of the Baja Peninsula. Stan and his wife Carol, whom we had met in the San Juan Islands in Puget Sound were aboard for their first offshore sailing experience. Stan was also a sport diving instructor with many years of experience. Stan and I went over the side while Diver Down was berthed in Chula Vista, California and cleaned her hull. A messy process but a dive nonetheless and it all counts toward bottom time, no?

The water on outside passage down the length of the Baja Peninsula is influenced by the Davidson Current making it cold enough to require at least a light wet suit for protection from the cold. I had a shorty 1/8<sup>th</sup> in suit aboard but Stan had heard about warm water diving in Baja and had no suit with him. Our first dive off Isla Cedros was bone chilling, so much so that we were back in the boat in fifteen minutes, shivering and grateful for a warm Baja sun. We both vowed to have warm dive suits with us if we ever made that passage again.

Our second attempt at a dive was at anchor inside Bahia Magdalena. The water was much warmer but still not the tropical temperatures we were looking for.

## La Paz

## Isla Rokas

## Isla San Francisco



Steel Diver and crew were anchored at Isla San Francisco when we arrived. We anchored in the cove at the southern end of the island.

The crews of both vessels prowled the beaches for a while during the day and planned on a night dive on the southern end of the island. It looked like perfect lobster

habitat.

At sunset we loaded divers and equipment into our dinghys and made our way around the hook at the southern tip of the anchorage. The entire eastern side of the hook was exactly the kind of rock pile that lobster love to hide in. Our hopes were high.

The dinghys were anchored midway between the south and north ends of the hook. Steel Diver's crew would work north while Vicki and I worked south. We would meet back at the dinghys at the end of the dive.

Dive lights were turned on and we headed for the bottom. My habit, was to put my nose on the bottom and just swim along the rocks looking for hidey holes. When I would spot a likely looking hole I would first shine my light into it and then ease the face plate of my mask up to the entrance of the hole to see what was in it.

One thing you must never do is stick any part of your body in a hidey hole without first knowing what is in it. Sticking your light into the hole is a good way to get light and hand bitten by whatever you have just cornered in its lair.

The first few holes produced nothing but in very short order, as I showed my dive light toward the opening to a rock crevice, a great mouth full of teeth swam out to meet me. I was looking nose to nose with a very large very green Morey Eel.

Mr. eel was not the least bashful. I immediately backed up, keeping my light and eyes directly on him and he continued swimming directly at me until he was completely out of his hole. I was the invader and Mr. eel was determined to defend his home.

Unless you have food in your catch bag, eels will usually not go very far away from the safety of their holes and that was the case here. As soon as I stopped backing up, the Morey began to slide back into

his hiding place. I had a good adrenaline high going but neither I nor the eel were any the worse for our encounter.

I motioned Vicki to watch carefully for the eels and we continued on down the rock pile. No lobster that night but we did have two more nearly identical encounters with eels before we made it back to the dinghy. The folks on Steel Diver saw one lobster but were unable to catch it and we decided to call it a night.

## **Honeymoon Cove**

## **Spearing Vicki's Bug**

## **Other Baja Dive Sites**

Before continuing with diving in the Baja, I must apologize for injecting a note on maintenance but it is directly related to diving and is very much a part of our diving experiences. While Diver Down was still parked in Seattle, I purchased an Italian made oil less air compressor to fill the scuba tanks. It was my intention to run the compressor off a pulley that was already available on the front of our Universal (actually Kubota) diesel engine. Luckily there was a space right next to the engine that was not being used.

I installed the compressor and built a nice teak cabinet around it with a flip up lid on the top that acted as both lid and bench seat. There was even room for a garbage bag or two that accumulated while at sea.

What I did not know at the time of purchase was that the compressor pulley spun the opposite direction from the engine pulley. This meant that there was a very long pair of belts that had to run from the

engine to a pulley on a jack shaft that in turn ran a pulley and a pair of belts that drove the compressor. The compressor pulley faced the opposite direction from the engine pulley, the long belts went past the other end of the compressor to one end of the jackshaft and the short belts went from the other end of the jackshaft back toward the engine and compressor pulley.

The jackshaft could have been positioned between the engine and the compressor. That would have shortened the long belts but there was an alternator bracket that was in the way. Running the belts the long way around just cleared the offending bracket.

On my first experiment, I used just one belt. The squeal and smoke from the slipping belt was instantaneous and no amount of tightening with an idler pulley helped. It was back to McGuire Bearing for double sheaved pulleys and matching industrial strength belts. Nothing else would do.

It took a number of experiments and several pairs of belts to discover an adequate method for keeping the long pair of belts properly tensioned and thereafter, considerable effort to keep the idler pulley adjusted, the belts dressed and jackshaft greased so that the compressor would run. We also discovered that the compressor ran rather hot making it necessary to cool it between tank fills.

Add the normal heat of the compressor to the normal Baja heat and it got bloody hot in the cabin of Diver Down. All this heat probably combined to hasten the death of our compressor for it was about this time that it threw a rod and permanently died. Following a disassembly, it was discovered that the rods were cast aluminum, the cheapest and least strong method for making a piston rod. Bloody beast was bound to fail. At this point the compressor was a pile of junk. I saved the filters thinking they might be useful and at the first landfall deposited the remains in a dumpster.

No more maintenance stories, I promise, er, hope!

## Palmyra

At about 4 degrees north latitude and roughly 900 nautical miles south of Hawaii lies the atoll of Palmyra. The atoll consists of a number of loosely connected islets and a relatively large lagoon surrounded by coral reef. When we dove there in 1993, Palmyra was privately owned by the Fullard Leo

family in Hawaii. It has since been purchased by the Nature Conservancy and is maintained as a bird sanctuary.

We arrived to find a caretaker living on his sailboat. Roger (use the French pronunciation) was the caretaker of the atoll, his dog, a huge crab named Nixon and a booby bird with an injured wing he had nursed back to health. Every afternoon Roger would don mask and fins and take his spear and a small net out to the reef to collect dinner for himself and his pets. Nixon and the dog ate whatever was left over and the booby bird would fly in near sunset and wait on his perch for Roger to slide a fish down his gullet every few minutes.

Our scuba tanks were deep in the stern storage locker heavily lashed down for the long ocean passage. It would have meant hauling several hundred pounds of equipment and garbage out to get at them. We settled for snorkeling and reef walking.

On our first night, Vicki and Roger walked the reef at low tide under a full moon and came back with 8 lobster and 21 crab. On our second night Roger, a Cordon Bleu chef, prepared one of the finest lobster dinners I have ever had. On the fifth night, at sea and heading for Pango Pango, Vicki suffered violent nausea and stomach cramps, undoubtedly from eating too much lightly cooked lobster.

All of the crew had read Vincent Bugliosi's, *And the Sea Will Tell*. I was written about the murders of two Americans who had sailed to Palmyra. Two hippies were accused of the murder. Bugliosi, who successfully prosecuted Charles Manson successfully defended the woman charged as an accessory. Her boyfriend was convicted.

The way the story is told is that the boyfriend murdered the two Americans and he and his girlfriend stole their sailboat and sailed it back to Hawaii where folks who knew the American couple and their boat became suspicious and contacted the police.

The bodies were stuffed into two large metal trunks and presumably sunk in the rather deep and somewhat murky lagoon. Eventually one of the trunks surfaced and the body became the evidence of the murders. Roger claimed to know where to dive for the remaining trunk.

On the second day Vicki and I went snorkeling in the lagoon. Within 5 minutes I had spotted 4 white tip sharks. They were smallish and did not display any of the aggressive posturing that would indicate their displeasure but a shark is very good at sneaking up behind its prey and four was just too many to deal with if they decided to defend their territory.

Regretfully, we terminated the dive. There were a great many fat fin fish that would have made a tasty meal but no way was I going to provoke those sharks with blood and thrashing fish on the end of a spear. We got out of the water and put out the fishing poles but they weren't biting.

One of the crew members was nicknamed Kojac and he looked very much like Telly Savalas. Our Kojac had never been diving. On the third day Kojac, Vicki and I piled into the dingy and made our way out along the edge of the channel that connects the lagoon at Palmyra to the open sea.

The water was no more than 15 feet deep and on the edge of a surf line. I had hopes that we would see a lot of different marine life in the process of teaching Kojac how to snorkel. There were parrot fish and damsels and some of the smaller fish you find on coral reefs. I think Kojac was impressed.

He was also a bit nervous but with some coaching and demonstrations, we soon had him paddling around eyeballing the fish. We probably spent an hour or more snorkeling that day. I spotted a lobster antenna but he was far back in a hole by the time I got close enough to try to grab him. All the same it was a good dive. I think Kojac might have been a little tired by the time we got back to the boat.

**Pango Pango**

**Western Samoa**

**Fiji**

**New Caledonia**

**The Great Barrier Reef**