

THE REEF SEEKER



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May - 2009



CHAMBER DAY 2009

We are now less than one week away from Chamber Day, which is Wednesday, May 6. (Of course, I refer to May 7 as "The Day of Blessed Relief.") It's still not too late for you to get involved.

Although the Reef Seekers boat (now the *Great Escape*) and our two tables at Chamber Evening are full, you can still get yourself signed up for the Flying Dutchman, participate in the on-line Blind Bid Auction, contribute to the Chamber Challenge (which right now stands at just under \$27,000), or buy daytime raffle tickets.

But it's important for you to support your Chamber.

The Chamber is there for you 24/7/365 and is a vital resource for the safety of the diving community. The Chamber requires about \$165,000 total a year to run and must raise about half of that from

non-governmental sources. So Chamber Day (which is the largest single-day scuba charity event in the U.S.) plays a large role helping to keep the Chamber going.

This year also marks the 35th birthday of our Chamber and we're planning a birthday party on October 4. Wanna get invited? Well, all you need to do is make a minimum \$500 donation to the Chamber Challenge and we'll bring you on out as our guest. Wanna also do a 165-foot in the Chamber while you're out there? Make a minimum \$1000 donation and we'll let you do that too (subject to medical approval). And for each \$1000 we raise, we light another candle on our Chamber birthday cake.

But the bottom line with all of these efforts is that they're directed at keeping our Chamber financially healthy. So whatever you can do to help, and however you choose to do it, it's appreciated.

Don't forget the date - this coming Wednesday, May 6. And be sure to look to the local scuba BBSes and your Monday morning issue of TWARS to announce the results.



SCUBA SHOW MAY 30-31

Don't forget the annual Scuba Show to be held at the Long Beach Convention Center the last weekend of May, the 30th and 31st. This is your chance to see booths from a bunch of the manufacturers, other stores, travel destinations, and a whole lot more. Plus, there are many speakers and seminars you can attend to improve the knowledge base of your diving.

We will once again be doing the well-attended "Why Divers Die" panel Saturday afternoon at 4PM featuring the Coroner, the Chamber, and myself (forensic consultant for the Coroner) where we'll talk about general trends in diving accidents and detail for you a few actual cases from 2008 and let you know what we found.

You can pre-register for the show on-line, as well as find out more info about all aspects of the event, simply by navigating to www.scubashow.com. See you there!!!

APRIL FOOL'S NEWSLETTER RESULTS

To say that our annual April Fool's newsletter is our favorite would be an understatement. For those of you who are longtime readers of our missives, we appreciate the notes we get anticipating the arrival of the April issue. And for those of you who are new to Reef Seekers, who hope you enjoyed the gags.

The challenge is in trying to fool people since so many people now know what's coming. (It's also challenging not to repeat ideas from years past.) The trick, of course, is to try to do it all in a way that - for those who might fall for the gag - is harmless and hopefully people can share in on the fun once they realize they've been had.

Probably the best reaction this year was from "Passports Needed for Catalina." We actually got a call from the secretary of a regional yacht club, two of whose members were very worried about the new passport requirements since they were going to Catalina that weekend. She sensed it was an April Fools joke and expressed some relief when told it was and commented, "Some people will believe anything."

We also got a few people to call in to the Aquarium of the Pacific to inquire about helping for the "Whale Wash." But somehow, none of you believed that Tim Burke was putting in an ice rink on the Great Escape or that there was any such thing as "Invisible Fish."

It's all in good fun and there's always a disclaimer at the end in the hopes that people may read all

the way through. but regardless, we'll warn you now: Be prepared for April 1, 2010, when we'll do it again.



BONAIRE BOUND

In two weeks, we leave for Bonaire with our group of 16 and we're eagerly counting the days. Once again, we'll be staying with our good friends at Buddy Dive and will hope to regale you with stories and pictures. One new thing we're going to try this year is a visit to the Butterfly Farm, which is located over on the Eastern "wild" side of Bonaire. That's been a good area lately to see some Flamingoes up close as well. But we've always loved going to Bonaire (especially right after Chamber Day) and anticipate that this year will be another wonderful experience.

BAJA BOUND IN OCTOBER

The other trip we always look forward to is Baja in October. Right now, we're about half-full on that one. This will be the 22nd year we've gone down to La Paz and - given that we flew in right behind a hurricane last year - are anticipating a better trip than in 2008 (which was still pretty good).

Swine flu, for those concerned about that, should not be an issue at all at that time. Not only is the area of Mexico affected by this not on the Baja peninsula, but by October, this thing will have long run it's course.

At any rate, if you're interested in going, let us know. Traditionally, this trip fills up. A \$500 deposit holds your spot and then we'll work out a payment plan for the rest. Total cost this year is \$2795 which includes airfare, diving, crew tip, and all the fun you can handle. It's a really great trip and its got diving for newbies and old salts and everyone in between.



DIVING VACATIONS

May 15-24 • Bonaire

October 11-18 • Sea of Cortez

Where to in 2010??

BE A RESPONSIBLE DIVER

Too often lately, I hear divers saying, "Well, that wasn't MY Fault." This might be uttered after they've surfaced 100 yards downcurrent from the boat, or never found the dive site, or went deeper than they wanted, or any other of a host of small problems.

I urge you to take some responsibility for your own actions. In your basic class, it was hopefully drummed into your head that you are responsible for yourself and that no one can be more responsible for your safety than you.

When I teach, I tell all of my students that they are members of the "NFM Club." There are no annual dues, no meeting, and I'm president-for-life. "NFM" stands for Not-For-Me and membership in the NFM Club gives them the right to bail out of any dive, at any time, for any reason that only has to make sense to them. The other slogan I pair with that is: You never get hurt on a dive you don't make.

But too often we hear divers making excuses or simply denying any involvement in their own predicament. In the work I do as a defense consultant in legal cases, we hear it all the time. The diver has nothing to do with the accident/malady/predicament and it must be someone else's fault. (Usually someone with insurance.)

But I hear it on boats too. And even after minor problems when talking to someone it's almost as if the attitude at times becomes "Well, it's not my fault I didn't pay attention to the briefing and didn't pay attention to my sur-

UPCOMING BOAT DIVES				
Sun	May 3	<i>Great Escape</i>	Farnsworth/Cat. backside	\$150/165
Wed	6	All boats	Chamber Day Benefit	\$90
Sat	16	<i>Sea Bass</i>	••• Oil Rigs •••	145/160
Sun	31	<i>Sea Bass</i>	<i>Star Scotland</i> /Palos Verdes	150/165
Sun	Jun 14	<i>Cee Ray</i>	Catalina (West End)	140/155
Sat	27	<i>Great Escape</i>	Santa Barbara Island	160/175
Sun	July 12	<i>Great Escape</i>	Farnsworth/Cat. backside	150/165
Sat	25	<i>Great Escape</i>	San Clemente (back)	165/180

Prices are listed as 14-day advanced purchase/regular. Food/air included all trips. All diving to be done on compressed air only - no nitrox. Fuel surcharge may apply.

roundings." And let's face it: Nobody likes to have problems and it's human nature to want to place the blame elsewhere. But in diving, inattention can sometimes have very serious, and even fatal, consequences.

So we'd ask you to think about responsibility and the role it plays in your diving. That doesn't mean you won't make mistakes. No big deal. But learn from them and don't repeat them. Here are a couple of things you can do to become more responsible (and hopefully you do these already):

1. Listen to the briefing.
2. Enter the water with a dive plan in place.
3. Ask questions when you don't understand.
4. If you feel something's wrong on a dive, stop.
5. If you can't correct the problem or shake the feeling, abort the dive.
6. Don't diving in conditions beyond your comfort zone.
7. Don't hesitate to ask for help -in or out of the water - when you need it.

Simple things like this can yield big results and will increase your enjoyment of this wonderful sport that we love so much.

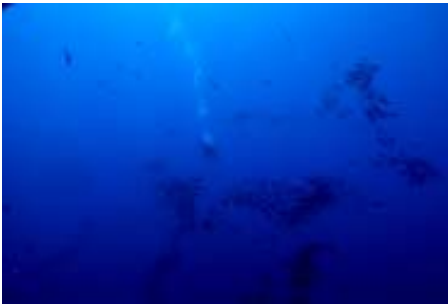
STAR OF SCOTLAND AT THE END OF MAY

We've got a great local trip coming up at the end of the month and it's one we only do once a year: the *Star of Scotland* on Sunday, May 31.

This is a rarely-visited wreck that lies a few miles off of the Santa Monica Pier in 60-70 feet of water. You never know what you're going to find. We've spotted juvy Black Sea Bass, Lingcod, and a host of others. Vis can vary and the water can sometimes be cold but - traditionally - the weather's pretty good and it makes for a lovely day.

We'll be out on the *Sea Bass* which, even though it's pretty fast, still means close to a 2-hour run to get there. The plan will be to do two dives on the *Star* and then break for lunch and head over to Palos Verdes (maybe Hawthorne East again) for a third dive. Given the speed of the *Sea Bass*, we'll be back before 5PM.

It should be a nice day and we'll hope you can join us. The boat's already about 1/3 full so make sure you don't get squeezed out of this one.



STUPIDITY KILLS

I recently completed an informal analysis of 5 years worth of fatality statistics from D.A.N. I've put it all into a PowerPoint presentation that I've given at a few dive clubs. (Note to those of you who book speakers - I'm happy to do it for whomever asks.)

The most amazing thing that emerges from this study is that (by

my classification) 70% of the 266 fatalities I looked at I classified as "Bad Diving" which was a nice way of saying "Stupid Divers." That's 186 people who died by making easily avoidable mistakes. The most glaring dumb thing divers did to get themselves into fatal situations was also the easiest to prevent - running out of air.

But what was very depressing (and revealing) about the statistics was that 2/3 of these deaths were absolutely not only unnecessary but also relatively preventable. For out-of-air, it's as simple as watching your gauge and ending the dive on the surface with at least 300-500psi in your tank. In other instances, it's as seemingly simple as not diving in areas above your training and experience (like

caves), and not diving in conditions beyond your abilities (fast currents).

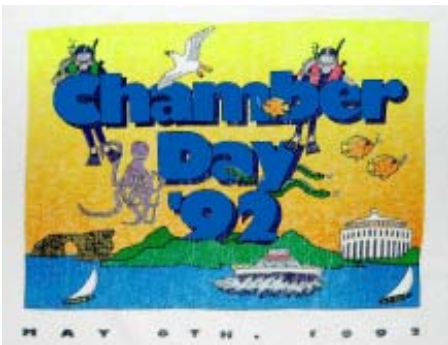
And, as an instructor, the frustrating thing is that if we could teach 100% of you to dive smarter, we could eliminate 70% of the annual fatalities. That's significant.

So I implore and encourage you to stop and think about what you do and simply dive smarter. The life you save could literally be your own.



PICTURE PAGE - Chamber Day logos

(All pix by Ken Kurtis © 2009)



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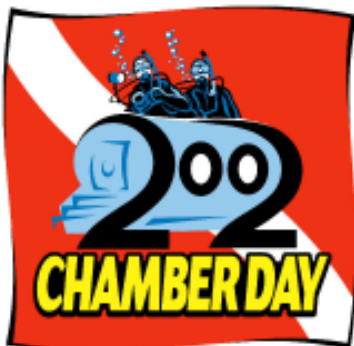


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1993



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