



The Official Newsletter of
THE SCUBA SPORTS CLUB

Nov/Dec 2006

ANCHOR LINE

This column of the Anchor Line is my last as the November/December Sea-Swells edition is the last newsletter for 2006. I've learned a lot during the past couple of years as a TSSC officer and I would like to thank the officers I've served with and the membership for providing this opportunity. We are very fortunate to have some active members of long standing with the club. Consider, if you would, that it was their interest in scuba diving that lead to the formal inception of not only **The Scuba Sports Club** but the creation of **Beneath The Sea** which is the largest dive travel related show in the United States that's open to the public and recognized around the world for its high level of purpose and achievement.

While I'm on the subject of Beneath The Sea in five months the 31st annual show will be held at the Meadowlands Exposition Center in Secaucus, NJ. Those members of TSSC that have been involved with the show know the excitement that begins building every year at this time as we look at what needs to be done to continue this magnificent international event. Where else would any of us have the opportunity to meet the history makers of our sport? Granted some may be only legends in their own minds but we've got some really famous

people that participate in our programs from the fields of science, exploration, military, research & development, literature, entertainment and the arts. Where can you go and in one evening meet the likes of Waterman, Brooks, Cameron, Perry, Chatterton, Kohler, members of the WDHOFF, and the international contingent as I only touch the tip of the BTS involvement iceberg ! These individuals are all legends or soon to be and we can all learn different concepts from them as they can and do from each other.

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PROGRAM

8:00 pm Wednesday November 8

Paul J. Mila retired after a successful career in corporate life, and now devotes his time to writing, scuba diving and underwater photography. He has enjoyed the opportunity to photograph and dive with Caribbean reef sharks in the Bahamas, humpback whales in the Dominican Republic, and an amazing variety of sea life in Cozumel, Bonaire, Hawaii, Antigua and his home waters off Long Island, NY.

ANCHOR LINE, CONTINUED

My hope is that in the future more TSSC members will pick up the banner and join us in making not only the club stronger but BTS stronger with our collective commitment to move forward. This can be accomplished by simply providing a few hours of your time to any of the events or programs we support. Volunteering some time for a cause you support is a worthwhile effort and normally something of which you can be proud.

And speaking of causes.....those club members that have been around for a few years are aware that we run a Toys 4 Tots drive to benefit the Children's Hospital at the Westchester Medical Center in Valhalla. Well, we've taken on another challenge as well. It appears that those children at the Sound Shore Hospital aren't under the same spotlight as those at the Children's Hospital so we're going to try to help out there as well. Don't be surprised when you see e-mails flying around from Santa asking for your support. He can't do it all by himself and requires the assistance of many elves. Bring an unwrapped gift to the next club meeting or the holiday party. If you don't want to shop cash donations are always accepted and we'll do the shopping for you. Once again **Joann Bohannon Sacci** has taken the bull by the horns and is the moving force behind the toy collection and distribution. She deserves all of our thanks for making a lot of local children happy during the holiday season.

Additionally, some of us will be giving up vacation time to work the BTS Booth at DEMA. This is another avenue of our continued effort to insure that BTS remains at the top of the exhibitors show

list. We will be meeting with former exhibitors and soliciting new ones to become a part of the BTS world. Additionally, we're always on the lookout for potential speakers and seminar/workshop providers while we're there. You just never know who you might meet that may be interested !

On that note, it's been a pleasure (almost all the time) working with everyone and getting to know more members during the past year. Thanks for coming to the meetings and supporting your team of officers.

And now a drum roll please as Vice President **Bob Bak** returns to the President's position and will be our guiding light for the next year.

Don Reynolds
President

SOCIAL CALENDAR

November – Harvest Brunch, Pete's Saloon Sunday 11/5. Toy drive for **Sound Shore Hospital, New Rochelle** 11/8.

December – Wine Tour 12/15 - 12/17
Dec Social/Holiday Party Saturday 12/9
& Toy Drive for The Children's Hospital.



SPECIAL EVENT

Sound Shore Medical Center's Annual Holiday Toy & Coat Drive

This year, The Scuba Sports Club has offered to support Sound Shore Medical Center's Holiday Toy Party and Coat Drive. The mission of this event is to bring holiday joy to the children of the many low income families who are cared for at SSMC's Pediatric Clinics. This is accomplished by distributing toys and winter coats to the children in need.

This event began in 1994 by **Kathy and Joseph Curto** in appreciation of the care Kathy received at Sound Shore Medical Center during pregnancy with her daughter **Adriana Jude**. While pregnant, Kathy was diagnosed with toxoplasmosis, a parasitic infection that placed her unborn child at serious risk. Due to expert care and monitoring by **Patricia Devine, MD**, a high-risk pregnancy specialist at SSMC, Kathy gave birth to a healthy baby. Three months later, thanks to Kathy's initiative, the first SSMC Holiday Toy and Coat Drive was born. The number of children participating in the event has grown from 60 that first year to over 1200.

Donations of new toys or money which would be used to buy winter coats would be greatly appreciated. If you would like to make a donation, you may bring a toy to the November TSSC General Meeting. If you are unable to attend, please contact Sound Shore's Toy & Coat Drive Hotline at 914-637-1169, or e-mail at ssmctoysandcoats@aol.com.

Monetary donations are tax deductible if made payable to SSMC Foundation Toy & Coat Drive. Thank you for your participation in this great event!

Gwyn Grant

HOLIDAY PARTY

December 9th

Celebrate TSSC's annual holiday bash! Enjoy appetizers, desserts, and anniversary cake. Take home anniversary favors. Bring slides, photos, or videos of club events or trips to share with your fellow club members. 7-11 pm at Jim and Joann Sacci's house, 101 Leda Drive Peekskill, NY.

Bring a special dish and your favorite holiday drink. Bring an ornament—funny, beautiful, sad-looking, sentimental—and we'll choose the funniest and the best in show in our **ornament contest**. Prizes will be awarded!

One man's refuse is another man's prize. Don't return it, re-gift it! Wrap up something for which you would like to find a better home and bring it to the holiday party for our **Chinese grab bag**. Check in with the grab bag group and pick a ticket. Gifts will be chosen, opened and traded as the grab bag continues. When it is all over, you will have adopted a new prize!

DIVE TRAVEL

Society Islands - Sailing and Shark Diving with Top Dive

It all started out as a fantasy - charter a sailboat and island-hop around the so-called Society Islands in French Polynesia. The more we thought about it, the more appealing it became, and when we found a good reason to undertake the long trip we packed our bags and set off on our big adventure.

After a 12 hour flight from New York's JFK to Tahiti - a great direct flight offered by Air Tahiti Nui - we arrived after midnight at a hotel we'd spend only a few hours in before catching an Air Tahiti flight to Raiatea, duration about 45 minutes.

At the charter base we met our friendly skipper Pierre who promised us a great ten days on the water. And he didn't exaggerate...

Yes - you are getting impatient to get to the diving part, I know. Yet it has to be said that combining sailing and diving (in all its facets from snorkeling to scuba) in one trip is the best way to get to know these beautiful islands. A sailboat gives you access to quiet coves, deserted beaches, and the best dive spots you could imagine. No matter whether we'd gone diving in the morning, we invariably spent the afternoon snorkeling on and near the uncountable reefs and motus (as the small islands near the fringing reefs are called). Not only did we go diving, we had plenty of opportunities to snorkel, and took advantage of our "prime location"

several times every single day. What else could you ask for?

Our itinerary took us from Raiatea to Taha'a (these two islands share a large lagoon), and then we undertook the six hour crossing to Huahine, a very quiet, undeveloped piece of paradise. It was, by far, the island I liked best, as we could imagine that we were the only people there. Tall palm trees, white, deserted beaches, turquoise sea... The paradise factor was, however, almost spoiled by a diving outfit called **Pacific Blue Divers**, whose owner seemed to have missed the most important lessons of safe diving training. Not only were his air bottles rather ancient-looking, his air compressor was in an enclosed garage and ultimately the air tasted of diesel fuel - not good at all. His dive boat was, to say the least, serviceable, but not exactly modern or comfortable. He also had a funny idea about diving as a group ("we all dive 45 minutes, nobody surface before that - if you run out of air, come to me, I will give you air"). We should have known...but you are limited to two dive operators on Huahine, and this one had come recommended by an acquaintance...

My husband and I have been diving together for more than 15 years, and we are a very good buddy team, always conscious of each other. So when my reg started breathing shallower and shallower at about 1500 psi left in the tank, and we were unable to resolve the issue underwater (reg and alternate started acting as if the tank valve was not open all the way which was not the case), we shared his tank and advised the divemaster of our problem. Rather than

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SOCIETY ISLANDS, CONT.

letting us safely abort the dive, he pulled the octopus out of my mouth after checking my air gauge (of course, there was still air in my tank!), forcibly stuffed my own reg back into my mouth and proceeded to drag me through the water, effectively separating me from my buddy... Never did I wish more to be able to talk under water (and later I literally had to stop my husband from punching the guy when we got back on the boat – looking back now I think I was much too polite by pushing him away and returning to my husband). To keep a long story short, my husband and I ascended to a safe depth, breathed from his tank, calmly did our safety stop (max depth had been 90') and proceeded to wait for the rest of the group at the surface. The divemaster was less than gracious about the whole issue. It turned out that in fact the tank valve was faulty (as I had my reg tested afterwards), not letting enough air through after the pressure dropped to 1500 psi (tank service issue? We'll never know). Of course, the owner didn't believe it – especially when we decided not to go on the second dive. Rather than being concerned for the safety of one of his divers he was concerned about the money he might be losing...

You have to understand that I am usually quite a peaceful person and rather rely on my own and my husband's training and instincts, and if something does not feel right, in my book it just isn't safe. This divemaster (was he really? I am not sure about the "master" part) got me very angry as he ranted and raved about losing business and demanding the money for the second dive. A few of the other divers on the boat at first did not realize what had happened – I guess

somehow we were too calm underwater – until our argument erupted (amazing how my long-buried high school French came to my rescue when I got angry!). I made it quite clear to the man that I would report him to PADI (as he claimed to be a certified and registered PADI facility) – and guess what, he is not listed nor does PADI show him as a "certified dive shop". We should have known... The moral of the story is to always trust your own instincts – and to stay away from any dive operator you don't feel 100 percent comfortable with. It's your life...

When we re-capped the dive later that day I realized that while we did see quite a few sharks and other interesting fishes during the first part of the dive I somehow was too busy trying to work out what was happening to really appreciate all of it. Our skipper took us to a nearby motu, where we made up for the spoiled morning by snorkeling until my skin was wrinkled like a prune!

Well, onward to Bora Bora. Of course, now I was concerned that my gear had malfunctioned and I needed to have it checked. We had booked a few dives with Top Dive in Bora Bora, and I was a little apprehensive considering our experience with the outfit on Huahine.

We needn't have worried. **Top Dive** is the most sophisticated, organized and friendly dive operator I have ever experienced. Their divemasters are extremely well trained and actually listen to you when you are talking! As soon as we got on board of their well-equipped vessel, we knew this would make up for the disastrous earlier experience.

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SOCIETY ISLANDS, CONT.

We were treated to a series of amazing dives. On our first dive we were guided by one of the owners of Top Dive, a very nice Swiss man who enjoyed showing us the underwater world of Bora Bora. We had an added advantage, as Top Dive now offers Nitrox, which allowed us valuable extra bottom time. We were surrounded by a large number of reef sharks, both black- and white-tip, and later grey sharks (nosy fellows - they get right into your face). I was so fascinated by them I forgot to be nervous about these predators of the deep with many, many sharp teeth.... The sun was glinting off their sleek forms, and they effortlessly glided through the water. They really are very elegant animals, clearly masters of their domain. We also encountered a huge school of bonito, whom we watched defending themselves against the sharks. I felt as if I was in the middle of a National Geographic Special! The second dive that day culminated in meeting a pod of wild dolphins, whom I could hear a long time before we finally spotted them. Diving on Nitrox again, we and a couple of the guides were able to stay with them for a while, rather than having to return to the boat and watching from above like the rest of the group. And the icing on the cake was a graceful manta ray making an appearance, showing off its underwater flying skills.... I was happy again, and my husband said he could see it in my relaxed posture and blissful expression. He'd been a little worried that the earlier experience would make me apprehensive, but I knew I was back in my element.

The second day was even more exciting. This time we were going out to feed lemon sharks. And here I was, a staunch

believer that feeding these animals is not a good idea... I still do, but the experience was something else. We were five divers (four men and myself) and three dive masters. The boat took us out to a reef where one of the dive masters had stashed a large fish head under a coral head, sealed in a thick plastic bag. We dove to the site and anchored ourselves behind a ledge - and the spectacle began!

At least ten lemon sharks, measuring 8 feet and longer, approached very quickly. They checked us out and circled the site several times. A couple of them came very (VERY) close to us, and I could see every tooth in its big, open maw... (My mantra was: "they are just big fish, they are just big fish, they are just....").

Then the dive guide pulled out the fish head from under the coral and with a last check around, set it adrift.

The sharks quickly snapped up the treat and we watched as a more dominant shark competed against the one who had taken the bait first. It was amazing to watch, and I am glad I had the chance to do it (from a safe distance, of course). The rest of the dive was spent looking at the pretty coralscape and multitudes of reef fishes. Reef sharks stayed with us but they now looked small in comparison to their larger cousins. The guides pointed out many types of fish and corals until it was time to return to the boat. Good thing - we somehow needed a calming closing to this adrenaline-pumping dive!

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SOCIETY ISLANDS, CONT.

That evening we treated ourselves to a first-class dinner at Top Dive's restaurant, and we relived the excitement of the past few days.

These are some of the sites you simply can't miss while on Bora Bora:

TEAVANUI WALL & PASS: Purple and yellow coral wall, manta and eagle rays, sharks, jack fish, and moray eels (our max. depth 95')

TAPU: Lemon and black tip sharks, Napoleon wrasses, tuna, jack fish, moray eels, and turtles (our max. depth 90')

MURI MURI: Schools of grey sharks, barracuda, jack fish, turtles, tuna, and wild dolphins (our max. depth 90')

Wherever you go, however, you will most likely find sharks in the water. We snorkeled off the boat and were quickly surrounded by the smaller reef sharks. One local told us "the sharks here are friendly" and we have to concur! The beauty of the waters around the Society Islands is that you get to see everything: from big fish like Napoleon wrasses, tuna, sharks, and more, to the smallest reef creatures you can imagine. The variety is fantastic and the coral does not disappoint either. We were sad that we didn't have more time to explore Bora Bora further...but we will be back.

As we set sail to return to Raiatea, we waved good-bye to the folks at Top Dive - and all the underwater creatures we had the privilege of being amongst, even if it was just for a short time.

Sailing back into Raiatea's lagoon, eagle rays danced on the surface and a pod of wild dolphins accompanied us to our last stop and swim near one of the many

beautiful motus. The fantasy had become reality and we loved it.

Ruth Emblin

TSSC Fab Fall Brunch
PETE'S - Saloon & Restaurant
Elmsford, NY

Sunday November 5, 2006
12:00pm – 2:00pm

Choice of:

Assorted Pastries, Breads, Muffins, and Bagels

Choice of Eggs or 3 Egg Omelets

Bacon, Sausage, Ham or Petit Sirloin

Hash Brown Potatoes

Coffee, Tea, Juice and Soft Beverages

Unlimited Champagne & Mimosa's
(Cash bar)

\$17.95 + Tax & Tip

RSVP – 11/2/06

Pat Forgacs @ 203/743-2282

greenmermaid@sbcglobal.net

**** This is at Pete's Saloon ****
Rt 119 & 9A, Elmsford
**** Need I say more! ****
