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On the Line

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE OLD COLONY AMPHIBIANS

PREZ BOX

Hello to all OCA members!

Thank you for electing me President. I'm going to do all I can this year to keep our club active and interesting. I look forward to working and diving with all of you and am looking forward to a great 2007 dive year.

Many thanks also to the folks at The Scuba Center for generously providing our meeting room.

We need to get more active members into the club and I think we need to do some club dives this year in new locations to generate more interest among our members. We already have agreement from some dive instructors to allow OCA members to speak to the graduating students. We need all of our members to pass the word about OCA to their diving contacts. I hope we are successful and that we bring some new blood into the club this year.

Club members need to keep in mind that new divers don't have the experience level that many of us have. It's easy for freshly certified divers to get intimidated by

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Linda and I just spent an enjoyable 8 days in the Bahamas, with 5 nights on the island of Andros and 3 nights on New Providence (Nassau). There is a 6,000' deep ocean trench between these islands called "The Tongue of the Ocean." It's a dead-ended trench at least 100 miles long, with steep walls along both sides. These walls come very close to both islands and make for some well known and excellent diving. The US Navy has a base on Andros called AUTECH (Atlantic Underwater Testing and Evaluation Center). It's a self-contained facility with a large docking area and many free standing sea platforms. They perform underwater acoustic/sonar testing; it's apparently not unusual to see US nuclear subs in the area.

In researching Caribbean trips over the years, I have repeatedly come up with the name of Small Hope Bay Lodge on the island of Andros. It is a small group of cottages with a central lodge building that is well known as a diving and fishing Mecca. The Lodge was started in the early 60's by Dick Birch, a guy who wanted to get away from civilization, and reportedly, also get away from the scare at the time of nuclear war. Ironically, soon after his purchase of the property on Andros, the Cuban Missile Crisis burst upon the world scene. Happily, war never happened and Dick developed the Lodge into a renowned getaway location, as well as bringing up his family and going through multiple wives.

Dick has since passed on and today the lodge is run by his son Jeff, who grew up on Andros and is a Bahamian citizen. He is also a wild and crazy guy. One of the best things about our stay at The Lodge was mingling with the staff and guests, who come from all over the world. I spent more than one night enjoying a bottomless glass of wine and either playing bridge or BS'ing till all hours.

Diving at The Lodge was fine, not spectacular, but good deep, clear wall and reef diving. The usual cast of marine characters was present; but not many larger species. I did see one big hammerhead shark as well as a few smaller sharks. The morning 2 tank trips typically started with a deep wall dive, then a shallower coral garden follow-up dive. The deepest dive I made was to a spot called whipwire wall, which is a pure vertical wall inhabited by a large number of whipwire coral. As I went over the wall edge at around 90 feet I briefly wondered if we were going to get to a base ledge, but when I looked at my depth gauge and saw 150 feet that thought quickly disappeared!

Small Hope uses some unusual boats and navigation techniques. Their main dive "boats" can be better described as barges. Triple hulled, flat topped, 10 feet wide and 20 to 25 feet long, with large motor(s) and hinged-top bench



The Tongue of the Ocean, Bahamas

seats for the divers. I had my doubts about these things until we started to dive in heavy seas. The second day the wind picked up to 20-25 knots, blowing hard on-shore. It was relatively rough even at the Lodge which is located inside a half-mile offshore barrier reef/island chain. Outside the reefs, seas were running at 6-8 feet on the worst day. We put everything loose into the bench seats and fully suited up as we headed out. Motoring out into the seas, we frequently had waves breaking over the bow which caused 6 or more inches of fast running water to flow around us down the deck. Once anchored however the boats were extremely stable and not that hard to get into. They made diving possible in seas that would have been much too rough for a typical v-hulled boat. I just kept laughing to myself as I sat on the boat and watched waves coming in that were well over my head. At 100 feet the waves were imperceptible and the diving was fine.

We did scrub the shallow dives however on the roughest days. On two trips I was the only diver; Small Hope definitely caters to its guests. If you want to dive, and it's safe to go, they will take you even if you are the only diver.

Their navigation techniques are also quite interesting. The Small Hope boats have no GPS or depth finders. Instead, the dive-masters have a "bible" of site maps which use triangulation based on shore references. Apparently the AUTECH facility does something to GPS navigation in the area. AUTECH supposedly denies this, but all the divemasters say that GPS simply doesn't work in the area. Once again I was skeptical until I saw the dive-masters put us on each site with unerring precision through pure visual references. Once on-site, one of the divemasters takes a white 5 gallon pail down to the grappling anchor. The pail is rigged with a couple of small weights on an attachment rope that is threaded across the pail opening. The pail is attached about 10 feet above the anchor and filled with just enough air to make it hang upside down. I couldn't believe how easy this makes it to spot the anchor line. With 100 ft vis, if you are anywhere near the anchor you are going to find it. When ready to surface, the divemaster pulls the anchor and fills the bucket with air; up it comes with no hung-up anchor problems.

Andros is the least inhabited of the major Bahamian islands. It is essentially just a big mangrove swamp built



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From the **RETRO** files.

Dig into your photo albums and share with us the memories of when you started diving or an event during your diving career.

Cleaning out the filing cabinet downstairs, we found a bunch of pictures from the early 90s. Hair seemed to be a lot darker in those days...



Banquet Awards

Largest MA Lobster - Steve Gonsalves @ 17.25 lbs.
Largest RI Lobster - Ray Baril @ 2.2 lbs.
Largest MA Fish - none
Largest RI Fish - Ian Campbell @ 32 lbs.
Artifact - Bill Turner
All three Photography Categories - John Stanford



Foggy Masks

Bill Turner - Sandwich Town Beach Award
"There's freak'n nothing to see!"

Janet MacCausland - Blind Diving Award
Never found her buddies who were right next to her during the whole dive.

Bob Gunnip - S.S. Minnow Award *He sunk his boat...again!*

Bob McManus - Waterskiing Award *Enough said.*

Jim Brady - Lost Gear "King" Award
Lost his compass and while looking for it proceeded to get tangled in his float line.

Ray, Ed, Henry, Bob R., Russ, Bill W. - Jim Brady Commemorative Lost Gear Award
No masks, no fins, missing weight belts...

Bob Riecke - Fishes in the 'Hood Award *"Hey, that tautog just stole my \$85 knife!"*

Connie Rogers - C.R.S. Award *Didn't remember diving Sandwich Town Beach.*

Eric Alphonse - Entomophobia Award *Always pre-check regulator...for earwigs.*

Bill Turner - Depth Tester Award *40'... 120'... whatever!*

Ian Campbell - Underwater Homing Award
Lost his spear tip to a striper and then found it, in the dead striper, during his 2nd dive!

Henry Cugno - The Human Fender Award *"I'd rather be in the boat with a drink on the rocks than in the drink with a boat on the rocks."*

Ed Packhem - The Free Speech, er Diver Award
The most talk about spearfishing with the least fish to show.

Terry Carragher - Poopy Drysuit Award
*Hello little birdy, why don't you rest for a bit.
Fly away little birdy, 'cuz my knee's covered in shit.*

A little privacy over here, please!



The purpose of the O.C.A. is the enjoyment of its members.

...promoting safety and sportsmanship.

O.C.A. OFFICERS

President **Ian Campbell**
Vice President **Bill Turner**
Secretary **Bill Lane**
Treasurer **Terry Carragher**

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Henry Cugno 06-07
Fred LeBlanc 06-07
Janet MacCausland 06-07
Connie Rogers 07-08
Alan Reilly 07-08
Rick Amaral 07-08

www.ocascuba.org O.C.A. meetings are held every Thursday evening at 7:00 pm at the Scuba Center in South Attleboro, MA. Winter meetings are held the first and third Thurs. of the month from November 1 thru March 31.

We welcome your articles, notes, cartoons and photos for upcoming issues. Feel free to forward them to:

Old Colony Amphibians
P.O. Box 1062
Attleboro, MA 02703

or directly to Bill Lane, editor of *On The Line*:
bill@lanedesign.com

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The Tongue of the Ocean, Bahamas

up over coral. It is also extremely fragmented by large, shallow estuary areas. One cannot physically travel from one end of the island to the other overland. Because of the huge estuaries, inhabited by many fish, and especially Bonefish, Andros calls itself "The Bonefish Capital of the World." Bonefish are an extremely muscular game fish, and get up to perhaps 10 pounds. They inhabit the shallow inland tidal mudflat areas and feed on small crustaceans. The preferred method of fishing for them is with fly gear, either by wading or in shallow draft skiffs. Roughly half the guests



at Small Hope were there for the fishing. Though I'm somewhat of an indifferent rod fisherman, I decided that I couldn't go to Andros without attempting some fishing.

My guide took me out in a 15 foot skiff which was equipped with a 3 foot tall standing platform in the stern. After traveling to the flats

at breakneck speed, my guide got us into an area 1-2 feet deep, mounted the platform and proceeded to move us along slowly with a pole while I stood on the carpeted bow holding a fly rod. He had a better view than I did since his eyes were 3 feet higher than mine (plus better trained to look for bonefish). A typical scenario was a sharp call like: "Give me a 50 foot cast at 11 'o'clock." Once the line was cast out, then: "slow strip," "fast strip," "long strip," "hold," etc. ("Strip" being line retrieval, not disrobing.) Unfortunately my ability to execute the guide's commands weren't the greatest, and though I did manage to catch a few small bonefish, I couldn't get hooked up with one of the big ones that are most sought after. I did get a bit of excitement though when fishing a narrow channel with a baited spinning rod. I had hooked a roughly 2 pound fish when I felt that the fish had entangled the line. It then broke free and reeled in easily. I soon realized

that all I had caught was a fish head- a barracuda had taken the rest!

Over in Nassau I did a 2-tank dive with Stuart Cove's, who bill themselves as the largest dive operation in the Caribbean. I'm not sure if the claim is true, but it's certainly believable. Stuart Cove's is a dive factory. They have around 10 boats, multiple buildings, and a small fleet of buses that bring in guests from the resorts or cruise ships. There were 14 divers on my boat, plus 2 divemasters/photographers who went underwater. They take underwater photos of all the divers and the dive site; these are available for purchase after the dive. This outfit has certainly figured out how to make money from diving. Diving was on the eastern side of the "Tongue." Once

again great vis, nice life; the second dive was a 90' wreck in 55 feet which was excellent.

Nassau is everything that Andros is not: crowded, lots of traffic, and very dirty away from the resorts. Not my kind of place. Restaurant food was good however, we were lucky to get recommendations from the chef at Small Hope, who got his start in Nassau. *Ian*



Aluminum 80 Tank Alert Update

Doug Leedham of The Scuba Center saw the article in the last issue of *On the Line* and reports that Luxfer has issued technical bulletins about the 6351 aluminum alloy. From 2/4/04: This policy (tank exchange program) is not a recommendation to discontinue use of older Luxfer scuba cylinders made from 6351 alloy, nor is it a product recall. As long as such cylinders are inspected in accordance with Luxfer requirements and can be requalified according to regulations established by the U.S. Department of Transportation, they can continue to be used indefinitely.

Also, from PSI Cylinders, Inc., look up this address on the web: <http://www.psicylinders.com/library/Current/cracking.htm> It is full of information and links to even more information.



Winter Dive Club at Fort Wetherill.



Dive Computers

A dive computer, or decompression meter, is a device used by a scuba diver to measure the time and depth of a dive so that a safe ascent rate can be calculated and displayed. With this technology, a diver can avoid decompression sickness.

Dive computers address the same problem as decompression tables, but are able to perform a continuous calculation of the partial pressure of inert gases in the body based on the actual depth and time profile of the diver. As the dive computer automatically measures depth and time, it reduces the need for the diver to carry a separate watch and depth gauge and is able to warn of excessive ascent rates and missed decompression stops. Many dive computers also provide additional information to the diver, for example, the water temperature, information on the diver's oxygen toxicity or the pressure of the remaining breathing gas in the diving cylinder.

The first mechanical analogue dive computer, the decompression meter, was marketed by Scubapro in 1972. It was very simple in principle: a waterproof bladder filled with gas inside a big casing bled into a smaller chamber through a calibrated porous ceramic cartridge (to simulate tissue in/out gassing). The pressure was measured by a manometer whose graduation indicated decompression stops. The device was eventually nicknamed bend-o-meter.

Several analogue decompression meters were subsequently marketed, some with several bladders for illustrating the effect on various body tissues. They were sidelined with the arrival of electronic computers.

Dive computers provide a variety of visual dive information to the diver. Modern dive computers display the following information on a LCD:

- Current depth
- Maximum depth reached on this dive
- No stop time, the time remaining at the current depth without the need for decompression stops
- Dive time, often measured from the end of the last longer surface interval

Many dive computers also display additional information:

- Required decompression stop depth and time
- Water temperature
- Ascent rate.
- Dive profile (often not displayed during the dive, but can be transmitted to a personal computer)

Some computers are designed to display information from a diving cylinder pressure sensor, such as:

- Gas pressure
- Estimated remaining time based on available gas and rate of gas consumption.

Some information is only shown at the surface avoiding an information overload of the diver during the dive:

- "Time to Fly" display showing when the diver can safely board an airplane
- A log of key information about previous dives
- Maximum non-decompression bottom times for subsequent dives based on the partial pressure of the gases in the tissue

Many dive computers have warning buzzers that warn the diver of events such as:

- Excessive ascent rates
- Missed decompression stops
- Maximum operation depth exceeded
- Oxygen toxicity limits exceeded

A diver wishing to reduce the risk of decompression sickness can take a number of precautionary measures such as:

- Use dive computers with a conservative decompression model
- Use safety factors with dive computers (e.g. using a high altitude dive mode for a dive at sea level)
- Add additional deep safety stops during a deep dive
- Make a slow ascent
- Add additional shallow safety stops
- Have a long surface interval between dives

To discourage continued diving after an unsafe dive, many computers go into a "lockout" mode for 24 hours if the diver violates the computer's safety limits. While in lockout mode, these computers display warning signs telling the diver that the dive computer cannot be used.

All this technology is good but I just got a dive computer 2 years ago and seemed to spend more time looking at the thing rather than what is down there. In the 20+ years I dove without a computer I never needed to make a decompression stop but now every dive I take indicates that I should. And, my computer has a warning beep but I've never heard it. Some of my buddies say they have heard a beep almost the entire dive. What if the thing goes into lock out? What am I going to do? I always bring my old regulator with my old analogue gauges just in case.

Don't get me wrong, modern technology is a thing of wonder and makes safe diving achievable for almost every level of certification. But sometimes, the way I'm familiar with seems a bit more comfortable to me.

Remember the Duct Tape: *The "McGiver" Diver*
Next Time: Live aboards



Not only does Mary win all of our dollar raffles, but she cleans up at the '07 Sea Rovers with a lift bag!

Help!

We have a goal this year to increase our membership and we are asking all members, active or inactive, to complete the following questionnaire. We want to know what's great about the club, what needs to change and why you're here...or **not** here. You can complete this form and mail it back to us at

P.O. Box 162, Attleboro, MA 02703. Anonymity is entirely up to you. Also, we will be e-mailing this form to those of which we have e-mail addresses if you'd prefer to work on your computer.

Thank you very much! Ian and Terry

How long have you been an OCA member (approximately)? _____

How did you learn about the club? _____

What is different about the club today then when you joined the club? _____

Has it changed for the better or worse? Why? _____

Do you still attend meetings? Yes No

Why or why not? _____

Do you still attend club dives? Yes No

Why or why not? _____

Do you attend major club events such as the Banquet, P-Town, Salem, Family Day, etc.)?

Why? _____

If you could change anything about the club, what would it be? _____

Is there anything else you'd like to add? _____

Name (optional) _____

March

- 3-4 **Boston Sea Rovers.com**
- 4 **Block 7 – The Final Block**
W.D.C. starts
- 30-1 **R.I. Saltwater Anglers Show**
Providence Conv. Center
- 31 **New Englanders Underwater**
at Dryden Gallery, Providence
through May 19.

April

- 5 **OCA meeting at Dryden Gallery**, Providence, RI.
Branch Avenue Exit, behind Benny's east of I-95. 7:00 pm start so get there early to see the exhibit.
- 5 **Commence OCA Summer Meeting Schedule.** 7:00 pm every Thursday night through October.

PREZ BOX

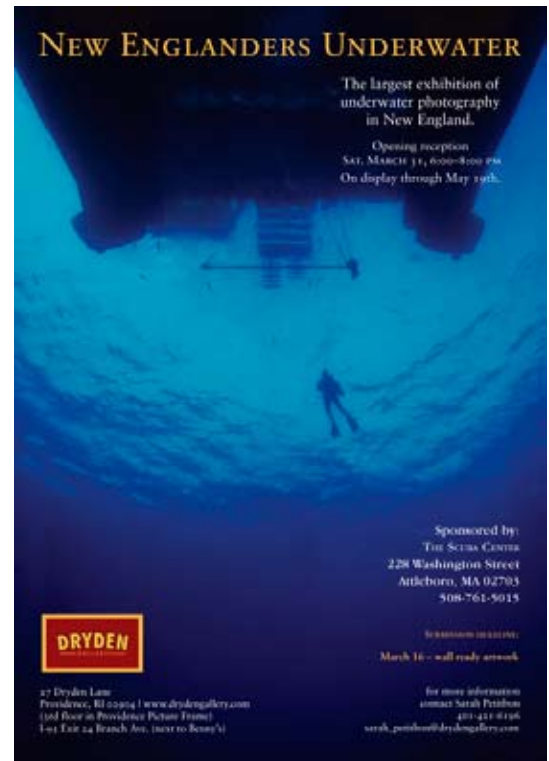
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locations or situations that are new to them. We need to take new divers under our “wing” and help them get comfortable underwater.

Our club has a great tradition of organized dives/ events such as P-Town weekend, Winter Island weekend, Family Day and Friday Night Dives. Last year we were a little light on organized dives other than these. I'm looking for the club to dive some different locations this year so please give your input to us as we plan our diving schedule over the next few weeks. Don't forget that we need chair-people for the dives!

There are already some great upcoming events: The R.I. Saltwater Anglers show will be happening March 30 to April 1. OCA will once again have a booth at the show, so please come and show your support or help work the booth. The “New Englanders Underwater” photography show will be held at the Providence Picture Frame Dryden Gallery starting Saturday night March 31, 7-10pm with a reception for the photographers; the show continues until May 19. Last year's show was terrific and no doubt this show will also be excellent. Our first meeting in April will be at the gallery at 7:00pm on the 5th. Get there early if you want to take in the photographs.

Here's to a great year of diving! *Ian Campbell*



New Englanders Underwater 2007
The New Englanders Underwater 2007 art show is returning to the Dryden Gallery, 27 Dryden Lane, Providence, RI.

We will have our April 5th OCA meeting there at 7:00 pm. If you want to see the show, plan to get there earlier and enjoy all the work.



www.ocascuba.org



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