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# On the Line

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE OLD COLONY AMPHIBIANS

## PREZ BOX

*As editor, I've decided to give Ian a break from writing his Prez Box column, especially since he wrote the wonderful article about his trip to the Caymans. So instead, here's a word from our Treasurer:*

**Time again for my annual reminder to all of us who don't own a boat.**

Think about where the club and we would be with out our friends who are kind enough to share their boats with us. I don't know about you but the thoughts of shore dives all summer is not very appealing. And that's an awfully long surface swim for scalloping at Winter Island without the aid of a boat!

My point?? Let's think about how much the price of gas, oil, insurance etc has increased in the last few years. We have all felt it at the pump this year, just imagine how much more it is at the docks. And don't forget the cost of putting in at certain boat ramps and the cost to tow the boat to the various boat ramps. I joined the club in 1997 and the suggested gift was \$20.

*Cont. on back cover.*



Linda and I took a 9 day trip to the Caymans at the beginning of April. Having never been there we decided to stay over a couple of days in Grand Cayman to check the place out, but my real objective was to go over to one of the smaller, out of the way islands where things would be more quiet. The two smaller islands are Cayman Brac and Little Cayman, which are 80-90 miles away from Grand Cayman, but are separated from each other by only 7 miles. After some research we decided on Cayman Brac as the main part of the trip, primarily based on hotel pricing. There is essentially only one place to stay on each small island: Southern Cross Club on Little Cayman and Brac Reef Resort on Cayman Brac. Given that Brac Reef was a lot cheaper and reported that they dive Little Cayman anyway, we decided to stay there.

On Grand Cayman we stayed just off 7 mile Beach at Sunshine Suites. It was a decent place, across the street from the beach. Definitely not a resort, but equipped with kitchenettes which make some meals easier. I did a couple of dives on the Northwest wall with Divers Down. They bill themselves as "Max 8 divers to a boat", which sounded good as Cayman is known for its "Cattle Boats." The dive-master led the 4 of us on a nice swim-through pinnacle/wall area down to around 110 feet for the first dive. On the second dive it was "There's the ocean, make sure you make it back to the boat, see ya later." My kind of dive boat for sure!

We rented a car and toured the island. It seems like the entire place is either under construction or for sale, likely as a result of the damage inflicted by Hurricane Ivan in 2004. One can still see the result of the storm in the form of destroyed houses and piles of trees and brush. The big island can be thought of as being in the shape of the letter "C" sitting on its back. There is a large central lagoon; the left (West) side of the "C" contains the hotel zone and the famous 7 mile beach. The east end of the island is less developed, but interspersed with resorts and villas. The far right end of the "C" is a place called Rum Point. If we go back to GC, that's probably where we'd stay. It's a picturesque, relatively quiet place with a nice beach-side bar and a dive operation right there.

On the third day we took the 30 minute flight to Cayman Brac, with a fast stopover on Little Cayman. These 2 islands are each about 10 miles long by 1 mile wide. One has to fly the length of Little Cayman to get to "The Brac," so we got a nice bird's eye view of L.C. Not much to see though. As with Grand Cayman, most of the island is low and flat. If sea levels rise much more, these 2 islands are in big trouble.

Cayman Brac gets its name from the Gaelic word for "Bluff." This feature runs down the entire center of the island, ranging from zero elevation at the west end to 150

feet high at the east end. During our stay we also toured the island by car, which included a trip up onto the bluff. At the eastern end is the "Brac Lighthouse," which is a bit of a disappointment as it's only an automated strobe station. Of more interest is a tour along the bluff, which is at its highest point, and descends directly to the ocean. It would be an extremely bad place for a shipwreck. Brown Boobies are nesting along the bluff edge; their chicks were with them and the parent bird stays right alongside the baby even as a person approaches. I stayed at least 10 feet away from the birds. Up close they have a distinctive pinched, funny-looking face. In flight they look like a variation of a cormorant. Further along the east end there's a point where one can look

down over the village of Spot Bay. This point is also right at "Peter's Cave," which is a hurricane hide cave, about 100 feet up the bluff. The cave was used as recently as 1988. Looking into the cave, it's hard to imagine over 100 people crowding into this

cave, which is at best only 4 feet high. Along the bluff there are several more large caves which have all been used for hurricane shelter.

The Brac Reef resort is located on the Southwestern end of the island, right behind the island's runway. This is a place which is devoted to diving. They have 4 identical purpose-built 46 foot dive boats. Three were in service

## Cayman Islands Trip



during our visit. I'd say about 50 divers were going out on a daily basis on the 3 boats. On entering the grounds of the resort, my first impression was "What is all this mess?" There are painted stones and boards of all sizes and shapes laying all about the property. On closer examination, they all prove to be mementos of folks who visited the resort. These are by individuals, clubs and other organizations from all

*Continued on Page 3.*

# OCA Tune Up Dive

On April 19 we had our first dive of the season, our Tune Up Dive. This year we scheduled the dive to coincide with the beach clean up that Giant Stride Scuba had scheduled. This was a good chance for us to meet with some of the divers from Giant Stride. We started at 10am with the clean up and after, some made their first dive of the year.

We had about 12 OCA members participate and Giant Stride had over 20. I did not dive as I'm all tuned up after diving all winter with the Winter Dive Club... which, by the way, had only 4 members complete all the dives. The divers that got wet said the vis was good and the temp was about 50°.

After the beach clean up and dive we had our burgers, dogs and sweets that everyone brings (thanks Connie). **Bill T.**

*Just a couple added notes.* When we first arrived at Eisenhower House, it appeared that someone had already cleaned up that area. The beach and surrounding area looked pretty good. However, looks can be deceiving as there were at least 25 garbage bags full of trash garnered from in and out of the water.

A special thanks to Bill for bringing the Hot Dog cart! We attracted a lot of attention which hopefully translates into new members. Between Bill's cart and Connie's cheerleading I think we've finally hit on how to attract new members. **Terry**

# Divers' and Snorkelers' Sunscreen is Killing Off Coral

*Undercurrent, V23, NJ March 2008*

The sunscreen you dutifully put on before a dive or snorkel may prevent sunburn, but its chemicals are killing coral reefs worldwide. A study in the journal Environmental Health Perspectives states that four common sunscreen ingredients can awaken viruses in an algae called Zooxanthellae that lives inside reef-building coral species. The chemicals cause the viruses to replicate until their algae hosts explode, spilling viruses into the surrounding seawater, where they can infect neighboring coral communities. Zooxanthellae provides coral with food energy through photosynthesis and contributes to corals' vibrant color. Without it, the coral bleaches white and dies.

The study's researchers looked at the effects of sunscreen exposure on coral samples from reefs in the Pacific, Atlantic, and Indian Oceans. Seawater surrounding the coral exposed to sunscreen contained up to 15 times more viruses than unexposed samples. Researchers found that even low levels of sunscreen, at or below the typical amount used by swimmers, could activate the algae viruses and completely bleach coral in just four days. They estimate that 4,000 to 6,000 metric tons of sunscreen wash off swimmers, snorkelers and divers annually in oceans worldwide, and that up to 10% of coral reefs are threatened by sunscreen-induced bleaching.

Several brands of popular sunscreens were tested and all had four ingredients in common: paraben cinnamate, benzophenone, and a camphor derivative. Banning sunscreen isn't necessary. To reduce their impact on coral, divers and snorkelers can use sunscreens with titanium dioxide and zinc oxide, which reflect instead of absorb ultraviolet radiation. Some eco-friendly sunscreens that meet those standards come from Caribbean Solutions ([www.caribbean-sol.com](http://www.caribbean-sol.com)) and from Aubrey Organics ([www.aubrey-organics.com](http://www.aubrey-organics.com)).



*At this year's Sea Rovers Convention, Max, Mary & Connie hear a pitch about a rebreather. Connie was especially intrigued with the unit...hhmmmm, maybe the lobsters won't hear me coming...*

*Eric and Dick find Dick's long lost younger brother!*



*The purpose of the Old Colony Amphibians is to further the sport of skin and scuba diving for the enjoyment of its members while at the same time promoting safety and sportsmanship.*

## OCA OFFICERS

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[www.ocascuba.org](http://www.ocascuba.org) O.C.A. meetings are held every Thursday evening at 7:00 pm at the Midas Muffler Shop on Route 1 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:

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P.O. Box 1062  
Attleboro, MA 02703

or: [bill@lanedesign.com](mailto:bill@lanedesign.com)

## Cayman Islands Trip - continued.

over the world. I was going to make a list of all the clubs I could find but it would be too long! At the front desk, guests can requisition the painting kit which contains all the material for creating a memento. Naturally I had to leave the mark of the OCA on site!

The diving was great, with the only slight disappointment being the lack of large swimming critters. We saw lots of turtles and stingrays; a few eagle rays and no sharks at all while on SCUBA. My best critter encounter was with a good sized octopus, who gave an impressive color and shape display as he traveled along. The underwater topography was spectacular and the visibility the best I've ever seen. At times I could literally make out divers 200 feet away. There is a nice wreck on the north side of The Brac, a former Russian missile frigate, later owned by the Cubans, who couldn't afford to operate it. It was sold about 15 years ago to the Cayman government as an artificial reef. It sits in about 90 feet at the deepest, with a radar tower coming up to 25 feet or so. One can see the entire 330 foot wreck immediately upon entering the water. There are a lot of nice penetrations, although I doubt the pre-sinking preparations are up to US standards. There are definitely entanglement hazards in a few areas. On

my second dive on the wreck I was paired up with a newer diver. We swam through the bow section which is about 80 degrees tipped over from the vertical. When we exited, this guy didn't hug the bottom of the now-horizontal door opening. The hang strap of his B/C perfectly engaged the door stop post and there he was, quite stuck. Had he been by himself he would have had a good chance to try out his doff/don maneuver as there was absolutely no way he was getting unhooked by himself.

The dive staff of Brac Reef Resort was excellent, and distinguished themselves by drawing the most intricate pre-dive briefing maps I have ever seen, using at least 4 pen colors on a wipe-board. The only exception to the intricacy was when we went to Little Cayman and did our first dive on Bloody Bay wall. There the map was simply a 90° bent line, with the number 30 at the horizontal top line and the number 6000 at the bottom

of the vertical line. This was quite literally how sheer and steep this area of the wall was. I personally found the second dive more interesting, as it was in a tumble-down area of the wall. Given the fantastic vis, one could see down the boulder area a really long way. Along the top of the wall is grouper "regeneration" preserve. Many large groupers have been tagged; these guys are so tame that they will allow themselves to be handled by divers.

On one of our other dives, the dive masters drew this strange colored box on the site map. They didn't explain this at all, and later said to be on the lookout for dolphins, to which we all responded with disbelief. Once we entered the water the explanation was clear. Sitting in about 40 feet of water is a beautiful large bronze statue of a two dolphins swimming with stingrays. I later snorkeled this area with Linda and dove down to the statue. My lungs aren't as young as they used to be as it seemed like a hell of a long way back to the surface! On that same snorkel trip, on our last day, immediately after entering the water I saw a 5 foot shark swimming toward Linda, who was in about 10 feet of water. She popped her head up and asked me what I had said, to which I responded "SHARK." By now the shark was right under her toes. As it was a nurse shark, and didn't bother her (Linda is a R.N.) I figured we had a case of professional courtesy! **Ian Campbell**



Tune-Up Dive with Giant Stride Scuba.

## June 2008

- 6 **Friday Night Dive**, Ft Wetherill  
Ilan Campbell, 7:30 pm
- 15 **Scallop Dive**, Salem,  
Rick Amaral, T.B.D.
- 20 **Friday Night Dive**, Ft Wetherill  
Henry Cugno, 7:30 pm
- 22 **MA Wreck Dive**, Charter-  
Gloucester, Max Arias

## July 2008

- 4 **Friday Night Dive**, Ft Wetherill  
Max Arias, 7:30 pm
- 13 **Lobster Dive**, Green Harbor/  
Marshfield, Bill L./Bill T.  
8:00 am
- 18 **Friday Night Dive**, Ft Wetherill  
Henry Cugno, 7:30 pm
- 20 **Spearfishing Contest**, TBD  
Ilan Campbell 8:00 am
- 26 **Weekend Winter Island**  
Salem MA, Eric Alphonse  
all day

## PREZ BOX

*Cont. from front cover.*

Ten plus years of diving later I see people still offering the same amount, sometimes less. I know that when you ask most of the captains they say that's fine, whatever. They are not in the charter business and can't "charge" us - it's just our way of saying thank you and in a very small way helping to share in the expenses. We should at least be covering the cost of gas. Call around to dive shops and see what it would cost to go out for two dives and keep in mind those two dives are half a day at best not a full day on the water like we usually do. Not to mention the entertainment and camaraderie!

So let's try and be a bit more realistic and generous this year when we thank the clubs lifeblood.

Along the same lines, please be sure that when you sign up for a dive you actually show up. Towing a boat to the ramp and finding out it wasn't needed is not only expensive but you are denying someone else an opportunity to dive. If you aren't sure you can make it, don't sign up. If at the last minute you want to dive, you can always call and see if there's room. If you are signed up and can't make the dive, please let your chair person and/or captain know as soon as possible.

Thank you, *Terry*



[www.ocascuba.org](http://www.ocascuba.org)



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