

# Paradise Dive Club

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## President's Log

*Diving ABC's*

Michael Ring  
President

For those who are not familiar, the Netherland Antilles are referred to as the ABC ISLANDS - Aruba, Bonaire and Curacao. If you have never dived there, when the chance comes, grab it! My daughter, son-in-law and I had the chance to dive Curacao and Bonaire this past New Year's and it could not have been better. Since I already submitted an article on Bonaire a couple years ago, I will focus on Curacao here.

I flew LAX to Miami and then directly to Curacao's Hato International Airport, arriving the evening of December 29. We had reserved at a cutesy little place called Lion's Dive on the Southeast corner of the island. Unfortunately the agent at the rental car counter was not very clear on the directions of how to get from the airport to the resort, and my Papiamento is not as good as it could be. So, true to form, I got lost. Late at night. On an island about as far south into the Caribbean as you can get and not be answering to Hugo Chavez.

One of the prominent features of Curacao is a huge oil refinery, which has a huge (and smelly) burn-off tower going 24 hours a day. As I left the airport it was to my right. While meandering around to find the resort, it moved to my left, and then my right, and then my left again. Since I was pretty sure it was not moving, I knew I needed help.

I found an open gas station and asked the attendant for directions. She did not have a map, but I had one from Avis (it showed me where 30 KFC's and 45 MacDonal'd's were!) and I was able to share it with her through the glass. That does make it hard to follow the directions. Eventually she indicated that she would come out of her cubicle to assist me after a couple paid for their gas purchase. That couple asked if they could help me, and when I told them what I needed, they offered to help. Eventually, since the directions were getting complicated, the man simply said he would lead me there. Very friendly people. I was grateful, and followed. Once we arrived I realized it was truly unlikely that I would have found the place on the map. So began my trip.

I checked into the resort, and was assigned my room. For some reason, our suite was not located on the contiguous resort property, but was part of the next door condos. The man at the front desk told me that the resort's wifi did not extend that far, so if I wanted internet I needed to bring my laptop over to them or use the business center. Well, if you use the business center prepare to be eaten. The bugs were out in force. (The next day I found that while I was too far away for Lion's Dive's wifi, I was perfect for the neighbor's. I could have saved a lot of scratching!)

The next morning I went to the dive shop, Ocean Encounters, and filled out the paperwork for diving. They asked a number of questions about my experience, when my last

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dives were; when I had last dived in the Carib, etc. While they normally require a check out dive before letting someone on the boats, I convinced them to let me start that afternoon without one. So, I got my weights and set up for Nitrox diving for the next few days and went to breakfast.

At the appointed hour I got on the boat and headed out for the first dive of the trip. A place called Tug Boat, because there is a sunken tug boat at the end of the dive. I found a buddy (Iris and Ryan were not arriving until the 31st) and into the 80 degree water I went. Ahhhhhh! If only the SB Channel were that warm. And clear. We saw squirrel fish, drum fish, eels, rays, turtles, angel fish, you name it. The dive was going great. My buddy, who was seemingly doing fine, signaled the dive master that he was at one half on his tank. I looked at mine and still had over 2000 lbs, but he was my buddy, so I indicated to the dive master that I would return to the boat with him.

When I looked back to my buddy he was sprinting back towards the boat. What the...? Hey dude, you spent 1500 lbs getting here, why not relax and use the remaining 1500 enjoying the dive back? After all, we were only a couple hundred feet from the dive boat, and at about 60 feet. Surely your air would hold you for a while? Well, when I tried to signal to him to slow down I made to broad a sweeping motion and, wham - the coral welcomes you to the Caribbean! I put an inch long slice right down the center of the palm of my left hand going into my middle finger. Why is it I always do that on the first day of my dive trips? Fortunately I have Neosporin in my kit at the resort, but I knew this meant days of discomfort and probably a permanent reminder of this fine encounter.

The dive itself was nice. When we got back to the boat, buddy boy decided to surface. The tug boat wreck was close, so I explored it a little on my own, in the presence of about 20 snorkelers, who were there too (the tug is very shallow).

On return to base I signed up for a night dive that evening. It turns out we went to the same spot, but it is somewhat different at night. I went on two other day dives

prior to the arrival of my kids, and saw other parts of the island.

The evening of the 31st I got much better directions from the resort about getting to and from the airport. It turns out that it is quite simple, once you know how. I picked up the kids and we went back to the resort for dinner and the fireworks. Apparently fireworks are a national pastime on Curacao. They were great. They launched right down the beach from our resort and it was non-stop finale! Truly fun. And that was just at our place. It appears that just about every resort, park, hotel, liquor store, whatever, puts on its own show. They went well into the wee hours of the morning.

New Year 's Day we wanted to start off with a dive. The problem was that our dive shop was not willing to let me check out tanks for Iris and Ryan without their having signed waivers. And, since everyone is expected to drink themselves silly on the big night, they don't open the shop until afternoon on the first. So, after some inquiry, we found another shop on island that opened at 8:00. It was Habitat Curacao. But it is located on the Northwest side of the island. About as far away as you could get and still be on Curacao. So, we got our gear into the car and headed out.

It was worth the drive. While Lion's Dive is ok, Habitat Curacao was fantastic! Unlike Lion's Dive, which is located in a somewhat industrial/developing part of the island, Habitat is in the lush part of Curacao. Like say Kapalua on Maui. And the dive shop is very laid back.

They have Nitrox, and told us we could rent one tank for \$10, two for \$20, or unlimited for \$29. We were planning to head back home for an afternoon boat, so we decided on one tank. But the house reef was so cool we decided to cancel the boat and stay up at Habitat. We went back to the shop and they said not a problem and away we went for 3 great shore dives. They have a few resident barracuda that hang around by the steps. We saw a large green spotted eel, turtles, schools of durgon and blue tangs. Etc. etc. etc. It was a great starting dive for the kids and me for 2009. We loved it. If you ever go to Curacao, forget Lion's Dive. Go

straight to Habitat and stay there. The restaurant on property is much nicer and their pool seems to die into the ocean.

The architecture of the towns in Curacao is a mix of Dutch and Caribbean.

Hues of every color of the rainbow are throughout the island. And the style is fascinating. Then to top it off, there are two areas separated by the waterway, one called Punda and the other called Otrabanda. There is a foot bridge connecting the two that has lighted colored arches every few feet the length of the bridge. Here's the cool part - the bridge is on pontoons! So when an ocean going vessel needs to get by, the guy manning the boat house on the bridge sounds a warning, starts up the engine, and then the entire bridge swings open on its pontoons to make way for the traffic. And if you are on the bridge, that's ok. You just go for the ride! Then when the boat traffic is cleared, the bridge swings back into place and you can walk to the other side. Way cool!! The night we first went there our timing was perfect. As we got to the bridge, it started to open and we got to see the entire process. It takes about 10-15 minutes for the bridge to open, and I videotaped the whole thing. Of course that filled my memory card for the night, but it was worth it.

Curacao is the economic center of the Netherland Antilles, and has quite a lot of history. We toured a number of places of interest, including an old fort that now houses several different kinds of restaurants, including a group of them that line the outside wall of the fort. On our last night there we dined in the Italian one at sunset and had a marvelous dinner with the sun setting over the water.

While the diving on Curacao is not as fantastic as it is on Bonaire, for an overall experience, I highly recommend it. ■

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

### BOARD MEETING

TIME: TUESDAY FEBRUARY 3, 7:00PM @ NOAH'S

Club officers to discuss 2009 plans

### MONTHLY DECOMPRESSION STOP

PLACE: LONGBOARD'S @ THE HARBOR

TIME: FRIDAY FEBRUARY 6, 6:30PM

Time to decompress from the week pressures.

### MONTHLY MEETING

PLACE: PETRINI'S

TIME: TUESDAY FEBRUARY 24, 6:30PM

Dive in to the food, stay for the entertainment.

### THE 28TH ANNUAL AVALON UNDERWATER CLEANUP

Date: February 21, 2009.

This is the 28th Anniversary of the Avalon Harbor Underwater Cleanup. This premier dive event has grown to be one of the largest in Southern California. Approximately 550 divers from across California and neighboring states join in this annual endeavor to clean Avalon's spectacular harbor of accumulated junk and lost overboard "treasures". Divers compete for the prizes awarded or raffled in a ceremony after the dive. The proceeds from the event are for the benefit of Catalina Island Conservancy's Bob Given Ocean Conservation Fund and the Catalina Hyperbaric Chamber, a life support recompression chamber on Catalina that serves the thousands of divers who frequent the nearby waters.

In addition to a fun dive, we will have a lot of great prizes that we will be raffling and giving away at the afternoon award ceremony.

Please register online individually by going to [www.catalinaconservancy.org](http://www.catalinaconservancy.org), to enter a group, please contact Tom Turney @ [turney@newcap.com](mailto:turney@newcap.com).

## Call for Articles!

Articles and photos are needed for future newsletters. Remember the newsletter is here to inform *and* serve the club. If you have any ideas you'd like to pass along, let your editor know. Write me at [scubadawg61@gmail.com](mailto:scubadawg61@gmail.com) Thanks and have a safe and happy holiday season. See you next year!

# PDC Thursday Night Dives!

To find out where the group will be diving, or to be added to the night dive e-mail list, sign up at [http://groups.yahoo.com/group/PDC\\_midweek\\_dive](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/PDC_midweek_dive), or send e-mail to [PDC\\_midweek\\_dive-subscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:PDC_midweek_dive-subscribe@yahoogroups.com)

## Membership

\$25/year for individuals, \$40 for families. Membership runs May-April and includes a monthly newsletter, free air-fills, and other benefits. For details or to join, contact Noah Philips at: [membership@paradisediveclub.org](mailto:membership@paradisediveclub.org).

## Newsletter

Send newsletter items to Stuart Ponder at: [webmaster@paradisediveclub.org](mailto:webmaster@paradisediveclub.org)

## Website

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

## Join the Coolest Club in Town!

1. Monthly meetings with entertainment.
2. Raffle prizes (we all need new dive stuff)
3. Great dive buddy pool
4. Beach and boat dives, AND weekly night dives
5. Club BBQs, and other activities
6. Free air-fills and gear discounts at local dive shops
7. Right to proudly wear the official PDC T-Shirt (nobody has a logo as cool as ours).

## Dive Club Officers

President	Michael Ring	<a href="mailto:info@paradisediveclub.org">info@paradisediveclub.org</a>
Vice President	Geof McFarland	
Treasurer	Mark Silva	
Secretary	Akiles Ceron	
Membership	Noah Philips	<a href="mailto:membership@paradisediveclub.org">membership@paradisediveclub.org</a>
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#### Truth Aquatics

301 W. Cabrillo Blvd.  
Santa Barbara, CA 93101  
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#### Anacapa Dive Center

22 Anacapa St  
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805!963!8917

*Many thanks to our sponsors for their generosity including air!fill donations and gear discounts!*

## Meeting Place

The February 24th meeting will take place at  
Petrini's Restaurant in Santa Barbara.  
14 West Calle Laureles.

Feeding frenzy at 6:30pm, meeting at 7pm