



ASK DR. DEBBIE...

By Debra A. Hill, MD

A SEA OF FRIENDS, FAMILY, LAUGHTER, PLAYFULNESS, AND LOVE....

COULDN'T THINK of a better sea to immerse myself in! And that's just what I got to do this past weekend in Catalina with a fantastic bunch of our dive club members! What a great way to achieve neutral buoyancy in life!

As I was trying to put the rings for my dry suit gloves into the latex wrist seals at 10:00 o'clock on Sunday night, I felt so great that I was getting ready ahead of time for the weekend dive trip--until the seal tore, and I went into a mental panic thinking, nooooo—I'm not going to dive a wetsuit at this time of year!! I began trying to map out how I was going to fit in a drive to San Diego early in the morning to drop off my dry suit at DUI, begging them to fix the latex seals before Friday. Well, then I realized that Monday was a holiday, which meant that all I had was Tuesday through Thursday to get this problem solved. It was just not going to happen. I knew I had an old tri-laminate suit whose seals had been replaced about a year ago but had begun to oxidize sitting in the attic. I took out the old suit and could see there was a small hole in one wrist seal and a thin area on the other wrist seal. My schedule was so tight with work; there was no way

I could get my suit to DUI in time to get it fixed before the Catalina trip. I frantically called Beach Cities Scuba to ask Hosam if he thought I could glue a patch on the small hole. To my surprise he suggested using duct tape on it—which DUI later confirmed is a good temporary solution for a small hole. I got so caught up in this fuss about my dry suit seals. It was ridiculous. I did begin reflecting on how hard it is sometimes to actually walk the talk of keeping balance in one's life between work and play.

Then Friday came, and it was a great morning of diving at the Aquarium, followed by a few hours of work, and errands--and at last Bob and I were on the boat to Avalon that night at 7:00 pm. We were hungry and tired and thought we would probably have to hunt around for some place to eat that might still be open once we arrived around 8:30 pm—but, to our pleasant surprise as we walked up to the door of 352 Eucalyptus—a wonderful aroma was wafting through the air—kind of like when I'd go to Grandma's as a kid and smell the fantastic aroma of a good home cooked meal as we pulled into the driveway for Sunday afternoon supper. It was like walking into Heaven—great food and a room

filled with happy welcoming dive buddies! We ate and laughed and slept like babies. It was like coming home...

The next morning we all headed down to the stage in town for a group photo but, like most families, everyone thought the other one had the camera but no one had the camera. Sere ndipitously, I remembered that my new PDA/ cell phone could take pictures—so we took a few candid shots—and headed off for the registration and briefing for the Clean-up Dive at Casino Point. Most of us were planning a short clean-up dive and then on to a fun dive in the Underwater Park. Bob and I, however, got rather mesmerized with the stuff that we could find and ended up doing a 40 minute clean-up dive—collecting 17 cans, a few bottles, a large sweatshirt, a bait bucket, old watch, and a scapula bone. Turns out the matching scapula bone was retrieved by another club member and we finally heard that they were from the back of a pig—oh, well, it was fun imagining that they were from some huge, elegant bird, or a sea lion or other large undersea animal. There were great stories of someone getting a photo of a sheephead carrying a lobster in its mouth—and others about a newly sunk sailboat near the Sujack that had been completely cleaned out inside—but we all could only speculate as to why it went down there.

The night got even better as everyone brought Spanish tapas for the Saturday night party, along with Konrad's Famous Basque Chicken, Maria's Scrumptious Empanada, and so much more.... And the wines were unbelievably diverse and fine!! All of this was just the backdrop to the great conversation and stories about scuba diving, sky diving, the latest movies we'd seen such as Sideways, and all sorts of life adventures. But that's not the end...we got to dive even deeper into the realm of fun and play as nearly everyone headed over to Luau Larry's for an evening of dancing our little hearts out!

The next morning was calm as people gradually departed for home throughout the day. Bob and

I hung out and walked around and visited more with fellow divers and club members as we ran into them. We got to working on some great ideas toward the latter part of the day about going to Thailand to assist with the underwater reef clean-up. I actually have the website for info as to how to get involved in that, but it is primarily in Thai—anyone speak Thai? Wouldn't that be a spectacular experience to participate in?

As we rode the Catalina Express home and watched the silhouette of Catalina get smaller and smaller on the horizon, both Bob and I reflected on why we dive—it's not just to immerse ourselves into the ocean and the underwater world—it's also to immerse ourselves in a great group of people from all walks of life, with interesting backgrounds, expertise, and experiences. It's quite comforting to come together and enjoy a sport that we all enjoy—and through this common interest we get the added luxury of getting to know a whole lot of interesting, warm, friendly, fun, and diverse people that we might not otherwise get a chance to get to know. It's also a group that's like a family—you know you can let your hair down and you'll still be accepted, loved and appreciated for who you are. I'm glad I could get away from the nearsightedness of fussing over details and achieve some "neutral buoyancy" this past weekend while immersing myself in the Sea of Friends--like family; and breathe in great memories that I'll keep forever...

P.S. Since I'm not a whiz-bang when it comes to electronic things, I haven't figured out yet how to download the photos from my phone—so, they'll have to wait till next month's newsletter.

Yours truly,

Debbie Hill-Titus, MD