



APRIL 2006

CHECK OUT THE LATEST ADVENTURES OF OUR CLUB MEMBERS...

A Whale Of An Adventure to the Heart of Baja on a Moment's Notice.

PRESIDENT'S CORNER



BY
Konrad Fry

Some trips define you and your taste for adventure. Some trips challenge every bit of your will. Our March Baja Whale Trip was just plain enjoyable. We saw crazy things, just missed instant death, achieved major groups of whales, discovered a marvelous wine valley and re-discovered Ensenada, Mexico as a cruise ship destination where we were the only gringos in town on a Saturday night. Here is the whole story.

At the February SOCDC meeting I said I was thinking of finally going back to Guerrero Negro, Mexico to see the whales in Scammon's Lagoon. The last time I did this trip was February 1994, twelve years ago. That trip was a 24 hour turn-around that included night driving south of El Rosario, dodging drunk, aggressive Baja Mexico truck drivers - one of whom tried to run me off the road in the mountains on switchbacks going down hill and eventually flipped his rig near Bahia de Los Angeles. I made it to Guerrero Negro, spent \$28 for my motel room, got up, saw the whales and decided there was nothing else to do there and headed home.

At the March SOCDC meeting I asked for a show of hands from those who would like to accompany me on a 3 day turn-around trip to Guerrero Negro. Out of 80 people at the dive club meeting, only three hands went up: John Doyle, Dale Davis and Ian Baillie. 2 weeks later it was decision time and Stephanie Fonder was also interested.



On Monday, March 13th I emailed everyone and John volunteered his GMC Sierra crew cab as the vehicle for the trip because it was diesel fueled and had three - count 'em - three fuel tanks! Diesel fuel only costs \$1.83 / gallon in Mexico! Dale was on the fence as was Stephanie. Ian was 98% going and gave us incredibly detailed information on motels, restaurants and Pemex stations.

Thursday, March 16th 2006. Ian said he would leave today, and meet us at the Baillie Malarrimo

Motel on the corner of town (only one main street!) for dinner Friday. John got his truck ready, Dale said he was in if we keep the costs down and Stephanie could not get off work. I went to AAA to get the latest Mexico book and Baja Map. John got an excellent detailed Baja map book and travel guide. Dale bought snacks and we all coordinated a 4:30 AM departure from my townhouse in Mission Viejo.

Friday, March 17th, 2006 Dale arrived at 4:05 AM a little early. John arrived at 4:15



AM on time and we decided to load our dive gear in the back of the pickup with a little trepidation about how to watch it in Mexican parking lots. The first thing Dale and I noticed was how incredibly comfortable John's truck was! Leather seats with individual warmers, leg room front and back and as if sent from heaven, XM radio (I guess it comes from above so why not). We zoomed to the Mexican border by 6 AM. After the red light inspection line, we searched in vain for the tourist card necessary for traveling south of Ensenada. The inspection officer told me that the oficina was in the adjacent parking area. Disafortunatamente, it was lit but not manned. We circled around the border area looking for another office, parked, walked and still nothing was open. So much for 24 hr. service in Mexico. We decided to just get it in Ensenada.

The drive to Ensenada was

beautiful. We saw the new boarder fence with US Boarder Patrol trucks along the length of the 10 foot high fence. Another interesting sight was the Coronado's islands. They are further south than we imagined. Actually south of Rosarita Beach. When Laurel booked us on those trips, we were deep into Mexican waters! Then we sailed past Fox Baja Studios where *Titanic*, *Master & Commander*, *Deep Blue Sea*, *Tomorrow Never Dies*, and *Pearl Harbor* were filmed. The whole area is looking very nice, as the shacks and shanties give way to new, luxurious development including a new harbor half way between Rosarita and Ensenada. As we made the big drop from the cliffs above Ensenada, John pointed out the Tuna farms in giant circles in the big bay. We were early for the opening of the customs office so we had breakfast at 7:30 AM. That was a quick ride!

The customs tourist office is on Azueta Street, which parallels Rte 1 as you enter town, next to the harbor. I watched the gear while John and Dale took in the passports. They tried to hit John up for \$47 because we did not do this in Tijuana but we suspected it was a bribe so John just gave him \$2 and we were on our way. First stop, Scotia Bank for Pesos. Fast way, use the ATM, slow way, go to the counter and wait in line. Then on to Gigante Grocery store. To our mutual horror, no Alcohol sold until 10 AM! Were we in Tennessee or Mexico? The guys bought avocados, bananas and limes for \$2.35 and we headed south to the NEW COSTCO. Yes, COSTCO for our Tequila and Dos XXs. We noticed a new grand opening Home Depot across the street. Hmmm. Then we hit the big, long road at 10:30 AM for our 350 miles trip to Guerrero Negro. Listening to XM radio the entire

trip was a blessing! Everything village flew by with three satellite comedy channels, cold Mexican beer and Herradura Tequila (in moderation at stops), considered the finest premium tequila in Mexico by Mexicans. John and Dale's snacks were excellent and having three gas tanks insured that we would never run out of fuel, the main concern of any Baja traveler. Santo Tomas vineyards, Punta Colonet where someone drove a small pickup with a horse shoved in the back, Camalu rest room stop, it was clean! San Quintin harbor that looks like a mini San Diego harbor with seven volcano's. Then on to El Rosario where the last Pemex is before the road goes up into the mountains and nothingness. We saw a guy sleeping on a cantina porch holding up a post with his boot, expecting him there on the return. Things are VERY slow in Mexico.

Catavina is a welcome oasis of sculpted boulders and palm trees and arroyos in the middle of the mountains, 100 miles north of Bahia de Los Angeles. We stopped for another bio-break and got back on the road. The XM comedy made the whole trip fly by. We were laughing every 10 minutes. The Bay of LA Pemex

is still closed but the road looks great. From that point on the terrain is lunar landscape and the XM signal kept us going until we arrived in Guerrero Negro at 6:30 PM, one half hour early!

We checked into a no-name motel for \$12.80 each. Then we went to the Malarrimo motel and THERE WAS IAN BAILLIE! Dinner was great. They have some disturbing things on the menu though. The Pacific Black Grouper made us wonder if that was a Giant Black Sea Bass. Most likely. Total cost for dinner with a bottle of wine: \$24. After dinner, we agreed to meet for coffee at 7:30 AM with Ian who was staying there. Before we hit the hay, we found an internet café that was super cheap and easy. We checked in back home, even though we had only been gone 12 hours! We brought the dive gear up to the room chained the truck spare gear and collapsed.

Saturday March, 18th Whale Day. We met Ian early and got going by 8 AM. Breakfast brought another suspect dish to our attention: Devil Fish Stuffed Omelets. The waiter said it was bass with hot salsa, not Manta Ray. We were relieved. Thank God for John's truck. The road to the national park is rough,

graded dirt. We paid our \$38 and waited to fill a panga boat. Our closest guest passenger drove down from Alaska, the other 5 were from Spain so don't think this is too far from Orange County. Right off the bat we saw two mothers and calves and one male grey whale. Then we had a 30 minute lull. Suddenly we saw big whales breaching and spy hopping. Then it was Grand Central Whale station with over 34 different individuals. We had one baby come 10 feet away but it went under the panga before we could pet it. I'll let the pictures do the talking, it was very cool. What blew us away were the stories from Alaska guy: Hunting walrus in the Bearing Sea. What does walrus taste like? "Walrus, the skin has to dry and takes up the whole side of your house for 5 days and smells ...like dead walrus." He hunts moose: "Tastes like, well...Moose! You have to carve it up quickly before the Grizzly Bears come for it." What is it like hunting Grizzly Bears? "You need three guns because it can attack you after 3 shots to the heart, always dangerous. Tastes like, well I hate to say it, Grizzly Bear." John, Dale, Ian and I could not beat any of his adventure stories so we agreed he won the most testosterone award while

Upcoming Events

SOCDC April Meeting April 13th CHAMBER FUND DONATION NIGHT

The *Atocha* was a Spanish treasure ship that sank in 1622, just two days after leaving port. Down with the ship went a fortune in silver and gold bars, emeralds, personal jewelry, along with hundreds of thousands of treasure coins.

Wendy's Super Cool Boat Dives: Easter Sunday Dive

PLEASE SIGN UP - WE NEED YOU!

Sunday, April 16 – Sun Diver (Seal Beach) to Catalina Farnsworth and Back Side

Includes food and air, \$110 for members and \$120 for non-members Bring your non-diver family member for a fun filled day out on the water \$40. We will have an "Underwater

Easter" egg hunt. Prizes given out when the eggs are returned. The big winner will be the diver who finds the GOLDEN EGG.

Email soccdiveboat@hotmail.com to signup with Wendy. Send checks to: SOCDC, PO BOX 3687, Mission Viejo, Ca 92690

May 3rd Chamber Day / Night Long Beach Aquarium of the Pacific. Get your donations in!

May 13th Tina's Nevada State-Line Turnaround Spots open! \$25 pp

June 24-25th Scuba Show

August 3rd - 12th Fiji @ Beqa Resort only \$2,400 !

being a real nice guy. Oh yeah, he drove along the dotted lines in the eastern Baja from San Felipe to Bahia de Los Angeles and South. Yikes. Ian suggested we pick up giant salt crystals from the guard shack at the exit to the park, and he let them. Back to Malarrimo where Ian was going to head south to Mulege and we were going to haul it back to Ensenada and dive.

1 PM: We checked out late from the motel and grabbed fish and shrimp tacos from a street vendor. YUMMM! The PDT/MDT 28 Latitude military stop has a bald eagle nest with an eagle in it just north of town. After that it was XM comedy and the mad dash 400 miles north. We stopped in San Quinten to see the harbor and marveled at the 20 mile white sand beach. It turns out that there are 2 sea mounts near the harbor with reported 80 foot vis. This is also where the San Diego great white shark charters go: Precacion! We got into the outskirts of Ensenada at 8 PM when, suddenly, the sky ripped apart with lightning and a massive storm front. We could only drive 10 mph. There went our diving at The Kennedy's Punta Banda because the dirt roads + massive rain = stuck-n-mud. John reserved a hotel in downtown that was nice: Casa del Sole. We hit the town in rain and 49 degree weather. We

were some of the only gringos in town so Hussong's was all locals and Papa's and Beers had a local wedding reception. It was cool to hang with Baja Californians.

Sunday March 19th Ensenada Day. We went to the Sanborn's at the harbor for Sunday brunch. Sanborn's is the Denny's of Mexico. I went to several in Mexico City when I went there for business. No diving, so we decided to check out San Tomas Winery downtown. Closed Sundays. Oh well, better yet we hit the Opening day of the new Home Depot. You can only imagine the crowds. The thing I thought was cool: tile from Puebla Mexico, weird: small circular saws 1/2 the size of normal. Then back to COSTCO across the street and on to the wine region. The Guadalupe valley is north of Ensenada on Rte 3 to Tecate. It is clean, beautiful and looks like the Alexander valley of Sonoma County! We stopped at L.A. Cetto's tasting room and were stunned at the quality of the wines. There are 20 wineries in the valley and we all decided to make another dive & wine weekend down there. But the time was 1:30 PM and the Sunday boarder crossing was looming ahead. We knew we had to get there before 4 PM so we went to the toll road and through TJ to get there fast. Taking a

new southern route, we were by passing downtown for speed. John pulled into a PEMEX station with diesel. As he was filling up Dale and I went to the Caballeros (men's room). In mid stride a wind pushed us back as a pickup shot through the diesel pumps at 80 mph and almost took out Dale. He was bypassing the traffic light. Viva la Adventura! That was the wildest trip to the big boy's room Dale ever had. We headed for the airport and the Otay Mesa border. This shaved 2 hours off the crossing. It took 1 hour to get across. We were home!

6:30 PM: Arrive Mission Viejo, unpack, say good bye. Wow! Wish you were there. Thank you John, Dale & Ian for a pleasant whirlwind adventure with good friends.

-Konrad

PS. Ian went to San Ignacio, disliked it and went on to Mulege, spent the night and on the way back, Sunday, was pulled over in El Rosario for going over speed bumps in a school zone (On a Sunday, mind you) and was escorted to the police station and relieved of \$80 that was weighing down his wallet. They initially wanted \$100. Amazing how they round off the fines isn't it! He returned that evening safe and sound.

Raffle Winners

Scuba Towel..... Susan Allen
 Mask Case Paul Miller
 Scuba Tool Bruce Weller
 Blanket Gary Cornell
 Blanket Ute Packi
 Classic Radio Mike Herndon
 First Aid Kit Wayne Phillips
 Blanket Dale Davis
 Blanket Susan Wright
 Blanket Dan Eisenbeisz
 Blanket Tina Duarte
 Regulator..... Susan Wright

Blanket..... Judi Sveen
 Blanket..... Judi Sveen
 Camera Bruce Weller
 Fiji Towels Jeremy Bloch
 Picnic Platter..... Susan Allen
 Blanket..... Mike Herndon
 Weight Bag..... Susan Allen
 Poker Set..... Jeremy Bloch
 Fins Ian Baillie
 Sleeping Bag..... Gary Cornell
 Dive Bag Gary Cornell



SCUBA SCUTTLEBUTT: Scuba Swap Meet is coming this weekend

By Debbie Karimoto

TIME CHANGE: Did you change the clock on your dive computer??

SPORT CHALET SCUBA SWAP

Saturday, April 15, 2006
Participating OC Locations: Brea & Huntington Beach

HERE'S HOW IT WORKS!

Bring in your used SCUBA equipment to one of our participating locations between April 10th & April 14th. For a fee of \$3.00 per item, we will register and tag your items with your name, the price you want and give you a receipt.

On April 15th, customers can browse through the used equipment and purchase items. If your gear sells during the SCUBA Swap, on April 17th, you will have two options:

1. Receive a Sport Chalet Gift Card equaling 110% of the selling price of your item(s). **EXAMPLE:** If you sell your regulator for \$200, you can receive a Sport Chalet Gift Card for the amount of \$220.
2. Receive cash in the amount of the selling price of your item(s). You can then visit any one of our professional SCUBA stores and upgrade into the latest dive fashions and technology

Gear not sold must be picked up by May 1st, 2006 or it will

be donated to charity. Inventory receipts must be presented along with a proper I.D. to claim unsold gear, cash or GIFT CARD.

SPORT-HARVESTED SEAFOOD ADVISORY

STATE HEALTH OFFICER ADVISES CONSUMERS NOT TO EAT SOME SHELLFISH AND VISCERA OF SARDINES, ANCHOVIES AND CRAB FROM SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA COAST

SACRAMENTO - Consumers should not eat sport-harvested species of bivalve (two-shelled) shellfish, sardines and anchovies, or the organs, or viscera, of sport-harvested or commercially sold lobster or crab taken from the coast of San Diego, Los Angeles, Orange, Ventura, Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo counties because they may be contaminated with domoic acid, a naturally occurring toxin that can cause human illness, State Public Health Officer Dr. Mark Horton warned today. Dogs, cats, birds and other household pets are also susceptible to domoic acid poisoning and should not be fed these products.

The California Department of Health Services (CDHS) has detected elevated levels of domoic acid in mussels and the viscera of sardines along the Southern California coast. Bivalve mollusc shellfish such as oysters, clams, mussels and scallops and the viscera of anchovies, crab and lobster could also contain

dangerous levels of this toxin. Crab viscera is commonly known as "crab butter" and lobster viscera is called "tomally."

Domoic acid was first identified in 1991 in samples of mussels, razor clams and other seafood at several locations along the Pacific Coast, including California. No known cases of human poisoning from this toxin are known to have occurred in California. CDHS includes testing of domoic acid and other marine toxins in its biotoxin monitoring program.

Symptoms of domoic acid poisoning include vomiting, abdominal cramps, diarrhea, headache, disorientation, seizures and loss of short-term memory. Severe cases may be fatal or result in permanent short-term memory. Older individuals and individuals with impaired kidney function are more vulnerable to the toxic effects of domoic acid.

This warning does not apply to commercially caught bivalve shellfish, which are sold by certified harvesters and dealers and subject to frequent mandatory testing. State law prohibits the sale or offering for sale for human consumption of any clams, mussels, scallops or oysters, except by state-certified commercial shellfish harvesters or dealers. Shellfish sold by certified harvesters and dealers are subject to frequent mandatory testing.

For more information, consumers can call CDHS' toll-free "Shellfish

Information Line," which includes updates on shellfish biotoxins and quarantines, at 1-800-553-4133.

CRYSTAL COVE COTTAGE RESERVATIONS

After a long-awaited restoration, 13 of the 46 Crystal Cove Cottages will soon be available for overnight stays to the general public. Lodging reservations can be made beginning at 8 a.m. April 27, 2006, for overnight accommodations beginning June 26, 2006, by contacting ReserveAmerica at 1-800-444-PARK or online at www.parks.ca.gov. Go to Reservations and Fees and Camping Reservations and continue to Crystal Cove SP. Costs per night will be \$150 to \$200, and many of the cottages can sleep several families. There are also three dorms that will run about \$30 per bed. A total of 109 beds will be available.

CHAMBER DAY & EVE 2006

Some of us will be at Chamber Day and Chamber Evening. I hope you'll be there too! If you can't, please donate to the Chamber Day/Evening events by diving the Flying Dutchman, buying raffle tickets or the beautiful tile murals, or donating to the Chamber Challenge! www.chamberday.org

There are still 3 seats at the Chamber Evening table with Derek and me. Wanna join us? It'll be fun! Raffle-mania, SoCal social of the year, great cause, let me know!

PRESSED STEEL TANKS SOLD

New Company Will Continue to Produce Scuba Diving Cylinders! This is a big relief for those who have Pressed Steel HP tanks and have been wondering if their tanks would become obsolete due to the possibility that they wouldn't be able to renew the DOT exemption. All appears well!

www.OCdiving.com

Debbie Karimoto
deb@OCdiving.com

This Month's Speaker

Rick Daynes is an authority on treasure hunting: He was a member of the expedition led by Mel Fisher that, in 1985, discovered the remains of the Spanish galleon "Nuestra Senora de Atocha," which sank in a storm off the Florida Keys in 1622. The artifacts, gold, silver and jewels recovered from that wreck are estimated to be worth more than \$500 million.

In his presentation, Daynes will tell the story of the Atocha and of Mel Fisher's many years of searching before literally striking gold. Daynes will also show actual pieces of treasure recovered from the Atocha.



Ask Dr. Debbie...

Meet the Fish and Famous

By Debra A. Hill, MD

YES, MEET THE FISH AND FAMOUS was the title of the first night's black tie event at the 30th *Beneath the Sea* Scuba Event in Secaucus, New Jersey this past March 24-26, 2006. My husband and I were fortunate to be there that weekend working on our latest project, a DVD series called *Legends of the Sea: The Pioneers in Diving*. Among our plans for the weekend was to actually meet the Fish and Famous which included **Hans and Lotte Hass**-- truly an honor and delight.

I'd like to introduce you to Hans Hass, the "man who discovered the sea." Hans and his wife are in their late 80's now but are still lively lovers of the sea! In his incredible lifetime he took diving from the hard hat days of walking on the sea floor with an air tube that tethered you to the boat to the free-swimming experience that we know diving to be today. He used self-contained breathing equipment along with flippers and, as a result, initiated the change from "walk diving" with leaded boots and a helmet to "swim diving!" He utilized diving to take photographs and introduce us to the creatures and environment of the underwater world.

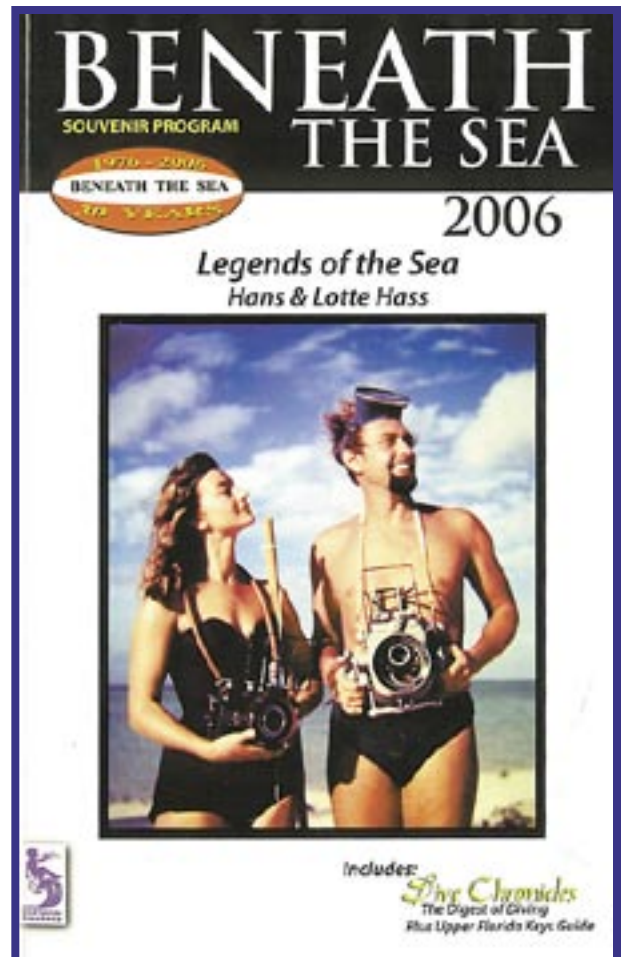
Initially he was a bit of an

outcast in France where people thought that his photos were a joke and didn't take him seriously. But with time he became a well respected scientist and film producer. He produced 74 films, and more than 25 books. He received the Biennale Prize in 1951, an Oscar for his extraordinary underwater photography in his film *Unternehmen Xarifa* 1951. In 1998 he received an Austrian Decoration for Science and Art, and in 1999 he received the Konrad Lorenz award. Since then he's received five more science awards. DEMA awarded him the Reaching Out Award in 1997, and in 1998 he received two NOGI awards from the Academy of Underwater Arts and Sciences—the first man to ever receive two awards from them within one year.

I had the pleasure of speaking briefly with Hans and his wife to invite them to be a part of the *Pioneer in Diving* DVD series and to express my gratitude for all that they have

done to propel diving forward so that we can enjoy it today. They both were very gracious and agreed to participate in the series, provided we go to Vienna to shoot their interviews. Now that sounds good to me!

Hans received another award at *Beneath the Sea* for his unending inspiration to us all to continue to explore and protect our seas. Interestingly, as he spoke he was quite



candid in his statements that we are moving too fast with technology and he wishes that our world would slow down with its technological advances as he fears this will be the demise of our society and our oceans, too. He then apologized for making such a serious statement, but said that it had to be said. Hans Hass is a fascinating individual and I can hardly begin to do justice to describing his life in this short commentary. Michael Jung has written a wonderful article about Hans Hass the Pioneer of Swim Diving. This article can be viewed at www.julz.com/Hassbio.htm.

Not only did we get to chat with Hans and Lotte Hass that evening, but we also met up again with Wyland and Guy Harvey, two famous underwater artists and all-around nice guys. They both had several pieces of their art available through the silent auction that night. In addition to their art, there were about 15 dive trips also available to bid on. We had never bid on anything like

this before, but the starting bids were so incredibly low, we gave it a try on two trips we've wanted to take for awhile. One was a 2 week trip to Indonesia, and the other a one week trip to Tawali Resort in Papua New Guinea—both trips were for two people. To our surprise, we won both trips for less than half the normal cost!

Going to a dive show on the east coast was a fun and unique experience. The divers there were very easy going and friendly, but the emphasis on dive gear on the show floor was on primarily dry suits, or very warm wetsuits, and there was more emphasis on dive gear for cold water environments. There was one group, however, from North Carolina, called Divers Down that boasted about their warm water diving, excellent visibility, numerous shipwrecks, and diverse marine life—they've even seen lionfish lately! We can definitely vouch for all of those claims as we dived there last October—and it was great! We didn't see any lionfish,

though. But, North Carolina diving is a must do—perhaps the club would want to go there sometime.

All in all, the weekend was great—we got to meet some of the Fish and Famous, Hans Hass, the father of swim diving, and his lovely wife, and discovered a little more about our “cousins” in diving on the east coast.

Happy Diving, and remember there is a lot we can learn from those wise people who have contributed a lot to make our lives what they are today.

All the best,

Debra A. Hill, MD

First Aid items to add to your dive kit:

Povidone 10% iodine solution
Bacitracin
Bottled water
Small scissors
Tweezers (to remove foreign objects)
Ziplock bag with some 4 x 4 inch gauze pads
Band-aids (all sizes, large to small)
Clear bandage tape

Meeting is April 12th 6:30 at...



**Come join us Wednesday Night
for Good Food and Good Friends!**

*Please give your support to all of
the people who support us...the
dive shops, Fuddruckers and all of
our diving friends....*



*Great raffle this month...bring
your tickets for the Quarterly
Drawing!*