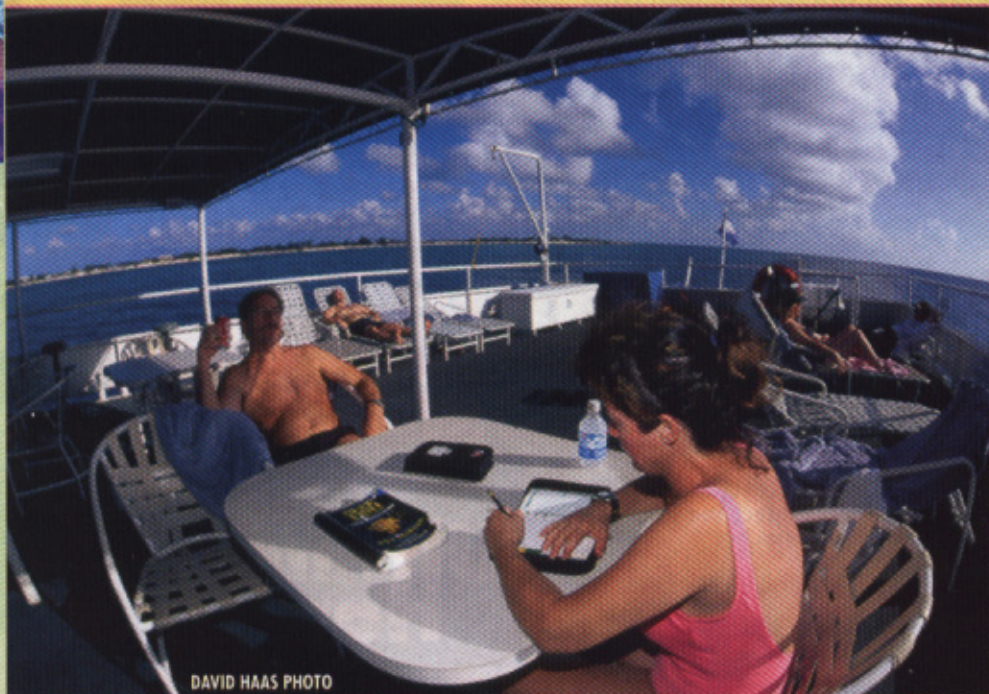


# The Sun Also Burns

*Besides Rising Each Day, the Sun Brings Its Warmth, Light — and Burning Rays — to Us*



DAVID HAAS PHOTO

BY GIL ZEIMER

*Barbecued ribs. Braised shoulders. Baked legs.* These sound like summer grilling choices, but they're really describing the effects of the sun on your skin — if you don't take precautions with sunscreens and protective clothing, that is.

Skin cancer is something that all divers should think about. As the most prevalent type of cancer, it will attack one of every seven people annually across the USA. The National Cancer Institute warns that between 40 to 50 percent of Americans who live to age 65 will develop skin cancer at least once. And if you're a blonde

or redhead, you have a two to four times higher risk of developing skin cancer.

The good news is that 90 percent of all skin cancers can be cured if they're detected and treated in time. The better news is that lathering on sunscreen, wearing a hat and donning the proper clothing can help prevent skin cancer and sunburns.

Sunscreen manufacturers have long manufactured compounds that help protect the skin against the range of rays known as ultraviolet B (UVB), the "sunburn spectrum." Recently they've recognized the additive role of longer-wave ultraviolet A (UVA) rays,

responsible for photodrug eruptions and for exacerbating photosensitive diseases like herpes simplex solar urticaria, polymorphous light eruption and discoid and systemic lupus (see story on lupus, Page 7), among others.

A sunscreen's ability to protect against UVB is known as its Sun Protection Factor (SPF), defined as the ratio between the time it takes your skin to burn versus how long it takes after applying sunscreen. An SPF of 15 provides 15 times the amount of protection you'd get without using any protection. For example, if your skin reddens after 10 minutes in the sun, your SPF 15 sunscreen would allow you to remain 150 minutes in the sun before burning.

For UVA, the degree of protection is defined as the Phototoxic Protective Factor, or PPF. These values are lower because the energy contained in UVA rays is less.

## Divers Do It In the Sun

Because divers are often exposed to the sun for hours at a time while on dive boats, kayaks, and other non-shaded craft, here are some helpful tips:

- Use a sunblock with a sun protection factor (SPF) of 15 or more when you're exposed to the sun, even when you're simply running errands. So if you're going to a pool, a beach or on a boat, a 30 to 50 SPF will protect you better, longer — especially if you choose one that's sweatproof and waterproof.