

Desert Dolphins

4/15/26

“Scuba Storyteller:  
How I Turned Four Decades  
of Dive Logs into a Book”

By Gil Zeimer

## Raise Your Hand...

- If you've logged every dive you've ever done
- Did that then, not now
- Posted images/videos to social media
- Written a story/blog



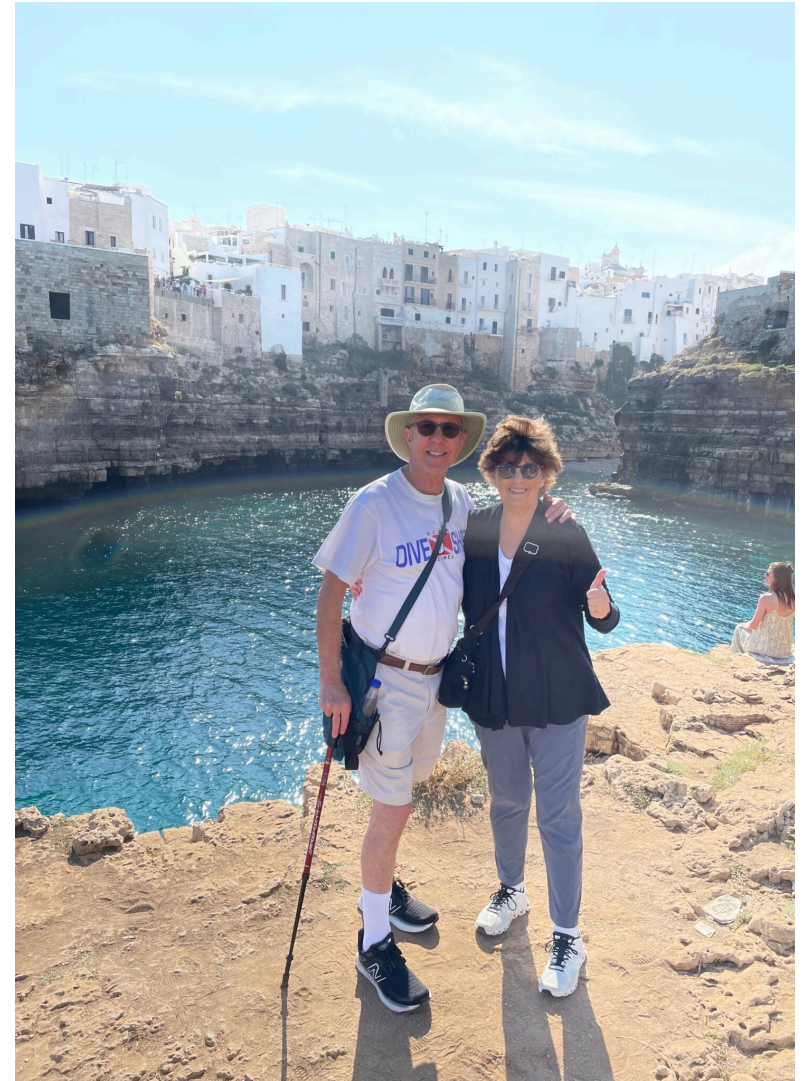
## Fast Facts:

- Diver since 1985
- Published > 300 scuba stories since 1994
- > 25 magazines, newspapers & websites
- 15-year NCUPS member
- 20-year MSC member



## Fast Facts:

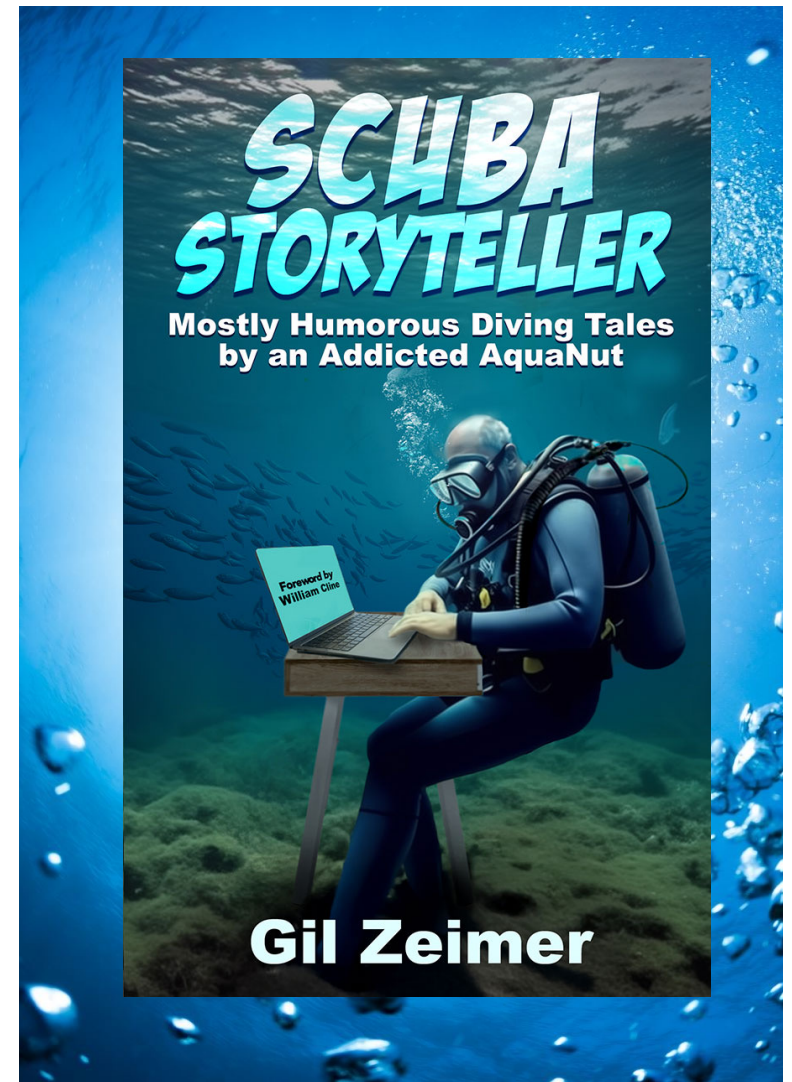
- Retired advertising copywriter
- 2x skin cancer survivor
- Married to a non-diver for 34 years
- We negotiate our vacays



# Fast Facts: Where I've Published

- Scuba Times • Scuba Show • Scuba Radio
- Scuba Diving Industry Magazine
- California Diving News • DAN Alert Diver
- inDEPTH Magazine • X-Ray Magazine
- Sport Diver • Dive Travel
- Dive Pacific • Asian Diver
- Adventure Journal • Scuba Diver Life
- Sun Divers Roatan • Undercurrent
- NCUPS • Marin Scuba Club
- Medium • Desert Dolphins
- Local Getaways • S.F. Chronicle
- L.A. Times • Marin IJ

- 65 of my favorites are now in my book
- More than half were written from logbooks
- Others are about the diving industry
- I strive to create funny headlines and strong ledes



# My Philosophy:

- Diving is a serious, potentially dangerous sport
- I tend to look on its lighter side
- Chronological order
- I'll read a few tonight
- Save your questions until the end



# My First Time

“You always remember your first dive. It’s right up there with your first kiss... your first boy/girlfriend... your first car... and the first time you ‘did’ it.”– SDIM Magazine



Grand Cayman, 1981



Granbury, TX – 1985

# Don't Stop Belizin': Surviving a Two-Star Liveaboard at a Five-Star Destination

“In 1987, I booked my first liveaboard. When I look back, I must have been out of my mind. Only 10 dives...”

## DON'T STOP BELIZIN': SURVIVING A TWO-STAR LIVEABOARD AT A FIVE-STAR DESTINATION

by Gil Zeimer on August 6, 2025 in Blogging



*In 1987, I made a killing on Disney stock options, decided to book my first liveaboard, and vowed to wear a Mickey Mouse T-shirt every day of the trip in Belize.*

But now, when I look back from 2025 with 20/20 hindsight, I must have been out of my mind. With only 10 dives under my weight belt at the time, I was looking forward mostly to getting wet in the Blue Hole with a depth of 130 feet, though my deepest dives to date had only been 40 feet in Grand Cayman. What was I thinking?

### Getting There Was Quite a Challenge

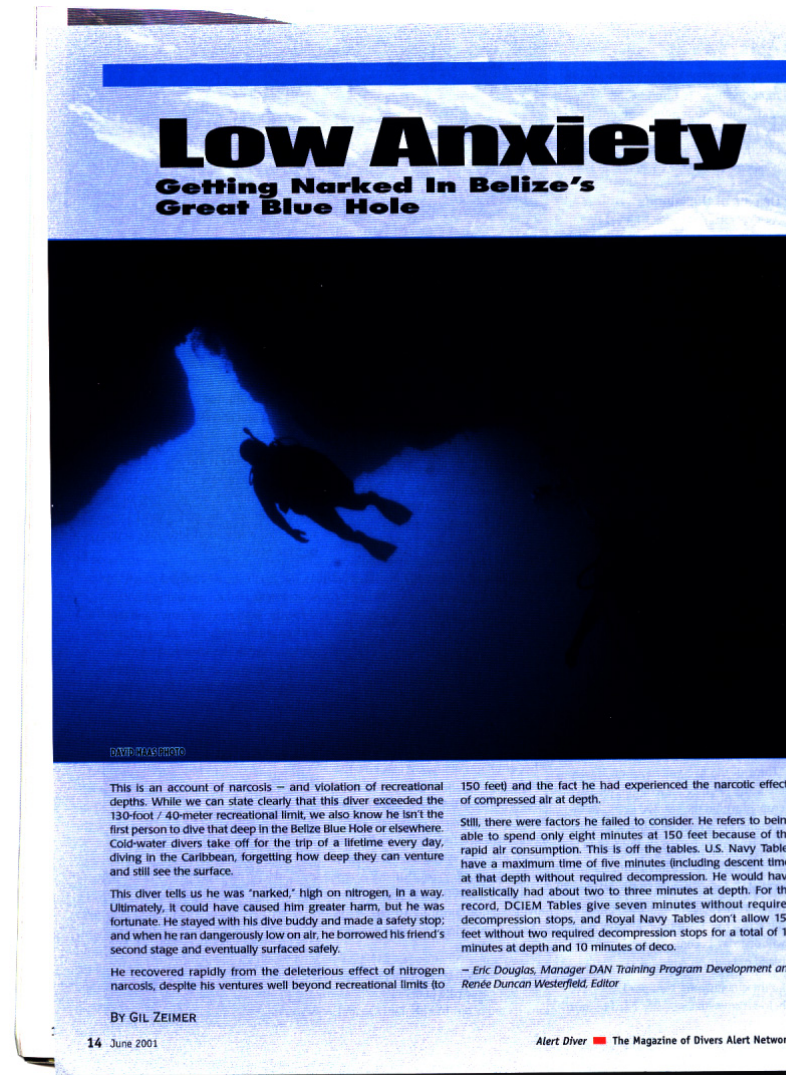
Ever since I got PADI-certified in 1985, I had read about the *Isla Mia* liveaboard boat in Belize through ads in *Scuba Diving Magazine* for See & Sea Travel, Carl Roessler's company in San Francisco. So, I booked a week.

A rookie travel agent there helped line up my flights from SFO to Houston, then to Belize, but failed to send me a list of items to bring. I had to rent a used

# Low Anxiety: Getting Narked in Belize's Great Blue Hole

“What’s round, midnight blue, and over 1,000 feet deep? It’s where I got narked, ran out of air, and broke my watch.”

Alert Diver



## Low Anxiety

Getting Narked in Belize's Great Blue Hole

DAVID HAYES/PHOTO

This is an account of narcosis – and violation of recreational depths. While we can state clearly that this diver exceeded the 130-foot / 40-meter recreational limit, we also know he isn't the first person to dive that deep in the Belize Blue Hole or elsewhere. Cold-water divers take off for the trip of a lifetime every day, diving in the Caribbean, forgetting how deep they can venture and still see the surface.

This diver tells us he was 'narked,' high on nitrogen. In a way, ultimately, it could have caused him greater harm, but he was fortunate. He stayed with his dive buddy and made a safety stop; and when he ran dangerously low on air, he borrowed his friend's second stage and eventually surfaced safely.

He recovered rapidly from the deleterious effect of nitrogen narcosis, despite his ventures well beyond recreational limits (to

150 feet) and the fact he had experienced the narcotic effect of compressed air at depth.

Still, there were factors he failed to consider. He refers to being able to spend only eight minutes at 150 feet because of the rapid air consumption. This is off the tables. U.S. Navy Table have a maximum time of five minutes (including descent time at that depth without required decompression. He would have realistically had about two to three minutes at depth. For the record, DCIEM Tables give seven minutes without required decompression stops, and Royal Navy Tables don't allow 15 feet without two required decompression stops for a total of 1 minutes at depth and 10 minutes of deco.

— Eric Douglas, Manager DAN Training Program Development or Renée Duncan Westerfield, Editor

BY GIL ZEIMER

14 June 2001

Alert Diver ■ The Magazine of Divers Alert Network

# A Little Kelp With My Friends: Diving in California's Channel Islands

“My first trip in 1987 to dive among the kelp forests was going to be spectacular. But all I could think about was my hemorrhoids.”

## A LITTLE KELP WITH MY FRIENDS: DIVING IN CALIFORNIA'S CHANNEL ISLANDS

by Gil Zeimer on July 8, 2025 in Blogging



Photo purchased through 123rf.com: 132171773\_fm.jpg

My first trip to Southern California's Channel Islands National Park and Marine Sanctuary in 1987 to dive among the kelp forests was going to be spectacular. But all I could think about was my hemorrhoids.

I'd already whet my appetite for this type of cold water diving thanks to several trips to the amazing Monterey Bay Aquarium, which opened in 1984. At the time, it was the first of its type to feature a living kelp forest. But since my PADI Open Water certification in 1985, I'd been wanting to get wet in a real underwater forest.

### **A Trip on The *M/V Vision*.**

I had booked a three-day dive trip on the 84-foot-long, 33-passenger *M/V Vision* dive boat out of Santa Barbara with a few friends in mid-November. This would be my second liveaboard experience after one in Belize the prior year. (NOTE:

# Warm Memories of Hypothermia

“Mark Twain once said, ‘The coldest winter I ever spent was a summer in San Francisco.’ The same might be said about a three-tank, one-day boat dive in 1988 in Monterey, California, when the ocean temp was 50°.”



[Dive Pacific.co.nz](http://DivePacific.co.nz)

# The Day I Rode a Manta Ray: An Ecologically Incorrect Thing I'll Never Do Again

“I was once blessed to be in exactly the right place at exactly the right time.”

Dive Pacific Magazine



the day I rode a *Manta Ray*  
by Gil Zeimer

an ecologically incorrect thing  
I'll never do again

Looking up, my field of vision was filled with a giant Pacific manta ray, backlit by the hot summer sun. At 10 feet (3.04m) wide, the pelagic was a spectacular, almost eerie sight.

About 20 years ago, I was blessed to be in exactly the right place at exactly the right time. While diving at about 40 feet (12.16m) at Isla Partida in the Sea of Cortez, Baja California, Mexico, a shadow fell over me.

Looking up, my field of vision was filled with a giant Pacific manta ray, backlit by the hot summer sun. At 10 feet (3.04m) wide, the pelagic was a spectacular, almost eerie sight. As it flapped its majestic wings and floated by gazing at us from one of its black eyes, four snorkelers from our liveboard boat swam by to take a closer look. It reminded me of the scene in 'Jaws' when everyone and their brother got into their boats to capture the great white shark.

The manta tilted towards us, then flapped its wings a few times and undulated away.

Unfortunately, I'd left my camera on the dive boat, but I followed the manta ray, along with my two dive buddies. Suddenly, it stopped moving away and actually approached us.

Though it's now ecologically, environmentally and politically incorrect to touch such a spectacular species, it wasn't back in 1989.

One at a time, we got a ride around the lagoon. In fact, the manta ray let my dive buddy float above its back, gently grab its shoulders, and took her for a five-minute ride around the lagoon at a depth of about 20 feet (6.08m). When she returned, I took her place. After me, our third buddy was also given a ride.

Though I didn't have my camera, someone did. I have the framed shot on my office wall of me riding the manta ride, with two three-foot-long remoras sticking to its shoulders in front of me.

Today, after 28 years of diving, this scenario remains as the single most exciting sports moment of my life. When I gaze at the photos or think back on the experience, it's almost a dreamlike memory. But it's a memory I'll always cherish.

# Waterlogged Proposals

## Taking The Plunge Into Marriage

“I tried to propose to my wife underwater in Provo. She almost drowned...”

Dive Travel Magazine

### “WATERLOGGED PROPOSALS” Taking the plunge into marriage.

by Gil Zeimer (Dive Travel Magazine, Summer '96)

I tried to propose to my wife underwater. She almost drowned.

While planning the moment — the “commitment” most men fear most — I thought this would be a romantic way to tie the knot. Certainly, it would be a more intimate memory than the electronic message you often see on stadium scoreboards — “Ellen, will you marry me? Gil”. After all, how embarrassing would it be if she turned the guy down in front of 35,000 people?



So when the moment arrived four years ago to transform my girlfriend into my fiancée, I wanted a smaller, more private venue.

The first step was choosing a vacation site. We opted for a new dedicated dive resort along a quiet 10-mile strip of sand on Providenciales in the Turks and Caicos chain. Though it was only a 1/2-mile from the bustling Club Med Turquoise, it was a world apart. Serene, peaceful and romantic, it was perfect for a surprise underwater proposal.

There was just one small detail. My girlfriend wasn't a certified diver. With some hesitation, she enrolled in a resort course. Though she thought she'd enjoy diving because she loved swimming and snorkeling, she also had some reservations about it. “What if I don't like breathing through that mouthpiece thing? How disappointed will you be? Will you resent me?”

Naturally, I couldn't share just how disappointed I'd be. I couldn't say, “Look! You've got to like it! I'm gonna ask you to marry me down there!!”

I couldn't share my dream: We'd descend slowly down the anchor line. Every few feet, I'd use my hand signals to ask “Are you O.K.?” She'd nod and give me the signal.

When we reached our depth of 30 feet, I'd planned to again ask how she was doing. Next, I'd write on my slate, “How much air do you have left?” She'd scrawl in the amount.

Then, I'd take a few big gulps of air and write “Ellen, will you marry me?” I'd be able to see her eyes brighten inside her mask . . . I'd see the corners of her mouth smile around her regulator . . . and she'd write, “Yes, oh yes, my dearest!”

# Maui March Madness

Honeymooning With Humpbacks

Adventure Journal Magazine



“While on my honeymoon, I fell in love with another man. So did my wife. And we're not even swingers.

“He was a big fella-45 feet long, 30 tons, and had a beautiful voice. Though he was about 200 yards away, we heard his haunting calls while we were snorkeling and felt the sound waves reverberate through our bodies. It was like getting splashed with a liquid wave of sound.”

# So, You Can't Make The Reef

“I became the poster child for Murphy’s Law at the Great Barrier Reef. I assumed the world’s largest living thing would be easy to visit. I assumed wrong. Four of my five planned dive days were canceled.”

Scuba Times Magazine

## So, You Can't Make The Reef

Scuba Times Magazine, November/December 1994

I became the poster child for Murphy's Law at the Great Barrier Reef.

I assumed the world's largest living thing would be easy to visit.

I assumed wrong. Four of my five planned dive days were canceled.

Though the GBR is about half the size of Texas, its remote location off the coast of Far North Queensland makes it tough to get to during a short vacation. In fact, many visitors just don't devote enough time to getting there and back. It's a day's round-trip journey by a fleet of boats from Cairns or Port Douglas. And it's over 1,200 air miles from Sydney.

Here are a few options I discovered for divers who just can't get under the waves because of bad weather, bad timing or a badly-planned travel budget. Starting in Cairns and moving south, you can:

- Cruise daily from Cairns or Port Douglas to Fitzroy Island, Green Island, Moore Reef and Outer Reef.
- Take a 4-wheel-drive safari through the Daintree World Heritage — the world's oldest tropical rainforest — 30 miles north of Port Douglas.
- Experience a Daintree River Cruise to view crocodiles and mangrove swamps.
- Stroll through Port Douglas' Rainforest Habitat, with elevated walkways to view 66 species of tropical birds, kangaroos and crocodiles.
- Ride the sugar cane train from Kuranda, just north of Cairns, shop at an Aboriginal artifacts store, and view a Noctarium to see Australia's animals in a nocturnal rainforest setting.
- Dine on Barbecued "Bugs"—Australian Crayfish.
- Pet kangaroos and cuddle koalas in the Australian Wildlife Park, Wonderland Sydney.
- Visit the Sydney Harbor Oceanarium and the Open Ocean Tank (sharks and rays).
- Or see some of Australia's 150 million sheep on a farm in the Outback.

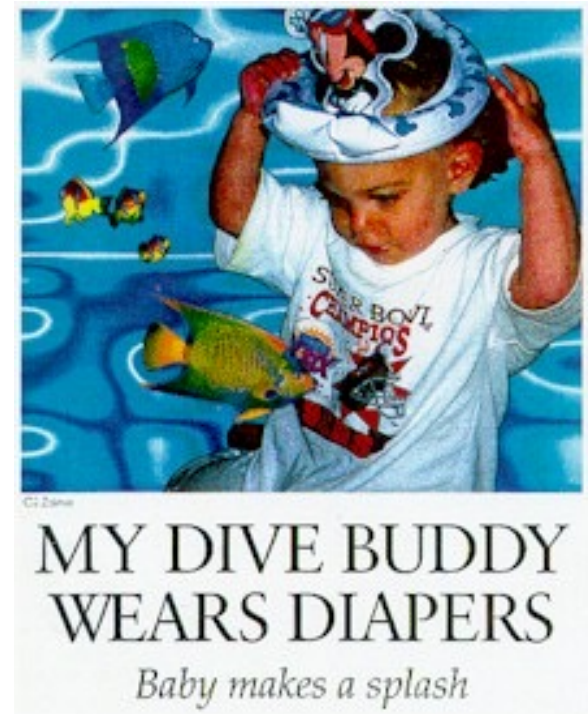
Home for Gil Zeimer is San Rafael, California. He and his wife's most recent production was their daughter, Sara, born in March, 1994.

# My Dive Buddy Wears Diapers

“My dive buddy prefers warm water. So do I. Every evening around 8 p.m., we gather our gear, approach the dive site, and take the plunge.

“Her dive conditions: Water temp, 90°; depth, 6 inches; bottom time, 30 minutes; swells, 1-2 inches.”

**Dive Travel Magazine**



# M-I-C K-E-Y S-C-U-B-A:

## Diving in Disney World's Six-Million Gallon Aquarium

“I met Walt Disney in 1956 in Anaheim. Forty years later, I never imagined that I'd dive in his aquarium in Orlando, Florida, through the EPCOT DiveQuest Program.”

NCUPS Newsletter

### Headline: "M-I-C K-E-Y S-C-U-B-A"

Subhead: In this 6,000,000-gallon aquarium, the fish are real; the coral isn't.  
– Northern California Underwater Photographic Society Newsletter, 12/96

I met Walt Disney in 1956 in Anaheim. Forty years later, I never imagined that I'd dive in his aquarium in Orlando, Florida.

My secret entry key was Walt Disney World's EPCOT Dive Quest Program. Limited to eight certified divers per day, it's a pleasantly-packaged, behind-the-scenes tour of the Living Seas exhibit, with the bonus of a 40-minute dive into the 6,000,000-gallon tank. The dive operators ask you to bring your mask and certification card. They supply everything else.

Once in the water, my dive buddies and I were transformed from mere divers into entertainers as part of the "Disney experience". We were asked to be cordial to the viewing public. So we waved enthusiastically like Mickey at our families and others viewing us from the Observation Deck. We smiled like Ariel, The Little Mermaid, at folks dining in the Coral Sea Restaurant. And we generally acted Goofy for all the folks riding through the aquarium on its People Mover.

Since this was my first dive in 3 1/2 years, I was pretty jazzed at the idea of getting wet in what the Disney PR folks call "The world's sixth largest ocean". A tank 200-feet square by 27-feet high is pretty humungous. In fact, it's the world's second biggest aquarium. But it sure ain't no ocean.

What was amazing was both the variety and the diversity of fish – over 65 species and thousands of marine creatures – including three six-foot black-tip reef sharks, a few 300-lb. turtles, eagle rays, triggerfish, parrot fish, other tropicals, even a hefty 450-lb. grouper aptly named Orson. The water temperature was a pleasant 75 degrees. The vis was about 80 - 100 feet, and limited to that because of the minimal aquarium lighting to maximize viewing for the dry spectators.

What was amusing was the coral, starfish and sand, which were formulated by the Disney folks especially for this tank. The coral was hand-painted. Up close, it looked pretty phony. But from a few feet away and further, it looked and felt as brilliant and real as any I'd seen in the Caribbean or Australia.

# Just Back From... Scuba Diving in Kosrae, Micronesia

“I went because Kosrae offers some of the world’s best diving with pristine reefs, 100-foot-plus visibility, 85-degree water, and more than 200 species of coral.”



**FAM Trip: San Francisco Chronicle**

# The Sun Also Burns - **Alert Diver**

Skin Cancer:  
Preventing The World's  
Most Prevalent Diving  
Injury - **SDIM**

“Wear sunscreen” - Kurt Vonnegut



# Say Hello to My Little Cayman Friends

“These are entries from my diver’s logbook for a trip in February 2020 with the Marin Scuba Club, just before COVID-19 disrupted our travels and our lives. I made many friends there, especially those with gills and fins.”



# Drift Diving Away in Cozumel

“I’ve done a variety of drift dives in my underwater life and each of them has offered different challenges. But when you dive in Cozumel, virtually all of the dives are drift dives with strong currents and shifting winds.”



# Cozumel, Mahahual & Roatan by Cruise Ship

“I'm in a mixed marriage:  
I dive; my wife doesn't.

“As we age, it's become more  
difficult to plan a vacation that  
satisfies both of us. A 3,500-  
passenger ‘liveaboard’ seemed  
like the right solution.”



Undercurrent

# NECO Marine, Palau Royal Resort, Micronesia


*still the wow factor for pristine diving*

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Dear Fellow Diver,

I've been diving for 40 years, and I figured my first dive in the Republic of Palau would be one of the best of my life; instead, it was one of the worst.

On my checkout dive at 15 feet, I was having trouble clearing my ears; I saw the water rising under the crystal of my 10-year old Casio watch (am I the last diver on the planet to wear a watch underwater?); I had insufficient weight to maintain my buoyancy; and I was unable to reach the purge valve on my rented BCD. I felt like a brain-dead newbie.

I cut the checkout short, climbed aboard the boat, swallowed my pride, took off my watch, and solved my problems. Having been too eager to begin my week underwater, I wasn't fully prepared. So, I slowed down, checked everything twice, and began again on a week of near-perfect diving.

Palau is an island nation in Micronesia, comprising 340 limestone islands, islets, atolls . . . and swift currents, the result of the confluence of the Indian and Pacific Oceans. But those currents are precisely why it's home to at least 1,450 species of reef fish, over 135 shark species, and more than 700 varieties of reef-building hard corals and soft corals. Currents make fish life abundant and exciting, so most dives are drifts, and one needs a reef hook to stop and see the action at a couple of sites. It's no place for new divers.

For example, after hooking into the reef at Ulong Channel to avoid being swept along, I watched hundreds, if not thousands, of reef fish, barracudas, sharks, triggerfish, and groupers swim by, and viewed the world's largest patch of cabbage coral, plus sea cucumbers the size of Subway Foot-Long Subs.



*Neco Marine's dive boat*

A Few Photos...















The poster for Steven Spielberg's 1975 blockbuster film *Jaws*, based on the book by Peter Benchley, published by Doubleday in 1974

## Jaws at 50: This Shark Still Has Legs

Text by Gil Zeimer  
Photos by Virginia Bria, Carrie Roseman and Amos Nachoum

Sharks have taken a giant bite out of Wendy Benchley's life for over five decades... and she could not be happier. Gil Zeimer interviewed Wendy, the wife of Peter Benchley, who passed in 2006. They discussed what Peter's novel *Jaws*, the movie and its longevity have meant to her, as well as her diving experiences and her current role as a global ambassador for shark advocacy.

From the success of her late husband Peter Benchley's novel to the Steven Spielberg-directed summer blockbuster to the global hoopla surrounding its 50th anniversary, Wendy Benchley is now best known as an environmentalist, ocean conservationist and shark policy advocate.

**Shifting perceptions**  
"Peter grew up in a literary family

and wanted to be a novelist from a young age," said Wendy. "His father, Nathaniel, encouraged him to write a thousand words daily to give his brain that mindset and avoid writer's block. He had the genes and the absolute passion to write. After working as a speechwriter for President Lyndon



CARRIE ROSEMAN

Wendy Benchley, wife of the late Peter Benchley, who wrote the best-selling novel *Jaws* in the 1970s

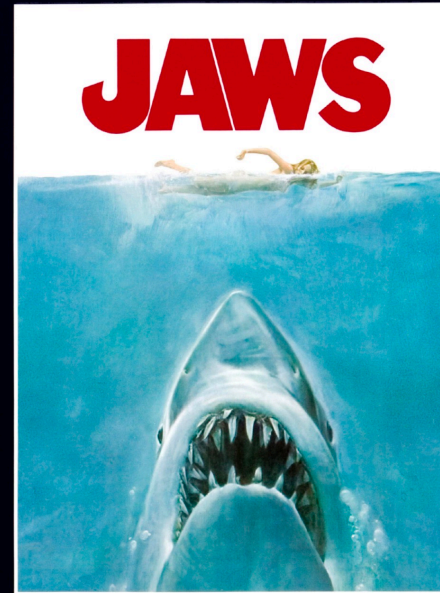
Johnson, Peter started pursuing freelance opportunities."

His experiences in Nantucket, including fishing with his father and observing the local economy, influenced his idea for two possible books about the sea. One was about modern-day pirates, and the other was about a great white shark that used a New England beachside town as its feeding grounds. She told him, "I didn't think either one was good, and to think of something else!"

"Fortunately, Peter didn't listen to me. He eventually secured a publishing deal with Doubleday for *Jaws*, which became a global phenomenon. No one had written a novel about sharks until then. At the time, most people thought that sharks like this great white were mindless killers. But, after the book was published, Peter received thousands of letters annually from readers who expressed interest in sharks, and their perceptions shifted from being afraid of them to wanting to save them from being killed unnecessarily."

The hardbound book spent 44 weeks on the *New York Times* best-seller list, and the paperback edition sold nine million copies. After

The terrifying motion picture  
from the terrifying No. 1 best seller.



ROY SCHEIDER ROBERT SHAW RICHARD DREYFUSS  
**JAWS**

Co-starring LORRAINE GARY • MURRAY HAMILTON • A ZANUCK/BROWN PRODUCTION  
Screenplay by PETER BENCHLEY and CARL GOTTLIEB • Based on the novel by PETER BENCHLEY • Music by JOHN WILLIAMS  
Directed by STEVEN SPIELBERG • Produced by RICHARD D. ZANUCK and DAVID BROWN • A UNIVERSAL PICTURE •  
TECHNICOLOR® PANAVISION® **PG** PARENTAL GUIDANCE SUGGESTED  
SOME MATERIAL MAY BE OFFENSIVE TO CHILDREN ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK AVAILABLE ON MCA RECORDS & TAPES  
...MAY BE TOO INTENSE FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN



# shark tales

Silhouette of a great white shark at Guadalupe Island, Mexico (right). The book cover of the first edition of *Jaws* by Peter Benchley, published by Doubleday in 1974 (below).



ALEX GOTFRYD / WIKIMEDIA / PUBLIC DOMAIN

Portrait of Peter Benchley by Alex Gotfryd, on the back cover of *Jaws*

the movie was released in 1975, *Jaws* eventually sold more than 20 million copies, with renewed interest in it this year.

### Frightening, then educating audiences

When the book was in galley form, Helen Gurley Brown, the longtime editor of *Cosmopolitan*, showed it to her husband, David Brown. He and Richard Zanuck were so excited that they became the film's producers.

They hired Steven Spielberg, a relatively unknown director at the time, after their first choice for director kept calling the shark "a whale" during their meetings. The script, co-written by Peter Benchley and Carl Gottlieb, showed how people react to public menaces that they cannot control, much like COVID-19 in recent years. Carl's focus was cranking out the daily dialogue for the actors, and Wendy thought he was terrific.

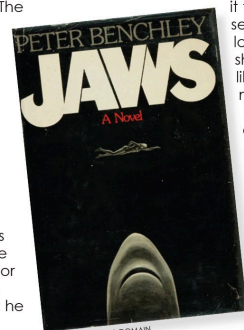
"Peter worked closely with Steven to maintain a realistically sized shark in the



AMOS MACHIN / BIG ANIMALS EXPEDITIONS

film," she said. "In the book, it was about five meters long (15 to 16ft), but Spielberg wanted it to be about seven meters long (20ft) for the shoot, so it was like a monster movie."

"Peter had a cameo as a newscaster, a la Alfred Hitchcock," she added. "Universal sent a helicopter to pick us up in Connecticut and fly us to Nantucket. We were only at the shoot for a few weeks."



WIKIMEDIA / PUBLIC DOMAIN

### A few little-known facts about the movie

According to **IMDb**, when Police Chief Brody (Roy Scheider's character) was chumming the water and the shark popped up, he said, "We're going to need a bigger boat!" This was an ad lib, as confirmed by Gottlieb, and Spielberg loved it.

There were so many problems with "Bruce", the mechanical shark, named after Spielberg's attorney, that it was only on screen for four minutes throughout the movie. But it seemed much longer due to the editing.

When composer John Williams first played the now-iconic score for the shark for Spielberg, he said, "That's funny, John, really; but what did you really have in mind for the theme of *Jaws*?"

### Global success

Wendy was astounded by the movie's worldwide acclaim. She and Peter saw the premiere in New York City with Richard Dreyfuss, who played oceanographer Matt Hooper. The entire audience gave the film a standing ovation. "Richard was so excited that he kept jumping up and down, yelling, 'We did it! It's a f\*\*\*ing success!'"

Then, the producers asked the Benchleys to gather their scuba friends for a private screening, including Peter Gimble from the documentary film *Blue Water, White Death*, as well as Stan Waterman and Rod and Valerie Taylor. Their positive feedback was very reassuring to Wendy and Peter.

More importantly, audiences worldwide loved the film.



# shark tales



COURTESY OF WENDY BENCHLEY



AMOS NACHOUM / BIG ANIMALS EXPEDITIONS



VIRGINIA BRIA

Peter and Wendy Benchley in scuba gear in the early 1970s (top left). Divers cage-diving with great white sharks in Guadalupe Island, Mexico (above). Great white shark at the surface (left).

It garnered four Oscar nominations, took home three wins (Best Sound, Best Original Dramatic Score and Best Film Editing), and earned US\$478 million worldwide, making it the top-grossing movie ever, at the time. Three sequels followed.

The success of *Jaws* led to an increased interest in sharks and environmental awareness, though it also sparked a rise in shark-hunting tournaments. Wendy noted that the experience helped educate the public about sharks and turned many into advocates for shark conservation.

### Raising shark awareness

Gradually over the past 50 years, the

general public has expressed growing admiration for sharks as intelligent, sentient beings that are vulnerable and essential to healthy marine ecosystems. Wendy reflected on the issues she has worked on for 40 to 50 years, such as shark awareness, protection, conservation and environmentalism, and how her dedication to these issues, along with the dedication of thousands of others, is making things happen.

"If you look at truly protected marine areas, the biomass is amazing," she said. "It took until around the year 2000 for people to understand how important the ocean is for climate change, how much we all need to value sharks and other species,

and how we can work collectively on these issues for healthy oceans.

"In fact, 80 to 85 percent of apex predators have been decimated in recent decades, so 15 to 20 percent of the biomass is left. But so many positive things are happening now, led by NGO groups like **WildAid** and its shark conservation program."

Wendy told me that WildAid is small, agile and especially savvy. Its campaigns leverage US\$200 million in pro bono media annually. For every US\$100 donated, its marine partners turn that into US\$10,000 in free TV time, outdoor boards and web banners donated by the Chinese government. Furthermore, to



# shark tales



AMOS NACHOUM / BIG ANIMALS EXPEDITIONS

A great white shark photographed at Guadalupe Island, Mexico

help educate the masses in China, WildAid features Asian celebrities like Yao Ming in informative **public service announcements**.

The audience is learning that up to 100 million sharks are killed each year for shark fin soup and that one-third of all shark species are now extinct. But this campaign has now helped to reduce the demand for shark fin soup in China by 85 percent.

"By 2030, scientists and governments worldwide hope to expand the ocean's marine protected areas to 30 percent," she said. "The United Nations has also been developing a treaty over the past 30 years to pro-

tect the high seas and only needs 11 more countries to ratify it."

WildAid, along with **Beneath The Waves**, the **Environmental Defense Fund** and many other non-profits, like the **Peter Benchley Ocean Awards**, are all worthy environmental causes for your donations.

#### Dangerous diving with sharks

In 1974, before the movie premiered, *The American Sportsman* TV program on ABC-TV reached out to Peter and Wendy about going shark cage diving. They met with Rodney Fox in South Australia because he was a consultant on

the film as a renowned shark expert who had survived an attack on his abdomen that required 462 stitches. When a rope from the cage got caught in a great white's mouth and the cage above Peter began to collapse, Wendy removed the rope while the crew kept filming.

#### National Geographic documentary

National Geographic recently created the documentary film **Jaws @ 50: The Definitive Inside Story**, with Wendy as an executive producer, as a tribute to the original film and the ocean's most misunderstood

predator. In it, Spielberg admitted, "We were 100 days behind schedule, the mechanical shark didn't work 80 percent of the time, and I thought I'd be fired. ... I had PTSD for years after the struggles of filming this movie because I always thought I was failing." Watch it on Disney+ and Hulu.

#### 50th anniversary showings and exhibitions

Throughout the years, the movie's appeal on TV, VCR, cable and streaming has never waned. Now, to celebrate its 50th anniversary, Universal Studios will re-release

## ADVENTURE IN LUXURY & COMFORT



**4-13 December 2025**

Celebrate the 50th anniversary of the film *JAWS* with Rodney Fox, the movie's chief consultant!



#### UPCOMING TRIPS:

- Apr-May 2026** Polar Bears, Norway
- Jul 2026** Sardine Run, South Africa
- Oct-Nov 2026** South Georgia Island
- Jan & Dec 2026** Sperm Whales, Dominica

**BigAnimals.com**  
amos@biganimals.com

PHOTO BY AMOS NACHOUM

BRANDI MUELLER

## UNDERWATER MUSEUMS

WHAT REMAINS OF WWII IN THE PACIFIC



Dive into the Pacific theater of WWII where ships, planes, submarines, and military surplus rest beneath the waves. Explore the underwater museums preserved in time through stunning photography from award-winning photographer, Brandi Mueller, and captivating stories of diving the wrecks and the history of how they came to rest. Available on **Amazon**.





## GOING SHOPPING ON BLACK FRIDAY? CELEBRATE BLUE FRIDAY 5.0 INSTEAD

Here's a multiple-choice question...  
Which would you rather do on the day after Thanksgiving?

A. Get up at the crack of dawn to fight a horde of shoppers for deeply discounted items and get mauled at the mall?

B. Eat leftovers for breakfast (turkey and egg omelet), lunch (turkey and cranberry sauce sandwich), and dinner (turkey à la king)?

C. Chillax and go scuba diving?

The correct answer to give back to the Earth and skip plastic consumerism is 'C'.

In fact, this healthy alternative to Black Friday is called 'Blue Friday'. It's now in its fifth year, and its slogan is 'Don't Shop. Dive!'.

Today, more divers are getting wet in more than 170 countries year-round, while the absurdity of fighting the crowds to find the year's best bargains is being celebrated in over 120 countries.

### The first Blue Friday: A new holiday tradition

Since 2021, the Marin Scuba Club and the Dive Club of Silicon Valley, both in Northern California, have been embracing Blue Friday, which was the brainchild of Kenneth Carter of Mill Valley, CA.



Ken Carter and his son.  
Photo by Miles Sewed, 2021

He said, "I was inspired by REI closing its stores the day after Thanksgiving. That's why the members of both of these clubs are avoiding the malls to diving at Point Lobos State Natural Reserve in Carmel-by-the-Sea, within the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary.

"It started as an excuse to take my son, who had just gotten his Open Water certification, diving in California waters throughout the year. I woke up one morning and booked all of the reservations at Point Lobos in 2021.

Because we had such a great time with excellent visibility and virtually no other divers the first year, we decided to launch a second annual trip the next year, and have tried to dive every year since."

**The second Blue Friday: Varying visibility at Point Lobos**  
When Robert Louis Stevenson lived in Monterey in 1879, he called it "The most felicitous meeting of land and sea in the world." Though we all know that it's beautiful, above and below the waves, ten divers from the two dive clubs braved the chilly Point Lobos waters, rough seas, and varying visibility for the second annual Blue Friday in 2022.

Their logbooks reflected encounters with rockfish, kelpfish, and a small herd of sheephead. Sadly, they discovered that purple sea urchins had destroyed the preserve.

**The third Blue Friday: High tides and churned up water**  
For 2023, we heavily promoted Blue Friday in California Diving News and other media outlets with the hopes that more divers would participate in more locations. Unfortunately, Mother Nature had other ideas. On the Monterey Peninsula, Jim Van Gogh, a member of the Dive Club of Silicon Valley, reported: "My buddy and I ascertained that the conditions were less than stellar. The tide was very high, with a big swell. The water was very churned up, aerated, and dirty. So, we bailed on the dive and just hiked."

But Kerwin Lewis, a Marin Scuba Club member who lives on the Big Island of Hawaii, and Natalie and Shannon Shuman, the American co-owners of Sun Divers Roatan, both enjoyed warm weather and excellent visibility.

**The fourth Blue Friday: Finally, a global footprint**  
Even though the weather negatively affected diving for Blue Friday 2023 in California, some of its positive news spread to other parts of the globe. The result? It was embraced by more people in more places than ever before:

- In the southwestern Pacific, Terry and Cathie Cummins of Dive Queensland spent Blue Friday in the Coral Seas, Australia, on Mike Ball Dive Expeditions' Spoilsport to dive Ashmore Reef and Raine Island.



Terry and Cathie Cummins, 2024

- In the mid-Pacific, Kerwin Lewis, chartered a boat with Blue

Wilderness Dive Adventures out of Kawaihae Harbor in Hawaii. He exclaimed, "Ideal diving conditions. Surface temperature 83", water temperature 80".

Visibility was the best I've seen in months – about 100 feet!"

- In the eastern Pacific, our friend



Kerwin Lewis, Big Island, 2024

Jami Leslie Feldman  
November 28 at 10:29 AM · @  
#BlueFriday What a day below the surface! Treated to beautiful blue water, excellent visibility, and calm waters! SoCal fall diving at its finest! Came across this fiery male cabezon guarding some eggs. He let me get some beautiful shots with him and his babies but it took some trust... he did charge me at first, sat on my camera rig and mean mugged me for a bit before he decided it was ok to take some photos. 📸 And yes I have video. He was on my camera rig long enough for me to get the GoPro and get 8 seconds of video proof. 📹 Video will be up later, check back! Hope you're spending some of this holiday weekend outside!

📍📍 (@underwaterpaparazzi)  
#underwaterpaparazzi #cabezon #bigislandhawaii #bluestaterdiving #underwaterphotographer



underwaterpaparazzi, 2024

Jami Leslie Feldman of "#UnderwaterPaparazzi" dove in San Diego, California. She added, "What a day below the surface! Treated to beautiful blue water, excellent visibility, and calm waters!"

- Here in California, Mike Smith of Marin Scuba Club, and Chris Cervellone of Sea Divers Scuba Dive Club in Redondo Beach,

chartered the Peace Dive Boat for three days to San Miguel in the Channel Islands, CA, with 15 other adventurers. They encountered clear skies, good visibility, above-average temperatures, and exceptional conditions for lobster hunting and diving.

- In the Western Caribbean, Heiko Goetze of Amigos del Mar,

dove at Banco Chichorro and Mahahual Reef. He reported, "Water temp was 84 F. Viz was 50-100 feet. Saw nurse sharks, eagle rays, turtles, and lots of tropical fish."

- About 550 miles south, Natalie Shuman of Sun Divers Roatan focused on "Changing Black Friday to Blue Friday" by swapping the shallowness for something deeper. Water temp was 82. We didn't find a single piece of debris, but we did find a hammerhead."



Chris Cervellone and son, Channel Islands, CA, 2024



Amigos del Mar, Banco Chichorro, Photo by Heiko Goetze, 2024

### Join us for Blue Friday 5.0 - 28 November

Like last year, Blue Friday is again falling on the last weekend of November. As always, members of several Northern California dive clubs will convene at Point Lobos in Carmel, California, for some shore dives. If the weather is mild, they may extend the trip with shore dives for a Blue Saturday on 29 November in the Carmel/Monterey area, or even for Bluest Sunday on 30 November.

In addition, our colleagues are again poised to get wet on the Big Island of Hawaii... Sun Divers Roatan will host a 'Dive Against Debris' at its PADI Adopt The Blue dive site, joined by members of The Coral Reef Alliance, then will conduct a beach clean-up that evening in Half Moon Bay... Our amigos at Amigos del Mar in Mahahual, Mexico, will do some drift dives in the Western Caribbean... Our mates at Dive-Queensland.com in Australia will dive in the Coral Sea, as will our new connections at NECO Marine in Pala... with more participants to come.

Stateside, Marin Diving Center in San Rafael, CA, will host training classes in its pool, Jami Leslie Feldman has plans to dive in San Diego if weather and conditions permit, and the 216-member Chicago Undersea Explorer Society will be using Roosevelt High School's facilities for a Blue Friday celebration.

### Or organize your own Blue Friday event

We invite you to organize your own Blue Friday celebrations. It's this easy:

For divers: Go diving the day after Thanksgiving, or anytime that week, then send an email to [gil@zeimer.com](mailto:gil@zeimer.com) to let me know you participated, attach a photo or two, add a description of where you went and what you saw, or include a link to your social media. I'll include it in a follow-up story later this year.

For dive shops, boats, and resorts: Kick off your holiday sales a week earlier or all week long, from Monday through Sunday, to free up divers who want to 'Dive... Then Shop!' Or lead a group Blue Friday dive event to a beach or lake near you.

Wherever you are, warm or cold water, great vis or not, start planning your Blue Friday 5.0 dive for the last weekend of November. Ask your dive group, shop, club, or buddies to join you, but if you can't get wet, at least visit and support your local shop during its holiday sale. With your expanding global participation, Blue Friday can continue to grow as an evergreen holiday event each year. ■

### About the author

A PADI-certified diver since 1985, Gil Zeimer has written more than 300 scuba articles, blogs, and newsletters that have appeared in over 25 magazines and websites. His first book, *Scuba Storyteller: Mostly Humorous Diving Tales by an Addicted AquaNut* is now available for pre-orders at [www.ScubaStoryteller.com](http://www.ScubaStoryteller.com) and will debut at DEMA. He lives in San Rafael, California.

"What sets *Scuba Storyteller* apart is the sheer diversity of tales. If you're a dive retailer, a liveboard operator, an instructor, or just a passionate diver, this is the book for you."

– **William Cline, Publisher, *Scuba Diving Industry Magazine***

"Gil Zeimer's new book is a walk through the author's life, illustrated with anecdotes, short personal stories, and real-life examples."

– **Dan Orr, Past President, Divers Alert Network**

"At times, I was laughing so hard I nearly peed in my drysuit; other times, I caught myself thinking, 'Damn! I need Gil to give me writing lessons!'"

– **Jeffrey Bozanic, Ph.D., [JeffBozanic.com](http://JeffBozanic.com)**

"Gil has done a masterful job of bringing the diving life to readers, and this book collects some of his best."

– **Eric Douglas, [BooksByEric.com](http://BooksByEric.com)**

"Gil is an extraordinary storyteller. His book chronicles his longtime passion for scuba diving with heart and humor."

– **Cathryn Castle Garcia, scuba industry professional, writer, and consultant at [ClearStoryCoach.com](http://ClearStoryCoach.com)**

"*Scuba Storyteller: Mostly Humorous Diving Tales by an Addicted AquaNut* contains 65 stories such as "Warm Memories of Hypothermia," "My First Time," "Low Anxiety: Getting Narked in Belize's Great Blue Hole," "The Sun Also Burns," "The Day I Rode a Manta Ray," "Honeymooning With Humpbacks," "Jaws at 50: This Shark Still Has Legs," "My Dive Buddy Wears Diapers," and much more.



Gil Zeimer



Connect at [ScubaStoryteller.com](http://ScubaStoryteller.com)  
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SCUBA STORYTELLER

# SCUBA STORYTELLER

Mostly Humorous Diving Tales  
by an Addicted AquaNut



Gil Zeimer



Gil Zeimer

## A Few Testimonials:

- “Every now and then, a voice comes along that makes you laugh, makes you think, and makes you remember why you got into diving. That voice belongs to Gil Zeimer.” – William Cline, SDIM
- “I was laughing so hard, I nearly peed in my dry suit.” – Jeffrey Bozanic, Ph.D.
- “If a dive log could talk, it would sound like *Scuba Storyteller*.” – Natalie Shuman, Sun Divers Roatan
- It’s like swapping stories with your favorite dive buddy.” – Dr. Alex Brylske

Buy an autographed paperback via mail like Jen (\$26: Zelle or check) or just get it via Amazon.



And please write a review.

See you at Scuba Show:  
“Blue Friday”, Sat. 5/30,  
10:30–11:15 am;  
“Scuba Storyteller”,  
Sun., 5/31,  
2:30 – 3:15 pm

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Any Questions?

Want to become a  
Blue Friday  
Ambassador?

Get in touch/read more:  
[www.ScubaStoryteller.com](http://www.ScubaStoryteller.com)

