

A Shrink Studies SCUBA

Panic

www.DivePsych.com



Next September I will be the “ringmaster” of a workshop on diver panic in Johannesburg, South Africa, along with several experts at the invitation of DAN South Africa. Dr. Frans Cronje expects well over 120 instructors and divemasters to attend and one of the topics will be “Identifying anxiety and panic risk in divers.” As Frans and I discussed the workshop recently, I told him about a student diver.

Ron, a local Raleigh dive shop owner and very experienced PADI instructor, asked me to help out with open water check out dives at our local spring-fed quarry one weekend. He already had an excellent divemaster intern lined up to assist him with a large class, but he was concerned about one young woman in particular. “Susan” (not her real name) had struggled with extreme anxiety during the pool sessions and had required lots of extra attention which had slowed down the rest of the class. He thought

she could complete the OW check out dives but wanted some extra backup just in case.

When I arrived that Saturday morning at the quarry I was introduced to the class and was assigned to stay very close to this young woman who seemed somewhat nervous. Susan explained she just needed her cigarettes and coffee. We let the rest of the class wade in ahead of us and then she and I followed closely behind. After being underwater for a few minutes at less than 6 meters depth, she indicated she needed to surface immediately. We ascended with my holding her BC strap firmly to prevent a panicked rapid ascent. We inflated our BCs and I helped her calm herself with

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"KRUSA LAMAN" International Literature Festival

Next week Tuesday, March 27, at 7:30pm will be the 4th year that Bonaire will be organizing "The International Literature Festival - Crossing Seas 2007."

In Papiamentu it is called *Krusa Laman*. This time it will be held at Kas di Arte. We have authors from **Indonesia** - Nukila Amal; **South Africa**-Gabeba Baderoon; **Surinam**- Jit Narian; **Holland-Morocco**- Ramsey Nasr; and from **Curaçao** the popular Jazz, Tumba singer of the moment, Ezaline Calister. From **Bonaire** we have as authors: Frans Booi, Monica Clarinda and Annie Francees.

All these international authors of this festival will visit the S.G.B high school and will offer some workshops with the local authors. With this Festival we want to encourage The Art of Literature - to read, write, and publish more books of Bonaire on an international level, and of course, support all the future talented artists in this field. The entrance is free! But there will be a box for donations to help organize future events. □ Jackie Bernabela, *Kas di Arte*.

kas di arte

ARTISTIC AND CULTURAL FORMATION
KAYA J.N.E. CRAANE 34
BONAIRE N.A.

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diaphragmatic breathing while the rest of the class presumably went on to the submerged platforms to perform various tasks.

Susan talked about being worried about multiple psychosocial stressors in her life, including her job and family and personal finances and a conflicted relationship with her boyfriend. That was all well and good, but then she explained that she had decided to learn to scuba dive to overcome her claustrophobia. Unable to hold my tongue, I blurted out something to the effect that she should have come to somebody like me for treatment of the claustrophobia before taking up scuba diving! She admitted that she had deliberately hidden this little piece of medical information from her instructor after being turned away from another dive shop where she had filled in the student application form honestly.

The Recreational Scuba Training Council Medical Statement (2001) used by PADI and most training agencies specifically asks, "Have you ever had or do you currently have... Behavioral health, mental or psychological problems (Panic attack, fear of closed or open spaces)? A positive response to a question does not necessarily disqualify you from diving. A positive response means that there is a preexisting condition that may affect your safety while diving and you must seek the advice of your physician prior to engaging in dive activities." Susan had answered, "NO" at Ron's dive shop.

At that point I decided it was unlikely Susan was going to be able to catch up with the rest of the class and complete

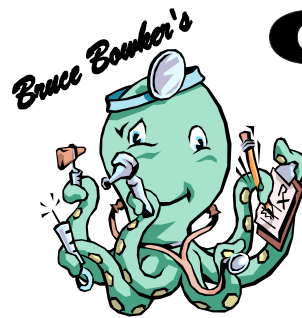
David F. Colvard, M.D., is a private psychiatrist and clinical investigator in Raleigh NC, and a divemaster. He hosts the website www.DivePsych.com which provides evidence-based information for divers on psychological and stress factors in scuba divers. □

Most photos supplied by author



her open water check out dive tasks that weekend. So, I focused instead on just helping her enjoy some casual diving with very close divemaster support with her instructor nearby. She made several fun dives that morning, remaining submerged up to 10 meters depth for over 20 minutes at a time. I later heard from one of her friends that she decided she was too busy to complete her scuba certification.

Susan's case illustrates an all too common problem faced by dive shop owners and instructors. Some scuba students willfully withhold critical health information for a variety of reasons, which potentially endangers them and their instructors and other divers in the water with them. In retrospect, Ron realized he would have been wise to have asked Susan more questions after he observed how much anxiety she had during the pool classes rather than just helping her tough it out. Then, maybe she could have been directed to professional help before failing to complete her open water certification. As it is, she is unlikely to retry, which may or may not have been for the best. □ *Story & photos by Dr. David Colvard*



Gear Doc

A bi-monthly feature in The Reporter devoted to helping you maintain your gear.

Beware of Your Dive Light!!

Dive lights and video lights are a lot brighter and therefore can be much hotter than an average household flashlight. Some manufactures of dive lights even say they should be used only underwater, the reason being that the water keeps them cooler. In other words, dive lights get hot, real hot. I mean really hot.

The first time I saw how hot this could be was when a diver was carrying a bag onto an airplane. Halfway to the steps, the bag was smoldering! In it was a very powerful European made dive light. If you have never seen one of these, they look like something made to carry plutonium. When he opened his case the inside of the bag was more or less a melted pile of plastics and other unrecognizable items. The light had only been on a few minutes! Imagine if this had been in the cargo space and happened after the plane took off with no one around to see it.

The other time was just a small dive light that was in checked-on baggage. When the diver opened his suitcase the next day, the little yellow light, which previously had a rather flat plastic lens, now had a very domed plastic lens and very dead batteries. The heat was so intense, and with the lower airplane pressure, it caused the plastic to bulge



out and discolor. Had something been close by with a low flash point, a fire could have easily started. One doesn't need much imagination to think what the result of that could have been. Also the light was packed with the switch in the locked position! So much for locks on the switches.

Don't ever travel with batteries in your lights. Don't trust the locks on the switches either. And if you feel you absolutely need to keep the batteries in the light because of space (a poor excuse though), at least remove the bulb or one battery.

One last tip. There are a lot of makers of lights and each manufacturer makes a lot of different lights so that makes one large amount of different bulbs. It is not reasonable for a dive shop to carry every light bulb for every light so bring one or two spares with you on each dive trip. □

Bruce Bowker

Since 1980 Bruce Bowker has been the owner-operator of the Padi 5 Star Gold Palm Carib Inn. Tel. 717-8819.



(The Fisherman and the wheelbarrow.
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He pushes his handmade wheelbarrow to the shore of Kralendijk. His wooden one-wheeler is registered: "3009 - B" and "B - 1964." Every car on the island has two license plates, so the wheelbarrow has two license plates too. Kadóf built his vehicle some 10 years ago. He bought an eight-inch rim and fitted a massive tire on it: no tube, no air, just solid rubber. Uncomplicated! He took some wooden beams and a piece of marine plywood and his carrier was ready.

So, every day he rolls to the coast, parks his vehicle along the boulevard and jumps into the *Trupial*, his handmade fishing boat, registered: NB 26. Then he starts his brand new and reliable Mercury 15 horsepower outboard engine, heading for Punt Vierkant and the Willemstoren (a lighthouse along the south coast of Bonaire), eagerly searching for barracuda. He feels no fear of the big blue sea. He is completely relaxed.

There are two impressive hooks on the fishing line. The hooks are connected with an iron wire. Mr. Soleana dismantled old cables from the hand brakes of a bike to connect the two hooks. Uncomplicated!

Every day the catch of the day is barracuda. Every day he catches fish from two to three feet long. The total weight of his catch is about 15 kilos. Then, around 11 in the morning, he returns to Playa. He puts the two buckets with the fresh fish on his wheelbarrow and rolls home. There he picks up his bicycle and pedals to Louis, the fishmonger in Antriol. Around noon Kadóf returns to his little home. The working day has come to an end. But, because of no hurry, no watch, no nothing, no nonsense, Mr. Soleana gathers his tools and continues working on a new fishing boat. He uses "saman," a very strong type of wood from Venezuela to construct the frame of his boat. This will be his 14th hand made fishing boat.

Mister Soleana is a happy man: a bike, a boat and a barrow. No car, no computer, no airco. Just the sea and some friends. Kadóf lives the right way of life that is so easy to practice on our small Caribbean island. □ *Story & photos by J@n Brouwers*

