



Return From Roatan

by Frank Onstine

Our flight to Roatan was on TACA, the national carrier of El Salvador. I didn't know what to expect and the woman at Roatan Charters had told us to be at check in several hours' early warning that San Francisco departures are "sometimes chaotic". The reality turned out to be rather boring, just got on the plane and went, like any other flight, changed planes in San Salvador and, before we knew it we were in Roatan. The passengers on this last part of the trip seemed to be equally divided between divers and missionaries.

I think that the most interesting thing for me, a California boy, was to dive in an ecosystem that was completely devoid of kelp, where coral fills that niche. Black lace coral, sponges the size of oil drums, eagle rays, giant groupers, these were things that I had never seen before. The people living on Roatan are Garifuna, Afro-Caribs, whose ancestors escaped from two slave ships, which wrecked in the early 1600's near St. Vincent. The Garifuna did not colonize well and in 1797 the Royal Navy rounded them up and exiled them to Roatan. The Garifuna speak English and Spanish but also continue to speak their old language which is a mixture of Arawak, Swahili, Banti, Yuroba and archaic French and English. West End, the closest town to Anthony's Key, has a large colony of expats, mostly American and European kids.

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In Search of the Whale Shark

by Loretta Lowe

Honduras, Adventures in Nature, "Utila is also well known among fish enthusiasts as one of the best places in the world to see the whale shark, the largest fish in the world. These monstrous creatures, getting as big as 15 meters, frequent the Cayman Channel right off Utila and can be spotted most of the year".

Undercurrent, Insider Report: "Whale sharks are seen occasionally near Utila", *TACA Airline magazine*: "One of Roatan's unusual attractions is the chance to swim with huge whale sharks." *Destination Honduras*, "Take note that Utila is renowned for its whale shark sightings. Pelagic sightings bring divers in search of that intense communion while suspended in the deep blue of the ocean."

Utila Lodge brochure: "They have been seen off Utila for a long time. Since the diving boon five years or so, they have been reported about once a week." *Honduras, Dive and Travel Guide*, "Utila is also a kind of Mecca for whale shark watchers, and, indeed, might be the best place to see one of these oceanic behemoths in the entire Caribbean."

Articles and reviews had us all very excited about the possibility of seeing a whale shark. Certainly, with seven days of diving in Roatan and an additional three days in Utila the odds *had* to be good! If we are to believe these articles, there must be a plethora of pelagics here.

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August Entertainment: **Rah, Rah, Roatan!**

Great month for entertainment! Come and enjoy Canyon Reef video footage from the successful Roatan trip led by Loretta Lowe. Colorful fish and tropical wetsuit clad people you may recognize will swim in a happy soup before your eyes.

editor's note

Working on this month's newsletter as a guest editor has been a blast! After reading this month's collection of articles, you'll know why – they're awesome and full of adventure.

In this issue, you'll also find tons of interesting diving information, such as local volunteer opportunities, items for sale and upcoming events – such as our upcoming Sea Ranch Weekend.

And check out our group (below right) from Frank's M.'s last dive in the US!

Happy Diving!

Thanks,
Kharmen Roman

**Harbor Clean Up Day
September 15, 2001**

Help recover man made objects from the Monterey Harbor and the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary without causing harm to existing marine life.

Free BBQ and air fills (9/15 only) provided by local dive shops!

Prizes! Prizes! Prizes!

For registration:
David Clayton
drc@cnet.com
(925) 689-8840

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(L-R: Gerda Hurter, Robert Foster, Michelle Chang, Bill Donnelly, Frank Matzkies, Kharmen Roman, Armin Luggen, Curt Degler)

Payments for membership and activities should be mailed to:
Bill Donnelly
P.O. Box 151223
San Rafael, CA 94915

| Reefers Rap | |
|------------------------------------|--|
| August 4 | Beach Dive Coordinator: Pierre Hurter |
| August 11-12 | 2002 Monterey Shoot Out http://www.theshootout.org/ |
| August 19-21 | Channel Islands Boat Trip Aboard the <i>Peace</i> Coordinator: Jim Vallario (415) 566-4784 |
| August 21 | General Meeting |
| August 25 | Cypress Point Trip wth NCRD |
| September 8 | Monterey Beach Dive Coordinator: Bhushan Mudbhary bhushan@synopsys.com 9AM @ Aquarius (Del Monte) Dive site TBD |
| September 8 | Alcatraz Swim Race Coordinator: Pedro Ordanes South End Rowing Club serc_swimming@bigfoot.com |
| September 15 | Monterey Harbor Clean Up Contact: David Clayton drc@ccnet.com (925) 689-8840 |
| September 18 | General Meeting |
| October 7 | Annual Abalone Feed Coordinator: Roy Didier Location: Rod & Gun Club At Lake Merced |
| October 16 | General Meeting |
| October 27 | Halloween Beach Dive Coordinator: Kharmen Roman kharmenr@melibe.com (415) 921-4655 Dive site TBD |
| October 30 – November 3 | Channel Islands Boat Trip wth NCRD |
| November 16- 18 | Annual Sea Ranch Weekend Coordinators: Kurt & Arlene Haworth (510) 724-7253 |
| November 20 | General Meeting and <i>Officer Elections!!</i> |
| December 18 | General Meeting and <i>Holiday Party</i> |
| January 1 | New Year's Dive |

President's Corner

by Pierre Hurter



Pierre Hurter

Seems as if only last month I made a comment about meeting club members, new and old. I also nattered on about waning interest by members compared to the past. Saturday's dive on the Cypress Point gave me a chance to both meet members new and old as well

as re-assess the lack of interest in club activities. The day started at "O dark thirty" Saturday morning when Bhushan showed up at my front stoop. We quickly loaded my motley collection of gear and fortified with a bag of bagels and a thermos of coffee we headed towards "K" dock and our rendezvous with destiny.

The turnout was excellent, Jim Vallario, Tim Howe, Van Barbieri, Bill Galarneau as well as new members Joe, Niki and Peter. The water was flat and the sky slightly overcast as we headed for our first anchorage. We dropped anchor at a spot called "Honeymoon" off Point Lobos State Park. The visibility was around 50 feet as we dropped to a depth of 100 feet for a tour of the area. This also marked my second dive in my "day glow orange red" dry suit. As usual I endured a fair amount of ribbing about my "Santa" outfit. It was worth it to be warm; besides, I'll be ready for the Christmas party. As an aside, I discovered that my "new - old" Jet fins were too small. Once again I was reminded of the advice I had given a fellow diver shortly before this dive. "Don't go out with new gear before you have a chance to do a shake down dive in familiar waters, preferably off a beach. That way if something doesn't work, you can bail out and recover on shore." It's amazing how easy it is to ignore your own advice. So if you are going on the Peace trip and have some new gear ...

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President's Corner

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Meanwhile, back on the Cypress Point, our second dive was south of Point Lobos at a place named for a waterfall that once marked the spot. This spot is in Big Sur, as far south as I've gone diving from Monterey. The visibility here was even better than at "Honeymoon," at least 75 feet. We drifted along a wall at a depth of 60 to 70 feet through schools of rockfish. The wall was covered with a carpet of strawberry anemones and huge nudibranchs.

The third dive was at a spot called "Mal Paso". We dropped through a hole in the kelp and swam along the anchor chain to a depth of 50 feet. From there we drifted in and out of the kelp canopy. I spent most of my time swimming on my back watching the sun's ray's pole through a cathedral of kelp. There were places where the kelp canopy was so thick that it grew as dark as if a curtain had been drawn over a window blotting out the sun. All told, these were three of the best dives I've ever had in Monterey.

On a more general note, we need people to step forward to lead and coordinate dives in the coming months. How about an abalone re-opener or the annual salmon swim? I'd love to do another Point Lobos. We also need people to coordinate this year's Christmas party; it's closer than you think. For those looking to learn more about our underwater neighborhood don't forget the marine biology class being offered at Merritt College in Oakland starting August 29 through December 12. The class includes trips to Monterey Bay, Gerstle Cove, Mendocino and Point Lobos.

For more information contact James Grass at (510) 841-1512 or enroll on line:
<http://www.peralta.cc.ca.us/enrollonline.htm>.

That's it for August. I'm afraid I'm going to miss the August meeting; I'll be heading back from the Channel Islands trip aboard the Peace. For those of you who can't make it, read all about it next month.

New 2001 Vice President, Robert Miché!

Reefers, after many months, our search is over! **Please welcome Robert Miché as our new club Vice President.** Over a plate of cashew prawns at our recent Officer's Meeting, Robert Miché has stepped up to fill this role for the remainder of the year. We're excited to have him onboard!

2002 SFRD OFFICER ELECTIONS

Our club is over a quarter of a century old and we're still going strong! The San Francisco Reef Divers wants you to help us continue our success as a dive club.

Become an officer in 2002 or nominate one of our star members you admire.

Elections will be held during our October general meeting. Be sure to come and cast your vote – it counts!

(We're also looking for volunteers to help coordinate this year's holiday party!)

Calling All Artists!

There's some interest in updating our club logo. Please submit logo entries, in jpg. or gif. format, to Kharmen Roman by October 1, 2001.

FOR SALE

Mares Plana Avanti Fins
Excellent Condition
Color: Yellow
Size: XL
Price: \$35
Contact Jim Vallario
(415) 566-0784

Return from Roatan

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The town is full of tiny dive shops with names like "The Happy Diver" and "The Pure Life Dive Shop". Some of the dive shops included bars and restaurants; this was a popular concept, I'm surprised that no one in the US has tried it. In the biggest dive operation/bar in town, the Sueno Del Mar, perched on stilts in the middle of the bay. I had my first taste of that sublime Cuban rum "Havana Club" and, on the way home, I was delighted to find that it is sold in the duty free shop in the San Salvador airport.

Some things we had been warned about turned out to be non problems: TACA was great, no problems with delayed luggage, the sand fleas were way over rated, not a problem, jelly fish attacks on the night dives, however, were formidable; everyone got nailed, even Paul and Annette who were fully wet suited. The whale sharks, regrettably, failed to show. The locals said that the best time to see them was in the spring and fall, contrary to what we had read, Loretta said that she would look further into this matter, I guess that we will just have to keep going back until we find some. One final thought regarding sharks, if you have never heard the story of the Reef Divers first outing to the Farallons thirty years ago, ask Ursula to recount it for you; didn't need no stink'n shark cages in those days!

SFRD Rocks! Pass it on!

Be sure you don't miss out on any future events by joining SFRD today! And be sure to pass on the good news to all of your dive buddies.

For additional membership information:

Kharmen Roman
2001 SFRD Membership Chairperson
kharmenr@melibe.com
(415) 921-4655

In Search of the Whale Shark

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When we got to the Bay Islands, however, everyone had a different story. Samir Galindo, manager of Roatan's Anthony's Key Resort, writes in a email, "I believe that some of the literature being written today regarding whale sharks in the Bay Islands is a little misleading..." Kevin, the dive shop manager, shows us the records on his wall calendar. Marked with a red X, the last sighting was four months ago. He assures us that *if* one of the boats sees a whale shark, they will radio the other boats. As he continues to tell us how rare it is to see these elusive sharks, we notice that he is wearing a whale shark tee shirt. Further advertising for the big creatures.

The myths we heard surrounding the sharks were pretty astounding: "they only come during the wet season;" "they only come during the dry season;" "they're here in the months of _____ to _____ (fill in any dates);" "heard about a cruise ship in the channel that saw hundreds of them feeding on tuna;" and our all-time favorite quote; "whale sharks hang vertical in the water until tuna jump in their mouths".

On Utila we got a bit closer. At the dive shops we heard: "Saw one two days ago;" "saw one this morning and one the day before." But we also heard other discouraging comments: "I never saw one, but someone on another boat saw one two weeks ago;" "I've been here two months and never saw one;" "the water's too rough, we can't see them with the swell". One boat captain told us, "we don't look for whale sharks, but the captain at Laguna Beach Resort does".

After finishing our final dive of the trip - after a week and a half of stunning coral reefs, eagle rays, eels, bountiful tropical fish...but no whale sharks - there was a hat in the gift shop that I just had to buy: "Whale Shark - The Legend Lives On"

Octopuses of Costa Rica

by Mark Lanett

In late June I did my first non-Monterey scuba dive ever, as a volunteer on an Earthwatch expedition to survey octopuses in Costa Rica. Octopuses in general are not well-studied and are consumed in great numbers in Costa Rica, so we wanted to survey the species, abundance, and other attributes of the population. Costa Rica is very supportive of conservation efforts and all research is being shared with the government for use in policy-making.

We met in San Jose, ten volunteers (four from the UK) and three researchers, and traveled north by bus before taking two tiny boats on the three-hour trip to the research site.

We spent our time on an island, Isla San Jose, off of the Pacific coast of Costa Rica, in the north (near the Nicaraguan border).

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Two diving opportunities with local dive club, Northern California Rainbow Divers (NCRD)

Celebrate Halloween on a four-day live aboard trip to the Northern and Southern Channel Islands with NCRD aboard the Vision. The Vision will leave the dock at 11:30 p.m., Tuesday, October 30th, and will return to Santa Barbara late afternoon on Saturday, November 3rd. The total cost of the trip will be \$585, payable no later than August 20th. The boat will be limited to 28 divers only – versus the 35-40 open boat load! Contact Lisa Newman (Lisa_Newman@maxygen.com) or David Milani (dmilani@pinnaclesys.com) with any questions.

Join NCRD members for a day of boat diving off Monterey and Carmel Bays and possibly Big Sur aboard the Cypress Point on August 25. The boat will be a reduced load of 20 divers max, so there will be plenty of room on deck for all. A tariff of \$80 covers 3 tank dives and includes breakfast bagels and a full lunch with homemade hot soup. The boat departs at 7:00 a.m. from the Municipal Pier in Monterey.

Make checks payable to "NCRD"
For Vision Trip, 10/30-11/3:
Lisa Newman
1137 Reed Avenue, Apt. B
Sunnyvale, CA 94086

For Cypress Point Trip, 8/25:
Paul Duhamel
1850 Sacramento St., #502
San Francisco, CA 94109
(415) 396-1941

Sea Ranch Weekend November 16-18

Spend the weekend at beautiful Sea Ranch along the coast, just South of Gualala. This annual event is a time to dive, hike, feast (on abalone, hopefully) at the Saturday Pot Luck Dinner, shop in town and soak in the hot tub. Too hard to resist, right?

We've rented two three-bedroom homes. The prices are \$50/pp for a living room spot, \$120 for a bedroom. A \$50 deposit holds your spot and should be sent to Bill Donnelly. First come, first served.

Be sure to bring your fishing license, abalone stamp, ab iron, gauges, etc.

This is a club event you won't want to miss!

To sign up for the trip, contact :

Kurt Hayworth
(510) 724-7253
h-kurt@pacbell.net

My North Carolina Diving...

by Bhushan Mudbhary

One day in a war long ago, Herr. Kapitänleutnant, the CO of U352, part of a wolf-pack on a hunt of merchant ships carrying wartime supplies to the Allied forces battling the Third Reich from El Alamein to St. Petersburg, brought his submarine to periscope depth. In shallow waters, the Kapitänleutnant gave orders to fire two torpedoes at what looked like a merchant ship, its holds full of hope for an army a continent away. With bitterness and fear, the CO cursed under his breath when to his double horror the target turned out to be the US Coast Guard Cutter Icarus and the torpedoes exploded well short of the intended target. Icarus responded with extreme prejudice and as perhaps the skipper of Icarus might have succinctly put it - "that dog don't hunt no more".

Circa July 8, the year 2001 of our Lord, the propellers of Outrageous V churns the waters of the calm seas off of Beaufort. The only U Boats that lurk below are ghost ships from that war long ago. The Icarus and its rendezvous with the U352 is now nothing more than a matter of historical curiosity and in these early hours of this particular day, that history from that day in the past is reflected upon by one of the divers - man what a way to go, to die in a tin can so far from home, I hope the diving is good. Relevance it seems rots with time.

Thirty feet along the anchor line that led to the coning tower of the U352, I gazed below and took in the shape of the stricken sub. An instrument of war that was now somewhat incongruously framed in a post card setting of blue water, warm light and colorful fish, an ambience so completely devoid of the horror and tenor of war. Juxtaposed against this background and some distance deeper I held a perfect vision of myself set in the mercurial reflection of a bubble from a diver below. And then I was next to the sub.



US Coast Guard Cutter sinking a Uboat (U172) with a depth charge.

U352 is a Uboat wreck from WWII lying at 120 ft in sand some 25 miles off the coast of North Carolina. The easiest way to get there is to fly to Raleigh and drive to Morehead City along I70-E. Discovery Diving, based in Beaufort some 3 miles away, runs dive charters to the numerous wrecks off shore including the U352. The day trips leave early at 7a.m. and return to dock approximately at 3 p.m. The long ride to the wreck site can be rough and the diving itself can be challenging if currents are running. Prepare for a deep dive at about 110 ft. at least. On a good day the diving is good.

On Monday morning we met in meeting rooms. We listened and talked business. The metaphors of business are borrowed from war. The players believe they are in one, the competition is enemy, a win is a kill and battles are fought in the trenches. But I knew better, I had seen the sub.

D i v i n g B a c k I n

by Kathryn Klein

As some of you may know, a stupid snow skiing mishap in December (had to have a major knee ligament reconstructed) has kept me out of the water -- and therefore with nothing much to report for the Reef Diver Times -- for any months. So, to entice me back into the water once again, Frank had to go out and find us a new boat. Gone are the days of cramming bodies and gear into that little inflatable put-put... Now we're ridin' in style (sort of), in 17 1/2' of double-hulled aluminum, driven by 90 seahorses of outboard power, better known as "The Tin Can." Those of you who know Cap'n Phil Sammet of the Cypress Sea in his other incarnation as tech diving instructor, may have had the pleasure of motoring out to dive off the ol' Tin Can, before it became ours.

My first return to the water was less-than-satisfactory -- I lost some weight and I forgot just how buoyant my newish neoprene dry suit is... so I was underweighted and dive buddies Loretta and Frank were kind enough to curtail their dive, when my knee got tired after continually kicking to keep me down under on our shallow (20-30') test dive.

A couple of weeks later, however, like lemmings, we had to return to the sea. I had spent more time with my fins in the swimming pool and felt much better about being in shape for diving. We put the boat in at the Breakwater and dove with a couple of

Canadians Frank knows from Stanford, who had not yet seen much of Monterey Bay. As we descended for our first dive of the day, at a spot known as "Eric's Rock" on the Monterey side of Point Piños, we thought our friends might not get to see much this trip... It was like slogging through pea soup -- you could barely see your own hand on the anchor line... until, at about 50', it became almost crystal clear. We had a good 30' of viz in the bottom layer, at from 50' to 65' of depth. Saw a surprising lot of rockfish, a cabezon or two, some fantastic giant white metridium, and many nudibranchs -- even a tiny purple and orange Spanish Shawl.

Last week, Frank even convinced this workaholic to do a mid-week "hookey" dive with Pam and Jim Radkey, who have the summer off from teaching elementary school. We hoisted the Tin Can into the water using the sling launch at the Pebble Beach access in Stillwater Cove. The water was as flat calm as I have ever seen it in Carmel, and we were able to motor some distance south of Yankee Point to a pair of sea-lion rest spots known as Lobos Rocks. Very stinky rocks, they are, too, being with the beasties and covered with their sewage. We anchored in about 130 feet of water between the two rocks, and planned to swim close to one of the rocks and circumnavigate it.

Frank and Pam actually did go all the way around the rock -- at about 65' -- and, apparently, had a very nice dive. Jim R and I had both had a few minor equipment difficulties so, with a little less air to burn than Frank and Pam, we decided on a less ambitious plan. We descended to near 100' toward the base of the rock, then slowly ascended as we swam along the wall for awhile before turning back toward the boat. On this dive, as well, I saw more rockfish in the water than I remember seeing last year-- especially a lot of blues. There were also a few large schools of tiny, baby fishies -- not sure what kind. The sea lions were playful and plentiful, and I ended my dive doing an extra long safety stop while watching a pair of gorgeous brown jellies leisurely pump their way along.

Our second dive, after a lunch break back at the dock (and a much needed bathroom break for four drysuits!), was as good as the first. We dove a pretty spot along Mono Lobo Wall -- kind of a stroll in the kelp forest dive... a deep, dark kelp forest. Accompanied on this dive by a curious but shy grey-spotted seal, we all noticed a couple of good-sized ling cod, feeling safe and secure since no one was wielding a spear gun, and our seal friend was clearly more interested in us than them.

I am very glad to be diving in, once again.

“The Blue Edge”

A book review
by Kenneth Gwin

At our last dive club meeting, I mentioned a book that I had just read by freediving guru, Carlos Eyles. He's written a number of books in the past, written many articles and published underwater photographs. He is considered by many to be the spiritual guide of freedivers and spear fishermen, focusing his observations on the inner diver, the Great Sea, the hidden language of the sea and the life within.

His latest book, *The Blue Edge*, is a composite story of trips to the Sea of Cortez and the Island of San Benedicto in Mexico's Islas de Revillagigedo. Woven into the story are recollections of past experiences diving the relatively untouched waters of Mexico and the current state of sustainable fishing, not only in Mexico, but worldwide.

The unfolding quest is to freedive with the really big sharks, mantas, and the deep schools of illusive hammerheads. More than an adventure story or a treatise on conservation, however, this book dives deep into a reverence, mysticism, and revelation often missing in the lives of civilized men.

Interestingly, Carlos almost died from ciguatera poisoning while in Fiji and can no longer eat fish. Since he can't eat fish, he no longer hunts them. Instead, he takes his camera along for his underwater communion.

He makes a great guide into many inner worlds.

He also has opened a freediving school on Hawaii's Big Island and leads dolphin trips in the Bahamas.

He can be reached at www.divingfreehawaii.com.

Octopuses of Costa Rica

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It is part of the Islas Murcielago chain, recently incorporated into the Guanacaste National Park. The island is uninhabited except for a basic marine lab, with drinkable well water but no electricity.

Because this was the first year of the expedition (the very first team in fact), we had plenty of kinks to work out and restricted the surveying to beach diving near the marine lab.

Research diving is not like recreational sport diving. We stuck to transects and either kept our eyes peeled for octopuses, or selected quadrants at random for complete collection and assays. In contrast to Monterey, here octopuses turned out to be active or resting in the front of their den during the daytime and were very easy to catch by hand, with a little encouragement from diluted bleach.

Almost all of the octopuses we caught were from one species, but on the last research dive I was lucky enough to capture a specimen of a different

species, apparently unknown: a small black and white octopus with beautiful little eyespots, somewhat like the common *O. bimaculoides* here on the Californian coast. We preserved the octopus, and if the taxonomic review holds, it will be named after me, so look for *O. lanettus* in the next edition of “Octopuses of the World”! In fact the second team also caught a new unidentified octopus, highlighting just how unknown these creatures are and how easy it is to make a contribution to science while having fun diving!

We did manage to get a sport dive in and spotted a saltwater crocodile as well as a sleeping nurse shark (I was able to pet it). I had the chance to meet some people I had already known online on an octopus mailing list along with a bunch of other tremendously fun people. And the warm water (up to 86F) was really hard to leave behind. For next year, the Earthwatch team is planning a more advanced week to include a rapid survey of the entire island chain via boat - I'm going to be there, definitely.

Anyone who wants more information about Earthwatch's expeditions or octopuses, please feel free to contact me, or catch me at a meeting.

Or visit the Earthwatch Institute website: <http://www.earthwatch.org/expeditions/cigliano.html>.



ABOUT *SFRD* (SAN FRANCISCO REEF DIVERS):

The Reef Diver Times is the official newsletter of the San Francisco Reef Divers, a not for profit community organization dedicated to safe sport diving and the preservation of our ocean resources. Membership is \$25 annually, dues payable to SFRD. There is a general club meeting on the 3rd Tuesday of every month at 7:30pm with a social half-hour before the meeting at 7:00pm. We meet at the Presidio Alliance Building, Room B, 563 Rucker Street, The Presidio, San Francisco. Rucker is the first left after entering via the Lombard Gate entrance. For more information, visit <http://www.sfreedivers.org/>.

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