



## DIVING NI'HAU ISLAND, HAWAII

By Norm Knutson

Most divers do not think of Hawaii as a dive destination. But if you are going to Hawaii for lots of other reasons, you really have to go diving there. In this world, there are plenty of different types or places to go diving, cave, cavern, wreck, kelp, coral gardens, coral drop-offs, ice, lake, and various combinations of all of these plus more. Diving Ni'ihau is another one that is different and unusual.

This last September, Jim Vallario and I, including our wives, spent a week in Kauai, aka the Garden Island, enjoying the hiking, kayaking, the views on the beach (*Editor's note: this was almost censored*) and exploring the island. And we had heard that the small island of Ni'ihau (it is the smallest and oldest of the Island Chain), 17 miles from Kauai had some excellent diving.

We made reservations months in advance so we would not miss out on this. You can only dive Ni'ihau during the months of May thru September and with only two dive operators. We used "Bubbles Below" as our ticket to adventure and were not disappointed.

Ni'ihau is referred to as the Forbidden Island and has less than 200 people living on it at this time. The island is generally off limits except to relatives and invited guests. The people on the island speak Hawaiian as their primary language with English as a 2<sup>nd</sup> language.

Prior to our scheduled day of diving, the ocean was a little rough, but calmed down to a lake when we left early one morning with 6 other divers plus crew. After about 90 minutes we arrived off the island of Ni'ihau next to Lehua Rock, which is larger than Maui's Molokini Crater.

As we entered the water, I was amazed by the clarity of the water, with viz looking 100ft plus. Descending to the bottom, or top of a plateau of volcanic rock, we counted at least 12 Gray Reef sharks cruising around. We ventured over the underwater cliff and went along a straight vertical wall of volcanic material and when cruised along some canyons we met a 8 ft. Galapagos Shark.



These sharks are more inquisitive than a lot of other sharks. They do not have a high kill rate on divers, in fact, as of 2008, only one fatal attack and one other non fatal attack was reported world wide. But they are known to approach close to swimmers and divers.

On this dive, this shark appeared to be on a mission and seemed nervous or intent on getting something. He looked at us, and just went on his quest for what sharks normally do, either sight seeing or looking for something to eat.

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### GENERAL MEETING OCTOBER 21<sup>ST</sup>, 2009

AT SINDBADS



Pier 2, Embarcadero Street, San Francisco

MEET at 7:00p.m. for socializing, DRINKS &  
FOOD and 7:30p.m. for CLUB BUSINESS



*Der Stammtisch*

By Pierre Hurter

October's been a slow month at least for me and diving. I'm glad to see other folks have been getting into the water. Rumor has it that the Vallario, Bhushan Wreck Alley, San Diego extravaganza will become an annual event. Look for it in the 2010 calendar which will be posting soon and is already on the Yahoo site, see the column on the left side of the page where it says "Files". You'll find the calendar titled Reefers Rap 2010.

We had grand plans for October; first it looked like a live aboard in Belize, than lobster hunting off of one of the Vision boats. The first trip started to feel the impact of the economy and the second was at a time when it looked when one of us might have to race off for family issues. It ain't easy growing old; it's not a job for the faint at heart.

This Saturday, we did manage to slip from Pier 45 and with two tugs to give us a shove headed out towards the Golden Gate Bridge aboard the *S.S. Jeremiah O'Brien* as part of the Fleet Week activities. The cruise started a little after nine in the morning and we spent the day on the bay, along with 925 potter souls sailing under the bridge, coming back in with the parade of ships, wandering around Angel Island, Alcatraz and then after the airshow heading back to Pier 45 around 4:30.



For those who have never taken the tour, you should. This is one of the hidden gems of the Bay Area.

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## 2009 SFRD OFFICERS

President	Gene Kramer	(650) 359-2785 <a href="mailto:genekramer@pacbell.net">genekramer@pacbell.net</a>
Vice President	Retired	BBB (Bailout Bonus Baby)
Treasurer & Secretary	Pierre Hurter	(415).810.6851 <a href="mailto:sfreesdiver@comcast.net">sfreesdiver@comcast.net</a>
Webmaster	Curt Degler	91-94442154 (India) <a href="mailto:cdegler@yahoo.com">cdegler@yahoo.com</a>
Newsletter Editor	Gerda Hurter	(415) 810.6851 <a href="mailto:sfreesdiver@comcast.net">sfreesdiver@comcast.net</a>
Entertainment Committee	Ken Gwin	(415) 648-7046 <a href="mailto:artfxsf@aol.com">artfxsf@aol.com</a>
AMCR Representative	Gene Kramer	(415) 339-2785 <a href="mailto:genekramer@pacbell.net">genekramer@pacbell.net</a>
CenCal Representative	Debra Gilmore	<a href="mailto:gilmored2@yahoo.com">gilmored2@yahoo.com</a>



**Payments for membership and activities should be mailed to:**  
**Pierre Hurter**  
**515 Diamond Street**  
**San Francisco, CA 94114**

<b>Reefer's Rap 2009</b>		
<b>JANUARY</b>	<b>FEBRUARY</b>	<b>MARCH</b>
01 - New Year's Day 07 - Officers Meeting 10 - Cypress Sea - (3 Dives) - Sat - Pierre - 415.810.6851 <b>21 - Meeting - Sinbad's</b> 27 - CenCal Board Meeting	04 - Officers Meeting <b>18 - Meeting - Sinbad's</b> 19 - 22 - SF Ocean Film Festival	04 - Officers Meeting 14 - Cypress Sea - (3 Dives) - Sat - Pierre - 415.810.6851 <b>18- Meeting - Sinbad's</b> 25 - CenCal Board Meeting
<b>APRIL</b>	<b>MAY</b>	<b>JUNE</b>
01 - Abalone Opener - Fort Ross 01 - Officers Meeting 11 - Cypress Sea - (3 Dives) - Sat - Pierre - 415.810.6851 <b>15 - Meeting - Sinbad's</b> 17 - 18 - San Jose Dive Show 29 - CenCal Board Meeting	06 - Officers Meeting 09 - Cypress Sea - (3 Dives) - Sat - Pierre - 415.810.6851 <b>20 - Meeting - Sinbad's</b> 27 - CenCal Board Meeting 30 - 31 - Scuba Show - Long Beach Convention Center	03 - Officers Meeting <b>17 - Cypress Sea CANCELED</b> TBD - Abalone Closer
<b>JULY</b>	<b>AUGUST</b>	<b>SEPTEMBER</b>
01 - Officers Meeting 11 - Cypress Sea - (3 Dives) - Sat. - Pierre - 415.810.6851 <b>15 - Meeting - Sinbad's</b>	TBD - Abalone Opener 05 - Officers Meeting 09-11 - Channel Islands - Jim Vallario - 415.566.0784 13 - Kayaking Santa Cruz Island <b>19 - Meeting - Sinbad's</b>	02 - Officers Meeting 19 - <b>Three MAJOR EVENTS:</b> 1) Cypress Sea - (3 Dives) - Sat - Pierre - 415.810.6851 2) Santa Cruz Beach Clean-up 3) Int'l Talk Like A Pirate Day <b>16 - Meeting - Sinbad's</b> 30 - CenCal Board Meeting
<b>OCTOBER</b>	<b>NOVEMBER</b>	<b>DECEMBER</b>
07 - Officers Meeting <b>21 - Meeting - Sinbad's - Officer Nominations !!!</b>	04 - Officers Meeting 14 - Cypress Sea - (3 Dives) - Sat. - Pierre - 415.810.6851 <b>18 - Meeting - Sinbad's - Officer Elections !!!</b> TBD - Abalone Closer	02 - Officers Meeting 02 - CenCal Board Meeting 12 - Cypress Sea - (3 Dives) - Sat - Pierre - 415.810.6851 <b>16 - Meeting - Sinbad's - Christmas Party ???</b>

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After the dive, we took a break from scuba and free dove with Spinner Dolphins that were inside a cove. There must have been at least 50 swimming under and around us. It's quite a thrill to be among such efficient swimmers.

On our 2<sup>nd</sup> dive, we were joined by a Hawaiian Monk Seal. Monk Seals are endangered but are making a comeback. They are endemic to the Hawaiian Islands, meaning they are not found anywhere else. These guys can get up to 8 ft in length and my guess, this one was about 7 ft. Unlike other seals, Monk Seals cruise by at a slower pace and will check you out and then suddenly take off. We followed this one over an underwater cliff and looked down at least another 100 ft. and lost sight of him, when he poked his head out from a ledge and looked at us.

One of those moments in nature when both of us checked each other out.

They can be quite good divers, as they can stay underwater for up to 20 minutes and dive as deep as 600 ft. Normally, on land their heart rate is between 55 to 120 beats per minute, but underwater, they slow it down to between 4 to 15 beats a minute.

As we explored the area we noticed clumps of coral on top of the volcanic substrate with lots of colorful fish everywhere. More than 20% of the fish here are found no where else in the world.

On our last dive, we started by going through some crooked swim throughs and then under an arch at least 15 to 20 ft tall. We cruised along a canyon, spotting a pair of Spotted Eagle Rays. We went into this deep, then vertical and then horizontal tunnel and saw what is called TV Cave. It was the exit that was bright blue, framed by the top of the cave with a straight horizontal ceiling, and almost straight sides. In "our TV", was a pair of divers, and it was indeed as if we were watching them on a big screen TV.

Water temp was 78 degrees F. and divers either wore a full wet suit, no wet suit, swim trunks and T-shirt only or just a shorty suit. Everyone seemed comfortable no matter what they wore or didn't wear.

On the way back up, a Manta Ray cruised underneath us.

Three great dives and free diving among the dolphins made this a great day of diving. Below are 2 video links of what diving on Ni'ihau is like. Pictures and videos don't always do justice, but if you are curious on what diving is like off shore from this island, check out the links below the next time you are online. The 1<sup>st</sup> one is from YouTube and other is from a Backroads (now OpenRoad) TV show awhile back.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5pARJ5yUt3Q>

[http://openroad.tv/index.php?categoryid=16&p25\\_id=205#](http://openroad.tv/index.php?categoryid=16&p25_id=205#)



## Stammtisch from page 2

The *S.S. Jeremiah O'Brien* was launched at the New England Shipbuilding Corporation in South Portland, Maine in June of 1943. She entered service shortly thereafter, operated by the Grace Lines for the War Shipping Administration.

She was named after Jeremiah *O'Brien*, who on June 12, 1775, while in command of *Unity* captured *HMS Margareta* in the Battle of Machias (a town in what was then Massachusetts and now Maine) considered to be the first naval battle of the American Revolutionary War.

Under the command of Jeremiah *O'Brien*, thirty-one townsmen armed with guns, swords, axes, and pitch forks captured the British schooner in an hour-long battle after the *Margareta* had threatened to bombard the town for interfering with the shipment of goods to British troops in Boston, Massachusetts. This battle is the first time British colors were struck to those of the United States. At the time *Unity* was not formally a member of the Continental Navy.

Captain *O'Brien* continued the war as a privateer (a private warship authorized by a country's government by *letters of marque* to attack foreign shipping. An early form of outsourcing) as Captain of the *Unit* renamed the *Machias*, for two years. After the war he was appointed as the federal customs collector for the port of Machias a position he held until the day he died.

The *O'Brien* was built in 56 days, thanks to the miracles of mass production, the U.S built 2,751 of

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these ships to meet the needs of a nation in the midst of a world war. From the first, the *S.S. Patrick Henry* to the last these “ugly ducklings” served with pride. Today there are two Liberty ships still active, the *O'Brien* and the *S.S. John W. Brown* in Baltimore. The *O'Brien* is however the only unaltered liberty ship still afloat.



Here's a tidbit you might not know, 18 of the Liberty ships were named after prominent African Americans. Captain Hugh Mulzac was the first African American Merchant Marine officer to command an integrated crew in World War II. Like other Merchant Mariners he never lived long enough to attain veteran's status or receive its benefits. Mariners did not receive veteran's status until 1988.

One of the joys of wandering through the ship is running into people from every walk of life. I mentioned the ship had 925 souls aboard; they ranged from kids hanging (literally) from the fore and aft 3-inch deck guns to bored teens to a surprising number of vets from the last “good war”. Everywhere we looked someone would poke their head in and start talking about how they served on one of these ships. We were in the radio room and gentlemen started telling us about what it was like to be the radio officer on a ship just like this one.

Gerda told how her dad came to America as a prisoner of war from North Africa on a Liberty ship and returned home after the war ended on another. Down in the engine room we learned how they had filmed the scenes from the *Titanic* here. When you see those pistons stroking up and down in the movie, this is where the magic happened. If you ever find yourself in town and wandering around wondering what to do, visit ... <http://www.ssjeremiahobrien.org/> they offer day tours as well as cruises

The story of how she escaped the Ghost Fleet, the only such ship to leave the mothball fleet on her own

steam and came to be restored is a story of its own. In 1994 she began her 8<sup>th</sup> voyage, steaming through the Golden Gate, through the Panama Canal and across the Atlantic to England and France to take part in the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Operation Overlord, the Allied invasion of Normandy ... D-Day. The average age of the crew was close to 70. As one of the old vets said to his friend looking at the diorama of the invasion on the tween deck, “these kids today, they don't know what it was like ... thank God.”



If you're hungry check out some of the Recipes from a coal-fired stove: The Jeremiah O'Brien Cookbook, by Captain Walter Jaffee (recipes adjusted for electric or gas stoves). I'm partial to the zabaglione with champagne and Raspberries.

In the meantime, try and get wet once in awhile, dive safely and often.

## Spindrift

### PLASTIKI - OR WHAT DO YOU DO WITH 12,000 PLASTIC BOTTLES?



Well if you are David de Rothschild and you find yourself with some 12,000 2-liter soda bottles, you build a boat.

The goal is to sail 12,000 nautical miles across the Pacific Ocean from San Francisco to Sydney in a boat made entirely out of plastic bottles and recycled waste products. They plan to embark in April, carrying (among others) four scientists from the Scripps Research Institute who will study ocean

acidification, marine debris, overfishing, and coral bleaching.



If you're in the neighborhood of Pier 31, take a look otherwise check out ... [www.plastiki.com](http://www.plastiki.com)

### SEA SHEPHERD'S PAUL WATSON'S IMMIGRATION STATUS IN DOUBT

Australia's Federal Immigration Department is looking into the anti-whaling group leader's police and court records as it reviews his visa.



Paul Watson has attracted his share of controversy from both government officials from whaling nations such as Norway, Denmark, Iceland and particularly Japan as well as more mainstream conservationists. Dr Sidney Holt, formerly of the International Whaling Commission and a chief architect of the 1986 moratorium, has called Watson's involvement an 'absolute disaster' for the cause: 'Almost everything he has been doing has had blowback for those who want to see an end to whaling. In too many cases, playing piracy on the ocean, and creating danger for other ships, is simply not liked.'

Greenpeace, which has called Watson a violent extremist and an eco-terrorist, will no longer comment on his activities, despite the fact that Watson was one of the founders of Greenpeace in 1972 and the first officer on its early campaigns against whaling and the clubbing and skinning of baby harp seals on the Canadian ice floes.

### HALCYON EQUIPMENT RECALL

Here's what Halcyon has to say ...

Halcyon in cooperation with the US Consumer Product Safety Commission has initiated a voluntary recall of select Eclipse, Evolve, Explorer, Pioneer and CCR35 BCD's manufactured between January, 2006 and September, 2008. In addition, select Halcyon inflatable devices (Lift Bags, SMBs, DAMs, Surf Shuttles and Diver Lift rafts) may also be affected.

These BCDs or Inflatable Devices could develop excessive corrosion or rusting problems with the stainless steel Over Pressure Valve (OPV) spring, causing the spring to fail and the BCD or Inflatable Device to leak through the OPV. It is unlikely that most of these units will experience any problems since the potential defect is limited to a very small portion of the total number of OPV springs used during this time period. However, given the potentially serious implications all OPV springs should be checked to minimize risk or inconvenience to Halcyon customers. BCDs manufactured after September, 2008 are not included in this voluntary recall.

If you have gear you are worried about, see your dealer for a replacement. You can contact Halcyon at 800-425-2966 or online at ... [www.halcyon.net](http://www.halcyon.net) nother good reason to have your gear serviced every once in awhile and getting to know your local dove shop, it can save you a lot of grief.

### BOLLYWOOD TAKES THE PLUNGE AND GOES "BLUE"



Remember The Deep, with Lou Gossett Jr. Robert Shaw, Nick Nolte and one of the all time wet "T-shirt classics, Jacqueline Bisset? Or maybe you remember the more recently filmed Into the Blue with Jessica Alba and Paul Walker?

In the Bollywood version Sanjay and Aksahy are two fisherman in the Bahamas joined by Zayed an over the top guy who joins them in a treasure hunt. There's no cocaine or ampoules of morphine as in earlier versions, but there are still sharks.



*We encourage you to also support the other organizations listed below when you pay your annual dues. (Please indicate your membership options with the checkboxes below.)*

- |                          |                                                     |      |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | San Francisco Reef Divers (SFRD)                    | \$25 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Central California Council of Diving Clubs (CenCal) | 15   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Sonoma County Abalone Network (SCAN)                | 10   |

*Show your support for all three! \$50*

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Please make checks payable to “**San Francisco Reef Divers**” and mail to: Pierre Hurter, SFRD Treasurer, 515 Diamond Street, San Francisco, CA 94114



**SINCE JANUARY 1<sup>ST</sup> 1973**

**ABOUT SAN FRANCISCO REEF DIVERS (SFRD):**

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". The General Meeting is held the 3rd Wednesday of the month at Sinbad's, located at Pier 2, Embarcadero Street, SF, CA 94111. Meet at 7:00pm for socializing, drinks and food and 7:30 pm for club business and entertainment. For more information, visit <http://www.sfreefdivers.org/>.

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Reef Diver Times  
C/O Gerda Hurter  
515 Diamond Street  
San Francisco, CA 94114