

## Kwajalein Scuba Club, September 2010

### --The First Stage--

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Due to technical issues, there was no photo contest at last month's meeting. So, we will simply have two contests at this month's meeting- one for August and one for September! So remember to get those photos sent in...it's worth points!

Since we couldn't have the photo contest last month, which means there is no winning photo for this month's newsletter, your club secretary has taken the liberty of selecting a photo for this month's issue. This one was taken near Mellu Island on August 9<sup>th</sup>, 2010, and these are two of the many American WWII aircraft that were dumped into the lagoon after WWII ended.



*SBD 'Dauntless' dive bombers at '13 Planes'*

#### *Correction from last month...*

Last month's winning photo of a diver swimming with a manta ray off North Point was incorrectly credited to Marc Ray...the winning photographer was actually Marc Rivera. The editor apologizes for the error.

Speaking of the monthly photo contest, don't forget to send your photos to [photocontest@kwajaleinclub.com](mailto:photocontest@kwajaleinclub.com). If you haven't seen the rules for the contest yet, check out this link- [http://www.kwajaleinclub.com/forms/photo\\_contest.pdf](http://www.kwajaleinclub.com/forms/photo_contest.pdf).

#### *September Club Meeting*

The September meeting will take place on Wednesday the 8<sup>th</sup> at 7pm, in CRC Room 1. Don't forget the Best Dive Story of the Month contest as well...yet another opportunity to win points while telling a great story to some of your fellow divers.

Scott Johnson will be our featured speaker, and he will be giving a presentation on marine life that abounds in and around Kwajalein Atoll. In case you may not know who Scott is, here's a little about him before the meeting...

By the age of 8, Scott Johnson had had enough of New England winters and convinced his parents to move to the tropics, which they did in the summer of 1959.

Growing up on Kwaj, Scott took to the water early, snorkeling off all parts of Kwaj by the time he was 13. At times he was in the water for 6 hours or more, causing his father to come down to the north point of Kwaj to make sure he hadn't been washed away.

At the age of 15 in 1967, he became old enough to take the NAUI dive course offered quarterly by the early Kwajalein Scuba Club. Graduating from Kwaj High in the infamous class of '69, he attended the University of Hawaii, largely supporting himself as a commercial aquarium fish collector in the early 70s. He returned to Kwaj after graduating in 1973 and worked as assistant manager of the small boat marina for three years.

Leaving Kwaj again, he got a Master's degree in marine biology at the University of Hawaii while working on the ecology and population biology of subtidal nudibranch mollusks (seaslugs). He spent some time doing field research at Kure Atoll (the northernmost atoll in the world), the big island of Hawaii, and Enewetak Atoll, where he put in nearly three years on the research staff of the Mid-Pacific Research Laboratory, diving daily and taking side research trips to Bikini, Rongelap, Ujelang and Utirik Atolls. Some of the work included dives to the bottom of the thermonuclear blast craters in the Enewetak Atoll rim and dives to the deep lagoon bottom to take bottom cores for radiation layering checks.

Having not had quite enough of the tropics when the lab closed down at the end of 1983, he bided his time for a few years in Hawaii and California preparing his return to the Marshalls, which took place in 1988. Since then he and his wife Jeanette have been documenting Kwajalein's marine life with video and still cameras, frequently finding species new to the Marshalls and many even new to science and unnamed. The photo show at September's meeting will illustrate a tiny fraction of the seemingly innumerable curious Kwaj creatures.

Be sure to attend the meeting so you don't miss out on this GREAT presentation!

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*The Classifieds- more great gear from some of our club members!*

John Pennington has expanded from just mask, fins, and snorkels to the whole AquaLung line of regulators & SeaQuest BCDs too. John now carries all Suunto computers, DiveRite BCDs & lights, Apex regulators, and DeepSee lines that you've known and trusted from Ron Gamble for many years. The new Zuma & HotShot travel line is great for Kwajalein divers. Visit [www.aqualung.com](http://www.aqualung.com) or [www.diverite.com](http://www.diverite.com) to browse for your gear needs and then contact John at 5-3290. Ron Gamble (5-4211) will still be providing service/repair work on regulators & BCDs as usual.

Lisa Shier sells videos, and these are the current titles in her line-

*Fishes of Micronesia*    *Shipwrecks of the War in the Pacific*    *Denizens of the Deep*  
*Fish Babies*                      *The Best of Yap and Palau*

Lisa also sells prints of local fish and various underwater sights. Contact her at 5-2243.

### *Upcoming Events-*

September- Earth Day Clean-Up

September- One-Day Underwater Photography Shoot-Out

October- Underwater Poker Run- you'll need a compass and a slate to join this fun!

October- Underwater Pumpkin Carving Contest

### *Safety message-*

*(As we mentioned in last month's newsletter, we are re-printing a story that was originally published in the KSC newsletter back in 1974. Although the story took place 36 years ago, it is still a good but sobering reminder on the importance of safety while diving, and especially the dangers inherent in penetrating wrecks. The story is retold here almost in original form, except for some minor editorial corrections and omission of facts not relevant to the overall story. And now, Part 1...)*

On Friday, April 26, 1974, Bobby Miller Riley lost his life in the remains of a Japanese submarine 120 feet below the surface of Truk Lagoon. *(editor's note- in recent years Truk has reverted to it's original name of "Chuuk")*

Our first encounter with the 331-foot *I-169* was on the morning of April 24. The [submarine] is lying in a perfectly upright position and it is marked by a surface buoy tethered to its hull by a steel cable. The cable terminates several feet from an open hatchway on the upper surface of the hull. Forward of the cable the ship is a mass of twisted rubble that resulted from a series of depth charges that were exploded by the Japanese after the submarine was sunk. The aft third of the [submarine], reputedly consisting of the engine room and aft torpedo room, is intact with the open hatchway leading into the engine room. A rope was found attached to the cover of this hatch, and its free end was tied to the [submarine's] hull as a precautionary measure by one of our group.

Of the five Kwajalein divers who dove that morning, five entered the submarine by way of the engine room hatch. The sixth, Bob Riley, experienced some difficulty in lowering himself through the small opening, and was content to peer into the [submarine] without physically entering it.

The engine room interior, flanked on two sides by massive engines, gives the impression of being in a cylinder of somewhat more than five feet in diameter, and about thirty feet long. At its forward end, about ten feet from the open hatch, passage is

blocked by dense rubble. Swimming aft, about twenty feet from the hatch one encounters a [hatch] leading into another room- probably the aft torpedo room. The bulkhead that separates the two rooms is rather picturesque, containing a number of large valves and several gauges, all in seemingly excellent condition. Although there appears to be no problem in gaining access to the torpedo room from the engine room, at least two routes exist when swimming in the opposite direction into the engine room from the torpedo room. Selecting the wrong one, as we so tragically discovered two days later, can be fatal.

Although it wasn't known at the time of our first dive, the engine room apparently consists of two levels separated by a floor or catwalk. After some 30 years of submersion the floor gives the appearance of being a lattice network of steel beams. Perhaps at one time this structure supported a wooden floor, but if it did, the wood has long since disintegrated. Apparently the torpedo room door was designed to permit entry to that room from both engine room levels. In order to gain access to the upper level when swimming through the door from the torpedo room, one has to angle upward to clear the floor. Swimming downward and to the left takes one into an extremely small tunnel-like area under the floor in which it is impossible to turn oneself around. The interior of the ship exists in total darkness with the exception of the faint shaft of light that filters through the engine room hatchway. A diver's vision is completely restricted to the narrow field of view that is afforded by his underwater flashlight.

Despite its cramped and dark quarters, the *I-169* provides an exciting and interesting dive, especially for those with cameras. A return dive was scheduled for the morning of April 26. Given the size of the sub's compartments it was agreed that only two divers would enter it at any given time. This would give everyone an ample opportunity to enter into and photograph the interior. Dives were to be made by one buddy-pair at a time, with the first pair consisting of Bob Riley and Tom Kelleway. Bob and Tom agreed on a 20 minute dive or a 700psi tank pressure limit, whichever came first. Their plan was to enter the submarine via the open engine room hatch, swim aft and enter the torpedo room via the bulkhead door. They then planned to retrace their steps, leave via the open hatch and explore the outer hull of the submarine until their time expired or their air supply reached the agreed-upon limit.

The first half of the dive proceeded according to plan, and at about eight minutes after the start of their descent Bob and Tom were in the aft room, and about to begin retracing their steps. Tom, having led the way into the [submarine], was now following Bob toward the exit.

*(Editor's note- this concludes Part 1 of the story. The final part will be in the October 2010 newsletter.)*

**Don't forget- Wednesday, September 8<sup>th</sup> at 7pm, CRC Room 1 for the monthly meeting. We'll see you there!**