

BAROTRAUMA OF ASCENT?

A SUBJECTIVE ACCOUNT OF A PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

With borrowed equipment the diver entered the water with two companions and began to follow a sloping coral-studded terrain. He had no contents gauge or depth gauge and no buoyancy vest. His mask was leaking freely and the flash gun he carried was not only not working but was giving him small shocks. These annoyances irritated him to the extent that he was frequently clearing his mask in an unnecessarily violent manner.

Approximately 30 minutes after starting the dive he cleared his mask once more, emptying his lungs to do it and tried to inhale on an empty tank. His companions were close by but outside his reach and not looking at him.

The diver looked up, estimated he was 50 or 60 feet from the surface and decided to make a free ascent. He felt that he was in control of the situation and kept his regulator in his mouth hoping that he might get some air out of his tank as the pressure grew less and consciously tried to relax his glottis so that he could exhale.

All seemed well until he was about 20 feet deep, when his regulator seemed to explode out of his mouth and then he found himself on the surface, not knowing how he got there.

He was in extreme respiratory difficulty seemingly only able to inhale a few ccs of air, and having to shout with every exhalation. He was kicking madly to keep his mouth just above water and such was his conscious state that he clung to his camera and made no attempt to let go of his weightbelt or tank.

Luckily for him his companions came up and assisted him to shore, all this time in desperate respiratory difficulty. When he sat down in shallow water he coughed up a little clear froth and his respiration suddenly became normal, and apart from being extremely tired he felt quite well.

After lunch he went snorkeling and was diving down to 20 feet with no trouble. This story is a classic example of bad diving procedure - AN AWFUL EXAMPLE!

But the pathophysiology puzzles me. *Why did the respiratory difficulty reverse itself so suddenly? And why no after effects?*

VICTOR BRAND

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POTS NOT NATURAL HABITAT?

There is an interesting case simmering up in Newcastle at present. A man has been charged with stealing lobsters from another man's pots. As his defence he has claimed that the lobsters are the property of whoever first lifts them from the water, being still wild animals "free for the taking" until the owner lifted his pots. It was also claimed, naturally, that the State had no jurisdiction as the action occurred beyond the high water line. Legal evidence was offered to the effect that larceny could be committed on wild animals that are fit food for man. Sergeant Richards assured the Court that it is undisputed that lobsters are fit for human consumption. There is no mention of the fate of the lobsters pending the resumption of Court hearings

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