

Things that could only happen to Peck.



First Scuba Dive

When I was around 21 and working in Morgan City, I was offered a job overseas. My first assignment was on the seismic ship Gulf Rex which was going around the world on a three-year mission. I was on this ship for nine months and then transferred to a ship in the North Sea.

There was a story at every port for me and I want to tell you some of them. One of the Ports was the beautiful Island of Curacao, where we anchored next to the shore of the island. It was customary when the ship came to a port, that one person had to stay on board to make sure all the instruments and equipment were safe. This happened to be my day to stay on board while everybody else went on the island. I was bored silly, so I was looking around for something to do.

We had scientists on board the ship who would put on their scuba diving gear and go down and bring back rocks and seaweed and whatever from the bottom of the ocean. The divers told me the grand plan was that we would live off of the products of the sea one day. The water there was super clear and you could see forever. I had never been scuba diving but I figured it can't be that hard. I was also a very good swimmer.

I went down to where all the diving gear was stored, and I tried breathing with one of the oxygen tanks. It seemed pretty easy to me, and I had no trouble breathing with the diving mask on. I put on the tank, goggles and fins and duck-walked to the edge of the ship where we had a rope ladder going down into the water. I had to take the fins off because they did not work on the ladder but was able to put them back on while holding on the ladder when I got in the water.

It was easy swimming around underwater and it was beautiful. The divers told me about the black spiny creatures on the bottom. They warned that if you touch them, the needles would stay in your foot and it would hurt like crazy. So, I was a little paranoid about avoiding them. As I was swimming around, my goggles started to fog up and gradually I could not see anything, not even my hand in front of the mask. It was then that I decided it was time to stop diving, and I proceeded to go up to the surface, but I still couldn't see anything because of the fogged goggles.

Finally, I bumped my head on the bottom of the ship! It hurt, but I was relieved that I found the boat. I kept crawling along the bottom thinking that, "I've got to come out of this somewhere." I finally ended up at the ship's propeller and found my way to the ladder to climb on board. I carefully dried off all of the diving equipment to make sure that no one would know that I was diving. Later, when we left the island I asked one of the real divers if their goggles ever fogged up and what do they do about it. He explained the methods of splashing water on the goggles and also that you can blow air into the goggles and that will clear them up. Now they tell me!

That was my first diving experience and it scared the hell out of me.