



# ESTEC SWIMMING & SUB-AQUA CLUB

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**September 2006 Newsletter**

*Second Edition*



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**Martin de Boer**

1966 - 2006



Martin, not long ago, enjoying a social water-ski event.

## Editorial

The fact that our newsletter is issued quarterly makes for quite an easy life for any editor - or so you would think!. It allows time to collect story items and chase material certainly. However, problems with such a time span do exist. Such as, anything newsworthy arriving soon after the previous publication becomes rather dated during the ensuing three months. Also, contributors (including your editor) tend to get a bit blasé regarding deadlines.

However, the stuff from Con and Maria out in Guatemala, part email to everyone, part exclusive to this editor, makes for an interesting read. See 'Con and Maria (still) In Guatemala'.

The last item in our newsletter is something that Kevin Bennett stumbled on (we know not from where) which is highly amusing but, unfortunately, also highlights a well known issue. See 'Les espècies més perilloses del Mediterrani' on our last page.

Phil

By now Essac members will have learned of the passing of a good friend Martin de Boer on 13 August 2006.

An active committee representative for a long time, up to our last AGM in fact, Martin never really let on to fellow members and colleagues as to how serious a medical condition his was. A quiet, pleasant and thoughtful man always, Martin was tragically allowed so little time to fight the illness.

Our heartfelt condolences remain with Elena and Martin's family.

## Con and Maria (still) in Guatemala

We left Antigua at 4a.m. on Friday morning and arrived at Copan Ruins just over the border in Honduras about 11a.m. We then changed bus and were driven to Ceiba ; arrived there about 5p.m. same evening. We stayed overnight and carried on to Utila which had to be reached by ferry lasting an hour long. Utila is five klms. long which boasts of seventeen different varieties of mango. Nobody buys a mango there as they drop at your feet and are ready to eat!

Next morning we were transported by the dive boat of Captain Morgan to a little island called Jewel Cay which is 2k long with a population of five hundred. Our little dive hotel was at the edge of this small island, run by a German, Norwegian, American and young English couple training to be dive instructors. If ever I saw a paradise island this is it! We paid \$5 a night to stay with them as we were diving with them. We were the only dive boat in the whole area every day with six of us on board. We did a wreck dive on the last day with four of us on board. The colour of the corals and the formations were absolutely fantastic. It is the second biggest reef in the world next to the Great Barrier Reef. We could even snorkel across to all the little islands in the afternoons as it was so safe. I have never had such private diving without having to climb over lots of boats with our kit! The water temp. under was 28d. and 38d. over. We will have to renew our visas again in Sept.. We would like to fly to Cuba, Panama or Belize but to be quite honest, we would prefer to go back to that perfect diving island.

**Con and I went to Panama city** last week at a cost of \$500 each ticket - flights in North and South America are not as cheap as they are in Europe. It was only a two and a half hour flight.

The old part of the city is beautiful very New Orleans looking buildings, but the new part is being destroyed by the North Americans coming in and building the usual square glass boxes - atmosphere and featureless. There is a vast difference in the poverty of Panama and Guatemala and it is very evident as you walk around. Panama is very noticeable straight away by the absence of security guards walking around with guns, as they do in Guatemala. Mind you I don't think one of the guards know how to use the gun they carry, they are all so friendly.

We went to see the famous Panama Canal which is fifty miles long. It cuts through a mountain between the Caribbean and the Pacific and took ten years to engineer. Each big oil carrier or liner has to pay \$100,000 per trip

but, apparently, it saves them about a million dollars in time and money. The locks are very impressive when a big carrier is going through.

We also wanted to spend a few days on the islands off the mainland where the indigenous people live and the women still dress as from hundreds of years ago but unfortunately it wasn't possible at this time. We were just about the only tourists in Panama. For some reason it doesn't seem to be a tourist attraction kind of country. We were delighted anyway.

I was attacked by three men in one area in the afternoon, who tried to take my bag and did not succeed. Con came in "like a roaring Lion" and sent them running. Boy this man surprises me more and more. The police seemed to come out of nowhere on big bikes then a police car . We were taken back to the hotel in the car and another car full of police were waiting for us at the hotel. I was certainly impressed by the way they look after their tourists! I can't see us getting that kind of attention in Europe.

**Back here again in Guatemala** and we are relieved of our duties as volunteer coordinators as we are going into the jobs we both came for in the first place. Con is finally about to start his metalwork shop in the new building. The teacher is hired which Con is paying for up to one year. The work benches are being put in place this week and then everything is ready to go ahead. I am starting to manage a big tract of land bought by the project . I am going to be given my own little truck to drive out there as it is a bit isolated. It is being cleared at the moment as it is full of bamboo and scrub etc. The idea is that we pipe in water which is 500 metres away and the road is full of potholes and quite impossible in the rainy season, but the overall panorama is magnificent.

When we manage to build a latrine and a cabin the idea is to bring the children out there to have fresh air from the dump and for the mothers to grow fresh vegetables but, all in good time. In the meantime we have a small version of the same thing at the Casa Hogar where the problem children live to see how well everything takes and how many mothers are interested. We have the most fantastic veg, here in the market and so fresh compared to ours in Europe.

**Con has finally started** in his nice new building in the city. He has hired a teacher who will teach the children after Con leaves. Con is very pleased with him even though he is very young. Con will pay his salary (out of funds) for a year and then the project will take over.

They cut their first piece of metal

yesterday with the new metal cutter and apparently they were like two excited children (Con and the teacher). He came home exhausted - retired from work is killing him!

I have also started my new project. We cleared a sizeable amount of land at the back of one of the houses in San Pedro just outside of Antigua where we live having I spent a whole week digging and turning over the soil. Then a truckload of soil arrived to be put on top. I crawled home every night exhausted from the heat and stinking, no car to step into, have to wait for the chicken-bus and hope everyone doesn't run out the back door from my stink. Would then cook a three course meal for ourselves so ladies don't ever tell me again it's not possible to cook well even after a hard day's work. It's a little easier now as I have started to plant veg with the children and mothers.

The reason we started on the small plot of land is because we don't have any funds for the big tract of land we bought right now. We hope to raise some money for that next year. Con and I do the shopping together each Saturday with bags on our backs. We have a fantastic market a couple of blocks away and we are even eating veg and fruits we have never seen or eaten before. It is possible to live like a king here as the food is so cheap and non-processed eggs taste like eggs and the cream is a must to stay in Guatemala for.

Antigua itself used to be the capital before the big earthquake. It is a small town of old Spanish one-storied buildings and it is very beautiful. Most people don't want to go home when they are here for six months or so. It has the same temperate climate all year round and the people are so gentle and friendly and hospitable. So to finish, we are giving a party this weekend. Friday is the year of the child and lots of things are being prepared. In fact it's a country of celebrations, every week is party time.

See you all after Nov. 9th.

Maria

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### **Rita and Jörg Marry**

A very happy event which happened in our club this summer was the wedding of Rita Kremer to Jörg Langen.

It took place on a very hot day and after our usual Saturday morning pool session; we set off to Leiden for Rita and Jörg's wedding.

Rita looked stunning and Jörg quite dashing as the attached photograph will show of a very elegant couple.



With the backdrop of the restaurant gardens set on the rivers edge it made indeed a perfect location for a wedding party. The food was beautiful and I hope that the bride and groom actually managed to eat some too as they moved around and socialized with their friends and families.

There was the usual toasting of bride and groom and speeches but the magician won the hearts of all the guests there.

Also, a log sawn in two, a German tradition, was carried out.

The of four us thoroughly enjoyed being part of this very happy event and would like to wish Rita and Jörg all happiness for their future together.

Myra, John, Chantal and Tiree

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### **Just An Ordinary Dive Weekend**

Normally there is nothing special to report on our weekly club diving trips, but this was not the case for one of the weekends that I had the pleasure of marshalling!

The dive site was Oostsvoornsemeer (Stormvogel) which is a very popular site for divers and their families as it offers good facilities for, easy access to the water, interesting things to look at (underwater) a couple of nice restaurants, a safe sandy beach for the kids to play on and of course the facility to refill your cylinder.

We have dived this site on many occasions and was expecting to report back to Mario (our DO) the usual short report on who dived with whom and who completed what

exercise. This time however included some unexpected excitement - if that is the correct description for it.

We had arrived on site at around 9:30 (after an early start for a Sunday) with the plan to perform two or three sets of dives that day as the weather was dry, hot and sunny. I split the party up into their allocated student/diving groups and then assigned instructors where appropriate. Just as the first group of our divers were about to enter the water, under the guidance of Göran, a commotion started some 200m from shore. Divers were waving and shouting but due to the distance the message was unclear. It took what seemed like minutes for the message to be relayed to the shore and when it did there was uncertainty regarding the problem.



The gist of it was that two divers had surfaced, close to the 25m buoy in a bit of a panic having become separated from their buddy. A slight variation of this had the missing buddy trapped at 24m under the actual platform. ( It would later be confirmed that they were diving as a three-some on a training dive and that the third and missing diver, was the instructor). Anyway, someone went off to summon the rescue services while an adhoc group of divers jumped into the water and headed out (on the surface) to the 25m buoy to see what assistance they could give. Among this group was Göran, the only instructor from our club who was at that point fully kitted up and in the water. He of course first made sure that his students, knew that they were not to follow him. With Göran and some other divers providing surface cover a couple of divers descended to the 24m platform in order to conduct a search for the missing or trapped diver.

Probably around that time, and what must have been only about ten minutes after the initial call for help, the first elements of the Police, Fire and Ambulance services arrived. The arrival of these units were shortly

afterwards followed by the arrival of a rescue helicopter and a dedicated diving unit of the fire service.



Despite the seriousness of the situation, it was interesting to see the faces of divers, who had entered the water before the incident had happened, as they surfaced to be greeted by members of the police, fire and ambulance services. All further diving was of course suspended, as the police cleared the growing number of spectators away from the waters edge.

After a further 10 - 15 minutes I was informed by a police officer that the missing diver had just surfaced, back at the jetty! It would seem that having got separated from his buddies he continued his dive alone! He was therefore oblivious to the frantic scenes on the surface, the presence of the rescue services and to the state of shock his two buddies were now in. By then they had been brought ashore and were being administered oxygen by the ambulance teams.

It was another hour before the situation at the dive site returned to normal and the first divers began to enter the water.

Fortunately there were no serious repercussions on the day but the whole exercise helped reinforce in both students and instructors the importance of establishing a proper dive plan, including reminding your fellow divers the correct action to take when you get separated from your dive buddy(ies).

As a result of all this, the first club dive of the day started roughly 1hr 30 min later than planned but I am pleased to report that nothing out of the ordinary occurred during our dive.

John

## Swimming Matters

Over the summer various people have raised different but quite valid points with me about how we utilize our swimming space in the pools. They came from a mix of swimming and new committee members. What I would like is as much feed back from you all, on what you as members, actually think and want. These will be passed onto the committee for a full discussion and if there are any brilliant ideas out there we could well try them on a trial basis. Just because we have done something one way for a long time doesn't mean we can't change it.

For the Saturday and Sunday pools, please forward your ideas via e-mail ([myra@albaspace.nl](mailto:myra@albaspace.nl)) on how YOU think the pools could be divided inside the allotted swimming time. Take into account that we only have 45 minutes in the Saturday pool but an hour in the Sunday pool to swim.

Another swimming matter is that our Sunday pool, "De Schelft" is open this Sunday 1st October until the end of April. The time is as usual from 3.45 to 4.45. I know that the time goes quickly but could I please remind everyone that we must leave on time as they will bill us if we keep staying later.

Enjoy your swimming everyone and I look forward to receiving lots of e-mails.

Myra

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## Maldives

It was finally here. The day I had been waiting for. The day we travelled to the Maldives. Our summer holiday and Dad's 50<sup>th</sup> birthday present.

Our first flight of our long journey was from Amsterdam to Frankfurt, then the nine hour flight from Frankfurt to Doha (capital of Qatar). It went very quickly with all the films we watched, but unfortunately no sleeping was done. In the morning we had a couple of hours in Doha airport then we took a relatively small plane to Malé (capital of the Maldives). This was a four hour flight where Chantal and I stretched out across some empty chairs and went to sleep.

When we flew over the mass of small islands making up the Maldives we got the most gorgeous views of white sand, blue water and green palm trees. However we found that Male and the airport were not so lush and attractive looking. We also arrived to find that most of our luggage had been left in Frankfurt. Well let's just say that after a lot of the hassle our luggage arrived at midnight the next day.

We were picked up from our hotel and

taken by taxi to the harbour. We met there several of the crew from our dhoni (converted fishing boat that is used to dive off, store equipment and fill the tanks). We also met another couple (Spanish) that were going to be on the boat with us. They were having the same problem we had, their luggage had not arrived. Luckily we had planned an extra day before getting on the boat, however they had not. So we then visited one of the many dive shops on the island to rent some equipment for them. Everything went well and the dhoni took us to our boat. As we neared the lagoon there were loads of liveaboards moored there. I kept trying to rack my brains for the picture of ours from the internet. However when we neared it, there was no need to because it stood out. It was gorgeous. There are no words to describe how pretty it was with the sun shining and the light reflecting off the water. I always thought that they used a wide angle lens on the cameras and digitally altered the pictures to make the boat look bigger and better. But if anything I felt the pictures did not do it justice. It was called the Stingray and owned by an Austrian group.

Once on the boat we met everyone else, the other guests and the rest of the crew. There were eight, en suite, double cabins. The interior of the boat consisted of fantastic polished wood finishing's with a lovely 75sqm sun deck. It couldn't have been better. We all then sat down for lunch in the parlour area where we had our first of many delicious meals. The food was just spectacular. We had three chefs, one Indian, one Sri Lankan and one Maldivian.

We were all eager to have our test dive and get in the water. We were each given a box, a tank and an allocated spot on the dhoni. We all kitted up and headed to the dive site. Each dive site was around 10 minutes away from where the boat was tied up. Our guide was Hardy and our group consisted of Amy and Howe, Eva, Quinni and us. We all jumped off the dhoni and checked our buoyancy. Hardy then asked us each to clear our masks, which was not the nicest of things to do in salt water and on your first dive however it went fine. The first dive was a nice relaxing one where there was a lot of fish life however I was slightly shocked not to find a lot of bright coral life. I later learned this was due to the after effects of El Niño and coral bleaching 10 years ago and the reefs are only now recovering. Though there was a large variety of large fish around and on the reefs.

The next day we were up early at 6.00 for a 6.30 briefing however it was more like 6.45. We quickly worked out that Maldivian

people are very relaxed about time. We then had a dive before breakfast which was very enjoyable and it was nice to be greeted with a friendly smile and some coconut from our dhoni crew after each dive. After the dive we would go back for a shower and a lovely breakfast prepared by our chefs. We all then headed up to the sundeck for a siesta and a little sunbathing.



My shot of a Manta Ray

One day as I was only dozing it was easy for me to spring to my feet when the word dolphin was shouted by Howe. And true enough there were several dorsal fins in the water quite far behind the boat. The whole boat was now up on their feet watching. However it seemed as if we had lost them but then soon enough they were spotted at the bow of the boat. So we all rushed to watch a gorgeous display of a large pod of all sizes glide and jump through the water competing with the boat. It was a spectacular sight to see these wild but beautiful animals so close. I have always loved dolphins but had only encountered them in sea life centres and I could not get over the huge difference between those in a centre and the free ones.

The highlights of the week were snorkelling up close with a young whale shark (4 to 5 metres long) and spending an hour in the water with seven mantas so close to us that they were in stroking distance. They were feeding in the bay around the boat and they were totally unconcerned about us.

During the weeks diving some of the things we saw were, spotted eagle rays, white tipped reef sharks, black tipped reef, grey reef sharks, turtles, scorpion fish, lion fish, and a lot of clown fish (Nemos!), huge parrot fish, angel fish, napoleon wrasse, spotted burr fish and many more exotic fish, like for example the leaf fish. We also really enjoyed a trip to a local island where there was beautiful white sand and palm trees. We all bought

Maldivian sarongs. Well the ladies in the group did!



My shot of a Whale Shark

On the Thursday evening we had a sort of bonte avond (end of trip party) where the crew played the drums and sang traditional Maldivian songs and we all danced well into the late hours of the evening. The guests including myself had an attempt at the drumming however I don't think we were very good. But it was a good laugh.

The holidays end came extremely quickly, too quickly, and all the wonderful things I had experienced that week. Not only did I feel sad that we would have to go back to normal everyday things but I hated the fact that it would most likely be the last time I saw the boat, the people and everything that made the holiday so special. I guess you only fully understand when a holiday has been really good is when you feel like that at the end of it.

It is a shame that Dad only turns 50 once!

*Tiree*

## Our Committee

Our 2006/2007 elected committee is:

Chairman	Göran Pilbratt
ESSAC Secretary	Wim van Leeuwen
ESSAC Treasurer	Wim van Leeuwen
BSAC Secretary	Chantal Macleod-Nolan
Diving Officer	Mario Monaldi
Training Officer	Vacant
Snorkelling Officer	Wim van Leeuwen
Equipment Officer	Vacant
Expeditions Officer	Valerie Le Gallou
Swimming Officer	Myra Macleod-Nolan
Social Secretary(s)	Rita Kremer Wil Hedley

The committee minutes and reports can be viewed on our website under the 'Our Committee' icon.

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## Editorial Footnote

*We try to produce a newsletter each March, June, September and December. Contributions need to reach the editor by the end of each preceding month.*

*Updated versions of the newsletter, though automatically posted on our website, will not necessarily be distributed by e-mail. Such updates, following on from the first edition, may contain for example, corrections and/or information previously unavailable or overlooked.*

*Contributions to a newsletter should be addressed to the editor, preferably by e-mail, and any attachments in a file format other than PDF.*

*Non-English text is welcome but must be thoroughly checked by the sender because grammar, punctuation and spelling errors will be published 'as received' - by this editor!*

# LES ESPÈCIES MÉS PERILLOSES DEL MEDITERRANI



La brutícia fóra de lloc amenaça el mar.