

SPUMS 1983 SCIENTIFIC MEETINGTHE WAIGANI EXPRESS

Ian Lockley

This film is about the salvage of the Waigani Express. The Waigani Express is a container ship, German owned, German officered, and Papua New Guinea-national crewed. She was on a run from Australia to Port Moresby, when they forgot to turn the corner, literally, and took up their selection on the reef at full speed, within sight of a lighthouse. A lot of people have asked how do accidents like this occur? It was quite simple. The officer of the watch was being entertained by the rather gorgeous blonde German radio officer. The lookout, who came from the village which was just beside the lighthouse, was not prepared to go and disturb the First Officer, because he was not quite sure what they were up to. This accident happened on the fourth of July 1981. It certainly was not Independence Day for the crew of that ship. They spend the next four weeks working hard with myself and our team battling, not only the elements, but the German owner, who was an ex-U-boat commander. If anybody was difficult to work with, he took the cake. I think the film shows some of this.

The camera man, Lynton Diggle from New Zealand, did an excellent job. He was able to get his camera into some spots where it was not always appreciated, sometimes under threat of the film being destroyed. But we did persevere and asked him to persevere, because the film was taken primarily for arbitration. The major part of our reward and remuneration for salvage is decided by an arbitrator appointed by the Committee of Lloyds of London. The more we can show him exactly what happened, the easier his job is.

This U-boat commander decided to take it one step further after we re-floated the ship. He transferred the ship from one group of owners to another, then managed to convince Lloyds that it had been very badly damaged and received a settlement for repairs. Then he promptly went to another shipbuilder, who gave him a quote that was about one third of the first one. We were able, with some of the evidence which was on the film, to typify the sort of man he was and prove that this had happened, and have our salvage value increased. This of course, hopefully, increases our reward. Even though this operation took place some two years ago, we have still not been paid for it. This gives you some idea of just how long the process of arbitration can be.

Those interested in seeing this excellent film should contact:

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DECOMPRESSION SICKNESS
THREE CASE REPORTS FROM THE
CARIBBEAN

Grahame Barry

When we first start off doing diving medicine, we think we can cure all people who have the bends, air embolism and so on. But the more conferences we attend the more we are regaled with horrendous stories of totally failed treatments and people ending up crippled. So to start this conference on a happy note I am presenting two marvellous cases of 100% success. One resulted from the right people doing the right thing in the right place at the right time and the other was probably due to sheer good luck, but nevertheless had a very successful outcome. Neither of these cases is mine, mine is the third case, with the bad result.

The first two cases were dealt with in Trinidad, by a group which I worked with. I think they are fascinating cases, not that they raise any great problems, but show that if one does do the right think, one can do some good.

CASE ONE

In 1976, an inexperienced diver, who was working for a commercial diving company, made a working dive to 70 feet of sea water (fsw). Every now and then horrendous things happen, and these things started to happen in this case. There was a foul up in his air line after 90 minutes at depth. Furthermore he could not get the safety bottle free from his down line. Also, just to make things a little more complicated, he could not get himself free from his harness. His co-worker was on the ball and they buddy breathed from 70 feet to 40 feet, at which time the buddy's air ran out. So the buddy made for the surface, leaving the patient airless and tied up on the down line.

The buddy reached the surface and gave the news to the diving superintendent. The superintendent, who was also on the ball, put on scuba gear and went down. He found the patient at 40 feet still tied to his lines and unconscious. He brought him to the surface, where CPR was at once begun. The patient, on reaching the surface was reported as having no pulse and no respiration. However, within one minute of starting CPR the pulse returned. Two or three minutes after surfacing, the patient was trying to breathe and then vomited. Within five minutes, the patient was put into the recompression chamber (this was a commercial diving operation, so they had a chamber on site) and taken to 10 feet of sea water for thirty minutes.

By then he was conscious and vomiting, his pulse was stronger and becoming regular. After thirty minutes at 10 feet he was taken out of the chamber and transported by launch and ambulance to a hospital, breathing oxygen by mask all the time.