

By Stan Waterman

Many dive masters aspire to some prominence or development in their profession that enable them to progress beyond being just dive masters. Perhaps the ultimate aspiration might be to become the admiral of a great live-aboard dive boat fleet. I doubt that Wayne Hasson's hopes stretched that far when I first met him. He was the dive master at a small resort on Grand Cayman, Casa Bertmar. I was shooting and producing a video for Cayman Airways. Peter Benchley and his family were my celebrity stars. Wayne had discovered the giant green moray eel, Waldo, in the reef in front of Casa Bertmar. He had broken through the wall of fear through which divers viewed the morays and hand-fed and stroked the docile monster like an old friend. A picture of Waldo being caressed was on the cover of *SKIN DIVER*, many years past. That's what led me to Wayne for a splendid photo op. That was also the start of a long and rewarding friendship.

Enterprise, energy, business acumen and a shrewd awareness of what divers wanted and needed equipped Wayne for his move ahead. He became a partner in the development of the first diver-friendly live-aboard dive boat, the Cayman Aggressor. The rest is history.

Wayne's way with marine animals has provided some of the most appealing scenes I have captured on film and video over the years. He is willing to attempt a contact with most marine animals we would not attempt to be familiar with. He has a gentle touch and a fearless approach. The animals seem to sense that. However a natural penchant for making friends with new animals encountered on reefs around the world led to a shocking experience one time. This is what happened:

I was in the harbor at Grand Cayman, part of a production film team on a large yacht. I called Wayne on the radio for the news of the day. He was just returning from a dive with the Cayman Aggressor and had encountered a strange ray, one he had not seen before. As he recounted the experience he approached the animal to stroke its back gently and make friends. The next thing he knew he was on his own back on the sand some distance away, still numb from the shock. It was, of course, an electric ray, a real anomaly in Cayman waters. Wayne decided to extend his hand in friendship again. For his trouble he was again jolted, but not as potently as the first time, he said. He explained that he decided to give the animal a third try, just to find out how much juice it might have in its batteries. As it turned out, the batteries had run down. The animal allowed itself to be stroked. It would be anthropomorphic to suggest that a bond of friendship had been achieved. But Wayne had made a new acquaintance and done something no other person I know would have attempted after the first blast.

There are many more stories about Wayne. They will continue to unfold as long as he dives in the sea that is his world and his love. I have been hosting tours on Aggressors all over the world as the fleet has grown. I owe much to the enterprise of the one-time resort dive master who reached beyond his horizons and whose grasp has matched his reach.