

# Live is full of changes and new beginnings!

This truth was brought home to me rather forcefully after a recent medical check-up, which indicated that having a heart and lifelong passion for sharks does guarantee the heart to tick smoothly forever. I am feeling well, am up and about but was advised to relax, exercise regularly and not too strenuously but sadly also to stop diving altogether!

This will effectively end the exciting diving chapter in my life. Although Jane and I had intended to retire from our guided tour operations during 2008, this earlier, even if only by a few months, enforced retirement came as a bit of a shock to both of us. However, it opens great opportunities for us to pursue our many other joint interests, in particular the outdoors, wildlife and shark protection at a more intense yet relaxed pace.

With great thanks we look back at an exciting diving and tour-operational career where we made many, many good and personal friends from the world over and managed to impart and share our passion for sharks, the marine environment, wildlife and the people and challenges of Africa.

Where it concerned shark protection, I, ever the “diplomat”, also made a good many enemies, some becoming good friends, now sharing our passion; others still have to see the light and the need for urgent and rigorous shark protection worldwide to prevent a major marine ecological disaster!

*While we will discontinue our own tours and dive guiding with immediate effect, we will gladly assist our many loyal friends and ex-clients (same thing!) to arrange a special positive touring, diving and shark experience in Southern Africa. On request we will recommend suitable partners and operators that share the same passion as we do for guests, service, sharks and the environment.*

This enforced change is also an opportunity to reflect on my shark diving experiences spanning more than 2 decades:

- *Some 25 years ago in 1981 I was privileged to lead the first CHARTERED dive to the Aliwal Shoal and likewise the Protea Banks in 1991.*
- Having been a Sergeant Police Diver with my own section for 8-years added experience and dives. By now these have accumulated to 4083 logged dives or 3964hrs 10 minutes underwater, plus, less precisely, an additional 500 unlogged dives. Sharks and I were able to observe each other at close quarters during 900 hours of these dives.
- In this period I introduced some 7000 divers to sharks. Most converted to ardent shark enthusiasts by the experience after some initial reservations!

*Following and sharing my passion was recognised by three international awards and a KwaZulu Natal conservation award in recognition of my environmental, marine pipeline clean-up and shark conservation efforts and contribution to the establishment of the Aliwal-Shoal Marine Protected Area.*

Sharkproject, an international initiative for the protection of and research into sharks made me an honorary member and their Shark Ambassador to South Africa. This association with an organisation and friends sharing my passion and commitment to shark protection worldwide is very rewarding and I will continue to support this cause with undiminished enthusiasm.

Some highlights in my diving career:

- ❑ NAUI and SSI Instructor with Platinum Pro 5000 status and Department of Tourism Scientific Diver.
- ❑ South Africa's first underwater marine and shark diving Guide and the first trainer and assessor for Underwater Marine and Shark Diving Guides.
- ❑ Appointed as an NGO for Coastwatch, the WESSA marine lobby committee and SATSA for marine ecotourism.
- ❑ I serve on various environmental watchdog forums and committees, such as the Provincial Coastal Committee, for coastal and marine issues and the SAICCOR LAF and UIC LAF for marine effluent pipe issues.

Although now "beached" on medical advice, I intend to continue to follow my passion of shark, marine and environmental issues as an NGO.

*Not being able to continue my underwater shark behaviour observations is saddening but should give me plenty of time to finish my book of observed shark behaviour gathered over the last 26-years and during the over 900-hours logged with shark only, thus sharing my experience with a much wider audience, so watch the press! 😊*

*Having spent years of time and experience to be accredited as South Africa's first trainer and assessor for Underwater Marine and Shark Diving Guides, shark enthusiasts have not seen the last of me!*

*I will continue to personally offer my exciting and informative **Underwater Marine and Shark Diving Guide Training and Assessment Courses** on a regular basis. The associated underwater work will be done in conjunction with qualified underwater marine and shark diving guides that meet my requirements.*

*With these courses and the awareness generated therewith, I hope contribute to:*

- *A reversal of the damage done by inconsiderate cowboy divers and operators that have effectively chased the sharks from the Aliwal Shoal, depriving many future divers of a mind blowing and enlightening shark experience.*
- *Persuading the Recreational Diving Industry of having a representative body for Dive Charter Boat Operators and Dive Resorts and for them to employ accredited Underwater Guides to comply with the South African 2<sup>nd</sup> Tourism Act for the benefit of their clients and the marine environment.*

*Well-qualified Shark Underwater Guiding professional will contribute significantly to a safe, sustainable, INFORMED, interactive experience with marine flora, fauna and sharks for the sustained benefit and enjoyment of the diving industry, clients and the environment.*

*See you soon on one of these courses, well worth it even if you only want to use this knowledge for your increase personal enjoyment and understanding of sharks!*

*Cheers for now!*



Andrew C. R. Cobb 21/11/07

**THETA Trainer: #COB001C**

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Provider AQN: [www.aqn.za.org](http://www.aqn.za.org)

1. SATSA – NGO - Coastwatch NGO

## Wedding

Since coming back from Uk, Vancouver Island and Bahrain in May has been committed to a couple of shark diving courses and tour and support to Jane in preparing for our eldest daughters wedding on the 6<sup>th</sup> of October. This also meant enlarging two rooms as decent sized bedrooms and convert Jane's office into a bedroom as we were blessed with family and relatives coming to stay from UK, Kenya Bahrain and Dubai. Jane was really stressed as the wedding was at Didima in the Drakensburgs Vanessa and her fiancée' in Bahrain and we live in the Southern suburb of Durban? Vanessa is a Landscape Consultant and Barend Vermeulen is a Project Manager and both working in Bahrain.



Hendrik/Barend's Dad –Barend – Vanessa – Cecilia/Barend's Mum



My Youngest Daughter Bernadette – My Son Christopher & Vanessa



Jane

Barend

Vanessa

Andy



**Andy & Christopher**



**Roland & Beulah Mauz – Andrew**



**Bride & Setting**



**Bernadette & Jane**



**Family at Winklespruit**



**Family in Bush Camp**



**4 meter Python**



**Last day with Sarah and offer at Itala.**

Amazing experience, with remaining family at Itala Ranch.

Took photo one and a half meters away. Someone's camera flash disturbed it as it doubled back to where it had come from.



**So sensitive**



**We watched 3-million Barn swallows, otherwise European swallows come to rest. All escaping the European Weather. Major issue in SA as they roost, where the new 2010 Airport is sighted!**



**Barend and Vanessa's thank you for arranging their wedding. #-nights in Toad Tree Lodge. Our nightly Bush Baby visitor. The sliced bananas were permitted and in the rule book!**



## GUIDING

### UNDERWATER MARINE AND SHARK DIVING

In March 2007, I trained and assessed Rolf Collins of Aikane Ocean Marine & Shark Diving Tours and will be complying with the SA Tourism Amendment Act. All had a three day course before the assessment

## **Guides**

### **Underwater Marine & Shark Diving**

(Comply with the 2nd Tourism Amendment act)

**Train and be assessed**

- Unit standards: TG01 #8531, TG02 #8532, TG03 #8533 Tourist Guide
- Unit standards: TG38 #12126 the Generics of an Underwater Marine & Shark Diving Guide

**Andrew C. R. Cobb**

**THETA accredited trainer and Assessor**

**Assessor #613/A/00352/2005**

**My PROVIDER: Adventure Qualifications Network. [www.aqn.za.org](http://www.aqn.za.org)**



#### **Contact**

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### Underwater Marine and Shark Diving Guides 16/07 to 22/07/2007

**July the 16<sup>th</sup> Monday 2007**, for three days is an underwater marine and shark diving course and the next three days to being assessed as an underwater marine and shark diving, finishing on **Sunday the 22<sup>nd</sup> 2007**. The whole week is long hours a very intensive. The statutory level one site guide at level one has by SAQA been raised to level 4.

**The whole process starts with registering with my Provider R400.** The registration form can be sent digitally. Once registered and I have your student number, I will send via Email, the student work book and assignment. The assignment is a major project and needs time to research and complete. For underwater Marine and shark diving guides the statutory level one site guide has been pushed up to level four by SAQA. Time is also needed to collect all your Records of Prior learning and submit certified copies, together with:

- Certified copy of your I/D or legitimacy of being in SA.
- If you want a language option to your guide recognition, a verified copy of a letter endorsing compliance from the appropriate Embassy.
- Maybe you are already a level one site guide still requires the assignment to be completed and you will be assessed at level four.
- The course and assessment is an intensive week with long hours. To have done your assignment, in which logbook are you daily diary entry of events and changes before hand? Further include an accident (imaginary) in your assignment, do your diary entry and write the accident report. It saves time which you do not have in the week. Completing your assignment will be a distinct advantage to complete your assessment
- Four passport size photos.
- Certified copy of your education levels.
- Certified copy of your in date Dive Master or Instructor status.
- Certified copy of your PDP if you are a driver guide.

- ❑ Certified copy of your Public indemnity insurance.
- ❑ Certified copy of your in date 1<sup>st</sup> aid and CPR.

I am not marketing the fact that I am a Trainer and Assessor for Underwater Marine and or Shark Diving Guides but by reading this and complying with SA law will save you a R10000 fine if you operate a dive resort or dive charter boat business in SA. My Provider is AQN see [www.aqn.co.za](http://www.aqn.co.za) for details and verification.

## **SHARK College**

### **Shark College**

I have combined my Advanced Shark Course, Shark Diving Guide knowledge to run as Shark College Courses



The presentation is using Power Point and inclusive of video clips on behaviour.

**Andrew and Jane Cobb.**  
November 2007