

Lost in space

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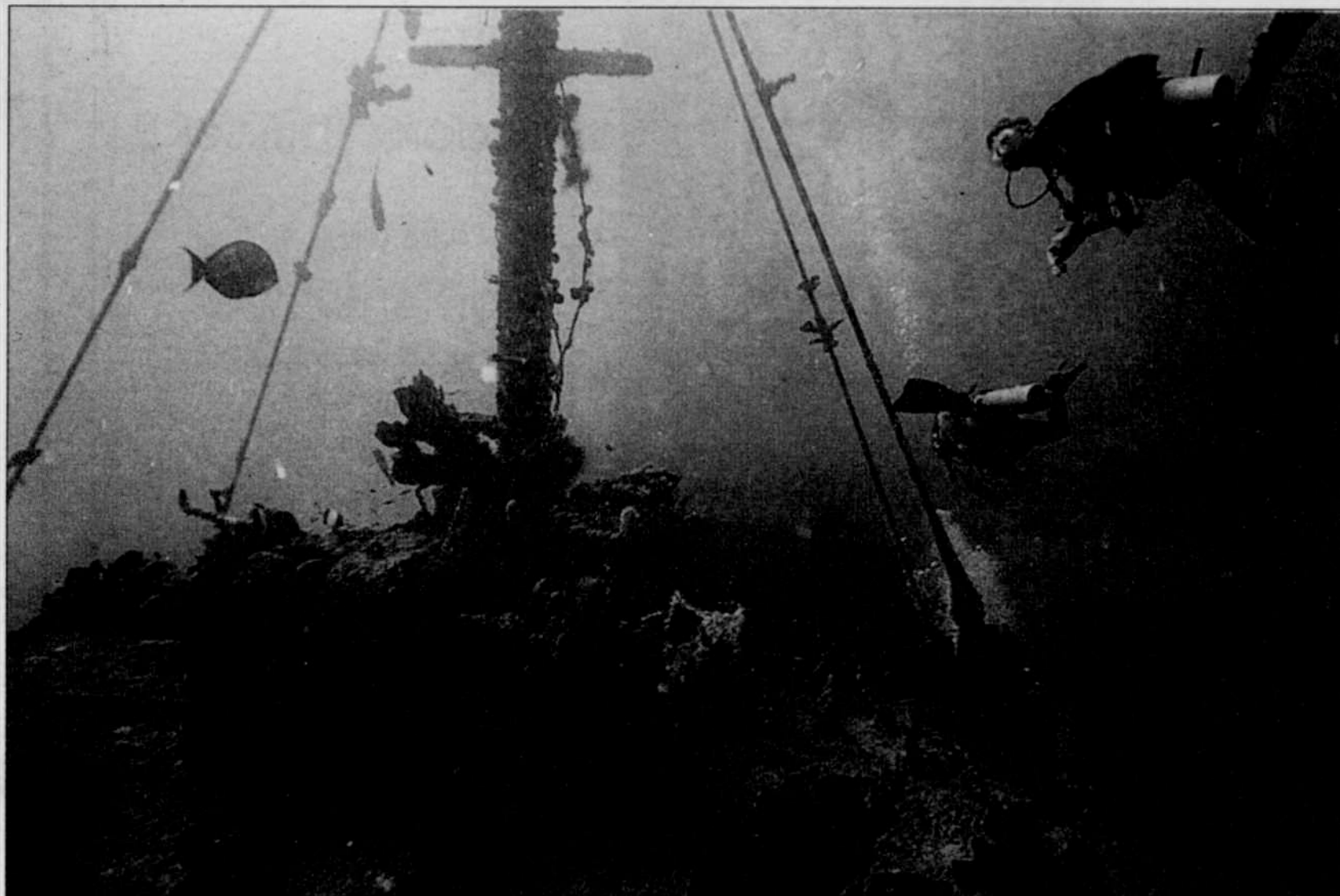
wrong. And after a certain age you realize that you're not invulnerable. It was a real push for me to learn how to dive. My first day actually getting in the water in Puget Sound was a little scary. But I like a good challenge, so I stuck with it."

Floyd spent several years in the Army Reserve as a drill sergeant and says that experience also gave her the confidence to persevere in diving. "Doing things like rappelling...and obstacle courses where you learn to have confidence in yourself and your abilities, I think transferred a lot to scuba diving. It's basically the same thing in learning to trust yourself."

She also emphasizes the importance of learning to trust and to use diving gear properly, likening it to jumping out of an airplane. You'd want to have "a damn good parachute," she smiles, and you'd want to be sure you knew how to use it.

In the six years since her fateful jump into Puget Sound, Floyd has become a master diver, traveling from Alaska to the South Pacific and from Micronesia to the Bahamas. She has floated over the black abyss of a 9,000-foot canyon, has taught many others to dive and has become active in Diving for Life, a nonprofit that raises money for gay and lesbian health charities.

Since 1992 Diving for Life has organized an annual jamboree of gay and lesbian scuba divers from around the world. On her first one in Bonaire, an island about 50



Floyd and crew happen upon a World War II Japanese freighter

miles off the coast of Venezuela, Floyd was hooked.

She met participants from Seattle, with whom she continues to dive, and found a diver's paradise she hopes to retire to someday. Bonaire is in a marine preserve that Floyd says is akin to diving in a giant fishbowl.

"You can't even wear gloves in the water because they figure if you're wearing gloves that means you're trying to touch something," she remarks. "And they don't want you touching anything."

Diving for Life raises money through diver fees and two auctions. Donated items come from diving clubs, shops and gear manufacturers as well as celebrities like Drew Barrymore, Jennifer Aniston, the Muppets and Martha Stewart.

Floyd is hoping to get a club together from Portland not only to start diving regularly but also to attend this fall's Diving for Life jamboree in Freeport, Grand Bahama.

"It's a group of responsible gay and lesbian individuals," she notes. "That is, to me, one of the greatest aspects of that whole event—people who go there are not the party hounds. They're responsible divers. You don't find people doing stupid stuff."

and more equipment."

Of course, the payoff is knowing what it feels like to walk in space. **J**



Floyd wants to take a Portland crew to Diving for Life



PHOTO BY ANITA FLOYD

Swimming with the turtles off the coast of Venezuela

If you want to join ANITA FLOYD's diving club or learn more about it, call 503-421-4788 or e-mail acfloyd@qwest.net. The Diving for Life Jamboree is Sept. 21 to 25.

MELISSA SAYLER, who prefers diving into a hot cup of coffee to the ocean, is the Production Assistant at Just Out.

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