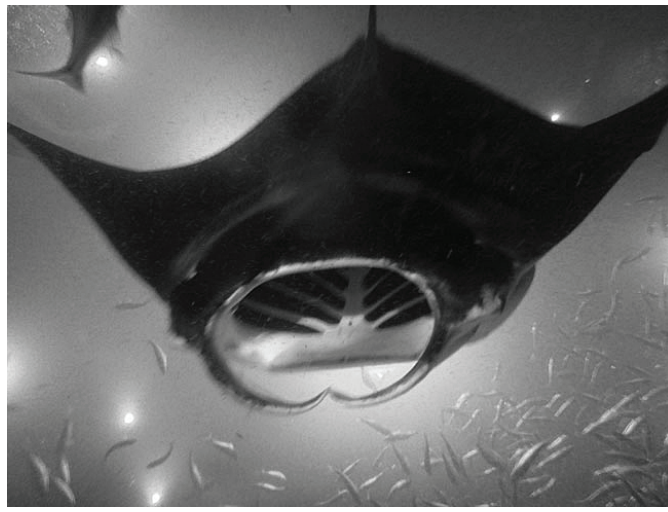


Snorkeling with the manta rays



Try to visualize this: You are comfortably dressed in wetsuit and snorkel. You and 12 others are face down, holding onto PVC pipe attached to a rectangular, floating platform. Powerful lights illuminate the waters below. The water is teeming with activity. A fish, the shape of a Stealth Bomber, a wing span of 14 feet, comes swooping out of the shadows, a wide-open mouth – that could easily inhale a basketball – is coming straight at you. If you haven't sucked water into the breathing tube by now, you have nerves of steel. Big Bertha turns and glides past. Her underbelly is literally inches from your face. You can look directly into her gills.

You have just experienced what *National Geographic* calls, "A once in a lifetime, must see experience." My wife Jo and I recently had this experience in Kona, Hawaii, on the Big Island of Hawaii. Donald and Tracy Koskela, of Silverton, joined us for the vacation. We have chosen to go for our adventure with SeaQuest. At the marina we are greeted by a staff that is energetic and efficient. After fitting us with wet suits and masks, we board a 20-foot zodiac boat for a short ride out in the bay, to our viewing destination. It is always a different sensation on the water at night. Lights from all directions seem



Submitted Columnist G.I. Wilson recently took a scuba diving trip with manta rays off the coast of Hawaii.

to dance across the surface of the water, creating ominous shaped shadows that chase us as we ease across the bay. We are not alone on the bay. We learn there are 26 boats viewing mantas. We arrive at the viewing platform and staff assists us in a short swim, where we take positions around the platform. We grasp the PVC pipe with both hands. Staff makes sure we have a flotation device securely under our ankles to prevent our feet from sinking. They want to make sure we do not touch the rays. The reason being, we could damage the rays natural protective covering. If the ray brushes

into you, that's OK. And this happened to Jo and several others. Now, all we have to do is look down and wait for the action. It comes quickly and continuously. Showtime. Bright lights attract plankton. Lights attract rays to eat plankton. Of course, other tropical fish come to feed also. Tropical fish are always fascinating to watch, but here, the main attraction is the manta. The captain tells us there are usually five to seven rays. This evening we are lucky

to see 11 rays of various sizes. Viewing time is 50 minutes. My arms are tired after 35-40 minutes. I alert staff and they assist me to the boat. Two husky guys lift me onto the steps and on board. I enjoy a cup of hot chocolate and cookies while the others finish our 50 minutes. This is only one of two places where this phenomenon is available. Keahou Bay is the super bowl of manta watching. Truly a once in a lifetime, don't miss experience.

FAITH, continued from Page B1

She celebrated with family, coaches and a dozen young players she coaches on a 12-and-under team at Southside. "I wanted all of my girls here," Jauregui said. Hans Schneider, who leads the sand volleyball program at Keizer Rapids Park, first met Jauregui as a fifth grader at the Boys and Girls Club. Jauregui

has also played sand volleyball in the summers. "She stuck with it," Schneider said. "She went through the rough times and came out on the other end a better person and a better player. She's intense. She wants the ball hit to her. She wants to be in there when the game is on the line." Jauregui plans to major in nursing at College of the Redwoods and after two years transfer to Portland State to finish her education.

McNary men's golf kicks off with March Madness

McNary Men's Golf Club held their season opening event, the March Madness, on Saturday March 24. Nine four-man teams, as selected by the Tournament Committee, competed in a scramble event. Despite chilly, wet, and sometimes muddy conditions some good scores were posted. Winning the low gross competition with a nine under par 62 were: Darin Humphreys, James Martin, Bart Heath, and Robert Tesch. There was a tie for second low gross between the team of: Terry Jacques, Bill Link, Ken Nivens, and Jay Ireland; and, the team of: Jeff Jones, Jeff McDonnell, Mark Heppner, and Andy Anderson.

Low net honors with a score of 47.75 went to: Mark Morris, Robin Brockmuller, Chris Morrison, and Michael Hampton. Second low net was: Perry Sinasone, Kent Hollingsworth, Jon Brammeier, and Dave Smedema. Third place low net was: Jim McKenna, Greg Pedersen, Mark Piercy, and John Elliott. Winners of the KP awards (closest to the pin) for the five par 3s were: Bob Olson, Greg Pedersen, Brad Krater, Mark Piercy, and Jim McKenna. Bob Olson recorded the closest tee shot at 4-feet-1-inch on hole 4. The next event for the Men's Club is the 3-Man ABC/2 Best Balls on Saturday, April 21.

ATHLETE of the Week

presented by

Joel Dutcher
McNary High School

McNary sophomore Joel Dutcher shot 80 in his first league match of the season on Tuesday, March 20 at Michelbook Country Club in McMinnville. Dutcher's round included four birdies on the front nine.

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