

profile

# Wayne hasson



On a trip aboard the *Kona Aggressor*, this Whale Shark entertained guests for nine hours.

Photo/Wayne Hasson

# RENAISSANCE

Over the years, Wayne Hasson has worn many hats—U.S. marine, scuba instructor, divemaster, photographer, videographer, husband and father. But it's the Captain title that most people know him for. As founder and Captain of the Aggressor Fleet, Wayne is known for introducing the highly-successful live-aboard concept of dive vacations.

A 30-year veteran of the dive industry, Wayne and his wife Anne were working at the Casa Bertmar Resort on Grand Cayman when they envisioned the creation of a "better" dive vacation. They dreamed of creating a trip where divers could dive as much or as little as they wanted, without having to wait in lines or worry about crowds. From this, the idea of "the ultimate live-aboard" was born.

Their first vessel, the *Cayman Aggressor*, was the most luxurious dive boat in the world when it was launched in 1984. The goal from the beginning was to give divers something more.

"We built and lived on the vessel and developed it the way our customers and our experience taught us it should be," Hasson explained, adding that he hasn't looked back. "We've had an increase in the number of travelers every year since we started."

Following the *Cayman Aggressor* was the *Cayman Aggressor II* in 1985, followed one year later by the *Kona Aggressor* in the Pacific. Today, the number of Aggressor boats is at 13, escorting divers to new adventures in 12 destinations around the world.

"It's the little things that make a difference," Hasson said. "Over the years, we've added amenities including personal heads and air-conditioning in each room, an onboard photo lab, scooters, nitrox and more. We now have the ability to let passengers e-mail photos of their dives back to their friends in the states. We strive to be different."

It's this spirit of being different that led Hasson to organize a trip to Cocos Island in 1988. It was an expedition to dive with schooling

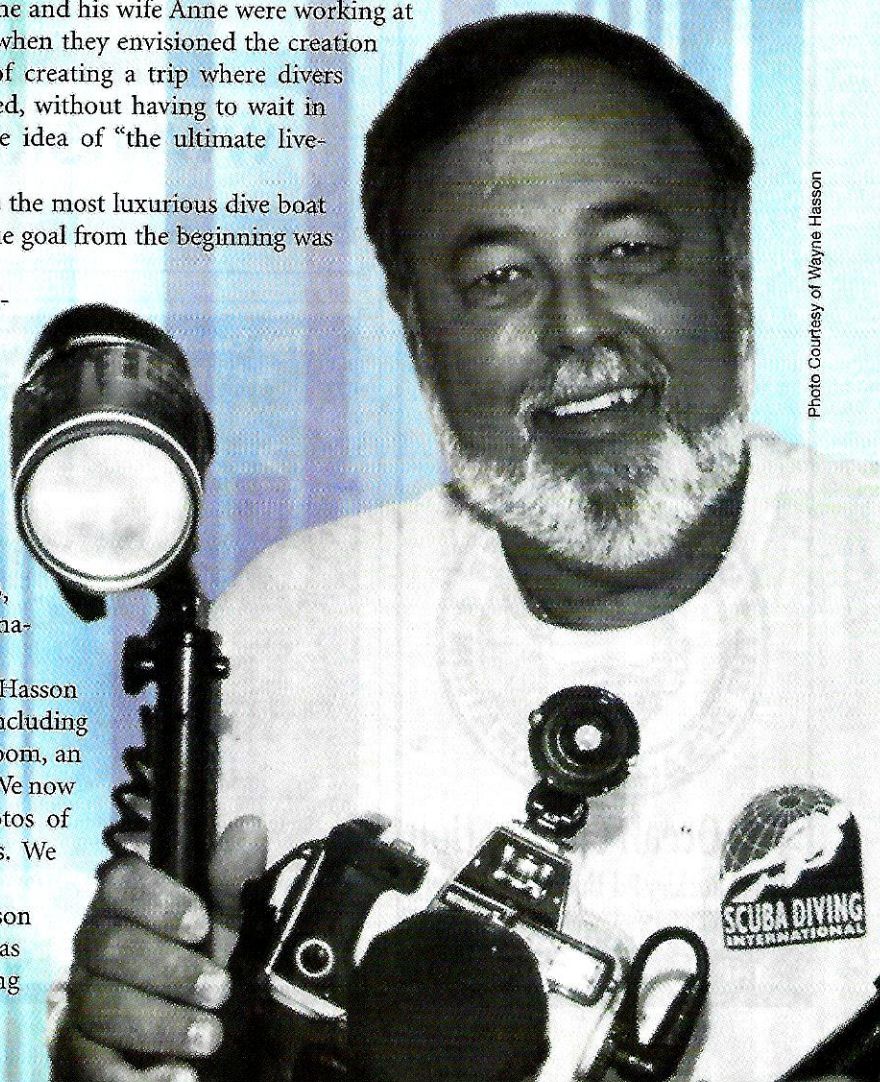
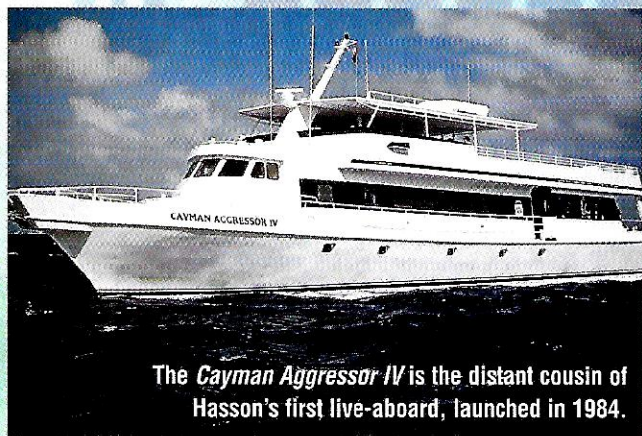


Photo Courtesy of Wayne Hasson

Hammerhead Sharks, something that was unheard of until two decades ago. "People looked at me like I was crazy, but we went, and it was one of the most exhilarating experiences participants had ever had. It was an instant success...and it helped pave the way for today's shark diving expeditions."

Hasson remembers one "guest" who refused to leave. "I was onboard the *Kona Aggressor*, and we came upon this 45-foot Whale Shark. Everyone was overjoyed, and we got in the water and took pictures, swam with it and everything. I guess the shark fell in love with the boat or something because every time we moved, it went with us. This went on for nine hours. It was a tremendous experience. I



The *Cayman Aggressor IV* is the distant cousin of Hasson's first live-aboard, launched in 1984.

Photo/Wayne Hasson

# MAN

by Scott Jones

shot 19 rolls of film that day."

Hasson also organized the world's first mooring program in Cayman and, using his own funds (close to \$50,000), began installing permanent moorings for boats to use. "We put in 112 moorings around the islands. Most of those I personally helped install."

Hasson's reputation quickly spread. He was approached by Academy Award-winning director James Cameron during the production of *The Abyss*. Wayne trained all the actors to dive and also struck up a friendship with Cameron that continues today. "James bought the Truk franchise because he was so impressed with our operation."

Hasson has also worked with major stars such as David Hasselhoff, Robert Urich and Leslie Nielson. "These guys all like to dive, but they prefer something out of the way and quiet. It was my pleasure to accommodate them."

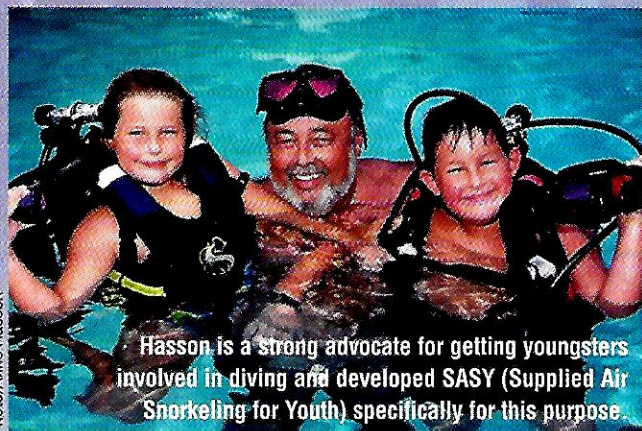
Diving legend Stan Waterman was part of the famous Cocos Island expedition. He's joined Hasson on many different dives and said that Hasson's ability to interact with marine creatures is unparalleled, although it sometimes results in the unexpected.

Waterman recalls an encounter Wayne had with an electric ray off Grand Cayman. "I remember Wayne telling me that he approached the animal to stroke its back and make friends. The next thing he knew he was on his back on the sand some distance away. Electric rays are a real anomaly in Cayman



An accomplished photographer, here Hasson captures a squadron of Spotted Eagle Rays.

Photo/Wayne Hasson

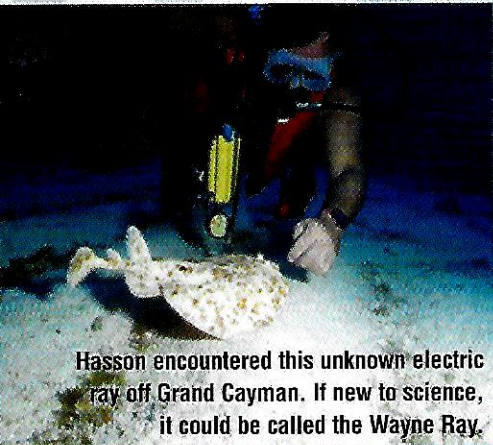


Hasson is a strong advocate for getting youngsters involved in diving and developed SASY (Supplied Air Snorkeling for Youth) specifically for this purpose.

Photo/Anne Hasson

waters." Waterman said Hasson tried to make contact several more times, being shocked for each effort. "The animal finally allowed itself to be stroked, and Wayne made a new friend."

Now, several years later, it turns out the ray that Hasson encountered may be a new species. Should this be confirmed, the scientific community is planning to name the new species the Wayne Ray. "That's ironic because Ray



Hasson encountered this unknown electric ray off Grand Cayman. If new to science, it could be called the Wayne Ray.

Photo Courtesy Wayne Hasson

just happens to be my middle name," laughed Hasson.

During his 20-year residency on Grand Cayman, Hasson has made many friends. He's seen diving grow and change. Today, he's become a strong advocate for getting young people involved in diving. As Chairman of the Oceans For Youth Foundation, Hasson is working with dive equipment manufacturers, resorts and media to promote the SASY (Supplied Air Snorkeling for Youth) concept. The non-profit foundation is working with many industry partners to make the lightweight surface units available at resorts and dive destinations around the world.

"I have a soft spot for kids," Hasson explained. "If someone asks me to help teach a class or lead a group of kids on a snorkeling trip or something, I'll usually drop everything to go and take part." He admitted that his children (Davis, 9 and Caroline, 6) are a large part of why he does this. "They are our future and the ocean's future. We need to get them involved and diving is a good way to do that."

To experience one of Hasson's upcoming live-aboard adventures, go to [www.aggessor.com](http://www.aggessor.com) or call (877) 348-2628.

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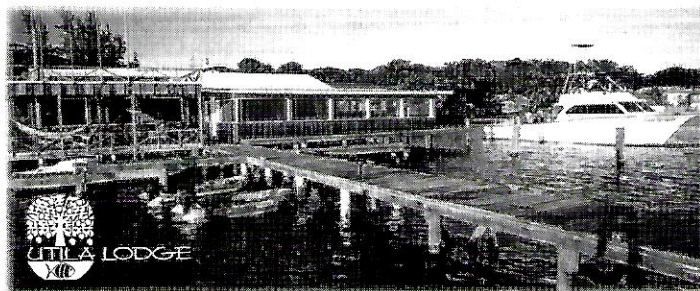
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