

A safe distance through glass

Eyeball-to-eyeball with a shark

United Press International
HONG KONG — The world's largest aquarium enables landlubbers to observe fish from different parts of the world normally only seen by the most experienced deep-sea divers.

It is among the \$32.5 million Hong Kong Ocean Park's many features and sits 500 feet above sea level, commanding a panoramic view of the South China Sea.

The 443,000-gallon tank requires

a staff of 26 to maintain the massive equipment needed to keep alive the 30,000 marine specimens in the collection.

Senior Aquarist John Chin has not taken a day off since he became involved in designing the tank in 1973.

"The aim is to give visitors an eyeball-to-eyeball experience with fish, normally the privilege of those who indulge in deep-sea diving," Chin said.

Although Ocean Park has what is believed to be the world's largest saltwater aquarium tank, Chin said the San Francisco Aquarium has the largest collection of fish.

The tank, housed in a low, oval-shaped building, is surrounded at four different levels by glassed galleries.

The beginning is the top of the atoll, jutting out of the water like the tip of an iceberg, but resplendent with tropical plants brought from the Philippines, Indonesia and South Pacific islands.

The shallow reef or lagoon of the atoll is the home of many brilliantly colored fish, such as the half-inch blue damselfish, the smallest resident of the tank; grey and blue triggerfish; butterflyfish and angels.

The mid-level or fringing reef is large enough to allow many of the fish to form schools. In this reef are 150 silver pompanos, weighing 15 pounds each, multi-colored snappers and groupers.

The barrier reef at the bottom is the realm of sharks, eels, rays and turtles.

Chin and his aides constructed the complex reef out of fiberglass, soaking it for two months in seawater, sterilizing it and finally decorating the outside with coral and flora.

The key factor is making sure anything artificial is compatible with the fish," Chin said, "and fiberglass is one of the materials that doesn't bother them at all."

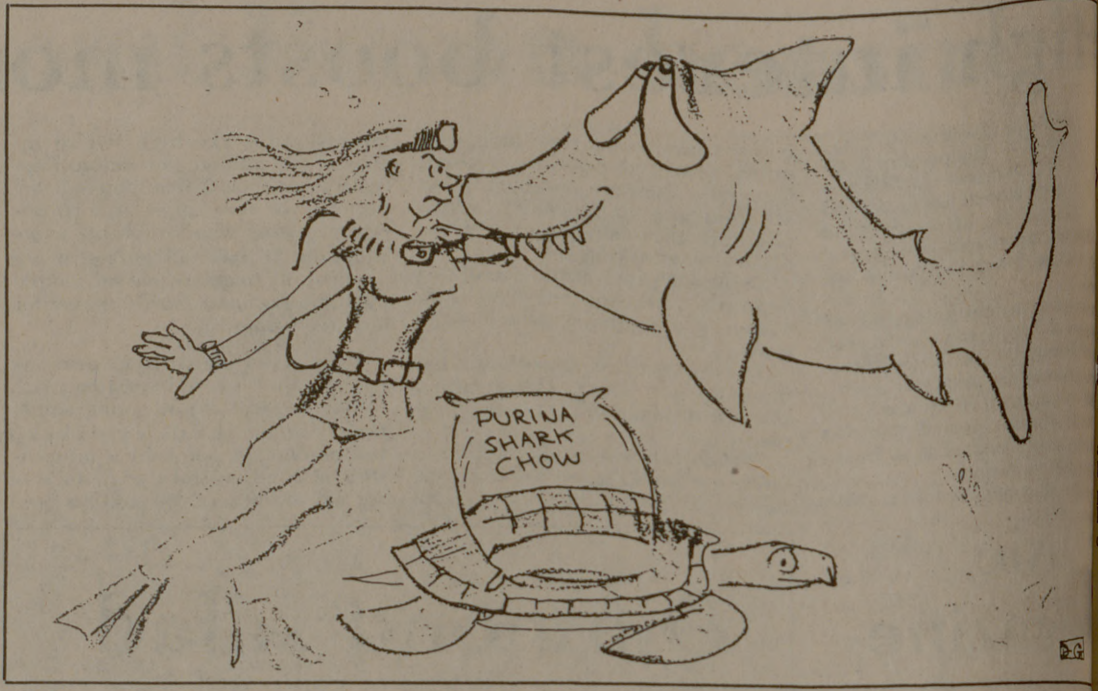
Inside the reef and invisible to the onlooker is a vertical pipe with several outlets providing continuous circulation at such a rate that the water is changed every 90 minutes.

The water is pumped from the South China Sea into a series of reservoirs which sterilize, filter and add essential chemicals and provide all the aeration needed before it flows into the aquarium.

A heating system keeps the temperature at 78-82 degrees F. The warmer the water, the hungrier the fish get, Chin said.

Feeding is the responsibility of Judy Hu, the chief diver whose presence inside the tank has become so familiar the fish rub up against her affectionately. "That's because they associate me with their meals," she said.

Twice a day Miss Hu and an aide dive into the aquarium in full scuba gear and suits to protect them from some of the overzealous species that



tend to nip for attention.

"In a single day, the fish consume about 70 pounds of food we carry in nets," she said. "Many are fed by hand, including the 9-foot-long sharks, to make sure each gets his fair share."

Meals consist of meat, shrimp, crabs, shellfish and sea urchins. The food that isn't handed out is distributed at the different levels so that no

one is left out.

Gluttony could be a problem, Miss Hu said. "The small fish could starve if we didn't take such care in dispersing the food throughout the tank. All this takes at least 30 minutes per session."

Both Miss Hu and Chin regard the fish as friends.

"There's nothing dull about this

job," said Miss Hu, a diver for years.

The biggest fear of any aquarist is that the fish will catch a contagious disease. The team at Ocean Park has been scrupulous in preventing such calamity.

"Our mortality rate is less than one percent monthly," Chin said, "but that the figure is very low."



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Utility shut-offs center of protest

United Press International
WASHINGTON — Pledging to "march to the plant gates" if necessary, a labor-citizen group coalition is launching a campaign in 23 states to prevent utility companies from shutting off heat to consumers who cannot pay their bills this winter.

At least 200 people have died in recent winters after their gas or electricity was shut off, the groups contend, and thousands more suffer

silently, some going without food or medication to pay ever higher utility bills.

The "Citizen-Labor Energy Coalition" demanded Tuesday that the Department of Energy implement the Public Utility Regulatory Policies Act of 1978 which, a spokesman said, provides that each state public utility commission should adopt policies forbidding shut-offs during severe weather.

The law also gives the energy department the power to make sure they do so, he said.

The coalition said Wisconsin, Maryland and Rhode Island already have banned winter shut-offs.

William Hutton, director of the National Council of Senior Citizens, said that unless shut-off policies are changed, "I think some of the utilities are going to see us marching to the plant gates."

Many older people are being forced to make "life and death eco-

nomical choices. In fact they've had to make the cruel choice of heating or eating in many cases," Hutton said.

He said the figure of 200 deaths, which came from press reports, is probably "just the tip of the iceberg."

He said in 1976, there were 1 million senior citizen households with annual incomes of less than \$2,000 who "spent over 50 percent of their income on winter fuel."

Bernard Veney, executive director of the National Citizens Council,

which represents low income people, said "there are thousands of persons in this country who live in total fear that their utilities will be cut off." So far, he said, state regulators have provided "less sabotage than assistance."

One coalition member said President Carter's approval of legislation deregulating the price of natural gas amounted to a "warfare" for many consumers.

He said the legislation was "sabotaging" the interests of the poor and the elderly. "We've been thinking about this for a long time," he said. "We're removing production and distribution and

Medical discovery near; human organs to be frozen

United Press International
GATLINBURG, Tenn. — Scientists may be near a medical breakthrough that would allow human organs to be frozen and saved for later transplants, a leading biologist says.

Such a step would mean hospital patients needing transplants could obtain genetically compatible organs with little or no delay, Dr. Peter Mazur told a meeting of the Council for the Advancement of Science Writing Tuesday.

Organs removed from a dead person normally must be transplanted within a matter of hours or they become useless, said Mazur, a biologist with the Oak Ridge National Laboratory.

But Mazur said work performed

by him and Dr. Stanley Leibo, also of Oak Ridge, in the field of cryobiology — the study of how subzero temperatures affect living systems — means mankind one day may be able to control time, rather than the reverse.

He said six years ago he and Leibo and a British researcher successfully froze mouse embryos, then thawed them and implanted the eggs in foster mothers which gave birth to healthy mice.

That accomplishment, along with dramatic results in sperm preservation, moved the scientists to press harder in their efforts to freeze human organs and store them indefinitely, Mazur said.

Cryobiologic advances with mammalian embryos and fetal organs have made it likely that a human kidney, composed of a wide variety of cells, will be successfully preserved in the near future, he said.

But a major obstacle has to do

with finding the right cooling and thawing range because different cells have different limitations.

Bodily rejection of transplanted organs, the most common problem in such operations, could be reduced or possibly even eliminated through freezing, Mazur said.

Until recently, the biologist hopes for successfully preserved human organs were dim. Present advances in cryobiology, however, have bolstered hopes of accomplishing the feat soon.

Mazur said his research has practical applications that may be long in implementing, for example, he said, human embryos could be preserved to permit previously infertile women to have children; new or improved organs of animals could be raised in the United States by freezing embryos in other nations and importing them; and embryos of rare animals could be preserved to prevent extinction.

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