

ARGOSY

MAY 50¢

GIANT OF ADVENTURE

The Dangerous Life
of Bob Marx,
World's Greatest
Treasure Diver



LINCOLN'S ASSASSINATION

Exclusive Pictures
of Booth's
Walking Arsenal



WELL OF THE VIRGINS

Mystery Dolls Prove
America Was Found
200 Years
Before Columbus



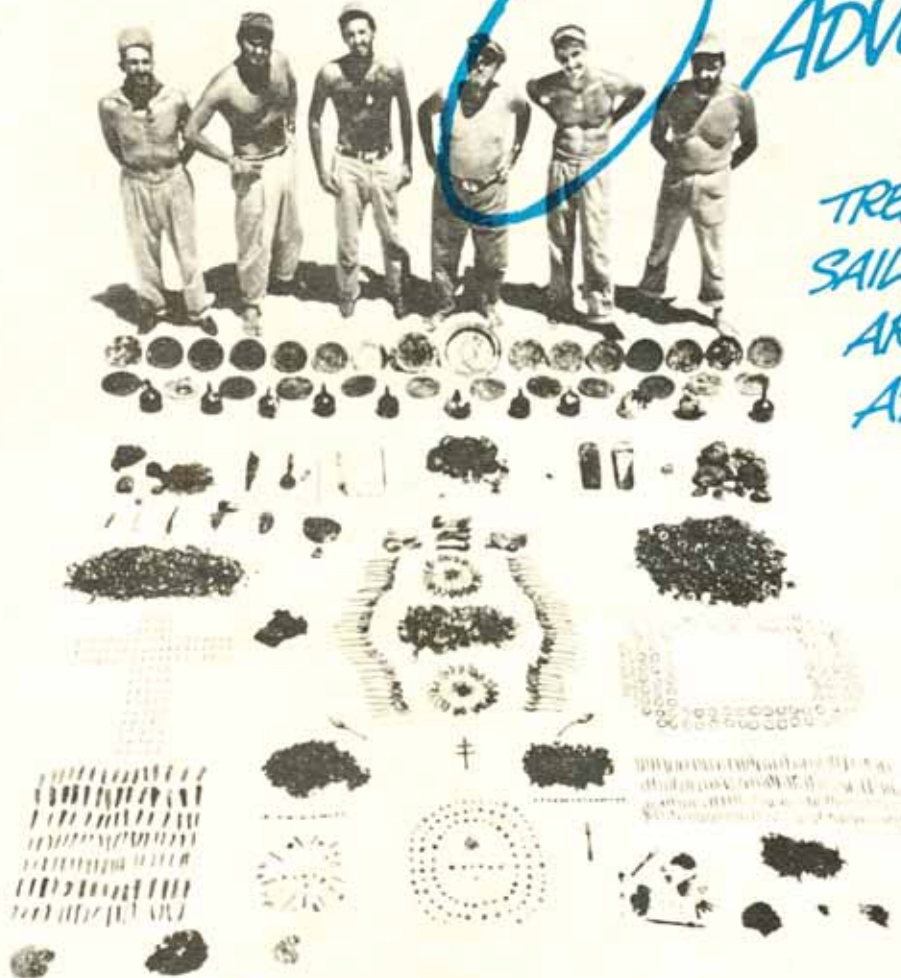
BONNIE AND CLYDE

"How I Shot
Them Down"—
Frank Hamer



ARGOSY
GIANT OF
ADVENTURE
1968

TREASURE DIVER-
SAILING PIONEER-
ARCHEOLOGIST-
ADVENTURER

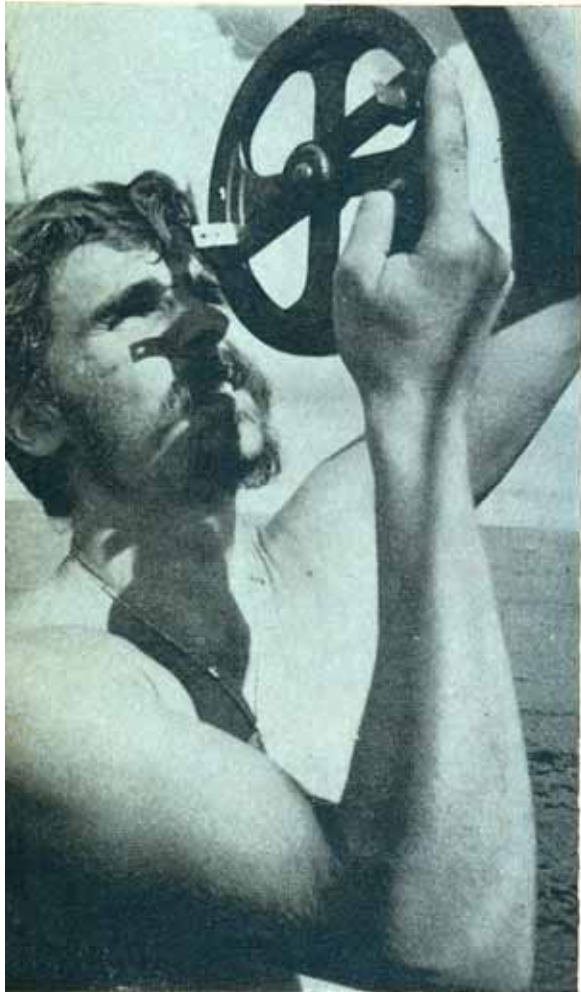


"Tell them I'm a scientist and an archeologist,
or I'll kick your damn teeth in."

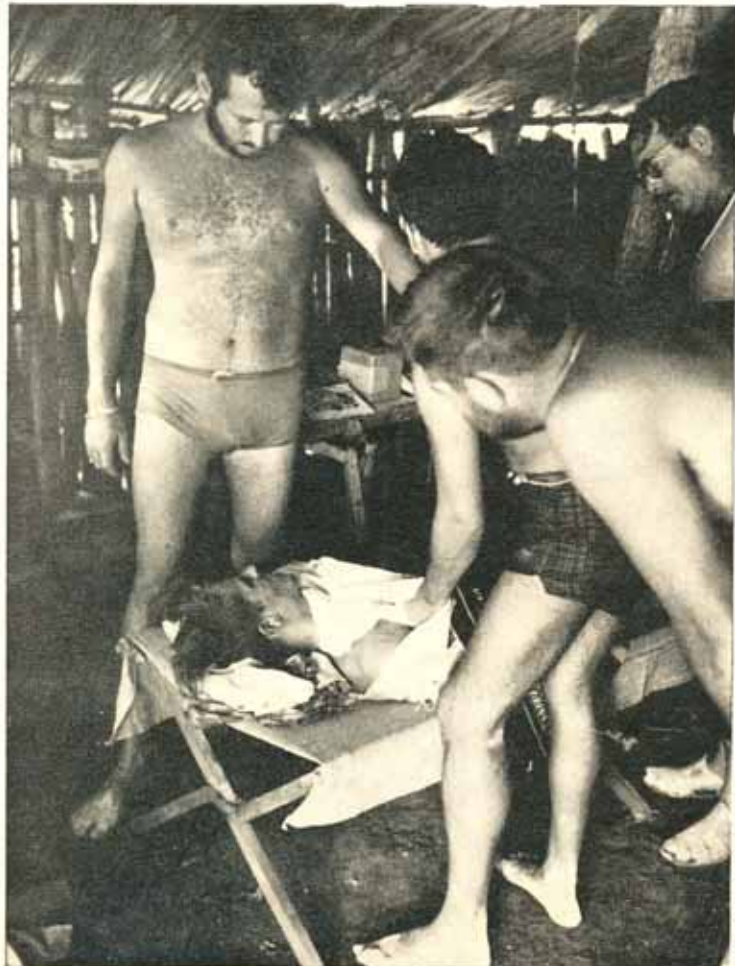
Bob Marx is a scientist and an archeologist.
He is also a lot of other things,
all of which add up to adventure

BY MILT MACHLIN

Marx (second from right) and friends pose with relics of Spanish merchant ship, El Matancero, wrecked off Yucatan.



Marx tried to duplicate fifteenth-century conditions aboard *Nina II*, even to the point of using period navigational equipment. Top, right: His crew sets fire to Viking ship after frustrating tangle with Tunisian authorities. Right: Friends tend to disabled Marx after capture by bandits



PHOTOS FROM BOB MARX

TRYING TO fit all of Bob Marx's adventures into the confines of a magazine is like trying to pack an aqualung, a wet suit, a couple of .45s, the world's largest archive of treasure information, several dozen ancient iron and bronze cannon, a couple of spearguns and a Marine's uniform into an overnight flight bag.

It is doubtful that any man, even ARGOSY's own intrepid Giants of Adventure, has had the varied, exciting experiences, narrow escapes on land and sea, and wild escapades that Bob has had—and still emerged as the most highly respected man in his field. For despite his scarred, piratical appearance and casual manner, Marx is the world's greatest expert on treasure diving and has long been recognized as such. Proof? He was just hired as chief treasure, wreck and archeological advisor by Real Eight, the group which started Florida's treasure boom by discovering one of the great treasure fleets of all time off the Florida coast.

Marx has recorded a good many of his big-time thrills on these pages ("I'm Digging Up Jamaica's Fabulous Sunken Pirate City," October, '67, "Providence Island: Where Dream Treasures Come True," January, '68), and now that he is ARGOSY's Treasure Editor, you'll be hearing even more of his exploits.

But Bob's everyday living has enough unrecorded thrills to fill a book. (He's already filled a book with some of his recorded exploits. It's called "Always Another Adventure," World Publishing, \$6.95).

The day I visited him in Jamaica recently, he had just finished coping with a problem in Marxian fashion. Bob's current project, the restoration of the sunken pirate city of Port Royal, operates out of the ruin of an old Naval Hospital which happens to be the oldest iron-frame structure in the Western Hemisphere. The crumbling halls are full of native squatters, who are permitted to live there rent-free provided they don't interfere with the restoration project. But outside, scavengers have a habit of pirating any loose goodies left unguarded. Marx had hired a giant, bearded Rastafarian (member of a weird Jamaican cult which believes that Haile Selassie is literally God) to guard his establishment and the old hospital from looting. The man was reported to be the toughest hombre in Port Royal. But when Marx arrived that day, he had found his Rasta backed against the wall by a half-dozen knifetoting pirates who had been interrupted in the act of dismantling one of the hospital gates for scrap iron. Marx took one look at the six open blades and ran for the main building. Thinking they had scared off the boss man, the six pirates started to close in on the terrified Rasta, but froze in horror as they saw Marx descending on them, roaring at the top of his lungs and swinging a nail-studded two-by-four like a samurai sword. The pirates tripped over each other retreating.

We retired to the Buccaneer's Roost, one of the two bars in the tiny fishing town, for a Red Stripe beer. In the bar was a tall, blue-black and nail-hard young Jamaican who, Marx told me, was nicknamed "Money" after his favorite pursuit.

"Hey, Money, man! How many times did I fire you?"

"'Bout twenty, mon!"

"And how many times did you try to kill me?"

"One time, mon!"

A couple of weeks before, Money, who had worked as a diver on the Port Royal restoration, had been fired for the last time for drinking, loafing and stealing. Brooding on "whites," the local rum and *ganja*, the popular local marijuana, Money decided to wait for Marx with a knife when he came out of the water that day. Unfortunately for that plan, Marx came out carrying a crowbar. Money abandoned the plan, but continued to skulk around the area swearing to gut Marx as soon as he showed up. Marx picked up a sidearm for safety and went into the big yard of the Naval Hospital. A crowd had gathered to watch the day's activity.

"How tall is Money?" Marx asked.

"'Bout like you, Bobmarx," said one of the crowd. (People in Port Royal usually call him Bobmarx, as though it were one word.)

Marx lay down on the ground and said, "Mark me off, head and toe."

One of the crowd obliged. Marx produced two shovels.

"Now start digging between those marks."

"What you doing, mon?" asked one of the spectators.

"I'm digging Money's grave," Marx answered coolly. "I never kill a man unless I dig his grave first."

Twenty minutes later, Money was back, literally on his knees, crying and holding his knife open-palmed.

"Don't kill me, Bobmarx! I be good mon!"

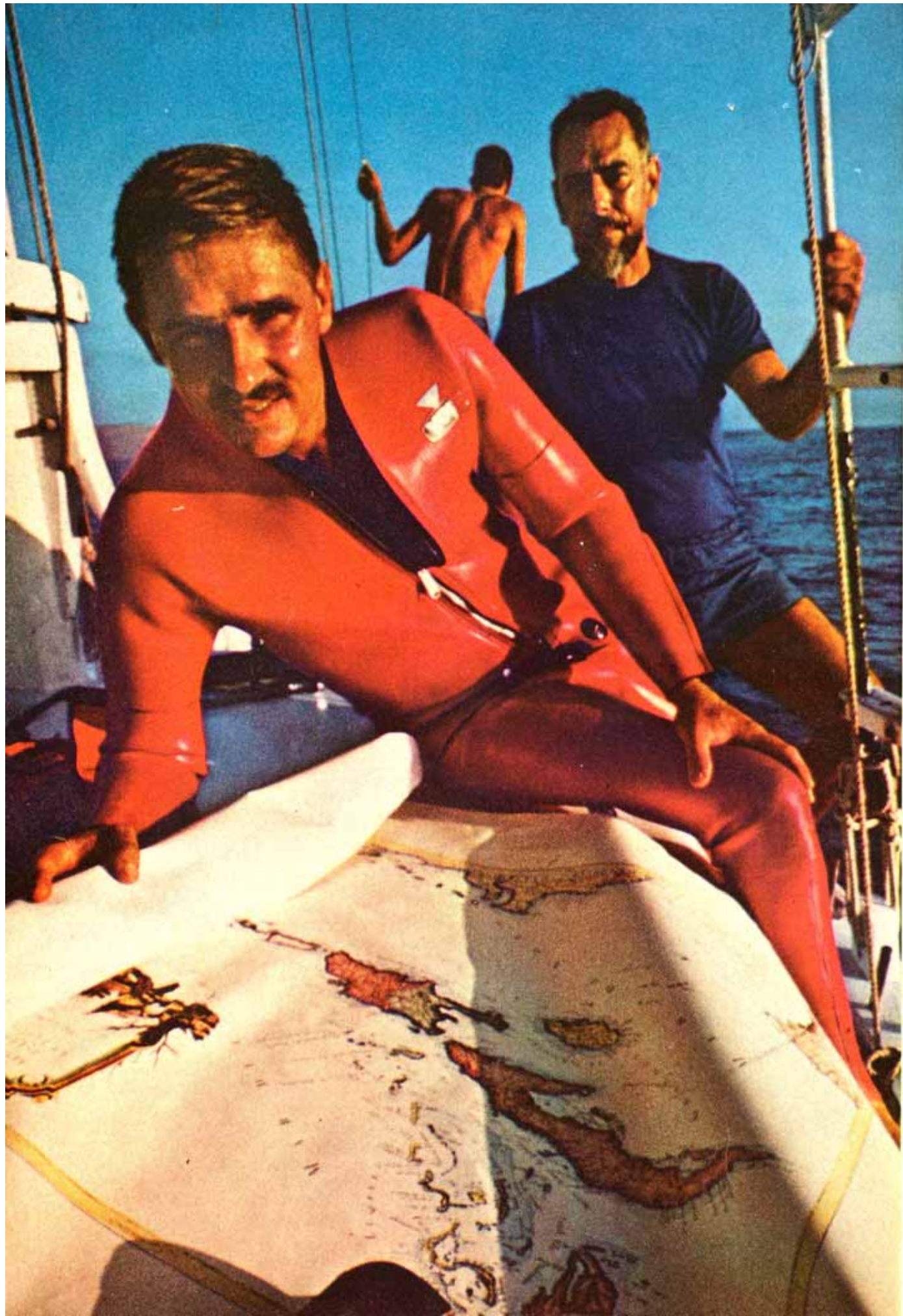
The incident was closed as of last week.

But stories of these swashbuckling exploits—like the time he was trapped under a stone wall in Port Royal harbor for forty minutes and had to be rescued with the help of a teen-ager who had never before worn a diving mask, or the time he was attacked at 200 feet by a nitrogen-narcosis-crazed amateur diver who ripped off his mask and tried to strangle him—are not what Marx wants to hear told about himself.

The image Marx wants to leave behind is that of a man who has contributed to man's knowledge of his past—and as one of the most knowledgeable men in the world on Marine Archeology, he has earned that reputation. Despite the fact that his academic credits include only an almost-degree at the University of California at Los Angeles, Marx is a consultant to university professors and governments on archeology.

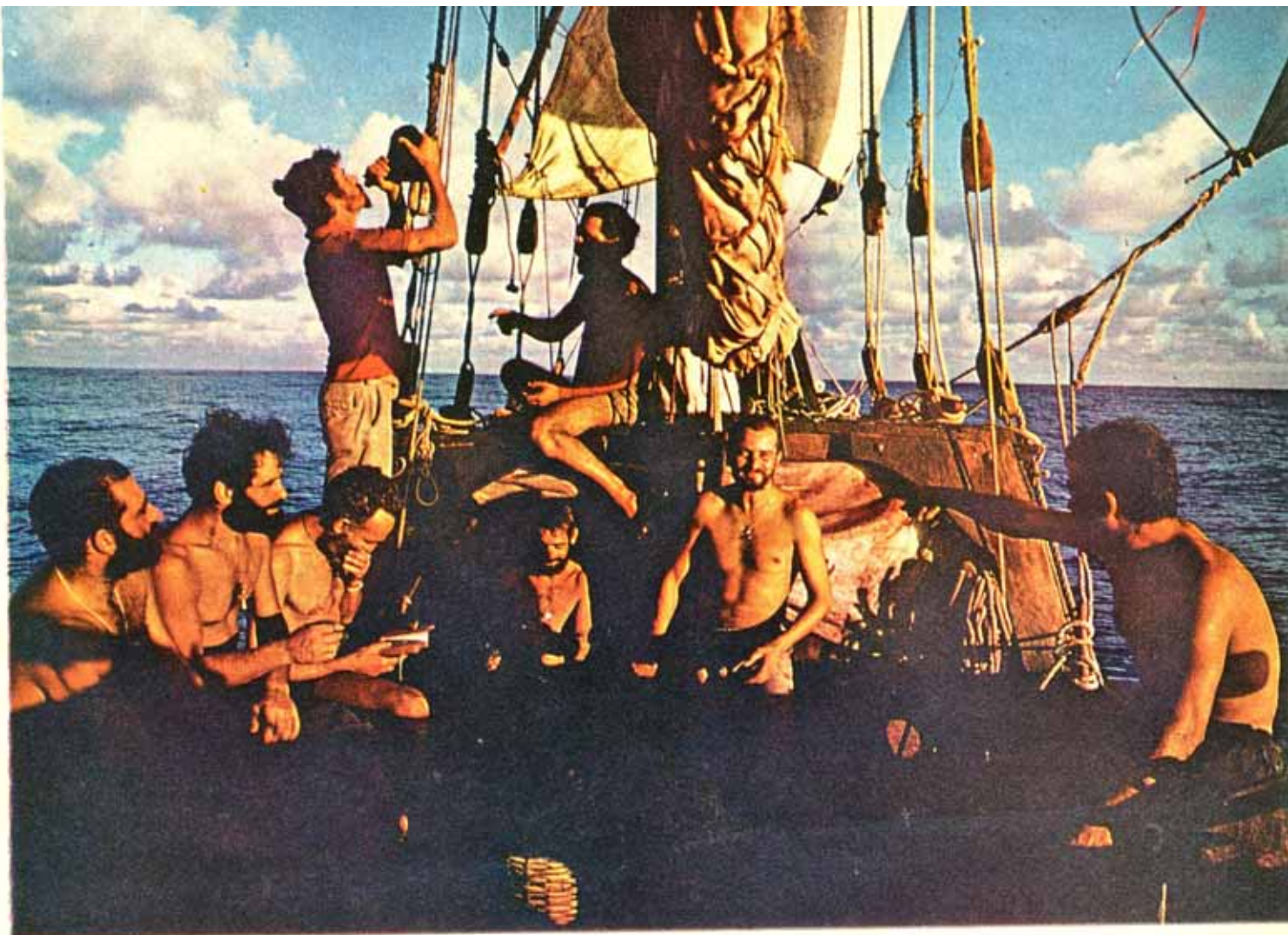
His first interest in diving was prompted by early magazine stories about Port Royal. He was a professional diver by the time he was thirteen, and when he entered the Marines at eighteen, he was already so expert that none other than Marine Commandant General Chesty Puller gave permission to set up the Marine Corps' first skin-diving course. He taught more than 1,000 marines, from privates to generals, the principles of the new technique, which was relatively in its infancy in the mid-fifties.

It was while still in the Marines, diving on his free time, that Marx, along with Captain Robert Legge, a Navy surgeon serving with the Marines, made his first historic find. Using a technique he later developed into an art, he first researched every written source in local libraries and in the Library of Congress, then traced down local rumors and documents until he actually located and definitively marked the wreck of the historic Union ironclad, the *Monitor*. Unfortunately the



CARL TURN/KIMBERLY CLARK





weather off Cape Hatteras is famous for its unco-operative moods, and every time Marx was within fingertip length of salvaging this fabulous relic of the Civil War, whose famous "cheesebox" turret he actually saw and touched, storms would scrub the operation. The last storm covered the hulk with five feet of sand. This is one of the many wrecks in Marx's book of future projects.

"I would like to see her raised and preserved as one of the most interesting relics of our country's naval history, and if someone could find a spare hundred thousand dollars, which is what it would cost to refloat her—providing her hull is still reasonably intact—then I'm more than willing to do it." (ARGOSY is more than willing to help on this one with a little assist from a historic-minded capitalist).

In college, Marx became in-

Left: Marx, who has read original medieval archives in Spain and the New World, has documented the location of almost every Spanish wreck and its cargo. His opinion is regarded as the most knowledgeable in the field. Above: Crew of *Nina II* had more trouble crossing the Atlantic than Columbus himself. Marx (drinking from *bota* in rear) and rest of crew were out of sight of land for seventy-six days, covered 4,250 miles under sail. Below: Marx has recovered thousands of coins like these diving for treasure, but usually was doing a job for someone else or had the loot confiscated by government.



trigued with the history of the Mayans on the Yucatan Peninsula and the fantastic pre-Columbian culture that existed there and disappeared mysteriously before the arrival of the conquistadors. Especially of interest were the sacred wells or *cenotes* of the Mayans, which he felt might furnish important clues to this ancient mystery to a skilled diver. (See story page 65 in this issue). After diving in several *cenotes* with interesting but not spectacular results, Marx wound up on the island of Cozumel off the coast of Quintana, a wild and largely unexplored territory in Yucatan. There he spent three years diving in what may be the world's clearest waters, running a hotel and teaching tourists to dive. One tourist turned out to be definitely out of the ordinary. While the tourist, who gave his name as Larry Mills, was diving, one of Marx's crew members discovered that he had two .45 automatics in his pants. A good many people carry sidearms in that part of the world where the nearest law enforcement may be hundreds of miles away, but two .45s seemed excessive for the average tourist.

A few days later, Marx ran across a month-old edition of a Mexico City paper with a story about "Larry Spence," known as "The Flying Bank Robber." Spence was only number one on the FBI's most-wanted list for bank robbery and murder! There was a picture—and it was of "Mills," except as a blond. Among his crimes, the husky Spence was accused of personally strangling to death a prison guard in making good his escape. Marx decided not to try to take him single-handed, but sent a message to Mexico City for help. It came in a matter of hours in the form of a U.S. Air Force plane with about twenty high Mexican police officials and two FBI men. Spence was picked up and identified as the man in the Post Office pictures. He had robbed three banks after escaping from jail, and the "Efay Bee Ee," as the Mexicans called them, were anxious to lay their hands on the loot. All they could find in Spence's digs was \$5,000.

It was then that Marx got one of his first and best treasure clues. Spence apparently liked Marx despite the fact that he had been caught. As he left, he turned to Bob in a friendly way and said, "You're always talking about finding a treasure. Try looking under the keel of that modern wreck we visited last week. You might find something interesting."

With one FBI man and a couple of Mexican agents, Marx went to the spot indicated. What he found was as interesting as the bank bandit had promised—over \$100,000 in neat, plastic bags. The police took the money, which was only a few thousand short of the total loot Spence had gotten away with, and Marx never heard anything more about it—or the reward that had been offered for its recovery.

"I never did hear what happened to Larry, either," Marx reminisces. "I suppose he got a stiff sentence—and it's a shame, in a way, because he would have made a great diving buddy with that cool nerve of his."

In Cozumel and along the coast of Quintana Roo, Marx made some interesting finds during the next few years, while failing in several get-rich-quick schemes. He tried exporting tropical fish, but they all died in transit. He tried exporting parrots, but they were barred at the border by health officials, and he finally had to turn 800 birds loose.

Near the Quintana Roo coast, he found—and lost—fascinating evidence indicating European settlement of the Mayan area, centuries before Columbus. (See page 65.) In an unexplored temple ruin, he found frescoes of red-bearded men in what appeared to be Greek or Viking ships, and in a nearby temple, clear paintings of horses, both apparently dating to long before Columbus's time—though supposedly horses were introduced in America by the conquistadors. Trying to locate these fabulous finds again, Marx stumbled into the camp of Mexican bandit Barbanegra and was sentenced to death because he might spill the location of the camp. He escaped with the help of a Chinese girl who was the bandit's hostage. (I know this sounds a bit like "Terry and the Pirates," but it all checks out.)

Quite a lot of time was spent during those three years diving on wrecks, and Marx *did* find a good wreck—the *Matancero*. He recovered a fortune in relics from it, only to have it seized as of historic interest by the Mexican government. Marx's share, he estimates, would have been about \$200,000. He already had planned what to do with the money: he wanted to build a boat which would be specially equipped for underwater exploration and salvage and cruise the Caribbean in search of old shipwrecks.

In the succeeding years, Marx, who was briefly named Adventure Editor of the "Saturday Evening Post," spent a year in Spain studying the original archives on all the Spanish ships that came to America.

"I figure I have dived on every reef and cay in the Caribbean," says Marx. "As to treasure, experience shows that more treasure is found than is talked about. So who knows?"

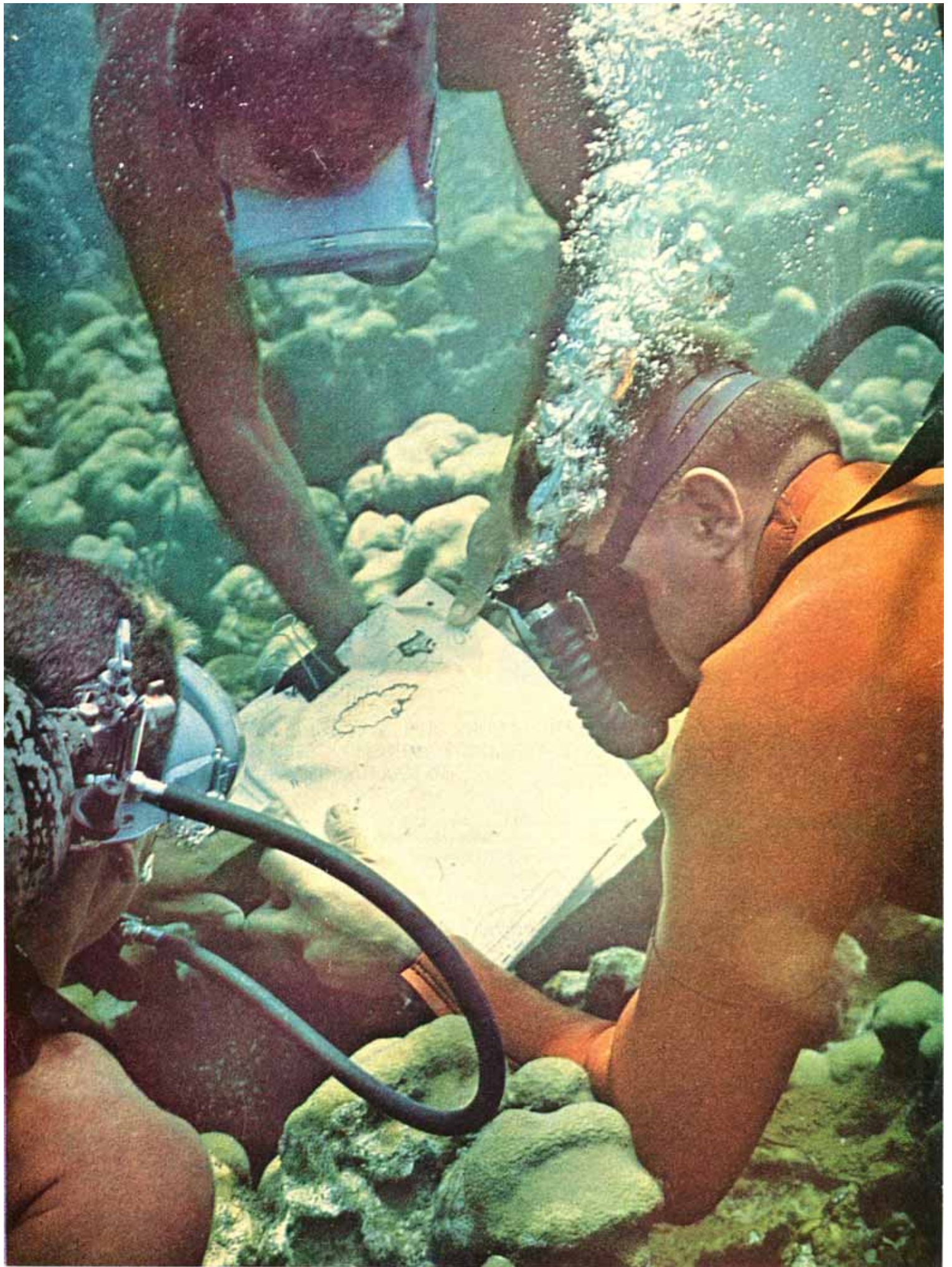
In Spain, Marx became intrigued by the voyages of Columbus. He had decided that he would put together his information from the archives into a great history of the Spanish fleets that came to America. But to do this, he needed the human element which was not recorded in the old Spanish logbooks. Marx wanted to know what really went on aboard those ships during the long, tedious transatlantic voyages. This was the start of the adventure which wound up with Marx gaining world-wide fame by crossing the Atlantic in Columbus's tracks in a ship modeled on Columbus's *Nina*—the *Nina II*. The ship Marx sailed on duplicated Columbus's route, equipment and sailing methods down to the last detail, except for two things. The *Nina II* was smaller than Columbus's ship and less seaworthy. The new *Nina* set sail in September of 1962 and didn't reach San Salvador, Columbus's landing point, until Christmas—a total of seventy-seven days on the last leg of the voyage alone. During the trip, the tiny ship was plagued by hurricanes, leaks and faulty navigation which took it hundreds of miles off course. The water supply became so foul that they had to drink a combination of red wine and sea water. Marx says, contrary to seamen's superstition, the sea water did not make him crazy. "I was like this before the trip, too."

Marx ate barnacles, fried shark's blood, squid, octopus and plankton to stay alive. Once he nearly poisoned himself by gobbling what he (continued on page 60)

Diving off coast of Yucatan while living on Cozumel Island, Marx gained valuable experience in then little-known art of salvaging wrecks of wooden ships.

PHOTOS FROM BOB MARX

ARGOSY



thought was a mouthful of plankton, but which turned out to be tiny, stinging jellyfish. In general, though, Marx says, "I'll eat anything that comes out of the sea."

The paintings of Greek or Phoenician ships which Marx saw and lost in Quintana Roo convinced him that early Europeans could have sailed to the peninsula. But in Marxian fashion, he decided that the way to prove this was to do it himself. He acquired an authentic replica of a Viking ship from Columbia Pictures in return for giving publicity to the film, "The Long Ships." But the movie company didn't tell Marx that the ship's keel had broken and been patched together. Maybe they didn't know. In any event, the ship fell apart and nearly drowned all hands before being beached in Tunisia. There the Tunisian officials demanded that he get his unfloatable wreck off their beach. If he tried to sell any of it, they demanded an eighty-percent import plus a twenty-percent agent's fee, which left zero for Marx. If he didn't get it off, they threatened not to let Marx or his men leave. Finally, furious with the red tape and hostility, Marx hauled the barely floating ship out to sea and gave it a true Viking funeral. He burned it to the waterline and got out of the country, fast.

Shortly after his return, Marx marooned

himself for three months on Robinson Crusoe's original island and even found the ship which many believe to be the wreck from which one survivor, Pedro Serrano, survived to serve as the model for the classic adventure. (This story will be reported in detail in Argosy in a future issue.)

During the next two years, Marx cruised the Caribbean, found hundreds of wrecks to add to his growing archives, and married a beautiful American brunette with a Ph.D. from the University of London. Plans were made to excavate treasure on Providencia Island (See Argosy, October, 1967), but foundered in red tape when the United States and Colombia disputed ownership of the area. Finally, after waiting for clearance for several months, Marx got impatient and accepted his current assignment—the restoration of the sunken pirate city of Port Royal in Jamaica. His agreement is that he gets a small salary, some of the credit and none of the treasure—and he's found at least a half-million dollars worth of coins and relics already!

His next adventure? It's history-making. You'll read about it here in the next few months—and in newspapers and magazines all over the world when the story breaks.

No Giant of Adventure has more richly deserved this award. ● ● ●