



## Scarborough Underwater Club Incorporated: Our 50<sup>th</sup> Year (1961-2011)



### History

The first skin diving (snorkel diving) course in Scarborough was organized by the Scar. Parks and Recreation Dept. Bruce Fleury, the aquatics supervisor at the time, hired an instructional staff of five: four men and one woman. Twenty-nine members registered for the first session in 1960. Classes took place at Porter C.I. January to the end of March.

The four male instructors proposed the formation of a scuba club and offered to conduct the first training program. Nineteen graduates from the previous snorkel diving course enrolled. The training staff appointed an interim executive.

The first scuba training program was at Porter CI in the spring of 1961 and did not include an open water checkout, yet it was expected they would all help with the training of new recruits from the Parks and Rec. skin diving program. Membership was \$10 + \$1/night pool fee and tanks and regulators were rented from Argosy Sports. There were 17 members that first year. The following year, training took place at Cedarbrae Pool and Community Centre - membership went up to 62!

Herb describes some mistakes made in diving due to lack of experience. On their 5<sup>th</sup> dive, he and another member dove to 80 ft. at Big Bay Point wearing 20 lb. of lead: "We didn't drop our belts to get back to the surface but I sure discovered the limitations of a Shark II regulator. That was a lot of hard work getting off the bottom not to mention the amount of water I drank". (No BCD in those days!)

**\* based on writings from Herb Lynch, former life member and many copies of various Buddylines**

**(1)**



In those early days, SUCI struggled to get insurance coverage at the pool - premiums at that time didn't cover third party liability. Fun dives were spontaneously organized - sometimes with other clubs - and included both night and ice dives. Herb mentions the difficulty in recruiting women: "almost impossible". They were eventually successful with one, Peggy Burton.

A serious dive accident during an ice dive on the Waome is described. (BTW, Herb refers to a depth of 85 ft. Now it is only at about 75 ft.) A club member became lost under the ice and when found after an "abnormally long time", he was unconscious and not breathing. One diver managed to restore the victim's breathing - mostly in a VW Beetle on the way to hospital.

During those very early years of SUCI, the club profit was put toward their first banquet at Maple Creek Farm - free for all members. Log books were also given out to members.

In 1968, several SUCI members started a historical group to research details of many shipwrecks. One member, Bill McNeil, accrued over 15 years of Great Lakes shipping information. Several members of SUCI became active in SOS (Save Ontario Shipwrecks), which was established in 1979. "As soon as the ice went out in April, search, mapping, drawing and recovery of artifacts commenced." - Tom Towson, sec. Historical Committee/1970.

In the late 1950's, divers started ice floe racing in the Peterborough area. In the past, as many as 60 clubs were involved, as the race became an international affair. For years it included a Saturday night dance and a Sunday buffet.

During the weekend of May 12, 1979, both SUCI and OUC members performed the "Waome Cleanup". In 39°F water, dangerous wires, nails, glass, jagged boards and debris were removed. A permanent bow and stern buoy system were designed in order to protect the precious shipwreck. Photographs were also taken, despite the lack of ambient light. *Well done!!* (2)



## Other Interesting Facts

- For the first 2 years, executive consisted of chairman/ president, secretary and treasurer, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> VP added.
- Training in early years (before PADI) based on standards prescribed by A.C.U.C and N.A.U.I.
- OUC was created in 1958, initially to lobby the provincial government for spear fishing rights in Ontario. SUCI joined in 1962. The first goal was evaluation of diver and instructors. SUCI played a very active role in OUC.
- SUCI was instrumental in the formation of the Instructor Advisory Committee which helped set consistent minimum standards in teaching scuba diving in Ontario: a world recognized A.C.U.C program.
- Participated in the Sportsmen's Show 1969 – great displays.
- Legal advisors were used for documentation, by-laws etc.
- In 1970, Dr. Tom Towson established the “Triton Trophy” in honour of outstanding SUCI trainee's of the year. Dr. Towson was active in both archaeological studies and instructor certification programs, was medical advisor to ACUC, organized International Diving Medicine Seminar in Toronto and was active in OUC as well. He received numerous awards for his outstanding efforts in diving. This included the Ontario government's Special Achievement Award.
- T. Towson announced in 1970 that there were 658 newly certified divers under OUC Diver Certification – to encourage untrained divers to be properly trained and avoid needless diving accidents. Also, 57 dive clubs representing 2 176 members + 10 individual members.
- Requests for Buddyline articles - the “bare cupboard”.
- Descriptions of Dr. Joe MacInnis' Subliminos project



- In the early days, at Cedarbrae pool, reference is made to a game entitled “murder-ball’. Described as very strenuous, scratches on the backs of players...*mmmm, sounds familiar!* Also a jousting game: platforms on inner tubes – using poles, which despite the soft ends, ‘smarted’ various body parts...!
- Several dive clubs then had underwater hockey teams. This game was also wild, especially when masks were ripped off; flippers were thrown at players – to the point of a ruptured ear drum...yikes! For trainees, 10 minutes of underwater hockey or water polo gave them credit for swimming 10 pool lengths.
- In 1973, mention made about a motion to lower the age limit for scuba training to 12 yr. (children of members only). A strongly worded lengthy explanation as to why this was a dangerous idea was given in the Buddyline. Suggested it be amended to age of 14 yr. (sound familiar?)
- Motions to outline duties/responsibilities of Divemasters (1971)
- In 1970, membership dues of \$20 incl. pool fees; prior to this, pool fees were paid at the door. Pool rental increased from \$7.50/hr. to \$10 that year. No lifeguards –members did “Pool Patrol”, incl. three whistle blows to clear pool at 10:00 p.m.
- September, 1970 elections: nominations and elections took place the same night. Many nominated – most declined but enough that each of the positions were filled.
- Popular dive sites in 1970 or so: Lily Parsons, the Atlantic, Tobermory, the Mayflower at Lake Kamaniskeg. Also Fenelon Falls (quarry?), Presquil’le Park. Dive season mid-May to October - included long weekends. Trainees often invited to skin-dive, since they weren’t yet certified. They dove everywhere: bottle cleanup at Kirkfield Quarry, Byng Inlet, Bon Echo Prov. Park: Lake Mazinaw - diving of cliffs in channel. Also, “*It is imperative, for the success of this dive program that all club members participate (to) the greatest extent that their circumstances will allow*”. June Buddyline, 1972.



## Other Interesting Facts

- 1970: membership fees were “due Jan. 1<sup>st</sup> and must be paid before Jan. 30<sup>th</sup>...and if dues have not been paid by Jan. 30<sup>th</sup>, a member may be dropped from the roll...and reinstated on payment of dues.”
- Open Water dive sites - often in mid-May: Clear Lake (n. of Lakefield), many times Big Bay Point, a private residence on the west shore of Hall’s Lake in the Haliburtons, Cedar Point
- A lengthy story in Jan., 1970 Buddyline about the J.C. Morrison (“quite grand 150 ton vessel, ornately furnished, with velvet plush and embellished woodwork...and hand carved figurehead”) and how she was destroyed by fire. What is interesting is the mention that “it is possible that her remains have been undisturbed since August 4<sup>th</sup>, 1857 and are merely waiting for someone in the spring of 1970 to go looking for her!” (It was discovered by a diver in 1974 and made public in 1976.)
- A lot of cold dives in those days! For example, Tom Towson and Bill McNeil (very active divers) did dives on Sunday mornings. One was a skin dive in 12°F air temperature at the foot of Port Union in Jan., 1970. Found items such as golf balls, pipes and a schooner spike which Tom speculated may have come from the Marysburg wreck ...which has not been found.
- Buddylines emphasized the importance of divers keeping fit by swimming lengths, playing various water games etc.
- In 1972, members helped reinforce Sweepstakes wreck in Big Tub Harbour, Tobermory
- SUCI did research on “tube rescue” procedure developed by NAUI: resuscitation on a diver’s float: an inner tube
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## Other Activities in SUCI's Earlier Days

- SUCI and the Canadian Sub-Aqua clubs chartered a bus to Fairhaven, Mass. in the Cape Cod area. They were the guests of the Fairhaven Whalers for a local dive.
- Participated in 1971 in Sport Ontario Lottery (500 tickets at \$1): 40% of sales to club, 10% to OUC, rest to Sport Ontario.
- Log pushing contest at Fenelon Falls (SUCI won first heat, beaten by narrow margin in final round). Entries incl. Hart House, Rynauts, RMC Kingston, York Sub-aqua (2 teams), Aqua System, Midland Ave. Collegiate.
- Dances once or twice a year in addition to the Annual Dinner Dance, incl. New Year's Eve Dance in 1973 at the Wellington Motor Motel that didn't end until 2:50 a.m.
- New Year's Day/1970 dive at the Balmy Beach Canoe Club.
- Dive clubs extended invitations to each other's dances etc.
- GM Divers of Oshawa hosted Inner Tube races at Oshawa Harbour on March 29, 1970.
- February, 1970 ice dive hosted by Hamilton Sub-Mariners at a farm near Dundas, ON.
- At an OUC Spring Convention in the Park Motor Hotel in Niagara there was a Miss OUC contest: swimsuit competition in the afternoon and crowning of Miss OUC at the evening dance. As a club member pointed out: *"The Scarborough Underwater Club have never had a contestant in the Miss OUC contest (can be Mrs.) yet. Come on girls - look at what you can win. A full cruise wear outfit from Sea Queen of Canada. Plus more gifts."*

By Nora Mark, Secretary of SUCI