

My memories of the origin of D.U.C. & its Founders .

D.U.C. was originally conceived by a small group of enthusiasts who came together largely as result of contacts made while pursuing their common interest in snorkeling, spearfishing & elementary Scuba & Re-breather Diving in the area of Vetches', Limestone Reef, the piers at Harbour entrance, The Bay and other venues.

This group soon became aware of the special camaraderie which was being developed amongst them, the essential factor of not diving alone, together with the many advantages of shared experiences, equipment, etc. Bearing in mind the very basic nature of Diving equipment in those days, much of it suspect to some degree.

It became apparent then that a Club was the answer.

In those early days, of 1951 this group substantially comprised of :-

Bob Levitt, Gordon Lumley, Eric Vere-Davis, Harold Hepplethwaite, Bob Johnston, Alex Fagan,

Ted Henley, Talbot Goodlad, Harold Peskin, Gene Franken, Ken de Villiers, Dan Collins,

Des Thomas, Boet Martins, Eric Roest, Maurice Mc Gregor, Derek Wilkinson, Tony Mclean,

Miles Reid, Rubert Stead. & some very welcome Ladies like; Margie Martins, Stephanie Henley, and Wives & Girlfriends of their men. Also Geoff Aiken-Smith, Ron Wright, Johnny Wormser,

Julian Snyman, [later to break away, forming Associated Divers].

The inaugural meeting of DUC took place in the auditorium of Natal Technical College.

Thereafter our monthly meetings were held at the Palmerston Hotel, and members usually wore jacket & tie. (I remember that as Gene & I were under 16 our Subs were 2 shillings & 6 pence per annum, [25cents] as junior members). By the middle of 1952 the club was attracting many new members, among the pioneers were

Mike Liebenberg, George Askew, Paul Malherbe, Johnny Buzzard, Len Jones, Sean Pitt-Kennedy,

Ian Dalgliesh, Peter Gibson, Brian Webb, Arthur Southey, Peter Donaldson & Ian Massey.

Those inclined to participate in the growing pursuit of spearfishing, soon became known as "Spearo's" or "Surf Steamboats" [due to the prohibition by the authorities at that time, of entering the sea from a small craft, so it was ' Swim out through the surf ' or find some other pursuit].

In those days although we were all very much beginners some amazing & useful equipment was designed & put together by members, many being forerunners of today's hi-tech gear.

However, not all attempts at D.I.Y. were fool proof; tragically our esteemed Chairman Gordon Lumley lost his life while diving alone with his D.I.Y. Closed Circuit Re-breather early in 1956/57.

As you can imagine this definitely spelled the beginning of the end to Re-breathers, and most Divers began to concentrate on compressed air rigs, & although some accidents still occurred, thankfully they were seldom fatal, although not altogether.

By 1958 the club had grown substantially & the lure of various new disciplines attracted many new members and the pursuit of under water activities had brought into being many other Clubs throughout the Union & the Rhodesia's.

Some time in the early 60,s The Club negotiated the Lease of the present site with the S.AR&H.

Prior to that gatherings took place either on the beach in front of our present site or at premises we leased behind Addington Hospital.

Underwater activities were fast becoming very popular, as more and more people world wide, and in South Africa, took to "taking the Plunge" so to speak.

D.U.C. attracted many "new" members thereafter, not only from Durban area, many of whom contributed enormously towards the existence of D.U.C. its success & achievements, making D.U.C. what it is today.

It followed that one National Body was required to regulate these bodies & so DUC.'s. Committee under Tim Condon played a pivotal role in the formation of & incorporation into S.A.U.U.

In truth I very much doubt that many of us in those early days ever dreamed it would lead to 57 wonderful years for DUC!

Foot note; Sadly many of the original founders and early members & others, are no longer here.

Ken De Villiers