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Its companion paper (Drowning syndromes: the mechanism) will appear in the March 1998 issue of the SPUMS Journal.

THE WORLD AS IT IS

AUSTRALIA'S UNDERWATER LINE DANCING RECORD ATTEMPT

Peter Fields

Following the spectacular growth and success of the Historical Diving Society in the USA, an outfit which has attracted diving luminaries such as Hans and Lotte Hass, Jean-Michel Cousteau, E R Cross, Bev Morgan, Phil Nuytten, Dr Sylvia Earle and many other celebrities too numerous to mention, our own representative Bob Ramsay, the expatriate Scot from Adelaide, set up a branch in 1996 in Australia. Since then the Diving Historical Society Australia SE Asia has blossomed and is attracting people from all parts. Folk with a love of diving and its history, collectors and restorers of old equipment and aficionados of standard dress (hard hat) diving.

After a succession of social get-togethers in the region Bob was looking for ideas for something a bit more grand. Over a few beers one Adelaide evening Bob was musing on what to do with, say, 3 or 4 helmet divers in a pool. John Riley, in a flash of alcoholinspired mischief, suggested a line dancing competition. Bob was entranced and passed on the idea to Melbourne's John Allen. So was born the Word Record Attempt for Underwater Line Dancing.

John Allen ran with the idea and, using his brilliant organising skills, created not only a superb record attempt but a whole weekend of entertainment and recreation for

standard dress lovers, society members and their friends from all over Australia.

On a fine spring Saturday in October nine men and one woman in traditional helmet diving dress, plus all the myriad paraphernalia which accompanies this activity, lined up at the Harold Hold Swim Centre in Glen Iris (in suburban Melbourne), Victoria, ready to create a record.

John Allen had planned the event down to the last detail; pallets of 240 cu ft cylinders, delivered by BOC Gases, were on hand, media fact sheets had been handed out to print and electronic media, a detailed scheme of underwater arrangements was set out on a white board, a cook tent and canteen set up to provide breakfast and lunch for the participants and a local bootscootin' club alerted to be on hand to coach the tyro standard-dress line dancers.

In addition, topside and underwater supervisors were briefed and ready to direct and assist the divers, easy access to the 5 metre deep pool was provided via builders' ladders and a range of trophies and certificates awaited the successful conclusion of the dive. Awards were to be given for: Best Presented Equipment, Best Dressed Dive Crew and, most coveted of all, Best Underwater Line Dancer.

To further illustrate the depth and detail of John's organising skills, extra dive crew hands were on duty to assist, spare Desco cuffs were on stand-by in case of blow-out and Melbourne dive historian Jeff Maynard and your correspondent were detailed to handle media arrangements and enquiries.



Fig 1. The venue

By 0900 the poolside was a buzz of activity. Sydney's contingent had a crew of 4 divers and support including a diver all the way from Cairns in North Queensland. All were impeccably attired in matching shorts and gold t-shirts topped with matching Akubra slouch hats. Missing, however, were matching Orotan handbags. Graham Weir had arranged a rental truck and had ferried all the heavy equipment many kilometres down the track from Sydney. Included in the Sydney equipment was a beautiful handcrafted wooden diver-distribution and communications panel, a real work of art.

Melbourne, the home team, had a fine line-up of divers including Mandy Jones, the only lady entrant. Frank Zeigler had trucked over his gear from Portland in West Victoria and "Wee Bobby" Ramsay transported his equipment all the way from Adelaide, South Australia.

By 1000 the joint was jumping. You could not get near the divers for media crews, Betacam cameras and foptail mikes on long booms. The media loved it. All the ingredients were there: colour, movement, novelty, history, the romance of diving and, to cap it all, the uniqueness of underwater line dancing.

Craig Jones, topside dive supervisor, briefed the divers on positions, procedures and safety precautions while Geoff Cross prepared for his in-water dive supervisor role. Underwater cameramen readied their equipment, both still and video, Joy Allen the resident chef, cooked resolutely on and Stampede Line Dancing's Cherine Stiller and her team taught the guys and gal their basic underwater dance steps.

The dive, as a result of the impeccable topside organisation, went like clockwork. The divers finished dressing and in an orderly fashion took up their designated positions, in two lines of 5, underwater, making sure all comms were operative and no hoses or lines were snagged. All ready, the music and dance commenced. Ben Cropley, bless his soul, boogied his heart out to emerge clear winner of the Best Underwater Line Dancer trophy.

Cameras flashed and video cameras whirred and the team clumped through their routine. As the dance ended Ben, to amuse the folk topside, did a few balloon ascents, popping his rig out the water clear to his knees, most spectacular.

That was not the end of the weekend. The rest of the day was spent with support crews and others diving the equipment, fun and sport with re-breathers, modern Superlite helmets and general hoop-de-do in the pool, before cleaning up. A great dinner party and presentation was held at Chez Lucien in Moonee Ponds on Saturday evening. Incidentally the previous night, Friday, provided the opportunity for a get-together, drinks and a meal at a grand old pub in South Melbourne. This convivial meeting set the tone for what was to be, in every sense, a great weekend of fun and entertainment.

The Melbourne lads had also organised the Polly Woodside (a fine old sailing ship moored in Melbourne's docklands) Maritime Museum as venue for a talk fest on Sunday morning. Jeff Maynard gave a fine presentation which included footage from early Australian movies of the



Fig 2. The well dressed lady diver



Fig 3. Essential equipment for underwater line dancing

1930's which featured standard dress divers and all sorts of derring-do. Bob Wallace-Mitchell reminisced about the early diving days with Ted Eldred and the development of the Porpoise set and the growth of diving as a sport. A wartime Commonwealth Marine Salvage Board diver, Kevin Hood, entertained with stories of post Japanese air-raid salvage work in Darwin, salvage in the Pacific war theatre and of his time with the legendary Captain Williams (of Niagara gold recovery fame) and diver Johnno Johnstone.

For lovers of old equipment the divers line-up was:

Mandy Jones	Modified MK5 US Navy, 1944 vintage.
John Allen	1970's Yokohama with large face plate (probably fitted for California abalone diving).
Link Kirby	Seibe-Gorman
Ben Cropley	Seibe Gorman, 4-light construction helmet
Bob Ramsay	1943 MK5 Desco
Darren Skerman	US Navy MK5 Schrader
John Balson	Shanghai Diving Work 12 bolt (Chinese)
Michael Graves	Russian Navy 3 bolt
Peter Weir	Toa 12 bolt (Japanese)
Graham Weir	Siebe Gorman 6 bolt.

Contacts

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Who Was Who On The Day:

Craig Jones	Topside Dive Supervisor
Geoff Cross	In Water Helmet Dive Supervisor
Jeff Maynard	Media Liaison
Peter Fields	Media Liaison
Pat Forbes	In Water Media Liaison
Narelle Wilson	Topside Media Supervisor/Assistance
Peter Bathie	Video Cameraman
Laurie Bell	Video Cameraman
Joy Allen	Head Chef

Awards

Best Presented Equipment	Sydney Crew
Most Original Equipment	Bob Ramsay, Adelaide
Best Underwater Line Dancer	Ben Cropley, Melbourne
Best Dressed Crew	Sydney Team