



Beneath the Sea
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Meadowlands Exposition Center
Secaucus, New Jersey

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BENEATH THE SEA proudly presents their DIVING PIONEER for 2023 Walt “Butch” Hendrick



Butch's career began in 1954 during his first dive at age 7 in Candlewood Lake, CT. By 1960 he was running snorkeling trips in Puerto Rico from his family's boats in one of the world's first dive resorts. As a teen, he ran injured divers through hyperbaric treatments in the Caribbeans only non-military chamber installed by his family and started a busy offshore water rescue team. While lifeguarding in San Juan's large surf Butch created the diver do-si-do and in-water ventilation procedures that he later presented at a NAUI IQ and that is used worldwide today. At 16 Butch found and saved his first drowning victim – a schoolgirl who drowned during a beach trip. Butch provided revolutionary CPR while nuns beat him thinking he was assaulting the girl. Two years later he saved a scuba student who sank during a swim test. Butch loaded him into his VW Bug providing CPR and oxygen during transport and later learned the student suffered a brain aneurysm and likely would have died had it occurred outside of Butch's class. Also at age 16 Butch was a support diver for Andre Galerne and rode the outside of the French Bathysphere to 160 feet in the Bronson Trench off Puerto Rico. That same year Butch created the Rescue Throw Rope Bag that has saved thousands of people around the world and for which he received the Leonard Greenstone Award.

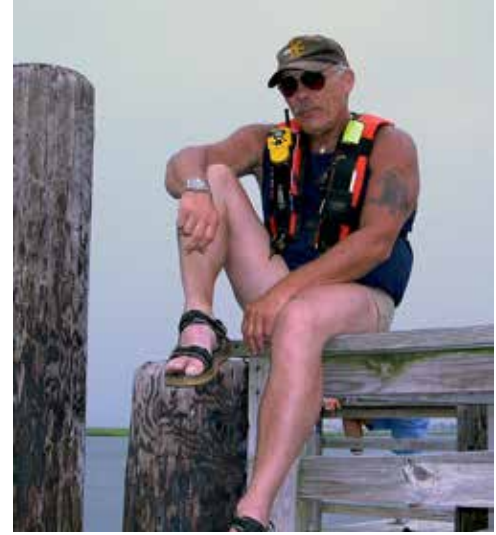
At age 17 he worked as a safety diver for Jacques Cousteau on the Calypso during the filming of the turtle hatching off Aves Island, filmed in incredibly rough water, teeming with sharks and other predators. He was a safety diver for Hydrolab and was the Training Officer and Safety Coordinator for the Puerto Rico International Undersea Laboratories. In 1978 Butch was the Safety Coordinator for the Green Beret Diver Trainer Program, 1978-88 was the Trainer for the FDNY Rescue Companies Dive Team, the NAUI Eastern Regional Manager for 8 years starting in the late '70s, and 1981-6 was Regional Director for the National Association of Search & Rescue. Butch developed the water safety protocols and did the training for Howard Hughes when he did worldwide ballooning expeditions.

Walt Hendrick Sr, Drs. Lee Somers and Glen Egstrom, Paul Tzamolus, and Chief Gene Cahill (USN), all taught Butch the value of teaching diving at a time when dive instruction was being created. Butch worked started as an- NAUI ITC Team Leader in 1969 and became the ninth person able to create NAUI Course Directors. Many of the divers Butch trained and made dive instructors went on to become important contributors to the diving industry such as Bridget Thompson, Maria Hults, Hillary Vidars, Andrea Zaferes, Christina Zenato, Amos Nachoum, Dr. Karen VanHoesen, Dr. Craig Nelson, Adam Ravitch, Ira Barocas, and many more. Butch saw the need for non-leadership-level divers to have rescue skills and created the first Rescue Diver

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Certification program that NAUI and PADI recognized. It was then that he created and promoted the right-hand-release weight belt standard and the “better lead than dead” weight belt ditching drills. Butch brought NAUI Instructor Training Courses to South Africa while running diving rescue training for national teams around Africa that included the use of the SOS hyperbaric field chamber with helicopter operations. In the 1970’s Butch introduced a controversial 3-slide-projector show at Underwater Canada called “120 Seconds to Save a Life” that showed how easy it was for a diver to die and the difference between effective and ineffective rescue procedures. It was shown at multiple shows. Butch started the concept of paid educational workshops that Beneath the Sea was the first to adopt and soon spread to all major shows, with Beneath the Sea remaining unparalleled for offering diver education.



It was in the 1970’s that Butch increased his teaching of fire, military, and law enforcement in the US and abroad. He started a drown-proofing turnout gear program teaching many hundreds of FDNY firefighters and taught thousands of fire personnel worldwide how to stay safe in the water. Butch created the two-divers up (backup diver and 90 percent-ready-diver) per 1 diver down safety standard for public safety diving that OSHA later also applied. From sonar operations for the Malaysian Military, rescue operations for U.S. Air Force para-combat divers, to local volunteer teams throughout the U.S. and Canada, Butch continues training thousands of public safety divers and water rescue personnel around the world, instituting critical safety standards and developing procedures to keep them safe.

In the 1970’s and 80’s Butch spent many hours working with Moray Wheels designing procedures and training physically challenged divers. He got to spend time working with Great White Sharks with Marie Levine and her team in South Africa. With Andrea Zaferes he created the shark attack rescue program for the Underwater Explorer’s Society in the Bahamas, wrote the first book on oxygen administration for scuba diving accidents, and created the first Field Neurological Evaluation Specialty program recognized by PADI, NAUI, and ACUC – certifying hundreds of divers in oxygen administration and field neuro exams in the 1980’s and beyond. Together they created the Aquatic Death and Homicidal Drowning Programs training thousands of dive team personnel, law enforcement, death investigators, and prosecutors. Together they continue working on diving fatality and aquatic homicide cases.

He started Lifeguard Systems, Team LGS, to further diver education and safety. Butch has several books, hundreds of articles, a number of educational videos, and continues leading the way with leadership level rescue diver training, diver fatality investigations, and work to raise industry standards. A NOGI award winner, he has received awards from multiple countries including the first DAN-Rolox award, South African Paramedics Achievement, NAUI Hall of Honor inductee, Ulster County Sheriff’s Dept Lifesaving award – an act performed in the line of duty, Ontario Underwater Council Outstanding Recognition, British SubAqua Club Outstanding Contribution, U.S.C.G. Admiral’s coin, Boston Sea Rover Lifetime achievement award and more.

Walt Hendrick Sr. said, his greatest contribution to diving was his son. Referred to as the Father of diving rescue, Butch continues working hard to make diving safer.

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