

BOTTOMTIME

The newsletter of the Nova Scotia Underwater Council

February 1994

Press Release

Believe it or not, Spring is just around the corner. Now is the time to dig to the bottom of your dive bag, (I hope you dried everything after your last dive). Get your regulator tank valve, B.C. and whatever other goodies you have serviced before your next dive.

Perhaps the most overlooked item for inspection is you, the diver. How long since you were trained, or since your last dive? Perhaps it is time to investigate a refresher course, or at least go to the pool with your favourite instructor's permission and a good buddy and practise some drills you may not have used for a while. Sharing air, neutral buoyancy, mask clearing and ascents are a good start.

Sometime this March, the largest artificial reef in Nova Scotia is due to be sunk near Lunenburg. Good Luck to all those involved, More about this later in this issue.

continued on page 9

Presidents Report

So Why Insurance?

Why clubs or five individuals should avail themselves of the NSCUC insurance.

1. You can get a better price for liability insurance at \$22 per individual plus \$50 for a club membership.

What's in this Issue ?

1. Press Release
President's report
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by Colin Frazee-Whitelock
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10. South Shore Marine Park Society

Presidents Report continued

2. Liability insurance is becoming the very in thing and will at least cover people for accidents that they might be sued for.

3. The new tenancy act awaiting in the wings to be passed by government will make the need for insurance for various activities an almost must. The new Tenancy law in a simple form is that it will distribute liability. For example : A club charts a boat and there is a serious accident. The scenario; the weather is on the rough side after all the divers go over the side, the boat drags its anchor. There is no dive officer left on board, a pair of divers are swept onto rocks and one seriously injured. WHO IS LIABLE?

continued next page



The Aims and Objectives of the Nova Scotia Underwater Council

1. To be a representative body for the scuba diving community so as to preserve, support and promote diving and diver safety in the provinces;
2. To ensure that training programs are given to a recognized level of quality, to foster and encourage the safe handling and usage of all approved types of equipment used in the sport of scuba diving;
3. To make available to all members information concerning safety, medical, technical and research data concerning the sport of scuba diving and scuba diving equipment;
4. To co-operate and participate with the provincial government on projects and policies that lead to the recognition of sport diving as a significant recreational activity.

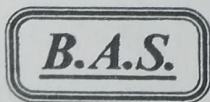
Presidents Report Continued

We will say that the two divers concerned sue for \$1,000,000 a piece. The court may look at this way. The boat captain should have refused to anchor therefore he is 20% liable, there should have been a dive officer left on board, the club is 60% liable. The pair of divers could have refused to dive in those conditions so they are 20% liable. This is just an example but this the way the Tenancy Act is supposed to operate.

Think about this seriously. This not the time to adopt the attitude IWNHM (It will never happen to me.) Even if you belong to a club that does not belong, 5 club members can get together and get the insurance as a club.

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SS Atlantic

by Colin Frazee-Whitelock

The SS Atlantic was built in Belfast in 1871. She was 420 ft. long and registered at 3390 tons. She was powered by four coal fed steam engines with four square rigged masts for back up. On the 20 March 1873 she left Liverpool England on a regular run to New York. She made a brief stop at Queenstown the following day before continuing her fateful last voyage. On board there were almost 1000 passengers, consisting of 33 cabin and 800 steerage class passengers. The crew consisted of the Captain James Williams four officers and 143 crew. As was common practice she carried just enough coal to make the crossing under carefully calculated speeds and wind conditions, with a little extra in case the weather was rougher than anticipated. Unfortunately this practice was ultimately to lead to the Atlantic's demise. From the day the ship left port the captain was uneasy about the quality of the coal on board. This was a mixture of Welsh and English and as he suspected the English coal contained a large quantity of stone which of course was useless. After weighing the risks Captain Williams considered heading for Halifax to purchase more coal.

continued on page 3

Atlantic continued from page 2

Having read the history of quite a few ship disasters this seems to be a common factor in a lot of ship wrecks around the Halifax area. They were heading to Halifax because they were short of coal due to adverse weather conditions in the Atlantic.

On the 31st March the shortage of coal was not going to let her make New York under steam. At this time of year when storms were all too common maneuvering under sail could be very awkward in New York Harbour and so the final decision was taken to head for Halifax.

The captain was a capable seaman and knew the Nova Scotia coast line to be dangerous though he had never sailed it. At midnight he calculated that their course had brought them within 48 miles of Sambro and determined that by 3 a.m. they would be 18 to 20 miles south of Sambro light. It was now the early part of April 1st. There were no stars and the night was as black as a grave, but it was clear. The captain knew Sambro light could be seen from 21 miles in clear weather, and 15 miles in moderate weather, so he deemed soundings necessary. At 2.40 a.m. he retired leaving instructions to be roused at 3 a.m. at which time they would heave to and lay by until daylight. By 3 a.m. the weather had begun to get hazy, and still no lights were seen by the men on watch. The captain was called late at 12 minutes past the hour and did not immediately awaken. A few minutes later ice and breakers were sighted off the bow and the quartermaster ran to the wheel and put the helm hard to starboard, but the steamer struck heavily on Meagher's Rock thus sealing her fate. What happened in the next few hours is almost too horrible to relate. The ship began to keel over almost immediately, most of her lifeboats being crushed or swept into the sea. Six were launched but were over turned by the waves. Only one life boat managed to stay afloat for six minutes and then it too overturned and its passengers were lost. As the frightened passengers emerged on deck Captain Williams ordered them into the rigging, but many were washed away by waves that dashed in constant succession over the deck. People clung to anything that would float - corks, empty flour barrels, pieces of the steamer that had been snapped off by

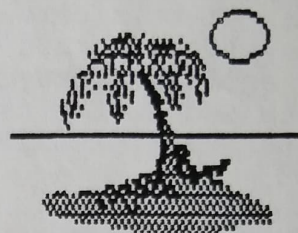
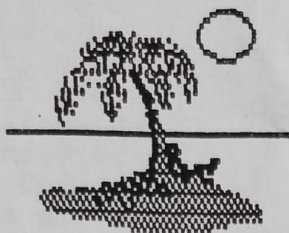
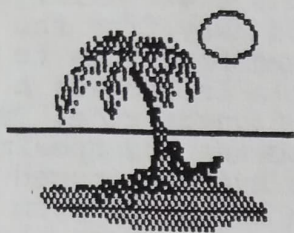
the waves. Several hundred people managed to climb into the rigging, nearly all of them in their night clothes, which offered them little protection from the cold wind and sea. As the night wore on and no rescue vessels were sighted, one by one the people in the rigging were overcome by the elements and fell into the sea.

In desperation a plan was hatched by some of the ship's crew. A large rock lay about 40 yards away from the starboard bow, and from this to the shore of Meagher's Island was a shallow channel about 150 yards wide. Two quartermasters, Owens and Speakman, and a third officer, Brady, managed to swim to the rock with ropes and from there got a line and hawser across the inner channel. This was done with great difficulty as there was a heavy surf running in the channel. Many of those who followed succumbed before reaching the shore as the slack rope was sometimes under water for several yards. Others were forced off the rock to their deaths by the mad crush of people desperate to get ashore. It was about 5 or 6 in the morning when those who had reached the shore were brought to hearty cheers by the sight of a dog that came strolling down the beach. It was soon followed by a man whom immediately went for help to the nearby settlement of Lower Prospect. In a short while 3 boats were setting out from shore in an heroic attempt to rescue people still on the rock and those still alive on the ship's rigging.

The boats were small and it took many trips and many hours to save the few who valiantly clung to life. Some of those who were still alive when the boats set out from shore expired before they could be reached.

As the day progressed the seas grew rougher and by late afternoon the rescue boats could no longer draw near enough to ship the last few to safety from the rigging. One of these was a lad of 12, John Hindley, and he must have known that his last chance of survival was about to withdraw. As a large wave washed into the rigging he let go his grasp and was swept towards the retreating boats. With the last of his strength he swam toward the out

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THE NOVA SCOTIA UNDERWATER COUNCIL'S

14TH ANNUAL SEAHUNT

AT CRYSTAL CRESCENT, N.S.

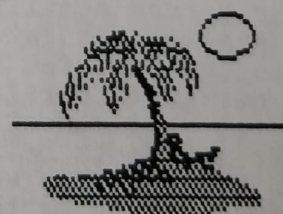
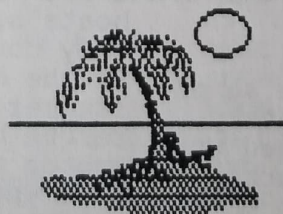
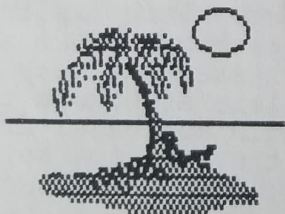
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REGISTRATION



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retched arms of the cheering fishermen and was hauled to safety. John Hindley would have been the last survivor if not for the courage and determination of the Reverend Bill Ancient, a Church of England clergyman from Lower Prospect. The exhausted fishermen had returned to shore, convinced that no efforts could save the last two people remaining in the rigging. The first officer, Mr Firth was by now too weak to swim to the rescue boats and an American woman he lashed to the rigging beside him was very near finished.

The Reverend was a man of powerful faith and would let nobody die if God would give him strength to prevent it. Climbing into one of the boats he pleaded with the fisherman to follow suit.

On reaching the wreck Reverend Ancient managed to climb aboard and throw a rope to Mr Firth. The women had since died her eyes protruding and her mouth foaming whilst numerous jewels sparkled in her hands. Mr Firth tied the rope about his body and jumped clear of the wreck. He was then hauled aboard the boat which then returned to shore.

In this manner, and with the help of the line, 429 souls were brought to safety. By nightfall all of the survivors were lodged in a wooden hut on the island, owned by a fisherman named Clancy. There they were warmed and fed before being billeted off the following day to other homes in the area.

Much of what was recorded about the events of that night was gleaned from interviews with those who were rescued from the rigging that morning by the fisherman from Prospect. One of these was Patrick Leahey, a young Irishman who clung to the mast for seven hours, keeping his blood circulating by moving up and down.

Throughout the night he watched as men on all sides of him dropped from exhaustion. He was soon numbed by the icy sea. He watched the smoking room steward jump overboard with corks tied to his body. He was soon in trouble with the waves and the cold water and the last Leahey saw of him was his

waving hand which remained above the water after his head was no longer visible.

Of all the horrors Leahey witnessed, one scene in particular etched itself on his memory.

After the first glimmer of daybreak pierced the horizon Leahey noticed a large mass drifting past the ship on the crest of a wave. At first it appeared to be a mass of seaweed, but as it passed cries could be heard from the black mass. Those in the rigging could then make out women and children being swept along by the waves. When the Atlantic struck mostly women and children were trapped below decks with no means of escape. With the high seas hundreds of passengers were swept from steerage class to their deaths.

One of the saddest facts about the Atlantic is that not one woman survived and only one child, John Hindley, both his parents and younger brother were drowned. As an orphan he became the favourite of the village. More than a few families wanted to adopt him and an Halifax business man bought him a brand new suit of clothes. In the end he was sent for by his sisters in New York.

Details of the disaster dominated newspaper headlines for weeks. One local newspaper published a daily bulletin from the scene of the wreck. All the gruesome details of bodies washed up and photos of rows of hastily constructed coffins as they lay in common graves were published. The site of the wreck was over run by officials, relatives and by those who were there to pillage what ever they could.

There was much looting of the bodies and it was said that some of the Atlantic's own crew were the worst offenders. As was the practice of the day, the Atlantic had hired some last minute crew members, and among these had been thieves and other criminals. When the wreck occurred they had crowded onto life boats with the

continued next page

SS Atlantic continued from page 5

passengers and some of those who made shore had robbed not only the dead but some of the living as well.

The loss was felt by the surviving officers in particular the captain, who was overheard to say "Would to God even one woman had been saved," the tears were streaming down his face as he said it.

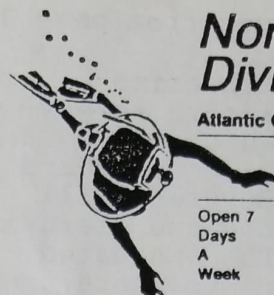
There were some 300 bodies recovered and buried in a field in Terrance Bay a short distance from the wreck. These were the bodies of the crew and steerage passengers. Of the cabin passengers only 13 survived and of those who were drowned the bodies were claimed by their relatives for burial elsewhere.

Today the Atlantic Memorial School stands as a monument to those who died bravely on the SS Atlantic, and to those who risked their lives so others could live.

This was to be the worst marine disaster until the sinking of the SS Titanic.

Today she lies where she sank in varying depths from 27 ft. to 60 ft. very broken up from various salvage attempts and being picked over by amateur divers. This is a boat dive and is a good dive for beginners and experienced divers alike.

Most of the story and information was gleaned from *Disasters At Sea* by Tony Cranston.



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The NSUC Lending Library

- 1991 Sport Diver Open Water Vol 1,
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Using Scuba Diving Equipment video
Sports Diver Open Water Vol 1, 2, Pts 1 & 2 video
Buoyancy/Out of Air Part 1 slides
Rescue/Accident Management Part 1 slides
Rescue/Accident Management Part 2 slides
Dive Promotional Program slides
Audio Tapes for above
Underwater Louisbourg video
Underwater Hockey video
Hyperbaric Video video
Hyperbaric Video (Beta) video
Sport Diver Advanced Vol 1, Parts 1 - 3 video
Contains Equipment, Boat Diving U/W Navigation
Sport Diver Advanced Vol 2, Parts 1 - 3 video
Contains Limited Visibility Diving
Diver Stress and Rescue, Deep Diving
Neal Watson's Undersea Adventures video
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Part 1 Dive Nova Scotia
Part 2 Dive Nova Scotia (continued)
Part 3 Wreck Diving

All videos are VHS unless otherwise stated.
Lending Policy - There is a \$10.00 deposit for each item borrowed (except audio tapes needed for the slide presentations). The deposit will be forfeited if the item is not returned within 21 days of shipping from NSUC. All costs incurred in shipping payable by borrower.

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Sport and Recreation
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ess Report

Continued from page 1

has any one any material to submit for the **Bottomtime** ? There have been no Area Director's reports at least since last June, and although I have written before that all submissions are greatly appreciated, only 3 articles have been received. (All have been used). If the **Bottomtime** is suffering from content, it is only because none has been submitted.

Hope to see you on the beach --
The Editor

The Sunsweep Grand Prize Winners

The Grand prize

Joseph Day
North Sydney, N.S.

The Second Prize

Alexa Smith
Halifax, N.S.

Instructor List

- | | |
|---------------------|----------|
| 1. Dave Allen | 464-4091 |
| 2. Austin Baird | 492-2653 |
| 3. Noel Battcock | 876-0555 |
| 4. Mike Chambers | 454-4296 |
| 5. Sheilagh Condry | 423-5783 |
| 6. Darin Connors | 479-1631 |
| 7. Gary Edwards | 883-9392 |
| 8. Gary Field | 479-2981 |
| 9. Aaron Flynn | 461-2855 |
| 10. Tim Gay | 835-6565 |
| 11. Ken Jardine | 562-6061 |
| 12. T. Kenchington | 889-3555 |
| 13. Roland Lewis | 562-2457 |
| 14. Rob Mack | 860-0684 |
| 15. Chuck Musial | 852-3994 |
| 16. Carolyn Nichols | 466-8715 |
| 17. George O'Neil | 564-5671 |
| 18. Lorne Piercey | 429-8265 |
| 19. Donnie Rogerson | 835-8833 |
| 20. Don Saunderson | 420-1230 |
| 21. James Semple | 876-0555 |
| 22. Joanne Shadbolt | 634-9190 |
| 23. Bob Smith | 462-0738 |
| 24. Ches Chaulk7 | 765-8527 |
| 25. Carol Draper7 | 57-2149 |
| 26. Gordon MacVicar | 564-4863 |
| 27. Russell Warren | 567-2055 |

Congratulations

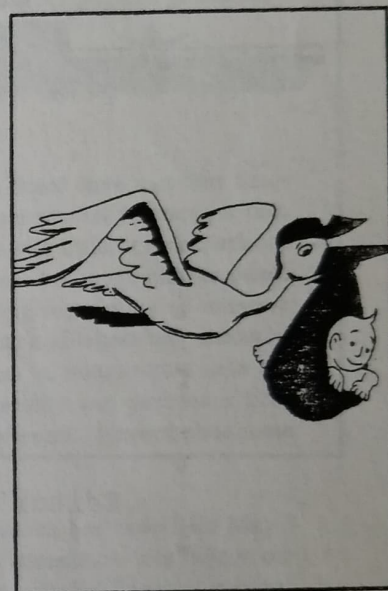
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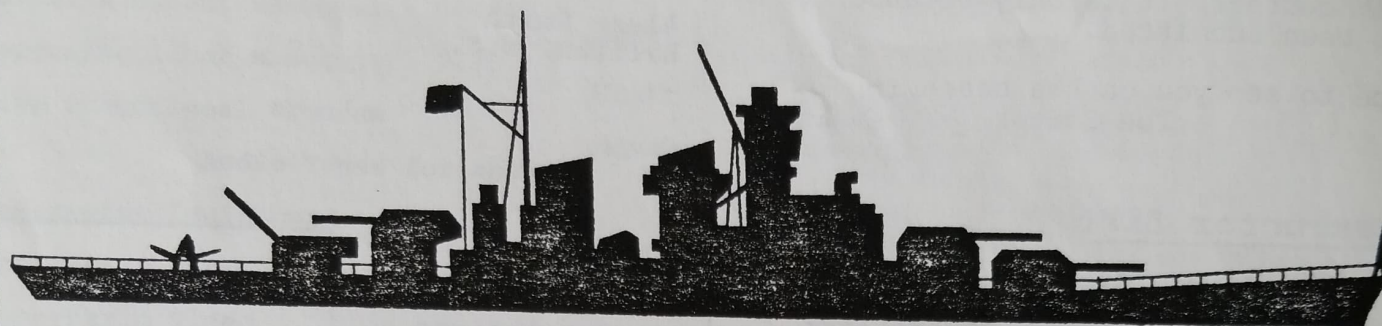
Tim and Holly Gay

on the safe

Arrival of their

Daughter





Editor's Note - The saguenay looks very little like this graphic. Dive the site and get a good impression of what she is like!

The South Shore Marine Park Society

Several people from the Halifax area have travelled to Lunenburg to give a hand cleaning and making the ship diver safe. From them I learn that March is now the expected date that the Saguenau will become the largest artificial reef in Nova Scotia and the first large vessel to be sunk for the sole purpose of diving.

The 33 year old ship which was commissioned in 1956 will be sunk three mile due east of the Ovens Park, halfway between Cross Island and Sculpin Shoal. The Society hopes it come to rest slightly on its side to provide better access and to allow the masts, etc. to be left on the vessel.

The bottom is approximately 28 meters (90 feet), The average visibility is 30 - 40 feet, with 0 - 1 knot tidal currents. This makes for an enjoyable and safe dive for all levels of training and experience.

For technical information, contact the South Shore Marine Park Society, Lamb and Lobster Bed and Breakfast, 619 Garden Lots, R. R. # 1 Lunenburg, B0J 2C0 or call (902) 634-4833.

REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT

As presented at the NSUC Annual General Meeting - May 15, 1993
Sydney, N.S.

I first wish to thank all of you who took time out of your busy schedules to be here today. Special thanks are due to Russell Warren who organized this meeting place. As your Cape Breton representative to the NSUC he has done much to further the sport of scuba diving on the island. It is indeed fitting that this AGM be held in Sydney. If you look at our membership statistics you will see an astounding rise in NSUC members in this area over the past year. This of course is due completely to the opening of Scuba Tech in Sydney. Not all the divers trained through this shop, owned by Suzanne and Ken Jardine are current members of the NSUC, but I understand all their new students will automatically become members upon completion of their various courses. To them I offer, on behalf of the NSUC, our gratitude.

This is the time when the President of any organization looks back over the past year and tries to make some sense out of what has happened or to justify his or her existence, and also attempts to look to the future and see how things can be done better. I am not sure I am up to either task, but I will do my best.

Since the last AGM held at the MicMac Boat Club in Dartmouth, the Executive and/or the Board have met four times to conduct business. This is in contrast to the ten meetings held the previous year. There are several reasons for this. After the 1991 meeting the volunteer Board members were for the most part all new members with little or no experience so we met frequently to get comfortable with our roles. In the past year we did not feel the need to meet quite as often. In retrospect, perhaps we should have met a few more times. Another reason for not meeting was simply to conserve money. These meetings are held in Halifax because that the official head office of the society and where our executive office is located. To ask the Directors to travel to Halifax can be an expensive proposition (although most have not claimed their full expenses). Another reason for not meeting must simply be stated as apathy and perhaps a little frustration. We all suffer from this from time to time and your volunteer Directors are no different. Nevertheless some things were accomplished.

At our May 30, 1992 meeting we were able to give a preliminary report on the ScubaFest which had been held May 9 & 10. While this was a successful event in terms of the organization and attractions, attendance was below our expectations while expenses were quite a bit higher than anticipated such that it can not be called a financial success. It was decided not to attempt this project in the current year - although future ScubaFests are a definite possibility.

The other main event of 1992 was the September 13th Seahunt. Although this was held on a near perfect sunny Sunday, the event was clouded by misunderstanding precipitated by some lapses in planning by your executive with the result that we did not get the support from the majority of dive shops in the Metro area. However, it was a fun day for the 190 participants and everyone took home some sort of prize. Unfortunately we overspent on last minute advertising which consumed any profits.

Because of these two events the Council found itself in some financial difficulty in the latter part of the year. In fact we still owe a few dollars of which we will hear in the Treasurers report.

One success story of 1992 was that we were at last able to send out to both present and past members the hyperbaric emergency cards which are suitable for attachment to gear bags. The card contains various emergency numbers which are then available for ready reference. These were sent to past members because the funds to produce them came from a previous budget. Such a card is given free with each membership; additional cards are available for purchase.

Another positive aspect is that we have experienced a boom in membership. I must offer my tanks to Gloria Connors of Divers World who was the first to follow up on the suggestion that all new divers become NSUC members as part of their open water training. Suzanne & Ken Jardine have also had enough faith in the Council to make a similar offer, and so we also thank them. The double digit inflation we are experiencing due to both these efforts are most appreciated.

This time last year I made a comment on the opening of two new dive shops in Nova Scotia - Jo's in Lunenburg and Scuba Tech here in Sydney. As we are well aware, Scuba Tech is thriving, and I can assure you Jo's is also doing well from what I saw on the recent visit. This year I am happy to report that yet another dive outlet is about to open its doors. I have sent my congratulations to Tim Gay on the opening of Discover Diving in Bedford. Congratulations must also go to Jim Hennebery on the move of Dive Masters to its new location in the Wyse Road Plaza. I hear today that Joe MacIssac is all set to get with his dive charter service in Louisbourg. The proliferation of such businesses in Nova Scotia and the continued success of the established firms is testament to the interest and popularity of sport diving and hopefully a sign the recession is fast coming to an end. I remind you all these shops are here to serve you - the divers of Nova Scotia. Help yourself to enjoy your chosen sport by supporting your local dive shop.

The past year saw the 'retirement' of our administrator Marcel Maessen. At the same time we welcomed Michael Haynes and are pleased to see his enthusiasm for our world of diving.

In the May 1992 issue of Bottomtime I spoke in a positive manner regarding the Canadian Federation of Underwater Activities (CFUA). I had great hopes for positive action. However the only communication since received from CFUA was a recent request to renew membership - which has been declined. While I support the idea of a national association for scuba diving, it is my contention we cannot afford a membership for which there is no return, nor can the divers of Nova Scotia support and Canadian association when they seem reluctant to support a Provincial Council.

Although talked about for many years there has been some action taken within the past year toward the establishment of artificial reefs and underwater parks. I can only see this as a positive move for the sport. Those involved in such projects are to be encouraged and I urge all to get involved. Much still needs to be done to convince the skeptical and influence the politicians. The more people involved the lighter will be the work and the quicker the desired result.

It has long been suggested the Council organize safety seminars - and indeed this was a planned project for the past year. Unfortunately as a Council we never quite got our act together. However, as was shown in Cape Breton with a little initiative this type of event can be put on, and even be profitable. This is the type of things where the Area Directors ought to be the driving force to get the local divers involved. Future survival of the NSUC depends on the active participation of the Area Directors - we must go out to the divers.

As a last comment as your President, I ask all of you to have some care and be aware of the environment - not just that below the surface but also that which borders it. This applies especially to parking sites which may be privately owned. Project a good image so that we can continue to use public property for everyone's enjoyment.

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