

Two Generations: Two NAUI Leaders

In our world of scuba, there are many divers, but there are relatively few “capital D” Divers. Multigenerational Diver families are fewer still. The Cousteau family is one. The Sam Miller family is another. The father, Samuel Miller III (NAUI A27) made his first scuba dive in 1951. The son, Samuel Miller IV (NAUI 13227) made his first scuba “dive” in the bathtub when he was 2 years old.

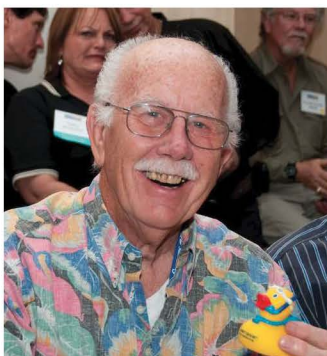
Miller III’s acquaintance with the underwater world began in 1943 when an eye infection from his local YMCA pool in Indiana forced him to wear swim goggles, and he discovered he could see underwater. He managed to acquire a mask and a pair of Churchill fins and became an avid snorkeler in area lakes. The early 1950s brought him to California, where he immediately made the transfer from fresh water to the Pacific Ocean. One of the attractions of the ocean was spearfishing and bringing home dinner.

He made his first scuba dive on Memorial Day 1951 in Divers Cove, Laguna Beach, California.

“We had no diving instruction till 1954,” Miller III said. “In those days, every time you put your head underwater, it was a new experience. ... When you bought your diving equipment, you got a little pamphlet of about six or eight pages that you read, and that was the sum total of instruction.” There was no real buddy diving either. It was “same ocean, same day” buddyman-ship. Once in the water, each diver did what he wanted.

After serving in the U.S. Air Force in Korea, he returned to Southern California and diving. The sport was burgeoning; its main attraction remained spearfishing. The ocean was teeming with life, and you could easily harvest a dinner of lobster, abalone or fish, often simply wading in from the beach.

Diving brought together Miller III and his wife, Betty, who was also a diver. Their four children — daughters Roni, Randi, and Keni, and son, Sam IV — could easily go down to the ocean and catch dinner. They sometimes grew tired of the seafood delicacies that they or their father brought home and pleaded for hot dogs “like the other kids.”



Once the whole family became qualified divers, Catalina Island became a favorite offshore diving destination for them.

Miller III began teaching scuba at the Long Beach YMCA in 1956. Los Angeles County established its Underwater Instructor Certification Program in the mid-1950s, and Miller III attended a course and became a certified instructor. When NAUI was established in 1960, he became a NAUI Instructor (NAUI A27), and he spent 28 years actively teaching people to dive.

His enthusiasm and increasing knowledge of diving made him a recognized expert in the field. He has authored numerous articles for diving magazines and websites, developed instructional programs, been a lecturer at conferences, a newspaper columnist, consultant for equipment manufacturers, expert witness and even diving safety officer for Cousteau’s deep sub-

mersible *Denise*. He has assembled what is probably the most complete private collection of recreational diving books, periodicals and ephemera in the world.

Miller III has estimated that in his more than six decades of diving, he has made over 8,000 dives all around the world, many of them with his wife and son. At 86 years old, his adventure with all things ocean continues.

In the next generation, Samuel Miller IV, was a diver almost from birth. Having first mastered bathtub diving as a toddler — the regulator had a long hose and the cylinder was on the bathroom floor — he graduated to the family pool at age 4 using a MSA cylinder with homemade backpack. At 5 years old, he was in the Pacific Ocean. “Not too deep and not far from shore, but he was underwater, and in his own mind, he was a diver,” said his father.

Miller IV had a lot of encouragement from his family and also from family friends who were diving luminaries themselves. The photo shows “Sammy Miller” on his sixth birthday getting ready for a dive with Dr. Charlie Brown, NAUI’s medical adviser, with whom Miller IV dived many times. Brown was interested in learning how a young child adapted to diving.

By the time he reached his 10th birthday, Miller IV had logged more than 100 open-water dives, and that year, he completed the Los Angeles County and NAUI Scuba Diver courses, although he was too young to be certified.

During the summer of his 12th birthday, he was accepted and successfully completed a 40-hour US Divers equipment repair course.

At age 18, he became the youngest person listed in *Who's Who of Scuba Diving*.

In SoCal diving circles, Miller IV was considered a top hunter and freediving spearfisher. When he turned 18, he was accepted for provisional membership in the Long Beach Neptunes Spearfishing Club, and then into full membership.

In his spare time, Miller IV designed, fabricated and sold custom-built teakwood spearguns. His guns had a custom-length balance bar measured to the user's arm length and a handle that was shaped from a mold of the owner's gloved hand in the shoot-in position.

During college, he served on weekends as a deck-hand on the dive charter boat *Golden Doubloon*.

In 1991, Miller IV became a NAUI Instructor (NAUI 13227) and taught scuba at one of the Southern California dive shops. He won a scholarship to the Catalina Chamber course, completed their internship and became a qualified chamber technician.

While waiting to enter medical school, he began technical mixed gas diving with his friend Jeff Bozanic, making deep technical dives on a regular basis off the California coast.

After completing medical school in Pomona, California, and an emergency room residency in Kingman, Arizona, he won a fellowship in hyperbaric diving medicine at University of San Diego Medical Center. At the end of the fellowship in 2008, he accepted a position at Marion Regional Medical Center in Santa Maria, California, where he is currently their director of ER/Hyperbaric Medicine.

Miller III summed up much of the feelings of him and his family: "The ocean provides bountiful gifts. It's a recreational area to protect for all present and future generations. Everybody should be able to enjoy it. Every time I went diving, it was a privilege for me to go into the water."

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