

**Introduce Yourself – Red Larsen**

**to --Our Association's National Executive  
Head Table Guests**

**All the Ladies and Other Guests here tonight  
(and last but not the least )**

**My Fellow Divers All**

**Tonight I am greatly honoured to introduce to you a very distinguished gentleman guest who we have here with us tonight at our head table.**

**I refer to :-**

**Surgeon Captain (Navy) Derek John Kidd - OMM DSC**

**CD**

**(Order of Military Merit   Distinguished Service Cross   Canadian Forces  
Decoration )**

**With the help of his good wife Patricia (sitting there beside Derek), his own recollections and my limited association with him I will attempt to enlighten you here tonight of the accomplishments of this very dedicated individual and of his important contributions to our diving community.**

**Dr. Kidd was born in the Lambeth borough of London England on July 5<sup>th</sup> 1922. He got a taste of diving at the rather early age of about 3 years. Living in Cambridge, he wandered away from home one day and realized -- - no doubt with glee ---- his proximity to a busy body of water ---- the Cam**

river. By accident or design, he ended up immersed in it, and was fished out rather ignominiously with a boat hook. He must have enjoyed the experience because he repeated it not long afterwards. Accidental? Who knows? Most likely, the beginnings of a life-long interest in using himself as a guinea pig for his own experiments. Later in life, he at least figured out that he would last much longer ---- if he was properly equipped.

At the age of 17 years he joined the Royal Navy as an Ordinary Seaman in September 1939 and after serving on HMS Sandwich in the China Seas he was drafted to Portsmouth by early 1940. Here, he was assigned as the coxswain of a launch, that was part of the flotilla, that helped rescue the British and Allied troops off the beaches of France at the Battle of Dunkerque in May 1940. Shortly afterwards he was posted ashore as an Upper Yardsman ( this marked him as a future commissioned officer prospect) Because he was rated in the top 5% of his group he was placed on a special navigation course for officers destined for service in anti-submarine vessels. Therefore, during the remainder of World War II; he served much of his time as an anti-submarine officer aboard the British destroyer HMS Wanderer escorting Arctic Convoys and the support groups that aided the D-Day Landings, this was in addition to many other successful action related forays. ( looking up Wanders record she had one of the most successful submarine “kill” records of the war). Due to his tracking skills in one particular sub sinking chase Dr. Kidd was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross. He was also Mentioned in Dispatches on two other separate occasions. It was sometime during this period that he recalls taking a diving course in Portsmouth. This probably stimulated his

interest in researching the limits of underwater activity; however, until he immigrated to Canada those opportunities were unavailable.

From 1947 to 1954 Dr Kidd was at Charing Cross hospital in London England doing his medical training via a government sponsored/assisted training program as the result of his wartime service. He did his PhD research in the area of artificial acclimatization to heat and cold – and **as his good wife suggests** –

it was a remarkably perceptive choice given the present effects of climate change today–

**Patricia says -- Who knows? He may yet be employable!**

Turning down 2 offers of lucrative private practices in England, Dr. Kidd joined the Royal Canadian Navy in 1954. Alas, his hopes of following in the footsteps of the notorious “Capt Kidd” his earlier pirate namesake, were dashed by his appointment to HMCS Labrador and he was thus sent to the Arctic where there was very little plunder to be had. He served as ship's doctor for both trips Labrador made through the Northwest Passage, the first of which involved circumnavigating North America. Whilst in the Arctic he deployed experimental diving suits designed specifically for Arctic waters.

Amongst his awards and honours he remembers with particular pleasure was his “Certificate in Knee Deep Diving” awarded by our own Jim (Tug) Wilson after an adventurous dive in Bedford Basin! Unfortunately as we all now know Jim Wilson passed away on Monday 31 August. I was in

fact trying to call Jim on the night of September 1<sup>st</sup> to obtain a little more detail and background of this award to Dr. Kidd. Sadly that information is now lost with the ages!

But no doubt, in light of this prestigious award from Tug Dr. Kidd was seconded in the early 1960's to the Chairman of the Defence Research Board specifically to assess the current state of deep diving then in practice. After visiting several countries around the globe including a lengthy stint at the Royal Navy's Experimental Diving Unit in the United Kingdom he gave his report and on his recommendation, Canada decided to form its own experimental organization to pursue diving research. After much discussion “the powers that be” (Ottawa) decided that the Defence and Civil Institute of Environmental Medicine (DCIEM) in Toronto should be the location for an experimental diving program. Although far from Canada's coasts the availability of many research scientists, a large local manufacturing base, a military environment and the fact the Institute of Aviation Medicine (IAM) was already located there and were investigating the opposite end of the “stick”, so to say, by studying the reduction of pressure for aviation matters versus the divers requirement to study increases of pressure for diving related matters. These particulars probably influenced the rationale of this decision. Dr. Kidd was then delegated to be the leader of this experimental diving unit. This ultimately led to his meeting Wing Commander Royston (Roy) Stubbs a superb physicist and former pilot already attached to IAM who also was interested in pressure related aviation problems. It was about this time that Dr. Kidd had decided that diving decompression

was the main obstacle to overcome. He decided then that the solution had to be an analogue computer. It would be designed to detect changes in ambient pressure on a continuous basis in order to provide an analysis of its significance in relation to safety for a diver. In essence it would provide the diver with a constant safe decompression ascent path. Then in conjunction with Roy Stubbs input they designed, built and patented their initial model of a pneumatic analog decompression computer. I am privileged to have here in my possession a very technical and interesting scientific history paper put together by Phil Nuytten of Can Dive detailing Dr. Kidd and Roy Stubbs work on this decompression computer. --- **Display Write-up** -- It makes extremely knowledgeable reading. Over the years this development after many diving trials and eventual conversions via modern day technology and electronics has resulted in the modern day diver decompression computer which is now throughout the world, a common item in our diving toolbox along with compatible decompression tables that have been developed in parallel.

Originally most of the testing was done at the Toronto General Hospital's hyperbaric chamber facility often during the midnight hours when it was available. To facilitate the required testing of the decompression computer and other diving related equipment Dr. Kidd was influential in having a 350ft rated decompression chamber facility including a water filled pressure chamber built at DCIEM. That facility is presently just reaching the end of it's life span but at the time provided an on site capability for the required testing and research.

**I am sure there are many divers here tonight who were on the east or west coasts during the late 1960's and early 1970's who participated in the evaluation of several various computer models during deep water tasking, official trials and other such evaluations. Those important results helped us to get to the final product and to where we are today in the field of diving decompression computers.**

**In the late 1960's Dr. Kidd and his team developed a one man transportable decompression chamber that could be carried in a variety of transports in order to provide continuous treatment for a diver suffering decompression sickness. He was also involved in the simultaneous development of a larger chamber that provided a capability for attaching the portable unit and transferring the patient to the larger chamber while both chambers were still under pressure. Of course this procedure is commonplace today.**

**During this time (1960's and 1970's) Dr. Kidd was our go to guy when decompression sickness treatments turned sour and we needed expert guidance and knowledgeable consultation. I personally was very relieved on a number of life endangered decompression sickness treatment occasions when Dr. Kidd gracefully appeared on the scene to take charge of a difficult situation and provided direction and support. While doing so, (he was by this time a full three ring navy Commander) yet he was always the most confident individual and easiest person to get along with, providing confidence to us all. For that I would like to personally thank him at this time. As an aside, I will inform you that Dr. Kidd was very respectfully called "Dr. Pete Kidd" by most of us who worked with him. I do not know**

the background of where the name Pete originated from but we all felt comfortable with it and we appreciated his “down to earth approach”.

Dr. Kidd retired from the RCN in 1979 and served for many years as the main authority then available in Canada on diving accidents. He also was heavily involved in the Undersea & Hyperbaric Medical Society (UHMS) from whom he received their “Lifetime Achievement Award” in 2003. By 1985 he had swapped the salty sea for a sea of rhododendrons, planting 365 (last count) in his Moss Street garden here in Victoria. In case you are wondering---- According to Patricia no, they do NOT look after themselves, regardless of what the salesmen tell you!

Dr. Kidds first wife, Vera passed away in 1981, and in 1985 he married again. He and Patricia have been blessed with two sons (yes, the first was born the year he became a senior citizen!), both of whom stay well away from deep water.

This concludes my introduction of our honoured guest and at this time I would ask you all to rise, put your hands together to recognize and show our appreciation to

**Surgeon Captain (Navy) Derek John Kidd -- 93 years  
young!!!**

for his contribution to our divers safety in the Past, the Present and to all divers of the Future.

**Thank You and Good Evening**