




Transformation: The Master Dunker

by Steve Schultz

Editor's note: The story of how diving transformed my life and my request for you to think about how it has done the same for yours appeared in the Third Quarter 2006 issue of The Undersea Journal. Since then, I've heard from many of you telling me how much you enjoyed the article and how it got you thinking about your own transformation stories. I wanted to thank those of you who have written or called for your kind words. Writing my story brought back wonderful memories of amazing people, and experiences that I haven't thought of in ages, and the time spent writing it was worth it for that alone.

Some of you have told me you plan to write your stories, too, and I sincerely hope you do. They're a great way to bring back your passion, enthusiasm and love for diving and I thank you in advance for sharing them. And, like I said, you might just see your story in an upcoming issue of The Undersea Journal or on padi.com. If you'd like to write your story, but aren't sure where – or even how – to start, let me know and I'll see what I can do to help. I can be reached at 800 729 7234 (US and Canada) or +1 949 858 7234, extension 2433. Or, send me an email at susan.tate@padi.com.

In "Master Dunker," Steve Schultz [MSDT] tells us about his transformation. It's a heartwarming, personal story and I hope you enjoy it as much as I did.



If you're going to write anything on my tombstone, make sure it's

something about diving. Whenever I take the time to reminisce about my life to date or think about my accomplishments, both personally and professionally, I'm most satisfied with the time that I've spent in the world of scuba. Diving has changed me in a number of ways, and all of them for the better.

To begin with, I owe scuba for saving my childhood. I was a short kid and a late bloomer. As the other kids matured into their adult bodies, I was left sitting on the bench of the sports field of life. But, I was an exceptional swimmer, so even though most of the other kids seemed twice my size on land, in the pool I was fast as a dolphin and three metres/ten feet tall. And that was when I learned a very important thing: No matter how powerful and sadistic a bully might be on dry land, he'll always fear a master dunker in the deep end.

So for me, water was the great equalizer. One murmur of, "Wait until I get you in the water," could diffuse most bullies and keep life bearable. I learned how powerful the fear of water could be. Since I could compete with my peers in the water, I spent a lot

of time there. I mastered other water sports besides swimming and eventually took up scuba diving, as well.

The more I dived, the more I liked it. I was transformed by diving -- from an ungainly little kid who could barely keep up with his peers on land, to leader of the pack underwater.

I remembered this transformation when I became an Open Water Scuba Instructor. The memory of how comfortable I was in the water while others were terrified allowed me to develop a PADI Distinctive Specialty called Mind, Body and Spirit Scuba. In this specialty, divers learn to relax and improve their performance through the use of breathing, stretching and visualization tools. Since then, I have been lucky enough to teach the program in the Caribbean and Mexico, and I have met some great people in the process.

My dive buddies and students have been an incredible influence in my life. Most people only learn to dive once. Too quickly the freshness and novelty of the first dives can give way to boredom. As an instructor, I see my first joys as a diver mirrored in the eyes of my students -- and experience them again with each class. It's said that sharing your passions enriches your life. For me, nothing could be truer when it come to my passion for scuba diving.

In my everyday life, at home and in business, I'm often guarded and on edge. I'm on a schedule, with things to do and places to go. But, when I'm diving, I let all of that go, if only until I get back on shore. When I meet someone while diving, I get the best that person has to offer. Friendships form. Relationships start. Some of my best, lifelong friendships and business relationships are with people I met while diving.

Teaching scuba has transformed me in other ways, too. Instructing has improved my observation and listening skills and it has taught me to be patient. I've learned that passive skills like listening and guiding can be more effective than overt lecturing. And, while it's important to use these skills as a dive instructor, I've found that it's even

more important to use them as a spouse, as a friend and as a co-worker. I consider myself lucky to have learned these skills through PADI, while training to be an instructor.

PADI also taught me to make effective presentations and to develop courses. These are skills I use constantly in my "day job" as a technology consultant. We all know PADI's education systems works, but I can testify that it works in the business world, too.

As a participant, diving has changed me in even more ways. Watching *Animal Planet* on the Discovery Channel can't compare with the powerful, life-enhancing experiences that come from interacting with intelligent animals like dolphins, whales, and sea turtles. My dive experiences have changed my entire viewpoint of humanity's place in the environment. Through diving I have learned respect. And, the exotic locations I have visited in

order to feed my scuba habit are places I would have never dreamed of seeing under any other circumstances. As a diver I have collected a vast treasure trove of the experiential jewels that only an extraordinary life can provide. Diving has transformed my life from ordinary to extraordinary.

There are a lot of things that I've done in my life, some of which I'm proud and some that I have to call 'learning experiences.' But, other than my family, nothing has been as consistent, transformative and positive a force in my life as scuba diving. For sure, much of my growth as a person is attributed to what I've learned as a student, as a buddy and as a teacher. And, for everything diving has brought to my life to date -- confidence, self-esteem, amazing learning, growth and travel opportunities -- I'm grateful and excited to see what new adventures it has planned for me in the future. ♦

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