

THE
HISTORY
OF
OILFIELD
DIVING

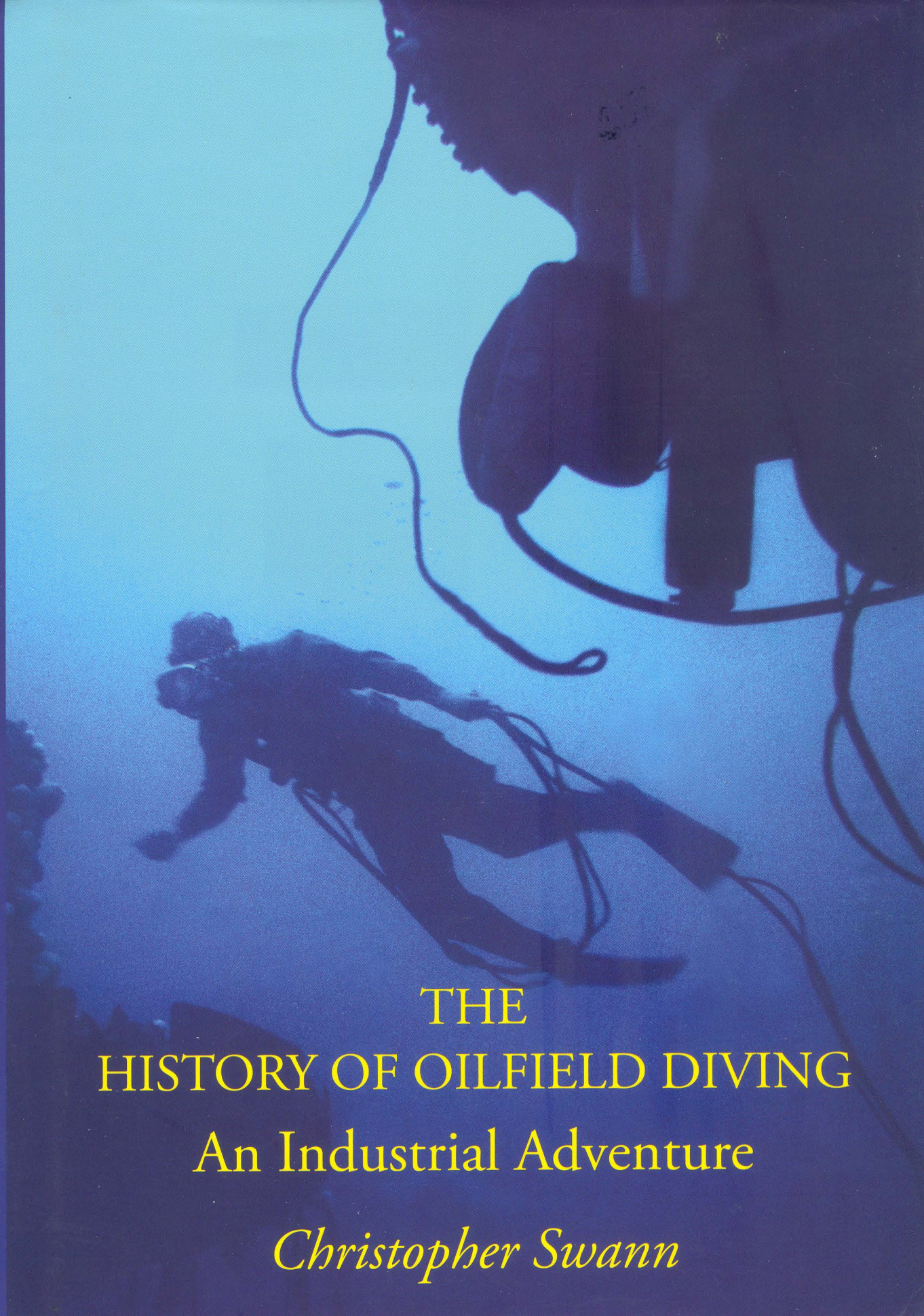
*Christopher
Swann*



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THE
HISTORY OF OILFIELD DIVING
An Industrial Adventure

Christopher Swann



THE HISTORY
OF
OILFIELD DIVING

Best wishes,
Christopher L

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The Star Trek intro says, 'Space: the final frontier'—but what about the seas? Mysterious, inhospitable, full of untapped resources, surely the oceans are our final frontier; and divers, like astronauts, have 'the right stuff'.

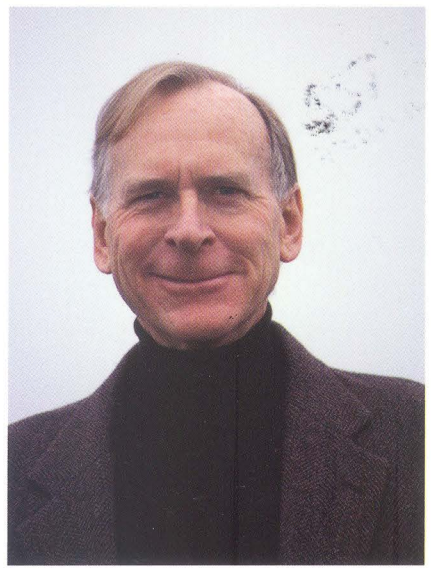
The History of Oilfield Diving chronicles one of the greatest adventures of the 20th Century. A story of human endeavour, physical danger and breakneck technological development, this is the most comprehensive account of oilfield diving ever written.

Until the 1950s there was no oilfield diving industry. Some people dived for fun. The few men who dived for a living fished for abalone or plied their trade in harbours and dockyards, on civil engineering projects and on the occasional salvage project. Nearly all the work was in shallow water. As a result, there was little innovation in either equipment or techniques.

As oil was found at greater depths, all that changed. In the early 1960s, the oil companies drilling off the coast of California were pushing the limits of traditional commercial diving. All their exploratory wells were in 200-250 feet of water, a depth at which nitrogen narcosis becomes a serious limitation. Progress into still deeper water was about to come to a halt.

Until, that is, a former US Marine, who made a precarious living diving for abalone, mounted a scuba regulator in an abalone helmet, bought some helium from a hospital supply company and dived to 400 feet. Within days, he had a work order to put a set of helium gear on a drilling vessel. Two years later, his company became the nucleus of the world's first industrial diving concern.

And the rest, as they say, is history: a history meticulously chronicled, with superb illustrations, many of which have never been published before. Like any good historical work, this book is packed with exciting stories. Fortunes gained and lost, dazzling innovations, tragic death, heroic rescue, battles with officialdom ... you can find all those, and more—together with an exceptionally comprehensive index to enable readers and researchers to find exactly what they are looking for.



(© 2007 Bob Evans)

CHRISTOPHER SWANN has been involved in the professional diving arena for many years—as a diver, photographer and writer. He first came in contact with oilfield diving in 1965 when he made a film on the first commercial lock-out diving bell *Purisima* after coming to California from his native England to take a course at the Brooks Institute of Photography in Santa Barbara.

He has worked for the French subsea company Comex, for the Undersea Division of Brooks Institute, as a photographic technician in the North Sea oilfields and on the administrative staff of a small independent oil company in Indonesia. He was the head of the photographic department, and a crew member with the *Johnson Sea Link I* submersible, at the Harbor Branch Foundation in Florida. He has done archaeological work in the Mediterranean and dived on wharf inspection and maintenance contracts. In 1973, he was a subject in two 1,000ft chamber dives at the Duke University Medical Center in North Carolina.

His articles and photographs have appeared in publications in the United States, Britain, Germany and France. In 2008, he received the Historical Diving Society Dr. Art Bachrach Award For Contributions to the Literature of Diving History.

He lives in California with his wife Hadda.

Jacket photographs:

(Front) Bob Ratcliffe swimming from the lock-out bell *Purisima* (© 1965 Bev Morgan)

(Spine) Diver working on a wellhead at 150m/500ft during the Janus I experiment in 1968 (photo A. Tocco. Comex)

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Advance Praise for *The History of Oilfield Diving*

'A magnificent piece of work ... I have never read anything so precise. I am amazed by the incredible amount of historical detail that is absolutely essential to the reader to understand fifty years of diving history.'

—Henri Delauze. Founder and President, Comex SA

'A superb history. Gives a vivid picture of the early decades and of the many great personalities who pioneered the development of diving for offshore oil and gas. This is an invaluable introduction to a unique period of man's development of exposure to raised environmental pressure and the achievement of useful work at low risk and at great depths.'

—David Elliott, OBE
Civilian consultant in diving medicine to the Royal Navy

'A massive tour de force, impressive in depth and range of subject.'

—Malcom Williams
Former Joint Managing-Director, Wharton Williams Ltd

'An absolutely wonderful work on the history of diving! Amazingly detailed and very accurate.'

—Mike Hughes
Former Chairman of the Board, Oceaneering International, Inc.

'Anyone who works—or has ever worked—in the offshore petroleum industry should buy this book. This is history as it happened, not as people think it happened.'

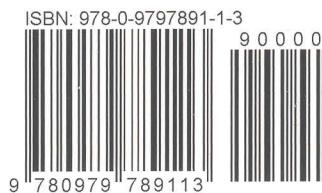
—Bev Morgan. Chairman, Kirby Morgan Dive Systems

'Swann has managed to forge the individual—and sometimes contradictory—accounts of those who were there into a surprisingly succinct picture of the half century between the start of commercial oilfield diving and now. From being in the trenches during most of those "interesting" years, I can tell you that *The History of Oilfield Diving* is a must-read if you want to know who was who and how it all went down.'

—Phil Nuytten. (Co-founder, Oceaneering International, Inc.)
Can-Dive Ltd
Founder and President, Nuytco Research Ltd

'A splendid account of the explosive development of the oilfield diving industry. By talking to those who know what happened, Swann has preserved the true story for posterity.'

—André Galerne
Founder and former Chairman, International Underwater Contractors
Former President, The Association of Diving Contractors



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