

# Historical Diving

# TIMES

*from*

*The Historical Diving Society*

## Conference Report Issue



**Dutch Working  
Equipment Group**



**Friedrich Flohr**



**A Galeazzi in Brazil**



**HDS People**



**Inside the Cz Saturn**



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We have come to know Dušan Šuráni, a member of the Czech HDS, from the annual HDS Germany Neustadt meetings. However, it was during our trip to Gdynia, as guests of the HDS Poland that we finally got thrown together seated next to one another on the coach taking us to the Polish Submarine Escape School. As Dušan (thank goodness) speaks some English and is a keen collector of equipment, we took the opportunity to ask if he could provide the HDTimes with an article. As we put it to him at the time, we still know very little about the history of diving in the Czech Republic, so anything that he could contribute would be a plus. Here, slightly edited, is Dušan's contribution and what he tells us indirectly is that in the Czechoslovakia of fifty years ago diving equipment was either unavailable or hard to come by. Read on and see how ingenuity allowed sports diving to thrive. As the HDTimes has said before, and as readers will quickly realise, there is no way that anyone or anything is ever going to keep a diver out of the water.

## A Collector in the Czech Republic

“A graduate of the ‘Secondary Staff College and Military Academy’, I am now a retired 67 year old who was born in Slovakia and currently lives in Olomouc in the Czech Republic. I took up diving in 1961, my first time underwater being in a gravel pit at Šurany, a village in Slovakia. My introduction was by way of a friend Milan Sucháň who, being good with his hands, had manufactured a few twin hose single stage regulators in 1960-61. I still have one in my collection.

Why did he have to manufacture them himself? Well, at that time there was no diving equipment available, even though there was a lot of amateur interest in sports diving. So, he built his own regulators and mounted them on fire extinguisher cylinders. One of our problems was that, at that time, compressors and high pressure air were only available to specialised companies, so in the beginning we charged the cylinders with

industrial oxygen: it really was a pioneer era. I became more active in diving once I entered full time employment and have now been an instructor with diving clubs in Czech Republic and Moravia for 25 years. Today, I still go diving – just as a hobby so that I can practice underwater photography.

I have always had an interest in the history of diving and read many books on the subject including those covering Cousteau's exploits, Jacques Piccard's descent into the depths of the ocean and others on wreck and cave diving. My collection of diving equipment and regulators however, only dates from the 1990s when I managed to acquire older items from some of the diving clubs where I instructed. In the beginning I focussed on regulators manufactured in Czechoslovakia as, though the country is small with no access to the sea, there were a few manufacturers who catered for the amateur market as well as for the army and fire services.

The result is that I now have almost all of the regulators produced in Czechoslovakia in the



1960s and 70s, including the rare PL-40/PL-401 which was only produced for the army and looks very much like the legendary French CG45. My favourite is probably the Czech built Saturn regulator, which was only ever produced in small numbers; its construction being unique and its technical parameters comparable to foreign two-stage regulators. It is only more recently that I have managed to acquire other regulators from my friends and other sources. These include La Spirotechnique, Medi, Dräger, Nemrod, US Divers, Healthways, Siebe Gorman, Dacor, SeaHornet and others.

The purpose of my collection is to preserve diving technology produced in the past. My collection is a small one and I only collect regulators I like and in particular those that are



Dušan Šuráni - retro diving in flooded quarry on Borena Hora mountain.



The Czech manufactured Saturn regulator.

different from the more normal designs. My intention is, in fact, not only to collect but to acquire and preserve as much information as possible including historical data, as well as allied technical and functional information. On top of that I try to find out as much as I can about the manufacturer, my main sources being catalogues, books and magazines, including the Historical Diving Times. This is not easy with regulators of Czech manufacture, as production runs were limited and there is often no surviving documentation.

Last year I decided to show my collection of regulators, depth gauges and diving books on the internet. My son Radek has created a web page, which I am now continually adding to by way of additional sketches and details of individual regulator parts, as the information becomes available to me."

*Dušan Šuráni*



View Dušan's webpage at [www.vsc-ds.cz/](http://www.vsc-ds.cz/) Dušan with his friend, regulator manufacturer, Milan Suchán (left). Egypt 2008.

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