

## Hyperbarics International

Dick Rutkowski

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All dates as remembered

History of Dick Rutkowski with UHMS

1970 – Present

Before joining NOAA I spent 7-1/2 years in the Navy, 6 years with Polar Operations in Antarctica and the Canadian Northwest Territories, 4 years, with Environmental Science Services Administration (ESSA). In 1967 I went to commercial diving school for diving and decompression chamber training. Around 1970 the Navy closed their decompression chamber in Key West Florida leaving all of South Florida, the Florida Keys, the Caribbean, Central and South America without a decompression chamber for the treating of diving accidents which were mostly recreational. In 1970 I was a member of a scuba diving club called the "DIGA Dive Club" they were foremost in working with me to approach my Director Dr. Harris Stewart, (a very avid Oceanographer and Diver) Director of the Atlantic and Oceanographic Meteorological Lab AOML, Virginia Key (MIAMI) Florida. When I came back from a scientific cruise a big tank (78"x35 ft, see attachment 1) was sitting in the yard at AOML blocking the driveway. Everyone was very curious to know what the thing was, and thought I was crazy. They complained I did not have the knowledge to conduct a diver medical treatment facility and I would kill somebody, they complained to the NOAA Director and the Dept of Commerce Director. Dr. Stewart and AOME allowed me to continue. We moved the chamber across the street under the NOAA National Marine Fisheries building. Working with the Florida Underwater Council and DADE County Fire Rescue community funds were raised. We started building the facility with all voluntary help, doctors, Lawyers, and construction workers. It took Six months to finish the installation, piping, volume tanks, fire suppression systems, compressors...etc. The acronym NOAA came about in 1970. NOAA established their diving office in Rockville Maryland with Morgan Wells, PhD, as Director. I became his Deputy Director. The recompression chamber and I came under NOAA AOML, Virginia Key Florida until 1978 when Morgan Wells transferred me from AOML into the NOAA Diving program. I remained the Director of the Hyperbaric Dive Training/Treatment Facility and President of FUWC and President of Undersea Research Foundation (URF) plus, NOAA Diving Safety Board. Medical Directors for the facility include James Lowenherz, MD 1978-present, Ron Sampson, MD, Harry Heinitish, MD. The NOAA dive treatment facility on Virginia Key treated over 880 divers from 1975-1988 many needing multiple treatments, the chamber was moved to the Seattle Washington, NOAA Dive Center. When the chamber was moved, I was honored by having my name

placed on the chamber for past service

The information above is necessary to include because my facility was the beginning of the history of the NOAA Diving Program and without it other dive related programs would never have come about. Such as the NOAA/UHMS/URF Physicians Dive Medical Training Program. Morgan Wells, PhD, Jeff Davis, MD, Captain USAF, and Dr. Shilling, were the surrogates to help get the Department of Energy funding to establishing the Physicians Diving Medical Training Program, DMT, DAM, NOAA Diving Manual and other operational diving and scientific programs directed by Dr. Wells (see attachment 3). I was Director of the Hyperbaric Facility, Director of NOAA Diver Training, and CO-Director of the NOAA three-week Physicians Dive Medical Training course for 33 years.

In 1976 the NOAA AOML Hyperbaric Facility on Virginia Key (Miami) Florida was commissioned. The local community was invited, also present were Dr. Morgan Wells, Director NOAA Diving Office, Captain George Bond, MD, USN, MC Ret. (father helium and saturation diving), COL. Jeff Davis, MD, MC Director Brooks Air Force Base Hyperbaric Facility, Dick Rutkowski, Director Virginia Key hyperbaric facility. (see attachment 2 and 3). A Two-day seminar "Medical and Physiological Aspects of Recompression Therapy" was conducted by the celebrity speakers listed. This was not part of the physicians diving medical training program, that program started later in the year.

In 1976 the first NOAA/UHMS/URF physicians' course was conducted on Virginia Key in the recompression chamber room with Morgan Wells, Director, Administrator, Speaker and Dick Rutkowski, CO-Director (1975-2008), Speaker, operational control of all equipment and AV/Chambers. Twelve doctors were invited for this three-week program, (later two weeks). Ten or more guest speakers were invited with all their expenses were paid through a Department of Energy Grant secured by NOAA. Mark Kaiser, equipment controller, Rutkowski speaker on Central nervous system oxygen toxicity, pulmonary oxygen toxicity, physics, pathophysiology, medical aspects of treating divers, gases diving life-support systems. Dick Rutkowski also filled in as Speaker when needed... with sea stories.

In addition to being involved with UHMS from the early 70s, Dr. Morgan Wells and I tried helping Dr. Shilling, 1964 is when UMS (was original name) was getting's started. We always asked Dr. Shilling were his funding came from, he said he had an angel that took care of UMS. When the medical students had to pay their own expenses, remaining funds then went to UMS to support a non-profit organization.

In the mid-80s (I cannot remember the dates), I was vice president of the Gulf Coast Chapter of UHMS. During this time, I presented a 3 hour seminar on CNS and pulmonary oxygen toxicity at UHMS annual scientific meeting

In 1970 the FUWC award was given to Charles Shilling, MD, as special recognition

In 1985 I received the DAN lifetime membership award

In 1985 I received the NOAA/UHMS award for teaching physicians' course.

In 1988 I became vice-president of the Gulf Coast Chapter of UHMS.

In 1989 I became President of the Gulf Coast Chapter of UHMS.

In 1989 I received the GCC UHMS award of service for the diving community.

In 1981 I received the NOAA UHMS award for physicians' program #7.

In 2011 I received the Craig Hoffman/Chuck Shilling memorial award, with Morgan Wells, PhD.

In 1978 at the Royal Biscayne Hotel, Virginia Key, Florida, the annual UHMS meeting was conducted. At this time, Dr. Morgan Wells, Dr. Peter Bennett, Dr. Bill Hamilton, Dick Clark, and Dr. Gordon Doherty had a meeting to organize forming a nonprofit organizations with government grant money to start the National Board of Diving (NBDHMT) and Divers Accident Management, now (Divers Alert Network.)

As one can see the effort that Dr. Charles Shilling Dr. Jeff Davis Dr. Morgan Wells and myself have contributed to the early years. (1970-present) to make the NOAA Diving and the UHMS programs successful as they are today. I have primarily pointed out the area I was most directly involved with. This article does not include all the other functions and duties I have been involved with over the last 70 years, such as working with 3 NASA Facilities, NOAA, EPA, Panama Canal Commission setting up their safety boards, dive training programs, chamber treatment facilities..etc, working with 30 other countries basically the same programs, owner and Director of 5 hyperbaric facilities, in addition for all the programs I have done for UHMS & GCC, not to mention the 10 programs and business I have brought and sold publications, manuals, Papers, theories and concepts