

## **My Journey to KISS**

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Photographs by Doug Ebersole

It all started in 1975 when as a member of the NY State National Guard 19th SFG (Airborne), I was given the opportunity to attend the US Army's SF Underwater Operations Reserve Qualification Course in Key West Florida. It was a two-week course designed for members of the reserves and National Guard who were civilian certified scuba divers but had no military diving experience.

I had been certified in 1970 and was eligible for the course in lieu of summer camp. The pre-requisite training was fun as we had the chance to try out the Navy's submarine escape tower, and take a chamber ride on pure O<sub>2</sub> (they use to check your O<sub>2</sub> tolerance by doing that in those days) in New London.

The Program of Instruction included water survival, open-circuit twin-80s SCUBA (no manifold, no BCD, one regulator), closed-circuit SCUBA (using the Emerson Rig O<sub>2</sub>/Beryllium Rebreather), submarine lock-in and lock-outs, ship bottom searches, underwater navigation (compass swims). The course included boat operations with Boston Whaler skiffs.

The rules were different then and if I remember correctly we could go to 30 feet for a short period of time. I had never heard of a rebreather before and enjoyed the silence and procedures of preparing and diving the unit. I never again dove in the National Guard after attending the school.

Fast forward to 2010 and I am an Instructor on a dive trip to DiveTech on Grand Cayman with Rex Dive Center from Connecticut. One of the girls on the trip saw a bucket with the sign " Place Scrubber Here" and asked Steve Tibbetts what scrubber was.



The next thing you know she is signed up for a re-breather experience dive if she can find one other diver to make the minimum of two required for the package. As I was along to help the clients on the trip and had actually dove a re-breather many years ago I signed up to accompany her. Steve showed us the Sentinel re-breather, gave us some basic directions, and off we went. It was a fun dive despite the buoyancy issues and once again I enjoyed the silence and procedures involved.

The next year 2011, I met Mike Young at the KISS Booth at the Beneath the Sea exposition in NJ. He was showing off his new GEM SCCR. He explained it in detail and impressed me with the design, simplicity, safety, and cost of the unit. I bought one and immediately got in touch with Steve Tibbetts who I believe was the only GEM instructor at the time. Back to DiveTech and GEM certification.



I loved diving it and never had any issues with it. I travelled to the Caribbean and the Philippines with it, I used it on a live aboard in Palau and out of my car in the Florida Keys, on the wrecks of North Carolina and the chilly Atlantic. I put close to 200 dives on it.



In 2014 I brought it on a trip to the Philippines and dove with other KISS divers that were on the new KISS Spirit Lite CCR. I decided that a CCR was the way to go after making a Thresher Shark dive with them and having to do my deco while they were on the boat having breakfast. I looked the units over carefully at DEMA and liked what I saw but Mike just could not quite sell me one.

This year (2015) I again went to Beneath the Sea and who else was there but, Mike Young and his KISS Spirit Lite. This time he made me an offer I couldn't refuse and I walked out with a new KISS Spirit Lite for my 70th birthday and a buyer for my KISS GEM. Mike walked out with less baggage for his flight home.

Immediately I called my friend KISS Instructor Trainer Doug Ebersole to check on his availability for a training class and found him getting ready to go to DiveTech on Grand Cayman while his daughter Kim taught a KISS Spirit Lite class there. There are not many father daughter re-breather instructor teams out there. I talked my way in and was certified this past April. Since then I have moved to Florida and used it extensively here.



I went to Bonaire for TEK Week and made a couple of deep dives with it and many not so deep. I have done the Spiegel Grove going down with the first group of OC divers and coming up with the second. I am scheduled for my trimix course with Doug in December. Currently working on my dive plans for next year, which already include an April trip back to North Carolina.



The best part about travel with the Orca Spirit is that it is light and easy to pack at about 20 pounds, it fits in my 24 inch suitcase with ease. The maintenance and prep time on it is minimal and requires no special tools. I get a lot of questions from curious OC divers on the dive boats and enjoy telling them all the benefits of diving a KISS CCR. The reliability and safety of KISS systems shows in the over 250+ hours logged without failure or an aborted dive.