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Scuba Emporium

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1979 The ITC

Why in 1979 did I open The International PADI Instructor Training Center here in Chicago?

I was doing well training instructors. I had a few stores at this time and was very busy. The problem was finding good help to run the stores and teach. I was also as I do today getting calls from all over the US and Caribbean looking for good Instructors. One day I was training at Racine when I got to talking to my friend Ralph. He and I had a true understanding, he taught the May Instructor course in Chicago and I would do the fall. We each would have 15 to 25 candidates. We both understood the need for better training and understood the Industry was in need of a lot more quality instructors. So, along with my partner Bernie, we formed the International PADI Instructor Training Center at Midway Airport. It was pretty cool being in one of the buildings on 63rd street and being around all those planes. Through the years I was able to get up in a few of them. We would fly to Munising for training, as well as other nearby locations. WOW, I was having so much fun. Then we started to get more and more calls to hit the road and conduct Instructor Training and get these even PADI Master SCUBA Diver and then the Master Scuba Diver Trainer training programs. Seems a lot of Instructors could not get the help they needed to teach Specialties and what the heck, I was writing a lot and conducting a lot of them, it made sense to come to IPITC. So now I am going to Jamaica, Atlanta, Florida and other states conducting programs. I was like in heaven when we get the call to come to Cozumel. Of course we accepted and started doing two and three programs a year there. We were running programs with 30 people in them. I could not believe just how busy we were. A lot of those Instructors are still working in the field all over the world.

It was back then I was doing a lot of cave diving and was starting to dive the Cenote in Mexico. I had the pleasure of designing the first outline for these dives. Today I still enjoy getting back in those caves and Cenote. You have no idea what it is like swimming around in a cave that date back thousands of years ago.

What is so much fun today is between E mail and Facebook I am getting back in touch with some of them. The training Center went well for years but like all great things it had to end. Ralph, god love him fell in love and he and Karen were married, they retired to Texas. Ralph has passed on but Karen and I are still very close and good friends. In fact this past January 2011 through our Foundation we conducted a PADI IDC in the Bahamas at Stuart Coves. What was fun we picked up like it were yesterday. As with all programs the staff was so happy to have us there and today are all enjoying the living they are making from teaching diving.

I have to say I miss the Training center and the days with Karen and Ralph. But today I enjoy the time with Karen and their Daughter Karina. So part of my past is still with me.