

From: Bill Gassett <bgassett@londonbridgetrading.com>

To: <usscanopus@mail.com> <usscanopus@mail.com>

Subject: Dereka Dodson Rescue

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Gotta love this age of information that we live in.

I just became aware of the USS Canopus Association and I will be applying for a lifetime membership.

My name is Bill Gassett and I was a brandy-spanking new 2nd class diver onboard my first at sea command from 1979 - 1981: AS-34 USS Canopus.

I am in the photo below of the rescue of Ms. Dereka Dodson.

Prior to that underway, where we happened upon Ms Dodson, the divers had engaged in some shenanigans with the boatswains mates down on the finger pier and in the process of chunking water balloons at our shipmates we had "upset" the BMC who got nailed as he came out of one of the shacks on the pier.

He in-turn, fired up MDV Richard Thompson who was a scary man on his best day.

The man had tattoos of "twin screws" on his ass and a Deep Sea Diver in full diver's dress hung at the end of an umbilical on his calf...the umbilical ran all the way up the back of his leg and disappeared somewhere between those twin screws!!! Holy Crap.

Though this was highly unusual (that we got caught) the Master Diver exacted his pound and announced that the lot of us would be getting underway with the ship instead of staying behind to tend to the boats as we were accustomed.

Doom and gloom on the high seas...and liberty in Cape Canaveral!

Fast forward to the return leg home to Goose Creek.

All the divers were up late "training" the night before the rescue so when the Man-Overboard drill went down that morning, the new guy was told to go.

A lot of hustle and bustle going on up on the boat deck and everyone seemed to be taking the drill rather seriously, so I got in the mode, got in the motor whaleboat and over the side we went.

Quick aside here. When I joined this man's Navy, it was my intention to become a Deep Sea Diver, do 4 years and go to the oil fields to work in the highly lucrative commercial diving world there.

25 years later and more friends/stories/job satisfaction than one can shake a proverbial stick at, I retired from the US Navy.

My segue nearly over; in that time I have also been bent at least 5 times, embolised once (that's enough right), stood on the bottom somewhere around 850 FSW and I have been severely banged around the last eight years hanging out with my brethren SEALs at Naval Special Warfare Development Group.

I can't remember everyones name from those early days...hell I am hard pressed to remember my own on some days.

I did NOT know it was a legit rescue until we literally pulled up next to the lift raft and Ms. Dodson said in her perfect British lilt, "Thank God, what navy are you from?". Huh?

She thought she had drifted clear cross the Atlantic back to her home land of England.

We brought her on board and she insisted the life raft come (intact), as it had served to save her life. Can't argue with that.

Back to the Canopus we went.

Despite the well meaning corpsman's attempt to kill us all, the deck hand, coxswain and engineer did a great job of getting us back onboard the ship while I hung out with the chick, as Navy Divers were genetically engineered to do.

1 Attached Images

