



NO CHILLS, NO FRILLS—These girls are finding skin diving an exciting sport as members of the Mt. Pleasant Skin Divers Club. Practicing diving in the college pool are (left to right) Shirley Gibson, Judy Foltz and Ann Girvin. The girls, wearing aqua lungs with air tanks, are looking forward to winter diving. (Saginaw News Photo).

Mt. Pleasant Girls Go Near The Water

Skin-Diving Girls Have Big Time Learning Those Deep Water Tricks

By CARL BRAHCE

MT. PLEASANT - Look out boys . . . the gals are taking to skin diving.

Ten girls are having a whale of a time, diving in full skin diver regalia as members of the Mt. Pleasant Skin Diving Club.

"They're doing pretty good too," admits Donald Brackenbury, club president, who works as a geologist with the Department of Conservation.

"We're hopeful of having the girls do a little exploring under ice this winter, and I bet they'll be game," he adds.

The rugged male skin divers are just a little envious of their comely underwater companions when it comes to exposure, and we're not talking about surface beauty. The girls admit the fellows with teeth gritted to keep from chattering, "can take cold water a lot better."

For the most part, the girls are learning how to safely use underwater diving equipment, and achieve confidence in the lonely depths.

"Panic is the skin diver's worst enemy," explains Brackenbury. "When you're down there and something goes wrong, you've got to keep calm and forget where you are. If you panic, you can do nothing."

Which is sometimes tough to learn, and especially important for the adventures planned this winter below hard ice.

The group practiced swims at Higgins Lake recently, to get used to cold water diving. Yesterday they dived in Littlefield Lake near Mt. Pleasant and sharpened their under-ice maneuvers.

Explorations under a layer of ice take careful precautions and calm thinking, says Brackenbury.

"Naturally you're a little apprehensive at first, the important thing is to know that you can take care of yourself in case of an emergency. You have to be able to get back to the surface safely, and it can be a long way back to that hole."

That's why all club members

are learning the safety fundamentals of skin diving. If the mouthpiece is knocked off, or another emergency arises, the diver must be able to get his mouthpiece on and otherwise know how to get back safely. The girls who brave the chilly depths below ice won't go

willy-nilly on a carefree pleasure trip. Skin divers know the importance of "playing it safe."

"We fasten a nylon parachute cord at the hole. The diver takes a reel and unwinds the cord as he goes down. When he is ready to come back up, he winds it in," says Brackenbury.

Of course, the divers wear rubber suits to practice the wintry skin diving. Before they tackle this, they master tricks of clearing their masks, keeping water from their suits, how to prevent bends and air embolism. The latter concerns rising too rapidly with air in the lungs.

"If you're just down 10 feet and you have lungs full of air you're lungs can rupture when you come up if you hold your breath and don't exhale," explains Brackenbury. "This has happened to Navy skin divers and others."

also help out whenever requested to recover articles, outboard motors and other valuables lost in deep water.

Thirty-five skin divers are active in the club that meets Thursdays in the Central Michigan College pool. The members also take weekend outings to lakes for special explorations.

In the serious and challenging pastime of exploring the underworld depths, the girls are proving their mettle. It's not a man's world down there either, and the men will admit they don't mind that at all.

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