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## **Torrance R. Parker Collection on Commercial and Deep Sea Diving**

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Los Angeles Maritime Museum

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<http://www.lamaritimemuseum.org/>

2015

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## Descriptive Summary

**Title:** Torrance R. Parker Collection on Commercial and Deep Sea Diving

**Dates:** 1805-2013 (bulk 1947-1995)

**Collection Number:** Collection # 73

**Creator/Collector:** Torrance R. ParkerParker Diving ServiceParker Diving Service, Inc.Sparling School of Diving and Underwater Welding

**Extent:** 6 cubic feet; 322 books

Online items available  <http://www.lamaritimemuseum.org/2015/03/torrance-parker-collection/>

**Repository:** Los Angeles Maritime Museum

San Pedro, California 90731

**Abstract:** The collection contains business and personal correspondence; records of ship salvage and underwater construction work; diving logs, reports and manuals; survey and other diagrams; clippings and articles; rare diving equipment catalogs; maps; decompression tables and calculators; samples of permits, invoices, receipts, bids and contracts; interviews and profiles; brochures and fliers; periodicals; approximately 500 photographic prints; and a book collection consisting of 322 volumes, many of them rare, that document the history and practice of deep diving and related topics. Torrance R. Parker collected these resources over the course of his sixty-eight years as a deep diver, including a fifty-six-year career working as a commercial diver and nearly forty years as owner of the Parker Diving Service, Inc. of San Pedro, California; as a diver, researcher and compiler of resources concerning the history and practice of commercial, fishery, and military diving; and as author of two books on these subjects.

**Language of Material:** English

### Access

Prior arrangement with the Museum Director or Archivist.

### Publication Rights

Copyright restrictions apply. Please inquire in writing to the Museum Director or Archivist. The material may not be used without permission.

### Preferred Citation

Torrance R. Parker Collection on Commercial and Deep Sea Diving. Los Angeles Maritime Museum

### Acquisition Information

The collection was in Torrance Parker's possession over the course of its creation and was donated to the Los Angeles Maritime Museum in 2014.

### Biography/Administrative History

Torrance R. Parker (b. July 4, 1928) owned a commercial diving business, Parker Diving Service, Inc., in San Pedro, California for nearly forty years, from 1947 to 1985, and worked as a diver for sixty-eight years. During this time, he participated in all aspects of deep diving work, including commercial diving, which refers to construction, salvage, maintenance, repair, and inspection of underwater engineered structures; military diving, including stints as an army diver and army diving trainer; and abalone fishery diving, including work as a sponge diver while still a teenager, when he learned this trade from Greek practitioners in Tarpon Springs, Florida. At the end of the War, in order to work in the field of commercial diving, Parker moved to San Pedro, California, attending the Sparling School of Diving and Underwater Welding in nearby Wilmington to learn newly developed underwater construction techniques including welding and burning. In 1947, he went on to found Parker Diving Service, Inc. (initially, Parker Diving Service was incorporated). Like most commercial diving businesses at the time, Parker Diving Service began as a sole owner diving company; at 19, Parker owned the newest diving company on the harbor, and also became the youngest diver in the Pile Drivers and Divers Union Local 2375. In 1948, Parker married Tina Carreon, and they had six children, Kimberly, CynDy, Torrance (III), Timothy, Mellissa, and Dulce. From 1950-1952, during the Korean War, Parker was trained in Army diving methods to work as an instructor and diver at the Army's diving school in Fort Eustis, Virginia, as well as to provide diving services to their 3rd Port complex. Parker Diving Service is now the oldest continuously operating commercial diving company in California. Parker sold the company in 1985, but continued working as a consultant and diver with Parker Diving Service until 1995. Upon retirement, he authored 20,000 Jobs under the Sea: A History of Diving and Underwater Engineering (1997). He subsequently developed and built the "20,000 Jobs under the Sea" exhibit for the Los Angeles Maritime Museum in San Pedro; the exhibit depicts the history of both commercial and fishery diving and includes that of Southern California's earliest divers. Beginning in 1997, Parker conducted a survey of the Gulf of Mexico's pre-World War II deep-water sponge grounds unworked since 1939 - a diving project that took three years to accomplish. He has recently written a deep and thorough

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account of sponge diving from ancient Greece to its current epicenter in Tarpon Springs, Florida, *20,000 Divers under the Sea: A History of the Mediterranean and Western Atlantic Sponge Trades with an Account of Early Deep Diving* (2013).

**Scope and Content of Collection**

The collection focuses primarily on commercial diving in Southern California and the work undertaken by Parker Diving Service, Inc. in underwater construction, offshore oil diving, and ship salvage; other focuses include fishery and military diving. The collection also provides resources documenting the history of important commercial diving companies and of diving equipment and supplies, as reflected in rare catalogs and other documents; information about decompression sickness (also known as the bends or as caisson disease), its measurement and treatment; the work of individual divers; and the history of the Los Angeles Harbor/Port of Los Angeles, as seen in clippings files and in other materials. The book collection contains material on topics including deep diving and its history; marine ecology; seafaring and navigation; ships, underwater ship husbandry, and shipbuilding; underwater archaeology; underwater and offshore engineering and construction; shipwrecks and salvage; treasure troves; submarine medicine and underwater physiology; fisheries; commerce, trades, and privateering; and maritime photography and arts; as well as books by and about individual divers and those with a regional focus, including Southern California; Tarpon Springs, Florida; and other locations.

**Indexing Terms**

Decompression sickness  
Deep diving  
Deep diving--Equipment and supplies  
Deep diving--History  
Deep diving--Physiological aspects  
Divers  
Diving suits  
Marine accidents  
Offshore oil well drilling--History  
Salvage  
Shipwrecks  
Sponge divers  
Submarine medicine  
Submersibles  
Underwater archaeology  
Underwater photography  
Ellis R. Cross  
Percy Smale  
Charles Smale  
Port of Long Beach  
Port of Los Angeles  
San Pedro Bay (Calif.)  
San Pedro (Los Angeles, Calif.)  
Wilmington (Los Angeles, Calif.)  
brochures and flyers  
documents  
manuals  
manuscripts  
news clippings  
periodicals  
photographic prints  
Deep diving  
Salvage

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