

A Brief History of PDRA

By

Mac Robertson, President Emeritus

Piedmont Diving and Rescue Association, INC (PDRA) was chartered March 11, 1963 by Larry Bradley, Clyde Watson and Arnold Pugh, as non-profit organization by the *North Carolina Secretary of State*, for the promotion of Skin and Scuba Diving. Arnold Pugh is the only living incorporator.

The inception of PDRA was to be a group of member clubs with the President of each club setting on the Board of Directors and electing a set of officers. Members at large made up the General Assembly.

The original quarry leased by PDRA was the *Bluestone Quarry* in Thomasville, NC. Other Quarries leased by PDRA were *Farmer Quarry* in Asheboro, NC, *McLeansville Quarry* in McLeansville, NC, *American Quarry*, Salisbury, NC, *Siler City Quarry* in Siler City, NC, *Mebane Quarry* in Mebane, NC and the *Collinsville Quarry* in Collinsville, VA.

Over a period of time PDRA lost the lease on these quarries because most of them were reopened. In 1983 PDRA only had two quarries *Siler City Quarry* and *Collinsville Quarry*, membership was approximately 250 members. At that time the State of North Carolina put its excess property up for sale and one item was the *Blanch Quarry* in Hammer, NC. The quarry was located behind the Blanch Prison. PDRA bought the quarry and 51.5 acres at auction for \$28500.00. We paid that note in 98 days by selling Life Memberships in PDRA and also selling 16.5 acres of our property that we didn't need.

In 1974 PDRA no longer maintained an active volunteer rescue team. Area Rescue Squads began to form their own dive teams and no longer required the services of PDRA. However the association still maintained the name *Piedmont Diving and Rescue Association, Inc.*

In 1984 we also lost our liability insurance because our underwriter would no longer write insurance on high risk property and we could not find anyone else to underwrite for our association. Because of the loss of the liability insurance the owner of the *Collinsville Quarry* would not continue the lease. The owner of the *Siler City Quarry* agreed to let us continue to lease that quarry if the instructors insured the quarry with their liability insurance. We made a training facility at the *Siler City Quarry* for instructional purposes only. Because we didn't have liability insurance the guest policy was strictly regulated and enforced.

In 1988 Duke Power Company offered us a chance to purchase the *Lake Norman Quarry* at Mooresville, NC. Because we had restructured our dues system and adopted an initiation fee that went to a savings account after we purchased the Blanch Quarry, we were able to make an outright purchase of the Lake Norman Quarry.

In 1991 the PDRA had a windfall come our way. The owner of the *American Quarry*, a quarry we once leased, contacted the PDRA President and offered the *American Quarry* for an almost give a way price. The owner of the *American Quarry* wanted to develop the land around the quarry and the quarry was a liability to him. The decision to purchase the *American Quarry* was a no brainer. We also were able to get liability insurance again. Unfortunately the *Siler City Quarry* was reopened and we lost our lease on that quarry.

Quarry ownership and membership growth brought on a new set of management problems. In 1997 the PDRA adopted a new set of By-Laws, throwing out the old constitution written by the incorporators. The new by-laws gave PDRA a more democratic form of self government with a balance of power between the Officers, Board of Directors and General Assembly.

The Board of Directors agreed that quarry ownership was more productive than leasing quarries because we could make improvements without having to worry about forfeiting them in case of a lease cancellation. The PDRA began to pour its resources into its permanent property. All property owned has 24/7, 365 access. All quarries have picnic facilities, toilets, student areas, overnight camping, electrical hookups, floating docks and many items to see underwater.

Blanch Quarry has been renamed the *James M. Robertson Quarry* after James M. "Mac" Robertson a President who served the Association for 27 years. President Mac Robertson, Vice President Kenn Clark and Treasurer Bob Horne were the Executive Officers who along with a host of volunteers led the campaign to make PDRA a perpetual organization through quarry ownership.

American Quarry became a memorial quarry. A monument has been erected and the names of PDRA members who have made a significant contribution to PDRA are placed on the monument when they pass on.

In 2008 PDRA experienced its largest membership ever with 1270 members. We have property and cash assets valued at \$345,000+. PDRA operates on a budget of \$38,000.00 per year.

PDRA has a large source of volunteers, six Quarry Managers who are paid hourly and one full time Executive Secretary. It is probably the best managed diving association in the South Eastern United States.

On March 11, 1988 the PDRA held a special meeting and bar-b-que for all PDRA members at the JMR Quarry. Following the bar-b-que a 25 Year Time Capsule was placed in the old cap magazine. The time capsule will be opened on March 11, 2013.