

Havasu diving company gets rights to Lake Mead B-29 dive

By **BRANDON MESSICK**
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A Lake Havasu City company is sinking to new lows.

Havasu-based Scuba Training and Technology announced earlier this month that it has secured exclusive rights to bring scuba enthusiasts to Lake Mead's B-29 diving site.

The WW2 bomber sank to the bottom of Lake Mead, south of Las Vegas, in 1948 after a botched training flight. One of the most advanced aircraft of its time, the plane has remained there for nearly 70 years, almost completely preserved against time and the elements beneath 118 feet of fresh water.

The nature and location of the wreckage remained classified for nearly 50 years. In 2001, a private dive team searched for, and found, the site on Lake Mead's northern arm. The site became a popular diving attraction after it was revealed to the public. It was a piece of history, left behind (if accidentally) by the "Greatest generation."

"Our company has been involved in shipwreck exploration for a quarter of a century," said Joel Silverstein, Vice President of Scuba Training and Technology, Inc. "Having access to a special shipwreck, or plane-wreck, is very exciting."

The National Park Service accepted permits for Commercial Use Authorization (CUA) to the site until 2008, when they decided to conserve the site. This year, National Parks called for CUA applications again,

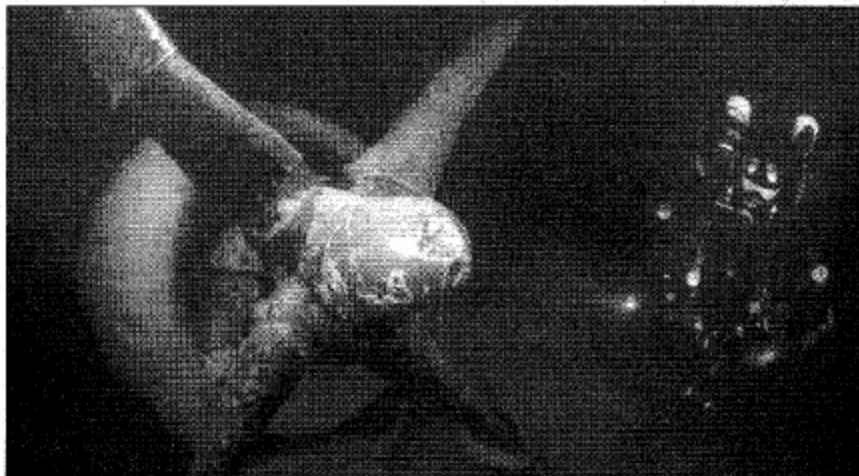


Photo courtesy of Mel Clark

Diver Joel Silverstein at the only remaining propeller on the B-29 Superfortress in Lake Mead.

and Scuba Training and Technology, Inc. was awarded exclusive access to conduct guided dives to the site.

"The B-29 is a fairly fragile dive-site," Silverstein said. As such, the CUA has been restricted to a total of 100 exposures per year — meaning that 100 dives at the site can be performed annually. The dives aren't cheap, at \$300 per-person for single dives, and \$450 per person for dual dives. But the logistics of getting to the site aren't cheap either.

"The logistical costs of diving the B-29 are extraordinary," Silverstein said. "If you're doing exploration diving in a remote location, it's fairly standard."

A dive to the B29 will include hit-

torical discussions, a dive plan, a guided tour, passage to and from the site, food, surface-supplied oxygen, experienced guides and crew and use of the company's dive boat.

Silverstein says that the site's reopening won't have a substantial economic impact on Lake Mead, but it may bring awareness to the severe drought affecting the region. Lake Mead's waters are at their lowest point in recorded history. As beneficial as that may be for divers, Silverstein also hopes that visitors to the site will become more aware of the West's current drought conditions.

For more information about the dive site, visit divetheb29.com.