

APRIL 3, 2016

## DIVE FITNESS PERSPECTIVES: AN INTERVIEW WITH ZALE PARRY

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# Dive Fitness Perspectives: An interview with Zale Parry

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Zale Parry doesn't celebrate her own birthday. She shares, "being ageless is wonderful."

What she does celebrate is diving!

Zale is a Pisces; the constellation and astrological sign named the Latin plural for fish. As the Greek legend goes, Pisces originates in the tale of [Aphrodite](#) and [Eros](#), who leapt into the sea and transformed themselves into fish to escape the monster [Typhon](#). They tied themselves together with a rope to make certain not to lose each other. With the sign element water and the ruling planet Neptune, it is ideal for Hollywood star Zale Parry; athlete, diver, model and actress.

Zale's contributions so profoundly increased the popularity and success of recreational SCUBA diving that her story will forever be tied to our participation, safety and enjoyment of the sport. Zale took to the water at a young age in the 1930s and is still diving and active in the diving community. Her unique experience, enthusiasm and zest for an active fulfilling life are inspiring. Zale graciously continues to share her insights, disciplines and motivation regarding fitness, health and diving.



Photo courtesy Michele Hall.

"Wave your arms Mantas will come to you," Nautilus Explorer Belle Amie Captain Mike Lever prescribed. I did. Mantas arrived. Every chimney of bubbles is a diver with camera. There were at least a dozen amazing Mantas at this feeding station.>Incredible experience drifting with underwater space ships off The Revillagigedo Islands, Mexico, 250 nautical miles South of Cabo San Lucas." Zale Parry 2015. Thank you Michelle Hall for this amazing photograph.

**Over the past fifty years, what changes, if any, have you observed in the health and fitness of divers?**

"In those days [1950s], divers were divers. After the war, food wasn't all that plentiful. Going to the beach was going out for a meal. Skin divers brought the whole family and it was an outdoor weekend event. Divers were all strong people; not just bubble blowers. Strong determined people filled their freezers. You could put anything on these guys. They brought in big fish."

"Now the perception is that new equipment can make a diver relatively safe. I know people with the fanciest equipment including their "wrist watch", but they are not necessarily good divers. There is a great gap between diver ability and equipment."

**During the 1950s there seemed to be many exercise concepts. Is there something that stands out for you with regard to women and exercise that has changed since then?**

"In the early 1950's when I was assigned to Twentieth-Century Fox Studio, Actress Agnes Moorhead was my Theater Arts Teacher in the evenings twice a week. She was strict with how one carries oneself. "Shoulders back, head high, tummy in, breathe..." I can hear her as I write to you. So I was programmed!"

**You are a beautiful and fit woman. Was there ever any pressure from others in your profession to maintain a certain appearance?**

"For certain, when one is in the industry of Motion Pictures and Television (MPTV) (a huge part of my life) plus the other Scientific Underwater Research Enterprises (SURE) with my husband, Dr. Parry E. Bivens (deceased), one needs to be in good form. Especially with the MPTV work. The lens of a camera will automatically add 5-to-10 pounds to a person's image. The extra weight shows like a neon sign. So best to keep moving to remain one size at all times! It takes discipline to follow good nutrition and stay in shape. Looking good on the big screen was important. Filming in those days took months and actors had to still fit into costumes, such as western wear, all the way through a film."

"Also during those days, I was teaching swimming for the Santa Monica Red Cross Chapter in the indoor pools of the Chase, Deauville and Kabat-Kaiser Hotels on the beach. One evening a week, I would be in the water as rehabilitation teacher for the victims of polio who were cared for at the Kabat-Kaiser Hotel. The hotel had a chair-lift to carry the patients down into my arms in the water. I would release the belt holding them secure until they were fully wet. I would walk the patient carried arm-to-arm so that the legs were free to try to kick. Most patients were strong from the waist up. The legs just failed to move...just trailed. But with workouts in the water, it paid off for some. Most were living in a "lung chamber". It was after one of these sessions one evening that Zale first tried on of Parry's tanks and regulator.

**You come from an athletic family; the daughter of swimming parents, one of which was an Olympic Track and Field competitor. You took to the water at a young age, competed in the breaststroke, Australian crawl and water ballet in high school and went on to perform with the Sam Howard Aqua Follies. Your athleticism was obviously an important aspect of your career as a model, actress and stunt diver. Now retired, how have you maintained your vibrant longevity and active lifestyle?**

"One would need to live with me to know my conscious effort to stay fit. First of all, you would know I never sleep with a pillow under my head. Never did. And it is easy for me to sleep on a ground cover flat if camping. I try to get into bed before Wee Willy Winkie rides through the town. That is usually 8:00 p.m. Mornings start early...about 7:00 a.m. now that I am semi-retired. Those 3:00 a.m. studio calls plus work from sun-up to sun-down are now history. Studio work is not an easy way of life but it did pay a good salary even in the early days."

"I believe I mentioned to you about keeping in good health and shape. Adding a few pounds increases to ten pounds when one is seen in a photograph, on TV or film. I do not attend classes at the YMCA but did use their swimming pool when I first arrived in the Northwest. Now I live in a small house with four levels. Stairs are the exercise without trying to keep fit it just happens. There is plenty of lawn to mow. For that chore I have a tractor to ride."

"I am still involved with fun diving and on-call for the Tillamook County Sheriff Search and Rescue (forest not water) Team."

### A Diving Story.

Zale and her husband Parry would go to Catalina Island, California to dive. There were two steam ships, the SS Catalina and the SS Avalon that transported people from the mainland back and forth to Catalina. When the steam ships arrived in harbor in Catalina, people on the deck would throw coins into the water. Local children would quickly go into the water to catch the coins. Some of the coins sunk into a very large pit created by the props on the ships. Using a small compressor Zale and Parry would dive from their boat to the pit nearest the yacht mooring; taking a small and filling it with coins. Since they already had fresh abalone, lobster and fish, they would go to the Safeway grocery store and buy bread with the coins to complete their meals.

**Do you have a message for divers?**

"...keep diving and get really good at it. Too many folks try many other activities and don't get good at any of them."

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Read about Zale's exciting and accomplished life at International Legends of Diving [http://www.internationallegendsofdiving.com/FeaturedLegends/parry\\_bio.htm](http://www.internationallegendsofdiving.com/FeaturedLegends/parry_bio.htm) and in the book Diving Pioneers and Innovators: A Series of In-depth Interviews, by Bret Gilliam.

Story by Gretchen Ashton, photo courtesy Michele Hall

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