

Early Aqua-Lung

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Identification Plates



1949



1951-52



1953



1954



1955-56

Collectors of U.S. Divers Double Hose regulators sometime disagree on the evolution of the identification plates attached to all of their early regulators. I've learned a great deal over the past few years through observation, studying sales brochures and catalogues, talking to some of the early pioneers and from acquiring early Aqua-Lung regulators from their original owners. With respect to the dates I've assigned to the different model ID plates there's some room for discussion. However, because the most often asked question among collectors is "What year is it?" I've been definitive as to dates. The timeline chart will help you put the model changes in more perspective. Now let's go back to January 1949 when Jacques Cousteau first set up distribution for his Aqua-Lung on the east coast and move on through the years to 1975 when U.S. Divers phased out the Double Hose regulator.

1949: The Aqua-Lung was first distributed on the east coast by Spaco Inc. of Burlington, Vermont. The ID plate is rectangular in shape, 1-1/4 by 2 inches, and surface mounted with four rivets. It is not countersunk into the bottom box as later models are. The example I have has raised letters and hand stamped numbers. The plate is non-magnetic, so I assume it's made of brass or copper, with what appears to be a satin platinum type finish. Any evidence of a background color is not evident.

1950-1952: West Coast distribution was secured by René Bussoz. The Aqua-Lung was sold through Rene's Sporting Goods at 1045 Broxton Avenue in Westwood, California. The ID Plate remained 1-1/4 by 2 inches and surface mounted with four rivets. The background color was black with raised chrome lettering.

1953-1954: Several changes occurred in 1953. This was the first year that the Aqua-Lung was manufactured in the United States. The ID plate was still riveted on but now it was countersunk into the bottom box assembly. We'll call this flush mounted and from this date forward all rectangular ID plates are thus. The now famous 1045 Broxton Ave address is still on the plate but the background color is now blue with raised chrome lettering. Sometime about 1954 a green background plate appeared.

1955: U.S. Divers relocated to 11201 West Pico Blvd. This was the first year for the Navy Type DA with the new address. The ID plate was flush mounted with four rivets. The color was black with raised chrome lettering. This was the year the DX over-pressure was first offered. The DX had a riveted



1955-57



1956-57



1956-57 (2)



1957



1958-69



1958-70



1960



1961-63

plate with a yellow background color and it retained the old 1045 Broxton Ave address.

1956: Two new models were introduced. The DW Stream Air had the new ID plate with two tabs that bent over to attach it instead of the rivets. The background color was red with raised chrome lettering. The DY Jet Air was also new, but it didn't have an ID plate or serial number. It was made of high impact fiberglass phenolic compound, brown in color with the lettering molded into the bottom box. The Navy Type DA and the DX over-pressure continued on as the year before.

1957: The new bend over tabs were now used to attach all ID plates except the DX which continued to use the four rivets. The Navy Type DA had a slight name change to the DA Navy Approved. ID plates for the DA came in four colors: blue, black, yellow and orange, all with raised chrome lettering. The DW Stream Air and the DY Jet-Air continued on from the previous year.

1958-1959: All the rectangular ID plates from 1958 on had the bend over tabs. Gone forever were the rivets. The D Mistral took the place of the DW Stream Air and had a yellow plate with the raised chrome lettering. 1958 was the first year for the DA Aqua Master. Together with the DA Two Stage they had a blue tag with the raised chrome lettering.

1960: U.S. Divers again relocates, this time to 3323 West Delhi Ave., Santa Ana. There are only two models this year, the DA Aqua Master and the DW Mistral. The ID plates are the same color as the previous year.

1961-1963: A slight address change again occurred in 1961; Delhi Ave was changed to Werner Ave. The location was the same, just the street name was changed. The DA Aqua Master and the DW Mistral continued on and a black plastic Jet Air without a plate was introduced for these three years.



1961-67



1964-65



1965-67



1966-69



1968



1970-72



1970-73

1970: This year a major change in the ID plate occurred. The familiar rectangular shape was changed to a round silver stick-on affair. There were no serial numbers on the new sticker, instead the serial number was stamped into the top box assembly. The DW Mistral continued on with the old rectangular plate, but this was the last year it was produced.

1971-1972: Production continued with only two models, the Aqua Master and the Royal Aqua Master. In late 1972 the Aqua Master was dropped from the lineup.

1973: This was the last year of production for the Royal Aqua Master. Units were still available for a couple of years until inventories were depleted.

U.S. Divers had about a 25-year run with their Double Hose regulator - not bad for a design that originated in 1943. The Double Hose regulator dominated the diving scene in the 1950's and early 1960's. Photographers especially prized it because the air exhausted on the divers' backs and didn't interfere with their camera work. Today, countless collectors prize these early regulators. They are restored and maintained with care and are often used at Working Equipment Groups across the country.

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