

Cape York Devil Divers

The Crater Expedition - 1959

1959 Crater Expedition Crew:

Fred Aprilovic (Expedition leader & diver)

Johnny Sesto (Diver)

Ian Croll (Photographer/Diver)

John Sharp (Photographer/Diver)

Alan Reason (Cairns Post reporter/Diver)

Shirley Reason (Diver)

Noel Bonnell (Diver)

Keith Ikin (PMG technician/Diver)

Robert King (PMG technician/Diver)

Crater (01): We plan a course of operations.



L to R: R.King; K.Ikin; I.Croll; F.Aprilovic; J.Sesto.

Photo credits:

Ian Croll: 02, 03, 04, 05, 06, 07, 08, 09, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 21, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32.

Douglas King: 01

J.Sharp: 20, 22, 23.

Camera: *Rolliflex* 120 with *Rollimarin* housing and underwater bulb flash unit.

Crater (02): The gear had to be carried along a 300 yard jungle track from the parking area to the crater.



L to R: F.Aprilovic; K.Ikin; J.Sesto; R.King.

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Crater (03): Sign at the top of the Crater. The depth of the water was later found to vary between 150 and 285 feet.



Crater (05): The Crater as seen from the lookout. The arrow indicates the point from which diving operations were carried out. The pale surface of the water is a layer of floating duckweed, not scum, as is popularly believed. The actual descent was made through the trees slightly to the left of the arrow.



Crater (04): Looking over the side into the abyss. The rock wall of the Crater at the lookout drops vertically 184 feet (56m) to the surface of the lake.



L to R: J.Sesto; K.Ikin; F.Aprilovic; R.King.

Crater (06): The big tube was rolled over the side and landed on the water with a booming echo.



L to R: A.Reason; R.King; F.Aprilovic.

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Crater (07): Fred ponders the problem of lowering the raft. Shirley Reason (with aqualung) walks up the track to the other side of the Crater. The others enjoy a brief rest and a smoke.



L to R: F.Aprilovic; S.Reason; R.King; K.Ikin;
N.Bonnell; J.Sesto.

Crater (08): The raft goes over the side. The thin white line attached to the rope is one of our telephone lines. Alan and Noel appear concerned about the possibility of a mishap. Keith watches on with interest.



L to R: R.King (obscured); N.Bonnell; A.Reason; K.Ikin.

Crater (09): Johnny keeps a watchful eye on Fred as he goes over the side. The large rope was our main climbing rope; the thin one was a safety line attached to a body harness. The vine (lower left) just happened to be hanging there in the picture.



L to R: F.Aprilovic; J.Sesto.

Crater (10): Worm's eye view of the first drop. All members of the party wore the safety belt while climbing. Negotiating the first drop was hampered by falling stones and dirt that sometimes got into the climbers' eyes.



L to R: R.King; J.Sesto.

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Crater (11): Aqualung cylinders and breakable gear were lowered in bags on the safety rope. They were then carried down the steep hillside, made slippery by recent rain, to the second drop from where they were lowered once more in bags to the ledge below.



Crater (13): Fred comes over the second drop. Climbing back up was made much easier by men at the top taking the climber's weight on the safety line.



Subject: F.Aprilovic.

Crater (12): Johnny and Fred smile for the camera while Keith holds Fred steady with the safety line. The second drop goes vertically for 60 feet. The far wall of the Crater and the lake may be seen in the background.



L to R: J.Sesto; F.Aprilovic; K.Ikin.

Crater (14): A diver's-eye view of the Crater wall, looking up at the main lookout point. The height of the wall may be gauged by the two tiny figures at the top (arrow).



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Crater (15): Fred and Johnny cut a dark path through the duckweed as they paddle the raft towards the rock ledge. To retrieve the raft, they had to swim across the lake and untie the rope on which it was lowered. Beneath the small rock jutting out from the bank on the left hand side of the picture is 150 feet of water, the shallowest part of the whole lake.



L to R: F.Aprilovic; J.Sesto.

Crater (16): Keith keeps in touch from the lookout with those below. Communication was maintained between the top of the Crater on both sides and also the bottom, with the use of three PMG portable telephones.



Subject: K.Ikin.

Crater (17): Fred and Johnny on a sea of duckweed prepare to measure the depth of the Crater's lake. On the end of the line is a small cotton drogue, designed to indicate any currents, if they should exist. Here, they are floating above the deepest part of the lake, found to be 285 feet deep. No underwater currents were detected.



L to R: F.Aprilovic; J.Sesto.

Crater (18): With a white ribbon tied every three feet on the plumb line, Fred measures the depth of the lake. Soundings were taken from all over the lake using this method.



Subject: F.Aprilovic.

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Crater (19): We take the lake's temperature. The thermometer was taken by divers to 30 feet (9m) and attached to the line by a piece of firm wire to measure the temperature at the bottom but when the line was hauled in, the thermometer was no longer there! The surface temperature was 69° Fahrenheit (20.5° Celsius); at 30 feet (9m), it dropped to 55° F (13° C).



Subject: F.Aprilovic.

Crater (20): The diving gear had to be carried down to the water over a 15-foot (4.6m) drop to a rocky ledge. Climbing was difficult. Here, Keith descends with a Porpoise aqualung (Model CA1) and a surface supply hookah line.



Subject: K.Ikin.

Crater (21): Fred goes over the side for a preliminary exploration of the Crater wall while Johnny clutches the raft's paddle and an underwater torch. In the background, the rock wall is hollowed out, forming a large but shallow cave.



L to R: F.Aprilovic; J.Sesto.

Crater (22): Johnny goes in for the second exploratory dive, with a safety line attached.



L to R: J.Sesto; F.Aprilovic.

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Crater (23): Fred and Johnny painted depth indicators on the Crater wall at the request of the Qld Forestry Department. The water level has been known to fluctuate throughout the year. Painted depth markers can be seen at the top right of the picture. The big tube floats beside the raft as Fred and Johnny prepare for the deep dive.



L to R: J.Sesto; F.Aprilovic.

Crater (24): The big moment: a final briefing before the deep dive. Fred and Johnny discuss the dive plan as they prepare to enter the water. Heavy contrast between light and shade made photography difficult.



L to R: F.Aprilovic; J.Sesto.

Crater 25: Fred hits the water in true Devil Diver fashion with a large splash as he submerges. He carried a pressure-proof torch that cast a bright gleam in the cold, dark water.



Subject: F.Aprilovic.

Crater (26): 13 fathoms (24m) down. Fred and Johnny hang weightlessly at 80 feet. Fred used my Porpoise "Universal". The murkiness is due to a layer of fine sediment. Little light filters down from the surface at this depth. Ian used a Rolliemarin housing for his camera, with a flashbulb attachment.



L to R: F.Aprilovic; J.Sesto.

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Crater (27): Johnny poses for the camera, braving the chill at 100 feet (30m) as Fred departs for deeper water. Johnny is using a hookah surface supply line attached to aqualung bottles on the raft at the surface. All divers wore self-inflating lifejackets in case of emergency.



Subject: J.Sesto.

Crater (28): With a halo of exhaust bubbles, Fred poses for the camera at 150 feet (46m). His heavy torch is a spark- and pressure-proof GEC product, originally manufactured for use in mining operations. The time on Fred's watch is 12:20pm.



Subject: F.Aprilovic.

Crater (29): 30 fathoms down. Clear water at 180 feet (55m) for the deepest photograph taken in the Crater. Ian, our photographer, stopped here as he was using only a single cylinder Porpoise Model CA1. Fred continued to 200 feet (61m) where it was very cold and very dark. A controlled ascent was then made to the surface, with a decompression stop for the three divers at 10 feet (3m).



Subject: F.Aprilovic.

Crater (30): Johnny and Fred resurface. The raft has pushed the duckweed aside to reveal the dark water. The dappled shadow is from a large, overhanging Moreton Bay fig tree.



L to R: F.Aprilovic; J.Sesto.

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Crater (31): Fred and Johnny examine a sample of duckweed, a water plant with tiny leaves and very fine roots that hang about an inch below the surface. The upper surface of the plant is green; the underside is purple.



L to R: F.Aprilovic; J.Sesto.

Crater (32): Husband and wife team Alan and Shirley Reason explored part of the crater wall together. From the bottom rock ledge, to allow ease of entry to, and exit from the water, we suspended a rope ladder, specially made for the purpose. Shirley's aqualung is a Porpoise Model CA1.



L to R: S.Reason; A.Reason.

Crater (33): I explored the Crater walls to a maximum depth of 12 metres, attached to the surface by a safety line. I managed to circumnavigate the entire Crater and discovered shoals of small fish as well as a few freshwater turtles, which no one else had reported seeing.



Subject: R.King

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