



Frank Scalli was born in Charlestown on April 13, 1931 and grew up in Roxbury. He graduated from Boston Trade School in 1949. He lost his father when he was 13 and became a source of comfort for his mother all of her life. He met his wife, Mary, while they were teenagers in Charlestown. They were married there in 1953. He joined the U.S. Army and proudly served during the Korean War from 1950 to 1953 as a paratrooper with the 11th Airborne Division, 188th AIR, out of Fort Campbell, KY. He was one of the original Army "Atomic Soldiers," having participated in the first live nuclear detonation tests involving U.S. troops during November 1951 in the Nevada desert.

Frank Scalli, a paratrooper, had just gotten out of the Army in 1953, and was desperately looking for something to keep him active, and diving seemed like it. During his last few months in the service he had been an aquatics supervisor at a base in Kentucky, where he earned his Water Safety Instructor (WSI) rating, which, as Frank says, was "the most difficult thing I had done in my life; jumping out of airplanes was easy in comparison". Once out of the military and back in the Boston area, he found one of the few places selling dive gear. He bought a mask, tank and regulator, and took them to a local Y. Since the gear came with no instructions, he jumped into the pool to teach himself. Everything turned out to be fine, except his ears hurt, and he couldn't figure out why. The next time he tried it, he ruptured an ear drum. He researched the subject as best he could, but all the books that he could find were written by, or for, helmet divers, and offered no help. They talked about equalizing, but did not say what it meant or how to do it. Frank figured that he just had a bad day, and went back three weeks later, when he promptly ruptured the other ear. Finally, additional research put him in touch with Dave Owen, Chief Diver at Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution (WHOI), who explained about ear equalization, and supplied some appropriate reading materials. Scalli asked why more people didn't know about this new sport, to which Owen explained, "It's not a sport yet!".

By the summer of 1954, the YMCA had received requests at two other pools from people who wanted to try out their equipment. There were no standards, so Frank wrote out a list of do's and don'ts. Frank was not an educator or a writer, however, the Y people liked what they read and adopted it. He wrote the first nationally adopted scuba instructional manual.

Although he looked around for other divers, it wasn't until August of 1954 that he heard about a meeting at the Boston Y, which he quickly attended. A few of the other people he remembered at that first meeting were Joe Cortese and his wife, Walter Feinberg, Jim Cahill, Don DeSantis, and Joe Linehan. At this meeting, or one shortly afterward, the group started meeting as the Boston YMCA Sea Rovers, and a logo was quickly chosen to make it official. There were about a dozen people present. This small but determined group of individuals were excited about diving, and wanted to let other people know about this burgeoning sport. They decided that the best way to inform those interested in the Boston area was to host an exhibition about diving. An ambitious date was selected less than six months away. They started to plan, promote, and pray that it would work. The rest, as they say, is history - the history of the Boston Sea Rovers.

He assisted in establishing the Massachusetts District Commission and the Massachusetts State Police underwater search and rescue teams in the early 1960s, following 10 years of volunteer search and rescue work for the state. As a diver, he had few equals, whether participating in the first dive expedition to the sunken Andrea Doria or pioneering a new drift dive adventure in the Caribbean.

Scalli joined U.S. Divers Company, chaired by Jacques Cousteau, in 1961 as East Coast Marketing and Promotional Director. He transferred into sales in 1963 and received an award from U.S. Divers for attaining \$1 million in sales per annum. In 1969 Scalli became National Sales Manager, a position he held until retirement in 1985. He and Cousteau shared a lifetime of diving and business adventures. Cousteau would visit Mr. Scalli at his home in Gloucester frequently, beginning with his family's permanent move there in 1967.



For his long dedication, he has received many awards and honors, including: the NOGI Award for Distinguished Service from the Academy of Underwater Arts and Sciences (1972); the Reaching Out Award and induction into the DEMA Hall of Fame (1992); and the Distinguished Service Award by the Cotting School for Handicapped Children.

Mr. Scalli considered his most important accomplishment the ones in which he helped those most in need. For more than 40 years, he supported the children of the Cotting School in Boston. He founded the annual fund-raiser Seamark, raising money from the local diving community for the school. He also raised funds to build their vision clinic, which now bears his name.

While waiting for a Sea Rover meeting at the Huntington Street YMCA back in 1957, Frank found himself wandering the block at St. Botolph Street. He happened upon Cotting Superintendent Bill Carmichael taking a fresh air break from his work. Frank asked Bill what kind of work went on in the building, which afforded Bill the opportunity to give Frank a tour of the School. Bill described the kids' daily struggles to challenge themselves at lessons that most people took for granted. Frank was so overwhelmed with what he saw that he convinced the new Sea Rovers of the kids' urgent needs.... needs that the Rovers could help do something about. The Rovers held a "Turkey Raffle" to finance a Christmas party for the kids. For the party, the Rovers decorated their YMCA "clubhouse" and pool, setting props in the facility's pool for an underwater treasure mystery. During a subsequent visit to the school, Frank recalled visiting classes and watching as several of the students strained to keep up with the day's lesson, or simply lost interest. In noting his observation to Bill, Frank questioned whether some of the children might be having visual difficulties which could be interfering with the learning process. When Bill indicated that the school had no program to tackle that question, Frank knew his mission was clear. Through the financial assistance of the Sea Rovers, every child in the school was provided with an extensive visual examination which provided insight into the students' learning difficulties. Several of the children were indeed diagnosed with visual problems. It soon became the goal of Frank Scalli to provide the students of the Cotting School with a vision clinic to assist them in attaining their educational goals. The first vision clinic at Cotting was financed by the generosity of the divers in the Boston area.

In March of 2004, his beloved Boston Sea Rovers continued his tradition of diving education and support of deserving youth by initiating the Frank Scalli Annual Summer Internship, in which a deserving high school senior spends a summer learning about a variety of career opportunities in the underwater world. It was his last great honor to be able to participate in the awards presentation.

On June 22, 2004, Frank J. Scalli, 73, of 36 Thurston Point Road, Gloucester, died peacefully at his home, with his wife Mary at his side.

"He was a man who loved life more than anyone else I've ever met," said his son, Patrick Scalli of Gloucester. "He was very lively spirited, the kind of guy you loved to have around."

"Frank was a close personal friend and we are all saddened to hear of his passing," Jean-Michel Cousteau said. "However, his influence and legendary work on behalf of the dive industry will live on forever." "Frank was a pioneer and one of diving's great ambassadors," Cousteau said. "He inspired many to explore the ocean and experience our water world."

"Frank was a wonderful friend of the students of Cotting. It was my great joy to work with Frank for some twenty years. His commitment serves as a model of what giving for the betterment of others should be. We will greatly miss this terrific man with the heart full of love for our kids." said Carl Mores, former President/Executive Director of Cotting School.

The Seamark Vision Clinic was established as a result of the diving pioneer and moving force behind Seamark, Frank Scalli. For over twenty-five years, Frank and his compatriot divers, Jacques and Jean-Michel Cousteau, Robert Ballard, Dee Scarr, Frank Fennel, Rick Frehsee, Stan Waterman, Sylvia Earle and many others, raised tens of thousands of dollars to support the Vision Clinic at Cotting School. The Vision Clinic has, in turn, helped hundreds of children reach a greater potential by giving them previously unrealized sight.