

Marine explorer named to prestigious club

**Kenn Feigelman named to Explorers Club,
Membership includes astronaut Neil Armstrong**

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Kenn Feigelman looking through the jaws of one of the many marine animals he has filmed over the years

The prestigious Explorers Club, based in the United States, has world renowned members such as astronaut Neil Armstrong, primatologist Jane Goodall, and now "a curly haired Jewish guy from Kingston," jokes Kenn Feigelman.

The Montreal-native who's lived here since 1992 is in good spirits these days having been honoured for his work relaunching DeepIQuest2 Expeditions, a diving business which has taken him around the world researching the seas.

The venture works under the motto "to educate, entertain and enlighten" and has led Kenn to explore shipwrecks of Lake Ontario, beautiful cenotes off the coast of Mexico and whale sharks of the Caribbean. He also has plans underway to document endangered manatees in Florida, coral reefs in Panama and aboriginal pictographs in Bon Echo Park.

"I'm an explorer," says the friendly and charismatic 59-year-old in an interview" from his rural Kingston home to talk about a lifetime of diving. "It's in my heart and my soul. I was hatched in this world to explore the underwater."

But the road to where he is now is quite an unusual one.

Kenn started diving at age 13 and received his first certificate at 19. But early in his life it was really just a hobby. He studied biological sciences at both McGill and Concordia universities, and went on to work a lab job in the paper and food industries. But diving was his real passion.

On weekends, around 1973, he and a friend began heading south to Lake Champlain in northern New York, where he heard there were shipwrecks of famous U.S. battles. The artifacts they discovered revealed details of the American Revolution and the War of 1812.

When the media got wind, the two became semi-famous. Sponsors came on board, a local hotel offered them free accommodation, and a documentary appeared on CBS. It was the first of several chapters in the life of Deep Quest.

In the 1980s, Kenn moved to Ontario and re-launched it as a nonprofit business called Deep/Quest 2 Underseas Research Society. Its job was to study shipwrecks of Lake Ontario and evaluate the effects of man-made reefs on freshwater eco-systems.

Eventually, the business acquired an underwater research habitat, called Sublimnos, and became the envy of many diving organizations.

But the program operated with provincial government funds and when the NDP was elected in 1990 support seemed to go south. Frustrated, Kenn resigned as head of the organization and went on to run a management company, which he kept until 2002.

But the waters came calling again. With the encouragement of his wife, a doctor who he moved to Kingston to be with him, he re-launched Deep/Quest to fulfill a passion he missed.

Since re-launching as a private business, Kenn and his team have become a trusted group for television companies and marine biologists to partner with for a project. As a veteran diver, Kenn is now asked to go to dangerous places such as cenotes, which are underwater caves, to help us understand our planet.

The work makes for great television and executives from Discovery, National Geographic and Outdoor Life regularly consider his footage for TV.

The work is also gratifying because it helps wildlife experts learn more about endangered species. Kenn hopes to keep doing it for as long as he can and the father of four has two sons who are becoming interested in diving and may want to keep up the company.

After all, it's come a long, long way since it was a humble two-person shipwreck exploring team. "I'm not sure I have a skill or any skills plural," Kenn says, remarking on his growing success. "My only skill is bringing people together."