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## Journey to the depths and back Local company on quest for pictographs

Matt Trevisan



**Kenn Feigelman**

Kenn Feigelman shouldn't have been surprised when Cuban divers nicknamed him the Old Man and the Sea.

With his scraggly grey hair and his skin tanned from time spent diving in Cuba and Mexico, the 59-year-old looks like a cross between Ernest Hemingway's Santiago and the author himself.

But instead of trying to catch the big fish like Santiago, Feigelman swims alongside them, filming gigabyte after gigabyte of digital footage.

"We want to create a greater awareness as to what truly exists underwater," he said.

Feigelman is the operations director of Deep/Quest 2 Expeditions, an underwater exploration team. Based in Kingston, he amasses footage for a production company in Burlington, Ont.

Not all of his job sites are surrounded by coral: One upcoming project will be to explore the 145-metres deep Mazinaw Lake in search of aboriginal pictographs.

Located north of Napanee in Cloyne, Bon Echo Park is home to the Mazinaw Rock and Lake. The rock stands 100 metres above water level and stretches 1.5 kilometres across the lake.

Scrawled on the Mazinaw Rock is Ontario's largest collection of aboriginal pictographs.

"They are messages from the past," said Mandy Bidwell, the park's natural heritage education coordinator.

More than 300 years old, the pictographs were most likely drawn by the Ojibway after a spiritual journey.

No aboriginals have claimed ownership of the



pictographs, Bidwell said, but Ojibway representatives have said their ancestors created identical pictographs at other provincial parks like Lake Superior and Quetico.

"They may have come as the result of a vision quest," Bidwell said of the journey taken by the Ojibway's young men and shamans.

When Feigelman was last at the park, he noticed the pictographs were located close to water level. "And the water level is much higher than when the drawings were first made," he said.

Feigelman and his crew will drop a camera with a rotating head into the water and use bright lights to illuminate the dark lake, one of the province's deepest. He will then dive and examine the rock with other divers. "That will be a neat find," he said.



Feigelman has filmed enormous sea turtles along the Yucatan Peninsula and in the Cenotes, the most fascinating locale he has ever explored.

The Cenotes are a series of ancient caves deep beneath the water, where divers can only venture if they have a guide.

"They are sights I could never imagine," he said of the spiraling, jagged underground tunnels.

Throughout the next two years, Feigelman will travel to Cuba, Mexico, Panama, Costa Rica, Colombia and to islands off Puerto Rico and Italy.

He will go back to Cuba to film a shipwreck from the 1898 Spanish American War that locals recently found.

In Mexico, Feigelman will film endangered whale sharks and manta rays, which are slaughtered for food and leather.

"These animals demand respect and preservation from being slaughtered," he said.

He'll also work closer to home, on an underwater film for the Rideau Canal's upcoming 175th anniversary. "There's always something to see, to discover and to find," he said.

Feigelman hopes to sell his footage to major production companies because there's a lack of underwater documentaries for the armchair explorer, he said. "God knows what this might lead to," he said.

Underwater exploration fascinated Feigelman as he grew up in Montreal's West Island district.

He read *National Geographic* and watched Lloyd Bridges in the late 1950s television show *Sea Hunt*.

And, of course, there was Jacques Cousteau.

"That was very avant-garde back then," Feigelman said.

He began diving when he was 13, and obtained his first YMCA diving certification in 1966 when he was 19.

"My mother said, 'You're crazy. Good Jewish boys don't go underwater and chase fish. They become doctors or lawyers,' " he said.

He studied marine zoology at McGill University but left to work as a lab technician. He eventually finished his degree taking night classes at Concordia University.

Feigelman created Deep/Quest 2 in 1973 with the expectation of taking one trip to Lake Champlain's bottom to explore ship wrecks from the American War of Independence and the War of 1812. But CBS filmed part of his exploration, and other organizations wanted more. One year later, he and his partner went their own ways "for personal reasons" and Feigelman expanded his company.

He documented the struggles of beluga whales that came in contact with toxic chemicals in the St. Lawrence River near Tadoussac, Que. "They were and still are very endangered," he said.

He also filmed several whale species in the St. Lawrence Gulf near Quebec's Mingan Archipelago.

When Feigelman heard Joseph MacInnis's underwater research habitat was "retired in mothballs" north of Toronto, he put it back to work beneath Lake Ontario near Point Traverse in 1990. Named Sublimnos, the underwater habitat was the first of its kind when MacInnis - the first Canadian to dive down to the Titanic - sunk it in Georgian Bay near Tobermory in 1969.

Feigelman drew the structure: Sublimnos looks like an octopus with four tentacles. Four legs prop up the pod that stands 4.5 metres tall and 2.5 metres long. It has several windows and an apparatus that regulates the pressure so scientists can walk around on the lake's bottom.

Feigelman wanted to use Sublimnos to test the effect of man-made reefs on the lake's fresh water. With several hundred thousand dollars from the Ontario Ministry of the Environment, Feigelman's not-for-profit society created four artificial reefs from rubber tires, concrete sewers, cinder blocks and debris from shipwrecks.

But when Bob Rae's NDP government took over after David Peterson's Liberals, Feigelman said, the government wanted the society to change its research focus to testing reefs in aquariums. "It was just so stupid and ludicrous," he said.

In 1991, Feigelman resigned as Deep/Quest 2's president. "The society folded and that was the end of that," he said.

Sublimnos is "lying on its side, covered in zebra mussels," but Feigelman wants to donate it to the Marine Museum of the Great Lakes on Ontario Street.

"People kept approaching me and told me to get back into what I loved doing best, but I kept saying, 'When I'm ready,' " he said of his time spent running a management company from 1992 to 2002.

Last year, the president of a scuba diving equipment distributor offered to sponsor Feigelman to start exploring again and speak about his underwater experience at conventions.

"I encouraged him to revitalize Deep/Quest," said Jack Bohmrich, Canadian Divers Ltd. CEO and an old friend of Feigelman's. "There was not a lot of talk at the grassroots level about how wonderful it is underwater."

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