

Floyd Gibbons Adventurers' Club

Hello Everybody!

"Suction!"
By FLOYD GIBBONS
Famous Headline Hunter

MEET August Burghard of Fort Lauderdale, Fla., and then read his strange, terrifying tale of how a strong swimmer almost met death in a fifty-five-foot swimming pool.

The pool was at Las Olas Casino in Fort Lauderdale, and Gus Burghard was the strong swimmer in question. In fact, Gus was life guard at the pool. Maybe he was TOO good a swimmer. It's always the good ones who take the chances and get into trouble, and Gus certainly took a long chance. He dived into the pool while it was being drained.

That might not seem like much of a feat. But wait till you hear Gus' story of what happened to him.

The pool was twelve feet deep at the deep end. Down at the bottom was an iron grate that covered a pipe sixteen inches in diameter. Gus says when that drain pipe was opened a miniature whirlpool was created at the end of the tank. Many a time he had seen bits of paper sucked down into that maelstrom. Also there was an iron-clad rule that no one was to swim in the pool while it was being drained. Yes—Gus knew better than to dive straight into that whirlpool. But on the sixth of March, 1928, he did dive in at the other end, while the big pipe was open.

He dived in once or twice at the far end of the pool, and it was exhilarating to feel the tug of the suction and fight away from it to reach the other side. But his last dive was a little closer to the drain—and in an instant he was DRAGGED TOWARD THE WHIRLPOOL.

Gus says he flew toward that drain opening as if he'd been on a stretched rubber band. Then he began to find out how strong suction could really be.

What the Suction Did to Gus.

Says he: "My left hand and wrist struck the grating first, but I managed to reverse my position. I got my feet against the bars and began fighting back with the utmost of my ability. My legs are strong, but now they were doubled up under me, and for the life of me I could not push away.

"Terrible suction DREW A FINGER RING FROM MY HAND that I had never been able to get off myself. The knuckle was large, and the ring took part of the flesh with it. Part of my bathing suit was torn from my body. Arms and legs were sucked against the bars, drawing blood and causing terrible bruises. All this time I was being held under water. And the drain was so constructed that it would take several minutes to close it!"

...several minutes! People have drowned in one or two! Still Gus struggled with his hands and legs to keep the rest of him away from that opening. "Once my body flattened out against that grating," he says, "I am convinced that the suction could break my ear drums, draw eyes from their sockets, tear out the stomach wall and otherwise mutilate me. Parts of my bathing suit jumped and waved in the rushing waters in front of me. My hair was pulled toward the opening. Even my eyebrows and eyelashes felt the overpowering tug. And every additional second I stayed under water the pull grew stronger and I grew weaker."

Death Seemed Very Near to Him.

Gus says he could feel sky-rockets shooting and bursting in his brain. His ears began to whistle, sing and pop. He had made up his mind in one desperate resolve, and that was not to take any water into his lungs. "I was going to die," he says, "but I would 'go out' with my jaws locked."

The angels were flapping their wings around Gus. He was losing consciousness. In ten more seconds—and dogs would be there—all the fight would be gone out of him and he'd be lying limp against that grating while the terrific pressure TORE AND MANGLED him. But even while Gus was fighting with his last strength help was coming from up above.

It was Billy Spears, a Boy Scout. Billy had been swimming with Gus—missed him, and gazed what had happened to him. The moment he reached the deep end of the pool he saw Gus down there in the clear water, fighting for life.

Billy used his head. His first impulse was to dive in after Gus, but he realized in time that that would do no good. On the floor lay a bamboo pole. Billy grabbed that and pushed it down to Gus.

Got Hold of the Bamboo Pole.

"He pushed it to me several times before I noticed it," says Gus. "Finally I felt it strike my head and slip down over my shoulder. With the last convulsive bit of strength I could muster I grasped it. My grip on it was so tight that the skin on the palms of my hands was broken. Then, aided by several others who had assembled, Billy drew me back INTO THE LAND OF THE LIVING.

"My eyes were popping. My face and shoulders were purple and my arms and legs bleeding. But I was outside again—and alive. The first breath I took when my head reached the surface was a gasp that could be heard all the way out to the street. Then, in an instant I was on an oxygen jag. The sudden intake of pure air burned in my blood vessels like fire. I lay on the floor, gasping, the flesh to move."

Too Much Pressure to Live—But He's Alive.

They gave Gus first aid in the Red Cross room and took him to the hospital. Half the patients in the place came to see him and call him such names as The Human Stopper and Old Man Rubber Lungs. An engineer computed the pressure Gus had undergone and figured it at 1,000 pounds per square foot. A man couldn't live with all that weight on him. "But here I am," says Gus.

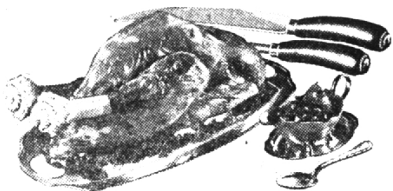
Billy Spears was publicly honored, as was fitting and proper. The mayor presented him with a medal, and the national scout organization gave him another.

"As time goes on," says Gus, "I don't have to fight the drain as I'm dropping off to sleep. My keenest delight is to touch things that are solid, and not fluff, elusive handfuls of water. It's great to fill my lungs with big breaths of fresh air—and nowadays I don't even pull the stopper out of a bath tub while I'm still in it."

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CHOOSE YOUR PARENTS WITH CARE

David R. Innes

If you would be a pioneer in thought,

Behold what Mr. Einstein's genius brought.

"We do not like," they say, "his cut of clothes,

The way he combs his hair, nor type of nose."

"We do not like the sculpture of his face,

Nor do we want that he should limit space."

"He thinks in terms we do not comprehend,

He makes us feel piebald-like, no end."

"He plays with gusto—plays the violin—

His views on politics are quite a sin."

"Since we like not the color of his eyes,

We'll seize all his effects—then ostracize."

Though all may choose their socks and B. V. D's,

Fate has a way of choosing pedigrees.

Some men are brave enough to choose their ties,

But who can choose his kind of nose or eyes?"

This is a fact, as plain as two and two,

You cannot be your own parent yet be you.

To which we wave a flag and yell with glee,

"Three cheers: Hurray! Hurray! Democracy!"

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