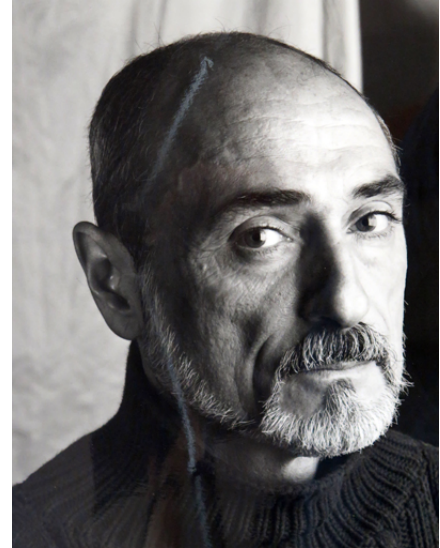


Tony Maffatone — 15 Years

By Joel Silverstein

It has been Fifteen Years since we lost our dear friend Tony Maffatone. August 2, 2000. Our daughter Jane was about to turn two and we were in Hawaii for the annual ISAM medical conference. Kathy had just put Jane to sleep when the news arrived via email. The cry that came out of me was pure silence. Tony had become a close friend to Kathy and I over the previous seven years. His sudden, dramatic, and unexpected death slammed us with incredible force. A hole still exists in our lives without him. We speak of him often with both reverence and joy.



Silverstein 1993

As our diving technology has changed, we can only imagine what he would have done over the past fifteen years. Though I know he may have stayed a little more old school than mess with some of the convoluted buffoonery we see today. There are still some things that he wanted to do that I keep on my dive list and try to do them as I can. He did not get to see our daughter grow up or Jona be born and grow. He would have taken Jona climbing and taught him skills of survival. I suspect he and Jona would have bonded like no other. He missed out on watching my oldest Charlie turn into a fine young man that Tony always believed he would. He would have been proud to see the great diver Jona has turned into and he would have reveled in Charles graduation at FDNY. He did not see his own children and grandchildren grow either. He did not live to see the positive impact he had on so many of us. And, we will never know how much more all our lives would have been enhanced had he lived.

Tony taught me that taking care of your body was important, though I did not begin to heed that advice until about six years ago. Some of you may not know that he was a friend of Sly Stallone and advised him on many films. Tony was a key character profile for John Rambo in the *First Blood* film. Tony was an advisor and had a cameo in *Rocky IV*. Every day when I work out I have a routine that uses the music from that film and I think of Tony. In addition, not a month

goes by now where he is not in the forefront of my thoughts while I try to figure out some technological project. I have gotten past being angry at him and kicking his gear box across the yard for leaving us. Now I just miss my friend

Over the years many of our friends have died diving and now some are passing for just having lived life. In the past few years we have lost the estimable Dr. Bill Hamilton and maritime attorney Peter Hess. Both had known Tony well. Our dear friend Dr. Ed Campbell (ISAM President) who died in 2012 had met Tony just a month before Tony died in 2000 when Ed came out to dive the *Andrea Doria*. These three died from medical causes while not underwater but were still most influential in the diving world.

The list of friends who have passed continues to grow. Now family is dropping off as well. With each one, I try to learn something from their deaths that can help keep me alive a little longer and live a little better. Today more and more divers are heading out to do bigger dives, bolder dives, more complex dives. The technology we have gives us easier access to dives that when Tony was alive would have been nearly impossible. However, the technology has not reached the point where it is infallible. And those of us who are old enough in diving and have other things to accomplish have taken a step back and are more cautious than ever before. Age seems to bring wisdom.

Tony died while testing a custom, deep diving rig, designed to be self-contained for up to six hours at depths to as great as 100 meters. The laws of physics failed on him that day. The distance to reach the surface was just too great. And God reminded us that life is fragile that day. Please take a moment today and remember Tony, and every other friend who has died while diving.

Today we lift a glass again to Tony and say "cent' anne"

Godspeed