

**ERROL DUPLESSIS**  
**President/CEO, Lake Rawlings**  
**Errol@LakeRawlings.com**

Errol Duplessis is the chief architect, and the President and Chief Executive Officer of Lake Rawlings. With his leadership and vision, and the help of a very savvy Board of Directors, Lake Rawlings was transformed from “a hole in the ground” into the most viable inland diving facility in the region.

Errol, with his lovely wife, Laurel, and several relatives and friends, planned and started a company in 1994 to provide services to scuba divers in Virginia. Little did they know that the company would become the premier inland diving facility in the mid-Atlantic region! Last year, the company served over 15,000 divers at its location, primarily from a six-state area, to include Virginia, Maryland, North Carolina, Washington, DC, Delaware and West Virginia. However, the company is not limited to a regional perspective. Divers from many other states and Europe came to Lake Rawlings last year to enjoy the facility.

When asked about the popularity and success of the business, Errol said, “Sometimes it’s hard to believe what we have been able to accomplish over the years. There were naysayers who said it could not be done; but we did not believe them, we believed in ourselves. We were able to transform a hole-in-the-ground with water into a viable scuba diving park. The rest speaks for itself. Last year, we constructed a \$250,000 bathroom facility for the comfort and enjoyment of our customers, the divers. The facility features seven private bathrooms that are climate controlled year-round. And, of course, each bathroom has a shower, toilet and urinal, face bowl, mirror, bench seat, etc. I have a prospectus for a private offering of Lake Rawlings bonds and have a few remaining for purchase. We believe it is a good investment in us, our cause, and that the investor will receive a decent return on investment for the bond buyer.”

Errol’s accomplishments do not end with Lake Rawlings. He enjoyed 21 “glorious years” at Hampton University as director of the aquatics program. As such, he was able to expand the level of professional aquatic courses, and also started a scuba diving club called the *Underwater Explorers* (but dubbed by the students as the *Kaos Krew*) in 1983. He stated that there are many stories to tell about their experiences, and decided to share one of his more interesting ventures.

“One of my favorite stories occurred during the spring break diving trip to the Bahamas in March 1991. The scuba club had been going to the Florida springs and keys for about eight years, so we decided to do something different, more adventuresome, with memories for a lifetime. We leased a bareboat sailboat for 18 divers with a boat captain for a one-week trip to the Bahamas. All the arrangements were made months in advance. Selling the trip was easy; the students were ready before the ink was dry on the flyer and application. But there was a problem! Thirty-six students, diving alumni and faculty signed up for the trip! Not to worry; we leased a second sailboat and got a bus to transport us to Watson Island Marina in Miami. And we had to leave about 10 divers home because there was not enough room on the boats.

“We sailed the 50 miles across the Atlantic Ocean to Bimini in rain and heavy seas, but got through it in good shape. None of the students complained. I did my homework before leaving, and discovered there was a marina and hotel/night club complex owned by a Black Bahamian family. The name of the nightclub was the Compleat Angler, and it was a favorite refuge for such notables as Adam Clayton Powell and Ernest Hemmingway. Mr. Browne, whose first name escapes me at the moment, was a gentle, well-spoken man who greeted us upon our arrival at his marina, appropriately named Browne’s Marina.

“He bade goodbye to us every morning when we left the marina, and he greeted us every afternoon upon our return. After doing this charade for a couple of days, I had to ask Mr. Browne why he did this. He said, ‘Mr. Duplessis (he always addressed me by my sire name), my family has been in Bimini since 1939. We have owned the Compleat Angler and this marina since 1941. I was educated at Howard University, and so was my family and sons. We have seen the boats come and go with students on spring break from the states for many years. Mr. Duplessis, you are the first to visit us from an HBCU university, and we honor you for this.’

“Wow! That blew me away! Here we were in Bimini on spring break having a good time, and here was this distinguished gentleman reciting history in the making. His words did not really resonate on me until days later, after we returned to Hampton University.

“My last spring break trip to Bimini with students from Hampton University was in March 2003, the year I retired. There are many other stories to tell. But the fondest memories are the ‘first’ events: the first scuba diving trip to the Florida Springs and Keys in 1984; the first Bimini trip in 1991; and the first North Carolina wreck diving trip in 1989.

Errol is a certified PADI Master Scuba Diver Trainer. He has taught scuba diving since 1978, and has been with the Professional Association of Diving Instructors (PADI) since 1995. Prior to his affiliation with PADI, he was sanctioned to teach scuba diving with the National Association of Underwater Instructors (NAUI) and Scuba Schools International (SSI). He is also an Oxygen First Aid Administration Instructor with the Divers Alert Network (DAN), and a former Water Safety Instructor-Trainer, Lifeguarding Instructor-Trainer, and CPR/First Aid Instructor-Trainer with the American Red Cross. By circumstance and opportunity, Errol is believed to have introduced and or certified more African-American men and women into scuba diving than any scuba instructor, active or inactive, in the United States of America.

Errol’s academic background includes an M.A. in leisure studies from New York University, and a B.S. in recreation from Southern University (LA). He is an active member of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc. and the Les Hommes Civic and Social Club of Hampton, VA.