

Healthways Aqua Suits

Dick Klein founded and headed Healthways until its bankruptcy in 1963 (Miller, 2005). According to Dick Bonin, the founder of its successor company Scubapro, Healthways was a mass merchandiser, selling to all comers, and one of the five original American diving manufacturers: U.S. Divers, Healthways, Voit, Dacor and Swimaster (Gilliam, n.d.).

In 1955, Healthways retailed “Pêche Sport” wetsuits and “Carib” drysuits, both available in long and short versions. The former was a “vulcanised foam rubber frogman isothermic diving suit”, while the latter was a “pure gum rubber suit made of 3-ply translucent gum rubber” (Healthways, 1955). The Carib was about one third cheaper than the Pêche-Sport. In 1957, the company added the La Jolla, Monterrey and Balboa lines in wet suits and the Aqua King and Aqua Flite dry suits.

Historical Diving Suits

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Aqua Suit Facts



Aqua King Professional Waist Entry Full Length Suit (Comes complete with hood, long shirt, long pants with boots attached, waistline sealing ring and can of HEALTHWAYS rubber dust). HEALTHWAYS Aqua King Suit is a revolutionary new pure gum molded latex seamless rubber suit which practically defies destruction! Even after being punctured this amazing material still resists further tearing! Another example of HEALTHWAYS leadership in the underwater sports field! There is no other dry type suit on the market which has the “wear-ability”, tensile strength and form fitting comfort of the Aqua King! Easy to slip in and out of... holds shape permanently, retains elasticity indefinitely, is non-allergic, odorless and resists sun, water, oil and perspiration as no other rubber suit can! The Aqua King is the all-purpose all-fitting suit sensation for 1957! (Delivery about December 1st). *Cat. No. 1722-Small, 1723-Medium, 1724-Large. (Retail \$42.50)*

Aqua Flite Water Ski and Skin Diving Suit (Includes long sleeve shirt with foam neoprene collar, waistline sealing ring and ankle length pants). Made of 2-ply laminated gum rubber... designed and perfected by HEALTHWAYS team of experts! Ideal for water ski enthusiasts as well as skin divers! Keeps the skier warm and comfortable. Soft foam neoprene zipper collar gives comfort never before possible... easy to put on or take off! The Aqua Flite is an excellent dual-purpose rubber suit! *Cat. No. 1740-Small, 1741-Medium, 1742-Large. (Retail \$29.95)*

Aqua King Suit

- The Aqua King Professional Suit was first delivered at the beginning of December 1957.
- Unlike the Carib Suit with its front chute, the Aqua King came with waist entry.
- The Aqua King was a full-length suit, comprising hood, long shirt, long booted pants and waistline sealing ring. A can of Healthways “rubber dust” powder completed the package.
- The Aqua King was made of “pure gum moulded latex seamless rubber.
- Healthways claimed that the suit material was virtually indestructible, resisting further tearing even when punctured.
- Among the suit’s selling points were unique durability, tensile strength and form-fitting comfort.
- Other advantages were ease of dressing and undressing, retention of shape and stretch, allergy-friendliness, odourlessness and resistance to sun, water, oil and perspiration.
- The Aqua King came in three sizes: small medium and large.
- The Aqua King retailed at \$42.50.

Aqua Flite Suit

- The Aqua Flite Suit was designed for the dual purpose of water skiing and skin diving.
- Like the Aqua King, the Aqua Flite came with waist entry.
- The Aqua Flite was a full-length suit, comprising long sleeve shirt with foam neoprene collar, waistline sealing ring and ankle length pants.
- Like the Healthways Carib suit, the Aqua Flite was made of “2-ply laminated gum rubber”.
- The suit design took into account not only the skin diver’s priorities but also the water skier’s need for comfort and warmth.
- The suit’s zipped soft foam neoprene collar was designed for additional comfort.
- The suit was easy to put on and take off.
- The Aqua Flite came in three sizes: small medium and large.
- The Aqua Flite retailed at \$29.95.

References

1. Bret Gilliam (n.d.) *Interview with Dick Bonin*, <http://www.fathomspub.com/cgi/interview.pl/9>
2. Healthways (1955) *Healthways Catalog Presentation*, Los Angeles, CA: Healthways.
3. Sam Miller (2005) *What’s in a name*, http://www.portagequarry.com/legendarticles/miller_070705.htm
4. Skin Diving History (2006) *Early Mfg. & Retailers - Healthways Inc.*, http://www.skindivinghistory.com/mfg_retailers/h/Healthways/index.html