

# The HangLine

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It is sometimes a dangerous thing to identify someone as a 'pioneer'. We took on that challenge and learned something about ourselves along the way. Greg has been diving for a very long time. His [website](#) is an anthology of diving adventures. His way of doing things is ever-changing, and changing the way the rest of us do things...for the better.

to this person who I regard as one of the most reputable and talented divers in Canada.

In its simplest context neophyte refers to something organic like an animal or plant (phyte) that is new (neo). From a theological perspective neophyte was a term used to refer to a convert or a beginner committed to the study of a new philosophy. Wow. That certainly describes Greg's approach to learning new and better ways to dive. Since I have known him (around 15 years now) he has always explored new diving techniques and equipment in a very methodical and practical manner. He challenges both traditional and contemporary principals and critically analyzes them – some would say with an obsessive zeal. But then he does something that very few other divers do (most are not capable of). He tests his methodologies in grueling challenging environments – over and over and with a very critical mind-set. As a result those who dive with Greg tend to adopt his diving principals and incorporate much if not all of his techniques.

## The Mossman – Anatomy of a Neophyte

By Bill Nadeau

In a paper written by Greg Mossfeldt he described himself as a 'Neophyte Technical Diver'. When I read that I was initially somewhat perplexed. I have heard the term neophyte used in many circumstances to describe a variety of things, human and not. I also thought I knew Greg, at least to a degree. 'Neophyte' is not how I would have described him. Greg is dynamic, disciplined, intense yet steady, and passionate about diving – very passionate. I decided then to look up what neophyte meant (cause apparently I don't get it).

After researching some 'online' encyclopedias I discovered that 'neophyte' can be used in many contexts so I challenged myself to see how that applies

From an ecological position a neophyte is a species that has been recently introduced to a new environment. Greg is very disciplined about the way he dives because





he knows he is not indigenous to the marine environment. Every year he explores new sites with very challenging conditions. Greg continues to safely extend the range of his diving arena because he maintains that attitude – that he (and divers in general) are newcomers to this level of exploration and that complacency and over-confidence will and does kill divers. Greg is renown for his feats of exploration because he does extend those limits regularly and does so with great effectiveness.

His exploits have taken him to over 400 feet of salt water diving sites like the Britannic in the Aegean Sea, White Star Line's 'Republic' shipwreck off of Long Island and the Andrea Doria among many others. Greg's film work has been featured on the Discovery Channel, NOVA, NBC and The Learning Channel. He draws crowds be it a guest speaker at an international Trade Show or a diver on a small dive charter.

But his accomplishments have not tainted his attitude. Greg's approach to diving and learning about diving remains humble. I have heard people tag Greg as fanatic and cultish when it comes to his regimented approach to diving. Ironically a neophyte has also been defined as a person who is a new member to a secret fraternity. Greg has, over the last few years, been a big proponent of GUE's (Global Underwater



Explorers) DIR philosophy. It is easy to label a person as a bias activist when he or she embraces the principals of an agency with a doctrine many consider to be extreme. But as you get to know Greg you learn that his logic is based on a very authentic foundation of experience and independent thinking. He dismisses accusations that he 'follows fraternities' with blind conviction;

*"When questioning or analyzing various practitioners' gear configurations and a weakness or flaw was found we would hear them point out 'Everyone has a different way of doing things', this is an extremely nebulous statement and is often used to deter a possible confrontational situation."*

I believe that there are a couple of important points that Greg makes here. First, don't be turned off or prejudice about a philosophy because of its 'perceived' extreme values; we all have something to learn from everyone. Secondly, it is an invalid dismissal when you base your argument on the sole premise that we have a right to do things differently. You need to

first run your theories through the same grueling sea trials that Greg and other seasoned pioneers do when developing techniques.

Conversely, those who adopt with blind faith what



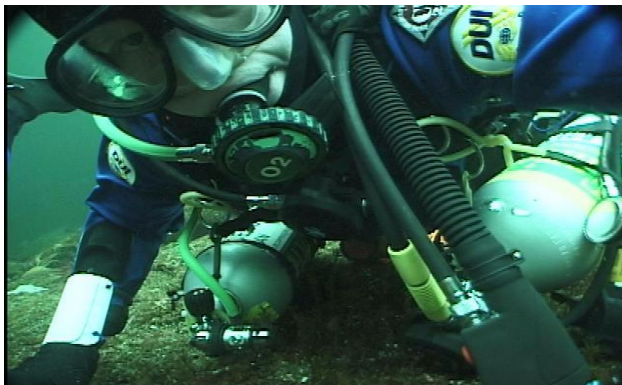


appear to be sound practices from agencies like GUE, must also consider why they are doing it. As Greg explains;

*"I found this attitude and these answers unacceptable and instead would analyze and re-analyze and research each problem. It is ultimately my responsibility alone to seek out the information necessary to ensure a safe return."*

A Neophyte? Perhaps. But there is no one I know more active in the diving community, doing more dives, different types of dives and for as long; as Greg Mossfeldt. He is probably diving while I write this. He may appear to be very convicted to his way of doing things, but that is only because he has put a lot of thought into how and why he does things. For Greg, this is a way of life, not just a style of diving.

~Safe Diving



**Above:** a frame from a Mossman video – little did I know it was a critique (circa 1997). **Right:** the kind of toys Greg plays with.



*"I do not kid myself into believing I am an expert on this subject. I understand there will always be an unknown in the world we live in. Knowledge and truth have been a driving force in the existence of humanity, and human nature drives us forward to achieve an understanding of our environment. There will always be better ways of performing a task and this is why we strive for truth, as it is essential for success."*

