

JOHN S. POTTER, JR.
01 Sep. 1924 — 04 Jan. 2014
“An Adventurous 89 Years!”

John S. Potter, Jr., most familiar to us as author of *The Treasure Diver’s Guide* and *The Treasure Divers of Vigo Bay*, passed over the bar at his home port of Martha’s Vineyard in the early hours of Saturday, January 4, 2014. At 89 years of age, John had had a full and interesting life, and his unusual career had taken him to almost every corner of the globe. Born in California in 1924 to John S. Potter, Sr., and Edna Lee Booker (an authoress in her own right) —and raised both there and in Shanghai, China— he was educated at St. George’s School and at Harvard. Mr. Potter traveled extensively with the Navy and learned skin-diving while on vacation in Majorca. He had been an enthusiast ever since. Even at his advanced age, he still dived upon occasion, but he was most lately engaged in the financing and management of various salvage operations.

A skilled writer, John recently published a sometimes salty account of his life’s experiences entitled *My First Nine Lives*, which was published in 2012. The second part of this trilogy, *My Second Nine Lives*, is being printed as we assemble here today, to be released in a month or two. Unfortunately for us, part three, although in roughed-out form now, will most likely not get into print.

Released in 1958, John’s second most popular book, *The Treasure Divers of Vigo Bay*, is the exciting account of John Potter’s personal experiences while hunting for a Spanish armada which was sunk in a tremendous sea battle off the coast of Spain in 1702 with a cargo of millions of dollars’ worth of gold and silver. The flyleaf from this book continues, “The adventures of his irrepressible team of young frogmen were sometimes dangerous, sometimes hilarious, often frustrating—and they make the story as zestful as it is gripping.”

His 1960 work, *The Treasure Diver’s Guide*, is considered the “bible” by most shipwreck divers and salvagers ... and by most researchers on this same subject today. As children, we were all thrilled by Stevenson’s *Treasure Island*, and other such fiction, but as adults it was the “GUIDE” which thrilled and motivated us even more, leading to the modern recoveries of sunken treasures of headline news proportion from the 1940s to the present.

John Potter was a staunch supporter of the Bob and Margaret Weller “Follow Your Dream” salvage diving seminars, and he spoke at some of these as late as June 2013. Those of you who attended these particular seminars, and met Potter, were witness to the aura and the reality of this bigger than life legend.

In July of 2013, my wife Ellie and I were privileged to have visited John, his wife Joanie, and his son John III at the elder Potters’ home on the bluff overlooking Vineyard Harbor and the East Chop Lighthouse.

John and Joanie recently sold off some of their properties in Oak Bluff, and it was during this moving of their belongings that John injured his back and wound up in the hospital, where he finally “threw in the towel”, sailed his frail craft over the sand bar in the harbor, and went home to be with the other “eagles” of our industry.

—*ER 09 Jan 2014*

