



“I have never seen any craft that allows you to work in the water column, or at depth, like you can with the Super Aviator. As a diver I am ever aware of how awkward and limited we are when trying to work in the ocean. There is simply no easy way to stay at depth without incurring the penalty of decompression. And as an underwater cinematographer who has been very keen on observing and filming marine mammals I really think that the Super Aviator might be the bridge that lets us spend more time in their world... a tool that gives us a better understanding of what is happening beneath the waves.”

—Jason Sturgis



Above (from top)  
INA Directors  
Captain Alfred Scott McLaren  
Clyde P. Smith  
Jason Sturgis

# SUPER AVIATOR TEST FLIGHTS

*The wave of the future for exploration in nautical archaeology?*

Sleek, fast, maneuverable and sophisticated, the Super Aviator submersible has been gaining a great deal of attention since first launched as the Sub Aviator in 2007. Initially built to fly underwater like an aircraft, Sub Aviator recently underwent extensive modifications at North Vancouver, B.C.-based Nuytco to become Super Aviator with the installation of advanced communications equipment, a sonar suite, HD video capability, HMI lighting, new electronics systems and improved, redundant life support systems, and a neutral buoyancy and weight drop system that allow the craft to hover.

Sub Aviator Systems, LLC (SAS) tested Super Aviator in Lake Tahoe on the California-Nevada border in April and May of this year. Interested in professional feedback as well as determining the needs of the professional and scientific community, SAS invited a veritable *who's who* including Don Walsh, Sylvia Earle, Steve Etchmندی and Bruce Robison from the Monterey Bay Research Institute (MBRI) and astronaut Bill Anders.

INA received three invitations, thanks to SAS' interest in archaeological applications for the sub and the support of INA director Captain Alfred S. McLaren, Ph.D., USN (Ret.), also a director of SAS and its chief pilot.

“Super Aviator is a quick and easily launched submersible with the ability to assess a survey target in depths of up to 1,200 feet,” noted Jim Delgado after his experience beneath the surface of Lake Tahoe. At just two tons this light and maneuverable craft, allows you to “put eyes on a wreck,” he adds. And with a skilled pilot flying, while an observer operates camera systems, the Super Aviator can be used to give archaeologists an opportunity to gain a fast, efficient, three-dimensional perspective, especially on intact or near-intact wrecks at depth. “I am particularly impressed with the new variable ballast system, which enables the sub to hover as well as *fly*,” says Delgado.

Joining the SAS field test and flight school were INA directors Jason Sturgis, an accomplished underwater photographer and cinematographer, Clyde P. Smith, who brought his years of experience as special projects director for Clive Cussler's NUMA and National Geographic's “The Sea Hunters,” and INA President and nautical archaeologist Jim Delgado.



*Pilot Fred McLaren takes the Super Aviator out for a spin!*

Above (left to right)

INA and MBRI team members  
Jason Sturgis, Jim Delgado,  
Fred McLaren, Steve Etchmندی,  
Bruce Robison and Clyde Smith.

Fred McLaren and  
Jim Delgado share a laugh  
during a pre-flight  
systems check.

All photos from the test flight  
in Lake Tahoe, Nevada  
by Jason Sturgis