



A limited amount of Diver Dan tie-in items were produced in the early 1960's. Rare and extremely hard to come by, they command high prices from dealers. Clockwise from left: "Diver Dan and the Bermuda Onion" on Columbia Records; Milton Bradley's Diver Dan Tug-O-War game; Diver Dan comic books, issues #1 and #2 from Dell; Diver Dan Club membership card from WGN in Chicago.

Norman Bales - Sacramento's Own Diver Dan

Kiddie show hosts on local television had their heyday in the 1950's & 60's. The days of the weatherman being drafted into doing schtick for the afternoon cartoon show are pretty much gone; but when Diver Dan was on the air in the early 60's, there were an endless assortment of local characters presenting the show.

In Philadelphia, where Diver Dan originated, it was Chief Halftrack. New York had Sandy Becker and Los Angeles had Sheriff John. In Ontario, Canada there was Captain Jolly, and somewhere in Wisconsin it was a guy in a giant chicken suit! But in Sacramento, California, it was . . . Diver Dan. Well, it wasn't Frank Freda, but Norman Bales, a cameraman at KXTV, Channel 10. Bales hosted the show every morning aboard the Channel - Tender with his sidekick, O.U. Squid.

The man behind O.U. (pulling the strings and providing the voice) was H. Alan Sims, and he told Planet X how he and Norman got involved with Diver Dan.

"He (Bales) and I and a bunch of other guys came on at Channel 10 during the strike back in the 60's," Sims told us.

"We were all hired as studio operators, so that meant camera, set design, floor directing, carrying a box, sweeping the floor etc., and Norm went on to become a staff announcer."

When KXTV began carrying the syndicated Diver Dan episodes they needed a local host, so Bales and Sims were 'drafted'. Norman Bales was a musician and entertainer (he even wrote and recorded



the theme song) while Alan Sims had a background in children's theater; they were obvious choices to host the show. "One morning I came to work", recalls Sims, "and he (director Bob Kelley) said 'Al go into the (sound) booth and make some noises - some funny voices and sounds.' Sims continued, "So I went in there and began making odd sounds, which is very easy for me, and I came out and he said, 'Good, you're going on the air tomorrow morning, on the new Diver Dan Show - you're going to be the mascot'. "So the next morning I came to work and he threw this enormous marionette, unstrung, a seven-legged

octopuss, in my arms and said 'Go back in the shop and string this, your going to be on the air in . . . ' I don't know how many minutes. It was strickly ad-libbed the whole time."

Sims eventually left television and found a career in teaching, but still has fond memories of his Diver Dan days. "Working with Norm Bales for those six years," Sims said, "was pure heaven." Dick Cruiser replaced Sims and the show lasted a few more years. The show eventually went off the air and everyone involved moved on the other things. Bales became a lawyer and Sims came back to television and did two other shows, 'Mr. Al's Storytime' and 'Mr. Al's Sunday Funnies' before going on to a teaching career. But whatever became of O.U. Squid? Does Sims still have his beloved old pal? "No," he told us, "O.U. Squid has passed on. He was in my garage for many years, and then the bugs got to him."

Right: Norman Bales, the Sacramento Diver Dan host on the set of the "Channel Tender" with Alan Sims (on the ladder) operating O.U. Squid.

