

AQUANEWS

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June, 2002



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From Aquanaut Air One (the Jet provided by JETBLUE) of the President of the Rockland Aquanauts

By Captain Tony Piscitelli

Hello again from the Rockland Aquanaut leadership group. And this will be a very short letter so short it might even be a telegram...remember those?

In thirty words or less, I've been in the water twice since the season started... weather and cold have kept me above the surface...hope to change this soon.

Captain Steve Belinda will be the feature speaker this year...a short while from now and I know we are all looking forward to the crew of the Wahoo putting on a great show for us. I will try to be there and enjoy the food, camaraderie and the presentation for our open house this June 11th. (See Open House Insert)

Prior to this meeting, I am looking forward and under separate cover we are getting ready for the first annual Captain Tony Day at Long Beach. I have booked 6 slots on the Eagles Nest for Sunday June 9 for a two tank dive on the Iberia, a small freighter that predominately had a cargo of dates. The major Artifact is a crate end printed with the contents and the company in NY who was to receive

them. They can still be had and once preserved make great wall hangings with super bragging rights. Please let me know who will be coming and look for the separate article in this newsletter.

Sorry this is so very short. Will make it up next news letter..... And again please remember...You as Rockland Aquanauts bring much to the table, so please share this with all of us. **This is a new day, and we want you to be an active part of the Rockland Aquanauts.**

It is **OUR CLUB**, so please participate. This is a great time to be a Rockland Aquanaut. **And, I again extend the invitation to be an active Rockland Aquanaut on land, and under the water, wherever you may chose to be diving.**

.....As always and for now, be present, dive safe, dive responsible and always support those who support the Rockland Aquanauts.

Thanks for the opportunity to be your President.

Captain Tony Piscitelli.

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AquaNews

The official publication of the Rockland Aquanauts Organization. Written contributions & photographs are always welcomed & encouraged. Submit materials for publication by the 24th of the month to:

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Next Meeting: Tuesday, June 11, 2002 Annual Open House Dinner Party

7:00 pm

Hard Wok Buffet

732 Route 304, New City, NY

See insert for details



FREE UPDATE ON WATER RESCUE AND SAFETY

9 am - 5 pm, Saturday, July 20, 2002

The Westchester Medical Center, in cooperation with the Regional Hyperbaric Center and Divers Alert Network, presents a FREE full-day seminar on DIVE SAFETY, DIVE RESCUE, WATER RECOVERY, and THE TREATMENT OF DIVE INJURIES.

Work with such outstanding professionals as: RW "BILL" HAMILTON, Ph.D., of Hamilton Research Limited; STEVE BELIENDA, past president of the Eastern Dive Boats Association; DOUG O'DELL of the Mount Pleasant PD Dive Team; ERIK LARSEN, M.D., medical director of STAT Flight Medevac; PATRICIA CREAGH, RN, of the Regional Hyperbaric Center at Westchester Medical Center; and representatives from the United States Coast Guard and Divers Alert Network as they update the dive community on rescue and safety techniques, equipment and facilities in and on the water.



This free seminar will include lunch and a post-seminar reception and tour of the Regional Hyperbaric Center at Westchester Medical Center.

Call (914) 493-8029 and reserve your place at this seminal seminar.

New Members

Please welcome our two newest members to the Rockland Aquanauts Organization.

Diana O'Brien joins us from Long Beach, NY. Dee is a PADI instructor. She can frequently be found on weekends crewing for Capt. Howard Klein on the "Eagle's Nest". Did I mention she is engaged to Capt. Tony?

EK Gunnar resides in Englewood, NJ. EK is an instructor for CMAS. His diving experience is world-wide with trips to Northern Europe, Vancouver, California, and Central America.

Thank you both for becoming part of our club. We look forward to being part of your diving plans and sharing your dive stories.



Walton Lake Diving and Picnic Saturday, June 15

Welcome, Aquanauts, to the 5th annual Walton Lake dive and picnic. Meet at our house in Chester (Rockland County, 40 minutes north of the Palisades Center) at 9:30 am, picnic at 1 pm-ish after the diving. Please let us know if you're joining us on Saturday June 15. We'll supply hamburgers, hot dogs, and soda. Let us know if you'd like to bring a salad, dessert, or something else. Email us at info@rocklandaquanauts.org to RSVP and for directions.

Thanks,
Les and Melissa

***** Next Hessian Lake Clean-up dive will be Sunday, June 23, 9:00 am. Sign up at the June 11 open house. *****

Aquajazz at the New York Aquarium

Every Friday night in July, 7:00 pm to 10:30 pm

Join us at the NY Aquarium for nights of live jazz and fireworks. Tickets are \$20; Member discount tickets are \$18. There is no advance sale - tickets are sold at the door only. Jazz bands will perform two sets in the Aquarium plaza, and people can bring blankets and chairs and either sit back and enjoy the music or take in the Aquarium. Beer, wine and food will be served at our snack bar or cafeteria, and the gift shops will be open. Stay and view the Coney Island fireworks at 9:45 pm.

New Web Site

Please go visit the new improved Aquanaut web site. The address is <http://www.rocklandaquanauts.org>. Joe Radomski, our new webmaster is trying to gather all the information that our members, friends and prospective members might want to know about Aquanauting. Up-coming dives, meeting plans, past and future parties, old newsletters and lots of images of past events. We always welcome your suggestions for content and your photos. Any one contributing more than four photos will get their own page. Please keep watching the web site for all the Aquanaut news.

Last Chance to sign up for Capt. Tony Day at Long Beach

This is it. This is absolutely your last chance to be part of Capt. Tony Day at Long Beach. All Rockland Aquanauts, family, kids, guest, significant others are invited to Long Beach, Sunday, 9 June 2002 for a day of diving, swimming, eating and general BBQing at my home.

What am I talking about...well is here the deal. I will host all of the above as follows.....

Those who want to do a shore dive can avail themselves at Beach 8th Street, shower and clean up your gear for a nominal fee of \$10.00 or less and then head over to my house and use a day pass to the beach, or sit in the back yard to sip a cool one (soft drinks only..... BYOBB). Those who want to do a boat dive on the Eagles Nest can join me on the 12 Noon (at the Nest by 11:00 AM). I have booked 6 slots on the Eagles Nest for a two tank dive on the Iberia, a small freighter that predominately had a cargo of dates. The major Artifact is a crate end printed with the contents and the company in NY who was to receive them. They can still be had and once preserved make great wall hangings with super bragging rights.

While this is going on and we are diving, your family, kids, guest, significant others are invited to use the Captain's day passes to the beach 200 +/- yards away, then join us for the festivities when we all gather post dive.

CALL me or email me on this:
info@rocklandaquanauts.org . Hope to see you!

Capt. Tony

Your e-mail Address Needed

If you have given in to the dot.com era, you could be eligible to receive a Jerry-gram. All we need is to know your e-mail address and you will know even more about Aquanaut activities than you get from reading this newsletter. No jokes, no chain letters, no nasty viruses. Just all the newest news about our club. So, test out that cyber name you dreamed up and send a note to info@rocklandaquanauts.org. Then get ready to be informed beyond your wildest dreams.

By the Dock on the Bay Jersey Report By Dave Swope

Greetings from South Jersey, The Garden State. Home of the Pine Lands which will occasionally catch fire. This allows the forest to be reborn and it gives all those Sunday beach binnies a chance to leave the Parkway and get to know our state a little bit better, stop light by stop light. Home of the New Jersey Nets who occasionally remember how to play basketball. What other state (with the possible exception of California) would consider nominating a rock star for the US Senate because he is revered as "The Boss"? What other state can take a proven technology like EZ-Pass and turn it into an unpredictable game of chance?

Yes, we Jerseykins have a lot to be proud of. But our greatest treasure is having the Atlantic Ocean splashing up our east side. For northern divers, it just doesn't get any better than this. Viz that is almost always 20 feet or better. Lobsters, scallops, sea bass, blackfish. Old real wrecks with artifacts that archeologists don't get all huffy about. New wrecks that the state seems to be able to sink without too much fuss and bureaucracy. Reef balls, tanks, bridge rubble. Maybe someday some subway cars. Underwater heaven is what it is.

The good ship "Fins" made the tricky transition from Long Island Sound to Barnegat Bay last Fall. Eileen and I caught up with her this spring and have settled into a new life as Pine Lands "Piney's". A Piney is sorta like a redneck who smells like cranberries. Big smile. Few teeth. A Piney can frequently be entertained all Saturday night with nothing more than a six pack and a bug zapper. My kind of people. Piney's also like to fish and dive. And I think us new Piney's are going to enjoy the diving down here.

We have gotten out to the ocean several times in May and got to go diving twice. Much of our time has been

spent just scouting out the locations of nearby wrecks and reefs. We have four artificial reefs within 12 miles of Old Barney (the lighthouse at Barnegat Inlet) and a gazillion (count them) wrecks just scattered all over out there. Our dives, so far, have included the tug "Choctaw", a reef ball farm, and the "Persephone". No killer lobster stories to tell yet. But the fish are plentiful and delicious. In addition, we did the 30 minute drive up to Belmar one morning to go out on the dive boat "Venture III" with Capt. and Mrs. Hepler on one of Marty Dick's dive days.

My purpose here is not to make you envious or to merely fill up some newsletter space. But rather, I want to remind you of some of our Aquanaut roots. There was a time when this club filled a New Jersey dive boat every other weekend all summer. Many of us are still northern divers in spirit but just don't seem to have the time to get out once in a while. Make the time. Spots for you and your buddy can be had just about every weekend on any number of dive boats leaving from Shark River, Manasquan and, yes, a couple out of Barnegat. Can't get away on the weekend? There are several Jersey boats that have open boat days during the week. Not sure who to contact? Contact me. info@rocklandaquonauts.org I can help find who is going when and what they plan to dive.

I hope to share some more Jersey dive stories in the months ahead. I hope you will come out and be part of the Jersey dive scene. This is northern dive season. Don't let it pass you by. See you on the Parkway.

Dive safe. Dive often. Vote for Bruce!

Cap'n Dave

Going on a Dive Trip? Share the Trip in the "Aquanews"

Remember when you had to write those "What I did on my Summer Vacation" essays when you went back to school in September? Would you like a chance to improve the grade you got on that essay? Okay, here's the deal. When you go on that dive trip to Florida, Bermuda, Tahiti, Truk, Belmar, Mamaroneck, wherever. Take your pen and paper. Keep your trip diary and share it with us for publication in the "Aquanews" Newsletter and the Aquanaut web site. Just tell us what you did and what you thought of the diving, the accommodations and the geography. We will gladly print your thoughts and your photos (on the web site). If you'll do this for your club, I will personally go to your high school English teacher and negotiate a higher grade for your last summer essay. I guarantee it. Send your contribution immediately and I will double your grade! Act now!! Send it to info@rocklandaquonauts.org (High school graduates only. Current students need not apply. Your teacher won't budge).

Down and out: 'Reef' sinks the wrong way Workers abandon ship; Bow above water

By Susan Cocking

Miami Herald - Posted on Sat, May. 18, 2002

The decommissioned U.S. Navy ship touted as the largest ever to be sunk deliberately as an artificial reef refused to go all the way to the bottom Friday off Key Largo.

Workers were pumping the 510-foot, 6,880-ton Spiegel Grove full of water Friday morning, preparing to blast holes in the hull when it began sinking much faster than expected.

The estimated 40 to 50 mostly volunteer workers were forced to abandon ship quickly into three waiting boats. They screamed, "No, no!" as the ship went down stern first, then flipped over, leaving about 50 feet of the bow sticking up out of the water upside down. No one was injured, but thousands of dollars worth of tools and equipment were lost.

"The lower deck all of a sudden started to fill up with water," said Julie Schramm, a volunteer worker from Miami. "The stern started to sink. Within a matter of minutes, the water went about 60 feet up. A [portable toilet] started floating away. From the time we got off till [the ship] flipped over was about 15 minutes."

Captain Harry Welch, who took 20 people to safety aboard the Starfish Enterprise, said no one panicked.

The crew of the tugboat Portsmouth that towed the Spiegel Grove down to Key Largo from Norfolk, Va., on Tuesday attempted to right it by attaching lines to the anchor chain on the bow, but that didn't work.

The upside down hulk bobbed on its four anchors in 130 feet of water about six miles off Key Largo, looking like a breaching whale minus the spray.

Dave Score, manager of the Upper Keys region of the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, said the ship caused no environmental damage.

"It's in the location we selected," Score said. "There has been no impact to sanctuary sensitive resources at this point. We need to get it oriented the right way on the bottom."

The worst possible scenario would be for the ship to rest bottom up, because it would be largely inaccessible to all but highly-trained scuba divers with experience in

penetrating hazardous overhead environments. Plans were under way Friday night to light the wreck, either with a buoy or by having the tug shine a spotlight on it, so that it wouldn't pose a hazard to navigation.

Meanwhile, representatives of three South Florida salvage companies flew over the wreck site in helicopters Friday afternoon and planned to meet with Score and the co-commanders of the sinking operation, George Garrett and Rob Bleser. Garrett, Frink and Score declined to discuss possible ways of righting the vessel.

The eight-year effort to sink the Spiegel Grove has already cost more than \$1 million, and that figure is likely to rise with the cost of a salvage operation. But according to a business plan filed by the chamber with the Monroe County Tourist Development Council and County Commission, the wreck is expected to draw 50,000 divers each year and generate \$14 million for the local economy. "Our intent is to make this the best artificial reef ever," Frink declared.

The Spiegel Grove, part of a class of Navy vessels known as a landing ship dock carrying troops and landing craft, was chosen to become an artificial reef because of its massive size and complexity.

Five of the vessel's 10 decks, including its cavernous well deck, were drilled with holes and strung with safety lines for diver access. The ship's lower levels were sealed off to keep divers from getting lost. The top-most level would have stuck up to within 40 feet of the surface so that snorkelers and glass-bottom boat riders could see it.

One of the most ballyhooed events in recent memory in the Keys, the sinking drew some of the sailors who served aboard the Spiegel Grove before its decommissioning in 1989.

Gene Dambra, an electrician's mate who sailed from 1969 to 1970, was shooting photos aboard the Spiegel Grove on Friday morning when it began to sink. He left his camera in his haste to abandon ship. Dambra of New York said he was sorry that the ship went down prematurely but glad it ended up at sea. "It's going to produce fish. It's going to be a coral reef," he said. "That's better than sitting in a mothball fleet or going to a scrap yard to make razor blades."



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Mailing
Address
GoesHere

Walton Lake

Water Rescue & Safety Course

Jersey Diving

Spiegel

****Next Meeting****

Tuesday, June 11, 2002
Annual Open House Dinner Party
7:00 pm at Hard Wok Buffet
732 Route 304, New City, NY

Speaker
Capt Steve Bielenda
Of the Research Vessel, "The Wahoo"