

AQUANEWS

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From the LB Casa Blanca with the Pink Flamingoes of the President of the Rockland Aquanauts

By Captain Tony Piscitelli

Hello again from the Rockland Aquanaut leadership group.

And where are you? I mean it, where are you, in your head and in body and soul. Most of you were not at the Open House (me included....I blame work and being 1700 miles away). Was it because it was in June? Because it was at a Chinese eatery, the guest? ...What?

I had a day at the Beach and where were you? I had a great time with Vinny Gale, Les Parker and Melissa Bogen on the Eagles Nest and latter here at my home. I know that Melissa Suoto and her bud made it to Beach 9th Street and Bob Zenorini and Steve Hausch got to my house for the eats part. Sorry we did not hook up.... the boat did not get back until very late around 6:30 ish when we got to the dock....you guys get the big rain check and thanks for the effort.....I will plan differently for the next one.) I had a lot of talk and mostly no shows.....very disappointing. Maybe it is the summer and we are all doing other things, maybe it is the money or lack of it that keeps us off the water locally... maybe it is work.....and yes, I do know that this local diving is not for everybody...but please lets make the extra effort required to support our functions. With that said, I'd like to move on.

I've been sidelined myself with the fracture of four toes...dumb accident on my part, and as I write I'm out of the water until mid July. Be this as it may, I was able to get it wet twice since my last writing pre toe crushing and I have to say that the diving in general is pretty good off the south shore of LI. Vinny reports that his Dive off the Ole Salty was

great too. I got to do the G&D and the club dive on the "Lizzy D". The water is getting warmer and the viz is beginning to grow we had 30 plus feet on the Oregon just last week.

As you know if you have visited the web site, our web master Joe Radomski has done a great job. And if you really read all the stuff there you know that RA-BOD Paulie G the plumber and myself will be taking an intro rebreather course under the tutelage of our Web Master and in-house instructor. More on this as it unfolds.

A Day For All Reasons will do a part two and I'm shooting for 8 September a Sunday 12:00 Noon. I will arrange a different plan of attack so that we can have it all come together. Hopefully we will have All the RA's and their respective families etc in Long Beach that day..... 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 your dive club 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 responsibly and always support those who support the Rockland Aquanauts.

Thanks for the opportunity to be your President.

Captain Tony Piscitelli.

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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The Continuing Saga of the Sinking of the Spiegel Grove

By Peter Bein

On a day when nothing seemed to go right, the ship that refused to sink, finally submerged on her starboard side slightly angled up on her keel, in 130 fsw.

Project organizers and salvage personnel finally breathed a sigh of relief even though she lies almost ninety degrees short of the stated goal of an upright sinking.

The project started in 1994 by the Key Largo Chamber of Commerce and local professional dive shop operators.

After numerous attempts through the years the scuttling was delayed time after time due to environmental restrictions on the contaminates inane to a military vessel.

On May 8th the Spiegel-Grove began her last voyage, under tow, from the mothballed ghost fleet in Norfolk, VA to six miles off the coast of Key Largo, FL. The seven day passage left the Grove off Key Largo on May 14th. Three days of prep work was required prior to her sinking. Anchor chains were set, dangerous passages were sealed, other areas were cut open to create diver's escape points, and lines were run through the ship to aid in penetration dives.

The afternoon scheduled sinking was expedited when shortly before ten AM on May 17th workers saw water quickly creeping over the open transom and up the expansive wooden well deck that once held military landing craft.

Word spread that the ship was taking on water faster than expected. The flooding was an intentional activity, but it flooded a bit too fast for the scuttling crew. All doubt was removed when a port-o-potty floated out over the transom.

The ship was supposed to be lowered four to five feet but it didn't stop there. It happened extremely fast. An emergency evacuation signal of five blasts on an air-horn sounded. There

was no panic. All of the crew of forty workers boarded the tugs which towed the Grove to Key Largo with no injuries.

As the great ship kept rolling around she eventually turned turtle and capsized completely. The 510 foot long ship resting with her stern in the sand at 130 fsw and bow fifty feet up above the surface of the water. The wreck remained in this position with a 500 yard patrolled safety zone until June 10th.

With the aid of salvagers the hulk finally slipped beneath the sea resting on her starboard side. The turning process involved 70 inflatable lift bags strategically attached to points on the port side of the vessel to provide 500 tons of lift, air injections into the port ballast tanks and the ship's double hull to provide 2000 tons of lift, two tugboats providing 110 tons of pull to help induce the rotation, the ocean currents contributing 10 to 90 tons of force contingent on the speed and direction of the current, and a lifting barge crane with two 500 ton hydraulic jacks. Dive operators will be visiting the Spiegel-Grove on June 18th.

The 510 foot wreck sits on her starboard side in the sand at 130 fsw six miles off Key Largo at Dixie Shoals within the underwater sanctuary. Her 84 foot beam leaves her 46 feet below the waves. With 6880 tonnage, called a landing ship dock The Spiegel-Grove once ferried military vehicles and troops around the globe for the United States Marines during the heat of the cold war.

The ship was originally sponsored by Mary Miller Birnkenhoff Hayes, the daughter-in-law of our 19th president, Rutherford Hayes and named after his home. First launched on November 10, 1955, commissioned June 8, 1956 then decommissioned October 2, 1998. She was the largest vessel ever scuttled to be used as part of the artificial reef system. The final cost to sink her was 1.4 million dollars. The sponsors were The

The Sinking of the Spiegel Grove

(Continued from Page 2)

Monroe County Tourist Development Council, The Key Largo Chamber of Commerce, The Artificial Reef Committee, Divers Direct, TIB Bank of the Keys, First State Bank of the Keys, Community Bank of Florida, Capital One, and individual purchasers of 10 dollar and 250 dollar dive medallions. Divers will be requested to donate 10 dollars for a red medallion to dive any wreck in the Key Largo area or buy a 250 dollar gold medallion for a lifetime wreck permit. Ten mooring balls will eventually be secured to the wreck.

Additional details can be obtained at www.fl-keys.com/spiegelgrove. Anyone interested in diving this or any other wreck in the Keys call me.

(Post script) After the reorientation of the faulty scuttling the great ship was still off limits to recreational divers until today June 28. A mysterious oil slick had begun when the hulk was turned upon her starboard side. The leaking oil, surfacing 60 bubbles per minute, created a sheen and spread for about 150 feet long by 7 feet wide.

When the ship sank prematurely in an inverted position on May 17 the oil from cleaning fluid containers left behind by volunteer cleaning crew was trapped within the bowels of the ship until she was turned on her side on June 10.

Volunteers who had been preparing her for sinking had to scramble off leaving three five gallon containers of cleaning solution trapped in a crevice below deck. As it oozed to the surface, most of the oil was absorbed by 18-by-18 inch rags referred to as diapers. The escaping oil evaporated or dissipated to such a small amount as to be considered not environmentally dangerous.

The Coast Guard used four aspects of the spill that they wanted resolved before opening the ship to the public for diving.

- 1) That it does not create a risk to public health or the environment.
- 2) They know the source of the fluid.
- 3) That it is contained.
- 4) That it is cleaned up.

Divers removed all of the containers of the cleaning solution and absorbed the spill within the hull allowing the opening of the dive site. Now it is all over. The wreck is open and I have reserved a spot for Sunday, June 30, at 8AM with Atlantis Dive Center in Key Largo. I am off to dive the Spiegel Grove at last.

More to report next month after the dive.
Peter

By the Dock on the Bay

By Dave Swope

During the first half of June, the NON-diving news in South Jersey could be summed up in two words. East Wind. The breezes can be as low as ten knots. Coming from the East, it might as well be Hurricane Mitch. The ocean gets all snotty and doesn't treat little boats like "Fins" in a kind way.

But all has settled down lately and we are getting out to the reefs and wrecks that make New Jersey "Dive Heaven". We got to the "Vizcaya" and watched Bill Cleary's dive team raise the 6,000 lb anchor from the wreckage. Stop by the Shipwreck Grill in Brielle if you want to see a real artifact. We also have made a few stops on the local artificial reef looking for "our dive site". More on this in articles to come.

Last week, We got to go diving on a Monday open boat trip with Capt. Bob Nash on the "Outlaw" out of Belmar. Bob's trips are always fun and usually productive. Between Eileen's scallops and my sea bass, we had a wonderful dinner. Check in with Capt. Bob for his trips at 732-988-5455.

Rumor has it that Capt. and Mrs. Paul Hepler and the "Venture III" will be returning to Belmar after July 4th from an extended commercial trip to Virginia. Once back, Paul will be running open boat trips on weekends and Wednesday's. Check in with Paul after the 4th at 732-928-4519.

Capt. Dan Crowell has moved the "Seeker" to Montauk for much of July to run trips to the "Doria" and other deep water wrecks. Dan will be back in Brielle in August for the Jersey diving. Call Dan at 732-836-0729.

Eileen and I got our CPR updated last month and learned something new in the process. I have always done my CPR through the Red Cross. This time, we went to a class at our local First Aid/EMT Squad where they taught a version of the class developed by the American Heart Association. Besides the normal CPR and clogged airway drills that we have come to know and love, the AHA class teaches you how to use a defibrillator. Talk about cool. Those defibrillator machines are way beyond any toy I ever wanted for Christmas. And this isn't just about giving electro-shock treatments to CPR dummies. These machines have a great potential to increase the odds of a CPR attempt being successful. If your CPR certification is in need of renewal, you might want to consider checking around your local paramedic squads to see if any teach the AHA course. It's a good course, you'll learn something more, and the certification is good for two years.

Dive safe. Dive often.
Cap'n Dave



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****Next Meeting****

Tuesday, July 9, 2002
7:30 pm at Palisades Mall
Adler Community Meeting Room
Level 4, East End,
West Nyack, NY
Speaker
Capt. Noel Voroba
Owner of Orbit Marine
Bridgeport, CT