

AQUANEWS

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2003
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Wreck Trekking the Keys Exploring Pompano Beach

By Peter Bein

What do you do for Christmas Vacation when your girlfriend goes away on a cruise? You go diving. Pompano Beach diving has a great advantage over other dive locations -- The Gulf Stream. This north flowing warm current comes closer to the shore here than anywhere else along the Florida coast. The result is warm water diving year-round in crystal clear water that continually feeds and refreshes the reefs and their diverse inhabitants. The gentle current allows divers the rare opportunity to drift effortlessly over long stretches of reef packed with wildlife. This long stretch of coastline is known for its turtle population. The reefs, which range in depth from 15 to over 100 feet, are all within two miles of land.

The highlight of Broward County diving is exploring the varied wrecks. There are over fifty artificial reef sites along the county's twenty-four mile coastline. This collection of vessels attract millions of fish and thousands of divers. I went diving with Scubatyme Dive Charters located on the Intracoastal Waterway just north of Atlantic Blvd. in Pompano Beach. Our first dive was to the wreck of the *Sea Emperor*. This upside-down 100 foot barge rests 72 feet below the waves parallel to the shore. The east side is littered with drainage pipes, the final cargo on the final voyage. The pipes form a group of underwater caves and crawl-throughs which house uncountable marine species. No less than five Jewfish call it home. There are many

friendly Nurse Sharks, large Green Moray eels, Spotted Moray eels, Lobster, Barracuda, Queen Angelfish and Bar Jacks. As a final treat, you do not have to go to Stingray City in Grand Cayman to play with the Sting Rays. They swim right up to you and sit on your head. There must be a good deal of fish feeding going on in the area to produce such an atmosphere. It was a thrilling dive.

The second dive was drifting across Sanctuary Reef where a group of four divers go down together trailing a dive flag float. We drifted for one hour at a max depth of 52 feet. We were greeted by a beautiful Hawksbill turtle and some Nurse Sharks along our underwater journey.

Pack it up and come back tomorrow for our third dive on the *Ancient Mariner*. This former Coast Guard Cutter, *NEMESIS*, served as a subchaser during WWII, later converted into a restaurant called the *Ancient Mariner*. She was scuttled as an artificial reef in 1991 after bankruptcy. All is not lost. The 165 foot Cutter rests in 70 feet of water. She stands 30 feet proud above the sand within 40 feet of the surface. A steel hulled work boat named C-Note lies 60 feet west of her bow. The *Ancient Mariner* is a sensational dive. She is easily penetrated offering safe exits in every direction. I maxed out at 74 feet inside and spent most of my 40 minute bottom time within the hulk. There were schools of Barracuda and Chubb gliding overhead. (Continued on Page 2)

AquaNews

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Rockland Aquanauts Annual Dinner Sunday, January 19, 2003

The winter doldrums have you down? We have a cure. For those of you who have not yet decided to join the Rockland Aquanauts at Arthur's Tavern of Emerson for an afternoon and evening of good food and merriment, there is still time for you to join in the fun. Currently we have thirty Aquanauts and guests who want to share the good times of 2002 and hopefully plan for a more active 2003 dive season. The party begins at 4:00 pm. The price is \$ 35.00. There will be plenty of time to mingle and talk when the d'orderves are served, followed by a sit down dinner and dessert.



Jean-Michel Cousteau Eyes Documentary Film on Oil Spill

Courtesy of *DiveNews.com* (News@Depth)

Jean-Michel Cousteau, son of the late ocean explorer Jacques Cousteau, said he hopes to capture the devastation of last month's massive oil spill in northwestern Spain on film.

The oceanographer and environmentalist said his film team from the Santa Barbara-based Ocean Futures Society is planning a documentary focusing on the residents, workers and fishermen of the Galician town of A Coruna.

Cousteau said he hopes the film will educate the public and force governments to remove aging and obsolete oil tankers from seas.

"Thousands and thousands of people are completely out of work because they were completely dependent on the ocean for their way of living," Cousteau said.

The tanker *Prestige* broke in two and sank Nov. 19, about a week after it ruptured in a storm. Officials estimate it spilled just under a quarter of its 77,000 tons of fuel oil.



Pompano Beach

(Continued from Page 1)

The fourth dive was another drift along Opal Towers. With a maximum depth of 42 feet we soared above the reef for one hour finding as company many Barracuda, Atlantic Spadefish, a humungus Balloonfish and a Barracuda cleaning station which was another fascination of the deep.

There are more wreck dive sites available in Pompano Beach than in the Keys and three hours less driving to get there. I wouldn't pass it up for anything.



Confessions of a Muck Diver

by Les Parker

I lie in total darkness, overweighted, face down in the mud, relaxed, and listening to my own breathing. Despite the day's brilliant sunshine and the shallow depth of 15 ft, a cloud of silt caused by my own digging has engulfed me. With my arms buried to the elbows in mud and silt, I search by feel for the familiar shape of a cylinder tapered on one end. I am hoping to find an antique bottle at least 100 years old. Then it happens.

My right hand bumps into something smooth and round in the muck, and my pulse quickens. I gently ease a bottle out from about 8 inches of mud, an indication that it has been there a while. Holding the clear bottle close to my facemask, I can just make out some raised lettering, which is usually characteristic of an older bottle. The decorative writing reads: "Sweeney Bottling Works, Middletown, NY," and on the other side, "Patented March 4, 1924." That's exciting! The bottle is not that old, but it's a local beauty with a date on it, and I'm glad to be bringing it home. I feel for the clasp on my bug bag, open it, and place my newest find carefully in the bottom of the bag next to several others I have already found on this particular dive. Diving doesn't get much better than this!

I enjoy all kinds of diving. I've nearly worn out my drysuit in the Northeast. I love the warm waters of the Caribbean and the Florida Keys. I'll never forget the Pinnacles in Puerto Rico, or the kelp forests in California. I'd never pass up an opportunity to go back to the caves and canyons of Grand Cayman reefs. I look forward to an upcoming trip to Micronesia. But I must confess, I consider muck diving right up there on the same level with all the other diving that I do.

Mucking around underwater doesn't require any special training or any expensive technical gear. Any small lake or pond will do. A little bit of air goes a long way at 15 to 30 feet, and at that depth, you can go by yourself and feel pretty safe if your buddy has to work and can't come out to play. Many good muck diving sites are local and accessible, so travel time is minimal. And the rewards are great.

On my last trip out, I found not only several Sweeney bottles, but a striking, tapered green glass bottle from the late 1800s that I think contained liquor, adorned with some beautiful writing. It reads: "Antediluvian, John Osborne Sons & Co, New York, Philadelphia, Montreal." I also brought up a clear blob top with the remains of a wire and cork stopper still in it. That bottle is also of local origin from another Middletown bottling company, I. Crans Sons. This is real treasure.

The most exciting find my best dive buddy,
Melissa, *(Continued in next column)*

Jim Church 1932—2002

On December 31, 2002, James Church, a pioneer in underwater photography, died at his home in Miami Lakes, Fla. after a brief illness. From his early diving experiences in the Navy, in an old style hard-hat suit in Adak, Alaska in 1953, he went on to become a renowned authority on underwater photography. As an author, educator and lecturer, Jim was able to share unselfishly his knowledge with countless individuals, many whom are today's leading underwater photographers worldwide.

Jim Church was born 1932 in Detroit, Mich. The family migrated to California during WWII due to the failing health of his father. After his father's death, Jim became the man of the house at age 13. At that time he started working for Bell Products cleaning the shop and continued there through out his school years, learning the welding trade. Graduating from Napa High School with class of 1950 he will be remembered by many for his musical talent playing trumpet in the classic style of Harry James.

Jim's photographs and articles have appeared hundreds of times in dive, travel and photography magazines, advertisements for companies such as Nikon and Kodak, as well as in numerous books, including *The Ocean World of Jacques Cousteau*. From 1989, Jim had been teaching underwater photography courses on the live-aboard dive vessels of the Aggressor Fleet. Besides being a natural teacher, Jim enjoyed writing instructional books on underwater photography. His first book, *Beginning Underwater Photography*, (1972) ran for five editions. He has since written five more instructional books covering the essentials of both still and video photography.

Muck Diving

(Continued)

and I have ever brought to the surface is the bottle she found in Virgin Gorda. We were invited to do some muck diving by native New Yorker and owner of Dive BVI, Joe Giacinto. Joe took us to his favorite mucking site, which turned out to be the highlight of our trip. Melissa returned to the boat with an onion bottle, so-called because of its shape, which is estimated to be more than 300 years old. After some restoration, the near-perfect bottle is now on display at Dive BVI's shop in Spanish town, Virgin Gorda, and is waiting for us to bring it home after our next trip to the BVIs.

If you were to ask me what is my favorite kind of diving, I'd be hard pressed to choose because I love it all. But top on my list is muck diving. I never get tired of it.



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Wreck Trekking

Muck Diving

Spain's Oil Spill

Jim Church

****Next Meeting****

Rockland Aquanauts Annual Awards Dinner

Sunday, January 19, 2003

4:00 pm to 8:00 pm

at

Arthur's Tavern of Emerson

Emerson, New Jersey

Details inside