

# AQUANEWS

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## On The Road With Max... or Sometimes It's OK To Be Delusional

Max Estroff

The end of May found me under some delusion that if I went to Florida I could do some business (Floridians in the optical business do most of their buying from October to February). Since I would be driving, there was lots of room for all my dive gear. After seeing my few appointments in the beginning of this road trip I found myself with 6 days before my next appointment, way up in Jacksonville.

Captain Leo and the "Deeper" out of Boynton Beach managed to fill my time. With the exception of one wreck, the "Castor", these were all aquarium drift dives. On the visit to the "Castor" the Goliath Groupers were gone. I did a familiar penetration down into the engine room where these two huge engine blocks are resting in the dark. There were five of us on the boat that day. When I untied the line, there were only three of us. The other two divers were not on the boat. None of us had seen the other two on the wreck. Within 5 minutes the Captain was picking them up. They did a 40 minute drift dive without a flag, yet Captain Leo knew right where to find them. Their excuse, "Why terminate the dive? We do this off our own boat all the time!"

My aquarium dives were all very easy, jump off the boat, do your dive, surface and get picked up. The diving off of Boynton Beach offers healthy reefs in 60--90 feet of water depending on if you go inside or outside of the reef systems. Fields of large barrel sponges, Gorgonian fields that go on forever, not a lot of fish but a lot of variety of fish with an occasional sighting of something unique. This time it was a 4 foot thin black and gray grouper looking fish which turns out to be called Black Tiger Grouper. The other thing is that on this whole trip I saw turtles on every dive except the wreck dives.

In between this type of diving, I met up with Peter Bein on Memorial Day and we dove the Spiegel Grove. We dove with Tavernier Divers. The boat left the dock a little after 1 pm. There were four of us on a boat that could handle 18. We did 2 dives on the Spiegel. The first dive we went down a bridge passageway to the sand. I came up the same way. On this wreck there is a lot of ins and outs through the superstructure. Going back to our up line, we were using the one connected to the bow (there are 5 or 6 connected to the wreck), I came across a pair of magnificent Midnight Blue Parrots. But it was time to leave.

After a long surface interval, 1 hour and 15 minutes, we did it again, only this time we did not go to the sand. We were back at the dock by 5:30 pm.

All 5 days the conditions were perfect with clear skies, flat seas, visibility around 75 feet on some dives and 40 feet on others, water about 78--80 degrees. Even at those temperatures I wear a 6mm wetsuit. I like to stay warm, especially on the second dive. I will be back down again in August, but this time there will be no delusions about working.



Picture from <http://www.hmsminnow.com/diveofmonth12.htm>

## AQUANEWS

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JERRY GHERARDI

## Diver dies near shipwreck off Atlantic Beach

By Tomoeh Murakami TSE, Staff Writer © 2004, Newsday, Inc.

Anthony Lobue enjoyed the routine of gazing at the calm water, chatting with fellow divers and strapping on his scuba gear before plunging into the underwater world that captivated him.

But a late-night dive on Wednesday was his last.

Lobue, 46, of Valley Stream, apparently drowned after becoming entangled in his own safety line 60 feet under water, near a century-old shipwreck three miles south of Atlantic Beach, Nassau police said. The Iberia, which sank in 1888, rests halfway between Debs and Jones inlets, in an area known to divers as Wreck Valley.

According to police, Lobue and three other recreational divers headed to sea on The Karen, a 42-foot dive boat based at Gerritsen Beach in Brooklyn. They went into the water around 9:40 p.m., and about 30 minutes later, one of the three crew members found Lobue snarled in his own safety line, said Lt. Dennis Farrell.

"He was found unconscious," Farrell said. "The mate [from the dive boat] ... was just cutting away at every part of the line" to untangle Lobue. The cause of death is under investigation.

Divers carry what is known as a wreck reel, so they can put out a safety line to find their way back to the anchor line attached to the boat.

The crew member who found Lobue was down at the sea bottom looking for lobster, police said, and fetched one of the divers' safety lines to lead him back to the anchor line. Instead of finding the anchor line, the crew member found Lobue. He brought Lobue's unconscious body to the surface and the boat took him to the Atlantic Beach Bridge. From there, Lobue was taken to St. John's Episcopal Hospital in Far Rockaway, where he was pronounced dead at 11:37 p.m. on Wednesday.

"There's no way of knowing how he was entangled in his line," said Robert Hayes, captain of The Karen. Hayes said he had taken Lobue out many times over the past 12 years and believed Lobue had gone on at least 200 dives.

Rockland Aquanauts Organization Inc.  
Mission Statement:

**To provide, promote, and advance environmental protection, care, and voluntary clean-up of waterways by any and all lawful means; to promote the importance and care in every manner possible by environmental awareness and otherwise; to purchase, print, publish, and circulate literature to promote the importance and care of the waterways and the work of the Corporation. To perform all acts the Corporation may deem appropriate or advisable in such operation; to establish, provide, and voluntary clean-up waterways, to encourage, support and subsidize the cleaning and protection from pollution.**

## Annual Picnic 2004 Steve Improte

June 26<sup>th</sup> marked the Rockland Aquanauts Annual Picnic and Environment Clean-up at Hessian Lake in Bear Mountain. I can't remember having the picnic with weather as nice as this day. Allan, Ben, Les, Pete, Melissa, and Mike all went diving in the lake while about 11 Aquanauts and their families stayed on shore and enjoyed the day at our shady picnic spot. In addition to pulling garbage from the lake some interesting treasures were recovered. A few notable mentions go to Les for pulling up an old ceramic jug, which reminded me of the ones that Noel Voroba has recovered from the Long Island Sound. Although the jug was broke in a few pieces, Les gave it to Ron with the Harriman State Park Commission for historical evaluation. Of course what would a dive be without mentioning Ben bringing up an interesting bottle, in this case a flask still with the cork in it. Also in the water were a couple of "Torpedoes", piloted by Ben and Allan, to cruise the lake and have a little fun. When the diving was over, the grills were fired up; all who attended were treated to hamburgers, hot dogs and chicken cooked by Chef's Paul and Jerry. Also the watermelon was the best. All who attended had a great time, hope to see everyone there next time. Thanks to all who helped put the picnic together.



## Diving The Dry Tortugas

Peter Bein

I have always heard about diving The Dry Tortugas; unlimited viz, warm waters, calm seas, pristine reefs, cool breezes. Well, it is all true.

I booked a trip on The Ultimate Getaway, out of Ft. Myers Beach, Florida, for three days in May. It is Florida's most remote diving destination.

Dive schedules are customized for the individuals on board; from photography to lobstering to technical diving.

I arrived at the boat at 5:30 PM after a five hour 250 mile drive from Marathon. It was quite an amazing trip across the state on Alligator Alley, route I-75. I was flying along at 100 mph and everybody was passing me.

After boarding the boat we were served dinner, received a boat briefing and left the dock at 7:00 PM for a twelve hour cruise to the pristine waters of The Dry Tortugas.

At 7:00 AM we were moored above our first dive site. Breakfast is served either before or after the dive, it is your choice. The sites are set up and each diver can pick the place that suits his fancy. Plan on between seven and ten stops per day. Most depths range between 40 to 80 fsw. Lunch and dinner were interposed between the dives.

Day two was similar to day one except for the optional visit to Fort Jefferson that can be worked into the itinerary. Fort Jefferson was originally planned as a bastion controlling the shipping lanes between the islands of the Caribbean and Europe. All shipping from Cuba to Spain had to pass through the shallow waters surrounding the fort. In fact no shot was ever fired from the fort and no shot was ever fired at the fort.

By 1829 the United States knew it could control navigation to The Gulf of Mexico and protect the Atlantic bound Mississippi River trade by fortifying The Dry Tortugas.

In 1846 construction began on Garden Key and continued for thirty years but was never finished.

During the Civil War the fort was a Union military prison for captured deserters. It also held four men convicted of compliance in the President Abraham Lincoln's' assination in 1865. The army abandoned Fort Jefferson in 1874 and in 1908 the area became a wildlife refuge to protect the sooty tern rookery from egg collectors. President Franklin Delalo Roosevelt proclaimed Fort Jefferson a National Monument in 1935. The Monument was redesignated on October 25, 1992, as Dry Tortuga National Park to protect both historical and natural features. Not least among the natural treasures are its namesakes, the endangered green sea turtle and the threatened loggerhead turtle.

Located seventy miles west of Key West, lie seven extraordinary coral and sand islands. On Garden Key, the centerpiece of the archipelago island chain, is Fort Jefferson, the largest brick structure in the western hemisphere. It is surrounded by beautiful water and spectacular coral reefs. It is one of the most unique bird watching venues in the world. The surrounding waters and shoals make up The Dry Tortugas National Park.

First named Los Tortugas, The Turtles, by Spanish explorer, Ponce De Leon in 1513, these reefs soon

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## Diving The Dry Tortugas

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read "Dry Tortugas" on mariners charts to show that there was no source of fresh water. In 1825 the lighthouse was built on Garden Key to warn sailors of the rocky shoals. In 1856 the present light on Logger Key was built. Why was this place so important to early seafarers? It was a source of fresh food. Turtles were readily captured and the birds, who had no fear of people were easily caught. Eggs provided a good basis of protein for ancient mariners.

On day three we awoke to find ourselves hooked into the "Baja California," a World War II transport ship built in 1914. The 266 foot steamship was carrying a general cargo, that included tobacco, when it was torpedoed just forward of amidships by the German submarine U-84 on July 19, 1942. The main wreckage lies in 115 fsw off Naples, Florida. I did two dives on this wreck and then moved on to an Air Force relay tower with some of the most prolific concentrations of undersea wildlife that I have ever encountered. Spear fishing is allowed here. After the dive we headed back to port for a 5:00 PM arrival.

The Ultimate Getaway is a fast stable 100 foot aluminum vessel powered by twin V-12 GM diesels. It is air conditioned throughout with a spacious interior lounge. Sleeping was dormitory style, not private. Individual bunks two high provided sleeping space for the twenty divers aboard. All food and drinks are included. The ship has a large 15 by 8 foot dive platform with easy to use ladders and a fresh water shower at the stern. There are five hot water showers and four restrooms. Again nothing is private.

Nitrox is available. Color TV with VCR is available too. Diving is limited only by your own safety standards.

Tanks and weights are provided. Divers need their own gear and a safety sausage is required for all divers. Sleeping bags a pillow, towel and any personal hygiene products as you see fit must be brought along. No soap.

Meals were satisfactory. Breakfast included eggs, bacon, toast, french toast, biscuits and gravy, waffles, muffins and danish. Lunch served meatballs, pasta, potatoes, chicken, rice, veggies, hot dogs and burgers. Dinner provided Lasagna potatoes, veggies, meat loaf, New York strip steak. Snacks are served throughout the day. We were never hungry.

Overall it was a worthwhile, enjoyable dive trip that wound up costing about \$750 for the three days including tax, tips and travel.



Picture From <http://www.yankeefreedom.com/>



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July 2004

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**\*\*There will be  
NO  
Meetings for July and August 2004\*\***

**September Meeting TBA**

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