

# AQUANEWS

www.rocklandaquanauts.org

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## On The Road With Max--Open Water Redux

Max Estroff

When I travel alone, I dive alone. Over a 100 logged solo dives. You carry a little more equipment and are a lot more conscious (if that's possible) of what's going on around you. On many occasions the choice of a buddy (total stranger) may or may not look appealing and could or could not be completely deceiving.

I am in Florida for a friend's daughter's wedding, to see some cousins and to go diving with Captain Leo on the "Deeper". I have been diving with this operation for about 8 years. When I dive with them I always carry my own flag, ALWAYS. Needless to say, tropical storm Bonnie and hurricane Charley messed with the diving plans. Both of these storms, so close together affected mostly the West coast of Florida. Off of the Southeast coast of Florida we had rain and cloudy days.

Thursday morning started as a beautiful day. By the time I got to the boat at 1 PM, the skies were gray and overcast. The boat left the dock at 1:30 PM with 7 of us on board. By the time we cleared the inlet it was raining hard.

The family of 5 dove together and the other guy looked to me to be in his 70's. He had a little Sea & Sea camera and said he would carry the flag. I said to him, "Take your pictures, I will carry the flag."

First dive we were a good buddy team in all aspects. We (I) stayed together on this aquarium drift dive. I saw 1 lobster and 1 moray eel which I pointed out to him. We came up together and he did my long hang (6 minutes) with me. We surfaced together into a squall, waves and rain. The boat was right there. The surface interval was rocking and rolling and raining.

The second dive.

The old guy wanted to carry the flag. Thinking to myself, the first dive worked out fine, I said "OK." First mistake. We do the dive. We see 2 different nurse sharks on the prow, swimming

along the reef line. There is about 10 to 20 feet of relief between the sand and the top of the reef. One was about 4 feet long and the other about 6--7 feet long. To see them patrolling like that was incredible. The water was about 84 degrees and the visibility about 50 feet. It is not real bright because of what's going on top.

Another aquarium drift dive and I am getting chilled after about 40 minutes. I signal to my buddy that I am going up. He waves to me goodbye (so much for this buddy) and hooks the flag line into the reef. I ascend up a stable line to about 20 feet and notice that the flag is below the surface. I do only 2 minutes like this, then let go of the line. Second mistake. I do another 4 minutes at 20 feet all the while watching the surface. It was so beautiful with the rain hitting the rolling, boiling surface. I remember thinking to myself, time to go up into this mess. I broke the surface, it's pouring, the seas are rolling, the wind is howling, it is so gray and the boat is way over there. Surface visibility is terrible, the waves, the rain, how are they going to me? The boat seems to be picking up other divers. I know it's just a matter of time. I have seen this Captain find divers who have drifted for an hour without a flag. All the while wondering how long our flag was below the surface. I came up with 1200 lbs in a steel 100. Because I flew down I did not bring my pony bottle and I have not dove with a snorkel in years. The wind is blowing, you can't hear a thing, it's thundering and lightening, I have my pink armed 3 mm suit on and I am thinking "what's taking them so long?" Can they see my pink arms waving in the rolling seas? That's when I see the boat going away from me and now it's out of sight. What do I do? I know they are looking for me, it's just a matter of time. I can see the beach maybe 1/2 mile or so away, where are they? How long am I going to be out here?

I see the boat again, still way off in the distance but I know they can't see me and it's not heading in my direction. What the F\_\_k is going on?

*(Continued on page 3)*

## AQUANEWS

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION  
OF THE ROCKLAND  
AQUANAUTS ORGANIZATION.  
WRITTEN CONTRIBUTIONS &  
PHOTOGRAPHS ARE ALWAYS  
WELCOMED & ENCOURAGED.  
SUBMIT MATERIALS FOR  
PUBLICATION BY THE 19TH OF  
THE MONTH

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### CHANGE OF ADDRESS

TO CHANGE MAILING  
ADDRESS, PHONE NUMBER  
OR E-MAIL, PLEASE NOTIFY:  
JERRY GHERARDI

At this point in time there has been no interest by anyone to set up an October or November meeting. This club is no longer a real club as only a handful of people are trying to do everything. The board not only needs input from other members but it also needs help in setting up meetings and dives.

Only eight to ten people have been showing up at meetings and sometimes even less are showing up at the dives. It takes a lot of work and time to perform these and other tasks that the board has to handle.

We have asked for help on many occasions and it has fallen on deaf ears. I for one am very tired of working my butt off for a group that seems to not appreciate anything that is done for them.

We have given more back to our members than ever before. Not only has there always been an annual picnic, we have had a picnic after every dive. The annual dinner has a subsidy as well as you have been given a Tax Deduction on all membership donations.

So if anyone has any suggestions and or ideas forward them to Steve @

[info@rocklandaquanauts.org](mailto:info@rocklandaquanauts.org)

Paul Galeazzi Jr. Treasurer/Director

## October Factoid of the month

The bull frog is the only animal that never sleeps

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## Members of the Rockland Aquanauts Organization Inc.

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Contact our webmaster

[webmaster@rocklandaquanauts.org](mailto:webmaster@rocklandaquanauts.org)

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.**

## On the Road with Max

(Continued from page 1)

The water is warm, I am not getting tossed around, it's just storming.

For the second time I see the boat going away from me. Now I am thinking at what point do I ditch my weights and tank? 1000 lbs still in the tank. When it's empty that's when I will dump them. I am still thinking I will be fine, it's just a matter of time. Did I mention that it's raining, thundering, lightening, the wind is howling and the seas are rocking and rolling. 800 lbs of air. I am thinking how crazy this is and am I going to do this again? I am thinking how long it's going to take for that helicopter with the orange stripe to show up, and hopefully before dark. That maybe I will hear them before they see me and what will I use to signal them? \*\*\*\*I will use my UK1200, the light that every Floridian makes fun of. REVELATION!!! If I can use it to signal the helicopter, I can use it to signal the boat\*\*\*\*. Off in the distance, I see the boat again. I turn the light on (8 fresh D batteries), raise my arm (still thunder and lightening) and point it in the boat's direction. At this point the boat was doing a crisscross search pattern, its port side facing my direction. That's when it turned directly towards me creating the most magnificent bow wake. I was in the water 18 minutes before I got picked up.

Captain Leo said that "I took 10 years off his life and was only 2 minutes away from calling the Coast Guard". They had seen my light in the gray haze of the surface. "What a great idea the light was". A light that few divers in Florida even carry.

As for my buddy, I don't remember saying anything to him. The other divers were too busy breaking my b lls for cutting into their drinking time. The ride back was in the same conditions, rain, wind, thunder and lightening.

Four days later I went diving again. Two more uneventful aquarium drift dives off of Boynton Beach carrying my own flag, alone and safe.

## Another Storm, Another Aquanaut Dive Paul Galeazzi Jr.

On this day, September 18<sup>th</sup> 2004, myself and a group of insane Aquanauts went to Lake Welch for the Annual International Cleanup Day. The day started off with a tremendous amount of rain, wind and flooding beyond belief. We had a major delay on the Palisades Pkwy because of a downed tree. It was enjoyable watching all the idiots in cars trying to ride the muddy shoulder and getting stuck. Of course they tore up the grass and left ruts in the mud which made it even worse for the next idiot. If we would have been stuck much longer I could have taken out the barbeque and sold hamburgers and hot dogs to the crowd. At least this would have raised our bank account somewhat. I guess I better get back to the Lake story.

Well eventually we made it to the beach and boat dock area, where the weather seemed to be getting better. Other than the wind, at least the rain had subsided. Les Parker, Allan Block and myself got dressed and hit the water. The water was a little murky but a nice 65 degrees near the surface. Visibility was around 3 feet until the water was stirred up by removing trash. I stood in the boat dock area and filled up my bag around 4 times. At one point the water seemed to get much darker. Well it wasn't the water but a thick fog had covered the lake because the air temperature dropped to around 55 degree's. When I surfaced I was looking at a group of shivering bodies begging me to get out of the water, which I did.

We cleaned up our mess and loaded our wet cold gear into our vehicles. We cancelled the picnic and went to a local restaurant for a nice lunch. We then headed home knowing that we removed our share of garbage.



## Marathon Report

### Anonymous

Most of my fellow Aquanauts know that I used to be an accountant. When I retired and moved to Marathon I brought all of my office equipment with me. You never know, Right.

It has always been a special convenience to be able to make a photocopy or send and receive a FAX at home.

A little over two years ago my photocopy machine, a seven thousand dollar Sharp monster, that could satisfy every one of your fondest desires, broke down. I called around and found another Keys shortfall, nobody here services or repairs a Sharp. The closest authorized service representative is located in Pompano Beach, about a four hour drive from Marathon. They wanted \$400 just to drive down to inspect the beast.

My FAX machine, also a Sharp, was an antiquated model that required heat sensitive paper that was sold in rolls. I had about six rolls left, more than I could use up in this lifetime.

My computer printer, a Hewlett Packard Series II was purchased in 1985 and was also not working properly. I had to use my scanner to scan a document in order to make it copy.

I also had an IBM Selectric typewriter which was purchased used so long ago that I can't remember when. All of these prior details are just foreplay. It is building up to a magnificent crescendo.

I found an ad for a Hewlett Packard four-in-one OfficeJet G85 for \$400 plus I had a 10% discount coupon with no shipping charges or sales taxes.

I jumped at the chance to acquire an updated, modern, compact office machine that could perform all the work that my existing equipment does and takes up less space than my original Hewlett Packard printer. The trick is, what do I do with the old equipment? I offered it to the schools, the churches, the library and the police. No takers.

My scheming mind devised a plan to dispose of the equipment, create an underwater marine environment and benefit the ecosystem.

I loaded all of this stuff onto my boat and headed five and one half miles out into the Gulf of Mexico.

While cautiously scanning the horizon for the sea cops I slowly chugged my over loaded boat out to my selected secret spot. I had thoroughly cleaned and vacuumed all of the developing dust and removed all of the other non-environmentally friendly components from the machines prior to releasing them into the wild. This solution started about two years ago, It is a shallow location, ten or eleven feet deep. I arranged the equipment on the bottom giving it about a two foot profile. This summer, when I visited my office, I found five juvenile angelfish scurrying around a thoroughly sponge and coral encrusted photocopy machine. I thought to myself, "Self this is a good thing."

What the office was missing was office furniture. Fortunately there four houses under construction in my development. This provided me an endless supply of construction debris. I collected Spanish roof tiles, curved in a semicircle and broken or discarded concrete block.

Once more I made the trip to the office with eight hundred pounds of office furniture. I located the office on my GPS and carefully arranged the block in stacks. Once again I headed out with another boat load and again and again.

I stacked the office furniture around the office. It is beautiful, a virtual lobster condominium.

It will probably take another year before it becomes inhabitable, but I noticed that the lobster boats have been placing their pots around the office. That must mean something good.

Of course I named the site the OFFICE on my GPS.

## A Ship Found, a Heart Healed

Tom Feeney, Star-Ledger Staff

Just as the bow of the USS Murphy long ago settled into the dark depths of the Atlantic Ocean, so too did Ruth Anderson's feelings for a curly-haired boy from Pelican Rapids, Minn., settle into the deep recesses of her memory.

Both recently were recovered.

The Murphy, a Navy destroyer, was split in two when it collided with an oil tanker off the coast of New Jersey in October 1943. The stern was towed back to port that night, but the bow -- or the front part of the boat --and the remains of 35 men sank into the chilly water.

Among the dead was Ruth Anderson's fiancé, Gilmor Weik. She mourned him intensely but eventually did fall in love with another man, Kermit Anderson. They married and had three sons, all now in middle age. Ruth Anderson never told them about what she lost the night the Murphy sank.

"I just kept it deep down in my heart," Anderson, 83, said on a recent visit to New Jersey from her home in Norman, Okla.

But two years ago, professional diver Dan Crowell of Brick discovered the long-lost bow of the Murphy in 265 feet of water about 80 miles off Long Beach Island.

The discovery, and the resurgent interest in the history of the Murphy that attended it, prompted Ruth Anderson to tell her sons about the man she loved before she met their dad.

"She was like a tea kettle on simmer for 60 years," her youngest son, Tom, of Oklahoma City, said during a reunion of Murphy veterans at a Holiday Inn in Vineland earlier this month.

The discovery of the bow brought her to a boil, he said. Her own little piece of the Murphy's history has been whistling forth ever since.

The Murphy, a Benson-class destroyer, was 348 feet long and 36 feet across. It carried 260 enlisted men and 15 officers.

On that night in October 1943, the ship was assigned to escort a supply convoy from New York to the United Kingdom. The convoy was not far from New York when an unidentified target showed up on the radar. The Murphy was sent ahead to determine whether it was a German U-boat.

The target turned out to be another American ship, the SS Bulkoil. The Bulkoil's captain mistook the Murphy for a torpedo and turned toward it, the standard evasive maneuver, said Fred Sheller, a Californian who was working below deck in the fire control room of the Murphy that night. Rather than avoiding a torpedo, though, the tanker crashed into the port side of the Murphy, between the bridge and forward stack, cutting the destroyer in two.

"It was like a bus crashing through pane after pane of glass," Sheller said at the Vineland reunion. "I don't remember a jerk, or a bump, just a loud shattering."

Harper Anderson Peacock, a 3rd-class torpedoman from Tennessee, was on watch on the top deck that night, standing near the sonar room where Gilmor Weik was stationed. The impact was so jarring, he said he was thrown overboard.

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## A Ship Found, a Heart Healed

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He was wearing a headset with a 35-foot cord. The drop to the ocean was 40 feet, he recalled. When he reached the end of his line, his head snapped back violently, and he was knocked unconscious. The water was so cold that he came to quickly.

Covered in diesel fuel and numb from the cold, Peacock, Sheller and several dozen other survivors eventually were plucked from the water and hoisted onto the deck of a rescue ship, the USS Glennon. There, they were scrubbed clean and given shots of brandy to warm their bones.

Peacock never found out what happened to Weik, but he has carried the memory of him and the others who died with him ever since.

"You realize that those boys that suffered and died that night were no worse or no better than you were, but you survived," said Peacock, 82, who settled in Mississippi after the war and went to work as a lineman for the power company. "You always carry a little guilt about being saved when the rest went down. It's kind of a hard token."

The stern of the Murphy stayed afloat that night and was towed to the New York Navy Boat Yard with many of the crew still aboard, Sheller said. The bow was replaced, and the Murphy returned to duty seven months later.

Because a war was on, the Navy and Coast Guard never made much of an effort to find the bow of the Murphy or recover the bodies of the men who were lost, many veterans of the ship believe. For six decades, they had only a vague idea of where their ship had gone down.

That began to change in 2000. Crowell, captain of a dive boat called the Seeker, had a conversation with a local fisherman that led him to believe he might find the remains of a World War II Liberty ship at a particular spot off the New Jersey coast. He made his first dive on that spot in August 2000.

Though the wreck Crowell and his team of divers found that day was shrouded in discarded fishing nets, they saw enough of it to doubt that it was a Liberty ship. Because of weather and equipment problems, it wasn't until they were able to make another dive on it, in September 2002, that they could say for sure that it was a destroyer. After that dive, they used Navy records to identify it as the Murphy.

A small memorial with the names of the men who died that night has been placed in a park in Surf City, on Long Beach Island. The memorial was dedicated Sept. 16.

Crowell, a videographer, is working on a documentary about the ship.

Ruth Anderson, whose husband died the year Crowell identified the Murphy, heard about the discovery from a relative who saw a television news report about it.

The experience has brought back memories of things she has not spoken of in six decades. Memories of taking the train from her home in Elizabeth, Minn., to meet Gil in New York during his shore leave, of taking along the gravy spoon from the silverware pattern she had selected for their wedding, of going to the opera and a party, of being stricken with a sense of foreboding when they said goodbye at the end of his leave.

When he was reported missing, she said, she clung to the hope that he was alive somewhere, possibly with amnesia, trying to find his way back to her. She moved to Washington, D.C., to stay with her sister and continued to write him letters after the Murphy sank. One day, the postman brought them all back to her.

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## A Ship Found, a Heart Healed

*(Continued from page 6)*

She gave up hope and took the train back to Minnesota. She destroyed the letters and gave the engagement ring to her brother. The only thing she kept was an ivory necklace Gil had bought for her at the Rock of Gibraltar.

She put that necklace away many years ago and kept it away, thinking it improper to wear it around the man she married.

But earlier this month, when she arrived in New Jersey with her son Tom for the reunion of the Murphy crew, she wore Gil's necklace.

"Ever since they found the bow," her son said, "she's been healing a thorn that's been in her heart all these years."

## U-Boat Remains Found off Canada

A team of divers and documentary film makers have found the wreck of a German U-boat off eastern Canada. The submarine was sunk in 1942 during World War II, preventing it from completing its mission to lay mines in the harbor of the US city of Boston.

U-boat 215 is the first confirmed Nazi submarine found in Canadian waters.

During World War II plenty of German U-boats were deployed off the Atlantic coast of North America, sinking naval vessels and merchant ships.

But U-215 had a special secret mission.

It was ordered to the American port city of Boston to mine the harbor.

But the German captain of the U-boat spotted an American ship loaded with tanks and bombers.

Mike Fletcher, a Canadian diver who helped find the U-boat, says it was then that the German captain made a fatal mistake.

"To him it must have been a tantalizing target that he probably should have passed by," he said.

"But he thought about those weapons and he thought about how many German lives he might save if he could sink that ship. But in doing so he exposed himself. The hunter became the hunted."

Ignoring orders, the sub torpedoed the American ship, USS Alexander Macomb.

But a British Royal Navy ship counter-attacked, sinking the Nazi submarine with depth charges.

For 62 years it has been sitting in its watery grave off the coast of Nova Scotia.

The team used sonar and conducted two dives to the sunken vessel while battling strong tides and currents.

Mr. Fletcher says his team could see live mines still inside the wreck and it is presumed the remains of the forty-nine crew members are also still inside.

The U-boat is likely to become the property of Germany and in the past it has been customary to leave sunken vessels alone.

Story from BBC NEWS:



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10956**

**October 2004**

Lake Welch, On the Road with Max, Marathon Report, U-Boat Remains Found off Canada

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**There will be no October 2004 Meeting**

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**Last Hessian Lake Dive– “Oktoberfest”  
October 17, 2004  
10:00 AM  
Administration Parking Lot**

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