

AQUANEWS

30th Anniversary of the AquaNews

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On The Road with Max, Upper Keys Wreck Diving. Max Estroff

Early February found me in South Florida. I spent 3 days with Captain Mike's Tavernier Divers. Each day we went out with between 2 and 3 divers to do 2 dives on each site. My friend Israel and I drove back and forth the 100 miles each way to his house in Davie, Florida.

The first day we did the Duane. Jump in; exhaust yourself, pulling yourself to the down line. As you go down the line you feel like a flag in the wind and not to mention, my octopus regulator free flowing from the force of the current. The wreck itself is upright and intact. Went inside and explored a bit. Inside was filled with grunts. On the way back I saw a pair of full sized Midnight Blue Parrot fish.

Second dive on the this site was much the same only I reconfigured my octopus so it was out of the current and did not free flow. The difference was coming up with 1500 psi instead of 500 psi. Both dives were 33 minutes total. Both dives were to 103-105 feet. On the second dive inside, I came across 2 Moray eels. One was only about 3 feet long and the second was at least twice the length. It's the size of the head that holds your attention. Both were free swimming in different parts of the wreck.

The next day we went out to the Spiegel Grove. This was my first time on this wreck since it was up righted by a hurricane. The current this day was not as strong as the first day. Even with 50 feet visibility this wreck is so big you only get to see sections at a time. We came down a ball line that was attached to a crane in the mid to back section on the port side. At the base of this crane was a full sized Hog fish. Lucky for it there were no spear fishermen on board just Israel and myself. We crossed the cavern below and were now on the starboard section that was resting on the sand. There were more big fish, Midnight Parrots, big groupers and small Goliath groupers. This open hatchway beckoned and in I went, down 1 deck and along a series of connected rooms. The inside Vis was great but it was empty inside. So when I turned around to go back all the sediment I kicked up was now

suspended. I shut my light and let my eyes adjust and through the ambient light and haze you could see where it's lighter from the light from the open hatchway. Again outside, looking over the side, I saw the groupers, waiting for us to leave. It was back to the line to watch the Barracudas as we did our ascent and safety stops. One hour and eight minutes later we are once again fighting the surface current to get to the down line. We descend into the midsection of the cavern until we reach the portside catwalk. We followed this forward into the cave like entrance deep into

midsection-forward section of this ship. Expecting a hatchway with a staircase leading up, we were disappointed. So we followed the starboard catwalk back. The opening of this cavern like structure was blocked by a huge ball of Silver Bait fish. We went through this as slowly as possible as not to break up the mass. It didn't work. On the way back to the up line, we passed the Goliath Groupers. We made another long ascent doing the flag thing.

The following day with just Israel and me the boat went to the "Bibb". The Bibb lies on its starboard side at about 133 feet. On this day the current was minimum. Vis was 70 feet.

We went inside and explored a bit. As on the other dives in this area, I saw a lot of bigger fish, from the Parrots, the Bar Jacks to the assorted sizes of groupers and of course the ever present Barracuda. On the outside up against the hull was a very respectful size nurse shark. We got back to the up line and there curved around a ventilator was a Moray eel out in the open and just hanging.

One hour later the second dive was much the same. The Moray was not to be seen and the shark was still where we left it. It was the amount of bigger fish that was the attraction. Tavernier Dive Center custom mixes your gas and lets you dive your skill.

AQUANEWS

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION
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WRITTEN CONTRIBUTIONS &
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Next Meeting: Tuesday May 9th, 2006

6:30-9:30 pm at the **Palisades Mall**

Level 4, East End

The Besso Community Room

West Nyack, NY

Protecting and Restoring America's Living Oceans

Given by

Robert Cowin representing Conserve Our Ocean Legacy

The meeting shall begin at 6:30 pm.

Directions:

The Palisades Mall is located on the New York Thruway (I87 and I287 at exit 12 West Nyack, Route 303). You can't miss it.

The Besso Community Meeting Room is located on the 4th level (top floor) at the east end of the Mall, directly above Filene's. The Besso Room - and other meeting rooms - are in a hallway leading to the Ice Skating Rink (also above Filene's).

The best and easiest way to get into the mall is to drive into the underground parking area. Proceed to the east end of the parking garage to parking areas "M" or "N" near the "East Mall Entrance". Take the escalators in the East Mall Entrance all the way to level 4. When you come off the escalator, turn around and you are looking right at the Ice Rink.

Members of the Rockland Aquanauts Organization Inc.

We need articles for our newsletter! Any help is appreciated.

Contact our webmaster 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.

Stingray Divers

Dive on the best-rated live-aboard, Odyssey Adventures to see the “ghost fleet” of Truk Lagoon, unquestionably the world's best shipwreck diving destination. The number, variety, and size of the wrecks and the spectacular marine life that grows on them are unequalled. In February of 1944, the US Task Force 58 attacked Japan's fortress of Truk Lagoon. More than 400 Japanese planes were wiped out and some 50-60 ships were believed sunk in this Micronesian lagoon (one hour flight from Guam).

Boat departs

9/10/06

To

9/17/06



Cost Odyssey. Boat fee PACKAGE PRICE \$ 2495.00 plus air fare
Air fare \$1530.00

Airfare available thru (Continental Airline), fees, port
And transfers, included, plus one night in Blue Lagoon Hotel,
(Double occupancy).

Includes Odyssey Adventures (7 NIGHTS-double occupancy)
5 1/2 days diving (up to 5 dives per day)
All meals (except final night), beer and wine include
30% Nitrox fills for certified (no charge)
Double tanks, dual isolation, DIN, 0/2 available
Nitrox and Trimix courses available for additional fee

Separate island airfare

Excursion, available to Palau, Yap, Hawaii, Guam
For just \$250 more) many other locations available

Deposit: \$500 (\$250 non-refundable)

Contact: www.stingraydivers.com
Email: info@stingraydivers.com
762 Grand Street, Brooklyn, New York, 11211

Phone 718-384-1280

Fax 718-302-0465

Diver deprived of air
Accident leaves 24-year-old in coma
By John Sullivan
Times Herald-Record

Chester – Commercial diver Anthony Guarascio climbed down a ladder off a pier in Camden, N.J., in a heated dive suit and diving helmet to chip away at underwater piles of cement with a jackhammer.

As he entered the water, he was leaving his life in the hands of two co-workers who would monitor his air tanks and his progress from a two-way communication box on the pier.

Before submerging, Guarascio might have glanced across the water at the glittering Philadelphia skyline to consider, if only for a moment, his good fortune.

After a rough but not so regrettable start out of college, the 24-year-old had a good-paying job, a beautiful fiancée, and a 19-month-old son waiting for him at home in Chester in Orange County.

There was little to indicate that his luck might change as he entered the waters of the Delaware River, a 40-pound weight belt pushing him 35 feet to the bottom on that late February day.

What went wrong almost three hours later is still being investigated by federal officials, as well as family members who suspect negligence on the part of the diving company Guarascio worked for.

According to Chris Drake, the owner of Drake Associates, who was the supervisor of the dive that day, “something” caused a critical valve to shut off on the air tanks he was monitoring for Guarascio. Drake estimates Guarascio went without air for five to 10 minutes, during which time the diver either clawed his way up one of the large underwater cement piles he was working on or used the umbilical tube feeding him air and hot water for his suit as a rope to get to the surface.

Seeing Guarascio’s body come up, Drake and another worker turned on the backup air tank to no avail. They pulled Guarascio in, using a forklift to heave his suited body by its umbilical tube to the pier 10 feet above.

Co-workers administered CPR, which restored his breathing before medics arrived to take him to Camden’s Cooper University Medical Center.

When the ambulance left, Drake examined the tank valves to find the problem. He guessed that Guarascio’s umbilical tube hit the valve at some point during the dive.

A former Navy diver and U.S. Naval Academy at Annapolis graduate, Drake said he plans to add secondary locks to his equipment to ensure such an accident doesn’t happen again.

There are no standards requiring such safety features be used, he said.

“It was a terrible, terrible, freak accident that just shouldn’t have happened,” he said.

Guarascio’s family believes the accident could have been avoided.

Anthony’s younger brother, Joe Guarascio, who also works for Drake Associates, said Drake should have detected his older brother in distress over the communication box.

(Continued on page 5)

Diver deprived of air

(Continued from page 4)

"There's always supposed to be someone on the com box and watching the pressure gauges," the younger brother said. "If someone's in the water and they're in distress, you would know it and pull him up right away."

Drake said he was standing near the communication box but that it was a windy day, making it possible for him not to hear distress calls if they were made.

Officials from the federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration are investigating. Calls to their Camden office were not returned.

Guarascio is sedated and in a medically-induced coma at Helen Hayes Hospital in Rockland County. Doctors at the hospital won't know until he wakes the extent of his brain damage or his chances of recovery, family members said.

Had the accident occurred the way Drake described it, Guarascio would have had time to think, even panic, as he sucked the remnants of oxygen from his air tank.

Through his mind might have floated thoughts of a June marriage to Christine Wile, his fiancée, playing with their infant son, Michael, or joking with brothers, Joey and John, and their large group of friends.

"I miss him so much," said Wile, the 22-year-old mother and bride-to-be. "I just can't wait for him to say something, anything, to me."

This was sent in by Mike Hatalla

Lake search gives no clues for Petra

By Greg Bruno
Times Herald-Record

Bear Mountain - Police divers searched a lake in Bear Mountain State Park yesterday for clues in the disappearance of a missing Highland Falls women.

Petra Muhammad, 30, was last seen Jan. 7 by relatives near her home on Schneider Avenue.

Nothing was found during the sweep of Hessian Lake, a 50-foot-deep body of water in northern Rockland County. Highland Falls police Chief Peter J. Miller said the dive was officially a training exercise, and wasn't the result of a specific tip.

But while authorities have taken pains to paint their case a missing-person investigation, they have in recent weeks turned their focus to search and recovery efforts.

Last month, state police canvassed Bear Mountain in a helicopter to look for clues before trees began blooming. And as water temperatures warm, Miller said police will search more waterways, gradually expanding the search perimeter for the missing woman.

"We're always looking for Petra," Miller said. "This is part of the investigation."

For more than two hours, dive teams from Newburgh, West Point and the Seth Foundation, a non-profit underwater search and rescue organization based in Columbus, Ga., searched the murky water. Divers combed the lake bottom in pairs, sticking close to the shoreline. Items brought to the surface were old bottles and one rusty knife.

William Muhammad has declined to discuss his wife's disappearance. At his parent's house yesterday, his mother, Lela Jackson, refused to comment when told that police were searching a nearby lake for clues.

This was sent in by Mike Hatala

Proposed Dive schedule
For
Hessian Lake, Lake Sebago, Lake Welch

Hessian Lake

Saturday June 3rd 2006 at 9:00 AM
Sunday July 9th 2006 at 9:00 AM
Saturday August 5th 2006 at 9:00 AM
Sunday September 10th 2006 at 9:00 AM
Saturday September 30th at 10:00 AM
Sunday October 8th at 10:00 AM
Saturday October 14th at 10:00 AM

Lake Sebago

Saturday June 24th at 9:00 AM
Sunday July 23rd at 9:00 AM
Saturday August 26th at 9:00 AM

Lake Welch

Sunday September 17th at 10:00 AM

*Only the Hessian Lake Dives are approved, dates and times for other lakes are still pending approval

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP FEES ARE DUE

Rockland Aquanauts Organization 2006 Dues

I guess it is that time of the year again, Membership Dues are due.
Last year all our members received much more than they gave out to the
Organization.

As usual you will be receiving a tax donation for the first \$25.00. All members
who attended the Annual Dinner not only received money off their own dinner
but they also received money off theirs guests dinner. Everyone whom
attended also received prizes, some worth many times the cost of their Dues.
Don't forget the Annual Picnic as well as all the BBQ lunch's after the Lake
Dives.

So please send in your \$42 dues early to;

Rockland Aquanauts Organization
c/o
Paul Galeazzi Jr.
4 Greensward Drive.
Valley Cottage New York
10989



**Rockland Aquanauts
Post Office Box 387
New City, NY
10956**

May 2006

On The Road With Max, Dive Schedule, 2006 Dues, May Meeting, Truk Trip, Searching Hessian Lake

****Next Meeting May 9th 2006****

**6:30pm at the Palisades Mall
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Directions Inside
