

# AQUANEWS

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## Diver deprived of air

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.

*(Continued on page 3)*

## AQUANEWS

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION  
OF THE ROCKLAND  
AQUANAUTS ORGANIZATION.  
WRITTEN CONTRIBUTIONS &  
PHOTOGRAPHS ARE ALWAYS  
WELCOMED & ENCOURAGED.  
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### CHANGE OF ADDRESS

TO CHANGE MAILING  
ADDRESS, PHONE NUMBER  
OR E-MAIL, PLEASE NOTIFY:  
INFO@ROCKLANDAQUANAUTS.ORG

**The Rockland Aquanauts are going to have their annual Dinner on April 6th 2008. The Dinner shall be held at Athur's Tavern at 214 Kinderkamack Road Emerson New Jersey 07630. The phone number is 1-201-265-5180.**

**Appetizers shall be from 4:00 pm until 5:00 pm and Dinner shall be from 5:00 pm until 8:00 pm.**

**There shall be door prizes for all who attend.**

**The cost of the Dinner and appetizers shall be for 17.00 for Members and 27.00 for the first Guest. We have been able to keep the same pricing for the last few years with the help of Arthur's Tavern.**

**Please send your checks to the treasure as follows;**

**The Rockland Aquanauts  
c/o Paul Galeazzi Jr.  
4 Greensward Drive  
Valley Cottage N.Y. 10989**



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.**

## Diver Deprived of Air

*(Continued from page 1)*

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.

“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

## Approved Hessian Lake Dives 2008

Saturday June 7<sup>th</sup> 9:00 am

Sunday July 13<sup>th</sup> 9:00 am

Saturday August 9<sup>th</sup> 9:00 am

Sunday Sept. 7<sup>th</sup> 10:00 am

Saturday Sept. 27<sup>th</sup> 10:00 am

Sunday Oct. 12<sup>th</sup> 10:00 am

Saturday Oct. 25<sup>th</sup> 10:00 am

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### BBQ Help Needed

We have BBQs after every Hessian Lake dive, but next year, we don't want the chef tasks to fall on the same people all the time, so we are asking for your help. If you plan on coming to the Hessian Lake dives, please consider offering to set up, cook, or break down the BBQ gear.

**Setting up** might mean you set up before diving, get out of the water first, or forego diving that day. **Cooking** means you cook for everyone who shows up, not just yourself & your friends.

**Breaking down the BBQ gear** means you stay until everyone has eaten and the grill is cool enough to put into your car to store until the next dive.

You don't have to be a Board Member to help. Everyone can pitch in. Any expenses, like buying food, are reimbursable. So please look at the dive dates and let us know when you can help out.

Thank you

**ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP FEES ARE DUE**

Rockland Aquanauts Organization  
2008 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 their 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

**Skip The Sunscreen While Diving :** It can damage and even kill coral reefs, says a study in the journal *Environmental Health Perspectives*. Italian marine biologists have linked four UV-blocking chemicals in sunscreens to coral bleaching because they cause viral infections in the symbiotic algae that live inside reef-building coral. The viruses replicate until their algae hosts explode, infecting neighboring coral. The researchers estimate that 5,000 tons of sunscreen wash off people in oceans annually, and that up to 10 percent of coral reefs are threatened by sunscreen-induced bleaching.

Don't Forget to Visit EmbroidMe for your Rockland Aquanauts Apparel

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**Rockland Aquanauts  
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New City, NY  
10956**

**March 2008**

Annual Dinner, Hessian Lake 2008 Schedule, Membership Dues

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**\*\*There will be NO March Meeting\*\*  
Don't Forget:**

**Annual Dinner on April 6th 2008.  
Details Inside**

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