

AQUANEWS

Volume 33, No. 8

August 2009



SECRETARY
MARSHA FREEDMAN
TREASURER
PAUL GALEAZZI JR.

DIRECTORS
ALLAN BLOCK
MARSHA FREEDMAN
PAUL GALEAZZI JR.
STEVE IMPROTE
LES PARKER

DIVE COORDINATOR
MIKE HATALA
PUBLICITY
JEFFREY HOROWITZ

DIVING THE GENERAL HOYT S. VANDENBERG Peter Bein

FIRST SOME BACKGROUND

On February 22, 1943 The USS/USNS GENERAL HARRY TAYLOR construction began in the Kaiser Shipyard in Richmond, California.

On October 10th she was launched. March 1944 the Navy acquired the ship and placed her in ferry commission on April 1st for transfer to Portland Oregon for conversion to transport in Vancouver, Washington.

The ship was decommissioned on April 10, 1944.

May 8th saw a re-commission as a troop transport during WWII.

During 1944 and 1945 the craft traveled between San Francisco and island bases in the Western Pacific Ocean carrying troops and supplies for the American amphibious sweep to Japan.

On June 29, 1945 she departed San Francisco for duty in the Atlantic after Germany surrendered. She passed through the Panama Canal on July 8.

Leaving the Atlantic Theater and passing back through the Panama Canal for the planned invasion of Japan but Japan surrendered on August 19, 1945.

The ship made her way to New York and by the beginning of September started returning the troops home from the European Theater. Between September 1945 and May 1946 she transported the fighters back from Egypt, India, France and Germany.

On June 13, 1946 she was decommissioned in Baltimore, Maryland and struck from the Naval Register and then transferred to the Army as a transport and renamed USAT GENERAL HARRY TAYLOR.

On March 1, 1950 she was reacquired by the Navy and assigned Military Sea Transport Service.

Her early duty consisted of carrying troops, dependents and European refugees. In 1957 the ship took part in the Hungarian Relief Program transporting thousands of the refugees of the Hungarian Revolution to Australia.

In 1958 she was placed in the National Defense Reserve Fleet in Beaumont, Texas and transferred to the Air Force.

On July 15, 1961 she was renamed THE GENERAL HOYT S. VANDENBERG.

On July 1, 1964 she was once again transferred to the Navy and operated in the Atlantic.

During 1965 through 1975 she returned to the Pacific as a missile launcher and tracked missiles launched from space and the missile test center.

IN 1077 she was converted and returned to service servicing the eastern missile range based in Cape Canaveral, Florida.

In February 1983 she was mothballed to James River, Virginia.

In April 1983 was again struck from the Naval Register.

On September 16, 1996 she was leased to Universal Studios for the filming of VIRUS. By June 19, 1997 was brought back to the mothball feet

In 1999 Artificial Reefs of the Florida Keys identified the Vandenberg as the best choice for the artificial reef program.

In January 2007 a transfer agreement with the State of Florida was signed for reefing in the Keys.

(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

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

PETER BEIN
ALLAN BLOCK
MELISSA BOGEN
MAX ESTROFF
PAUL GALEAZZI, JR
STEVE IMPROTE
LES PARKER
LADA SIMEK

NEWSLETTER COORDINATOR
PAUL A. GALEAZZI

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

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

Massive Shark Washes Up on Long Island

July 14) -- Surfers off Long Island, N.Y., caught more than waves Tuesday morning, as they watched a 20-foot-long shark circle the waves and then wash ashore.

The basking shark was dead on the beach at Gilgo State Park by the time officials arrived.

A crowd of about 40 people gathered on the beach, some taking pictures with cell phone cameras, according to the [New York Post](#).

There were no visible wounds or injuries on the shark. Tracy Marcus of Cornell Cooperative Extension told The Associated Press the shark likely had some kind of illness.

New York State Parks official George Gorman said researchers would examine the shark to determine the cause of death. After that, the animal will be buried in sand dunes on the beach.

Basking sharks eat plankton and are not considered dangerous.



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.

DIVING THE GENERAL HOYT S. VANDENBERG

(continued from page 1)

On March 30, 2007 the Vandenberg was transferred to Colonna Shipyard in Norfolk, Virginia to prepare her for sinking.

At 10:20 AM the 27 of Nay the 523 foot vessel was scuttled after a cost of \$8.6 million dollars to transport and clean for her final voyage 140 to 155 feet below the waves seven miles off Key West in the marine sanctuary making it the second largest artificial reef.

The Hulk's superstructure and radar towers are accessible to divers at 50 feet below the surface thus standing her profile proudly 100 feet high.

FINALLY THE DIVE

On July 7th I finally had all of my relatives, guests and grandsons out of my house. I was on my own again. I tooled my way down to Key West to DIVE KEY WEST for my first examination of the Vandenberg.

The dive boat, EASY DIVER, while quite comfortable was quite crowded. There were 20 divers who were divided into three groups and led down by a dive master/instructor on an escorted dive. There was no penetration allowed. Anybody who knows me knows that I am into deep penetration, that is why I dive. Divers had to stick with the group and the entire group was limited to the bottom time of the biggest gas sucker.

The viz was terrible only 25 feet max. The current was running at 3 knots. My lovely Keys diving has now turned into Long Island Sound.

Air temperature was 90 degrees. Water temperature was 85 degrees. These are comfortable numbers. I was dissatisfied due to the restrictions imposed on us.

I was the last diver to go down the descent line behind the whole group. Going down was at a snail's pace. The combination of current and retarded descent caused me to burn up 400 pounds of gas going down.

We landed on a round gun turret with the gun gone and proceeded to drag ourselves the deck to the superstructure. At this point I would normally enter the superstructure, get out of the current and 100 feet viz within the ship. But being the submissive person that I am I only entered the portal looked around and exited. This wreck would be a divers dream with many, many areas to explore within.

By this time most of the "experienced divers" were running out of gas and the whole group had to return to the ascent line. I was pretty pissed.

It would be a great wreck to explore but the restrictions required by the regulations of DIVE KEY WEST ruined my dive. I will not dive with them again.

I started with 2400 pounds of 31% nitrox mix and surfaced 900 pounds. I normally would have been able to double the bottom of 20 minutes at 91 feet maximum depth.

They charged \$100 for the ride. I had all of my own equipment and it would have been worth it if proved to be a good dive, but it was not what I consider a good dive.

I am looking at other shops for my next excursion down to the Vandenberg and will notify you all of the results of my efforts.

PETER BEIN
MARATHON FLORIDA
JULY 14 2009



Explorers Find Ancient Shipwrecks

By ALESSANDRA RIZZO

ROME (July 24) - Archaeologists have found five well-preserved Roman shipwrecks deep under the sea off a small Mediterranean island, with their cargo of vases, pots and other objects largely intact, officials said Friday.

The ships are submerged about 300 to 500 feet off Ventotene, a tiny island that is part of an archipelago off Italy's west coast between Rome and Naples.

The ships, which date from between the 1st century B.C. and the 4th century, carried amphorae — vases used for holding wine, olive oil and other products — as well as kitchen tools and metal and glass objects that have yet to be identified, Italy's Culture Ministry said. The spot was highly trafficked, and hit by frequent storms and dangerous sea currents.

The discovery is part of a new drive by archaeological officials to scan deeper levels of the sea and prevent looting of submerged treasures.

Discoveries of shipwrecks are not unusual in the Mediterranean, but these ships are far better preserved than most, which are often found scattered in fragments, said Annalisa Zarattini, the head of the ministry's office for underwater archaeology. Because the ships sank at a deeper level than most known wrecks, they were not exposed to destructive underwater currents, she said.

The ships also sank without capsizing, allowing researchers to observe their cargo largely as it had been loaded, Zarattini said.

"It is like an underwater museum," Zarattini said. The finding also sheds light on the trade routes of ancient Rome, marking the area as a major commercial crossroads, she said.

Treasure hunters usually dive down to about 100 feet underwater, but new and fast-spreading technology will make it increasingly easier for them to dive deep, Zarattini said. "It's important to arrive first," she added.

The ships were found during explorations concluded earlier this month by the ministry and the AURORA Trust, a U.S. group that gathers maritime researchers and provides equipment to explore the sea.

The researchers used sonar technology to provide imagery of the seabed and then employed remotely operated vehicles, the Culture Ministry and the AURORA Trust said.

The oldest of the ships has a cargo of wine amphorae from southern Italy, some stacked in their original position, AURORA said. Another one was carrying moratoria, large bowls used to grind grains. Another was loaded with African amphorae carrying garum, a fish sauce that was a delicacy in ancient Rome. The largest wreck measures more than 65 feet.

A handful of objects were taken out to be studied and will be put on display in Ventotene.





Approved Lake Dives 2009



Saturday June 13th 9:00 am Hessian Lake

Saturday August 8th 9:00 am Hessian Lake

Sunday Sept. 13th 10:00 am Hessian Lake

Saturday Sept. 26th 10:00 am Hessian Lake

Sunday Oct. 11th 10:00 am Hessian Lake

Saturday Oct. 24th 10:00 am Hessian Lake

AP WORLD NEWS

Thai Divers Seek Access to WWII Submarine

By DANIEL LOVERING
Associated Press Writer

Divers in Thailand have sought U.S. approval to explore the purported wreck of an American World War II submarine, but a U.S. official said Saturday that the vessel is a war grave that must remain undisturbed.

The wreck, thought to be of the USS Lagarto, was discovered in May by divers now trying to obtain Pentagon permission to film and conduct research on the Balao class submarine, Jamie MacLeod, a 43 year-old professional shipwreck diver from Chichester, England, told The Associated Press on Saturday.

Eighty-six sailors perished when the Lagarto sank in May 1945 - reportedly after being hit by mines laid by an enemy Japanese ship about 115 miles off the eastern coast of Songkhla province in the Gulf of Thailand.

MacLeod, who is based on the Thai resort island of Tao, says he is virtually certain the wreck is that of the Lagarto, but that he was waiting for U.S. military permission before further exploring the 311 foot, 9 -inch boat.

"It's a war grave. It belongs to the military," said MacLeod, who wants to film the vessel for a documentary. "We've known this was in the Gulf since the end of World War II."

But a U.S. Embassy spokeswoman said the divers would never get permission to study the sub because it belongs to the U.S. Navy and "is a final resting place for the people who went down with it, and it is not to be disturbed."

She spoke on condition of anonymity, a routine request for U.S. officials at the Embassy in Bangkok. The spokeswoman said she had discussed the submarine with Defense Department officials in recent days.

Divers spent weeks earlier this year scouring Thai waters for the boat, which sits upright on the ocean floor at a depth of about 197 feet, according to MacLeod. "You can see the whole wreck - it's complete," he said.

There are many World War II-era wrecks in the Gulf of Thailand and Indian Ocean, including two British battle cruisers off Malaysia and numerous Japanese vessels that went down in Thai waters. Songkhla province is about 590 miles south of the Thai capital, Bangkok.

<http://www.the-dispatch.com>

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP FEES ARE DUE

Rockland Aquanauts Organization
2009 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

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

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

**EmbroidMe-Nanuet**

Phone: 845-627-7711 Fax: 845-627-7707

E-Mail: nanuet@embroidme.com

Website: www.embroidme-nanuet.com

27 N. Middletown Road — Nanuet, NY 10954



Rockland Aquanauts
Post Office Box 387
New City, NY
10956

August 2009

Diving Vandenberg, Ancient Ship Wrecks, Shark Washes Up, Approved Hessian Lake , EmbroidMe, Dues

****There Will be NO August Meeting ****

Can Anyone Help Us Set Up Meetings?

Please contact info@rocklandaquanauts.org