

AQUANEWS

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On The Road with Max Wreck Diving Off Of the "Medusa" at Deerfield Beach, Florida Max Estroff

This past April, with fellow aquanaut Vinny G., I drove down to southeast Florida with all of our gear to dive with the best instructor we have ever had, Captain Red. The daily plan was to meet at 9AM and to do 2 different wrecks each day. If there was a consensus we would remain, tied into a single wreck.

I got to Florida a few days ahead of Vinny and went diving in Boynton Beach with Captain Leo in the "Deeper". Easy drift diving! A great way to acclimate after not diving since October.

Healthy reefs with lots of critters if you take the time to look. The area reefs offer 10-15 feet of relief on the 40-50 foot inside ledge with a tongue and groove formation on the outside extending down past 90 feet. My average dive time was 50 to 60 minutes with a steel 120. 4 great dives with Captain Leo.

On April 20, I picked Vinny up at the airport and by 12 o'clock we were at a new dive operation, Pompano Dive Center off of Atlantic Avenue and A1A. The boat "Sea Dog Divers" is right next to the shop. A full service dive shop that will custom mix your nitrox. The "Medusa" was having some maintenance issues and we just stumbled upon these people. We wanted to go diving

Again, two more easy drift dives and for Vinny, his first ever. The reef in this area does not offer as much relief on the inside ledge but has the same outside tongue and groove formations. Basic aquarium dives with all the usual suspects, only not that many of them.

They say the Lionfish are eating everything but I didn't see any. "Sea Dog Divers" is a nice boat. They left us alone without lecturing us. Average depth about 60 feet on both dives. I intend to come back to these very nice people.

We show up at the marina where the "Medusa" is docked. First thing that greets us is no easy access. The dock is actually part of a boatyard and dry dock facility. They are not keen to allow us in to unload. We park outside and have to haul our gear, part by part along a narrow walkway where one wrong step puts you into the water, 6 feet below.

We meet the other divers, 3 Jersey boys, all experienced. Two of them own a dive shop and had come to take their extended range dives for that course. One of these had a full prosthetic leg. He needed help getting in and out of the water and seemed very capable. One has to admire his dedication and determination to achieve that level of certification.

Captain Red has had some problems with his eyes and is no longer diving and because he can no longer see that well he had a young Texan to pilot the boat. He is a very pleasant affable young man but without enough experience to run the "Medusa", a small live aboard, with its own compressor. Maintenance issues resolved and we left around noon.

(Continued on page 2)

AQUANEWS

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The first day we did the "Sea Empress" 70 feet to the bottom. This is a barge with concrete tubes inside and outside in the sand. Lots of sea life inside and around it. The second dive was also on this wreck with a short excursion over to the "United Caribbean". Off the south side of the "Sea Empress" is a rock jetty and at the end of that is the "United Caribbean". This wreck is broken into 2 sections. A "Goliath Grouper" left as we approached the bow section. Inside was a spotted Moray eel using the coiled up anchor chain as a home.

The next day we waited for the 6 foot Helium tank to arrive. Somehow it rolled off the dock into the murky water below. Captain Red can't get it. Captain Texas won't get it. The two mates in training have never done it. So in goes one of the extended range divers, after all, he is one of the two that needs it. Again we leave after 1 PM.

The day's first dive was on the "Hydro-Atlantic". One of the mates jumped in and set the hook in the bow section. They used a 150 foot line so it was a long way down to the deck at 137 feet. The amount of ambient light at this depth was amazing. I spent 13 minutes at this level looking around. The only fish I saw were some Bar Jacks. What I really noticed was that the ship had a carpet of growth and on it with many sea fans. Back to the up line for a long ascent. My air computer, having gone into deco, cleared on the way up the line. The dive itself was on air and at 45 feet I switched to my pony bottle with a 50% mix. I used this mix for the next 14 minutes until surfacing. The boat was right there to pick us up after letting go of the line. Total dive was 36 minutes.

The next dive was over two hours later on the "Ancient Mariner", at 65 feet with 32% in my tank. The wreck was filled with fish, "Golden Sweepers" and "Spanish and Blue Striped Grunts". Outside the wreck were all sorts of Parrots and other tropicals. I switched to my pony bottle at 45 feet and used it for 8 minutes till I surfaced. The boat was right there.

Next day we had to wait for a new set of marine batteries to arrive. These are not what you put into your car. They are about 3 foot long, 1 foot wide, 1 foot deep, 2 of them and they need to be installed. Again we leave after 1PM. The first wreck is the "RSVF #1" resting at 111 feet. Using a 35% mix, I spent 20 minutes on the wreck. I went inside and outside and all around. There were lots of different tropicals and some "Atlantic Spadefish". Total time 33 minutes. On surfacing, the boat was right there.

Second dive was on the "Rodeo" at 122 feet using a 32% mix. It's a short wreck with multiple levels with lots of coral attached to it. I spent 20 minutes on this wreck and at 45 feet I switched to 50%. Total time was 45 minutes. When we surfaced the boat was right there.

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.

Next day we arrive and the compressor is not working. Finally after some more Band-Aids, we leave after 1 PM. Again we go to the "Hydro-Atlantic". Up to now the dive team has consisted of Vinny, Tom and I. Three Peas in a Pod, every dive, no issues, we recognize each other's hand signals, in together, out together. This day there are 3 foot seas, wind is blowing and there is a surface current by the drift of the ball. Vinny chooses not to do the dive. The hook is set into the stern this time. The plan is for Tom and I to jump in, followed by the two extended range divers. When their dive is over, they will pull the hook and do their time on the line while drifting.

Down the 150 foot line to the stern deck at 143 feet and spent 13 minutes there. I looked around this small deck covered in sea fans. I looked over the side but there was nothing to see, just a few fish. Just as on all of these dives visibility was around 50 feet. The water temperature was a constant 77 degrees throughout the water column. We never saw the other 2 divers. This was an air dive. My computer went into deco, again it cleared on the way up. At 45 feet, I switched to a 40% mix and stayed on this for 12 minutes until I reached the surface. We never saw the others. The current going down and up the line was minimal. However, the surface current was brutal. When we reached the surface the boat was not there. We held onto the lead line from the anchor ball. I was getting beat up trying to hold on and soon became exhausted. I was having trouble, my air gauges were both soon on empty and where was the boat? I could not hold on any longer and had to let go. Tom to his credit was not in any distress and let go to stay with me. Since I was preoccupied with my immediate situation, what did not come to mind was to tie myself to the lead line! Captain Red was not there screaming at me telling me what to.

Boats were passing by, ignoring our signals for help. Finally a small open boat stops and at least offers us a platform to hold onto. I am now too exhausted even for that.

Finally, after about 30 minutes, our boat arrives. I can't help myself and need assistance to get up the ladder and onto the deck. They get my gear off and put me on 100% O2.

I stayed on this until we docked.

So this is what happened according to Vinny. Captain Texas did not drop the other team up stream of the ball but to the side. Needless to say, they missed it.

As mentioned before the guy with the prosthetic leg needs assistance getting in and out of the water. This equates with time. The time it took for them to get ready after us. The time it took to place the boat into position. The time it took to recover them in the rough conditions of 3 foot seas, wind and strong surface current was time for us to do a 29 minute dive and for me to get brutalized for another 30 minutes.

I am totally convinced that this never could or would have happened if Captain Red had his sight. With Vinny yelling "lets pick up the divers (Tom & Me) versus Captain Texas and the mates in training trying to pick up two guys with full tanks. Red was indecisive, another strike against the "Medusa" this one just as fatal as the storm that wrecked her namesake. Without his eyes to see, the reasons for diving with him are gone.

Except for the pickup problem this was one of the finest dives I have been on. The "Hydro-Atlantic" is upright and intact, covered in growth. It's simply beautiful.

I dove my plan but there is always the unexpected. This was the last dive of this trip. In the morning I was fine.

I did 13 dives in 8 days.

NCIS mulls probe into vandalism of sunken U.S. warship off Okinawa

By TRAVIS J. TRITTEN

Stars and Stripes

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — Sometime in the past three months, a group of unknown scuba divers drifted 135 feet down into the deep blue waters here.

Their destination was the ghostly wreck of the USS Emmons, a World War II destroyer battered by kamikaze planes and scuttled by the U.S. military in 1945.

The divers slipped inside the Emmons, pried loose an engraved metal plate, and disappeared again into the blue.

The looting of the Emmons builder's plaque — a plate showing construction and commission dates — has drawn the attention of the Naval Criminal Investigative Service and riled former crew members.

NCIS was considering a criminal investigation of the alleged vandalism on Wednesday, NCIS spokesman Ed Buice said.

A law passed in 2004 asserts all such wrecks around the world remain sovereign U.S. territory, meaning looting and vandalism is a crime punishable under U.S. law.

If NCIS picks up the case, it could be the first investigation launched under the new law, according to Buice.

"I think somebody stole it for a souvenir," said Chuck DeCesari, an Okinawa dive company owner who discovered the missing plaque. "It is valuable to a collector as a piece of history."

DeCesari said he made the discovery recently while shooting video of the wreck for the ship's veterans group, the USS Emmons Association, and estimates the plaque was stolen within the past three months. Veterans who served on the Emmons were "disgusted" by news of the vandalism, DeCesari said.

"It is the only warship that I know of that you can dive [in Okinawa]," DeCesari said. "You go down to dive on the Emmons and you can see the battle, you can see where kamikazes hit."

The Emmons was patrolling northern Okinawa with another minesweeping destroyer, the USS Rodman, in April 1945 when it locked into a vicious battle with Japanese kamikazes, according to a history compiled by the USS Emmons Association.

The destroyers and planes from nearby U.S. aircraft carriers shot down at least 50 Japanese planes during the fight. But the Emmons took direct hits from five of the suicide bombers.

The crippled Emmons drifted for a day before the Navy decided to sink it.

The destroyer was lost on the ocean floor for 56 years before it was rediscovered by U.S. divers in 2001. Since its rediscovery, the ship has fared better than war wrecks near Guam or the Philippines that have been stripped and looted, DeCesari said.

Still, a porthole and some helmets have also disappeared over the past few years, probably taken by looters, he said.

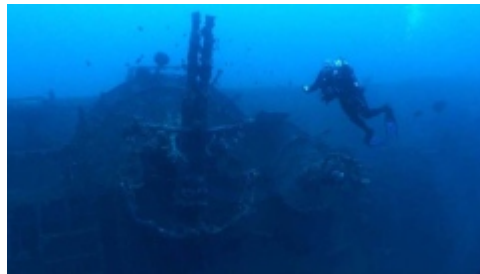
(Continued on page 5)

The plaque looting required a diver to enter the ship while diving in deep water, which can be dangerous, and “had to be somebody who had a little confidence in the water,” DeCesari said. The person who took the plaque can still turn over the artifact to any military dive shops on the island and it will be returned to the USS Emmons Association, DeCesari said.



The builder's plaque, which showed the USS Emmons was commissioned in 1941, was recently looted from the World War II shipwreck off Okinawa, according to a local dive captain.

Kurt Reese/Special to Stars and Stripes



A diver swims over the USS Emmons shipwreck off the coast of Okinawa in September.

Kurt Reese/Special to Stars and Stripes

Sea urchin could lead to knives that never need sharpening Telegraph.co.uk

A sea urchin with teeth that can eat through stone could one day lead to knives which never need sharpening.

The creatures have self-honing teeth which allow them to chomp through stone, carving out hideaways on rocky shores.

Scientists have now learned how the urchins keep their teeth razor-sharp and believe that technology based on the same principle could create everlasting bladed tools.

Analyzing the teeth of the California purple sea urchin, the scientists found a complex structure of layered calcite crystals held together by super-hard natural cement.

Between the crystals are layers of weaker organic material. As each hard layer becomes blunt it breaks off, exposing a fresh crystalline surface beneath. In this way, the sea urchin's teeth stay sharp.

Professor Pupa Gilbert, who led the US team from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, said: "The organic layers are the weak links in the chain. There are breaking points at predetermined locations built into the teeth.



Divers Say They've Found 1811 Wreck of Perry Ship

Hugh Collins, AOL News

Amateur divers say they've found the remains of the USS Revenge, a vessel commanded by legendary naval officer Oliver Hazard Perry that sank off the coast of Rhode Island 200 years ago.

"Our eyes were bulging out of our heads," diver Craig Harger told AOL News in an interview today, describing the discovery. "We were just flabbergasted."

The Revenge went down after striking a reef in heavy fog on Jan. 8, 1811. Perry became famous for his later role in an 1813 naval battle with the British on Lake Erie and for saying, "We have met the enemy and they are ours."

The sinking of the Revenge changed the course of U.S. history, Harger said, since it resulted in Perry being taken from the Atlantic and sent to the Great Lakes.

"He wrecked the Revenge, was commissioned to the Great Lakes and won that battle," Harger told AOL News. "If a lesser man had been there, who knows what would've happened?"

Harger, with fellow divers Charles Buffum and Mike Fournier, began looking for the wreckage more than five years ago. Buffum had been fascinated by the story of the Revenge ever since his mother gave him a book called "Shipwrecks on the Shores of Westerly."

"The account of Oliver Hazard Perry's wreck said the ship jettisoned eight cannons," Harger told AOL News. "We said, 'Let's go take a look.'"

On their third dive in August 2005, they found a cannon. They kept their discovery secret as they continued to explore the area, [The Associated Press](#) reported. Since then, the men have found five more 42-inch-long cannons, along with an anchor, canister shot and other metal objects.

They say they're confident that these artifacts are from the right period and match the official history of the sinking of the Revenge.

The find "fits the account of what happens," Harger told AOL News. "There are just too many things that fit."



Stopping the Problem: Do Ear Plugs Work Underwater

The question of divers using vented ear plugs to ease equalization and keep water out of their ears is often raised on divers' online message boards. These soft polymer plugs form a tight seal and have a very small hole, or vent, running through them to allow for equalization of the ear. Many responders indicate that the plugs reduce the frequency of external ear canal infections and ease clearing of the ears.

Doc's Proplugs (www.proplugs.com) is the primary purveyor of vented ear plugs. It claims that when fitted properly, the plugs reduce "ear squeeze caused by inability to equalize between the outer and middle ear," and help "prevent outer ear and inner ear infection, vertigo and thermal reaction." Its Web site includes a list of undated and unverifiable testimonials.

Only minimal medical research has been conducted on these ear plugs. A self-published, undated piece by the Sardinian Institute of Underwater and Hyperbaric Medicine evaluated two professional divers with histories of perforated eardrums "who in the summer made constantly 3 dives per day." After observing one diver for 17 months and the other for three months, no problems with inflammation of the middle ear were noted. Another study found that in patients involved in various watersports, the use of earplugs substantially reduced surfer's ear/exostosis (benign bony growth in the external ear canal caused by exposure to cold, wet and windy conditions).

If a vented ear plug did lessen the flow of water into the external auditory canal, the expectation is that outer ear infections (swimmer's ear) would be reduced. As for preventing inner ear infections, this isn't believable. Water does not enter the middle ear space from the outer ear unless the eardrum is ruptured. And someone with a perforated eardrum should not be diving anyway. Decreased water flow also would be expected to reduce temperature-related abnormalities, such as vertigo and surfer's ear.

The claim of easing equalization is difficult to support, as there is no reasonable mechanism to explain how this might occur. Doc's Proplugs' Web site states, "Due to surface tension, the vented plug also reduces abrupt pressure changes from reaching the sensitive eardrum which contributes to easier equalization." I find this assertion neither comprehensible nor compelling.

I was unable to find any published reports of harm to the ear from such plugs. Provided the vent in the plug remains unobstructed, these devices appear to pose little or no danger to the ear. However, if a vent should become clogged, especially upon descent, equalization could become impeded and the eardrum damaged. Using such plugs to protect a ruptured eardrum may give a diver a false sense of security. He runs the risk of losing the device during a dive, allowing water to enter the middle ear space and resulting in pain, disorienting vertigo and possible infection.

The bottom line? If you're experiencing external ear infections or worried about surfer's ear, vented plugs may be worth the small investment. However, divers with middle-ear congestion or infection are unlikely to benefit from these plugs, and they should refrain from diving until seen by an ear, nose and throat specialist. For those with continuing difficulty in equalizing, experiment with various clearing techniques before resorting to these vented ear plugs stoppers.

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP FEES

Rockland Aquanauts Organization
2011 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. Don't forget we
have all the BBQ lunch's after every Lake Dive.

So please send in your \$42 dues to;

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January 2011

On The Road With Max, NCIS Molls Probe, Stoppering the problem, Wreck Found , 2011 Dues Due

**We are currently looking for a place to have our 2011
Annual Dinner...**

Any suggestions?



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