

# SUB AQUA JOURNAL™

June, 1992 Vol. 2, No. 6

*The Forum for North Atlantic Diving*

\$1.95

## TECHNICAL DIVING

**ARUNDO**

**Captain Janet**

**Huntington  
Harbour**

**TARANTULA**

**New Book**

**MACRO**

**Boat  
Schedules**



# SUB AQUA JOURNAL

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## Knowledge Tempered By Experience

Oh, no. Not TECHNICAL DIVING again! Is that all you talk about at the Journal? One month it's oxygen, another month it's decompression sickness, and now you're going to define technical diving?

No, we're not going to define it, because frankly it is still being defined. What we are suggesting is that a good pair of speakers does not an audio engineer make. You can't become a proficient, conscientious, technical (whatever that means) diver overnight. The terminology is too new for recreational divers. We need to learn more.

The Journal strives to seek out the information that is pertinent to becoming safer divers. Knowledge is power. With knowledge you possess the power to go or not go on a particular dive. Only you can decide.

We are at a turning point in recreational diving, a decisive moment. We must go forward — minds open — to embrace a technology as revolutionary as the PC. A technological evolution decades old, will we evolve with it?

Advanced dives have always been there, but because of the closed minds of many people, divers have done it privately. These divers are ready to share their knowledge; it would be remiss of our magazine not to share it with you.

In this issue of the Journal, Tom Baker pays tribute to a Dutch freighter that was torpedoed during a forgotten wartime. His words transform this victim into wonder, bringing happiness to divers who remembered. Barb Lander spends some time with Captain Janet Bieser, and finds out some interesting things about this resourceful woman.

Mackerel? No, that's MACRO. Pete Nawrocky takes a close look at how you can have fun with your camera. The fine art of "technical" (patience) photography made simple. Danny and Rick are fogged in but manage to bring home a boat load. This time they use a row boat. Kirby shakes the sand out of his gear leaving the beach for his best dive on the *Tarantula*.

Adventure and knowledge tempered by experience is our focus.



Joel D. Silverstein, Editor

# The *Arundo*, In Memoriam

by Tom Baker

Mere months after the 50th anniversary memorial at Pearl Harbor, another passes almost unnoticed: the 50th anniversary of *Operation Drumbeat*, the devastating boat campaign against shipping along America's east coast. Notwithstanding its anonymity, *Operation Drumbeat* was militarily far more significant than the debacle at Pearl Harbor, threatening, as General George C. Marshall observed, "our entire war effort."

The *Arundo* went down in 130 feet of water with the loss of six crewmen.

Fifty years later, the seas are calm and the sun has broken through the morning fog as Captain Kevin Brennan closes on the wreck site. As our crew ties in, we realize we are looking down into very clear water. This sets off a chain reaction of divers rushing to hit the water.

We are tied in near the bow. My partner Roy Matthews and I decide to

the water. A whale has decided to visit. We think it's a pilot whale, but can't be sure. The whale lazily makes its way astern, blowing and diving. I think, if only we'd been in the water, camera in hand, what a shot, a whale over a shipwreck. But, as all underwater photographers know, the sea bestows its gifts in moderation.

We make our second dive with Tom Fagen, who shows us some interesting



Courtesy of The Mariners Museum, Newport News, Virginia. Wreck Valley Collection.

Despite the near-victory of Germany in the U-boat Battle of the Atlantic, and countless spectacular displays of burning ships just offshore, witnessed by thousands of coastal residents from New Jersey to Florida, the war on shipping seems to have passed from our collective memory. Only a small, bizarre group of East Coast wreck divers seems to remember what happened in that brief time when World War II was fought on our home territory.

Today, April 28th, the dive vessel *Sea Lion* pulls out of the harbor at Brielle, New Jersey, en route to the final resting place of the Dutch freighter *Arundo*, torpedoed exactly fifty years ago by the *U-136*. The *Arundo* was an armed merchantman carrying trucks, jeeps, two steam locomotives, and other war materials to Alexandria, Egypt, to aid in the desert war.

Travelling alone, she was an easy mark. Although the torpedo wake was spotted, it was too late for evasive action.

hunt for artifacts in that area on the first dive. On our descent our expectations of clear water are fulfilled. The visibility is so good we can see the entire forward section, slumping broken-backed over the flat sand plain.

We poke among broken plates and swim through a short tunnel among the wreckage. Tires from the jeeps and trucks are piled everywhere, their thick treads still ready for service on desert sands. Roy recovers a bottle, no doubt from the crates of Canadian beer that were also on board. I reach in for another and come away with only the neck! The visibility is amazing, and I decide to return on our second dive with my camera gear.

Our lunch during the surface interval, eaten under a warm sun and mild breeze, is interrupted by the sudden "PUFF!" off to port. A vapory mushroom is hanging in the air ten yards off our railing. As we watch, a broad, bronze back, complete with scythe-like dorsal fin, rises out of

wreckage he discovered just aft of the anchors. Roy digs for souvenirs while I shoot a roll of film. Naturally, the visibility has dropped during the interval. At the end of the dive, Roy sends up a lift bag for some early-season practice. Hanging on the line, we spot a brown layer of plankton flowing in, further reducing the visibility. Water temperature is a still-chilly 43 degrees, and we are glad when the long hang comes to an end.

Back on board, we find others have also retrieved beer bottles, clearly stamped, "Made in Canada" on the bottom. No other artifacts have come up, but no one is disappointed. It's been a spectacular day on a fascinating wreck.

On the *Sea Lion's* return to port, I find myself worrying that we hadn't placed a wreath over the wreck site. In contrast to the exhaustive Pearl Harbor ceremonies, our commemoration seems meager and incomplete. And yet, perhaps it is enough that on this day someone came out, visited, and remembered.



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## EVENTS CALENDAR

### JUNE

- 2 Tom Baker - TRUK LAGOON  
Rarely explored wrecks of Truk Lagoon. A visual experience.

#### BROADWAY DIVERS

Club Meeting 8 PM  
1 South Central Avenue  
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- 2 Pete Nawrocky - Multimedia  
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Rockland Aquanauts 8:30 PM  
Rockland Library  
Contact: 718/347-2090

- 16 Pete Nawrocky - Multimedia  
INSHORE CRITTERS  
OFFSHORE BEASTIES

UNDERWATER WORLD 8:00 PM  
WANTAUGH  
Contact: 718/347-2090

- 25 DORIA BOUND  
The season's first *Andrea Doria* expedition sets sail at 7:00 PM. See your friends off, and wish them well.

Captree Boat Basin. R/V Wahoo

### JULY

- 5 AQUA—WOMAN 1992  
The thirteenth annual AQUA—WOMAN dive is planned for a mystery wreck. To foster female diving comradere and fun, only women are invited.  
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516 / 798-1726, 7 - 9 PM  
for information and reservations.

### HAVE AN EVENT YOU WANT TO ANNOUNCE?

Send typewritten copy to the **Journal** by the 1st of the month prior to your event. Please include a phone number and contact person.

### This Month's Cover

Captain George Quirk prepares to descend on the *Ayuruoca (Oil Wreck)* resting 170 feet below the surface.

Photograph by Barb Lander.  
Equipment used: Canon EOS 10s,  
300mm 2.8L Ultrasonic lens on  
Kodak Ektar film.

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# TECHNICAL DIVING

## IT DOESN'T COME WITH TWO BOX TOPS

by Joel Silverstein

**tech•nique** (tek-nek) n. [Fr. <technique, technical < Gk, *Teknikos*.] 1. The systematic procedure by which a complex or scientific task is accomplished. 2. also. The degree of skill or command of fundamentals exhibited in a performance.

*The degree of skill or command of fundamentals.* Do these skills include the development of mask clearing so it becomes second nature? Or the practice of the balance of buoyancy, breathing and movement? Is technical diving the art of buying a lot of stuff (albeit necessary) and taking on advanced dives too soon?

What, then, is *technical diving*? Interestingly enough, none of the training agencies have defined it, yet. It is the mastery of skills, procedures and mental attitude necessary to enable an individual to dive to great depths for times well in excess of recreational standards.

Yet technical diving is not new. Long, deep dives have been done for the past thirty years, you just didn't hear about them often. In 1990 Michael Menduno began publishing a magazine called *AquaCorps*. This magazine focuses on the skills and information necessary to complete long or deep exploratory dives. Thus was born a name for deep water decompression diving. A community of divers once as private as the CIA were being asked their opinions — rather than being ridiculed for their adventures.

Technical dives include the exploration of intricate cave systems that often take many hours. The manned visits to deep wrecks like the *Wilkes Barre*, *Andrea Doria* (250 fsw range) and the *Osfrieland* (380 fsw); dives involving short bottom times and extremely long decompression requirements.

Many technical dives require special gas mixes (tri-mix heliox, nitrox and oxygen) for breathing on the way down, at depth and on the way back up. Done by

a handful of highly skilled divers with many years and hundreds if not thousands of dives under their hoods, technical diving has earned its place. What we can learn from these men and women is now readily available. The operative word is *learn*.

Do you know how much air you use when you dive? How much you will need for your hang time? Do you know how

continued on next page



Barb Lander

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many minutes you can breathe from 100 psi at fifteen feet? Exactly where is your third light clipped? What about getting your knife out of its sheath, and do you have another one or two? Have you practiced maintaining neutral buoyancy at 15 feet for 60 minutes? How does your body react to the cold? Are you breathing the right mix for the dive you're doing? These are questions you should be asking yourself as you train and hone your techniques.

Technical diving has become the buzz word of the 90's. The glamour and adventure of exploration where few go is exciting. Yet with all the talk about technical diving I have a fear. The fear is that many see technical diving as the art of buying the latest gear and using computers and alternate breathing gasses as the panacea for experience.

Brett Gilliam, author of *DEEP DIVING*, expressed "the problem that we are beginning to see in technical diving is that divers are becoming too equipment extensive and as a result equipment dependant. That combined with the lack of proper education and specific training leads to problems. Even with proper education you need the actual in-water experience."

Tom Mount, thirty-three year veteran cave diver and educator in mixed gas scuba diving, feels that any dive below 100 feet should be treated as a "technical dive." Divers shouldn't venture off into depths below 130 feet until they have at least 100 dives logged at the 100 - 130 fsw range, and then only under supervision. Tom also feels that the disciplines you can get in a full cave course will provide you with a better attitude while diving. Technical diving is not only skill performance but good personal attitude.

Captain Steve Bielenda, one of the pioneers of deep water recreational diving, has a knapsack (experience) theory. It goes something like this: each time you go diving you put another piece of knowledge in your knapsack. As the years go on and the knapsack gets filled and updated, you use that knowledge when it's needed. "Many divers today don't have the knapsack to do what they are doing."

In discussions with Dr. Bill Hamilton, one of the nations leading diving physiologists, he expressed that it doesn't matter that you can get the equipment, the gas mixes and even the tables to do the dive. Practice and good planning come first.

### TECHNICAL DIVE GEAR

Because technical diving involves long exposures, sufficient quantities of breathing medium are required. As a result, a diver will carry: double tanks (160 - 240 cu) with bottom mix, one stage bottle (30 - 80 cu) with ascent mix, one stage bottle (30 - 80 cu) with oxygen. In addition to tanks: three

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# Captain Janet Bieser

by Barb Lander

Seventeen year-old Janet Bieser started hanging around the *R/V Wahoo* not long after she started diving. "I'd do anything for nothing. Sanding, scraping, cleaning the boat, the terrible stuff," she smiled. When it was time to pick crew, Captain Steve Bielenda remembered.

"I started as a deck-hand, I was the only mate," she explained. Janet would throw the hook, tie in, help the passengers get ready to dive, pull the hook, drive the boat back, and clean the boat at the end of the day. This Captain is serious when she says, "I paid my dues."

Nearly seventeen years later, Janet is a full-time Captain, year-round. When she is not running the *Wahoo* she captains a cod-fishing boat. The locals have dubbed her "Captain Cod."

But, diving will always be Janet's first love. When we asked her, as a Captain, to pick just one wreck to dive, her pragmatic streak showed. "I'd have to say the *San Diego*, it's our bread & butter." We're not interested in bread & butter, we want the champagne answer! Like what about the *Doria*?

Despite Janet's list of accomplishments on the *Andrea Doria* — second woman to dive the wreck, youngest female diver, first woman to tie in, half of the first female team — she quickly eliminates it as her favorite. "It's too deep."

The *Andrea Doria* is, however, the setting for one of her favorite dive stories. "Another comedy that was," she begins. Janet and first team-member Sally Wahrman wanted first class china. The plan was for her to go all the way to the china area while Sally waited at the end of the corridor using her light to guide Janet back out. The interior visibility was excellent so Janet left the partially deployed line and reel with her partner.

Visibility went to zero when she grabbed the first dish so Janet was thankful for the glow of Sally's light. Arms



full of dishes (she had forgotten a bag), she found Sally completely cocooned in the line, unable to move a fin and hanging by a single strand, yet faithfully directing her light down the corridor.

Priorities are priorities; Janet secured the china outside then returned to cut Sally free.

Pragmatism aside, Janet chose the *Oregon* as her personal favorite wreck. The Cunard luxury liner sank in 1886 as a result of a mysterious collision. "Imagine the *QE II* underwater. The *Oregon* had the best of everything," she enthuses.

Janet has had her share of adventures on the *Oregon* too. She vividly remembers the day the anchorline pulled out of the wreck. Without an upline, and with hang time to do, she recalled the other divers saying that someone had lost an anchorline on the wreck's bow.

Janet found the abandoned line and followed it to the anchor end. She sent the anchor up on her lift bag, fastening the loose end of the line to the wreck with a small piece of scavenged sisal. Most of us would have been happy just getting safely to the surface; not Captain Janet Bieser. She retrieved the anchor and line too!

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# TECHNICAL DIVING

continued from page 6

to four high quality regulators, pressure gauges and timepieces or computers.

Thermal protection is crucial, primarily for the long hang times. Dry suits with appropriate undergarments, and in some cases (when using tri-mix or heliox), a separate argon gas inflation system is used for extra warmth.

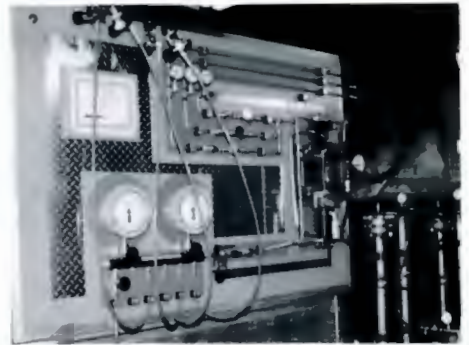
Other basic gear includes: a spare mask, a lift bag inflator hose, double back mounted bc's, line reels and up lines, three lights, plus tools and maybe a still or video camera.

Does the amount of gear for technical dives lead to a point of diminishing return? Does the dependency for all this gear spill over to dives that don't warrant it? When the equipment doesn't match the dive scenario properly, the overburden of equipment will lead to *task loading*. Not only will it affect mental attitude but the sheer weight and mass of the gear places higher respiratory demands on the diver. "You need more gas to breathe, to carry the gas you need to breathe to move around. Balance the equipment for what you want to do," says Brett Gilliam. Be wary of this vicious cycle.

For an air or nitrox diver in the 0 to 130 fsw range, normal gear (single with pony or doubles) will probably be sufficient. Venture below 130 fsw using custom nitrox blends and additional tanks may be necessary for gas supply. Enter the tri-mix arena for those deep (190 fsw plus) dives, and three to five tanks will be necessary for the gas switches. You have now become gear dependant.

### GAS MIXES

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- Heliox — 300 to 600 fsw



Mixing panel at the Gas Station in Gloucester, NJ.

### TRAINING and EDUCATION

Books and periodicals can provide you with information and questions to ask. Keep in mind that practice of this information without qualified supervision is like doing brain surgery on yourself — it won't work.

The certification agencies have done a great job in promoting safe scuba diving for the occasional diver but a problem exists in the misnomers used for continuing education programs. Certifications as an Advanced Diver, Deep Diver, Wreck Diver, Rescue Diver, etc. send the wrong message. One of experience.

These programs are merely an overview, an introduction, a taste, a tease and should not be confused with extensive training. Each course gives the foundation for skills *you* must master by diving, often. Darryl Steinhauer, a North Atlantic instructor, always says, "The only practice for diving is diving."





Once you master these fundamental courses, move on to more specific education. There are many centers around the country that provide high-tech training. Be prepared for four things.

1. **CASH:** Technical diving is expensive, both for the education and the gear.
2. **TIME COMMITMENT:** Each program takes a few days plus travel and after course dive time.
3. **EMOTIONS:** Technical diving takes an emotional commitment of maturity and patience.
4. **RISK:** Technical diving carries risk, is it worth it for you?

Hank Garvin sums it up. "I started diving in 1962 [but] it wasn't until 1985 that I dove the *Andrea Doria*. It wasn't time for me until then, I had other responsibilities in my life."



#### THE COMFORT ZONE

The education you need to become comfortable and prepared for technical diving should include:

- Gear selection and rigging.
- Physics and physiology.
- Complete nitrox course.
- Buoyancy proficiency.
- Shallow water (60 - 130 fsw) practice runs.
- Full Cave certification course.
- Field Neurological training.
- Accident and Oxygen Administration training.

Each training center has its forte. Take the time to interview your trainer, express your goals and expectations. Ask about required gear, recommended gear and forbidden gear. Ask to see a copy of their curriculum and the texts you will be using, ask for some student's names to talk too. Although price is important, don't take second rate training for the sake of saving a few dollars, the ultimate cost could be dear.



Is technical diving for you? Maybe. Whatever route you take keep in mind that there is no substitute for experience. Technical diving cannot be bought through a specialty certification. You have to train up (or down) to it, progressively, through many dives and with the accumulation of skills and experiences that only time, practice, patience and commitment can bring.



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WRECK VALLEY

# Huntington Harbour

by Daniel Berg

As we motored our way across Huntington Bay in the small row boat, all we could see was the fog. All we were able to think about was the virgin shipwreck below loaded with artifacts. At 6:30 AM, I arrived at my friend Rick Schwarz's house. Earlier that week, when he invited me to dive an unknown wreck he'd located a few weeks before, we planned on using my 12-foot skiff. However, as I found out that morning, it did not fit into my van.

Rick and I gazed down the 100-foot bluff in his backyard and contemplated carrying his little row boat up the 125 steps from the beach. It didn't look too heavy, until we were half-way up the stairs. He had conveniently taken the bow while I was straining with the heavier stern end.

By 8:00 AM we had the boat in the water, our dive gear loaded and dry suits on. The morning fog was getting thicker and we could only see about 50 feet in front of us. The little four horsepower outboard chugged our boat along and by using a dive compass we navigated across the bay. Rick was able to pick out land bearings and before long we were anchored over the 80-foot long Oyster boat wreck.

We jumped in at last but found the vessel had been stripped clean before being abandoned and sunk at its mooring. Rick and I swam around it a few times then surfaced, a little bored and very disappointed, to say the least. We had high hopes that this wreck would be loaded with artifacts just waiting to be found. So the next question was what to do now.

I suggested heading back for breakfast but Rick had another idea. He told me about a cabin cruiser wreck he had seen a few weeks ago sticking out of the water only a mile south. We didn't know what to expect but we got underway.

The fog was lifting and the day was turning out to be beautiful. Our only concern was the little row boat carrying so much weight with our tanks and dive gear, that the gunnel was a mere four inches above the water line.

Finally, I spotted the wreckage and noticed not one but two wrecks sticking above the water. From our boat we could see two portholes three feet below us as we passed over the first wreck. Rick and I geared up and went to work. I quickly popped off the first two portholes with a crow bar while Rick worked on the vessel's wooden helm.



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After recovering a few more items, I swam over to the second wreck and found two larger rectangular portholes. With chisel, and crow bar, I started working. After about two minutes I punctured a hole in the foot of my dry suit. Freezing water poured in almost immediately numbing my toes. It was time for me to get out, but no problem, Rick would be able to recover the portholes.

By the time I climbed back into the boat, Rick's ever-growing pile of artifacts included the helm, a deck hatch, several portholes and



Rick with the morning's catch.

an anchor. We moved our boat over to wreck #2 so he could get the portholes. About fifteen minutes later he came up exhausted, but instead of artifacts Rick handed me his tools. He told me if I wanted portholes that bad I'd have to get them myself. No problem. My foot was warm again and the portholes were only held on by twelve wood screws.

From past experience I knew these portholes usually require only a few minutes of work. Back down I went but quickly found how frustrating the stubborn portholes were. No matter how much I pulled and pried they would not budge. Finally, after almost 20 minutes of hard work one came free. I surfaced, handed it to Rick and descended to work on the second.

A few minutes later Rick appeared by my side pulling me out of the cabin. When we surfaced he told me the porthole was aluminum, and he couldn't see me doing all that work for nothing. If only I hadn't gotten caught up in the excitement of the moment, I would have taken the time to check before starting to work. What a waste of time and effort!

We pulled the rip cord and started putting back towards home. The little boat which sat even lower than when we started, overflowed with artifacts. These

weren't historic or from an offshore wreck, but for these two wreck divers out on a foggy morning dive, they were the icing on the cake in an area known as Wreck Valley.

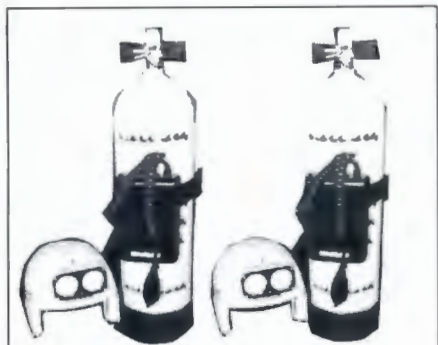
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# UNDERSTANDING MACRO PHOTOGRAPHY

by Pete Nawrocky

Simple, efficient, and fun! These three words best describe Macro (not Mackerel) Photography. This format is the best way to begin [learning] underwater photography as subjects can be found everywhere. Even on the most mundane beach dive or floating midwater. The equipment I prefer consists of a Nikonos camera (models I through V), a small strobe, a 35mm lens and a set of extension tubes.

Extension tubes are metal or plastic tubes that fit between the camera lens and body, with O-rings to prevent any leaks. The tube allows the lens to focus closer than normal; for example, 2.75 inches instead of 2.75 feet. It also changes the width and depth of field. To facilitate composition, a corresponding set of fram-

ers is included for each tube.

The tube and framer sizes are listed as 1:3, 1:2, 1:1 and 2:1 (read 1 to 3, etc.). The ratios are a comparison from actual size, to subjects reproduced size on a 35mm slide. Small tubes use large framers. Therefore, the larger the framer, eg. 1:3, the greater the depth of field, or zone of focus.

For instance, at  $f/22$  a 1:3 tube has a depth of field of approximately 1 1/2 inches, whereas a 1:1 tube's depth of field is approximately 1/2-inch at the same f-stop. The most commonly used tube is the 1:2, it has a depth of field of approximately 1 inch at  $f/22$ . Subjects that fill the framer are easy to find and the ratio of success is very high.

Out-fitting yourself with the proper



strobe is easy. Any strobe works! Personally, I prefer a small unit, such as the Ikelite substrobe M, or the Nikon SB 103. Since you'll be working in small areas and around or under rocks, a compact unit makes for light (pardon the pun) work.

Because high color saturation is desired for macro photos, low ASA films — 25, 50, 64 — are most often used. These are low grain films and will render sharp colorful images. Higher speed films can be used but will produce grainy shots. Because the strobe to subject distance is so close in Macro, "fast" films are unnecessary.

Most of the setup for Macro can be done topside. Load the film, then grease and install the O-rings on the camera, lens, and extension tube. Install the lens into the tube, then install the lens-tube assembly into the camera body, and attach the framer to the tube. You can also attach the strobe to the camera's holding tray. Strobe to framer distance can be measured with a ruler and should be approximately 6 to 8 inches from the center of the frame, assuming that you are using a 1:2 tube.

When determining exposures, remember extension tube lengths are roughly 1 f-stop apart. So the f-stop for ASA 64 film with a 1:2 tube, using an Ikelite substrobe M, is usually  $f/22$ . Similarly, a 1:1 tube would use an exposure of  $f/16$ . Next, set your lens for close focus, 2.75 feet, and off you go.

Now the fun begins. All you have to do is get the subject into the framer and snap the picture. Don't start with difficult

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subjects — such as fish. They tend to move around a lot which can make framing difficult and frustrating. Sea anemones make good models as well as crabs. Avoid touching the animal at all times.

Remember that extension tubes have a very small depth of field. With the lens set at close focus, only 1/3 of the depth of field extends in front of the framer, the other 2/3 extends back toward the lens. It may be necessary to put the framer slightly under the subject in order for it to be properly framed. Choose subjects that fill 60% of the frame.

After your film has been developed, check for proper exposure. Do not expect every shot to come out perfect. Remember your first roll of film is basically a training session in handling a camera underwater. Even though most of the work in setting up your system and exposures for Macro is done on the surface, I still prefer to bracket my shots.

Bracketing is a technique in which the film is shot at your first [exposure] estimation and then under-exposed on the next, and finally over-exposed on the last. [Try this with the same subject and angle for better comparison.] For example, the first exposure would be f/16, the second f/22, then f/11. If you prefer to use the camera's TTL [through the lens] metering, bracketing is still possible. Simply move the ASA knob up one speed after the first exposure, then down one. Try ASA 50 for the first exposure, ASA 25 for the second, ASA 100 for the third, and so on.

Because of the compact size of the whole assembly and the need to find subjects that will fit into the framer, you may find yourself searching around rocks and pilings. Move slowly and keep your eyes open. Plants and animals that you swam past before now become objects of photographic interest. Some of my favorite beach dives took on a whole new meaning once I was able to spend my time in almost no visibly and still come back with photos to share.

A friendly warning to photographer dive buddies: people have been known to spend a whole dive in 10 feet of water staring at one rock, not moving till all their film is shot! And I still don't have a Mackerel photograph.

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## KIRBY'S KORNER

# Good Gun Boat Goodies

by Kirby Kurkomelis

Taking that giant stride into the water was like stepping into heaven, with my right hand on my mask, my left hand waving goodbye. A blue aura covered my vision. My buddy Rich was already waiting on the down line. A final "OK" and we were off. Blue water everywhere. Tiny jellyfish floating in an endless sea. Their bright red and blue tentacles reaching out to capture the ray's of the sun, like sea anemone extending their nematocysts for lost minnows.

My breath was slow and even when we reached 50 fsw. Below us I saw the *USS Tarantula*, her skeletal remains gleaming on a smooth sand bottom. Our anchorline had landed a midships, just behind the boilers. Nearing the wreck my breath grew stronger. I noticed how over the past 74 years her broken hull has sunk into the sand. Most of her ribs are reaching out, some plating still visible, with plenty of places for lobsters to hide. Off in the sand lay a broken dish.

The *USS Tarantula* was in service in the US Navy during WW I. She was a private steam yacht converted to a gunboat, fitted with armor plating and two deck guns, forward and aft. On a cold October morning in 1918, on patrol 22 miles off Jones Beach, NY, the *Tarantula* collided with the *SS Frisia*, a steamship bound for New York, and sunk in 115 fsw.

Today, the *Tarantula* is still known to local boat captains as the *Good Gun Boat*. She had gotten her name before the ship's bell had been recovered by Captain Billy "Bubbles" deMarigny. In fact, digging around the sand near her collapsed hull divers can still find rounds of

ammunition which are similar to clips of bullets found on the *USS San Diego*.

Swimming in and out of her twisted remains were all types of marine life. Next to where Rich was reaching for the broken dish, lay a large hungry eel, no doubt looking for a few fingers to munch on. Everywhere we turned orange and white sponge grew on her frail body while little seabass chased small grunts. Large codfish shared hull plates with ling, while a starfish advanced quickly across a half eaten shell.

We continued along the outside of her ribs marvelling at how low the *Tarantula* was lying. Her mass came up from the sand only about 5 feet, with some debris nearby.

Heading back towards the boilers my bug bag was filling up with artifacts; bullets, a deadeye and lobster! Rich was reaching for a 6-pounder. In the distance, about 50 feet away, there were other divers enjoying themselves. Some taking pictures of a stingray 4 feet long, looking for a diver to offer him a crumb. Where's my camera..?

It was now time to head back to the anchorline. I had plenty of air left for my stops. Out of the corner of my eye, I saw another deadeye half-buried in the sand. No time to bounce down now. Signaling to my partner, he started up the anchor line first as I pulled the hook.

Looking back at the *USS Tarantula*, this dive was the best on her yet. Lot's of life and plenty of goodies. My bug bag was very heavy so I unfurled the lift bag attached to my reel. A puff of air, and up it went, grabbing every jellyfish in its path.

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7 Pinthis  
13 USS Yankee  
14 Fighter Plane  
20 Cathrine Marie  
21 Mars & Endicott  
27 Fighter Plane  
28 Catherine Marie  
**July** 3 USS Bass  
4 U-853  
5 U-853  
11 Fighter Plane  
12 & 17 Cathrine Marie  
18 & 19 Pinthis  
24 Endicott  
25 Mars  
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13 Polling Bros.  
14 Center Island  
20 Pine Island  
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27 G. Steers  
28 David's Island

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**June** 6 Lizzie D  
7 Pipe Barge  
13 Oregon  
14 Iberia  
14 Lizzie D  
20 Stold D'Agall  
21 Pinta/Bald Eagle  
23 Lillian  
27 Linda  
28 Pipe Barge  
30 Baleana

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7 Martin's Misery  
13 Cindy  
14 Gypsy  
15 Capt's Choice  
17 Immaculata  
20 Lizzie D  
20 Moonlite Cruise  
21 Local Wreck  
24 British Corvette  
27 Bald Eagle  
28 Jersey Reef  
**July** 1 Local Lobster  
4 NY Harbor Festival  
5 USN Algal  
8 Mystery Wreck  
11 Pinta  
12 Ed East Schooner  
13 Lizzy D  
14 Overnight 4 wrecks  
15 Nite Dive  
18 British Corvette  
19 Cindy  
22 Ambrose Lightship  
25 Pinta  
26 Big "G" 17 Fathoms  
28 Algal, Stoit, Pinta

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**June** 6 Fran S  
7 USS San Diego  
10 Dry Dock #4  
13 Wolcott  
14 USS San Diego  
17 Dry Dock #5  
20 Hyllon Castle  
21 USS San Diego  
24 Hyllon Castle  
27 Edwin Duke  
28 USS San Diego  
**July** 1 Dry Dock #4  
4 Hyllon Castle  
5 USS San Diego  
8 Dry Dock #5  
11 Tarantula  
12 USS San Diego  
15 Dry Dock #4  
18 Stoit Dagall  
19 USS San Diego  
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7 Sandy Hook  
13 Lizzie D  
14 Robert Snow  
20 RC Mohawk  
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**July** 4 Algal / Pinta  
5 Lizzie D  
11 Pipe Barge  
12 Iberia  
18 USS Turner  
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26 Lizzie D

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10 San Diego  
17 G & D/JIRMA C  
24 Algal  
27 Yankee  
**July** 1 USS San Diego  
4 Iberia  
5 USS San Diego  
8 Arundo  
15 Oregon  
22 Larchmont  
Montauk  
29 USS San Diego

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Babylon  
**June** 6 Fran S  
7 Kenosha

12 FI Reef  
14 Hyllon Castle  
20 USS San Diego  
21 Reggie  
26 Oregon  
27 USS San Diego  
28 Kenosha  
**July** 3 USS San Diego  
4 Jones Reef  
5 Linda  
11 Lizzie D  
12 Oregon  
17 Nite Dive  
19 USS San Diego  
24 USS San Diego  
25 Tarantula  
26 Oregon  
31 Yankee

### **Wahoo\***

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Capt. Janet Bieser  
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Captree

**June** 3 USS San Diego  
6 USS San Diego  
7 Oregon  
8 Hank Keatts  
Three Days  
12 Colmbra  
13 & 14 USS San Diego  
17 USS San Diego  
20 USS San Diego  
21 Oregon Charter  
25 Andrea Doria  
3 Day Expedition  
30 U-853 Block Island  
**July** 1 U-853 Block Island  
2 USS Bass U-853  
3-5 USS Bass U-853  
6-8 Prof. Hank Keatts  
9 Andrea Doria  
3 day Expedition  
15 USS San Diego  
17 Virginia  
18 & 19 USS San Diego  
22 USS San Diego  
24 Texas Tower  
25 USS San Diego  
26 Oregon  
29 USS San Diego

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Artifacts from the bottom of The Pond.



The Chowdhurys stop by for the events of the day. Lou Stamm



Art Haggerty, C.U.R.E. and Stush Doviak, PADI.



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Charles Silverstein and Capt. Steve Bielenda celebrate their birthdays. Charlie turned eight, and spent his birthday at the site of the USN Algal.

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