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The Forum for North Atlantic Diving

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BLUE WATER DIVING

**U-352 • USS TARPON
MELISSA WRECK
USS MONITOR**



LETTERS

COMPUTEK II

BOAT SCHEDULES

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I'M GOING TO CAROLINA

Blue water diving, that was the calling. Tropical conditions with North Atlantic wrecks, possibly a dream comes true. In this issue of the *Journal* we journey south to that wonderful state of North Carolina. Nags Head, Cape Hatteras and Morehead City. This hospitable land is where the Wright Brothers made their first flight, where the *USS Monitor* changed Naval history, and where more recent struggles make it a diver's paradise: the Graveyard of the Atlantic.

The Outer Banks stretch far up the coast like the wings of a sea gull, its head pointing into the wind to battle the storms. The frigid Labrador Straits from the north meet with the warm, blue water of the Gulf Stream to create one of the most powerful crossroads of the shore line. For centuries ships have made their way past these treacherously shifting shoals, some never to survive. An estimated 500 known sinkings lay between Cape Henry, VA and Cape Lookout, NC. Through the storms, currents and fogs they made way.

Our place for shelter, dockage, food and drink was the little community of Cape Hatteras. Here, where all of the 500 year-round residents know one another is like a small New England fishing village with the southern flair for makin' folks feel at home. Simple life with simple pleasures. Each day lived to the fullest for tomorrow the storms may take all.

Hatteras is known for deep water marlin fishing, beautiful beaches and fantastic diving. Oh, I almost forgot, clam chowder with bacon and Bubba's Bar-B-Que ribs — forks and knives not included.

Against this dramatic back drop Danny Berg takes *Wreck Valley* on location in search of sharks on the *USS Tarpon*. This popular wreck site is breeding grounds for sand tiger sharks. Tom Baker and submarine historian Professor Hank Keatts give us two different perspectives on a Nazi U-Boat, the *U-352*.

Photographer and author Rod Farb shares his notes on his most recent expedition to the *USS Monitor*. The controversy around this historic landmark makes us wonder what the government has to hide, and why most of the American diving population may never get to see this wreck.

Barb Lander profiles our host in Hatteras, Captain Art Kirchner; a legend in everyone's mind. She also takes on the interpretation of the NOAA Access Proposal for the *Monitor*, a date to remember.

Melissa and I experienced the storms and sometimes chilly seas of early season diving in the Graveyard. We rummaged through old maps and charts in the Hatteras light house and listened to the wind howl at night.

This issue also premieres a new column called *Open Forum* where the subject of buddies vs. partners is explored. Kirby stays home in New York and hears some strange sounds on a new and tragic shipwreck.

Blue water diving and the spirit of adventure is the focus of this issue.

Joel D. Silverstein, Editor

U-352

A GERMAN EMBARRASSMENT

by Tom Baker

Most of the time, the U-boat won. For over a year following American entry into World War II, German commanders viewed the war against coastal shipping off the eastern seaboard as a "turkey shoot." To historians, *Operation Drumbeat*, as German Admiral Karl Donitz named his submarine offensive, was the biggest defeat suffered by the American Navy in any war.

Much of the blame lies with the incompetence of outmoded naval planning. Only belatedly after hundreds of sinkings, did the U.S. Navy take effective counter measures, such as a coastal blockade and the extension of the convoy system south to Florida. But the response came slowly. For quite some time, Germany waged its campaign without the loss of a single submarine.

When finally the United States sank its first U-boat, the incident was not without irony. For, hardly the result of a concerted effort by destroyers and other anti-submarine vessels, the destruction of the *U-352* came at the hands of an inexperienced [crew] and far from formidable coast guard cutter, *USS Icarus*. The German defeat simply resulted from bad luck and inept battle tactics that must have embarrassed Admiral Donitz.

In the first place, the U-boat commander thought he was attacking an unarmed freighter.

Then, the torpedo he fired exploded during its run, alerting the *Icarus* to the *352's* presence. Rather than surfacing and battling the out-gunned coast guard vessel, the *U-352* bottomed out in shallow water. This was a fatal tactical error, as depth charges soon hit home. After the battle ended, the bewildered captain of the *Icarus* had to radio headquarters for instructions for dealing with the dozens of German crewmen swimming in the warm North Carolina waters.

But the German debacle has become a bonanza for divers. Of all the sunken U-boats lying off the East Coast, only the *352* rests in warm, clear water that invites even the novice to visit.

My first North Carolina dive turns out to be on the *U-352*. Jumping off the dive vessel *Ourageous V* into electric blue water, I think I have been mysteriously transported to the Caymans. (The Caribbean-like water comes as a special shock since

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50th ANNIVERSARY

by Henry Keatts

German survivors of the *U-352* were hosted by their former enemies in Moorehead City, North Carolina for the 50th Anniversary of the sinking of their U-boat by the U.S.C.G. cutter *Icarus* with a reception, a banquet, and presentations. Their lost comrades were honored in a dignified and beautiful memorial service. They and their U-boat were once again the focal point of attention; this time, the war was over.

George Purifoy, the first to find *U-352's* location 33 years after she sank, was instrumental in honoring both the survivors and victims of the German U-boat. The two-week visit and commemorative events were organized by he and his wife Linda of Olympus Dive Center in Morehead City, Ed Caram, author of two books on *U-352*, and members of the United States Coast Guard.

These German and American veterans who fought the Battle of the Atlantic gathered together for the memorial services. The commemorative banquet was attended by about 300 people, held in Morehead City, reunited eight surviving *U-352* crew members led by their chief radio operator, Kurt Kruger. The brother of one German seaman who was killed in the action also attended, as well as two crewmen serving on the U.S.C.G. *Icarus* at the time of the sinking

and four other *Icarus* alumni.

Divers, businessmen, and dignitaries, including U.S. Representative Martin Lancaster (D-North Carolina), attended the banquet that featured speeches and presentations by Americans and Germans alike, and my slide program of sunken North Carolina submarines. The next day Purifoy's dive boat *Olympus II* ferried the German survivors and several Americans 30 miles offshore to the remains of *U-352*.

On the stern of the boat survivors performed a moving memorial service to their countrymen lost at sea. Memories sharpened as they later viewed a video of the *U-352's* wreckage.

At the reception the following day, George offered Kurt Kruger a well-preserved brown leather jacket, with insignia indicating that it was probably Kruger's own service tunic. Purifoy, who had recovered and restored the jacket he found

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DIVE WRECK VALLEY on Location ... *USS TARPON*

by Daniel Berg with photography by Josef Koppelman

We cruised out of Hatteras Inlet, North Carolina and began the 25-mile trip to the wreck of the American submarine *Tarpon*. Our group consisted of nine divers, Captain Steve Bielenda of the *R/V Wahoo*, underwater photographer Jozef Koppelman, Rick Schwarz, John Connell, Dr. Steve Lombardo, Billy Campbell, Rich Lefkowitz, Seth Appelbaum and me. After the ten-hour drive from New York we were rewarded with a picture perfect day. The ocean was flat and the water was a translucent, almost tropical blue.



The *US Submarine Tarpon # SS-175* was built in 1936 and launched on September 4, 1936. The *Tarpon* was 298 feet long and had a 25 foot beam. She was equipped with eight watertight compartments, and armed with one 50-caliber deck gun and eight torpedo tubes. The *Tarpon* was able to operate at a maximum depth of 250 feet, newly designed diesel (electric-battery) engines pushed her at a maximum speed of eight knots submerged, and 19 knots at the surface.

The *Tarpon* was sent on her first war patrol on December 9, 1941. A total of 12 patrols in the Pacific during World War II eventually earned her seven battle stars. The *Tarpon* was the first American sub to sink a German raider, *Michel*, in that ocean, for a total four enemy vessels sunk, including the Japanese cargo ship *Fushima Maru*, the Japanese transport *Tatsuta Maru*, and a Japanese patrol boat.

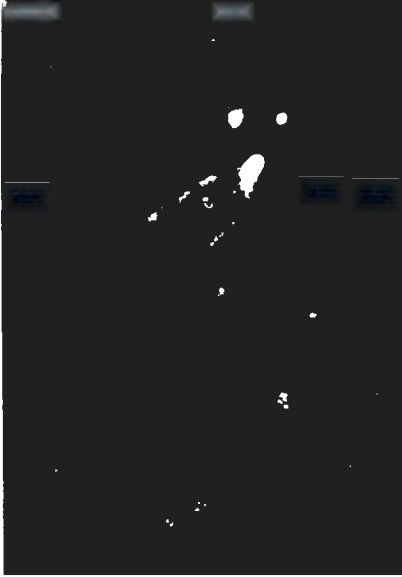
Towards the end of the *Tarpon's* career she was utilized by the Navy as a dock-side Reserve Training Ship. On September 5, 1956, the *Tarpon* was sold for scrap to the Boston Scrap and Metal Company. On August 26, 1957 while in tow by the tug *Julia C. Moran*, with all hatches sealed, she started taking water through her stern. Before long the *USS Tarpon* went down for the last time.

It was not until October of 1983 that a group of divers lead by Gary Gentile, noted author and pioneer technical diver, from Hatteras Inlet South, located and explored the *Tarpon's* remains. The wreck was found sitting upright and intact on a sand bottom in 140 feet of water in the **Graveyard of the Atlantic**.

Since the *Tarpon* was discovered, the wreck has become extremely popular for East Coast sport divers, especially photographers. One reason is that the wreck seems to attract groups of sand tiger sharks. In fact the *Tarpon's* deck and surrounding sand is littered with the teeth of these sand tigers. Although it is not known why the sharks hang around this particular wreck, it has been theorized that the *Tarpon* rests in a breeding ground or that the sharks come because of the abundance of bait fish that thrive here. Any way, our trip was certainly inspired with the hopes of filming these fierce creatures in their environment.

Steve Bielenda had shown me some footage he took on the wreck a year earlier and, to say the least, it was extraordinary. Large sand tigers slowly swimming through schools of bait fish. One came right at Steve's camera until its nose bounced off the hard wide angle lens. The shark then turned and darted away.

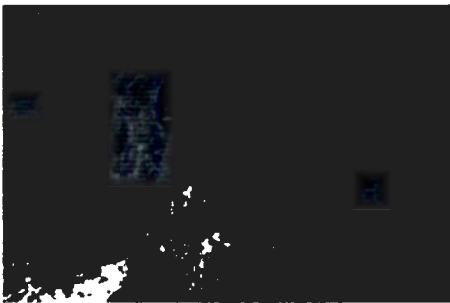
An hour and a half out of the inlet, Captain Art Kirchner anchored the *Margie II* over the *Tarpon*. Within minutes all nine divers plunged into the 70-degree, crystal clear water. We were anchored into the *Tarpon's* bow, just aft of her stabilizing fin. As we descended we could see her large anchor still mounted into the starboard side of the bow. There was a swift current running from her stern forward which made swimming aft a little difficult. As we slowly made our



way back, we passed her forward torpedo loading tube. Her conning tower, which has broken off the pressure hull, now rests on the wreck's port side.

Tropical fish were everywhere. Barracuda drifted lazily over head and small sting rays camouflaged themselves in the sand around the wreck. The intact submarine resting on a clean sand bottom in clear water was an awesome sight. The only thing missing was the sharks. We later learned the best season for the sharks is from late June through August; our trip was a just little early in the season.

The *Tarpon* sits in 140 feet of water and lies with a 30-degree list to her port side, although dives can be kept shallow-



er than 130 feet by staying on top of the sub's pressure hull. The very tip of her bow is broken off and most of her hatches have been opened by sport divers. Penetration into the wreck should only be done by those with the proper experience and training. The only way into the sub is through one of her circular hatches and they are all a tight squeeze.

Divers who visit this wreck can expect visibility ranging from 30 to over 100 feet. Even though we did not encounter any sharks on this trip, we all enjoyed our dive to North Carolina in an area known as the **Graveyard of the Atlantic**.

Open Forum

Do you have something on your mind? What about a gripe or difference of opinion? Maybe some information you would like to correct us on? With this issue of the Journal we will begin our Open Forum Column. Short and to the point works well here. It's your forum.

BUDDIES or PARTNERS?

In reference to "Captain Janet Bieser," by Barb Lander in the June 1992 issue of SAJ, the section on the "comedy" about "...Sally completely cocooned in the line, unable to move a fin..." and Priorities are priorities; Janet secured the china outside then returned to cut Sally free" does not come across as a comedy. Sally is lucky her regulator wasn't pulled out of her mouth and they're both very lucky Janet didn't also become entangled.

What happened to the buddy system and safety? I don't think such "comedy" is harmonious with the *Sub Aqua Journal's* safety orientation.

Andrea Zaferes, *Lifeguard Systems*

Dear Andrea,

Deep divers do not rely on the buddy system, they rely on "diving partners." People who understand the responsibility of themselves and the person they are diving with. These two exceptional divers (Janet, the youngest woman on the *Doria 25* plus dives and Sally the woman with over 40 dives on the *Doria*) did have their priorities in order. Sally was to remain at the entrance (not go in as many unexperienced buddy divers would) with a light beacon for Janet's safe return. She did that.

Rather than drop the artifacts and create more of a silt out she removed them from the area and returned (about 5 feet) to Sally's assistance. There was no panic in this situation. There was team effort.

The *Sub Aqua Journal's* safety orientation is as intact today as it was when we did our **Safety is our Goal** program with **Team LGS**. We don't hide stories like this one as other publications will. Luck is when opportunity meets with preparation, you don't dive deep without preparation and contingencies, they had both the preparation and the opportunities to accomplish their goal and solve the situation they were in. Isn't that what adapting to the underwater world is all about?

Joel Silverstein, Editor

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U.S. DIVERS

U-352

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only three days before I had been groping about blindly in green-black obscurity while exploring the *Oregon* off Long Island.)

Twenty feet into the descent, the U-boat suddenly appears. From above, almost the entire 220-foot vessel can be seen — a dim, bronze glow on a white sand plain. Near the stern, divers are clustered around a lift bag beginning to strain for the surface. Even now, worthwhile artifacts remain to be discovered.

We alight on the deck, just forward of the other divers. From here, the sub seems pretty much intact, but as we swim forward, we see wreckage toppled onto the sand off to starboard. Huddled under it are a dozen young groupers. I swim cautiously over to try for a few photographs. The groupers are already too street-smart to hold still for an ungainly, camera-toting diver. So in frustration, I turn back to the sub and my partner, who is more than happy to pose near the conning tower.

Like other wrecks, the *U-352* is a haven for fish life. Small bait fish, possibly glassy sweepers, school in a silvery curtain toward the bow. Nearby, groupers and thick-bodied cobia keep a sharp look-out for a quick meal. There are even a couple of moray eels nestled among the crevices. Beautiful queen angelfish flit nervously over low-lying coral.

I am impressed by the size of the sub. Though slender, she is too long to be fully explored on one dive. Our time is already running short when I spot an open hatchway forward of the conning tower. This is one of the main entrances for divers wishing to penetrate the interior. Today, I'll have to pass on that opportunity. I hope to go in on my next visit. Caution will be in order, I realize, as I look at the narrow opening.

The *U-352* lies with a slight list to starboard. The deck gun is gone, apparently blasted away by the depth charges. We notice as we head astern that the sea has taken its toll, too, as the outer hull has corroded away. However, the stronger pressure hull remains intact.

Rising on the anchorline, I savor the view spread out below: a magnificent wreck and an oasis of sea life.

The *U-352* had many mishaps before suffering the indignity of being the first ship lost in *Operation Drumbeat*. Before its sinking, it had become the butt of many jokes among U-boat officers and crewmen. But at its final resting place, it's a joke no longer. It is now one of North Carolina's most historic and impressive wrecks.



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Meet Captain Art

by Barb Lander

In 1971, Art Kirchner studied bio-medical electronics in college. He had dreams of making it big in the field. But, he explains, it was a college elective that was his downfall. He learned to dive in a 10-week college course taught by the YMCA, and claims Artie, "Diving has been keeping me broke ever since."

Artie's first wreck dive was on the *Delaware*. "I was hooked," he admits and recalls a few of his dives, "that made diving history." Like the day nine divers recovered six telegraphs from the *San Diego*. Or the *Doria* trip that netted thirteen promenade windows, seven plaques, four gauges, and the clock from the starboard promenade deck.

Artie shares how he recovered the clock. "Nobody used BC's back then. I was wearing a quarter-inch wet suit and didn't have a lift bag, so I tucked that clock under my arm, squatted down and leaped up as hard as I could. Then I just clawed my way up the hull."

Diving changed for Artie when, recovering from knee surgery, he went to the Mariners Museum in Hampton Roads, Virginia. The information he found on southern wrecks inspired now Captain Art to move his diving south, where he runs charters on the *Margie II*.

"It was January," Artie recalls, "I went to Hatteras with my dive gear. I wanted to decide whether I would come to Hatteras or Savannah." As he arrived in Hatteras, a commercial fishing Captain had just lost his propeller. Artie donned his gear and found the damaged propeller. Since the local travel lift was out of service, the boat would have had to be towed 60 miles to pull it out for repairs. Instructing the fisherman to have the prop repaired instead, Artie promised to return. Five days later he was back realizing Savannah was not for him. He helped his new found friend and gained the Loran coordinates for the most popular wrecks in the area.

Always willing to check out new coordinates, Captain Art put the first group of divers on the stern section of the *Australia*. At 510 feet long, the oil tanker was the second largest vessel to be sunk in American waters in WW II. These lucky divers recovered a helm, seven



J. Silverstein

portholes, and china emblazoned with the Texaco crest.

Our Captain's favorite wreck, the *Manuela*, lies in 165 feet of water, a victim of the now sunken *U-404*. The 4,772-ton freighter lies on its starboard side, her bow twisted off. "You can swim through most of it without a light," says Artie. "The debris field is totally awesome, busted and broken up — and the marine life is incredible," he raves.

One of Artie's first trips to the *Manuela* was aboard the dive boat *Gekos*. Gary Gentile located the ship's bell but could not free it from the davit. Each team on the boat took a turn trying to loosen the bell. Even Artie, with his massive six-foot, five-inch frame coupled with a three-foot crowbar couldn't budge the bell. As a last resort, they ripped the bell from its davit using the boat.

Artie remembers the astonishment of the group when the coral chips fell away from the encrusted bell revealing, not the expected *Malchase*, but *M-A-N-U-E-L-A*. The nautical charts off Cape Hatteras would be corrected.

NOTE: Captain Artie Kirchner and the *Margie II* were host to the following adventures and expeditions featured in this issue of the *Journal*: the *Farb Monitor Expedition May 1992*, *Wreck Valley on Location*, and the expedition where the *Melissa Wreck* was found in 156 feet of clear, blue water and named on May 29, 1992.

SHERWOOD

So simple it's ingenious.



Hank Keotts (c) with survivors of the U-352.

inside the U-352, offered it to the German sailor. Kruger thoughtfully chose to allow his jacket to remain on display at the dive shop along with other recovered artifacts.

At the reception, Kurt told me how — when he reached the bridge of the conning tower during the action — he was greeted by a severed hand on the deck. He added "I was lucky that I wasn't shot to death. We German survivors consider ourselves to be ambassadors of peace and understanding to the United States and the rest of the world; we hope that future generations will not forget the futility of war."

On this anniversary, peace and tranquility reigned.

U.S.S. MONITOR

by Rod Farb with editorial comments by Melissa Orenstein



The USS Monitor. The ironclad that saved the Union in one historic, yet indecisive battle, lay at rest in 230 fsw, 20 miles south of Cape Hatteras, NC. Now the battle ground for still another war — the right to dive our nation's Marine Sanctuary has been granted by NOAA to only a few civilians — Rod Farb is among them. The following are excerpts from his report to NOAA of the Farb Monitor Expedition, May 1992.

QUICK LOOK REPORT:

The first day of diving was the most productive. There was only [a] slight current on the site. The anchor was set 50 feet NE of the *Monitor's* stern according to plan. Thirty-five minutes of video was made of the stern end of the site, the amidships bulkhead, and adjacent areas. . .

On day three, there was a strong current running on the site. It took eight-and-one-half minutes to reach the site compared to one-and-one-half minutes on Day 1. One diver measured the length of the propeller bracket (26'5") and the width of armor belt directly above the sternmost part of the turret (62"). Two other divers made [a] video tape of the stern area. Strong currents limited their activity during the dive.

OBSERVATIONS:

The propeller bracket, its flange attachment to the stern hull, and a large hull plate to which the flange is attached have separated as a single unit from the stern hull. The hull plate, to which the propeller bracket is attached, is about 18 inches or more aft and below its original position leaving a large opening into the hull. The opening into the stern reveals a metal box attached to the lower hull near the opening. The propeller bracket is leaning severely to the starboard.

Videotape of the surfaces of the propeller bracket reveals no evidence of an external force such as an anchor to have caused the separation. The calcareous material along its length on all surfaces appears undisturbed. The yoke supporting the propeller bracket at its stern end is present. The propeller shaft is still attached to the hull and appears to be in the same position as on previous trips.

The side of the sternmost end of the armor belt is in the same plane as adjacent portions of the belt. It is not bent out [at] an angle as it ap-

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Diver swims over starboard portion of the Monitor forward of the engineering spaces. R. Farb.

pears to be in the NOAA videotape taken during [the] October, 1991 cruise. The butt end of the side of the armor belt is encrusted with calcareous material to the same extent as its front and rear (north and south, respectively) surfaces. This indicates that nothing has fallen off the butt end of the side of the belt.

However, the approximately 18" long vertical crack in the side of the armor belt, located a few feet from its stern end, which was reported in 1990 (*Farb Monitor Expedition Final Report*, page 36), now runs the entire width of the side from bottom to top. On each side of the crack, for most of its length, is an approximately one-inch wide band of exposed rusty metal, free from calcareous material.

This observation, along with the observation by NOAA in October 1991, that a few feet of the stern end of the side of the armor belt was bent outward (to the north), suggests that this part of the armor belt is mobile and is flexing at the crack. The flexing has caused the calcareous material along the crack to chip off, exposing metal which has freshly oxidized. The crack is not visible from the south side due to a presence of encrusted material in the interior of the armor belt. The side piece, if it is mobile, can be expected to fall off in the near future.

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The bottom of the turret yoke (H-bulkhead, located at the bowmost end of the engineering spaces, *Farb Monitor Expedition 1990 Final Report*, page 35) is separated from the hull and is further forward than previously (i.e., leaning towards the bow). The bottom hull plates above it appear to have shifted to starboard several inches while the starboard-most plates remained stationary, giving the appearance of the edges of some plates sliding and buckling over the edges of adjacent plates in a dis-

arrayed, "ragged" fashion. The appearance of the turret yoke, the "ragged" appearance of the bowmost edge of the lower hull above the turret yoke. . . and the separation of the propeller bracket from the stern hull, suggests that some portion of the engineering spaces have moved, probably to starboard.

It appears that the wreck is in eminent danger of total disintegration, in the two short years since the Monitor has been surveyed by civilian divers the ocean has taken its toll on her. Metal is shifting, brackets are

breaking. Although far beyond conventional sport depth limits there are those individuals who possess the skills to perform dives on the Monitor. These skills were proven in 1990 by the court decision won by Gary Gentile which opened the door to civilian diving on the Monitor. These hard won victories need to be preserved or the Monitor's remains may be lost to the sea forever.

Rod Farb has another expedition permit for the end of August this year, more photographs and videotape will be obtained further proving that access to this wreck is needed.

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Management Plan Reviewed

by Barb Lander

NOAA released their *Monitor Draft Management Plan* this May. Despite nearly a decade of pressure by divers, there are no provisions in the plan to increase diver access to our Sanctuary.

As "resource protection" is one of their priorities, NOAA maintains the delusion that the government can protect the wreck from the elements. While mechanical support and cathodic protection are being considered, realistic funding for these projects will never exist. [As Rod Farb observed,] the Atlantic ocean will soon reduce the *Monitor* to an unrecognizable heap of rubble; photo-documentation of the site cannot wait.

NOAA's proposed plan is up for review later this summer. Written comments are due by August 17, and should be directed to:

Ms. Annie Hillary, Acting Chief
Atlantic Great Lakes Region
Sanctuaries & Reserves Division
Office of Ocean and Coastal
Resource Management
National Ocean Service/NOAA
1825 Connecticut Avenue, N.W.,
Suite 714
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Don't forget to send your Congressman a copy of your comments! For a copy of the *Monitor Draft Management Plan*, call NOAA at (202)606-4122.

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EVENTS CALENDAR

JULY

- 28 **Staten Island Sport Divers**
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Contact: Staten Island Sport Divers
P.O. Box 140439
Staten island, NY 10314

AUGUST

- 5 **NYC Sea Gypsies**
Joel Silverstein
Responsible Diving and You — An Open Discussion about Safety.
Contact: Tony Smith 212 242-6867

Wreck Valley TV Series

is now on Nassau Cablevision

- 7 Propeller Salvage 6:00 PM
14 Bronx Queen 5:30 PM
21 R.C. Mohawk 6:00 PM
28 USS Algal 5:30 PM

- 23 **4th Annual Sheffield Island Lighthouse Treasure Dive & Picnic**
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Treasure hunt games are planned.
For tickets and information contact:
Norwalk Seaport Association.
203 838-9444

- 28 **Staten Island Sport Divers**
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Oops! We made some errors in the last issue of the *Journal*, fortunately you brought them to our attention.

1: The diver featured in the Technical Diving article is New Jersey's own Roy Matthews.

2: The technical community has agreed that 100% oxygen is usable to 20 fsw. for decompression.

Ultimate Wreck Diver & Shipwrecks of North Carolina; South of Hatteras Inlet, Gary Gentile's new books are available from:

Gary Gentile Productions
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SHIPWRECKS Diving the Graveyard of the Atlantic by Rod Farb is available from your local dive shop or: Menasha Ridge Press
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Sept. 12-13th, 15th(dive) Oct. 3-4th, 7th(dive)

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A Paddle Wheeler Named Melissa

by Joel Silverstein

It was Friday morning and the Nor'easter still blew. Yesterday we had gotten tossed around pretty good but today we'd be going south to follow a lead on a new shipwreck.

The watery Graveyard of the Atlantic off Cape Hatteras has been known for swallowing up ships from as far back as the mid 1500's.

Captain Art enticed us with some Loran numbers from a fishing captain buddy of his. "But its in deep water, around 150 to 175 feet. Too deep for the tourist divers." he smirked. Given the choice of another lumpy day out east towards the *Empire Gem* or the chance to dive a virgin wreck, our decision was easy.



Motoring out of Teach's Lair Marina the chop in the inlet told us we were in for a bumpy ride. Packed with doubles, milk crates, Jersey reels, and two sets of numbers not far from each other, we wondered about what lay ahead. Just south past the *Dixie Arrow* the Atlantic ocean starts to drop off. In a twenty-mile stretch she drops from 130 fsw to well over 3000; that blue water runs deep. Near the search area Art slowed the boat and began running the patterns in the clearest water I'd seen all week!

Back and forth, over and over again, we searched for over an hour. A flat bottom, no fish on the finder, not even a bump. We moved a quarter mile west and began the search on the second set of numbers. Then, just as he was told — in 156 feet, there she was, the blip on the bottom finder riding high off the bottom.

It took two throws of the hook but I grappled'er, then Steve went over the side to tie us in. Was it a wreck or sea mount? We'd have to wait for either Steve or the cups to come up. The moments of waiting seemed worse than the ride out. Which team would be in first? What would they find?

The cups came up, it was a shipwreck!

Two divers went over the side. My wait to free the hook began. Almost two hours and several divers later with winds kicking up I rolled over the side, camera in hand.

In the deep blue water at about 100 feet, the wreck unfolded below me. I could see the outline of a ship in pure white sand. Her single piston engine block still upright ready to serve her captain, a boiler waiting to be stoked, but her paddle wheel had fallen to the sand. Like the spokes of a wheel the pieces lay in perfect symmetry. She must have been here a long time.

Swimming around for 20 brief minutes, I could enjoy the wonder of a new wreck all to myself. Way too soon it was time to free the grapple. Releasing the anchor I drifted over the wreck for another view. I will be back to uncover the mystery.

Melissa didn't make it out this day — we named secret wreck #27 after her.

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OCEAN Edge COMPUTEK II Dive Computer

by Joel Silverstein

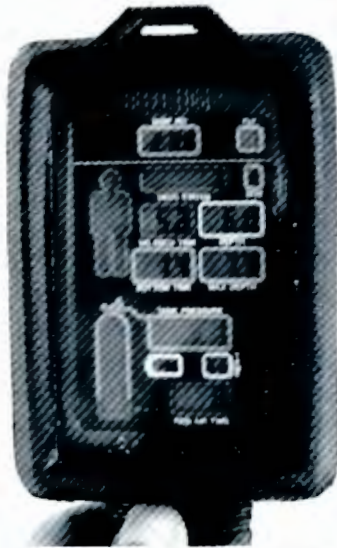
At first glance the *Computek II* is reminiscent of the days of Pac-Man, or maybe one of those Game-Boy handheld video games with a diver, tank, other pictograms displaying data on its console. We took this dive gauge/computer with us to the Carolinas and put it to the test of repetitive dives in varying conditions, as well as here in the North East for some deep dives (below 130 fsw). The *Computek II* is the second generation of the original *Computek* from Tekna, since merged into Ocean Edge, a new company formed in 1990. Their goal: to be on the leading edge of recreational dive technology. We feel, by and large, *Computek II* is a prime example.

The *Computek II* is an integrated dive computer and air monitoring system all in one, using icons (pictograms) and data windows to display a myriad of information. The unit, attached to your first stage's high pressure port, is self-activating: when your air is turned on, the unit turns on. Really simple? Remember, it replaces the high pressure gauge, computer, and depth gauge, too.

NO-DECO DIVING Designed as a multi-level dive computer primarily for no-decompression dives, the algorithm used in the *Computek II* is quite conservative. Therefore, you can easily get into the mandatory decompression requirement. The no-deco limits can easily be extended by progressively moving to shallower depths, especially when diving on reefs and wrecks with high reliefs.

DECOMPRESSION DIVING While diving, the little diver starts to fill (graphically) with nitrogen, when the pictogram fills up, it's time to decompress. The deco status window displays the total ascent time and the ceiling for the first stop, eg. 10 minutes at 20 fsw. As long your dive needs less than 45 minutes of ascent time the computer manages the decompression flawlessly. If you need more than 45 minutes (I hope you know what you're doing), the computer will enter violation mode and revert to an excellent time, depth and air monitor. I always carry tables just in case. I was impressed with how well it managed decompression diving. Of the two other computers I was carrying, the *Computek II* required the most hang time. Interestingly enough, on the dives I did (everything from 35 fsw to 200 fsw) the deco status mirrored the DCIEM decompression tables, which are the most conservative sport tables available.

REPETITIVE DIVING The *Computek II* managed repetitive diving nicely. After a five minute surface interval the no-deco scrolling system came on line,



indicating the maximum depth and time a dive could be accomplished without mandatory decompression time. This was updated every few minutes. As a safety feature, the unit retains a small amount of residual nitrogen time which forces deco stops on repetitive dives to the same depth, although tables would not. I liked this feature as it distinguished the *Computek II* from other computers.

AIR INTEGRATION I like to know how much air I have, mostly for the stop time. The computer accurately learns from your individual breathing pattern, what that remaining air time is. The tank icon fills in 15 segments each to represent 200 psi, and tank pressure is displayed numerically in 10 psi increments. I found this feature invaluable for air management on the decompression dives. The only drawback to the air monitor is the digital display which only reads as high as 3250 psi, even if your tank is filled higher. Once your pressure drops to 3250, the display descends accordingly.

ILLUMINATED DISPLAY No need to shine your light on this console. When ambient light levels drop, the eye-pleasing red back lights turn on so the whole information center is easy to read. No fumbling. This was particularly useful when penetrating shipwrecks and on night dives.

OPINION A little big at first but once you get used to having all that information in the palm of your glove you won't want to dive without it. Color graphics, easy-to-read and accurate information makes this unit a complete diving information system.

Special note. If you own a Tekna *Computek I*, Ocean Edge will upgrade your unit to a *Computek II* for a small fee. See your Ocean Edge dealer.

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Ocean Edge™ would like to extend a personal "thank you" to the following dealers for making the *Computek II* the most successful selling air integrated computer.

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160

170

200

KIRBY'S KORNER

Knock, knock . . . is Valerie home?

by Kirby Kurkomelis

The small craft advisory flag was flying high as we bounced our way through Debs Inlet. In the distance I could see a hint of blue coming out of the darkened northwest sky. The captain shouted, "three to five foot seas." With the wind at our backs, the smell of diesel fuel had made its presence known. My dive buddy Tony, started chumming for fish. The 28-foot Phoenix, with her deep V hull cut through the waves as we neared our destination; the *Valerie E*.

Our compass heading was 160 degrees south. We approached the area of Buoy 4 which marks the artificial reef, 3.5 miles outside Debs Inlet. The wreck came up fast on our depth recorder. My loran numbers were correct. I saw a sparkle in my dive buddy. Finally.

The *Valerie E* out of Wildwood NJ, was an 85-foot clam dredger, with a steel hull and large digging devices. On a cold and snowy night in December 1991, the *Valerie E* rolled over due to icing on her decks. All hands went down with the ship.

Our dive plan was simple, survey the damage and recover artifacts. Over the side we went. I could see in my buddy's eyes that he was filled with excitement. We descend slowly. With thoughts of artifacts strewn everywhere, I brought my large bag.

When we reached the bottom it was a nightmare. Five feet of visibility, steel cable and rope was everywhere. The thick lines appeared like vipers waiting for an unsuspecting diver. The *Valerie E* lay silently now, on her portside 72 feet below the surface. Broken clam shells litter the bottom from when she capsized. I signaled to Tony that we should stay together.

The entire ship was intact, no gash or explosion ripped her apart, only the sheer weight of the snow and ice. Sea bass were swimming in and around her hull where small anemones were starting to show their colors. Light brown algae had begun growing on her decks where once there was ice. Her large brass propeller was silent now, clinging to a stainless

steel shaft. Too big for my bug bag.

Swimming up to the wheel house, I could see a small amount of diesel oil discharging from her deck; probably a damaged fuel line. Looking inside the bridge, I searched for a much sought after prize — the wheel and helm — but they were gone. I cleared my mask and Tony was gone too.

A dark shroud began to cover the wreck. It didn't bother the tiny brine shrimp that swam about. Where did he go? I continued looking. Our plan, if separated, was to meet back at the anchorage. My journey began. The visibility got worse.

Swimming along her portside, there was steel cable at every turn, like a spider web enticing me to venture forward. I continued across her hull carefully. The small amount of sunlight was fading fast. Still no sign of my partner. Now twenty-five minutes into the dive I decided to pull out my knife . . .

I started to bang on the bow of the *Valerie E*, trying to get Tony's attention. The ambient getting dimmer by the moment, I kept up signaling until he signaled back. "What a relief," I thought, he answered?

The current had picked up. Holding firm to the hull, I could hear the noise coming closer to me, then it stopped. Could my partner have passed me? I continued to signal, my air was getting low. Suddenly, I heard banging from the other side of the ship. Was it Tony or someone else? But there were no other divers out today.

Time to reach for my pony bottle, air was at a premium now. I ascended slowly, looking back, still no partner.

At 15 feet I remained motionless looking for some sign of bubbles. My air supply exhausted, I broke the surface. Sitting on the deck, eating his lunch with a big smile on his face, was my partner. He'd gotten cold and came up. Who was that banging back?

Knock, knock. Who's there?

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|------|---------|---------------------------|
| July | 3 | USS Bass |
| | 4 | U-853 |
| | 5 | U-853 |
| | 11 | Fighter Plane |
| | 12 & 17 | Catherine Marie |
| | 18 & 19 | Pinthis |
| | 24 | Endicott |
| | 25 | Mars |
| | 26 | Fighter Plane |
| | 31 | USS Yankee |
| Aug | 1 | Mars |
| | 2 | Mars |
| | 7 | Seaconnet & Vinyard Light |
| | 8 | Trojan & YSD |
| | 9 | Vinyard Light |
| | 14 | June K |
| | 15 | Yankee/Cowin |
| | 16 | Kingfisher |
| | 21 | Mars |
| | 22 | Dwight/Yankee |
| | 23 | Fighter Plane |
| | 28 | Endicott |
| | 29 | Yankee/Cowin |
| | 30 | Catherine |

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|------|----|---------------|
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| | 12 | Cellic |
| | 18 | Condor |
| | 19 | Poling Bros. |
| | 25 | Capt. Choice |
| | 26 | Capt. Choice |

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- | | | |
|------|----|-------------|
| July | 4 | Baleana |
| | 5 | Aqua Woman |
| | 6 | Ayuruoca |
| | 8 | Texas Tower |
| | 11 | Eureka |
| | 12 | Yankee |

- | | |
|----|---------------|
| 18 | Lizzie D |
| 19 | Iberia |
| 22 | Resor |
| 25 | USS San Diego |
| 26 | Oregon |

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|------|----|---------------------|
| July | 1 | Local Lobster |
| | 4 | NY Harbor Festival |
| | 5 | USN Algal |
| | 8 | Mystery Wreck |
| | 11 | Pinla |
| | 12 | Ed East Schooner |
| | 13 | Lizzy D |
| | 14 | Overnight 4 wrecks |
| | 15 | Nite Dive |
| | 18 | British Corvette |
| | 19 | Cindy |
| | 22 | Ambrose Lightship |
| | 25 | Pinla |
| | 26 | Big "G" 17 Fathoms |
| | 28 | Algal, Stolt, Pinla |

- | | | |
|-----|----|-----------------|
| Aug | 1 | RC Mohawk |
| | 2 | Asfalto Nite |
| | 2 | Pentland Firth |
| | 5 | Mystery Wreck |
| | 8 | Harvey's Woody |
| | 9 | Veronica |
| | 10 | USN Algal |
| | 12 | RC Mohawk |
| | 15 | Lizzy D |
| | 16 | Martin's Misery |
| | 19 | Cindy |
| | 22 | Pinla |
| | 23 | Bald Eagle |
| | 26 | RC Mohawk |
| | 29 | Cindy |
| | 30 | Masadonia |
| | 31 | Asfalto |

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|------|----|---------------|
| July | 1 | Dry Dock # 4 |
| | 4 | Hylon Castle |
| | 5 | USS San Diego |
| | 8 | Dry Dock # 5 |
| | 11 | Tarantula |
| | 12 | USS San Diego |
| | 15 | Dry Dock # 4 |
| | 18 | Stolt Dagali |
| | 19 | USS San Diego |
| | 22 | Hylon Castle |
| | 25 | Fran S |
| | 26 | USS San Diego |

- | | |
|----|--------------|
| 29 | Dry Dock # 5 |
|----|--------------|

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|--------------------|----|------------------|
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| July | 4 | Algal / Pinla |
| | 5 | Lizzie D |
| | 11 | Pipe Barge |
| | 12 | Iberia |
| | 18 | USS Turner |
| | 19 | RC Mohawk |
| | 25 | Black Warrior |
| | 26 | Lizzie D |
| Aug | 8 | Black Warrior |
| | 9 | British Corvette |
| | 15 | USS Turner |
| | 16 | Stolt Dagali |
| | 22 | RC Mohawk |
| | 23 | Robert Snow |
| | 29 | Black Warrior |
| | 29 | USN Algal |
| | 30 | Lizzie D |

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|----------|----|-------------------|
| Freeport | | |
| July | 1 | USS San Diego |
| | 4 | Iberia |
| | 5 | USS San Diego |
| | 8 | Arundo |
| | 15 | Oregon |
| | 22 | Larchmont@Montauk |
| | 29 | USS San Diego |
| Aug | 5 | Oregon |
| | 12 | Linda |
| | 15 | G & D |
| | 19 | Tarantula |
| | 22 | USS San Diego |
| | 26 | USS San Diego |
| | 29 | Ambrose Light |
| | 30 | Oregon |

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|------|----|---------------|
| 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 |
| Aug | 1 | Linda |
| | 2 | Fran S |
| | 7 | Oregon |
| | 8 | USS San Diego |
| | 15 | USS San Diego |
| | 16 | G & D |
| | 23 | USS San Diego |
| | 29 | Kenasha |
| | 30 | Hylon Castle |

Wahoo*

- | | | |
|----------------------|---------|-------------------|
| Capt. Steve Bielenda | | |
| Capt. Janet Bieser | | |
| (516) 928-3849 | | |
| Captree | | |
| July | 1 | USS San Diego |
| | 5 | USS San Diego |
| | 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 |
| Aug | 1 | Yankee |
| | 2 | USS San Diego |
| | 7 | Coimbra |
| | 8 | USS San Diego |
| | 9 | Oregon |
| | 12 | USS San Diego |
| | 15 | Texas Tower |
| | 16 | USS San Diego |
| | 19 | USS San Diego |
| | 21 | Oregon Overnight |
| | 23 | USS San Diego |
| | 26 | USS San Diego |
| | 29 | Oregon |
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NORTH CAROLINA

Margie II*

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LOCAL HEROES:

June 1992

Divers from New York, New Jersey, Massachusetts and North Carolina always seem to find themselves in front of a Sub Aqua Journal camera.



Metro West Dive Club frolic for three days aboard the R/V Wahoo.



Broadway Divers Dive Club outing on Father's Day aboard the Jeanne II.



NJ photographer Herb Seagars and friends from NJ on the Margie II.



Capt. Butch Amaral



Mike Gallager with an brass artifact from the Melissa Wreck.



Julin Conlon



Captain Bill Reddan and Jim Cleary aboard the Jeanne II.

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