

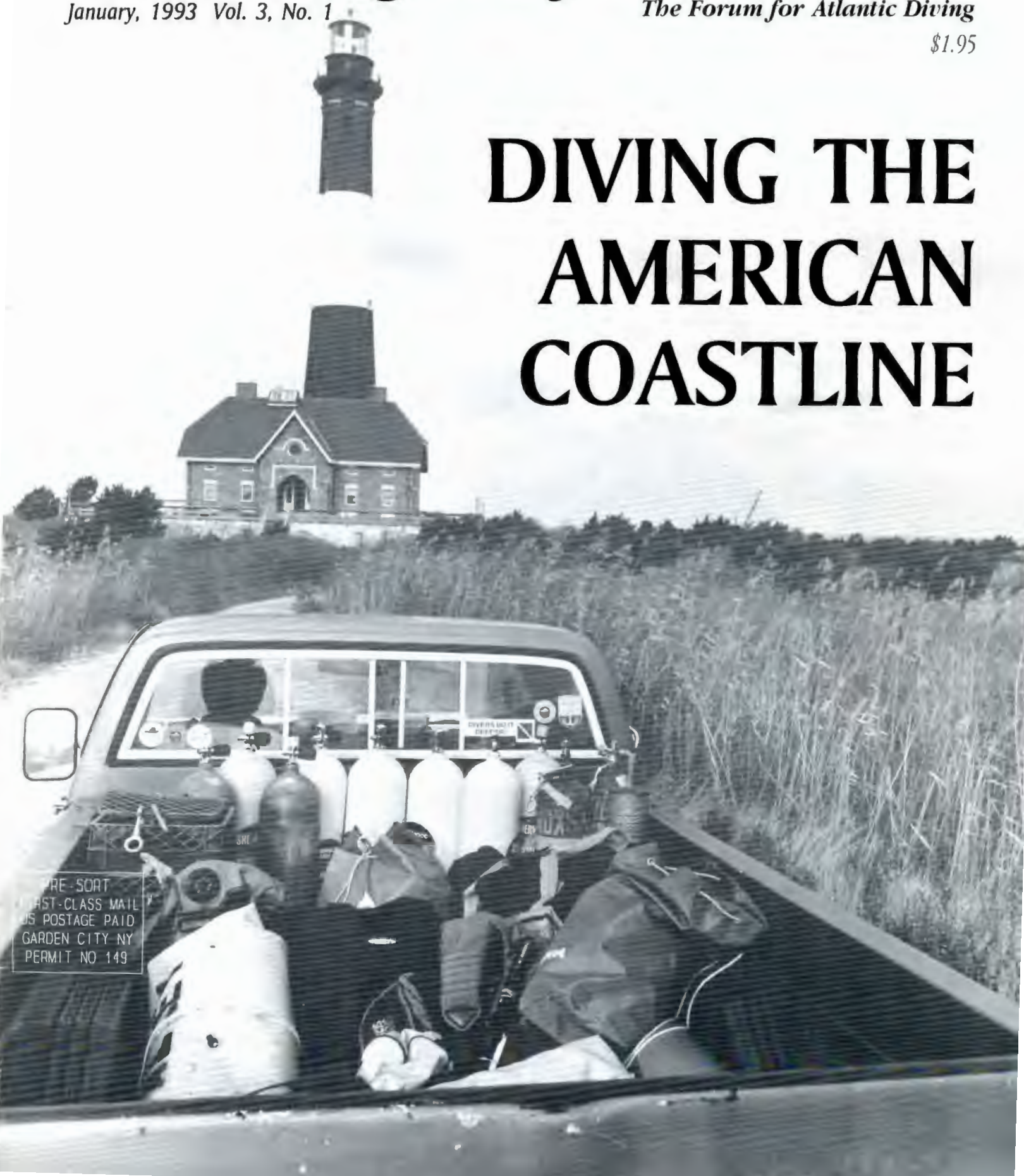
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DIVING THE AMERICAN COASTLINE

Once again Father Time brings in a new year. This is the twenty-second editorial I have written since the Journal began. We have grown tremendously and are now being read in at least twenty-seven of these United States. When we looked back over previous issues one thing stood out more than anything else — you prefer staying close to home for most of your diving.

I would like to propose a challenge to all divers for 1993: stay home and dive in America this year. Spend time with your friends and family while enjoying the sport we love so much. To give you more ideas for the kinds of diving you can be doing, we devoted this issue to the Atlantic Coastline.

Starting way up in Massachusetts, Dave Morton makes his debut with the *Journal* by taking us on an intimate tour of the famous *Chester A. Poling*, a ship that rests just thirty minutes from shore. The water is a little chilly up there but the sea life is as abundant as the divers who head out each weekend for fun and adventure.

Dan and Denise Berg take us off Fire Island, New York to the mystical Cunard Liner *Oregon*. Sunk in 1887, she still retains the beauty and excitement today that she did when she competed and won the Blue Riband award on her maiden voyage.

As we continue down the coast, Tom Baker explores the rarely dived *Bidevind* in the deep waters off New Jersey. Although the wreck is deep and the dive is short, Tom experiences a rare hang in the offshore blue waters.

Rod Farb shares with us some photographs and a report of his latest expedition to the *USS Monitor*. Beneath the warm, clear, blue waters of Cape Hatteras, North Carolina the *Monitor* has been a dive controversy since she was found in 1973. While the government has successfully tried to limit access to this historical wrecksite, she has been disintegrating before their very eyes.

From Hatteras, Cathie Cush takes a hop to the southernmost point of the Atlantic Coastline — Key West. She vacationed in the historic town where Mel Fisher's twenty-year dream came true — the discovery of the Spanish galleon *Nuestra Senora de Atocha*. Though she hasn't dived the *Atocha* she did manage to explore many wrecks including one of my favorites, the *Cayman Salvage Master*. When we talk about diving the Cayman — we mean diving it in the USA.

Kirby tells a tale of his encounter with Baby — a baby whale that is. A memorable experience from a few years ago, it proves that interaction with sea life can be done right here at home.

Choose from some of the best wreck dives in the world from Down East to the Florida Keys and it may just be the vacation you and the family need this year — diving the American Coastline.

Joel D. Silverstein, Editor

The Chester A. Poling:

A New England Classic

by David Morton

The *Chester A. Poling* was a coastal tanker with over three decades of experience shuttling fuel oil along the Northeastern seaboard. The vessel was built by United Drydocks, Inc. at Mariners Harbor, Staten Island, NY in 1934 and named the *Plattsburg Sacony*. In 1956 she was lengthened by the Avondale Shipyard by 29.3 feet to 282 feet overall, and in 1962 renamed the *Mobile Albany*. In 1969 the ship was sold to the Poling Transportation Co. of New York City and renamed the *Chester A. Poling*.

On the morning of January 10, 1977 she unloaded her final cargo of heating oil in Everett, MA and headed back to her home port of Newington, NJ. The weather report that morning predicted 10-25 mph winds with occasional gusts, and 6- to 10-foot seas, typical for January. But—as happens so many times in New England—the weather broadcast had nothing to do with what was developing. Before long Captain Charles Burgess and his crew found themselves struggling 8 miles off Cape Ann, MA with 15 to 30-foot waves and 50 mph gale force winds.

The storm conditions proved too much for the old tanker. Harry Selleck—a man of few words—had the 6 AM to noon helm watch, and witnessed the whole event. "We were hit by a wave, one of those big waves, maybe 30 feet high. It just came in and broke the ship in half." The coastal tanker was cleanly broken right behind the mid-ship pilot house. Burgess and Selleck were on the bow and the five other crewmen were stranded on the stern as both sections floated apart.

The captain managed to get a mayday call out at 10:30 AM which started a massive rescue effort by the Coast Guard, who sent out two 90-foot cutters, two 44-foot picket boats, and a helicopter into the storm. A herculean, four-hour effort by the Coast Guard managed to save six of the seven crew.

The bow sank uncharted in approx-

imately 180 fsw. The aft eventually sank near shore in about 80 feet of water, in what turned out to be a temporary resting spot. The "Blizzard of '78" produced swells so large that the stern was actually moved down a slight slope to its present location about 750 yards off the Gloucester, MA breakwall in 102 fsw.

The approximately 200-foot long stern section is probably the most popular wreck dive in Massachusetts, and for good reasons. It sits perfectly upright, intact on a hard sand bottom, with the stern deck rising to 76 feet. Fuel transfer valves, pipes, and stairways are still in place across the 40-foot beam, providing divers with a picture perfect wreck.

Conditions can vary significantly on

the wreck. Visibility has exceeded 50 feet on occasion—but is typically 10-20 feet—and there is usually little current. The bottom temperature can reach the 50's in August, but 42-48°F is more common. Advanced divers enjoy the *Poling* throughout the summer months, but bottom times tend to drop off with the temperature. Dry suits are highly recommended in the spring and fall.

After 15 years on the bottom, the wreck has become home to a great variety of marine life. Schools of pollack patrol the deck throughout most of the year, and big cod (2 - 4 feet, 20 pounds plus) live in and below the wreck. The cat walk and piping down the center



have become completely festooned with anemones and hydroids; a favorite spot for local photographers.

With all of the hatches open, the stern is easily accessible but as with any wreck, penetration should only be attempted by trained and experienced wreck divers. Some ambient light enters the compartments through overhead hatches and the round holes where portholes used to be. Although the wreck has big rooms, wide hatches, and doorways, the 15 years underwater have taken their toll. Cables and wires dangle from overhead and several feet of heavy silt have accumulated on the floors, demanding good buoyancy control.

By dropping through one of the forward cargo loading hatches, you can swim left or right through large open doorways into either the port or starboard crew's quarters. Swimming aft past piles of cots and debris, you can either turn amidships and enter the galley, or continue back through the aft-most compartments. In either case, it is possible to swim across the ship and get to the other hallway. All seven exits can be found amidships leading straight up to the outside of the wreck.

The engine room is also penetrable by dropping down a large stairway from the first deck into the lower level. However, due to heavy silt accumulation and tight confines typical of most marine engine compartments, this should only be attempted by very experienced wreck divers. Even with good technique, exiting the engine room is usually done by memory as the silt renders even the brightest dive light *useless*.

The *Poling* does not have to be penetrated in order to be an excellent dive, and many local instructors take their advanced students here for a great introduction to deep and wreck diving. Visibility permitting, the whole wreck can be seen on one dive. As you swim to the forward part of the wreck, the full damage caused by the storm is quite apparent. At the break, the wreck looks like it was opened by a big can opener with wires and pipes hanging everywhere. This break created a large cavern area, home to a multitude of fish that hide in the darkness. It's pretty cool swimming through here, but be careful of entanglement.

Because of its proximity to shore, charter captains typically use land sites to



Bed frame lies decaying in the interior of the *Chester A. Poling*. Photograph by Brian Skerry

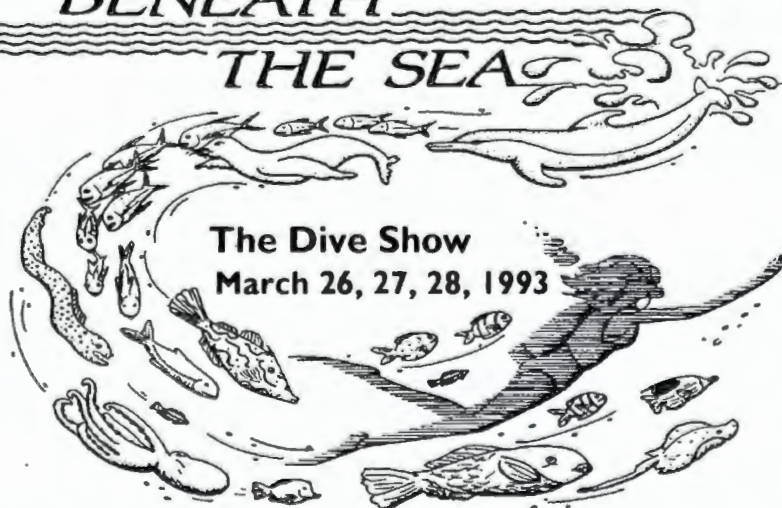
pinpoint the wreck, which is less than a 30-minute ride from many of the local marinas. Every dive shop in Northeastern Mass., can arrange charters to the stern of the *Poling*. Most boats take up to six passengers and run half-day charters out to the wreck.

The bow of the *Poling* remained "lost" until 1989 when Gary Kozak, of Klein Associates, found it with one of the firm's new side scan sonar. Located about 6 miles away from the stern, but it has only been seen by a handful of divers. A few of those who have made the dive report that the bow is upside

down with the pilot house completely buried in heavy mud at 178 fsw. Temperatures at this depth off Cape Ann rarely exceed 42°F, and strong currents are usual. At this depth serious experience and support are a must.

The *Chester A. Poling* served its owners well in her 33-year career. Now her stern serves as one of the premier dives of New England. Although it's been picked over pretty good through the years, you don't often get a chance to dive a 200-foot long upright wreck in 100 feet of water. If you're diving in Massachusetts, you don't want to miss this one.

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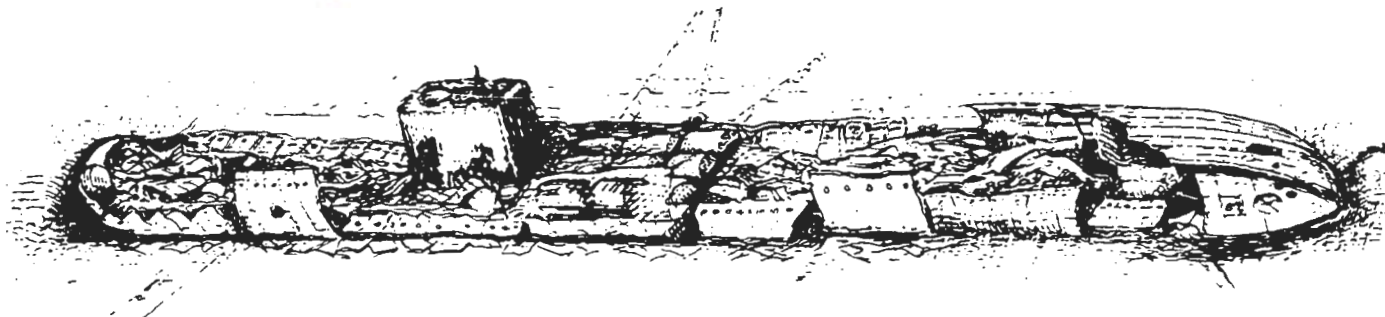


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THE OREGON

by Daniel and Denise Berg



The Cunard Liner Oregon as she rests today 130 feet below the surface. Sketch by Captain Stephen Bielenda.

Resting in 130 feet of water, on a clean sand bottom 21 miles south east of Fire Island inlet, are the remains of the Cunard passenger liner *Oregon*. This wreck is considered by many to be one of the finest shipwrecks on the East Coast. The *Oregon* wreck offers divers a seemingly never ending supply of artifacts as well as huge lobsters, and at times, visibility in excess of 80 feet.

The *Oregon* was built for Stephen Guion by John Elders Fairfield & Company of Glasgow, Scotland in 1881. She was 518 feet long, had a beam of 54 feet and displaced over 7,000 tons, making her one of the largest ships of her day. The *Oregon* was powered by a three cylinder engine which put out upwards of 12,000 horsepower and made her capable of running at nearly 19 knots. Steam was generated by 9 boilers each almost 18 feet long, consuming almost 240 tons of coal each day. Although she was a modern liner for her time, the *Oregon* was just emerging from the time of sailing ships. So her modified clipper designed hull not only carried two enormous smoke stacks, but was also fitted with four masts rigged for sail.

The interior was designed and fitted with the most elaborate and costly material available. She had accommodations for 340 first class, 92 second class, and 1,110 steerage class passengers. She was also equipped with watertight compartments and lighted

completely by electricity. The grand salon of the *Oregon* was of stunning elegance running 65 feet long by 50 feet wide and decorated with ornate woodwork made out of virgin timber from the state of Oregon.

On her maiden voyage, October 7, 1883, the vessel made a record trans-Atlantic crossing and claimed the coveted Blue Riband award. The *Oregon* left Queenstown and arrived in Sandy Hook just seven days, eight hours and 33 minutes later, averaging almost 18 knots. In 1884, when Stephen Guion's steam ship line was forced into bankruptcy, the *Oregon* was sold to a competitor — Cunard Line.

On March 6, 1886, the *Oregon* departed Liverpool and steamed for New York. At 4:30 AM March 14th, on a clear Sunday morning, the *Oregon* was jolted on her port side while running at full steam only five miles off Fire Island, NY. Although there were many conflicting reports of exactly what caused the accident, it has been accepted that the *Oregon* collided with the three-masted schooner *Charles R. Moss* of Maine reported missing that night.

The schooner was damaged so badly that it sank immediately leaving no time for rescue operations. Passengers on the *Oregon* reported hearing the desperate cries of those aboard the doomed schooner.

The *Oregon* stayed afloat for eight

hours, time enough for all 845 passengers and crew to be rescued by the vessels *Fannie A. Gorhan*, *Fulda* and the pilot boat, *Phantom*. There was even enough time for the crew to serve passengers hot tea and toast, and for passengers to retrieve warmer clothing from their cabins.

As is the custom, Captain Cottier was the last to leave his ship before she plunged bow first to the ocean floor leaving all four masts still sticking up above the water's surface. The Captain commented to reporters that "I never expected to see such an affair go off so easily. Not a soul on board the *Oregon* was lost."

Today divers will find the *Oregon* sitting upright on the sandy sea bed. Her bow is broken off and is resting intact on its starboard side. Her steel hull plates have given way to the elements of time and collapsed, leaving only her engine and nine boilers standing upright. In the stern divers can still see her huge steel propeller half buried in the sand, and her circular steering quadrant which stands a good twenty feet high.

With landmarks like her engine, boilers, and quadrant as well as various winches and masts, good navigational ability around this site can usually be learned after only a dozen or so dives. But this wreck is big, so if you are not familiar with the site, it's wise to use a tether line reel or to stay within sight of

the anchor until the wreck's landmarks are learned.

Divers have brought up all kinds of artifacts, including portholes, bottles, ornate chandeliers, clay pipes, silverware and fine china stamped with either the Cunard or the Guion Steamship Company crests. Best of all many artifacts still remain buried, waiting to be discovered.

On almost every dive portholes can be found. The only problem is that more often than not they are facing down with no access from underneath. This means that even if you pry the porthole loose, there is no way of finding a way inside to retrieve it. Most divers who have frequented this wreck know of at least a few such portholes that have already been knocked off but cannot be retrieved. Maybe as the wreck continues to collapse access to more of these portholes will open up and release the bronze prizes.

China is, of course, one of the most sought-after artifacts from this wreck. One good location to dig for china is around the boilers. Don't be too concerned, however, if the charter boat does not anchor in this area; prized artifacts have been recovered from bow to stern. The only secret to finding treasure on the *Oregon* is persistence and, of course, a little luck.

The *Oregon* is also well known to local divers for the abundance of lobsters that have made her their home, some as large as 20 pounds. Although lobsters can be located living in any of the holes under and on the wreck, one repeatedly productive spot is inside a pipe located in the sand on the wreck's port side near her engine. This pipe usually holds a big bug, in excess of ten pounds. Be careful because if you miss him on the first attempt he will retreat to the back of the pipe, well out of reach.

The *Oregon* is a wreck that deserves multiple dives to be truly appreciated. It seems that the more familiar a diver becomes with the *Oregon's* layout, and the more hours spent diving around her debris, the more a diver consistently wants to return. I guess you could say that diving the *Oregon* is addicting. She has everything a diver could want, good visibility, fish, lobsters, a fascinating history and plenty of artifacts in an area known as Wreck Valley.



Dennis Kessler explores the steering quadrant of the *Oregon*. Photograph by Bradley Sheard

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SURFACE
INTERVAL
WITH:

Captain Steve Bielenda

by Barb Lander

Popular Mechanics ran several articles in the late 50's that intrigued young Harlem-born Stephen Bielenda with articles about that new-fangled scuba diving and the Navy's UDT's (underwater demolition teams.) Curiosity piqued, Steve joined a motorcycle buddy in a 16 foot row boat for his first scuba experience.

"I didn't have a great first experience," Steve recalls. He didn't use a wetsuit and his buddy completely dressed him. Steve went over the side without one word of instruction, formal or informal, and later climbed back into the boat unassisted. Undaunted, Steve repeated the experience with a more cooperative friend. He learned how to set up the equipment and clear his mask. With that more positive experience behind him Steve says, "I knew I loved diving."

He also knew he needed formal training. Steve signed up for lessons at the YMCA taught by Roy Kieser of Central Skin Divers. That was in 1959. By 1961 Steve was acting as an instructional assistant. 1961 also marks the year that Steve did his first wreck dive, on the *U.S.S. San Diego*.

In the sixties the diver's focus was not so much on artifacts as it is now, it was on lobster. "Lobsterin' is totally different than artifactin'," says Steve in his pronounced Brooklyn accent. His 20-pound lobster is still a source of pride.

Lobstering has its risks too as Steve can attest. He vividly remembers pulling a 15 pound lobster from its hole, crossing the claws, and holding it up belly-side towards him. The lobster in its vigorous attempts to escape, knocked Steve's regulator out and flooded his mask. Steve instinctively let go with his right hand to replace his regulator and clear his mask. The lobster, his powerful crusher claw free, grabbed the first thing it came across, a regulator — effectively shutting off the air. Having just cleared his mask Steve needed a breath. Desperately he worked the hose into one of the spaces between the knuckles of the big claw to



restore his air. It took many minutes to completely free his hose.

Steve credits wearing his mask strap under his hood to saving the day in that situation. If the mask had been knocked completely off, the least that would have happen is that he would have lost the prize lobster.

Steve shares freely the lessons he has learned in the scuba school of hard knocks with his customers on the *Wahoo*. The first time I dived on Steve's boat his comment to me was, "I'd like to see you start wearing your mask strap under your hood."

For those willing to listen, watch, and learn, Steve makes an excellent teacher. Although he officially retired from scuba instruction in 1981, he feels he and his crew assist divers in how to dive. They are always ready to lend a hand, and are full of hints, from how to set up gear, placement of equipment, how to get on and off the boat, where and what to look for on the wreck and just plain old moral support. Many a diver has made their first ocean dive with Captain Steve or one of his crew at their side.

With three decades of East Coast wreck diving to his credit, Captain Steve
continued on page 14

SHERWOOD

So simple it's ingenious.

Visit to the *Bidevind*

by Tom Baker

It wasn't the best of diving seasons. On top of everything else the seas and wind were against us. How many times in August were we all blown out, for example? And now I'm looking back on a frustrating September as well. I had five trips scheduled and only got out twice.

But there was one day in early September that nearly made up for it all. It was a midweek trip on the *Seahunter III* to the deep and rarely dived *Bidevind*. Things hadn't seemed promising for this trip either, with windy conditions and high seas right beforehand. The forecast was doubtful. But ten of us showed up on the boat the evening before sailing, stowed gear and fell asleep (or what passes for sleep in those close, diesel-scented bunks) hoping for the best.

I knew something was wrong when I woke up the next morning—at seven



Courtesy Wreck Valley Collection

o'clock. I quickly realized this extended slumber could only mean flat seas. With a sudden adrenalin rush I rolled out of my bunk: we were going to make it.

We arrived over the wreck site early, and mate Roy Trapaso tied us in quickly. Half the divers were diving air and planning two dives. The rest of us were

on trimix with only one long dive possible on a day trip. Once the air divers were off the boat, my partner Rick Siaba and I geared up.

It had been two months since our last dives on mix, on the *Andrea Doria*, but a mild nervousness over again dealing with stage bottles and other extra gear dissipated the second we hit the water.

It was the best day of the year. After the bubbles cleared, I found myself in electric blue water. Visibility was forever. It was a blue paradise, and I relaxed totally under the spell.

The *Bidevind* rests in 200 feet of water 50 miles off Long Island. The ship was a 4900-ton Norwegian freighter. Such a big vessel was no doubt a juicy prize to the watch of the *U-752* patrolling off New York in April, 1942. The U-boat put two torpedoes into her and the big freighter settled quickly.

Although, when first located there was some fifty feet of vertical relief, the wreck has since collapsed. It is considered disorienting, so much so that Captain Sal Arena took the unusual step of warning us to be careful as we navigated over the wreckage.

Our descent was exceptionally mellow, no doubt because of the clear, warm water that remained with us well past the hundred-foot mark. Even the dense cold layer on the bottom didn't seem quite so dark today.

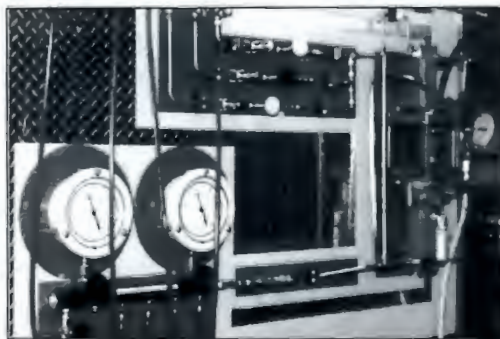
We landed in the middle of a broken

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down debris field. It was difficult to tell where on the wreck we had landed, so Rich set a strobe on the down line and we explored the area by circling the line in a progressively greater radius.

Not long into the dive I spotted some gauges and valves that looked like they might be worth rescuing from this watery grave. Unfortunately, without serious tools, or perhaps dynamite, they weren't going anywhere. I wasted additional time freeing myself from a snag involving my mesh goodie bag and the sharp-pointed end of a beam. I toured the wreck for the remainder of our planned twenty-five minute bottom time. The area was almost totally broken down with occasional high spots. I skimmed low over the bottom, hopping from one high spot to another, but found none of the artifacts I was hoping for.

The hang was one of those rare ones that you actually enjoy. Even though we were following the conservative mix tables of John Crea — and hung for an eternity — it was truly beautiful. Suspended in the blue, crystalline water of the Gulf Stream, we marveled at how clearly we could see other divers hanging off an oxygen trapeze in the distance.

In a trance-like state of relaxation, I happened to glance to my right. Below me, but sweeping upward, was a large, silvery creature. For a micro-second the alarm bells exploded in my brain, loosing more adrenalin into the system, before I recognized the animal as a mola mola.

The sunfish came right up to us, circled lazily and then swam over to the divers on the trapeze. For the remaining twenty minutes of our hang, the curious fish kept us company.

We surfaced to find Sal photographing Joe Garcia and Pete Maas with the beautiful porthole they recovered.

Shortly after we stowed our gear and got into shorts and sandals, Larry McEvoy climbed onto the deck. We had seen the sunfish circle him repeatedly. Larry made our day when he confessed

he never saw it.

On their second dive, Joe and Pete found another porthole lying just off the wreck in the sand, but unfortunately, didn't have the bottom time to recover it. But it gave them (and the rest of us) an excuse to come back next year.

That night, after we cruised back to Freeport on a glassy ocean, I heard over the marine radio that the winds were back and the seas building to ten feet. After a day of almost Caribbean-like conditions, the North Atlantic was reasserting herself.

THIS MONTH'S COVER

The American Diver's dream. Driving up and down the coastline — gear loaded and ready to dive.

Taken on Fire Island, with a Hasselblad 500 C fitted with a 50 mm Carl Zeiss Distagon lens on Tri-X pan film.

Photograph by Joel Silverstein

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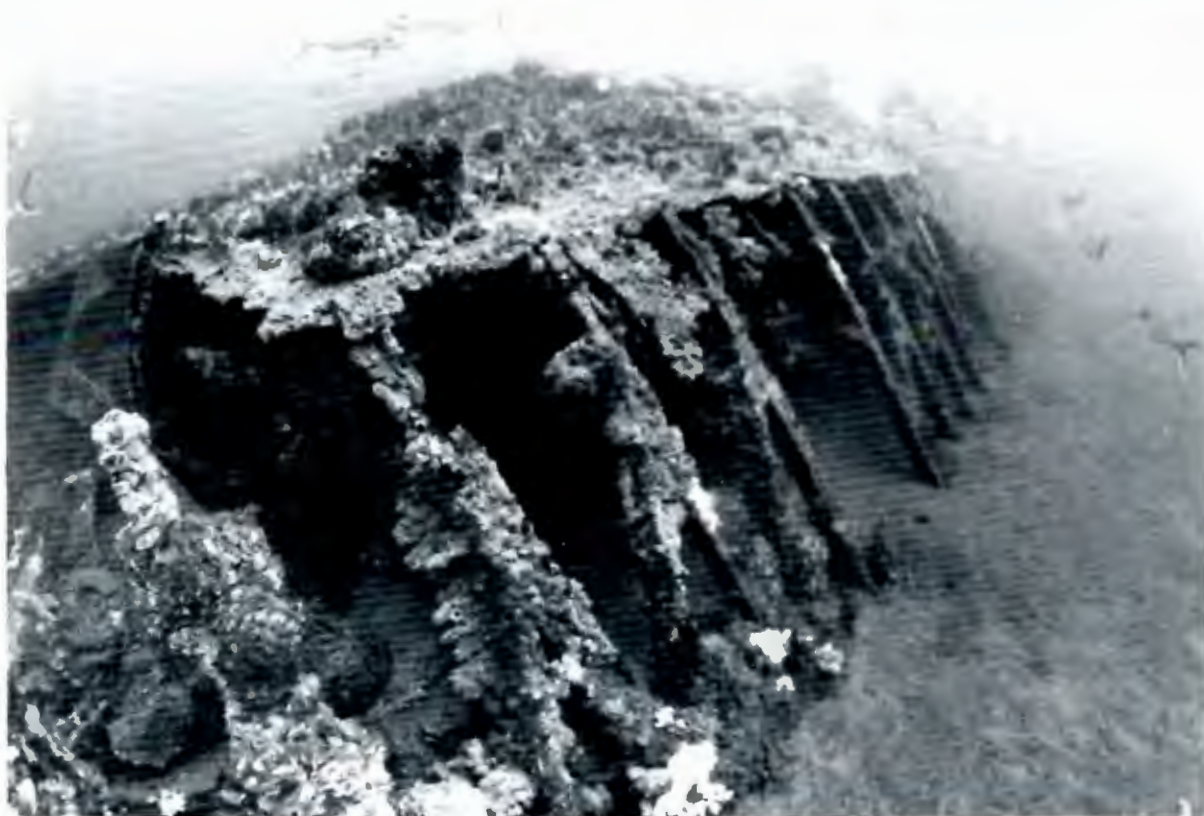
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USS MONITOR EXPEDITION 1990

Story and Photographs

Starboard side of the engineering spaces looking aft from the amidships bulkhead.

Since June 6, 1990, when I first began research dives on the *USS Monitor*, Farb Expedition divers have made over two hundred air dives on America's most famous shipwreck using only standard scuba equipment. Return visits in 1991 and 1992 have added more photographs, film, and video to an already large collection obtained during the 1990 work. After three years' research during seven cruises to the site, we are still making new discoveries about the ship; details about its construction that were never revealed by its builder, Swedish engineer John Ericsson.

Reports of the discoveries are certain to interest officials at the Mariners' Museum in Newport News, VA — the national repository of the *Monitor Collection*. The collection, an impressive gathering of

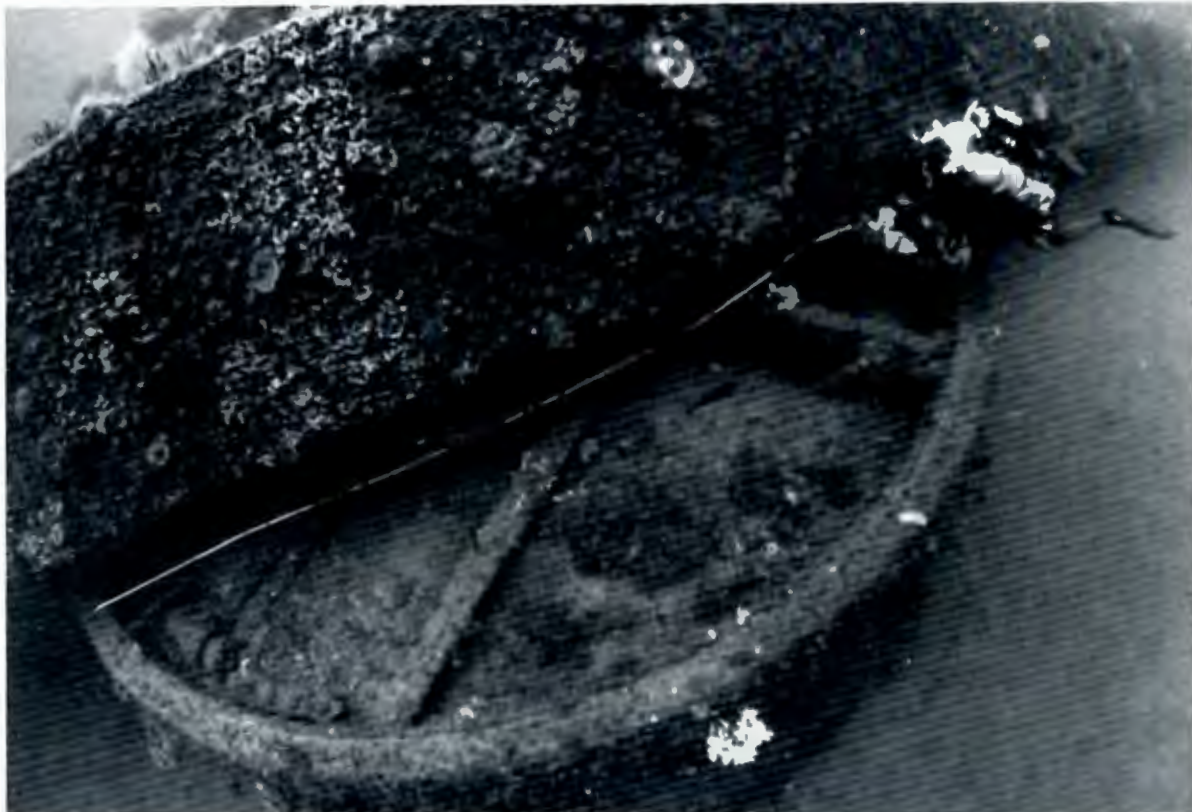
USS Monitor artifacts and historical documents, was dedicated on October 9, and is open to the public for the first time in nearly thirty years.

The Civil War ironclad —

whose historic battle with the *CSS Virginia* (formerly *USS Merrimac*) was the world's first between ironclads — has been slowly disintegrating in 235 fsw, 19 miles south of Cape Hatteras since it

PADI's Karl Shreeves measures distance between bottom of hull at fire room and port armor belt. Open coal shuttle below armor belt was a new discovery.





PADI's Karl Shreeves measures diameter of exposed turret of USS *Monitor* with tape for comparison with earlier CVID measurements.

raphs by Rod Farb

was lost in a storm on New Year's Eve, 1862.

Discovered in 1973, and designated America's first National Marine Sanctuary two years later, the ship has been the center of controversy since its conception 130 years ago. Today, with a new Management Plan for the Sanctuary due out early in 1993 — one that replaces an eighteen year-old plan — the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA is responsible for the *Monitor* site) is considering a variety of options to slow the rate of wreck deterioration including stabilization.

Opponents of stabilization question the expenditure of millions of dollars to do what they believe would be an incomplete job, wherein

preservation effects will likely last for only a short period. Critics likened it to life support for a comatose, terminally-ill patient; at some point you have to pull the plug.

A recently formed large opening in the deteriorating hull at the ship's stern gave divers the first opportunity to enter and film previously inaccessible parts of the engine room. The discovery of a unique steam junction box—*not drawn* on the builder's plans — and the observation of glass artifacts on the site, illustrates the need to inventory all of the ship's features before they deteriorate completely. Diving under almost perfect conditions in early September, Expedition divers also made the first tape measurements of the ship since its discovery in 1973. These measurements will be

used to check the accuracy of computer video image digitization (CVID) measurements taken from film and video footage. I developed CVID to map the *Monitor* site because its extreme depth limits bottom time for conventional measuring techniques.

Facts gathered by the Expedition will be used to help NOAA determine goals for future management of the site — including the feasibility of stabilizing the wreck against further breakup. An extensive collection of photographs, video, and film of the *Monitor* gathered by Farb Expeditions will be placed in the *Monitor* collection in Newport News.

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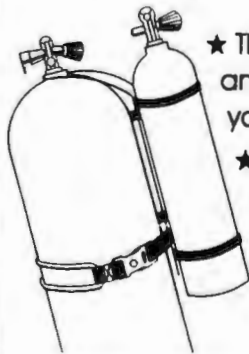
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Captain Steve Bielenda

continued from page 9

is concerned with the safety aspects of diving. Towards this end he is active with the Eastern Dive Boat Association. He has been their elected president for the past five years. The goal of the EDDBA is to further responsible diving operations. Steve feels strongly that the dive boats need to work in unison with each other.

Despite his extensive land-bound commitments, Captain Steve still makes time to dive. And after nearly thirty years his favorite wreck hasn't changed: the *Oregon*. According to him, "there is not a bad spot to dive on the whole *Oregon*."

If anyone is able to speak authoritatively on the whole *Oregon* it's Steve. One of his first boats he docked in Shinnecock; virtually all he dived was the *Oregon*. In 1977 he, Hank Keatts, and Ray Ferria surveyed the *Oregon*. They spent sixty-three dives just to complete the survey. The resultant sketch now graces the wall of the *Wahoo*. Stop by and see it.

GE-POWERED YACHT DESTRIERO WINS BLUE RIBAND

The high speed powered yacht, *DESTRIERO*, sponsored by the Yacht Club Costa Smeralda of Sardinia, Italy, powered by three GE LN1600 marine gas turbines, completed the transatlantic crossing from New York to England's Scilly Isles in the record-shattering time of 58 hours, 34 minutes and 50 seconds.

The *DESTRIERO* maintained an average speed of 53 knots (61 miles per hour) over the 3,106-mile course and reached maximum speeds exceeding 66 knots. (76 miles per hour).

The successful crossing earned for the *DISTRIERO* the mythical "Blue Riband," established in 1838 and awarded to the vessel that makes the crossing in the shortest time, without refueling or external assistance. The *DISTRIERO* bested the time of the previous record holder by an astonishing margin of more than 21 hours.

109 years ago the *SS Oregon* made this same crossing and won the Blue Riband. The *Oregon* however was powered by three steam engines capable of only 19 knots. The quest for speed and ribbons continues . . .

New Book



Shipwrecks of Virginia
by Gary Gentile

a review by Barb Lander

Wreck explorer and author, Gary Gentile, has released the latest volume in the Popular Dive Guide Series, entitled *Shipwrecks of Virginia*. The stories of more than 45 ships that met their fate off the Virginia coast make spell-binding reading.

His book spans two centuries of high-seas drama. From the loss in 1802 of the Spanish frigate *Juno*, rumored to be carrying "much wealth," the 1921 sinking of the "unsinkable" *Ostfriesland* by high-speed gnats of the sky airplanes, the merchant ships of the early 1940's assisted to watery graves courtesy of the *Kriegsmarine*, to the 1983 foundering of the 13,000-ton *Marine Electric*, Gary shares the extraordinary results of his original research.

In easy-to-use format—familiar to readers of other PDGS volumes — the narratives include exact location (if known) the ship's statistics, the history, each wreck's description for known sites, and often rare and difficult to obtain photographs.

Shipwrecks of Virginia is a bonanza for maritime history buffs and divers alike. Available from: Gary Gentile Productions PO Box 57137, Philadelphia, PA 19111, or from your local dive retailer.

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EVENTS CALENDAR

JANUARY

- 5-7 **Capt. Billy Deans** will be teaching a Nitrox workshop at the Scuba Shoppe in Medford, NY. Contact: Scuba Shoppe Jim Caccace (516) 289-5555
- 6 **Bret Gilliam**, celebrated author, will be speaking on deep diving and its applications at the NYC Sea Gypsies. Contact: Tony Smith (212) 242-3282
- 16 **Gary Gentile's Advanced Wreck Diving Seminar & The High Tech Wreck Seminar.** York, PA For tickets contact: (717) 757-1804
- 17-19 **tek93, "An Emerging Dive Technologies Conference"** Orlando, Florida. Contact: aquaCorps (800) 365-2655
- 20 **Gary Gentile — Wreck Diving to Rock Climbing** — a slide presentation. 8:30 PM Contact: Staten Island Sport Divers — Joe "Zero" Terzuoli (718) 979-6338
- 20 **SDRG - Deep Diving Forum:** A Question of - How Deep is Safe? Orlando, Florida Contact: Richard Nordstrom (215) 388-2739
- 21-24 **DEMA — Diving Equipment Manufacturers Association** trade show. Orlando, Florida. Trade only. Contact: (714) 890-9915
- 24 **ERDO — Extended Range Diver Organization** will be meeting at DEMA 2:30 PM room 12 B to discuss current operations and future plans. Contact: (516) 889-1208
- by 31 **Beneath the Sea Photo Contest** For rules and entry blank Contact: BTS Photo Contest PO Box 644, Rye, NY 10580 Entry deadline Jan. 31, 1993

FEBRUARY

- 21 **Ocean Wreck Divers Club — 5th Annual Scuba Flea Market.** Fun, Games, Prizes — a great Sunday outing in Seaside Heights NJ. Contact: Howard (908) 255-2865 or Jim at (908) 477-2532

MARCH

- 6-7 **BOSTON SEA ROVERS 39th Annual Underwater Clinic.** Two days of films, presentations, workshops on U/W photography, tech-diving, O₂ administration and dry suit repair. The oldest dive show in the nation. Copley Plaza Hotel, Boston, MA, Contact: (603) 432-1997





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While the standard color for the CF200 is still high-visibility orange and black, you can now order suits in any of the following color schemes: all orange (great for emergency rescue divers,) all blue, all black, black and orange, blue and black, or blue and orange. CF200 material is among the best abrasion resistant materials used to make dry suits. This is the same material that was selected for the U.S. Navy's Passive Diver Thermal Protection Systems.

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KEY WEST WRECKING CRUISE:

by Cathie Cush

THE CAYMAN SALVAGE MASTER

They say the third time's a charm, and in the case of me and Key West, it turned out to be true.

On my first trip to the Conch Republic, I was introduced to a few tourist-encrusted reefs that were enough to send any self-respecting marine life packing for the Caribbean.

On my second, I attended a birthday party for marine archaeologist Duncan Matthewson in the backyard of the Wrecker's Museum. "Hmmm...", I thought to myself. "They have shipwrecks around here?" But the *Atocha* was already spoken for.

So it was with admitted skepticism that I packed my backplate and regulators on a recent trip to visit some friends who are living in what they fondly call "Key Weird." I returned to Philadelphia with two Keys real estate guides in my carry-on. Does that tell you anything?

I can't say that the *Cayman Salvage Master* alone changed my mind. Captain Billy Deans and Key West Divers treated me to a number of outstanding wreck dives, each one better than the next. But the *Cayman* is one of Key West's most frequented wrecks, and with good reason. It's picturesque, it's accessible, and it's not a bad story.

Built in 1936, the *Cayman* was a 187-foot-long, steel-hulled buoy tender. By the '70s she had become a derelict, and lay sunken at the dock of the naval shipyard in Key West. Rumor has it that the vessel may have been involved in running guns to Honduras, and Captain Deans recalls that the FBI seemed to have had an interest in the derelict ship.

In the mid-1980s, the *Cayman* was to be used as an artificial reef. To this end, the vessel was refloated and her superstructure removed. In 1985 she was towed toward the Gulf.

"The ship was meant to be an artificial reef, but not with divers in mind," Deans explains. "She was being towed out to deeper water — 180 to 220 feet. Apparently the pumps weren't keeping up with it."

A cable snapped. The *Cayman Salvage Master* foundered and came to rest on her port side in about 90 feet of water about 6-1/2 miles off Key West. As if that alone wasn't enough to delight divers, Hurricane Kate came along later that year and righted the wreck. The *Cayman* now sits upright. The reefmakers couldn't have done a better job if they had planned it that way.

Since her second sinking, the *Cayman*

has become one of Key West's most popular shipwrecks — if not one of the area's most popular dive sites. On any given day of the week, it's a good bet that at least one dive boat will be tied to one of the moorings on the wreck's bow and stern. The buoy tender offers many opportunities for wreck photography, and its location just beyond the reef line and at the edge of the Gulf Stream makes it a haven for fish watchers.

Wreck divers of all levels can appreciate the *Cayman Salvage Master*. At 90 feet, the *Cayman* offers a little more challenge than the 65-foot *Joe's Tug*, another popular wreck that sits in just 60 feet of water. Yet even the most experienced wreck diver won't sneeze at a chance to explore the buoy tender. Captain Deans says his favorite spot on the *Cayman* is the engine room.

"There's lots of silt, so you can see how good your technique is," he says. (His own technique is fairly flawless, despite ultra-long Cressi-Sub fins. As I follow him through the wreck's interior, I don't see a speck of silt. That is, until I turn around. . . I sheepishly mention my faux pas to one of the guys back at the shop. He nods understandingly, then says helpfully, "You gotta remember,

Billy dives this wreck all the time.")

For technical divers-in-training, the *Cayman* is as much training ground as it is playground. For them, it is shallow enough to allow reasonable time to work with stage bottles, lift bags and other pieces of equipment they'll need for deeper dives on wrecks like the *Curb* and the *USS Wilkes Barre*. They practice running lines, doing "lost diver" drills and solving operational problems before they get into situations where seconds count.

The *Cayman* provides many opportunities for penetration, but be wary of this ease of entrance. The wreck was never stripped for use as a dive site, so cables remain inside that could cause entanglement. For those not interested in penetration, a tour of the *Cayman's* hull and deck areas can prove equally enticing. The blue water flowing in from the Gulf brings with it queen angels, grouper, yellowtail, snapper, schools of jacks and an occasional stingray.

A single dive on the *Cayman Salvage Master* was enough to snap a few frames and get a good taste of the wreck's potential. I have a feeling I haven't seen the last of it.

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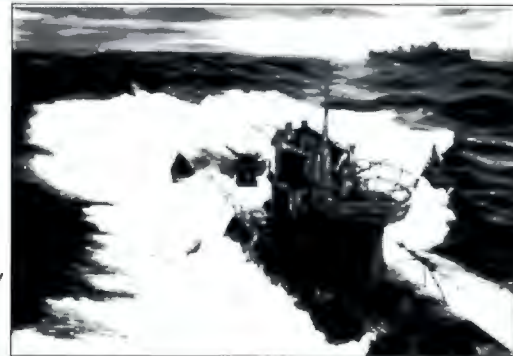
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A WHALE OF A STORY



by Kirby Kurkomelis

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It was a cold and rainy wintry morning. I wanted to stay home, read the Sunday paper, and listen to some music. It reminded me of a similar day in March of 1986...*NEWS FLASH...White whale sighted swimming underneath Long Beach Bridge...*In less than five minutes my equipment was packed. I raced in the rain to pick up my friend Richie. Ten minutes later — Atlantic Beach Bridge.

At the site Richie was complaining about the cold rain. I geared up and entered the water myself while he stayed warm in the car. Minutes turned into hours. On the verge of hypothermia I terminated the first of many searches.

Over the next few weeks I kept a constant vigil under the bridge. Suit on, equipment ready, and camera glued to my palm, I stood in knee-high water, agonizing at every white cap.

When I wasn't diving I gathered information about whales. They are the world's largest mammals and friendly, singing songs while traveling the ocean in pods searching for food. What was one doing in Reynolds Channel?

As the month of April arrived I put my boat in the water. My first destination—Reynolds channel in search of the whale. Suddenly off the port-quarter I spotted her, lost and traveling in a circle.

She was a white Beluga whale (*Delphinapterus Leucas*) about six feet long. The baby whale started playing with my

boat, splashing water onto the deck with a characteristic smile. I got her to follow me and after a while the whale made it out of East Rockaway Inlet back into the Atlantic. Waving farewell to Baby, her new nickname, I turned my boat and headed towards home.

The diving season was off to a great start. Warm blue-green water surrounded the East Rockaway Inlet, bluefish chasing spearing onto the beach. While diving on the *27th Street Wreck*—an old tug rumored to be a rum runner now in 15 fsw — with my friend Joel, we explored the boiler standing four feet off the bottom. On closer inspection the boiler was alive, covered in orange sponge with little anemones camouflaged from crabs. Laying quietly a goose-fish with its mouth open waited for a crab to fall off a broken pipe above. Heading north along her broken planks I could see where blackfish swam cautiously in and around the wreck's broken pipes and hull plates.

Suddenly a great shadow blocked out the sun; the seabass swam for cover. Instantly my buddy was in the boat looking down at me. Floating neutral I saw a large white animal about 13 feet long stalking me.

Looking up through the blue-green haze, I turned towards the anchorline to encounter my friend Baby. With a slight caress of her nose against my body, together we toured the wreck like old pals.

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With the incoming tide, Baby and I started drifting away from the wreck. I was thrilled to be swimming next to this wonderful creature with all her grace. The current was slow yet due to my depth I found it difficult to control my buoyancy. Hearing a boat, I figured it was Joel not too far behind us. Lucky for me I had the camera!

Drifting along in slow motion, I reached out to touch Baby's white body. It was soft to the touch, surprisingly warm and smooth. Then I noticed her spiked teeth, almost two inches long, and made sure to keep my finger out of harm's way. Belugas have no dorsal fins but Baby had a gash on her little hump. As I continued rubbing her stomach, Baby's expression kept changing, and I wondered if this was her first encounter with man.

Looking down at my gauges I was glad to have plenty of air remaining. It amazed me how long Baby could hold her breath. Once in twenty minutes she surfaced for air. My friend Joel must have been wondering what was going on below.

Baby put on a show for me; charging and missing me by inches. A couple of times she would sneak off. When I turned my head, Baby would be right behind me producing bird-like chirps by forcing air through her blow-hole. This game of hide and seek was very exciting.

The bottom composition started to change. Mussels and seaweed that cover the sand were replaced with broken concrete blocks. The deep water approaching must be the Atlantic Beach Bridge area. It was time to head up.

At the surface Joel was waiting in the boat with a big grin. Boy, did I have a whale of a story...



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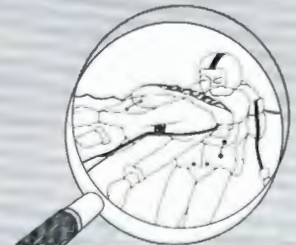
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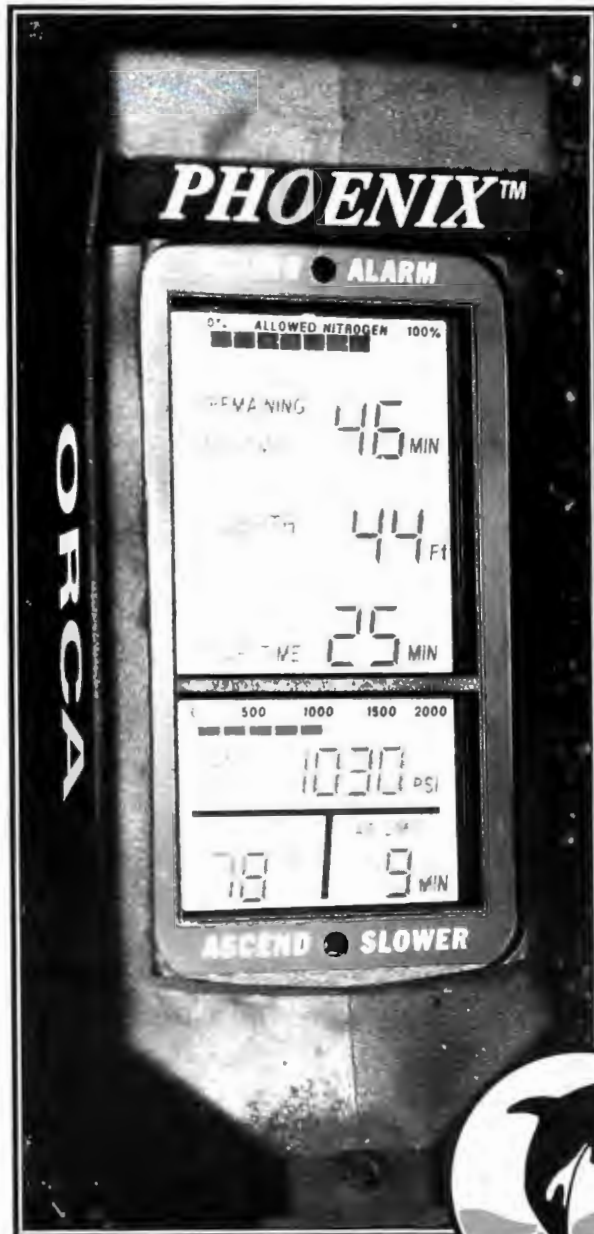
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Capt. Rich Cassens
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Kelp Forests, Wrecks
Shark Diving
San Diego

CONNECTICUT

Orbit Diver II*

Capt. Noel Voroba
(203) 333-DIVE
Bridgeport

FLORIDA KEYS

Key West Diver*

Capt. Bill Deans
"High Tech" Dive Center
(800) 873-4837
Dive Year Round
Key West

MASSACHUSETTS

Grey Eagle*

Capt. Erik Takakjian
(508) 362-6501
Bourne Marina
Yarmouthport

NEW JERSEY

Blue Fathoms*

Capt. Tony Donetz
(908) 369-2260
Daily, Weekends & Evenings
Point Pleasant

Deep Adventures III*

Capt. John Larsen
(908) 270-8888
Weekend & Night Dives
78' A/C and Heat
Point Pleasant

Sea Lion*

Capt. George Hoffman
Capt. Kevin Brennan
(908) 528-6298
Weekday Nite & Weekend
Brielle

Venture III*

Capt. Paul Hepler
(908) 928-4519
Shark River Inlet

NEW YORK

Defiance*

Capt. Mike Carew
(212) 885-1588
Dive the L.I. Sound
City Island

Eagle's Nest*

Capt. Howard Klein
(516) 735-2254
Point Lookout

Jeanne II*

Capt. Bill Reddan
(718) 332-9574
Call for afternoon and Nite dives
Heated Cabin & Hot Soup
Brooklyn

Dec: Open boat every weekend. Call for reservations and destinations.

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Apr	3	USN Algal
	10	RC Mohawk
May	8	USN Algal
	22	Siolt Dagali
June	12	Gypsie Wreck
	14	USN Algal
	19	Moonlight
July	4	USN Algal
	4	Fireworks
	13	Overnighter: Pinto, Mystery Imaculata
	27	Overnighter: USN Algal / Pinto
Aug	9	USN Algal
	25	RC Mohawk
	28	Cindy
Sept	5	Moonlight
	6	USN Algal

Sea Hawk*

Capt. Frank Persico
(718) 279-1345
Capt. John Lachenmeyer
(718) 279-1345
Wednesday & Weekends
Freeport

Shearwater II*

Capt. Jim McKay
Capt. Tom Conlon
(516) 242-2349
Fishing & Diving Charters
Captree

Southern Cross*

Capt. Phil Galletta
(516) 587-3625
Babylon Village Dock

Wahoo*

Capt. Steve Bielenda
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Captree

1993 SPECIALTY TRIPS

Apr	4	USS San Diego
	17	Eureka Tug
May	5	Coimbra 180'
	11	U-521 ??? 230' overnight trip
	21	Lillian 140'
	22	Texas Tower 80-180'
June	11	Coimbra 180'
	12	Texas Tower 80-180'
	24	Andrea Doña 170-250' Expedition
July	16	Andrea Doria 170-250' Expedition
	19-22	75th Anniversary USS San Diego
	24	Texas Tower 80-180'
	26	Republic Expedition 220' (516) 889-1208
Aug	6	Coimbra 180'
	14	Texas Tower 80-180'
	19	Oregon Overnight

NORTH CAROLINA

Margie II*

Capt. Art Kirchner
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Cape Hatteras

Scuba South I & II

Capt. Wayne Strickland
(919) 457-5201
Year Round Diving
Southport

RHODE ISLAND

Thunderfish

Capt. Bill Palmer
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U-853 & More
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VIRGINIA

SUNDOWNER*

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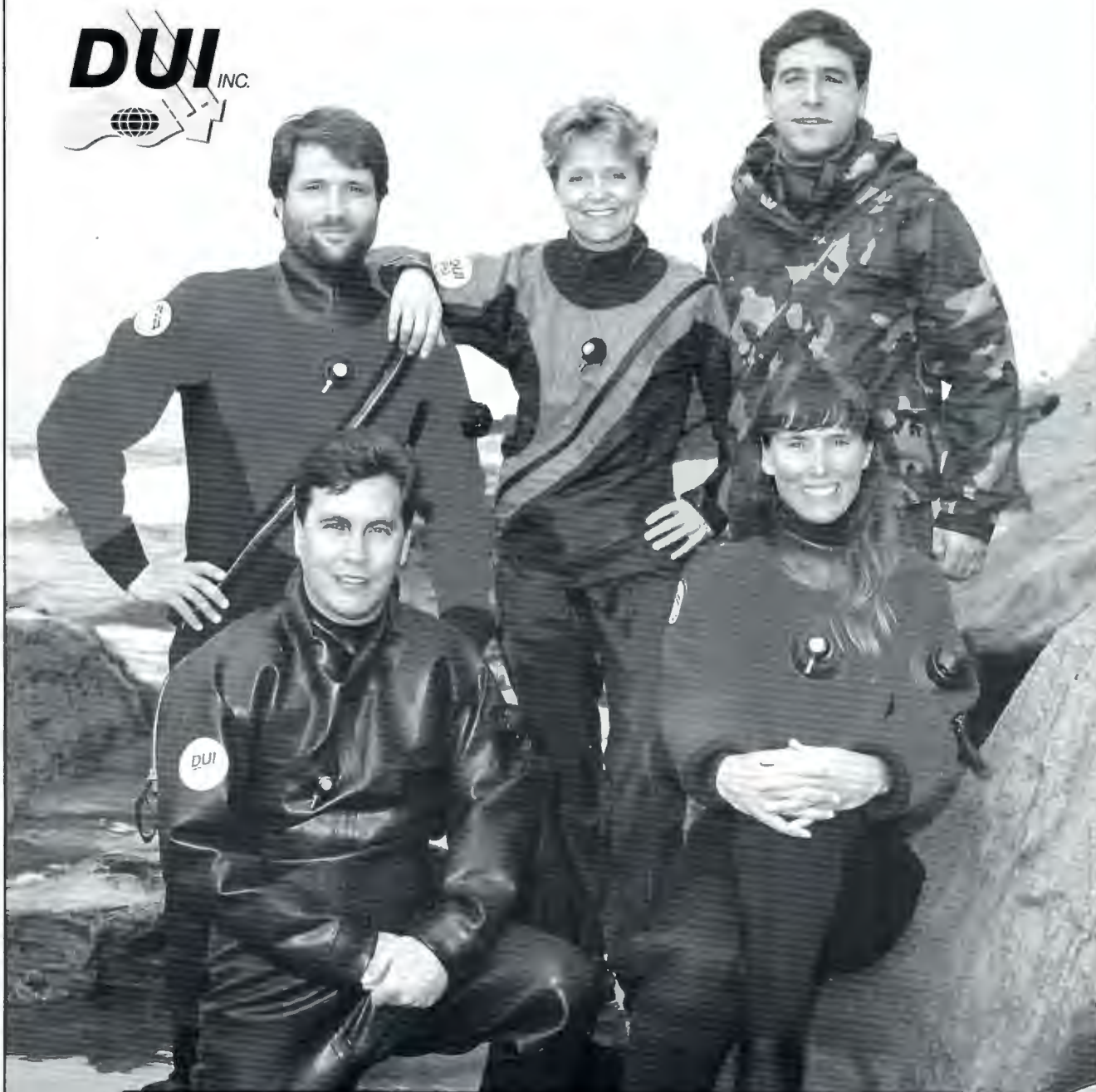
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