

The Scuba Scoop

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50 yrs+

The Official Newsletter of the
Saginaw Underwater Explorers

-Serving the Tri-Cities since 1958!

<http://www.saginawunderwaterexplorers.org>

Club Meetings- Held at 7:00 pm on the second Tuesday of each month,
at the Thomas Twp. Fire Station on the corner of Dice and Thomas.

No Meeting this month! See inside...



U.S.S. Vandenberg before it was sunk off the Florida keys.
Bill Giorgis recently dove it, and his account is contained on pg
3.

Inside....

- *RSVP Christmas Party!*
- *President's Message*
- *Florida Excursion*
- *Coming in January...*

also selected short subjects

Christmas Card Cover by Cora



Remember Our Troops!

December Club Meeting; RSVP

STOP! HALT! The monthly meeting for December will not be held! Instead, plan on conducting any necessary business items at the SUE Christmas Party. (Such as paying your annual dues for the advance discount) More on the party detailed below...

Here's President Fabish-

Don't forget the Saginaw Underwater Explorers Christmas Party coming up Dec 11 at Timbers Bar & Grill. This is a time to bring the whole family-kids included-to visit and enjoy the fellowship of our family of members. VP Tony has made the arrangements for a special menu for us and all the room; we'll need to have a great time. We all take care of our own meals, and the club will have prizes and SURPRISES for the event. On deck for entertainment is a presentation by Dave Sommers, a special presentation by Bill Atkins, and a magic show by Ken Kruska. Please RSVP with a head count by the end of November at piazza.anthony@sbcglobal.net or 989-751-0361. Also, you may have received your renewal notice by now as a reminder to save \$5 by renewing your SUE membership at/or before our first meeting of 2011. We've had several take advantage and re-new already. And, congratulations to Scot Thompson, who was elected our new Secretary to fill the vacancy left by Jim Jesselaitis. Scot will be on the board through to the next election, and who knows, may want to keep his hat in the ring for the next term, too. Thank you Scot, for being available to the club.

Our Jan 11 meeting will be something special for everyone! Don Cunningham has arranged for a Saginaw Township author to do a presentation for us on some of the history of Drummond Island, MI. Jill Brumwell's grandfather built the first boat capable of carrying cars to the island, and his car was the first to drive on Drummond. They have used part of a ship and remodeled it into a cabin on the island. She also knows of area shipwrecks and the history behind them. You'll want to bring your spouse, family, and friends to support Jill as our local representative of Michigan history. She also have some of her books there for signing. More info to come; let's give her a grand welcome!

-Mike

Advance information on the January Speaker"



Jill Brumwell's roots on Michigan's isolated Drummond Island, in Lake Huron at the eastern tip of the Upper Peninsula, go back to the 1880s, and she grew up there along with next door cousins Gayle and Donny.

The book covers a year in their life, 1946, when Brumwell was in third and fourth grade. It is filled with color illustrations drawn by Sarah Irene Venable, an art teacher at Arthur Hill High School, along with Brumwell's anecdotes, a map of the island, a family recipe and present-day photos of the island.

Brumwell's first two books were "Drummond Island History: Folklore and Early People" and "Growing Up on Drummond Island," a nostalgic memoir aimed at adults and covering her early years through high school.

-More on Jill's story in the Jan Scoop. In the mean time, check out

<http://www.seamanfamily.net/feature2->

Dive News-

First, the planned club dive to Petoskey last month was scrubbed at the last minute. Lake Michigan was sending it's own hurricane level winds, along with 30' waves. Prudent planners decided against the dive.

Perhaps a better story... Bill Giorgis recently made a warm water dive off the Florida Keys, diving on the sunken ship U.S.S. Vandenburg. Bill relates a great time-



Charter boat 'Sea Eagle' heading out

Diving the USNS Gen. Hoyt S. Vandenberg By Bill Giorgis

On May 27, 2009 at 10:21 AM the US Navy ship Gen. Hoyt S. Vandenberg was sunk to become the largest artificial reef in the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, and the second largest in the world. The ship settled upright on her keel in 1 minute 44 seconds, exactly as predicted by the many model tests performed to design the sink plan. Marine life began colonizing immediately and the ship is now home to pelagic and reef fish, and many other species of marine plants and animals.

I have been diving in the waters of the Florida Keys since the mid 1980's. My first dives were as a student from Wayne State University. I was working at Pigeon Key Marine Station and my diving around the Seven Mile Bridge piers was to collect marine samples for biology research at the station.

I dove on the surrounding reefs on the weekends when my work was done and became addicted to the warm waters of the keys and the diversity of the ecosystem. I was able to go on a charter to an old wreck of a freighter and was amazed at the diversity

of the animal and plant life that had blanketed the wreck. This was unlike any fresh water wreck that I had ever dived.

Since that time I have returned to the Keys to dive and enjoyed the reef year after year and the occasional wreck dive. The wrecks were always beyond the reef a long and often rocky boat ride. This was to change in the years to come.

Over the last several years, the Florida Keys Marine Sanctuary in conjunction with the US Navy has sunk three retired Navy ships as artificial reefs and dive attractions. The first ship was the USN Spiegel Grove sunk in 2002 near Key Largo for more information <http://www.spiegelgrove.com/>. The second ship was the USN Oriskany, an aircraft carrier, sunk in 2006 near Pensacola for more information <http://www.divemightyo.com/>. The third was the communication ship the USN Hoyt S. Vandenberg sunk in May 2009 west of Key West for more information <http://www.bigshipwrecks.com/>.



In the spring of 2010 I was making my dive plans for Key West. I had planned on several reef dives and maybe a drift dive. I arrived in Key West early in April 2010 and met with Leslie the owner of the Captains Corner <http://www.captainscorner.com/>. I was looking at the week ahead and asked Leslie, what was scheduled for dive trips and what were my best options. Leslie and I had become friends over the many years that I have been diving with her company. I had become known as the crazy diver from up north that always dove with an AGA mask. I remembered Leslie and the staff by bringing Saginaw Dive Rescue hats, t-shirts and sweatshirts over the years. Leslie was excited to tell me of the trip scheduled for the Vandenberg. It would be a 2 dive trip, the first a deep dive on the Vandenberg, then a shallow dive on the return trip to the dock. I would do a couple of shallow reef dives the next day then off for the deep

dive to the Vandenberg.

The reef dives went well, warm clear waters and good dive buddies. The next morning we were off to the Vandenberg. The weather was clear and warm, but the winds were blowing at 20 knots and the seas were running 4' to 6'. The boat was full of eager divers. We would be one of a few boats going out to the Vandenberg as several other charters had cancelled their trip because of the seas and winds.

I loaded my tote and got settled into my pre-dive routine on the Sea Eagle. I talked to the dive master and was paired up with 2 others for my first dive on the Vandenberg. The bottom would be nearly 140', the deck would be 92' to 95', the super structure and the wheelhouse along with the communications dishes would be from 40' to 85'. I met with my new buddies and we planned our dive for 80 feet maximum for 25 minutes with a 3 minute safety stop. As we left the safety of the harbor and came out of the lee of Key West the reality of the heavy seas hit the boat hard. We would have a long rough ride to the site, at the 10-minute mark we were all asked to get ready and get in quickly. There would be a current in addition to the seas and the winds. As we approached the mooring buoys we started to gear up. After years of dressing and gearing up in the back of the dive van for emergency runs, this was a quick and easy gear up. The boat was moored, a safety tank dropped in and a traverse line installed to help divers to the down line on the bow of the Vandenberg. I pulled my AGA mask over my head, cinched the straps and made my giant stride into the warm yet rough waters. I immediately descended to the traverse line and held on as the current was ripping past me. I waited on the line for my buddies. When they arrived we pulled ourselves to the down line. We fought the current all the way down. We arrived and swam over to the side of the pilothouse and were out of the current. I lead the dive along the port side of the ship from the bow. We explored the wheelhouse and the open passageways. We came out amid ships at the satellite dishes. As we swam over the deck we enjoyed the views of the newly grown of coral, polyps and gorgonian. The nooks and crannies were full of fish hiding for safety, hiding from the big pelagic fish that prey on the smaller fish and hang around the ship for a quick meal. The halfway point was nearing and we turned back to the bow as we traversed the beam of the ship toward the starboard side. We came across 2 weight belts that had been ditched by other divers. We grabbed them and slowly worked our way toward

the bow. The current was at our back now and was pushing us toward the bow. The ascent line was looming ahead as the current threatened to push us right off the ship and into open water. We grabbed the line and began our ascent slowly and safely. As we arrived at the traverse line there was a traffic jam of divers doing their safety stop, at the intersection of the ascent line and the traverse line. I bypassed the jam and swam to an open spot on the traverse line and slowly worked my way to the stern of the SEA EAGLE while staying at 20 feet and completing my safety stop.

The stern ladders in high seas are not your friend! The boat was pitching in the heavy seas and 2 of us were carrying extra weight belts, **NOT ONE OF MY SMARTEST DECISIONS!** I timed my exit attempt to avoid getting hit by a ladder or a face full of vomit. I grabbed the lowest rung, quickly passed up the extra weights and fins and climbed on board. Safely aboard, I assisted the crew with recovering other divers. We had 2 divers on board that had out of air emergency ascents and were on oxygen. We had 2 divers that had blown off the trailing line and were now drifting free. The crew reacted quickly and swam out another line to them and pulled them in to the boat. The Captain scrubbed the second dive as the 2 divers that had come up out of air needed medical attention. The Sea Eagle was released from the mooring buoy and headed to the safety of the Key West Harbor. A very eventful and stressful dive completed.



Fast forward to October 2010 another trip to Key West for some needed rest and warm water diving. Hats and t-shirts are packed in the dive box for Leslie and the crew of the Sea Eagle at the Captains Corner. The plan is the same. Head down to see Leslie and look at the schedule. I plan a couple of shallow reef dives to get acclimated and as a warm up. Then

another trip to the Vandenberg!

The first trip to the reef was amazing. I buddied up with a New Jersey diver that had transplanted to Bradenton Florida. He had over 4000 dives and was worried that I would slow him down and mess up his bottom time. Bob and I chatted on the way out to the reef. He became more comfortable with me and my skill level and he was a little inquisitive about my AGA mask. He insisted that we be first in and last out. The dive master allowed us 75 minutes or 500 pounds. Bob and I were the first divers in the water. We had a leisurely dive around the reef. Bob was a very skilled and observant diver. He scoured the reef for any unique signs of life. As our time was running out our air was just below 1500 pounds. We arrived under the Sea Eagle and explored the bottom below the boat, as our 75 minutes approached. We surfaced on time as the last ones out of the water. We both had nearly identical air consumption at 1200 pounds. We headed to the second reef and once again we were the first in and last out. Bob and I had great dives together. Tomorrow the Vandenberg!

The morning was a little dicey. There was an overnight thunderstorm and light rains and light winds still swept over Key West. I was excited about getting back on the Vandenberg. I didn't want a little bad weather to ruin my dive to the Vandenberg. I checked in with Leslie on the dock and she said the weather was clearing. Several other boats had cancelled their trips to the Vandenberg and we were going to pick up several divers, from other charters, including 5 Coast Guard rescue swimmers. Leslie warned us to keep an eye on Coasties, because they were young and knew it all. Leslie told us that of all the divers aboard they would be the ones to push the limits and get into trouble.

Unlike my first trip to the Vandenberg, this ride was much more pleasant. The rain had cleared and the winds were light with the seas 1' to 2'. The dive master paired me another experienced diver. I sat with Dave on the way out and we discussed our plan. He wanted to use and follow his computer and I agreed to let him lead. We would try to stay above the deck in the 80' depth for 25 to 30 minutes allowing a 3 minute safety stop. Dave was a videographer from upstate New York with lots of deep cold water dives. We would get along just fine. We arrived on the site and had our choice of the mooring buoys. The Captain put us amid ships. I geared up quickly, pulled my mask on and made my giant stride entry. I quickly descended to the traverse line and waited for

Dave to come with his camera. There was no discernable current, what a change. We swam leisurely toward the descent line. I could see the top of the communication towers as we descended to the Vandenberg. The visibility was 30' to 40'. Our plan was to swim along the port side to the fantail, then work our way along the starboard side then ascend. Dave and I explored the satellite dishes, and the stern cabins as we worked our way to the fantail. Our time and air were running close. We swam through a school of baitfish as the barracudas hung just out of reach. Dave and I came back to the ascent line and began our trip to the surface. His computer and my table dive were running closely together. We arrived on the surface with just over 1000 pounds each. We began our surface interval. The Captain decided to stay put as the weather had cleared up nicely.

Once the hour had passed we were allowed to head back to the Vandenberg. Dave had checked his computer. We would be staying a little shallower this time 60' to 70' as we explored the bow and the pilothouse.

I geared up strapped my mask on and was over the side hanging on the traverse line awaiting Dave and his video camera. We descended to the dishes again. This dive we headed along the starboard side toward the bow. We hovered over the deck and swam with the big barracuda and parrotfish that had claimed the bow as their own. As you swim over the pilothouse you see the US flag that flies gently in the current. The bow has the winches in place and a large shock of anchor chain. As we came around to the port side we swam through the upper deck that was wide open. We arrived at the satellite dishes and checked our time and air. We still had time and air to spare. We swam over the dishes and spied 2 lionfish. They were juveniles. The lionfish is an invasive species and has no natural predators. They are very venomous and dangerous for divers. We left the dishes and began our ascent. We arrived at the stern of the Sea Eagle after our safety stop and climbed back aboard with over 1000 pounds of air and well within our limits a truly great dive. As we were hanging out on the traverse line for our safety stop I saw a group of 5 divers swimming aggressively toward the stern. Once on the boat, we knew who the 5 divers were. The Coast Guard guys had not seen the stern during either dive and decided to race toward the stern rather than miss it. They ran low on air and surfaced on the stern mooring line 250' from our mooring location. The dive master had to swim a line to them and pull

all 5 guys back to the boat. Leslie had them pegged before we left the dock. The weather was great. The buddies were great. The Captain and crew were great! A spectacular set of dives on my return to the Vandenberg.



If you are heading out to the deep water dives of Florida be prepared for the challenge. Know your limits and stay within them. There have been over 20 fatalities in the Keys diving over the past year.

If you get a chance to dive in Key West stop by and see Leslie, tell her you are from Saginaw and they will treat you like royalty. You might even see a Saginaw Dive Rescue shirt or hat. -Bill

(Thanks, Bill! -ed -Archived photos by Sommers)

SRMHS Presentation; Dennis Hale



Dennis Hale is the lone survivor of the Daniel J. Morrell.

In November of 1966, the ore carrier Daniel J. Morrell went down in a storm in Lake Huron, just off Michigan's 'thumb'. 28 lives were lost. There was a single survivor; Dennis Hale. Dennis was invited to speak last month by the Saginaw River Marine Historical Society, in Bay City. Bill Atkins and UrEd attended.

Dennis relates how the ship broke up, and he spent 38 hours in an open raft in the frigid waters of Lake Huron. It's presumed he lived because he had a life vest on over his body trapping heat, and a pea coat on over that. The Coast Guard found him near Pt. Aux Barques. He has undergone 11 surgeries on his left foot, due to complications from frostbite.

Dennis was a good speaker, relating his feelings. He mentioned there was an early period that he didn't want to talk about it; then he realized he needed to talk.

UrEd recommends; if Dennis is scheduled for another talk near you, Go!

MERRY CHRISTMAS &



HAPPY NEW YEAR!

-from Cora the copy girl, and the staff and stockholders of the SCOOP, we wish all our faithful readers the very best in this coming year.

Please remember our troops overseas.

Scuba Scoop

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RIC MIXTER's book, "The Wheelsman retails for \$19.95 and is available from www.lakefury.com"

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S.U.E. 2010 Planner

Dec 11- Christmas Party

FOR SALE/WANTED/PERSONALS

Selling All Gear:

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Wanted: Used computer, ATX motherboard with 1.7GHz Intel Celeron processor
-Don, 642 8436

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