



# FAIRFIELD COUNTY DIVING ASSOCIATION SURFACE INTERVAL

July 2003

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## The President's Corner by Mel Rich, Jr.

No doubt this has been one of the slowest starts of any dive season that I can remember. Those consecutive rainy weekends early in the season put a damper on our diving plans! Charter boat captains lament! Mother Nature was absolutely relentless with the whole east coast. The days preceding my annual trip with 'The Boys' to North Carolina had shown no signs of improvement either. It was mid to late June but felt more like early May. And our ride down was often through torrential down pours. Would there be a silver lining in those clouds for us? With six days of wreck diving scheduled we sure hoped so. We dream about this week all year long! Seems more so as time goes by.

It was our good fortune the skies parted the day we arrived. The weather seemed to be finally calming down although the air temperature was still lower than normal. Within a couple of days warmer temperatures would prevail. Early Sunday morning we made our way down to the boat to begin loading gear for our six day adventure. We received a warm welcome from Captain Jerry Smith and first mate Justin. Our first trip with them was the previous year. It was obvious then that the chem-

istry was right. And the reunion felt good. They told us how tough a season it had been for them with many charter days lost to bad weather. The good news was that the forecast for our week called for light winds. At least in the beginning of the week. As it turned out we got out every day of the week. A perfect six for six! That's somewhat remarkable for the Outer Banks. The previous year we had a perfect five for five. That makes two years in a row without a blowout day. More remarkable yet!

We all enjoyed ourselves immensely. Our days were spent doing what we love most. Being out to sea exploring the wrecks and enjoying the topside camaraderie. Heading back to shore at the end of the day with the warm salt air in our faces and a cold beer in our hands. Stories around the dinner table enjoying good food and drink. Now that's living baby! Hey the season is still early and there's more to come! Fort Wetherill diving/cookout days, shark cage charters and our annual Cape Ann weekend. The more the merrier!

## A Tenet Of Diving Fine-Tuned

The National Association of Underwater Instructors (NAUI) is introducing into its training program the "rule of halves," which it recommends divers use when ascending from depths of more than 40 feet (12 m) in salt water. Instead of making one safety stop for 3 minutes about 15 feet from the surface, divers are now urged to make two stops. The first should be made half way to the surface and last about 1 minute. The second should occur 15 feet from the surface and last about 2 minutes.

The recreational dive safety stop — also called precautionary decompression stop — is a standard safety procedure preached by dive certification agencies. It is done to reduce the amount of nitrogen bubbles that form inside a diver's body. In recommending the "rule of halves," NAUI says research shows a deep safety stop results in a reduction of nitrogen bubble formation when used with recreational dive tables.

The change in "deep dive" proce-

dures was proposed by NAUI leaders Dr. Bruce Wienke of the Los Alamos National Laboratory and Timothy O'Leary, director of NAUI Technical Diving Operations. They made their case during a February conference on decompression stops, and based it on data, experiments, and analysis by Wienke, Dr. Alf Burbakk, and research by Drs. Peter Bennett and Alessandro Marroni of Divers Alert Network (DAN). Officially, the deci-

(Continued on page 2)



## June Meeting Raffle Winners

After a fascinating presentation on "Galapagos, The Enchanted Islands" by Chris Bradbury, we held our regular monthly raffle to support our **DAN** sponsorship.

Winners in our **DAN** raffle were: Dacor Dive Mask donated by Orbit Marine - **John Tricarico**, Mares Wrist Mount Depth Gauge donated by Orbit Marine - **Jeff Susa**; PADI Divers Log donated by Orbit Marine - **Colleen**

**Lewit**; Small Mesh Bag donated by Orbit Marine - **Steve Ziobrowski**; Large Camera Bag donated by New England Dive Center - **Colleen Lewit**; UK Trigger Dive Knife donated by Ski and Scuba Connection - **Tom Provencal**; Manta Mask Strap donated by Ski and Scuba Connection - **Tom Stark** and an Aeris Mesh Fin Bag donated by Ski and Scuba Connection - **Tom Provencal**.

Special thanks to those who donated prizes for this meeting to help support our **DAN** Raffle: **Orbit Marine Sports Center, Ski and Scuba Connection** and **New England Dive Center**.

Remember, you can't win if you don't buy tickets and you can't buy tickets if you don't come to FCDA events and meetings!



**FAIRFIELD  
COUNTY  
DIVING  
ASSOCIATION**

P.O. Box 3005,  
Fairfield, CT 06824

Internet mail: [fcda@aol.com](mailto:fcda@aol.com)  
<http://members.aol.com/fcda>

### 2003 Board

President	Mel L. Rich, Jr.
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## A Tenet Of Diving Fine-Tuned (continued)

*(Continued from page 1)*

sion comes from the NAUI Worldwide Board of Directors Technical Diving Committee, in conjunction with NAUI Worldwide's Training Committee.

The "rule of halves" will be introduced over time, said Jed Livingstone, vice president of NAUI Worldwide. He compares the change in protocol to the introduction of the safety stop at 15 feet (5 m). At the time of its introduction, critics claimed it wasn't necessary, he said, but most divers embraced it as an added measure of safety.

"Are divers somehow in jeopardy if they don't follow it?" Livingstone said. "No. But will they increase their level of safety? Sure."

Other dive certification agencies have not adopted the change. Gary Clark of Scuba Schools International, said the issue has not been discussed. Officials with the Professional Association of Diving Instructors (PADI) could not be reached by press time.

NAUI recommends entry-level divers not to dive deeper than 60 feet (18 m), and advanced scuba divers no deeper than 100 feet (30 m). The maximum recommended depth for recreational divers is 130 feet (40 m).

The "rule of halves" states that:

"For table-based no-required-decompression dives in excess of 40 fsw (feet salt water) [12 meters salt water], divers should halve the dis-

tance to the surface from the dive's deepest depth and make a 1-minute safety stop at that depth, followed by a 2-minute safety stop in the 15 fsw (5 msw) zone. For example, on a dive to 100 fsw (30 msw) the diver should make a 1-minute stop at about 50 fsw (16 msw) and a 2-minute stop at about 15 fsw (5 msw)."

On dives shallower than 40 fsw (12 msw), the standard 3-minute precautionary stop at about 15 fsw (5 msw) should be completed, NAUI recommends.

Through an analysis of more than 16,000 actual dives it was found that decompression injuries are likely due to ascending too quickly, and that the introduction of deep stops, without changing the rate of ascent, reduced high bubble grades to near zero, from 30.5 percent without deep stops. These findings led to the conclusion that a deep stop at half the dive depth should reduce the critical fast gas tensions and lower the DCI (decompression illness) incidence rate. Further study found that longer decompression times are not always better when it comes to bubble formation. Researchers found more bubbling with longer but shallower staged decompression stops compared with slower and deeper linear ascents.

Reprinted from *Dive Training*, June 2003.



## Events of Interest to FCDA Members

<u>DATE</u>	<u>EVENT</u>
July 19, 2003	<b>Orbit Diver Charter</b> -Dive Site to be voted on that morning. Afternoon dive 1pm followed by cocktails and dive stories at Captain' Cove. For more information, call Mel Rich Jr at (203) 445-0309 or e-mail: DiverMel@aol.com.
<b>August 2, 2003</b>	<b>"Caribbean Night"</b> - 7:00 PM. Fayerweather Yacht Club, Bridgeport, CT. Food, Minimal Cash Bar, Steel Drum Band, Dancing, Limbo Contest, DAN Raffle, and more! All this for only \$30 per person. Advance reservations required! For more information, call Pat Franz at (203) 333-7551.
September 20-21, 2003	<b>Cape Ann Weekend</b> . Great getaway weekend! In addition to diving, there's canoeing, whale watching and shopping topped off with cocktails by the campfire. For more information, call Mel Rich Jr, at (203) 445-0309 or e-mail: DiverMel@aol.com.
October 19, 2003	<b>Annual FCDA Underwater Pumpkin Carving/Beach Cleanup</b> 10:00 AM - Registration (High Tide - 11:11 AM), 11:00 AM - Dive, 12:00 NN Cookout. Donations of salads and desserts welcome. For more information, call Pat Franz at (203) 333-7551
December 6, 2003	<b>Annual FCDA Christmas/Hanukah Party</b> - 7:00 PM. Fayerweather Yacht Club. Save the date!

## Archaeologists Dive Into Mystery Of Actor's Legendary, Sunken Yacht by Neal Jones

At the base of the steep cliffs that surround the grounds of the actor's opulent stone castle, historians and archaeologists are beginning to study the remains of The Aunt Polly, Gillette's huge yacht-turned houseboat, which sank on its moorings after a fire in December 1932. The rusted, charred remains lie along the rocks of the lower Connecticut River Valley shoreline. The wreck was named one of two underwater archaeological preserves by the Connecticut Historical Commission in May.

State archaeologists and histori-

ans gathered there last week like modern-day Watsons to begin to measure, document and decode the pieces to determine not only the exact specifications of the yacht, but also to chronicle its significance to nautical archaeology and its importance in Gillette's history.

"This has been on the state files for a long time, but we've never had an opportunity to do this until now," said state Archaeologist Nicholas Belantoni.

The Aunt Polly is considered one of the state's "most intriguing ship-

wrecks," said Cece Saunders of Westport's Historical Perspectives, an archaeological consultant. The other underwater preserve, the wreck of Light Vessel 51 off Cornfield Point in Old Saybrook, rests on the bottom of Long Island Sound.

The designation certifies each site as "historical" and not only provides statutory protection for the wrecks, said David A. Poirier, Connecticut Historical Commission archaeologist, but also greater resources to educate the public.

*(Continued on page 4)*



## Archaeologists Dive Into Mystery Of Actor's Legendary, Sunken Yacht by Neal Jones (continued)

*(Continued from page 3)*

"There are some historical wrecks that need to be protected and preserved so they can be enjoyed and appreciated by everybody," he said.

Paid for by a \$25,000 grant from the state Department of Environmental Protection, the team will develop a booklet and mount a plaque near The Aunt Polly based on its research.

Members hope to have the work completed before summer ends, Saunders said.

Most of the wreck is easily accessible and visible at low tide, making it ripe for archaeological inspection, said Gillette Castle curator Henry Alves.

"It is kind of neat to actually stand in it," said Alves, who became curator in March. "To be able to do this first-hand is a dream for me."

Saunders said Historical Perspectives will combine the field-work with historical records to paint a complete picture of the yacht and its history. A team of Mystic Seaport archaeologists will visit the site, as well, said Saunders.

Volunteers from The Friends of the State Archaeologist also will help.

"You always combine the research in the library with the research in the field," she said.

Gillette, who died in 1937, launched the yacht sometime around 1900 and is rumored to have entertained the likes of Albert Einstein and Gov. Wilbur Cross, among others, aboard it. It was during one of his lazy sails down the scenic river when Gillette first eyed the land for his castle home, now a state park.

The Aunt Polly was built specifically for Gillette.

During the castle's five-year construction, Gillette lived on board the yacht. He hired a Brooklyn, N.Y., company to cut the entire ship in half and add 44 feet, turning the 100-foot yacht into a 144-foot houseboat, making it unique among similar boats of its time. No one knows what started the fire that eventually sank it.

"What flips me out is the size of it," said Mystic Seaport senior curator William N. Peterson, speculating on the various pieces scattered on the beach.

Despite years of erosion, battering from the wakes of passing motorboats and the occasional scavenger, what remains is in good condition and should yield a number of finds, Peterson said.

There is an intact bilge pump and a 100-foot beam, perhaps installed to reinforce the hull, that lies intact across the beach as well. The remains of what appears to be a water tank and pump lie buried in the sand.

"This is pointing us in the right direction for very specific research," said Peterson.

An initial site investigation in June produced "more questions than answers," Saunders said. "Every time you turn around you realize there is something else. But that's what

makes its so interesting and so much fun to unravel."

Reprinted from the New Haven Register – July 7, 2003

## Discarded War Munitions Leach Poisons Into the Baltic by Marlise Simons

ALLIN, Estonia - American teams may be struggling to find chemical weapons and other poisonous materials in Iraq, but tens of thousands of bombs and barrels filled with blistering agents and nerve gas lie scattered in the Baltic Sea and the eastern Atlantic.

American, British and Soviet military dumped them there after World War II. Entire ships full of weapons, most of them captured from Nazi Germany, were scuttled for disposal and forgotten. Now they have come back to haunt the environment.

Over time, scientists say, the weapon casings have corroded in the seawater and become brittle, allowing poisons like arsenic, lewisite, mustard gas and sarin to leach out. Scientists from the Baltic countries and Russia have found lethal material mixed in with sediments, and highly toxic sulfur mustard gas, transformed into

*(Continued on page 5)*

## FCDA Member Ads

Hey - have you got a non retail-diving business that you'd like to share with fellow members of FCDA? Get your business card size ad in the FCDA monthly newsletter "*Surface Interval*" for only \$50.00 for one year. Give your business a boost and help support the production of our monthly newsletters. For more information, write to FCDA, P.O. Box 3005, Fairfield, CT 06824 or email to [fcda@aol.com](mailto:fcda@aol.com).

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## Discarded War Munitions Leach Poisons Into the Baltic by Marlise Simons (continued)

*(Continued from page 4)*

brown-yellow clumps of gel, has washed ashore.

The problem is compounded by fishermen who have gone into risky areas to chase depleted fish stocks, using increasingly aggressive methods, including bottom tackle that snag the bombs. They routinely find mustard gas clumps among their catch and haul up whole or damaged chemical bombs in their nets.

"We had 10 cases of people finding bombs this year," said Beger Rasmussen, head of the Fishermen's Association of Bornholm, the Danish island close to one of the main dumping grounds. Denmark, which offers special incentives for reporting munitions to the military for retrieval, has recorded more than 400 such incidents in the last two decades.

Scientists believe that some of the poisons dissipate in the water, but others, like arsenic, can build up in the food chain. Little is known about their effect on marine biology, but people touching or inhaling them are likely to get hurt. Several fishermen have been treated for burns and other poisoning symptoms after handling leaking shells.

Fishing is now forbidden around the four main dumping grounds, which hold an estimated 300,000 tons of munitions. But in other areas, where sea currents and bottom tackle have dispersed many shells, vessels are required to keep gas masks, rubber gloves and special medical kits with antipoison powders and injections on board.

Either ignored or kept secret by governments until the 1980's, the dumps have now become a subject of debate among environmental and other concerned citizens' groups, some of

*(Continued on page 7)*

## FCDA Donors

The business listed on this page has donated dive gear and dive services to help support the Fairfield County Diving Association.



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# FAIRFIELD COUNTY DIVING ASSOCIATION



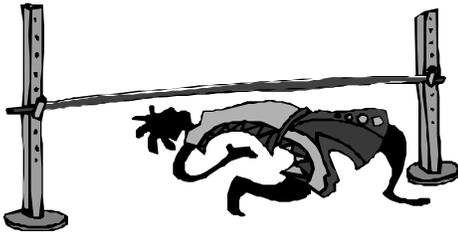
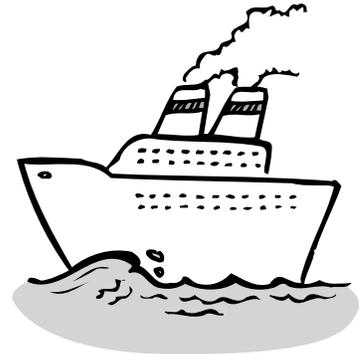
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## Discarded War Munitions Leach Poisons Into the Baltic by Marlise Simons (continued)

*(Continued from page 5)*

whom have demanded urgent clean-ups. With four Baltic states - Poland, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania - set to join the European Union next year, all types of pollution are coming under new scrutiny. But there is wide disagreement on what to do about the rusting chemical bombs.

Mr. Rasmussen, of the Bornholm fishermen's association, said it would help if governments from all nine Baltic countries would follow the Danish example. When a Danish captain finds a suspicious object, Mr. Rasmussen said, he calls a naval emergency number. A navy team boards the vessel to disinfect the crew and the ship and destroy the catch. The fishermen are reimbursed for their lost income.

"It's the only way," Mr. Rasmussen said. "We know that Polish, Swedish and German fishermen use bottom nets and pull up bombs. Then they throw them back and they keep scattering them. I say: pay the fishermen, so they're not afraid to lose their catch, and the military will pick up the bombs." But the Baltic and the North Sea are only part of the world's underwater chemical weapons graveyards. Large arsenals were also discarded in waters off the United States, Australia, Britain, Canada, Japan and Russia, according to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons in The Hague.

Others sites are still unaccounted for because marine dumping was required to be declared under the Chemical Weapons Convention only after 1985. Compared with other ocean dumps, the Baltic Sea is particularly sensitive. It is shallower than most and its semi-enclosed, brackish waters are renewed only every 30 years.

*(Continued on page 8)*

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## FCDA Donors

# Discarded War Munitions Leach Poisons Into the Baltic by Marlise Simons (continued)

(Continued from page 7)

Some scientists and politicians insist that the chemical bombs must be retrieved. Arnold Ruutel, the president of Estonia, told a recent meeting on the Baltic environment that the discarded munitions contained an estimated 60,000 tons of toxic agents, including 14 chemicals. He called for a regional plan "to neutralize this source of danger," adding that "this is our responsibility for future generations."

Vadim Paka, director of the Oceanography Institute in the Russian enclave of Kaliningrad, said surveys showed that "even deep waters are not safe for toxic materials because bottom currents can be turbulent and move the poisons around."

He said his team of marine scientists found mustard gas residues in the soil last year and arsenic up to 100 times higher than normal levels. "I don't think we face a catastrophe," he said. "But any persistent highly toxic agent in the ecosystem is dangerous."

Others, including military experts, insist that it is best to let the weapons degrade in the water, allowing time and bacteria to break them down. Clearing the dumps, they argue, is very costly and risky because the munitions could explode or break up, causing additional damage. "After numerous studies, the government concluded that it's safest to leave the munitions alone," Svend Auken, Denmark's former minister of environment, said.

One option being debated is a plan to entomb the deteriorating shells in cement. On the sea floor off the Norwegian and Swedish coasts lie some 40 ships filled with chemical and other weapons, retrieved from Nazi Germany and scuttled on American and British orders in the late 1940's. Mr. Paka said

(Continued on page 9)

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## Discarded War Munitions Leach Poisons Into the Baltic by Marlise Simons (continued)

(Continued from page 8)

the ships' holds could be pumped full of concrete.

Far more complicated, he said, would be coating the large dumps near the islands of Bornholm and Gotland. There, he said, Soviet soldiers simply threw barrels and shells overboard with no containment, spilling them over large areas. They have been further dispersed by currents and fishermen. Any solution, other than ignoring the weapons, is likely to cost millions of dollars, and it is not clear who would pay.

For now, the dumps are monitored sporadically by the Helsinki Commission, an international group that looks after the health of the Baltic Sea. Its last assessment, in 1996, said that the chemical weapons "are not causing any appreciable harm to the Baltic environment" and that the situation "has neither improved nor deteriorated."

At the same time, the commission published detailed instructions for fishermen on the first aid equipment they should keep on board and how to quickly treat any contamination.

"It's an illusion to think we can clear up this mess," said Jean-Pierre Henriot, a geophysicist who has tracked dumps of mustard gas weapons in deep waters off the Belgian coast. "This is a worldwide problem," he said, "and there's no easy way to destroy these munitions in bulk. It's done slowly, one by one." Farmers and fishermen still find them across northern Europe.

With stacks of such weapons from two world wars still waiting to be destroyed, he added, "it makes no sense to collect more from the sea."

Reprinted from The New York Times, June 20, 2003

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## Upcoming FCDA Events

**Next FCDA Meeting - Friday, July 25, 2003 8:00 PM**  
**Coast Guard Cottage - South Benson Marina - Fairfield, CT**

featuring

### **"The Many Faces of DAN**

a presentation by

**R. W. Bill Hamilton**

**Chairman of the Board of Directors of DAN**

Divers Alert Network is the premier organization supporting divers and diving safety. DAN provides a number of diverse services to recreational divers, and itself is a very complex and truly international operation. Dr. Hamilton will provide an overview of the many faces of DAN and how it helps divers, but will also touch on how divers can help DAN. Among the details, with the retirement of Dr. Peter Bennett, DAN's founder and President for the past 23 years, DAN is honoring his service, and is actively searching for a world class expert in diving safety to replace him.

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**FCDA "Caribbean Night" - August 2, 2003**



## SURFACE INTERVAL

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 P.O. Box 3005  
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**FCDA "CARIBBEAN NIGHT" - AUGUST 2, 2003**