

News and Views of the Underwater Archaeological Society of Chicago

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Vol. 14, No. 2

Spring, 2003

She's Down!

The Straits of Mackinac becomes the largest ship ever scuttled in the Great Lakes for the purpose of creating a scuba dive site -- and she's off Chicago!



(PHOTOS BY CRIS KOHL © 2003 BY SEAWOLF COMMUNICATIONS, INC.)

By Cris Kohl. The 200-foot-long historic 1928 auto and passenger steel ferry vessel, *The Straits of Mackinac*, was purposely sunk to create a new scuba dive site approximately eight miles northeast of Chicago on Thursday, April 10, 2003. After being towed out of the industrial wasteland of the Calumet River, into the calm open waters of Lake Michigan and majestically past the impressive Chicago city skyline one final time, her three seacocks below deck were opened at 2:30 PM. The temporary coverings on the lowest portholes (about three feet above the waterline) were also removed to assist in the sinking once the water level was waist-deep in the engine room. *The Straits of Mackinac* remained perfectly level as she settled slowly deeper and deeper into the calm lake until that final minute of sinking, when the ship developed (Continued on page 2...)

In This Issue:

- The Straits of Mackinac Sinking!* Pages 1, 2
- UASC Thumbnail Info (Past Events, etc.) Page 3
- Calendar of Upcoming Maritime Events Page 4
- Potpourri of Maritime/Great Lakes News Page 5
- Membership Information Page 6

Saved Porthole Back on Ship!

You may recall that UASC member **Keith Pearson** "shocked everyone into stunned silence" at an auction of an original *The Straits of Mackinac* porthole last fall by buying it for \$100.00 so he could return it to the ship! It was soundly in place -- the ONLY porthole on the vessel -- just prior to the sinking. **THANK YOU, KEITH, for saving part of this ship!**



...Continued from page 1

a slight list to port and sank stern-first in 78 feet of water at 4:10 PM, leaving more than the 30 feet of clearance demanded by the Coast Guard. Half a dozen boats with media people and project supporters on board, plus a helicopter darting in and out of the site area, witnessed the dramatic final floating moments of *The Straits of Mackinac*.

Eight steel-cable-tethered-to-the-ship 55-gallon cement-filled drums, each weighing about 500 pounds, were dropped in pairs off each quarter, or "corner," of the ship to serve as anchors holding the vessel not only in place, but also upright on her way down. A single diver sent down after the sinking to check her position reported stirred up conditions with visibility being only 1 to 1 1/2 feet, but the ship was sitting upright on an even keel. The sinking had gone perfectly!

UASC member **Hank Fiene** and organizational/financial backers **Pat Hammer** (owner of the Scuba Emporium dive shops and President of Chicago's "Our World -- Underwater," the largest Scuba Show in the Midwest) and **Dave Wetherald** (of the Tim Early Foundation), the 3 main driving forces behind the scuttling of *The Straits of Mackinac*, breathed a sigh of relief. It had been a long time coming.

The Straits of Mackinac had sat idle in a Wisconsin port for 20 years and was in the process of being prepared for sinking as a dive site off Algoma, Wisconsin, by the **Neptune Nimrods**, that state's oldest scuba club, when the carpet was pulled out from under their feet. In early 2002, the new marina owner where the ship was docked demanded her removal within 30 days. Left with too little time to finish the job, **Todd Maurina** and his group sadly told UASC's **Hank Fiene** (who had been searching for a ship to sink) about their plight.



Going



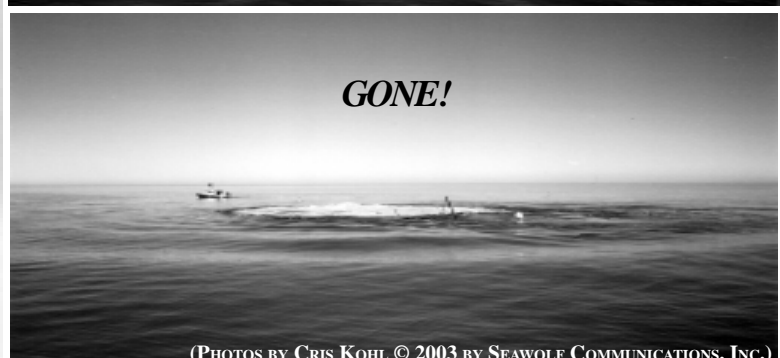
Going!



Going!!



Going!!!



GONE!

(PHOTOS BY CRIS KOHL © 2003 BY SEAWOLF COMMUNICATIONS, INC.)

Hank started the ball really rolling, and in June, 2002, the vessel was towed down to the Calumet River on the tough south side of Chicago, where a small army of divers from many clubs worked part time for months cleaning up and preparing the ship for her sinking.

Red tape (e.g. various required permits and other legal hurdles) kept organizers hopping for the next 10 months. **Pat Hammer** said he could write a whole book about THAT aspect of the sinking alone!

Next newsletter: How UASC members helped sink this ship!

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- Great Lakes Wreck Diving

UASC Thumbnail Info

All photos are by Cris Kohl unless otherwise indicated.



UASC at Shipwreck Festival

These members drove to Dearborn, MI, for the usually annual *Great Lake Shipwreck Festival* on Saturday, February 22, 2003, to set up our booth and promote diving, conservation, UASC, etc.: **Roger Brown, Chet Childs, Cris Kohl, Keith Pearson, Scott Reimer, & Val & Jack Olson Van Heest.** *Left:* Chet Childs and Roger Brown work the UASC booth.

Chicago Maritime Festival

UASC member **Liz Jurkacek** gave a presentation (*right*) at the 1st ever *Chicago Maritime Festival* on Sat., March 1, 2003. Other members **Tom & Chris Kastle** and **Cris Kohl** also presented, while **Bob Gadbois** and **Chet Childs** worked AV.



AV Gratitude Awards

Larry Boucha and **Bob Gadbois** (*left*), two of several UASC members who often work the AV end of Great Lakes scuba shows (sometimes unplanned but welcomed!) received awards in recognition of their work at Milwaukee's *Ghost Ships Festival* on March 15, 2003. They were also presenters, along with UASCers **Valerie Van Heest, Kimm Stabelfeldt** and **Cris Kohl.**

February Guest Speakers

Two doctors, **Claude Zanetti, M.D.** and **Matt Hickey, D.O.** (*right*, with UASC member **Diane Gulczynski**), generously gave UASC members a special seminar on "Fitness for Diving and Divers" and other diving medical information before and at the Feb. meeting. Many THANKS!



March Guest Speaker

Archaeological illustrator **Jack Scott** (*extreme left*) discussed techniques with UASC President **Chet Childs** and members **Roger Brown, Joan Forsberg** and **Diane Gulczynski** at the March UASC meeting. Besides showing his own work on recent archaeological recovery projects, Mr. Scott critiqued some UASC shipwreck drawings and offered useful suggestions for enhancing our work. He has offered to conduct a future workshop on illustration of shipwrecks for UASC members. *Photo and write-up by Past Pres Don Doherty.*



The REAL UASC Meeting Takes Place at Ricobene's!

When UASC gets evicted from its formal meeting place at 9 PM, members head for **Ricobene's** Restaurant, with its original 1946 atmosphere. This is where the REAL running of UASC gets done & **Tony Kiefer** (*above right*) can tell fish tales.



Center Stage

Great Lakes troubador and UASC supporter **Lee Murdock** (*left*) entertained at the *Great Lakes Shipwreck Festival* in Dearborn, MI, on February 22, 2003.



UASC Members at 4th Annual Ghost Ships Festival

Many members of UASC attended (and a few presented as well -- see previous column item) this popular annual show in Milwaukee, WI, on March 15-16, 2003. Pictured above (*from left to right*) are **Keith Pearson, Jack and Valerie Van Heest** (and their future UASC member), Past President **Tony Kiefer, John and Ruth Loftus**, and Past President and Present Archivist **Jim Jarecki**. Those UASC members who attended but are not in the above photos are **Larry Boucha, Cris Kohl & Joan Forsberg, Bob & Clair Gadbois, Gene Hasiak, Liz Jurkacek,** and **Scott Reimer.**

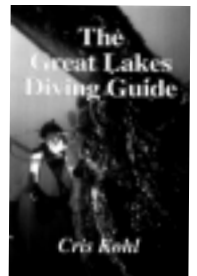
UASC Member Keynote Speaker at Annual Meeting

UASC member **Taras Lyssenko** made a presentation on "The Lost War Planes of Lake Michigan" at the annual meeting of the Chicago Maritime Society on February 6, 2003, at the Chicago Yacht Club. *Congratulations, Taras!*

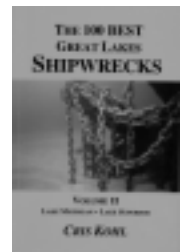


UASC member Joan Forsberg's NEW BOOK! "Diver's Guide to the Kitchen!"

World Premiere at "Our World -- Underwater" on April 25-27, 2003. Watch For It!



Enjoy these other excellent books, too, available in select scuba dive shops and book stores, or directly from the publisher:



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Calendar of Events



April 25-27, 2003 (Fri.-Sun.)--The 33rd annual "Our World--Underwater" show (the largest scuba show in the Midwest/Great Lakes area) at the Donald E. Stephens Convention Center, Rosemont (Chicago), IL, tel: 847-696-2208. Exhibits, workshops, seminars, film festivals. Presentations by UASC members **Nancy Boucha** ("New Guinea Adventures"), **Larry Boucha** ("Huron's Hidden Treasures"), **Bob Gadbois** ("Discovery of the H.C. Akeley"), **Cris Kohl** ("Robert Ballard in the Great Lakes" video at the Friday Evening Film Festival) and **Cris Kohl & Joan Forsberg** ("Crossroads of Disaster -- The Straits of Mackinac Shipwrecks"). 250+ exhibitors. Over 12,000 anticipated attendance. Accommodations at the Hyatt-Regency O'Hare next door, tel. 847-696-1234 (ask for special OW-U rate. See www.ourworldunderwater.org. **UASC will have a booth there. Volunteers are needed!**

June 21-26, 2003 (Sat.-Thurs.)--The **5th World Archaeological Congress** (WAC-5) will be held for the first time in the U.S. this year. Catholic University in Washington, DC, is host. Over 100 papers on u/w archaeological projects from around the world will be presented. In addition, Chris Underwood, the NAS Training Director, will be giving NAS classes to qualify suitably qualified individuals to teach NAS courses. See www.wehlt.flinders.edu.au/wac5/t16.htm (thanks to UASC's **Karen Sinniger** for this information).

August 9-10, 2003 (Sat. & Sun.)--The Great Lakes Shipwreck Museum at Whitefish Point, Michigan, will host scuba/Great Lakes authors (and UASC members) **Cris Kohl and Joan Forsberg** for a weekend-long book signing. Visit www.shipwreckmuseum.com for further information.

October 8-11, 2003 (Thurs.-Sat.)--The 27th annual **DEMA** (Diving Equipment and Marketing Association) Show, held this year in Miami, Florida, for Diving Industry Professionals. Go to www.dema.org for more info.

October 25, 2003 (Sat.)--The annual "Presidents' Night" Dinner of the Illinois Council of Skin and Scuba Divers, Inc. Annual dinner/dance/raffle.

November 8, 2003 (Sat.)--The 16th annual "Gales of November" Show, Duluth, Minnesota. Presentations, booths and displays.

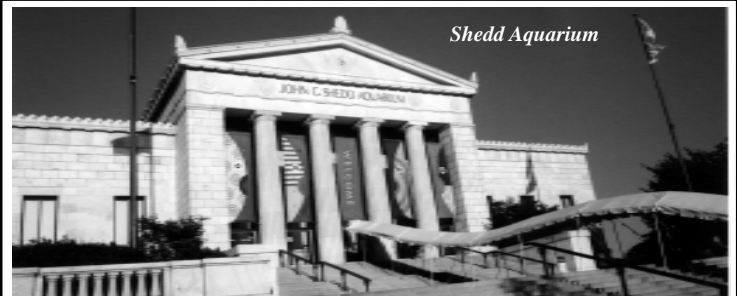
November 8, 2003 (Sat.)--The 8th annual "Shipwrecks Remembered" Show, McMorran Auditorium, Port Huron, Michigan. Presentations, booths and dis-

plays. For more information, call 810-359-8660.

November 9, 2003 (Sun.)--The annual **Underwater Archaeological Society of Chicago Shipwreck Show at the Shedd**. Several presentations including "The sinking of *The Straits of Mackinac*" off Chicago. Call (312) 692-3333 for info.

November 15, 2003 (Sat.)--The 21st annual "Shipwrecks and Scuba" Show, Holiday Inn, Sandusky, Ohio. Presentations, seminars, booths and exhibits. Call 419-483-3074 for more information.

Jan. 7-11, 2004--Soc. of Historical Archaeology Annual Conference, St. Louis.



Shedd Aquarium

UASC Meetings Remaining in 2003

Our meetings are held at the **John C. Shedd Aquarium** just off Lakeshore Drive on the scenic Chicago waterfront on the last Wednesday of every month (unless otherwise noted), beginning at 7 PM at the northwest entrance (the Education side door facing Monroe Harbor) of the **Shedd**. There is no meeting in December.

April 30	May 28	June 25
July 30	August 27	September 24
October 29	November 19	



The Straits of Mackinac passing Chicago one last time. Photo by Cris Kohl

Meet Great Lakes author **Fred Neuschel** at our Wednesday, April 30th meeting. He will discuss the subject of his book, *August and Herman Schuenemann, Tree Captains of Lake Michigan* (perhaps better known as the book about the Christmas Tree Ships!)

The public is invited to this **FREE** lecture. **SEE YOU THERE!**

April Guest Speaker's Topic Notes

by **Jim Jarecki**

The tradition of the Christmas Tree Ships began in the late 1860's and continued for nearly 50 years. Of the many tree ships, the only two that met a fatal end were captained by the Schuenemann brothers. Elder brother August met his end when the schooner *S. Thal* was lost off Glencoe on Nov. 9, 1898. Herman continued the tradition until Nov. 23, 1912, when the schooner *Rouse Simmons* was lost with all hands in a storm off Two Rivers, Wisconsin.



Elsie, the daughter of Capt. Herman Schuenemann, took over the Christmas tree ship business in Chicago after her father's tragic death when the *Rouse Simmons* was lost in 1912. (JAMES JARECKI COLLECTION).

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POTPOURRI

Titanic Returns to Chicago!

From UASC Treasurer **Bob Gadbois**: "This may sound like a promotion, but I was very enthused about a movie Claire and I saw today. 'For those smitten with shipwreck fever---' (to coin a phrase from a UASC presentation), they should run, don't walk, to see the new 3D IMAX movie "**Ghosts of the Abyss.**" Produced by James Cameron, the director of the [big hit movie] "Titanic," it is the best docudrama I've seen on the subject to date. The visuals are absolutely incredible, and the story-telling is superb. It's now playing at the Navy Pier IMAX, the Marcus Addison IMAX in Addison, the Regal Lincolnshire IMAX and the Cinemark IMAX in Woodbridge."



[Editor's Note: I agree 100% with Bob. I had a couple of freebie tickets mailed to me for a special preview showing at the Navy Pier IMAX Theater for Monday evening, April 7th, 2003, four days before the show opened to the public. Since that cute blonde chick with whom I

usually go to the movies was working that evening, I telephoned **Jim Jarecki** early one morning and asked if he wanted to go with me. Unfortunately, he was working that evening, too. He suggested that I ask Mrs. Jarecki, but hey, I'm no dummy. I instead asked **Bob Salvesson**, one of the Room Chairmen of "Our World -- Underwater." Bob lives a block away from me in High Lake, and seven years ago he was chaperoning that cute blond chick whom I referred to earlier when I met her at OWU. And Bob buys the ice cream at the movies! We both thought that "Ghosts of the Abyss" was fantastic and decided that we would take our wives to see it one of these evenings. Just don't tell my wife about that cute blonde chick.]


* * * * *

A new exhibit called "**Sailing Through Time: Great Lakes Maritime Art**" opens at the **Michigan Maritime Museum** in South Haven, MI, on Sunday, April 27, 2003. According to their press release, the exhibit "features a variety of artifacts and art from the Great Lakes. All items, research, and fabrication for this exhibit come from the Museum's collections and research staff. Included are oil paintings, watercolors, lithographs, sketches, wood carvings, ship models, rope work, and even fabric art. Some of the artists whose work will be exhibited are: Bertha Jacques, Remy Champt, James Clary, Dave Hamburg, Dave Davis, Frank Irej, Steve French, Patrick Kelly, Howard Sprague, and Mary Lou Ridley-Richards."

For more information, call the Michigan Maritime Museum (at the bridge in South Haven, MI) at 1-800-747-3810 or visit www.MichiganMaritimeMuseum.org.

* * * * *

It was a pleasure meeting you.
Jim Church



Luis Marsden, who worked for National Geographic Magazine for 50+ years, died in March, 2003. He was best known in scuba circles as the man who "found the bones of the *HMS Bounty*" in 1957. He also did underwater archaeological work on the *HMS Pandora* in Australia.

Sadly, **Jim Church**, noted underwater photographer, longtime instructor of underwater still and video photography, and author of several books on those subjects, passed away at his home in Florida on December 31, 2002.

Very emotional and often angry emails are still flying around the internet in uncomfortably large numbers about that **anchor** allegedly stolen from the St. Lawrence River, with the big New York City Scuba Show, "Beneath The Sea," bearing the brunt of much of the criticism for supposedly allowing one of the people who removed that anchor to make a presentation about its removal from his booth (his originally scheduled formal BTS seminar presentation was cancelled).

Enough is enough. Keep it simple and scrap the emotions: If a crime was committed, someone would have been arrested by now.

* * * * *



The fire tug, *Joseph Medill*.
PHOTO BY CRIS KOHL

The **Neptune Nimrods** of Green Bay, WI, are planning to scuttle another boat to create a new scuba dive site off Algoma, WI, on the Memorial Day weekend, 2003. This 1949 tug, the *Joseph Medill*, will be a substitute for the larger ship, *The Straits of Mackinac*, which they worked hard to sink in those

very waters, but their plan fell through due to circumstances beyond their control (see cover story). *The Straits of Mackinac* was sunk off Chicago recently instead. Ironically, the 92-foot-long *Joseph Medill* was a fire tug boat which worked most of its life in Chicago. THANKS to **Todd Maurina**, President, Neptune Nimrods, for this information.

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Members cannot participate in dive activities if membership is not current.

UASC Wreck Checker

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MISSION STATEMENT — The Underwater Archaeological Society of Chicago (UASC) is a volunteer, not-for-profit organization dedicated to the study and preservation of Illinois' shipwrecks and other underwater cultural resources.

The UASC conducts shipwreck site surveys which employ field drawings, underwater photography and videotape. Field survey work is augmented by academic historical research. The Society attempts to preserve sites by

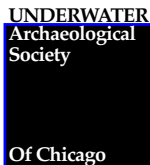
studying the effects of natural and biological forces as well as the impact of human activity on shipwrecks. It advocates responsible use of submerged cultural resources.

Membership is open to everyone. The Society presents the opportunity to meet, work together, and socialize with others who share similar avocational interests. It allows members to apply their diving or other skills to group projects that produce site maps, published surveys, technical drawings, and

educational programs.

The UASC shares the results of its work with the community through publications, museum exhibits, and presentations to all interested public and private groups.

Through its work, the Society hopes to add to the body of archaeological data available to local historians and maritime enthusiasts of future generations. It also seeks to enhance the enjoyment and value of local sport diving.



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