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## THE ANNUAL ELEPHANT / CHRISTMAS PARTY / MEETING

I, for one, feel like I was just passing out Halloween candy last weekend — yet, the month of giving is already upon us. For some of us, this will be the last chance we have to exchange holiday well wishes and hugs before we kick off yet another dive club year!

Yes, Mike & Georgann have scheduled the annual re-gifting of the gifts and re-packaging of the packages at their palatial estate. The White Elephant gift exchange will take place on Saturday, December 11th.

Mike & Georgann Wachter's

33326 Bonnieview

Avon Lake, OH 44012

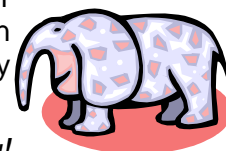
Saturday, December 11th @ 6:00 pm

As you may recall from crummy Christmas past, a White Elephant gift can be any inexpensive item—although it should probably not bring an expression of terror or dread to the fellow diver's face who opens it. As Mike pointed out at our last meeting, it would be appreciated if the gift were something the recipient might actually find useful (even if it's no longer useful to you...)

Yes, this is a bit of a new twist on our past exchanges which have included everything from spare tires, to old garage remotes (who keeps those?), to a box of brassieres. Of course, on the flip side of that same token, we would hate for anyone to have hurt feelings if they don't win the \$70,000 bottle of shipwreck champagne that Kevin is bringing.... (coz my name is all over that one!!!)

There is a limit to the number of times a gift can be traded, and re-traded, and re-traded (assuming someone in the group can keep an accurate count...)

Please plan on bringing a dish to share to the December meeting, along with your gift. LEWD will be supplying the main course of course! (Which we hope & assume will be lovingly prepared by our hostess...)



Thanks Mike and Georg!

## OCSSDI—join our dive team!

The Ohio Council of Skin and Scuba Divers (OCSSDI) has long been a supporter of scuba events, and particularly those that bring together divers from various dive clubs. In order to continue encouraging and supporting these types of events, OCSSDI has offered to pay \$100 toward an OCSSDI team fee for the upcoming Scuba for Diabetes scheduled Sunday, March 6th 2011.

Aqua Amigos 13th Annual Scuba for Diabetes

Cleveland State University's Robert F. Busbey Natatorium

2420 Chester Avenue, Cleveland

Sunday, March 6th 2011 from 10 am—4 pm

This fun and challenging event requires a coordinated effort by a team of divers to put together a puzzle underwater—the team with the fastest time wins! The OCSSDI fee can be used to assist the team in completing their total team fee goal, or as a supplement to the total amount the team is donating. Take part in the OCSSDI's first dive team by contacting Annette Soule. More about this event can be found at <http://www.ScubaForDiabetes.com>.

Get wet for a great cause!

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## ScubaFest 2011 — Big names, Big prizes

The OCSSDI ScubaFest committee recently announced that Sean Fisher of Mel Fisher's infamous treasures, will be the keynote speaker at the banquet March 19, 2011. Mel Fisher's Treasures store is located in Key West, Florida, and features treasures from the *Atocha* and the *Santa Margarita*. Find out more about it at [www.melfisher.com](http://www.melfisher.com) and enter your name to win a shipwreck coin!

Don't forget to enter your photos in the Ohio Regional Photo Competition. This is open to divers from Ohio and the surrounding states. This year a Point & Shoot category has been added for pictures shot using the smaller point & shoot cameras (this category will be kept separate from the digital SLRs.) There has also been a decline in submissions for the Great Lakes category—which increases your chances of winning (so dig out those photos and claim your prize!) Rules and entry forms will be posted at [www.scubafest.org](http://www.scubafest.org). Deadline for entering is March 1, 2011. There are many great prizes, including an Aggressor Fleet trip to the Baja Peninsula!

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## ALIEN INVASION — This Ocean ain't big enuff for the both of us!

Unless you've been hiding under a rock, you've likely heard about the invasion of lionfish in the Atlantic ocean and Caribbean. The lionfish is known for hanging out in some of the same crevices and hideaways that lobsters typically frequent, although they are also spotted floating in the open near coral or other structures.



Why all the hubbub? Lionfish are not native to these waters—which means they haven't developed natural predators to reduce their recent population explosion. Their native counterparts are smaller in size, while these aliens are growing abnormally large. Their reproduction rates are also alarming as they mate, and reproduce, year round rather than seasonally (which is the case for many other fish.)

The fish also have voracious appetites—and are capable of consuming as much as 30 to 40 fish per day. Multiply that by 365 days—and include the fact that the population density can be 1000 lionfish per acre, and we're talking major upheaval for the local species being invaded!

As many of you are aware, some dive resorts have taken matters into their own hands to try and reduce their population (by capturing, killing, or feeding the lionfish to other predators). Other efforts are being coordinated, including "Lionfish derbies" - where divers participate in contests to retrieve the most, the largest, and the smallest lionfish for prizes. There is also an "Eat Lionfish" campaign to encourage fisherman to capture the spiny invaders, and restaurants to include "lionfish bites" on their menus.

It is unfortunate that this species is wrecking so much havoc, as they actually are photogenic beauties. To find out more about this invasion, check out the November 2010 edition of "Dive Training" magazine.

*These beauties spell Trouble in Paradise....*

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## Gear Gab

First on our gear gab list is... a Lion Fish Catch Bag (you knew this was coming...) "Protect yourself while you protect our reefs" with hands free insertion, and hands free dump. Yup, it's a real ad! Get yours today at <http://www.armorbags.com>

How smart is your smart phone? With Dive Training Mobile Resources (and Microsoft Tag Reader) you can use your cell phone to scan and read articles, locate dive stores, and watch scuba skills videos. Download the free app (by selecting your cell phone manufacturer from the list) at <http://gettag.mobi>

Want to breath "liquid air" underwater like they did in the move *The Abyss*? Liquid breathing technology may be coming to a store near you! For more info, click [here](#). (Thanks to Kevin Magee for this interesting article!)

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## Shipwrecks & Scuba — Yet Another Success!

Isn't it amazing when a plan, and a LOT of hard work, come together? The annual Shipwrecks & Scuba conference was nothing short of fantastic! We can't say enough about how fortunate we are to have an event of this magnitude and quality in our own back yard!

The morning conference kicked off with **Jill Heinerth's** in-depth, and incredibly honest, detailed assessment of rebreather brands and features. One eye opener to take away is that 2% of all rebreather purchasers will die within 5 years on average. This is not a simple technology to be taken for granted—it's complex, and extensive planning and preparation is required for every dive.

Afternoon seminars began with **Sue Smith's** dives on the *U.S.S. Monitor*. This vessel was built as the Union's response to fight the Confederate's "Monster." This unique ship featured a revolving turret capable of a 360 degree firing range. She was built in an incredible 118 days, but her low draft prevented her from navigating the open ocean. She was lost in 1862 while under way to North Carolina. It took approximately 2 hours to sink as the crew watched from a rescuing vessel. She turtled as she sank and today is under threat of severe deterioration. A number of artifacts have been found, which remain on the wreck today, but will likely vanish beneath the silt. The heavy current digs at the bottom beneath her, and her unsupported back will likely break—which will cause her to deteriorate much faster. The once 'tough old bird' is in desperate need of help; however, attempts to secure funding to retrieve and preserve this historic vessel and her artifacts have not been successful.

**Georgann Wachter** next presented Sidewheel Treasure & Tragedy, and recalled events surrounding *Walk in the Water* (a 135' sidewheeler with an underpowered engine), the Erie (200 lives lost in our first major steamboat disaster), the *Anthony Wayne* (exploded off Vermilion, Ohio with an unusual horizontal engine), the *GP Griffith* (290 lives lost, which resulted in a mass grave at a nearby beach), the *Atlantic* (200 or more lost, rivalry over capturing her safe, and a later rivalry over possessing her), the *Northern Indiana* (towed for salvage to Point Pelee), the *Lady Elgin* (the worst disaster with only 96 of the 398 aboard surviving), the *SeaBird* (which had her safe recovered, but contained only ash), and the *Morning Star* (whose machinery is still mostly in tact and is a unique dive). Georgann's extension research uncovered a number of interesting facts, such as the disproportionate number of sidewheelers that sank in Lake Erie. Many burned or exploded at the docks, but a number of them still lie on the lake's bottom with freight below their decks.

**Dave Trotter** shared his travels and dives on a number of shipwreck finds in the Hidden Depths. Among his amazing discoveries was *Potter's Barge*, the *King Coal*, the *Admiral*, and the oldest self-unloader in the Great Lakes—the *Hennepin*. The *Hennepin* can be found in the National Archives' listing of interesting ships. Her large A-frame structure (part of the self-unloader) is a highlight of the dive. For those who think Dave has had an easy time locating wrecks, you should realize his determination in finding his targets includes running his search vessel 24 hours, rain or shine. Although many of these dives are beyond recreational limits, there was one dive featured that was shallower—and happened to be one young gal's first shipwreck dive ever! (Imagine your first wreck dive being with Dave Trotter!)

...but wait, there's more!

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## Shipwrecks & Scuba – The Story Continues

**Jill Heinerth**, recipient in the Women Divers Hall of Fame and underwater documentary videographer, finished the afternoon seminars by challenging us with the unknown and “Surviving and Thriving in the Underwater World.”

Jill cut her teeth on Great Lakes diving in Tobermory and expanded her dive skills to that of a hybrid career as artist, photographer, diver, explorer, and adventurer. Jill informed us she simply volunteered and worked hard until people noticed, which opened many doors to opportunity and unique experiences. Her projects with National Geographic led to her work as film producer.

Jill took us on her around-the-world dive filming adventures. During our travels with Jill, we were also introduced to her philosophies on diving and life:

- **#1 Nothing is impossible.** Jill and her dive team were often tasked with asking unconventional sources for help and asking for the impossible. She also found the old adage “asking forgiveness is easier than asking for permission” to be true. She mentioned that, in order to encourage your kids, let them scare themselves and shared a story where she, at a young age, was caught with the neighbor kids lowering themselves by rope into a pit they had dug. (This pretty much cinched her as having an adventurous spirit!)
- **#2 If you do not chase fear, you will spend the rest of your life running from it.** Making her way through narrow restrictions regardless of how difficult it was to pull herself through was one among many challenges Jill has overcome to get the job done. She sometimes led the way for the rest of her team. Under the topic of risk assessment, Jill advises: “a certain level of fear protects us from complacency.”
- **#3 Nobody ever had practice at something that’s never been done before.** When faced with trying to videotape what is probably the world’s deepest cave system, Jill shared that she often thrives in environments where most cave divers turn and walk away. Long hikes and hauling heavy gear were just a couple of the requirements to get to the location, not to mention the less than desirable water quality when they arrived at the dive site.
- **#4 Every idea has value.** How do you see where you can’t see? That was the dilemma facing the dive team. This challenge was met with an idea to create ground-breaking technology never used before. A device was built to ping the cave walls in 32 directions in order to map the cave system where visibility made for near impossible dive conditions. Did I say near impossible? The team received a ‘gift’ of body bags, along with a sarcastic note to ‘clean up the cave when they’ve finished’ to drive home the point that others were convinced it was impossible. In the end, the team succeeded in what they set out to accomplish—and built a new technology in the process, which continues to be used by NASA today and may some day be used to map oceans in other worlds.

... *there’s STILL more....*

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## Shipwrecks & Scuba – The Story Continues

- #4 *continued*. Jill mentioned that the only constant is change itself, and explained they'd been granted funding to dive the caves of the Antarctic before they even knew whether they existed! (Talk about your reputation speaking for itself!) New information often gave them opportunities to attempt something that might have seemed insane the day before. The filter feeder fish that flourished in this ice land burrowed thumb-sized holes into the walls to avoid the heavy currents that flowed through these ice tunnels. Jill and her dive team used these thumb holes to pull themselves up the ice walls to exit their dive, despite heavy current that had made it difficult to exit previously.

Among the many lessons Jill shared, was a strong message that survivors must be willing to get within a hair's edge of complete success and surrender. Despite the many close calls and scares she's faced, there was still a point that she and her dive team would not cross—that realization that you cannot beat mother nature, and that you need to know when to say "not today." Each of us need to assess our own level of risk and take responsibility for our choices. This thought concluded with Jill's wish: "May you all fail brilliantly in life!"

Jill then previewed her next project: "We are water." This latest project will be an independent documentary that she will be filming around the world and will likely premier at Sundance. The core message is that we are all ambassadors of our planet. This lesson in water literacy needs to be communicated as we may one day be fighting wars over fresh water, rather than oil. Disturbing footage of oil spills and our garbage leftover and washing up on beaches are a powerful reminder of the long-term damage we are causing the planet. We look forward to Jill's next film.

The evening keynotes included the touching presentations of **Dave Mekkler's** *Alvin Clark* story, which featured Joyce Hayward's narration (the former Mystery Ship at 19 Fathoms that was raised with no preservation plan and eventually deteriorated on shore despite the efforts of one man to save her), and **Tom Farnquist's** *Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald* (the families of those lost fought long and hard to raise the bell, which became the centerpiece of the memorial that stands at the Great Lakes Shipwreck Museum today.)

**Roger Roth** presented the incredible Underwater Images prize-winning photos and videos that took home fabulous trips. There were a number of silent auction trips available as well at great deals—including the trip to Anthony's Keys in Roatan, Honduras that **Dave Soule** won!

Bay Area Diver's annual achievements awards were presented to **Niagara Divers** (group) and **Jack Papes** (individual).

The M.A.S.T. 50/50 raffle drawing drew no surprised looks when our own **Bernie Atkins'** number was drawn to take home the winnings. **Mike Wachter** won the BAD membership raffle for the Edmund Fitzgerald beer (and unsuccessfully offered to trade Bernie for the ca\$h.)

The hard-working Shipwrecks & Scuba team once again pulled together a fun and informative event.

*Thanks to Bay Area Divers, volunteers, sponsors & speakers!*

## Shipwrecks & Scuba — Evidence (that it was evidently fun!)



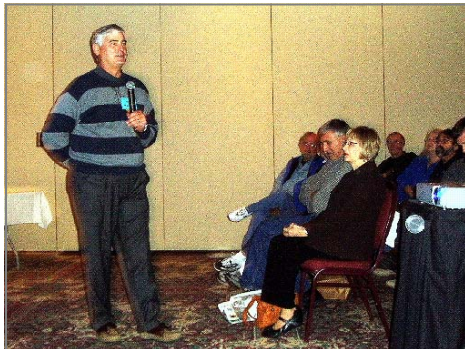
Sue Smith shares her experiences diving the *U.S.S. Monitor*



Linda Pansing working her MAST raffle magic



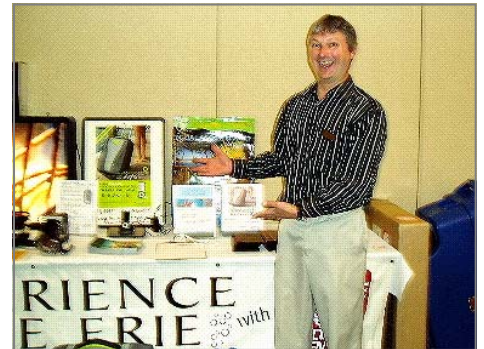
Georgann shares the history of numerous Great Lakes disasters



Mike addresses the afternoon seminar attendees



Mike & Georg displaying their shipwreck books and paintings



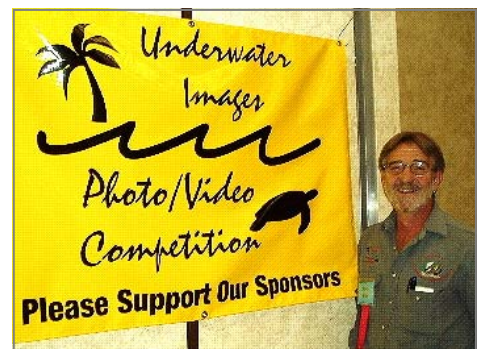
Rod Althaus invites us to visit his New Wave booth



Ron Westmoreland concealing his Safety Service secret...



Michele explains how she put this display together in no time at all!



Roger Roth, founder of Underwater Images invites us to place a silent auction bid

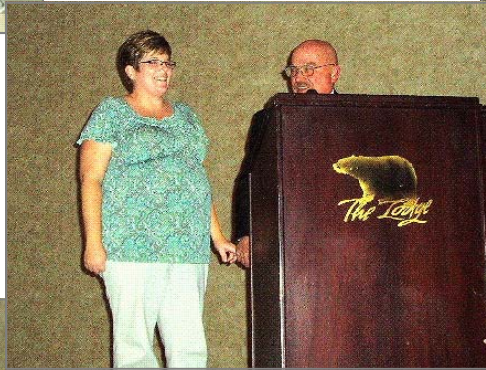
# Shipwrecks & Scuba — The Fun Continues!



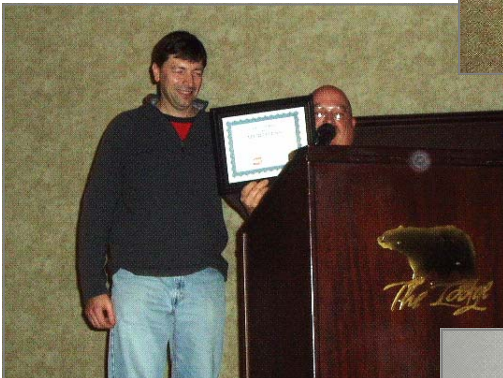
Cindy and KMan settle in for a relaxing evening



Jill pauses for a pose with yet another wannabe adventurer



A very pregnant Sandy Heschel receives a well deserved  
**THANKS!**



Jack Papes collects his deserving individual award



Niagara Divers were the proud recipients of the group award



Jill Heinert and Dave Trotter decide to temporarily trade hats (rather than jobs)



Bernie and his evil "I won it ALL" grin



Bernie later spotted with this accomplice

# [VISIBILITY]

*Visibility* is the monthly newsletter of *Lake Erie Wreck Divers (LEWD)*.

We:

- promote diving the many shipwrecks off our shores
- study the history behind them
- socialize with divers that share these interests
- have a lot of fun

The club meets at 7:30 on the third Wednesday of each month except December. *Lake Erie Wreck Divers* rely on "word of mouth" to bring in new members. If you know of anyone that may enjoy our club, please invite them. to our next club meeting.

**Next Meeting:**

The December meeting will be on Saturday, Dec 11th at

Mike & Georgann Wachter's  
33326 Bonnieview, Avon Lake, OH  
(440) 933-4601

6:00 Greets — ??? Eats & Gift Exchange

*Sea yawl there*

- Dec 11—White Elephant Gift Exchange/December LEWD Mtg @ Wachters
- Jan 14-23, 2011—Cleveland Boat Show @ IX Center
- Jan 19—LEWD Mtg at Stamper's Grill Pub
- Feb 19-26—Anthony's Keys, Roatan, Honduras Dive Trip
- March 5—30th Great Lakes Shipwreck Festival w Ford Seahorses
- March 6—Scuba for Diabetes @ Robert F. Busbey Natatorium
- March 12—Annual LEWD Banquet
- March 18-20th OCSSDI ScubaFest in Columbus
- March 26—Beneath the Sea in Secaucus New Jersey
- June 26—Port Sanilac w Dale Musser
- July 10 or Aug 7-Harbor Beach Tech Dive w Dale Musser
- July 21-24—Presque Isle w Dale Musser
- Aug 7-Port Sanilac w Dale Musser

## December LEWD Birthdays

*Ted Green—December 6*

*KB Sporck—December 20*

*Dave Russell—December 11*

*Doug Dellisanti—December 29*

## LEWD Gear—Orders are Ordered

Hope you've placed your order—cause we've submitted them! We're hoping to have your orders ready to distribute at the White Elephant gift exchange (so have plenty of cash, checks, etc. on hand.) Thanks for your order!

*Go forth and wear your LEWDgear proud!*

## Deeep Thoughts for the Month

“The best way to find a wreck is to use a dousing rod.” - Dave Trotter

When asked what wreck Dave would really like to find, he replied “The next one!”

*Banquet Note:* The Annual Lake Erie Wreck Divers banquet is scheduled at the Elyria Elks for **Saturday, March 12th 2011**. As always, it was challenging to select a date and work around other scuba banquets, work schedules, and vacations. We're hoping this will work for you—and apologize if this is not a convenient date....

*Hope to sea you there!*

Visibility Archive page at <http://visibility.nantucketbay.com/>