

FORT ERIE UNDERWATER RECOVERY UNIT LOG

JULY, 2010

Summer has officially launched and divers are in the water. We've already had several out-of-town dive groups coming down to use our facilities to dive the mighty Niagara. Make sure you check the Unit calendar on the website to see when the next group will be coming, and let either Mike Larocque or John Gilmour know if you're available at those times to help with the tank fills and direction.

We've already conquered the train bridge in the old Welland Canal and Windmill Point Quarry. Chief Diver Jim Traves will have some more action coming your way very soon. In the meantime, if you have a dive you'd like to do, please let Jim know so he can organize a group dive. The more the merrier!

Members: the only way to get the skinny on Unit activities is to:

- a) Attend our regular meetings. (second Wednesday evening of every month @ 7pm).
- b) Check the website calendar.
- c) Read the newsletter.

It's a common occurrence to hear, "Gee how come nobody told me about this?" Well, consider the above a), b), c), or all of the above, and you'll be well informed!

Parking cars for Safari Niagara (ZooZ) is on for the summer again, with last Friday evening being our first. It was a highly successful night and we had a fair turn out. The next event will be Friday, July 9; try to be there by 6pm. It's a great time: park some cars until around 9, then go in and enjoy the concert with a complementary free drink and some food. AND, to sweeten the pot, you can claim your working hours there toward your mandatory Unit yearly requirements! We only work this function five or six times each year, so it's not asking a lot.

IF you do plan to attend these events, *make sure* you let Mike Larocque know as soon as possible. We MUST have a minimum 6 people to receive our funding; more would be better. But we have to know who we have and who we can count on to keep this opportunity alive.

If you'd like to get more time in, we desperately need someone with a gas Weedeater to cut the weeds in front of the building. It doesn't look too good, especially when the out-of-towners come to visit.

From time to time we get into some heated discussions during our monthly business meetings and that's ok, because it shows our members care about what goes on in the Unit. You'll get this in any organization, so it's nothing new or unique to the Unit: it's basic human nature. We all have our likes and dislikes and may feel quite strongly about our point-of-view to the exclusion of others. And, it's essential for everyone to know that we value ALL opinions and thoughts concerning Unit activity. None of us are experts in thought expression, so yes, there may be some stepping on toes, and some ill feelings formed. Let's do our utmost however, to respect the opinions of others such that no one leaves a meeting in a spiteful manner.

The Unit has and continues to operate on the basis of majority rule. If you don't like something we've voted upon and the majority of the membership have voted for it, let it go. If the idea fails, then resubmit your proposal. None of us is perfect, and we've been taught from an early age that we don't always get our way. And as we get older, we realize the reality of that fact. Let's just be the professionals we are, respect ideas other than our own, and not take it personally if our idea doesn't fly for whatever reason.

Realize too, that there are members here who have done an excellent job serving the Unit in various capacities, but maybe not in the manner we like. So, if the outcome is beneficial to the Unit, even though not chapter and verse to protocol, so what? The member's heart is in the right place, and no harm done.

A kingdom divided against itself is doomed to failure. There's a lesson here. We cherish each and every member, and value the opinions expressed by all. We ask only that you respect those whose ideas don't always mirror your own.

DIVE JIVE

Gulf Oil Spill

As human beings, let alone divers, the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico is cause for great concern because it will affect us all. Never mind the company, BP, whose oil well it just happened to be. It could have been Exxon, it could have been Shell; fill in the blank. The media has been brainwashing us with BP bashing. The fact of the matter is, the United States seems impotent to contain what is not only a national disaster, it's a global one.

It smacks of the disaster in New Orleans several years ago. I'll never forget it. As the drama is played out on CNN, and we're watching the flood live on the upper right hand corner, they're interviewing the head of the federal disaster relief commission who wasn't even 'aware' it had taken place and was unfolding even as he was speaking!

I believe the Gulf war has all but bankrupted the mightiest country in the world. Trillions of dollars have been spent wasted on a war that has been spawned by greed. Bin Laden? Come on. If today's satellite technology can watch you taking a crap in your back yard, you mean to tell me they can't locate this guy!?! And those space shuttle 'missions'? They're not about high school experiments. They're putting more and more monitoring and weapons systems up there.

Point being, the country is going the way of Rome. Paranoia is bankrupting the system in the United States, and it will consume them. Right now as you read this, hundreds of thousands of barrels of oil are spewing out of that oil well *every day* since it ruptured on April 20, and it's estimated that over *eight million gallons* of oil have been released so far. It's devastating the tourism economies all along the coast. Other countries have offered to assist in the cleanup, but they won't let anyone in, and yet the U. S. government simply can't afford to fix it.

So, despite the fact that this is perhaps the worst 'manmade' calamity of the century, with ramifications that will affect generations to come, it's 'all BP's fault', and 'they' better hurry up and fix it, because President Obama says they're going to be in real trouble if'n they don't.

The Facts

The plume of oil begins at the seafloor nearly 5000 feet below, flowing four times as high as the Empire State Building. Thundering out of a 21 inch pipe from a ruptured wellhead, slow moving currents shear it into upward streaming strands. There are places where the oil on the surface is so putrid, the smell of swamp rot and sulfur makes men sick.

And for over two months, this plume of death has been enveloping the larvae and newborn of snapper, dolphin, lobster and bluefin tuna among many others. The mutilations amongst the sealife are legion; eye wounds, mouth wounds, gill wounds, stomach wounds, gelatinous tissue wounds, as well as oxygen deprived metabolisms for all sealife for miles around the site.

The oil continues to kill right up to the surface where phytoplankton (the lungs of the planet) are irreparably damaged by the poisoning oil and the chemicals used to disperse it. Untold trillions of dead diatoms and dinoflagellates rain down through the filthy progression of upward moving oil. In deeper water they mix with innumerable lifeless copepods and deeper still, the lifeless remnants of big fish, small fish, invertebrates and turtles. The deluge of death continues until the remains all come to rest on the floor of the Gulf.

All but forgotten are the eleven men who horribly died and burned beyond recognition when the rig blew. They had families and worked hard to provide for them. Then, something happened so suddenly, no one stood a chance. For on April 20, a high-pressure pocket of natural gas blew past the blowout preventer, roared up the riser, enveloped the drill rig, and burst into fiery orange flames that wouldn't quit until the rig disappeared beneath the surface. The billion dollar city-block-size drilling platform, once called *Deepwater Horizon*, with its enormous steel tower that sent drill pipe seven miles down into the earth's crust now lies silently on the seafloor at a crazy angle – not far from the bodies of the men who manned her.

They say the area around where the *Exxon Valdez* oil spill occurred many years ago has almost rejuvenated itself. The *Deepwater Horizon* area ever increasing, may *never* be able to do so, eventually leading to severe global ramifications.

It's now over for those eleven men. But it's just starting for the rest of us...

DIP TIPS

Bottle Diving Tips

The key skill for successful bottle diving is in knowing how to recognize what is a 'keeper'. Sometimes, you are lucky enough to find a site that was populated and deserted long ago. More likely, your site has continuously received empties up to the day you dive it. For every 100 or so bottles you see, probably only one may actually worth keeping.

Ocean, lake and quarry bottoms are littered with modern liquor, wine, and pop bottles. Sooo, with the bottom disturbed and vis next to nil, you'll have to ferret out the true gems. Stopper-type, shape and colour are your clues.

Start with a quick glance at the top of the bottle. With the exception of some preserving jars, screw tops are never very old. As a general rule, the tops of the oldest bottles were added by hand as the last step in the manufacturing process. A 'blobtop' or any applied lip usually means 100 years old or more. Examine the bottom of the lip for signs that it was added after the bottle came out of the mould. As for shape, a long, straight pop bottle with a very short neck is always worth examining, as is the torpedo bottle with its pointed bottom and the round-bottom soda bottle.

Old bottles were rarely made from clear glass. Glass in its basic state has a green tinge caused by iron in the sand. But that doesn't mean that a green bottle is really old, as many a diver has discovered upon finding the ever present 7-ounce coca cola hobbleskirt bottles. Clear glass became common early in the 20th century. Sometimes the glass in an old bottle will appear to have a swirling pattern throughout. This means the glass is deteriorating; collectors refer to these bottles as 'sick glass'. If nothing more, it makes your find a little interesting. The oldest freeblows will sometimes lose glass in very thin layers like an onion peeling itself.

Several clues may indicate a site with potential. Signs of human habitation – buildings, stone foundations, and wharves - are the most important. Having said that, be aware in the northern oceans, that if wharves contain wood, they may not be old enough, as wood rots readily in such water. You will find more 'glass gold' in just the bare rocks from a ballast pile, flattened out from storms, hurricanes, and ice, usually visible at low tide.

It's always a good idea to consult the local history buffs, collect some information and invest in an exploratory dive or two to verify any potential bottle dump sites. Before committing to such a dive, realize that flat land with sandy beaches or long, grassy points jutting out into the water, low islands, or rocks sticking up offshore are all indicators of shallow water and thus not a good place to look.

Why? Because there may be too much wave activity that can bury or damage your fragile treasures.

If diving in seawater, your finds will need to be cleaned and you must accept the fact that glass in many of your older finds will be permanently and irreparably clouded. Crockery and china don't seem to mind the saltwater. If you find you must rid the bottle of its inhabitants along with the coralline that often coats anything in saltwater, soak it in acid. Use hydrochloric acid at a ratio of about 50:1. Acid will not damage glass, glazed crockery, or china. However, be careful, for it may erase the crest or lettering on china. You can also clean clay pipes with hydrochloric acid.

The condition of bottles recovered in fresh water seems to always be better, although rare ones are more difficult to find. In lakes, we all know that deep silt usually covers everything, and green scum grows on bottles, making them blend in with the rocks. But it's certainly not uncommon to find some true gems devoid of any such crud! It's pretty neat to find a 100-year old bottle with heavy embossing from a now defunct local pop or dairy bottler.

To find these older beauties, it may be necessary to push your arms into silt past your elbows and feel around in areas where you know old breweries or bottlers were located close to the shore of a lake or river. You never know what you may find while 'grope diving', but of this you can be sure. If you don't try, the good ones may just get away!

That's all for now, diveniks. Stay tuned for the September issue of the *Log*. What'll be in it is as good a guess as any, but it's sure to be another world best seller. Until then,

THINK DEEP!