

# Dive Report

Sunday, July 16, 2017

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**Location:** 110 nm [204 km] ESE out of the harbor at Montauk, New York (eastern most tip of Long Island)

**Boat:** "OL' Salty II" (62 ft [19 m] length x 19'-6" [6 m] beam custom, fiberglass, charter boat)

**People:** 16 total passengers and crew including Captain Nick Caruso; trip organizer, Mark Alexander; crew member/photographer, Dan Wright; Great Lakes champions/aspiring prima donnas, Wayne Rush and Jack Papes....

**Weather:** 5-10 knot winds, 70 deg F, 2-3 ft slow and easy swells

**Dive:** "ANDREA DORIA" ocean liner (the Doria)

**Depth:** 245 fsw [75 msw]

**Bottom Temp:** 45 deg F [7 C]

**Surface Temp:** ~55 deg F [13 C]

**Thermocline:** ~40 fsw [12 msw]

**Bottom Viz:** 30-40 ft [9-12 m]

**Surface Viz:** 40 ft [12 m]

## Notes:

The readily available body of knowledge on the Andrea Doria is vast, so I won't expound here other than to simply state that she is an iconic shipwreck, 697 ft [212 m] in length with a 90 ft [27 m] beam, sent to the bottom on July 26, 1956, after colliding with the ocean liner MS STOCKHOLM in a dense fog.



We boarded the "OL' Salty II" Saturday evening, July 15, at



Star Island Yacht Club's dock in Montauk, NY. Blessed with completely out of character, calm sea conditions, our roughly eleven hour run to the wreck was uneventful. These tranquil seas afforded the crew a swift tie-in, which was accomplished by dropping a mooring line, weighted by a chain and grapple hook on one end and a float on the other, onto the site, followed by a



pair of heavily laden divers that free descended this line.

Their objective is to retrieve the chain, lying on the 245 ft [75 m] bottom, swim the chain to an object of substance, then shackle the chain to the wreck with sufficient integrity that those to follow may stake their lives on it. Subsequent to a masterfully delivered "hell fire and brimstone" dive briefing, by our well experienced Captain, effectively reminding us all that we were far from the shallow end of the pool,

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Wayne and I, giddy as a pair of school girls, eagerly awaited our opportunity to enter the water. It would be the first of our three planned dives during the three days moored to the site.

We had similar gear configurations consisting of twin 100 cubic foot (cuft) [12 Liter (L)] back gas cylinders, 80 cuft [10 L] and 40 cuft [5 L] decompression gas cylinders slung under our left arms, and a 6 cuft [.8 L] drysuit inflation gas cylinder mounted to the left-hand side of our stainless steel backplates. I additionally carried my, Aquatica housed, Nikon D300s DSLR camera with 10.5 mm fisheye lens, Light and Motion 1200 lumen focus light, and twin Ikelite DS161 strobes. Roughly half of the divers aboard were running similar "open circuit" configurations, while the remaining divers utilized "closed circuit" rebreathers.

I began my near-term preparation for this day, in April, by making frequent tune-up dives in this same configuration, my gear "overkill" drawing the typical ridicule from my fellow quarry and west (shallow) end of Lake Erie dive brethren. Ultimately, Wayne and I both worked our way up to more gear appropriate dives, culminating in a pair of late June dives on the ROY JODREY, located in the American narrows section of the Saint Lawrence river, which roughly approximates the Doria's size, depth, current, visibility, light level, and water temperature.

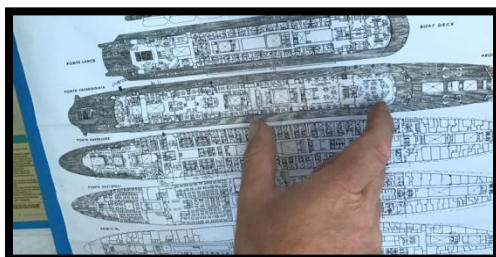
Once securely moored to the Doria, our entry was a giant stride off of the stern, through the open tuna door. The crew had rigged a "Jersey Line" consisting of several vertical lines weighted with 5 gallon [19 L] buckets full of concrete. These vertical lines supported a horizontal, knotted line that connected the stern to the mooring line at the bow. The infamous current on this site lived up to its billing, both in terms of magnitude, as well as, difficult to predict variability. It took us roughly five minutes to descend the lengthy scope of mooring line, hand over hand into the current, taking care to control our pace, thus



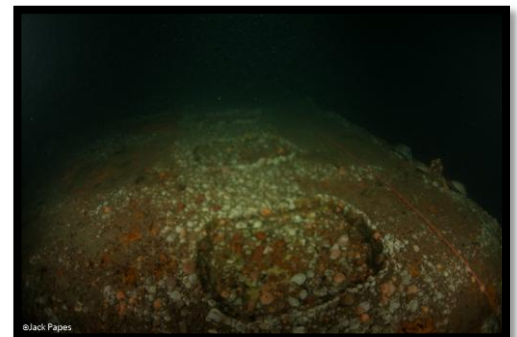
our gas consumption. We hit the wreck at 190 feet of sea water (fsw) [58 meters sw (msw)], and we were met by even stronger current here. The chain was wrapped through a void in the port side hull, which faces upwards as the wreck rests on her starboard side. A small amount of ambient light took some of the edge off of this dark and eerie dive site. We immediately could see a long row of oval shaped windows in the hull, thick glass still intact, although coated with marine growth.

Pre-dive, Wayne and I purposely held up our dives until we netted as much info on our location on the wreck as possible, and as a result, these windows were brought to our attention by the tie-in crew after they had surfaced. We soon discovered that the site is very confusing, even to those with many dives on her. It was initially speculated by the first tie-in diver that we were

"somewhere" towards the bow. Subsequent to this, the second



tie-in diver reported that his attempt to make it to the bow was thwarted after he expended his 200 ft [60 m] of guide line short of encountering the bow split, so we hit the water with the presumption that we were actually "somewhere" near amidships. I entered the



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water with a basic, two-word plan "follow Wayne", with the secondary goal of netting some reasonably compelling images. Wayne's role, being a veteran of several previous dives on her, was more involved; run a guide line, and get and us back to the mooring line within 20 minutes of our descent.

Hugging the port hull, Wayne tied off his guide line to a piece of railing, adjacent to the mooring. In order to descend over the hull onto to the deck, we had to struggle against the current considerably, which was flowing perpendicular to the deck at the time. Upon our successful descent, we observed that the deck was completely intact



teak planking. From here, Wayne and I separated briefly. In the darkness, I could see his light, but I could not pick-up

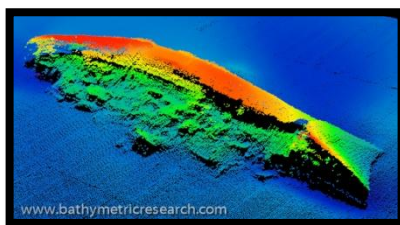


his white guide line, which I did not want to become entangled in. Ultimately, Wayne discovered a pile of swimming pool tile (a very good clue as to our whereabouts), while I descended the deck to the bottom examining several

large, penetrable openings in the deck and a large, anemone blanketed, debris pile. We soon regrouped at the tie-in, and ascended roughly 19 minutes into our dive. My maximum depth was 237 fsw [72 m]. I ascended on a, conservative, 240 fsw [75 m] / 20 minute schedule, which put me at the surface after spending 82 minutes underwater. Both of my gauges recorded a bottom temperature of 45 F [7 C]. The dive went relatively smoothly. Afterwards I felt very good physically and highly motivated to explore this site further. The fact that I'd just made a success of my first attempt to dive on the famed Andrea Doria was completely muted by the challenge that lie ahead.



Both weary from our previous day's lengthy drive and confident in the weather window holding for several days, our diving day was complete; although, several dive pairs aboard did make a second dive that afternoon. Equipped with a set of original deck plans and recent sonar images, we occupied the rest



of the day debriefing with other dive teams, collaborating together with the common objective of pin pointing our location on this large, dark, disheveled wreck site. At day's end, we had a good case that we were within 200 ft [60 m] of the fantail, completely opposite the location speculated after the initial tie-in dive. As the evening advanced, we all packed ourselves into our

modest bunks, pondering what this big, dark, mysterious beast had in store for us in the morning.



Jack Papes

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