

Visit our WEBSITE:
www.greatlakesaquanauts.org

Volume 41, Number 3

The Flipper

DAN Sponsor #28939

Official Newsletter of the Great Lakes Aquanauts

March 2008

GLA BOARD

PRESIDENT

David Albright

ACTING PRESIDENT

Tim Ouellette

VICE PRESIDENT

Steve Kunder

TREASURER

Steve Mahr

RECORD SECRETARY

Jan Ouellette

THE FLIPPER

Steve Kunder, editor, publisher

PROGRAMS

Joanne and John Westman

CHARTERS

John Westman/Hugh Walton

MEMBERSHIP

TBD

WEB SITE COORDINATOR

Kristina Konen

President's Corner

Notes from Tim:

We just got back from Hawaii & getting a breath.

Anyway,
#1 Caymen-Brac trip plans are finalized, & GLA is taking deposits. Act quickly as time is short, & spots are limited.

#2 Sch. change, as Dave Trotter can't make the March mtg. (see Flipper)

#3 David Albright is doing fine, & said to say hi to all. He hopes to be at the next mtg.

#4 That's all for now, let's all enjoy the summer, & the GLA activities planned.

Tim

From: Peg Wingard

For divers

www.breathebonaire.com. Go scuba diving in Bonaire National Marine Park in the Netherlands Antilles without donning a wet suit. The megapixel camera is located 49 feet below the drop off at the dive site and offers a view of the coral reef. Control how fast the image updates by selecting the refresh rate in the left-hand corner of the screen. You can make it as fast as every two seconds.

Programs

2008 Meeting Schedule

March Meeting: Farmington Community Library. 7:00 pm.

March 19th. Program: Westman's Present Cyman Brac/ A preview for upcoming GLA Trip

Meeting treats: Peg Wingard

April Meeting Farmington Community Library, 7:00 PM

April 16th Program Dave Trotter Cutting Across Time/ new discoveries and 1 of a kind pictures

Meeting treats: Joanne Westman

FOR SALE

Call, or email Steve Kunder to place your ad.

O'neil Drysuit, size XXL with weights. \$250.00 Gary Morgan

DIVE RELATED INFO

The Ford Seahorses are putting on their Shipwreck Festival on April 19, 2008. This will be held at Schoolcraft College on Haggerty Rd in Livonia. There will be more info to come. Thanks. Iva Moore-

Hay www.shipwreckfestival.org





A New dive site for Frank? Naw just a bit deep?

ST. PETERSBURG - For almost two years, the mock pirate ship for tourists, with its dangling skeletons and decorative sails, was tied up snug and secure at St. Petersburg's Pier.

Last month, the Treasure Seeker finally got its chance to ply the high seas. Ray Hixon, and his son, Tripp, voyaged south to the Virgin Islands where they hoped to continue their pirate adventures with tourists from the visiting cruise ships.

But just south of the Turks and Caicos Islands, it became clear there would be no more "Yo ho ho" aboard the Treasure Seeker.

The 55-year-old ship sank in 7,000 feet of water.

* * *

It was dark on the Caribbean the night of Feb. 26, so dark that Capt. Tripp Hixon could barely make out his hand in front of his face on the deck of the Treasure Seeker. But he could feel the waves building rapidly as a fierce wind seemed to come out of nowhere.

Before long, the 65-foot Treasure Seeker was struggling against 22-foot waves, rolling port to starboard at 70-degree angles, wave after wave.

So violent was the movement, Hixon said, the rudder poked out of the water and he could hear the air being sucked beneath the boat.

"They were big, slow rolling monsters, not that fast, but consistent."

Five people were on board the 65-foot diesel-powered vessel, including Tripp Hixon, his 60-year-old father and owner of the boat, Ray Hixon, Tripp's grandfather, 80-year-old Webster Knight, and two other men. They were headed to the Virgin Islands for a fresh start. Ray Hixon spent 30 years as a traveling furniture

salesman before he retired and bought the pirate replica in South Carolina several years ago. Tripp Hixon, who had just graduated from the University of North Florida, joined his dad in the business.

"All of my friends at the fraternity said, 'Oh, we're going to be doctors and lawyers,' and I was like, oh, I'm going to be a pirate," said Tripp Hixon, now 26.

They leased dock space from the city at the Pier for \$900 a month, and began offering 90-minute cruises around Tampa Bay, hoping to fill up the ship for weddings, birthdays, family reunions and the like.

In February, they gave the Pier notice that they would be leaving, repainted the boat so that it was red and black instead of red and canary yellow, and set sail for the Virgin Islands and its bounty of tourists. Ray Hixon left behind some financial difficulties, including a mortgage foreclosure. His wife, Betsy, a schoolteacher, was planning to follow soon.

They were about a day and a half from St. Thomas, their destination, when they were pounded by rough seas.

The next morning the sun rose about 6 a.m., and Tripp Hixon began to relax a little. He could see the seas calming down.

Suddenly there was another problem. The engine room filled with thick smoke. Water was coming in through the exhaust and flooding the engine room.

The boat has a bilge pump, but it wasn't keeping up with the incoming water. Tripp and his dad got two additional pumps running, each capable of moving 2,200 gallons an hour. The water kept rising. Tripp Hixon ran up to the cabin and woke everyone up, then back below again. The water was 4 feet deep.

"We were like, let's get out of here, let's go,"

Tripp recalled.

He got on the radio and called mayday. He also activated his Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon EPIRB, a device that emits a distress signal and a GPS location. By this time, the boat was just south of the Turks and Caicos Islands and east of Great Inagua, Bahamas.

A sailing vessel from the Turks and Caicos, the 104-foot schooner Juliet, heard the mayday. The Juliet was about 13 miles away and crammed with tourists headed out on a dive trip, but they began a 3 1/2-hour journey to reach the Treasure Seeker, according to the Juliet's owner, John Beltramo, 39. **Continued next page**

All five people on board the pirate ship got into a dinghy they tied up to the pirate boat and waited in their life jackets. "That's the biggest mistake people make," Tripp Hixon said. "You can't leave the boat or no one will find you."

As they sat in the dinghy, there wasn't much talk. They watched their dreams sink slowly into the waves.

"We watched that boat go down, foot by foot," Tripp Hixon said.

When the Juliet arrived, the tourists who were diverted from their dive trip began snapping photos of the sinking pirate ship and the five men, four of them over 60, grimy, salty and stunned.

A Coast Guard helicopter arrived and asked the Hixons if they wanted to try to save the boat. But there was no hope for the Treasure Seeker.

"It went down, bow first, swoosh," Tripp Hixon recalled.

The five shipwrecked men were dropped off in the Turks and Caicos Islands, where they boarded a plane, still in their life jackets, and returned to Miami.

"It was a family decision to go and live in paradise," Tripp Hixon said. "We decided to go and this is what happened."

The Hixons wouldn't say how much they lost at the bottom of the sea.

Despite financial difficulties in the court record, including the mortgage foreclosure on a waterfront house they paid \$812,000 for in 2006, the Hixons have a line on another pirate ship.

"It's a piratey-looking boat," Tripp Hixon said. "We're trying to buy it and start from ground zero."

They hope to fix it up and head to the Virgin Islands again.

GLA IS PLANNING ANOTHER TRIP DO NOT DELAY!!!!

John Westman has put together what looks like to be an exciting trip for GLA's upcoming fall trip. The trip is planned for the week of October 24th thru the 31st 2008.

Destination is Cayman Brac/Brac Reef Beach Resort www.bracreef.com

Dive Package and lodging price per diver is 995.00 per person/double /6 two tank am dives
Non Diver 605.00 per person/Double. These prices include Breakfast and dinner with an optional lunch package available for 115.00

Air Fare is priced at 502.55

Total price looks to come in at about the 1500.00 price and is subject to the amount of people going. 11 person stays free/ along with a 10% commission return.

I believe I have everything included here/ for specific questions contact John Westman.

The main concern is to get a count of how many and a deposit in ASAP in order to hold airfare and prices. Right now 16 airfare spots are being held. Please get deposit to Steve Mahr made out to GLA in the amount of 150.00 per person no later than 3/15/2008 Please let John know ASAP so we can determine if we have enough to book this trip.

This trip looks to be Fantastic and a great value. Thanks to john Westman for his efforts

Steve Mahr- Treasurer

A Bit of insight from Bob Evans:

It had all started when I looked at the chart on the wall at the dive shop. It showed all the different certifications that a diver had to get to become a Master diver or Scuba Instructor. Even then I knew,

That with more training I would not only be a safer diver but might be able to help out a fellow diver in need of first aid. Little did I know that even on the surface I could and would use these skills even more.

It took years but I worked my way up the ladder of certifications and then Rescue Diver class. Little did I know how important this class would be till I began using some of the skills that I had learned in this class.

It was taught by Marshall at Sea the World Scuba Center and I really enjoyed all the new knowledge that he helped train us for. I even later went on to finish Divemaster and learned even more First Aid skills. We even helped train (I as a DM candidate) some Fire Department and Police Department units for Rescue Diver.

All these classes improved the skills that I had learned and would help me and the others that I would save.

Hands Up!

Yep, Hands up I said!

This was one of the first times I was needed and used that knowledge from those classes. I was at a home installing a side door when I heard "Help".

I turned around and asked, "What's wrong" (yes, they even teach you this in Rescue class)

The Grandmother said, "my daughter is choking".

Looking around the room I said, "where is she".

Then I ran and saw the daughter standing trying to breathe. I went behind her and was just putting my arms around her to start the Heineken (yes, I call it that cause you can always get free beers afterwards) when I remembered Hands Up. So, I yelled into her ear, Hands Up! Just as she raised them above her head a piece of meat was projected about 6 to 8 feet away and then I heard her breathing. I didn't even touch her and had saved her life and then I looked over at the couch and saw her 3-month-old baby. Wow I thought,

Training does really help, and thanks to Marshall I will always be ready! So take that extra training, please.

Low on air,,, must surface now,,,, Sea U,

Bob Evans

EDITORS NOTES:

Well here it is March, and it looks as if winter is beginning to wane. I am looking forward to the upcoming dive/social season with GLA. Please take time to visit our website, as Kristina Konen has taken the time to update the site with new dates and info. Remember she needs information and photos just like the Flipper. So if you want something on the site make sure you get it to her. This is a bigger Flipper edition due to all of the info I have received from members, and for that I thank you.

See you at the March meeting.

Steve

REMEMBER WHEN ... This picture and article supplied by Joanne Westman. If you have items from the clubs past you would like to see in the Flipper Please get them to me.

Remember when the GLA would trudge onto the ice of Orchard lake in February, carrying two tents, dive gear, ice diving equipment, food and pots/pans. One tent was set up as a changing room for divers to change into their dive suits and the other tent housed stoves/pots/dishes where hot chili and cider were prepared (sometimes hot mulled wine for those not diving). A triangular hole was cut in the ice, carabineers attached to the ice with safety lines attached to the diver. The safety diver on the surface would man the safety line as the diver entered the icy water. After the diver had enjoyed the freezing water long enough, a couple of tugs on the safety line would indicate to the safety diver that he wanted "OUT". We used to have around 20-25 folks attending these dives. Following the dives the hole in the ice was covered over with brush, and the divers and helpers enjoyed hot chili and cider in the "food tent". Then the trek back with all the dive gear, tents, pots/pans/food and ice diving equipment. We were younger then!!!

Pictures c. 1985 and 1987

