

On Friday, August 12, 2005, Cindy LaRosa and Kevin Magee drove 10 hours through heavy traffic from Cleveland, OH, to Rogers City, MI, to go diving on some of the best deep wrecks in the Great Lakes. A large accident on the Ohio Turnpike in Toledo caused traffic to come to a complete stop for several hours, but Cindy and Kevin eventually made it to the rural northeast corner of Michigan on Lake Huron. Meeting them there was Dean Ziegler, a member of the Bay Area Divers (BAD), his wife Diane, his son Eric, and Alan Jensen from Columbus. Joyce Hayward, who was also caught up in the traffic jam, arrived at the campground later that night 12 hours after leaving home. The trip normally takes 7-8 hours.

Dean had earlier towed his 25' Sport-Craft boat "Ziggy II" from Ohio to allow access to the dive sites. Each morning it was put in the water at a public boat ramp at Rogers City, Presque Isle, Hammond Bay, or Alpena, depending on the wrecks visited. Dean also arranged for gases (helium, oxygen, and argon) to be shipped to a nearby auto shop. Home base was established at a campground on the outskirts of Rogers City where the boat was stored each night, gases were mixed, dinner was made, and we slept. Air top offs were obtained regularly at dive shops in Rogers City 5 miles to the north or Alpena 30 miles to the south. Having multiple sets of tanks helped alleviate some of the gas blending chores.

The wrecks in this area are spectacular. All sit high off the hard bottom by 15'-30' with almost no silting evident. Depending on the depth, the diving was done using single 120's with H-valves, doubles, and/or one or two stage bottles. Water temperatures were warmer than normal this year with the bottom temperatures at 39-41 deg F, the thermocline between 40'-60', and 68-70 deg F water above. Visibility was excellent with 60'-100' of viz seen on the deeper (>160') wrecks. Visibility on the shallower wrecks was somewhat less at 30'-40'. Unlike earlier years, zebra/quaga mussels are now coating all of the wrecks to a degree that some features are becoming hard to discern. This is sad to see in an area where the wrecks were previously pristine for the longest time.

On Saturday, August 13, 2005, the boat went out of Presque Isle to dive the "Florida." This wreck was a wooden package steamer that sank in 200' of water in 1897 after being struck by the "George W. Roby," another steamer. The seas were nice at 1'-2' with partly sunny skies and a 75-80 deg F air temperature. The wreck's bow points southwest, and the mooring was tied amidships but tangled with two other moorings at the 90' level, making the descent and ascent a little tricky by requiring maneuvering around the floating lines in the mid-water. The amidships mooring allowed easy exploration in either direction from the mooring. Starting at the extreme bow, three metal anchors can be seen on the deck. Two are neatly stowed with their shanks passing through the solid wooden bulwarks and their swiveled arms lying flat on the deck. They initially present a quandary as to how they were released until it is realized the bulwarks are removable to

allow the arms and flukes to pass overboard. Their metal stocks point straight up and down outside the bulwarks, and the metal balls at the ends of the stocks form a decorative arrangement that frame both sides of the stem post. A smaller third anchor with a folded stock but non-swivel arms lies on the foredeck nestled between the other two anchors.

Mounted on top of the stem post is a small flagpole with a wooden disk-shaped cap. There is a curved metal davit mounted to the foredeck to allow easy handling of the anchors. A bow pointing pole projects outwards on its pivot from the stem but is pointed downwards towards the lake bottom. Immediately behind the anchors is a capstan with a large brass cover that reads "SS Florida, 1889" and the name of the original owner and shipbuilder. Unlike so many other wrecks, there is no mistaking the identification of this ship. Some fallen air scoops lie on the deck, and several metal steam radiators stand out from the deck. Careful examination reveals the outline of a now-gone forward deckhouse with cabins where the radiators are located. The deckhouse outline can be discerned by following the pattern of the remaining baseboards on the deck, and there are two small openings and ladders leading below decks on the forward part.

Looking down the side of the hull reveals a massive wooden wall going down to a distant debris-scattered bottom. Wooden rub rails are evident on the sides along with various side doors for loading cargo. Moving aft along the deck, which is at the 170' level, large cargo openings can be found with three fallen wooden masts lying lengthwise along the deck pointed towards the stern. Early steamers had masts to supplement the engines and provide a backup means of propulsion. In fact, they were required in order to obtain insurance. The masts' wire rigging, crosstrees, and topmasts are all easily viewed across the deck. The crosstrees are a half moon-shape and have planks across them to create platforms. On top of the mainmast is found a flagpole tipped by a decorative ball. Several long wooden trays can be seen scattered on the deck with circular cutouts. These were used to store fire buckets, although the buckets are now missing. Inside the cargo holds can be found all sorts of general package goods. Immediately obvious are the many barrels. Some are collapsed staves and hoops, some are partially collapsed with a solid white pasty cylinder of flour remaining, some are intact and sitting on the floor, and some are intact and floating up against the ceiling. One barrel was seen floating in the rigging of a mast that had fallen across a cargo opening. Also seen inside the cargo holds are wooden hand trucks, stacked washtubs and dishes, crates of blue-and-white enameled coffee pots, stacked paint cans, stacked bricks, and a plethora of other goods. The remains of flour bags are evident as piles of a white pasty substance. The details are endless, and an entire dive could be spent inside the cargo holds without moving far.

Moving amidships an intact wooden deckhouse is found with the mizzenmast lying partially on top of it but leaving the roof undamaged. On the forward wall

can be seen mounted a fire axe, and a metal nozzle from a fire hose lies on the deck nearby. The port wall of the deckhouse is missing to reveal a room with a potbelly stove and collapsed benches and tables. A small adjoining room on the starboard side is full of lanterns, some intact and some busted on the floor. Shelves with cutouts for the lanterns line the walls. Another starboard adjoining room is filled with stacked paint cans with the labels still somewhat evident. On the deck outside the lantern room has been placed an intact lantern for divers to view. Just aft of this deckhouse on the starboard side is the impact point of the "Roby." It is a perfect wedge-shaped hole that penetrates the deck approximately 10' and extends all the way to the bottom. This hole conveniently opens up the interior for easy viewing at all deck levels. Aft of the collision hole is a metal deckhouse that contains two large boilers inside. The top of the deckhouse are the holes for two side-by-side smokestacks. Also placed on top is a second capstan cover reading "SS Florida, 1889." This was formally present on top of the engine last year but has been moved to a more accessible area. On the deck behind the boiler house was seen a brass gauge, probably from one of the boilers.

Immediately after the boiler's deckhouse the wreck suddenly ends. The hull appears to have been cut vertically with a knife, exposing all three deck levels and their interiors. The boiler room can be accessed at the second level, and a chair was noticed hung up in the wreckage at this level. If one enters the boiler room from one of two side doors, the open firebox doors can be seen facing aft. This is an unusual direction for the doors, and it was also noted the boilers are mounted unusually high two levels above where the engine was located. On the boiler room floor are shovels lying where they were hurriedly abandoned when the ship was struck and began to sink. Aft of the collapse can be seen the outline of the hull with the middle space filled with wooden debris and machinery. The stern is a graceful rounded shape. In the middle of this debris stands a large compound engine. On the starboard side of the engine are mounted five brass gauges, two filled with water but three still dry and readable. A whistle and bell can be seen lying among the jumbled debris on the bottom. One smokestack can be seen lying on the bottom to the starboard side and the other one on the port side. A large dumpster-shaped object is aft of the engine and may be the remains of the engine room skylight. The stern capstan can be seen nearby still attached to a piece of decking. Large blocks of coal litter the bottom, and the rudder post pushes up through the debris at the extreme stern. Swimming under the stern, the rudder can be seen turned hard to port, and a single blade of the propeller can be seen sticking up from the bottom behind it. The stern is undercut and scoured by currents, making this area an overhead environment below the lake bottom, and a depth of 210' is possible here.

During our time on the wreck, two large freighters went by at a fairly close distance. The "Florida" is still in the active shipping lanes today, and care must be taken to always have someone on board the dive boat at all times. Bottom time was 20 minutes, total run time was 57 minutes, 20/35 trimix was used with

50% nitrox and 100% O2, and max depth was 182'. For those interested, pictures of the "Florida" can be found at the following web sites of Vlada Dekina and Tom Wilson.

<http://www.wrecksandreefs.com/florida.htm>

<http://www.scubaq.ca/ontarioscubadiving/florida.htm>

On Sunday, August 14, 2005, the boat was launched at Hammond Bay and proceeded to the wreck of the "Henry J. Johnson," a large 260' wooden steamer that sank in 160' of water in 1902 after colliding in a heavy fog with the steamer "Fred Pabst." The mooring was tied to the exposed compound engine at the stern, which points north. The area around the engine is collapsed, and the hull is split open at the sternpost, exposing the propeller shaft and coupler running from the engine to a large 4-bladed propeller. The engine has its machinery exposed but no gauges were found. Forward of the engine is a partially collapsed metal boiler house. Inside can be seen two side-by-side boilers with attached auxiliary tanks. Forward of the boiler house, the deck is intact at a level of about 140'. The ship is quite wide with a 40' beam, and there is a slight list to the port side. Swimming forward along the deck, a mast hole is found followed by three cargo openings. Peering inside reveals a completely empty cargo hold, which contradicts the account of it sinking with a load of iron ore. Amidships is found the outline of a missing deckhouse with a radiator coming out of the deck. Two more cargo openings, a deck winch, and then a sixth cargo opening follow this. The bow deckhouse is missing, exposing the empty hull inside. The fallen foremast lies off to the port side with wire rigging trailing out to it. Inside the extreme bow is a collapsed windlass with a metal anchor hanging from the hull underneath it. The hull is slightly split at the stem on the port side, and debris hangs down from the bow to the bottom on this side. Bottom time was 20 minutes, total run time was 43 minutes, 25/20 trimix was used with 100% O2, and max depth was 146'. After this dive Cindy, Diane, and Eric packed up and left at the end of the weekend, leaving Dean, Alan, Joyce, and Kevin.

On Monday, August 15, 2005, the "Florida" was again dove with Alan filming a swim through the first cargo level of the wreck. Afterwards, he, too, left, leaving Dean, Joyce, and Kevin to finish out the week.

On Tuesday, August 16, 2005, the boat was towed down to Alpena at Thunder Bay and launched there. A long 20-mile run was then made out to the wreck of the "Monrovia," a steel ocean-going freighter that looks somewhat like a Liberty

Ship. It sank in 1959 after colliding in heavy fog with the freighter "Royalton." The seas were flat and calm at 1', perfect for the long run out to this site. After arriving and finding no mooring, an attempt was made to hook it. After one false attempt, a successful grappling was obtained on the bow, which points east. The bow is completely collapsed from the salvage of its steel cargo using dynamite in the 1960's. The grapple caught at 120' among the remains of decking and metal plates, and the bottom is at 130'. The extreme bow points upwards towards the surface, and its sides are torn open and folded outwards from the force of the explosions. There is much confusion and clutter on the bow portion of the ship, but swimming aft the tall standing bridge can be seen filling the full width of the ship. The large bridge windows are prominent, and peering inside reveals that most of the bridge equipment was salvaged. Swimming aft of the bridge shows the bow and bridge to be shifted to the port side (north) with the amidships section to the south. The deck of this section is at 90', and the ship is completely intact from this point on towards the stern. Unfortunately, zebra/quaga mussels have heavily encrusted this wreck, obscuring many of its interesting features. Peering into the deckhouse that is first encountered at the amidships section reveals a galley and other rooms obviously filled with furniture and equipment. Aft of this deckhouse is a standing mast on the deck with loading booms, hanging steel cables, and deck winches. Moving aft reveals empty holds followed by a stern deckhouse. This deckhouse also has cabins and rooms filled with encrusted objects. This deckhouse has a breezeway around its perimeter, and the stern is rounded and undercut.

This is a large wreck with lots of penetration and exploration opportunities, and many dives could be spent exploring it. There was also an abundance of fish life found on this wreck, making for an interesting dive overall. Bottom time was 20 minutes, total run time was 30 minutes, 28/10 trimix was used with 50% nitrox, and max depth was 110'. After arriving back at the campsite, Joyce's nephew Ian was there to greet us and spend a couple of days relaxing and watching the boat while we dove.

On Wednesday, August 17, 2005, the boat was launched from Hammond Bay and headed to the "Persian," a 2-masted wooden schooner that sank in 160' of water in 1868 after a collision with the schooner "E.B. Allen," which is coincidentally sunk nearby in Thunder Bay. The weather was cooler at 65-70 deg F, the sky was sunny and clear, but it was noticeably windier with 2'-3' waves, whitecaps, and choppy seas. No mooring was found on this wreck, so it was grappled. Upon descending, the grapple was found attached to the crosstrees of the fallen mizzenmast on the port side of the wreck. The topmast is attached, and the mast was followed up to the deck of the wreck at a 150' depth. A boom lies across the mizzenmast with some of the port railing torn off by the boom. The stern points northeast, and the cabin is missing, leaving a hole in its former location. Inside the cabin hole can be found some pots, pans, and dishes

stacked by divers, and the stove can also be found in the cabin hole. A broken three-legged stool and other pieces of furniture can be found on the stern deck. On this deck is also a wheel mounted to a strange-looking steering gear of a long triangular design attached to the rudderpost. Dropping behind the transom reveals the straight-pointed rudder and the underside lines of the ship.

Moving forward of the cabin hole, the starboard decking is missing amidships with an obvious breakdown in the hull. This would be the collision point, and it exposes the centerboard box with an attached winch on the deck. There are two hatch openings, and the standing foremast can be seen leaning slightly to port with another winch at its base and an integral fife rail around its circumference. The foremast's boom and gaff can be seen lying on the deck off to the port side. At the extreme bow is a windlass with a covered companionway going down below decks. The starboard wood-stacked anchor is on the bottom with the chain leading to the hawse pipe, and the port anchor is hanging on the cathead. The bowsprit with bracing (bobstay) chains is attached at the bow. Bottom time was 20 minutes, total run time was 50 minutes, 20/35 trimix was used with 50% nitrox and 100% O₂, and max depth was 160'.

The weather became noticeably rougher after surfacing, so a quick retreat was made to shore. After entering the harbor an unfamiliar buzzing sound was heard, and a yellow flying boat taxied into the harbor and beached itself. We learned the pilot of this vintage 1947-48 airplane had attempted to take off in the rough seas a couple of miles up the coast, hit a wave, ripped the left wing float off, and nearly flipped the plane with the pilot, his wife, and dog inside. He then taxied down the coast to the harbor for refuge. We took him aboard the boat and went searching for the wing float. The plane had only had one previous owner (his dad) and was all original equipment - including the Franklin engine - so he was anxious to recover the float. After a rough trip north, the float was sighted on shore, and the pilot called some friends to recover it. They saved it just in time as a motorcyclist was attempting to ride off with it, and the float met us at the harbor in the bed of his friend's pickup truck. Now that's something you don't see every day!

On Thursday, August 18, 2005, the boat was launched at Presque Isle and proceeded to the "Cornelia B. Windiate," a 3-masted topsail schooner that sank late in the season in December, 1875, when it was only a year old. It sailed from Lake Michigan bound for Buffalo with a cargo of wheat and was never seen again. It was always assumed to have been lost in Lake Michigan since its passage of the Mackinac Straits was never recorded. However, in 1986 this wreck was found in Lake Huron. Identifying it wasn't too hard because this is one of those rare wrecks that still has its name on it. It is considered one of the most intact schooner wrecks found in the Great Lakes, and it lies in 185' of water with her deck at about 165'. The mooring is tied to the top of the foremast, which

rises to within 90' of the surface with the topmast broken off above the steps. The crosstrees are intact with wire rigging dangling down to the deck below. Amazingly, attached to the mast with a swivel is a large square-rigged raffe spar resting at an angle. Having an attached spar is a very unique and extremely rare feature.

It is a long descent down the foremast to the bow, which points south. The only damage on this wreck is at the extreme bow where the bowsprit is broken off at the base and hangs down to the bottom on the port side with the jib boom pointing upwards and resting on the starboard cathead. There is a large forecabin in front of the windlass, and the deck is littered with rigging and miscellaneous parts. An oar from the yawl boat can be seen lying among the debris on the deck on the starboard side. A companionway opening with vertical stairs leads down to the chain locker. Both large wood-stocked anchors are stowed on their catheads on the railings. Curiously, the anchor chain runs out of the windlass and up and down the entire port side of the ship in three orderly, looping lengths. Speculation is that this was an attempt by the crew to correct a starboard tilt of the ship as she lay trapped in ice or that this was the normal procedure before going to anchor to prevent fouling. All deck equipment is present, including a capstan amidships and centerboard winch with chain running down into the centerboard box. All cargo holds are sealed tight with the wooden cargo hatches still strapped down with metal bands, allowing no examination of their interiors. However, several deck boards are ajar, revealing a full cargo hold immediately below the decking with white mold growing on top of it. On the starboard deck near the stern is a large open-topped box with very thick wooden walls and a metal-lined interior. This was probably an ice box used to store perishables and is another unique item to this wreck.

All three masts are standing, but the good visibility showed that the tops of the mainmast and mizzenmast are both broken off. The top of the mainmast, complete with crosstrees and attached topmast, is lying on the bottom against the hull on the port side. Wire rigging runs from both sets of mainmast deadeyes on the railings down to the crosstrees of this mast section. The top of the mizzenmast leans up against the starboard side of the ship near the stern and points up across the deck with its crosstrees and topmast in place. Sail hoops are stacked around the masts at their bases, and there are three-sided fife rails around the masts with belaying pins in them. The foremast boom and gaff are scattered on the deck, but the mainmast boom is stowed in its centerline position with its gaff resting neatly on top of it. Miscellaneous blocks are scattered or attached to various mast parts, and deadeyes are found on all the railings.

At the stern the cabin is completely intact. The mizzenmast runs out of the middle of its roof, and the boom and gaff are on the cabin roof. A front companionway is on the port side. Entering into the cabin, the stove can be seen on the floor. Two open doors with porcelain doorknobs can be seen leading to small rooms on the starboard side. These rooms and their walls are fairly broken

up, and broken furniture pieces can be seen on the floor. Windows with metal bars and sliding shutters are on both sides of the cabin, and original traces of white paint can be seen on the walls. At the rear of the cabin, a graceful winding staircase can be seen making a 90 deg. turn up and out of the cabin on the port side. On the raised steering deck one finds the wheel and steering gear with the wheel tilted up from a failed salvage attempt by an early diver. The davits are arched metal designs at the corners of the stern. On the port railing alongside the cabin is located the wooden nameplate with "Cornelia B. Windiate" carved into it. Unfortunately, it is now completely covered with zebra/quaga mussels and cannot be read. Examining the transom one finds a series of decorative metal stars, five on each side, attached to the transom in a curving design with a nautical rope design along the edges of the transom. There are also holes for two unique oval or key-shaped portholes on the transom, but sadly, they are missing and stolen by an early diver. Dropping down to the bottom, the rudder is turned hard to starboard at a 90 deg angle. Finally, on the bottom on the starboard side near the stern, a wooden yawl boat can be seen sitting upright next to the hull about 10'-15' away. Its bench seats and floorboards are in place, and there is a large wooden block inside at one end. This block would have mated to the davit. Bottom time was 25 minutes, run time was 69 minutes, 20/35 trimix, 50% nitrox, and 100% O2 were used, and 186' was the max depth. For those interested, pictures of the "Windiate" can be found at the following web sites of Vlada Dekina and Tom Wilson.

<http://www.wrecksandreefs.com/windiate.htm>

<http://www.scubaq.ca/ontarioscubadiving/windiate.htm>

One purpose of the dive was to obtain some final archaeological measurements of the aft hatches to settle a controversy about their sizes. These measurements were obtained, and the controversy was resolved. Upon surfacing it was discovered the NOAA boat from Thunder Bay was standing off waiting for us so they could obtain high definition video of the wreck for an upcoming survey by NOAA in conjunction with a visit by the John Chatterton and Richie Kohler of the "Deep Sea Detectives." We left them to their filming and retreated to North Bay near Presque Isle so Ian could try a drysuit for the first time in its sheltered waters. He did great, and then we headed back to Presque Isle in building 3'-4' seas.

The next day, Friday, August 19, 2005, awoke to heavy rain and strong winds with 5'+ waves rolling in and no hope of diving. That morning Ian left, leaving just Dean, Joyce, and Kevin again. Since we couldn't dive, we drove down to the new NOAA facility in Thunder Bay for the day. There we met with the NOAA survey folks and viewed their HD video of the "Windiate" from the previous day, which is impressive since there was 100' of visibility. Present were Pat Labadie

and Joe Hoyt, who was working at NOAA over the summer. Also present was the film crew for "Deep Sea Detectives" with Richie Kohler and John Chatterton. We met with them and their producers to discuss the results of our 2003 survey, our theories about why it sank, and what happened to the crew. After a lunch break with everyone at a nearby restaurant, we participated in the filming of parts of the episode where the NOAA crew holds a joint dive briefing with the DSD team and where Joyce and Pat are interviewed. Overall, it was interesting to see their filming technique and interact with them. Both Richie and John are very nice people, and it'll be interesting to see how the episode turns out.

It was decided after checking the weather forecast for the remaining two days that the weather was going to remain bad, so it was decided to pack up and head home early. Fortunately, it was learned that both NOAA and DSD were able to dive the "Windiate" with difficulty over the next two days and accomplish enough for the survey and television episode.

On a sad note, it was learned a week or two after the trip that the wreck of the "Northwestern" (formerly thought to be the "Perseverance") off Rogers City in 130' of water was stripped of all its artifacts by some unscrupulous individual(s). The event happened sometime between July 4 and August 27. Gone are the pocket watch, two whiskey jugs with decorative designs, the brown pitcher, cup, bowl, and plates, leaving only some of broken ceramic pieces. This is heartbreaking to hear, and anyone with information is requested to contact me or Steve Kroll in Rogers City so we may attempt to recover these items. We would like to return them to the wreck where they belong and can be enjoyed by everyone. There is also the fear this person(s) will now start attacking the other wrecks in the area, devastating what makes the Rogers City area such an enjoyable and fun place to dive.