

On Wednesday evening, July 30, 2008, ten divers met in Cleveland's Flats near the old Diamond Jim's Steakhouse on the Cuyahoga River. The divers were Brian Royak, John Norris, Jim Cooke, Chris Herbrook, Martie Truby, Ann Stephenson, Ron & Paula Koenig, Cindy LaRosa, and Kevin Magee. Jay McGrath was also aboard to assist the divers. They were there for Aqua Specialist's one-tank evening dive aboard the "Holiday." Captain Francine Pate piloted the "Holiday" while Captain Wayne Bratton handed out the sub sandwiches and drinks provided as part of the trip. The dive was three miles out in Lake Erie on the "Old Cleveland Crib." The weather was a little rougher than normal, and 2' seas were encountered on the way out to the site.

The "Old Crib," or "Crib No. 5," is a submerged water intake in 50' of water off Cleveland. It is a mile west of the more famous above-water "5-Mile Crib," also called "Crib No. 3." The "5-Mile Crib" derives its name not from its distance out into the lake but from the fact that its 9'-diameter tunnel runs 5 miles to the Kirtland Pumping Station near Burke Lakefront Airport. This crib was started in 1896 and finished in 1904 at the cost of 37 lives from 4 natural gas explosions in the tunnel and one fire on the crib structure. Despite its name, the "Old Crib" was built after the "5-Mile Crib" and is active today supplying western Cleveland with drinking water. Its larger 10'-diameter tunnel was completed in 1917 and goes to the Division Avenue Water Works behind the Cargill salt mines near Whiskey Island. This is the crib where the famous rescue by inventor Garrett Morgan occurred. On July 24, 1916, a natural gas explosion in the tunnel killed 11 men and 10 would-be rescuers who were overcome by gas when they entered the pressurized tunnel. Morgan and others used his new safety hood, the forerunner of the modern gas mask, to rescue several trapped workers. Morgan, a black Cleveland inventor, did not receive proper credit at the time, but the Division Avenue Pumping Station's name was changed in 1991 to honor him for his invention and rescue efforts. Morgan also invented the traffic light.

A large white buoy marks the "Old Crib," and the "Holiday" anchored upwind so its transom was near the buoy. The divers then swam about 50 feet to the buoy and used it to descend/ascend. Due to the excellent 10'-15' visibility, it was easily seen that the buoy is now attached to two chains that descend in opposite directions, one northwest and one southeast. This is a recent change in how the buoy is moored, and it now rests directly over the water intake of the crib. Hanging underneath the buoy is a sealed electrical cable, and at its end is a cylinder about 10'-15' above the crib's inlet grates. It was speculated this is a device to measure water temperature or some other physical property. Both buoy chains are attached to concrete blocks on top of the crib. The crib is constructed of many stone blocks all neatly piled to form a large circular mound with a depression at its top, much like a volcano. The crib is approximately 100 feet in diameter, 50' deep at its base, and 35' deep at its top.

Swimming towards the center of the crib, one descends into the center intake cavity, which is approximately square in shape and lined with large wood timber

walls that form a box with a large grate at the bottom. It was noticed certain sections of the grate had recently been cleaned of zebra mussels, revealing round metal bars. This grate measures approximately 30 feet square, and its sides are also grated at the edges by downward sloping metal bars. The top of the grate is at a 45' depth. Peering through the grate's openings, a deep vertical shaft can be seen cut into the bedrock that descending into inky blackness. Recently, divers used a depth meter at the end of a reel to determine the bottom of the shaft is at about a 110'-115' depth. No noticeable suction or current was detected at the grate.

Descending over the sides of the crib is initially a sharp descent to 40'-45', but there is then a long sloping descent to the bottom at 50'. The bottom itself is thick clay that is often sculpted into exotic shapes around rocks and embedded objects. The sides of the crib and the surrounding bottom are littered with large rafts of wood timbers, grated structures, metal railroad rails, and other pieces of debris. None were identifiable as to what purpose they served. Large limestone boulders also litter the sides. At 45' a mild thermocline was encountered where the water temperature changed from 75 deg F to about 70-72 deg F. The visibility also dramatically improved to 20'-25', and schools of small perch were seen gathered in this cold, clear water.

After surfacing it was found the wind had calmed, creating a pleasant evening with less than 1' seas. It was a pleasant trip back to shore, and everyone was treated to a beautiful view of the lighted Cleveland skyline after sunset. For those who are interested, more one-tank evening trips aboard the "Holiday" will be run on Aug 13, Aug 27, and Sept 10, and you can sign up at Aqua Specialists.