

On July 24, 2011, Cindy LaRosa and Kevin Magee made another Sunday morning drive to Barcelona, NY, to go diving with Jim Herbert on Osprey Charters. Lake Erie had 2'-3' rolling swells from the west, but it was judged good enough to head to the intended wreck, the "Andrew B." This modern metal barge and crane sank in November, 1995, while being towed between Sault Saint Marie, MI, and Toronto, Ontario. The tug and barge had stayed in Port Stanley at the base of Long Point to escape bad weather before heading back out into the lake downbound. Unfortunately, even worse weather was encountered near the tip of Long Point, causing the tow cable to break. The barge wallowed in the heavy seas, and then finally rolled and sank. The barge was judged not to be worth salvaging, so it was left where it sank.

Aboard the dive boat "Southwind" were 15 divers, including Greg Ondus, Jack Papes, Steve Moysan, Jacques Girouard, George Balas, John Gavroy, Adam Poniknar, Scott & Diann Shields, Les Bowles, Mike Bluth, and Jimmy Herbert, Jr. Also aboard were John as deckhand / diver and ride-along Dawn Moysan, who kindly helped all the techie divers into and out of the water. Due to engine problems, the boat had to go much slower than its normal 15-20 mph, making for a long 2+ hour trip to the wreck site. Upon arriving and mooring into the wreck, gearing up took a while in the unpleasantly hot 80-85 deg F air temperature, and the biting black flies were also present in large numbers. Once in the water, a hot 75-77 deg F surface temperature was encountered with about 10'-15' of visibility. The thermocline was found spread out between 40'-50', and below this was 41-42 deg F water. Bottom conditions were found to very dark, but visibility was estimated to be approximately 50' with a strong light. Unfortunately, the wreck is very disorienting and confusing since it is lying on its side with the high side at a 145' depth and the opposite side at a 185' depth where it sinks into the soft mud bottom. The deck is perpendicular to the bottom and faces east with the mooring tied to the top of the north end, which can be considered the bow since this end is shielded by a 5'-8' tall metal breakwater wall that extends the entire beam of the barge.

Rubber hose can be seen draped off the bow of the barge. Halfway down to the bottom on the bow at a depth of about 170' feet is a single spud, which is retracted and thus cantilevered out over the bottom away from the deck. At its base is a winch, presumably to help raise and lower the spud. Looking at the underside of the barge, the retracted spud's bottom is recessed into a cavity with a pyramid-shaped tip to help it bite into the bottom. The bow of the barge is square with a slight slope to it, and the underside of the barge is flat like most modern barges. Zebra/quagga mussels heavily cover all vertical surfaces, and horizontal surfaces have a thick coating of silt on them.

A large metal beam is attached to the deck near the spud, and this beam travels down the length of the barge and away from the deck until it meets two more beams, each attached to one side of the barge roughly amidships. This arrangement forms a tripod that would have towered roughly 30'-50' off the deck

of the barge and appears to have served as a support for the crane's arm. Swimming through these beams can be tricky as one navigates down the deck's length, especially in the dark conditions and with hanging cables. Care must be taken to not bump into anything or get entangled. All three beams meet at a single point with no further beams or arms attached at the end. Astern and below this tripod arrangement is the cab of the crane still attached to the deck of the barge, and it is rotated pointing towards the bottom. The windows, doors, and equipment of the cab can be seen. Equipment of various types is also mounted to the deck in various places and includes electrical boxes, hatches, hoses, cables, etc. in a confusing, jumbled arrangement.

The stern of the barge beyond the crane cab is square like the bow. Moving to the top of the wreck and traveling back to the bow along the port side, railings are seen along with a metal box structure with a doorway in it. Next to it is another retracted spud hanging out into space away from the deck, and presumably there is a third spud on the bottom adjacent to it, although it might be completely buried in the silt. Mounted on the deck nearby is a winch with cabling still wrapped around its spool. Cindy and Kevin's bottom time was 20 minutes, and 20/30 trimix was used with 50% nitrox and 100% oxygen for decompression. Total run time was 60 minutes, and maximum depth was 179'.

After surfacing, the swells had calmed to less than 1', and it was a very pleasant cruise back to port with everyone watching the sunset. However, because of the slow boat speed, we did not reach shore until 9:30 PM, and Kevin and Cindy did not get home to Cleveland, OH, until 1:00 AM, making for a long - but fun - day.

For photos of the dive, see Jack Papes' web site at the following location.
http://www.n2junkie.com/gallery/flash/lake_erie_flash_pages/20110724_AndrewB/