

On Saturday, May 26, Mike & Georgann Wachter, Gary Humel, Cindy LaRosa, and Kevin Magee went diving aboard the Wachter's boat "Figment" out of Lorain. Although there were hopes that the weather would be good, it was instead a cool (50-60 deg F) overcast day with occasional drizzling rain - typical Cleveland Memorial Day weather. The wind was steady but the waves were not too bad at 1'-2'. Therefore, it was decided to make at least a short run out and do some diving. The Wachter's boat is large and dry, making such days acceptable even when it would be miserable on other boats. It also helped that, with the exception of Cindy, everyone was diving dry.

The first wreck was the "Morning Star," a side paddlewheeler that sank in 1868 after a collision with the bark "Cortland." Because the "Morning Star" was raised and moved in a salvage attempt afterwards, the "Cortland's" location still has not been - at least publicly - found. Gary was the first one in the water while Cindy and Kevin suited up. Mike and Georg decided to stay aboard to watch the boat and the weather. Viz on the bottom was between 5'-8', which is actually pretty good for this notoriously low-viz wreck. The zebra mussels were also absent from most of the timbers and metal parts of the wreck, making for a good dive on this normally obscured wreck. The wreck is a jumble of timbers and parts and can be quite confusing. A line reel is absolutely necessary if one wishes to see the wreck and still surface up the anchor line. Even with good viz, however, Cindy and Kevin managed to run out both of their 150' reels and somehow circle completely around to pass by the anchor again without realizing they had turned around.

Because of the lack of zebra mussels, a lot of parts on the wreck were easily identifiable whereas in years past they were just nondescript blobs. A notable landmark is the boiler and stacks, and they are still standing upright. Nearby are the remains of the paddlewheels. Most of the upper parts are gone, but the lower spokes are still somewhat intact, and the shape of the wheels can be seen. The hub itself is a massive part that is easily identified. Still further along are the remains of the walking beam engine, which is standing and towers high above the wreck. It is a unique feature that is usually only found on paddlewheeler wrecks, which are themselves rare. Notable is the metalwork associated with the walking beam engine, including some interesting diamond-shaped parts. A maximum depth of 57' was achieved with a total dive time of 42 minutes. The bottom temperature was 46 deg F, and the thermocline was at 35'-40' with a surface temperature of 56-57 deg F above it.

Upon surfacing it was learned that a storm had passed by, and the waves were becoming increasingly stronger and choppier. The Wachters decided to skip their dives, so Kevin went back down to pull the anchor from the wreck, and a leisurely retreat was made towards shore. Upon reaching closer to shore, the weather improved, so Georg and Mike suited up to dive on the "Hickory Stick," a barge and crane that sank in 1958 after foundering in a late November storm. Its tug the "Black Marlin" was also lost in this incident and has never been officially

found. After Mike and Georg surfaced, Kevin and Gary suited up and went down.

Viz on this wreck was the same at about 5'-8', which again can be considered good. Zebra mussels were also not very evident on the wreck, and many details could be seen. The barge lies roughly east-west, and not much is left of the barge except some frames, trusses, and cross members. Both ends are collapsed or missing. After exploring down the length of the barge and returning to the anchor, a southwest jump was made over to the crane, which lies about 30'-50' off the side of the barge. Again, a line reel is invaluable for fully exploring this wreck and its debris field. The crane's boom was explored along its length. A small pulley is at the northwestern end, and the cab and its boiler is at the other end. The cab is on its side, and the boiler is easily examined. Obvious on the boiler were details like large rivet heads, which could easily be seen due to the lack of mussels. Lots of debris is scattered all around the crane, too, including the clamshell bucket, tools, a compressor, and other items, but a dedicated search of the debris field is required to see them. Along the crane's boom a pulley was spotted on the bottom, and on the way back from the crane to the barge, a large ball on the crane's main cable was found. The cable disappears under the silt at both ends, so it is not easy to follow to its source.

A maximum depth of 51' was achieved with a 28 minute dive time. Water conditions were exactly the same as earlier except there was a noticeable strong current headed south and the thermocline was a little more strongly defined at 38'. Despite the cold, overcast, and rain, it was still a great day for diving as far as viz was concerned. Let's just hope the topside weather improves for next time.