

On Sunday, August 25, David VanZandt, Cindy LaRosa, and Kevin Magee went diving out of Cleveland, OH, aboard Dave's boat "Sea Dragon." Despite the nice, calm conditions (1'-2' seas) and sunny sky, very few other boats were out. Therefore, they decided to dive the "Algeria," a large schooner that sank just one mile off Browns Stadium in 35' of water at the turn of the century while anchored during a storm. Despite being near the mouth of the Cuyahoga River and the rain during the preceding week, excellent 10'-15' viz was encountered on the bottom with a warm 75-76 deg F water temperature.

Despite the shallow water, the wreck has a lot to see in the way of structural timbers, knees, center posts, unidentifiable objects, and fish. Many large, curious sheephead, bass, and perch all approached and followed the divers to check them out. This is a refreshing change of pace considering the normally fish-less water we see while wreck diving in the Great Lakes. The wreck lies on a partially sandy bottom. It is very large with many large pieces torn away from the main body of the wreck. After many dives on this wreck, there is still always something new to be found. This time, an (authentic) plastic deck chair - obviously from the original "Algeria" - was found nestled among the timbers near the eastern (stern?) end. It was also noted that many tree branches have worked themselves into various holes, nooks, and crannies.

While eating lunch anchored to the wreck afterwards, the "Red Witch," an authentic two-masted schooner, sailed past within 50' with guests aboard. It reminded everyone of the schooner wrecks we regularly dive and the boats of the old days. Also steaming within 100'-150' was the large steel 3-decked "Goodtime III" party boat. It's a good thing we weren't in the water at the time, or we would have been diving for the bottom and swearing a laker must have just passed overhead. A historic-looking red tug and a more modern tug also passed by at much more comfortable distances while we were anchored.

Afterwards, the crowds were escaped by heading to the "H.G. Cleveland," a schooner that sank in 50' of water about 3 miles off Lakewood Park. Dave managed three dives on the wreck while Cindy and Kevin did two dives. There was an apparent attempt by the wreck to remain hidden by re-locating itself every time it was anchored. However, it was eventually found despite the poor 1'-2' viz on the bottom. Surface viz was great at 10'-15', but it steadily got worse as one descended, especially when approaching within 5'-10' off the bottom. Several searches using reels and one re-anchoring was required to eventually find the main body of the wreck. Visibility on top of the large rock pile at the center of the wreck was about 5'-10'. No thermocline was detected, but the bottom temperature was slightly colder at 74-75 deg F. While crawling around on the bottom, it was discovered that the bottom becomes hard-packed and gravelly the closer one gets to the wreck. Thick, gooey mud is found farther away. Furthermore, it was discovered that there is a lot of interesting equipment and pieces out in the debris field, making for a pleasurable, unique dive even though the wreck itself was only briefly visited.