

On Tuesday, September 17, the weather was too nice not to go out on Lake Erie. Kevin Magee, David VanZandt, and Dave's dad - who was visiting Cleveland, boarded Dave's boat "Sea Dragon" and headed out into the lake. The lake was flat initially, so the decision was made to do the 34-mile run from Cleveland to the "Frank E. Vigor," a large steel freighter that sank in 75' of water in 1944 after colliding in a heavy fog with the "Philip Minch," another steel freighter. The "Minch" survived, but the "Vigor" didn't. The "Minch," by the way, is different from the wooden steamer of the same name sunk off Pelee Island.

On the way to the site, the seas increased to 3', but by the time the wreck was reached, the waves had laid back down to 1'-2' seas. The "Vigor" is in the shipping lanes, and while the "Sea Dragon" was there, three lake freighters passed within a mile of the wreck, so care should be taken. Dave and Kevin suited up and descended while Dave's dad, a non-diver, kept watch and relaxed on the boat. The divers were pleasantly surprised to find a 73 deg F water temperature and 10'-15' visibility from top to bottom. A mild thermocline was found about 2'-3' off the bottom but was not measured. The wreck is upside down with the bow N. There is a list to the W (starboard) side, so the highest point of the wreck's bottom is on the E side about 15'-20' off the bottom. There is a vertical 1'-2' wide crack in the hull on the E side towards the stern, but otherwise no entry points were found into the wreck. The gunwales are buried in the mud all the way around the perimeter. A steel beam was seen sticking up out of the mud near the crack in the hull, but no other wreckage was seen. A very large four-bladed propeller is at the stern with the large rudder turned towards starboard (W). Several sheephead and gobies were seen on the wreck.

After such a nice, but bland, dive it was decided to visit the "Valentine," a three-masted wooden schooner that sank in 1877 about 4 miles away. A slightly colder temperature of 70 deg F was found on the bottom, but bottom visibility was much poorer at 5'-8' maximum. In addition, visibility quickly deteriorated once on the wreck, and soon only 3' visibility was present with a light being required to see anything clearly. The bow is N, and a nice windlass, square bit, and diagonally standing mast are on the bow. A hand pump is behind the windlass, and there are several interesting deck openings, including the chain locker. Unfortunately, the wreck's deck lies only a few feet off the bottom, and the inside of the wreck is completely filled with silt.

After several minutes on the wreck, it was discovered that it was also heavily covered in gill nets, some with live perch stuck in them. The diagonally standing mast at the bow was snagged in net, and most of the deck equipment towards the stern is completely covered in net. Two prominent pieces of equipment still visible were the capstan and center mast stub, which has a fife rail around it and one belaying pin installed in the rail. However, the centerboard winch, cleats, remaining mast stub, cargo hatches, and most of the stern's gunwales are completely covered in nets floating as large curtains or in tangled bunches. The nets made swimming around the wreck difficult, especially in the low viz. After

half an hour of trying to navigate and avoid the nets, it was decided enough fun had been had.

Overall, it was a great day, and calm 1' seas were found during the long ride back to Cleveland.