



# “Dive Log”

The monthly newsletter of the United Divers  
of Central Massachusetts

November 2008

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## The U 869

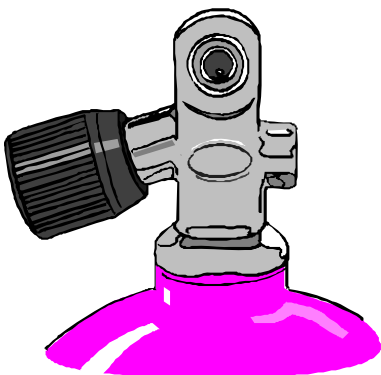
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It was a cold snowy March night. I was sacked out on my couch watching some TV when the phone rang, “Hey the caller said want to dive the 869”. “How much” I replied, thinking about the large deposit I had just put down on a Doria trip latter in the year. “\$325” said the caller, “I’m in” I replied, and so began the task of pulling off two major offshore dive trips in one season. I started planning the trip that night eagerly punching in numbers on my deco software, looking at different profiles and gas combinations. I spent the next three nights planted in front of the computer reading everything I could find on the sub and the dive, Even though the trip was three months away I new it would be here before I knew it. I couldn't have been more right! It seemed like I had just agreed to the trip and suddenly it was fourteen days away. My major concern with the trip was that it was so early in the year, the first weekend in June to be exact, that it didn't leave much room to do work up dives of a comparable depth. The U 869 lies in 230’ of water in an area known for some nasty currents. Shoot in May up here the water is still 39 degrees, who wants to do 90 minute trimix dives in that! I managed three 180’ dives that felt good and decided to go with that.

The 869 is a pretty formidable dive, it’s a 70+ mile run to the wreck which is a long ways from help if there’s a problem, Its also deep something I couldn't get out of my head as the date came closer. Due to a buddy change I would be diving with a guy who I knew well but had never dove to this depth with. I trusted him and he is a very experienced diver but why take chances. I planned my dives on the basis that I would be diving solo. Double gas across the boards, this meant stuffing the bejesus of my double 104’s and using 80’s for my deco gases. The wreck is small and low lying so you spend most of your dive 10’ or so off the bottom. If I was going to have to worry about something at that depth it wasn't going to be gas. I set myself up good or so I thought using a deep deco gas and a shallow deco gas. 34% at 120’ and 80% at 30’ as apposed to my normal 50% at 70 ’and O2 at 20’ combo. My main reasoning for doing this was two fold, first it moved my deco gas closer to me on the bottom in case of an all out last ditch effort, something I don't even like to think about but still cant ignore. Two it balanced out the gas consumption of both deco gases to less than 40 cfg per bottle putting me right where I wanted to be for the double gas thing. All that combined with my 15/50 trimix for back gas made for a well balanced gas plan.



The total cost for all the breathing gas for the trip was about \$350 dollars not to mention the countless gallons of gas used running tanks here and there. So there I was the night before the trip going down the check list and what a checklist it was,

3 sets of doubles with 15/50 trimix

3 aluminum 80's with EAN 34%

3 aluminum 80's with EAN 80%

1 Argon bottle for suit inflation

6 regulators

2 computers plus backup tables

2 lift bags

1 reel and 1 spool

1 HID light and 2 backup lights

2 masks

2 knives and 1 pair a trauma sheers

Dry suit and insulation

You get the idea, it's a lot of stuff and it all has to work perfect your life depends on it.

We arrived at the Captree Island Boat basin on Long Island at about 4pm . That was when I first saw the R/V Garloo. What a big boat I thought it looked like one of the whale watch boats that are docked next to the Cape Ann Diver. The Garloo is the former Wahoo under a new captain and with many improvements. She's a big girl at around 55' long, 16' wide, and has 3 decks. On offshore trips she sleeps 8 divers, 4 crew, 2 captains, and 1 cook All with 3 sets of doubles and 6 deco bottles minus 2 rebreather divers. Suddenly a 55' boat doesn't look so big, top that with dive bags, duffle bags, and food and water for 2 days at sea and it became down right small. My buddy and I quickly loaded the boat with all our gear and headed to dinner with our new friends. The weather was forecasted to be rough all weekend so being the puker that I am, I ate light reasoning with myself that it's better to be hungry from eating salad and stuff, than from puking over the side all night. I guess it worked however the 2 Bonine every 12 hours didn't hurt either. The Boat was scheduled to leave the dock at 12 am , and everyone turned in at around 10 pm , everyone that is except me. I spent the next hour pacing the dock watching fishing boats come and go wondering how in the hell everyone else was sleeping. There's diving to be done and I want to do it now, not tomorrow I thought now! It was about eleven when I finally convinced myself to try and get some sleep, it seemed like no sooner did I fall asleep though than the captain fired up the massive twin diesels that were 2' behind me, so much for sleep. Wouldn't you know it the one weekend the weathermen are right is the weekend I have to go offshore. We pounded 4' to 5' seas all night long making for a long night of no sleep hanging on for dear life in the top bunk. I learned two very valuable lessons that night on the 9 hour ride to the wreck that every diver should know. One if given a choice between sleeping in the bow or stern always take the stern, and two never ever offer to take the top bunk trust me...

The next morning I "awoke" to find sunny sky's but thick fog. We arrived at the wreck at around 9 am only to find another charter boat the John Jack tied in to the sub. Normally this isn't too big of a problem but the John Jack is a big boat 55' or so, and the 869 is a pretty small wreck. To make matters worse they were tied into the blast hole right in the middle of the wreck. Now I was starting to sweat things a little bit I was planning on two dives on day one but need a 5 to 6 hour sit between dives, we had already arrived at the wreck late and now we were having problems with the tie in. After splashing two teams of tie in divers and a couple of hours mucking around we were still in a bad spot. We had a pretty good current running and both boats had worked there way together banging repeatedly in the 4 foot seas. Finally the decision was made by both captains that with both boats anchor lines having decompressing divers on them we would drop our line the John Jack would assume it until clear of divers and the Garloo would temporarily tie to the back of John Jack until other arrangements could be made. The captain soon gave the word to start suiting divers and each team started getting ready.

My buddy Mark and I were divers five and six, and when our turn came to don tanks I was pumped, anxious, and wiped out all at once. I remember thinking how crappy I felt physically from not sleeping and getting tossed around all night, but on the same note saying to myself you've got to suck it up and dive there is nothing major wrong and you have spent a lot of time and energy getting here. Everyone has the right to call a dive even a big one like this. Knowing when to throw in the towel is sometimes a personal thing and it's a matter of knowing how much you can take and still function flawlessly and often experience is the only thing we have to help us decide. As I splashed over the side of the boat I was relieved when all the weight of my five tanks was gone and the world around me was finally still. We had a 125' swim to the bow of the John Jack to get to the mooring line and I had planned on just taking my time swimming on my back but the steep 4 footers quickly prevented me from getting a full breath of air without a mouthful of salt water. I deployed a deco regulator to breath from as my back gas was hypoxic (not enough oxygen to support life on the surface) and finished my swim to the John Jack. I was spent and had to bob on the surface for a few minutes to catch my breath. I gave Mark the nod that I was ready to go and we started down.

The water was murky down to 120' and I thought to myself great all this way and its crap! However at 140' we punched through the clouds and I was stunned when I could see the wreck splayed out below me, almost a hundred feet below me. We ended up descending on the Garloo line which was tied in 15' shy of the stern. From there I could see to the break 75' away. The ambient light was awesome very similar to the light on your average Poling dive certainly not what I had expected. Mark and I wasted no time and as soon as we checked the tie in we were off. Passing down the port side of the wreck I couldn't believe the life on and around the wreck. There were sand sharks everywhere and now shortage of massive lobsters, I am not a fish guy so I can't tell you what they were but there were lots of smaller fish and anemone's to. There was a fair amount of mono fishing line on the wreck and some current which kept it moving a little so one really had to pay attention. Arriving at the blast hole in the middle of the wreck I was taken aback at the amount of devastation that there was from whatever explosion sent this sub to the bottom. The hole was considerably larger than I had expected with the wreck now essentially two ends with a 45' debris field in the middle. The conning tower is lying 20' off the port side and I quickly scooted over to take a look, it's an easy penetration and I poked around for a minute or two. Exiting I did a basic check gas, buddy, and general pat down and everything was good. Mark and I had planned a 25 minute bottom time with a push to 30 minutes if everything was good and our gas allowed however at only 10 minutes I was quickly approaching my turn PSI so I signaled Mark and we turned the dive. I guess I was still breathing hard from the swim and I know I was more than a little excited. We swam through the blast hole scoping out points of penetration for the next dive and turned up the Starboard side. I was just blown away at the vis and swam wide against the current to get a panoramic view of the sub and the life around it, AWESOME I screamed through my reg. Approaching the stern I ducked down to get a look at the props and rudder and then swam up and around the stern and glided back to the mooring. I called the dive at 22 minutes and mark and I prepared ourselves for the hour of decompression ahead of us. Deco was uneventful and there was enough current to keep us hanging on and not allowing the usual deco games to go on. I surfaced feeling way better than when I had gone down and I was ready for dive two.

I surfaced at 1:30 pm and it was soon clear that I wasn't getting a second dive that day so I spent the afternoon prepping my rig for Sundays dive. I was taking a nap before supper when someone yelled dolphins, I ran to the bow only to see a massive school of dolphins swimming by, hundreds of em'. We had two divers at 10' on the line and they were repeatedly buzzed I swear I could hear Steve screaming from 10'. After the dolphins it was dinner and a movie. I climbed into my bunk that night all revved from the days dive and ready to do it all over again the next day. My hopes of a good nights sleep were quickly dashed with increasing winds and waves. We spent the night getting pounded by 6'- 8' footers and it was impossible to sleep with the waves slapping the hull and creaking of the mooring line. All I wanted to do was get out of my closet of a bunk and go topside. At 2:30 am the motors fired up and I thought for sure we were heading in when I got topside I found out we had snapped the 1 '?' mooring line. After pulling off the wreck and anchoring up out in the sand the captain said he would try to get us our morning dives but there were no guarantees.

I went back to my bunk and by morning the wind and waves had subsided some and it was game on. We were up early and getting ready to dive by 7 am. Pulling on our suits Mark and I were going over the plan one last time when we heard a snap followed by some choice profanities. Mark had snapped his wrist seal and was out of the dive. While I am not a solo diver I came prepared to dive solo, and I made the decision to go it alone. I hit the water and this time it was a much easier swim with a granny line in place. Before descending I did a quick bubble check only to find the valve on my 80% deco was leaking and I had to change bottles. The crew on the boat was great and had my bottle changed out in no time while I waited in the water. I started my decent and arrived on the bottom in 3 minutes. It was much darker than the previous day mainly because it was early and the sun wasn't high in the sky like the day before. The vis was a dark 40' and the new mooring was tied at the break. I was by myself at 230' and I was taking no chances. I proceed slow and steady making my way up the starboard side to the bow of the sub. Arriving at the knife like bow and drifted out into the sand a bit to take it all in much like Ritchie Kohler did in the book Shadow Divers, and while I didn't hear the music it was pretty cool. At ten minutes I turned around and swam back by the forward torpedo tubes and the bow anchor. Swimming back to the line I again noticed the massive lobsters just sitting out there in the sand not even trying to hide. I briefly contemplated scooping a few up but the clock was ticking and despite having tons of gas I wanted to keep this dive to twenty minutes. Ascending the line the wreck disappeared from view at 180', and I started my deco at 170' and again the deco was uneventful. I spent the next 75 minutes of deco hanging on the line blowing around in the current thinking about the dive and the trip. I surfaced with the energy of a bear that has the energy of three bears and made my way to the stern of the boat. I was pumped and started handing tanks up to the crew however as soon as I pulled myself out of the water and up the ladder I felt a sharp pain in my left elbow. Now I was nervous undressing on the back of the boat, is it a pulled muscle or a DCS hit I thought. I had no numbness or tingling so I passed it off as a pulled muscle and got out of my dry suit and picked up my stuff. 10 minutes latter it really hurt and I mentioned to a couple of the guys that I may have a problem. Boy I hate that, you feel like such a putts having to say hey look at me I'm the one with a problem, but when you have a problem you have to let other people know because as the injured diver you are not of rational mind even though you think you are. They recommended I take some Advil in case it is a pulled muscle and to act as a blood thinner if it's DCS, I also went on pure oxygen down in my bunk. Remember we are 80 miles off shore and deco chambers exactly aren't around the corner. The crew was nothing but professional and everyone on board were more than helpful. Let's face it doing dives like this things happen and you don't have to screw up to get hurt, 20 minutes on O2 and I felt better ,I spent another 25 minutes on O2 just be on the safe side.

The boat fired up at noon and we were on our way back in, the sun was out and the seas were mellowing out. We all hung out on the back of the boat for the bulk of the 9 hour ride napping and trading stories. Boy it's a good thing I'm a quiet, shy guy because I could have chewed some ears off on that ride. We got to port at 9 pm and it was the usual mad dash of everyone trying to get home. The U 869 was all and all a cool trip, and it is certainly a better wreck than the U 853. I will defiantly be back in fact there is already talk of another trip in 09' The RV Garloo is a nice boat with a lot of history behind it. Captain Hank was incredibly easy to work with and a friendly guy with some awesome stories. He puts lots of crew onboard who are some of the best divers and cooks in the business. I look forward to diving with them in the future. New York and New Jersey have some awesome wrecks and a great dive infrastructure to go with them. Don't ever be afraid to venture out and try new dives after all diving is all about exploring, just remember always take it slow and steady. Diving is the type of sport where you will always see and learn new things that you will remember and take with you through all of life's journeys.

Dive Safe,

Jeff Goodreau

# November/December 2008

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25 Marry Christmas	26	27

## Upcoming Events

**There will not be a general club meeting the month of December**

For any and all Calender updates please check out the club website [www.uniteddivers.org](http://www.uniteddivers.org)

## Birthdays!

**11/27- Bob Schoonmaker**  
**12/03- Kris Dufour**  
**12/17- Randy Catalucci**  
**12/23- Rich Atkins**  
**12/27- Shlomo Teken**



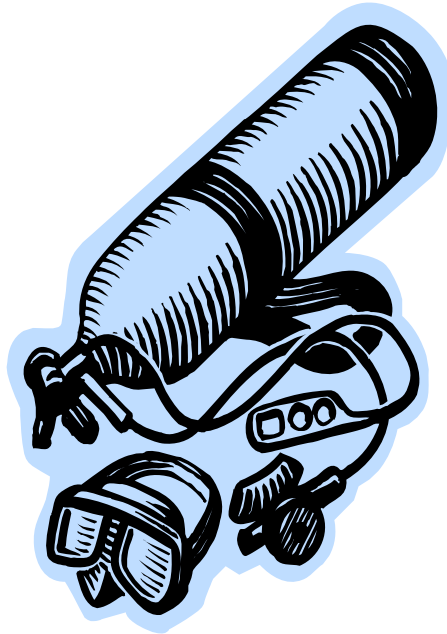


# United Divers of Central Mass

## Dive Log

United Divers of Central Massachusetts  
P.O. Box 57  
Fitchburg, MA 01420  
[www.uniteddivers.org](http://www.uniteddivers.org)

Email; For newsletter correspondence please contact Kris at [secretary@uniteddivers.org](mailto:secretary@uniteddivers.org)



## The Purpose of the United Divers of Central Massachusetts

The purpose of the United Divers of Central Massachusetts is to promote the sportsmanship and sport of SCUBA diving by stimulating our members to achieve the highest standards of safety and proficiency in Scuba diving. To promote friendship and wholesome social activity among its membership. To promote educational programs that will provide fundamental knowledge supported by actual hands on experience in a variety of areas including; safe diving practices, conservation of marine ecosystem, first aid and handling diving related emergencies, to organize group SCUBA diving trips, educational and social events that will allow our membership to accomplish all of the above.



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P.O. Box 57  
Fitchburg, MA 01420

## Monthly Trivia

**What is a Hatch Coaming**  
Answer in next months newsletter.

Last months answer.

**What is a Deadlight**  
solid cover fitted over portholes for protection or to darken the ship