

A Man's Guide To Excitement

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*Special
Valentine's
Issue*

RAMBO'S BIMBO

**BI-BLONDE
BRIGITTE
LOW-BLOWS
STALLONE**

LIQUID ASSETS:

**DEEP SEA DIVING
FOR DOLLARS**

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QUEENS, NEW YORK

AMERICA THE BREWERYFUL

THIS SUDS'FOR YOU!



LIQUID ASSETS

**1.6 Billion in Gold
Awaits Salvors
off the New England Coast.**

BY JACK BORDEN

ALL PHOTOS BY NORMAN GARDNER

The whole world has been fascinated by shipwrecks for centuries, and never more so than since 1985, when Dr. Robert Ballard and his team from the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution found and photographed the Titanic's grave. Those who weren't satisfied with his new book, "The Discovery of the Titanic," with its elaborate description of how the famous liner sank and broke up, drowning 1500 people, could turn to their TV sets, as millions did on October 28, to hear Telly Savalas recount the disaster and to watch salvors try to open a three-ton safe snatched from the two-and-a-half mile deep gravesite.

But 82-year-old Eva Hart, who was seven years old when she watched from a lifeboat as her parents perished, was having none of it, and she blasted the crew engaged by the French Institute for Research and Exploitation of the Seas who brought up chamber pots, statues, ship's bells, suitcases, and other effects from the ship last summer. "The grave should be left alone," she told Associated Press from her home outside London last July. "They're simply going to do it as fortune hunters, vultures, pirates."

But while millions were reading about what was going on at that spot in the North Atlantic some 350 miles off Newfoundland, the 50-man crew of the salvage vessel *Inspector* were quietly anchored about 50 miles off Nantucket, searching for treasure infinitely more valuable than anything aboard the Titanic.

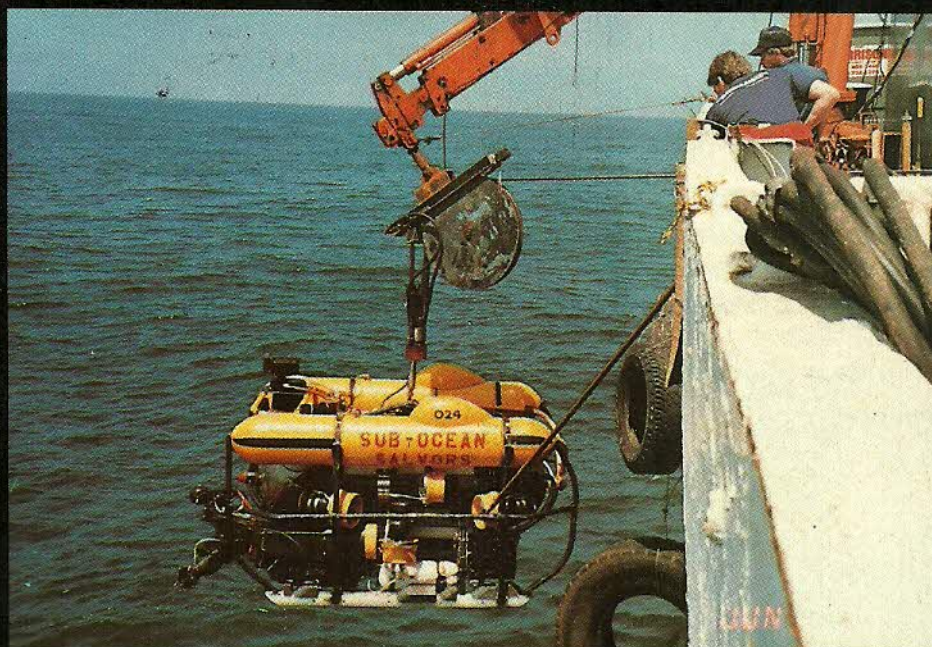
The area in which the men were working is nicknamed "Times Square," and for good reason. Any ship from New York bound for Europe, or vice versa, must churn through this area, which is notorious for its deadly summertime fog. Just five miles from the *Inspector*, in fact, the wreck of the *Andrea Doria* lies in comatose agony, leaking oil and wood 31 years after she collided with the *Stockholm*.

But for ten weeks last summer, the 20 divers and 30-man crew, chartered by Sub-Ocean Salvors, Inc. of Tampa, had enough excitement just 260 feet below the waves to make even the Titanic's lure look dull. They were trying to procure artifacts and dozens of bags filled with American Eagle gold coins, which, say the salvors and other experts, were aboard the *White Star* liner *Republic* when, on the foggy morning of January 23, 1909, she collided with the Italian liner *Florida* one day out of New York.



The salvage ship *Inspector*, off Nantucket, above the site of the dive. 250 feet below, the wreck of the *Republic*, a rusted tomb for long dead souls, sways in the current.

Diver Larry Dooling doesn't consider himself a grave robber. He has been hired to recover the sunken gold.



Mini-subs replace diving bells for a salvor of the eighties. Equipped with sophisticated technological sensors, the subs can zero in on a dime.



Bayerle (l.), Dooling (center), and crane operator Dick Little (bottom r.) sift through rubble vacuumed from a section of the Republic.



Naval architect Robert Stevens holds one of the 300 dinner plates brought up from the bottom. The ill-fated White Star Line's pennant signature can be discerned in the center.

Diver Dave Barber (l.), Canadian government observer Pat Bake (center), and diver Cameron McGuir observe the monitors. "Half a salvors job is waiting."



Speculation has it that she would have unloaded the \$3 million in gold, which was a loan to Czar Nicholas II of Russia, arranged through a consortium of French banks with the assistance of Goldman Sachs, the brokerage house, and the precursor of today's Citibank.

The *Republic* was carrying 484 passengers and 450 crew through a dense fog about 26 miles from the Nantucket Lightship. Suddenly, there came a dozen blasts on her fog horn, and a second later the Florida materialized out of the grayness. There was no time to stop or reverse engines. The Italian ship crashed into her side, causing the *Republic* to list heavily as the other ship's prow burst into the engine room. Then the *Florida* pulled away, righted herself, and floated off into the mist.

Although he is forgotten today, the *Republic's* wireless operator, John R. "Jack" Binns, became the Lindbergh of his era through his heroism. The force of the crash threw him out of his bunk and blew down three walls in his wireless cabin, but though drenched and hungry, he stayed at his key all day long to summon help—the first time wireless had been used in a sea rescue effort. When told of what Binns had done, William Marconi could only say, "I am extremely gratified, and very grateful..."

At one point, when he learned he was losing power to transmit, Binns searched a water-filled compartment and finally had to dive in to get storage batteries. It wasn't until 2 p.m., eight hours after he started sending, that he realized he was soaked and hungry. "The *Republic*," he tapped out initially. "We are shipwrecked. Stand by for captain's message." A second later, Binns heard a welcome signal: "All right, old man. Where are you?"

After a time, Binns finally came to realize the enormity of what had happened, and that his vessel was sinking under him. "I discovered the bodies lying near me," he told *The New York Times* later. "Dr. Marsh came along and...announced that both had been killed outright...and a little later they were laid in coffins....Sick with the horror of the scene that had been laid before our very eyes, I was indeed grateful for the brief respite that followed. I was lucky enough to find an apple and some water at hand, but it was bitterly cold in the cabin...I happened to look out and saw the *Florida*, with her bows gone, almost to the bridge...Douglas, my steward,...was able to get a bite of food and a cup of coffee for me, which I devoured while sending and receiving messages...Sailors, using the *Republic's* boats, began to transfer

passengers from the disabled *Florida* to the *Baltic*. This task was extremely difficult and perilous, as there was a heavy swell running. The greatest difficulty [we] had was in inducing the women passengers to leap at the right moment."

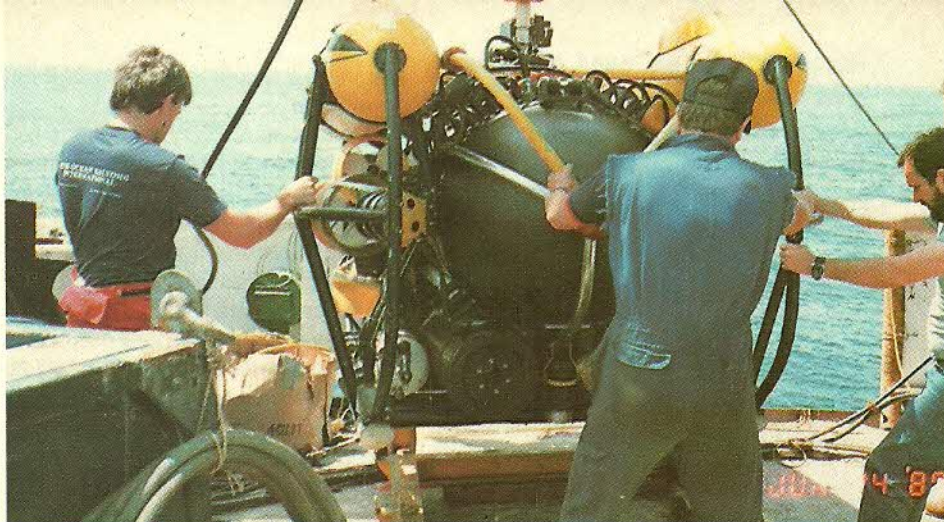
Binns reported that over 2000 people were transferred during that night, and some were moved first to the *Florida* and then to a second ship in the midst of a heavy sea before they reached safety. No fewer than 83 boatloads passed from one vessel to another, in what many still regard as the greatest rescue in the history of the sea. Then, some 40 hours after the collision, the *Republic* sank, stern first. "Never," said Binns, who later as an ace reporter for the *New York Herald*, got to cover the *Titanic* story, "was there a braver lot of men whose courage was put to the most crucial test."

If any other ship had had the knowledge, to say nothing of the chutzpah, to ask Binns, "What about the gold on board?" he would have replied the way the *Titanic*'s Jack Phillips did three years later when the mortally wounded liner was asked whether she was steaming south to meet another ship: "You fool, stand by and keep out!"

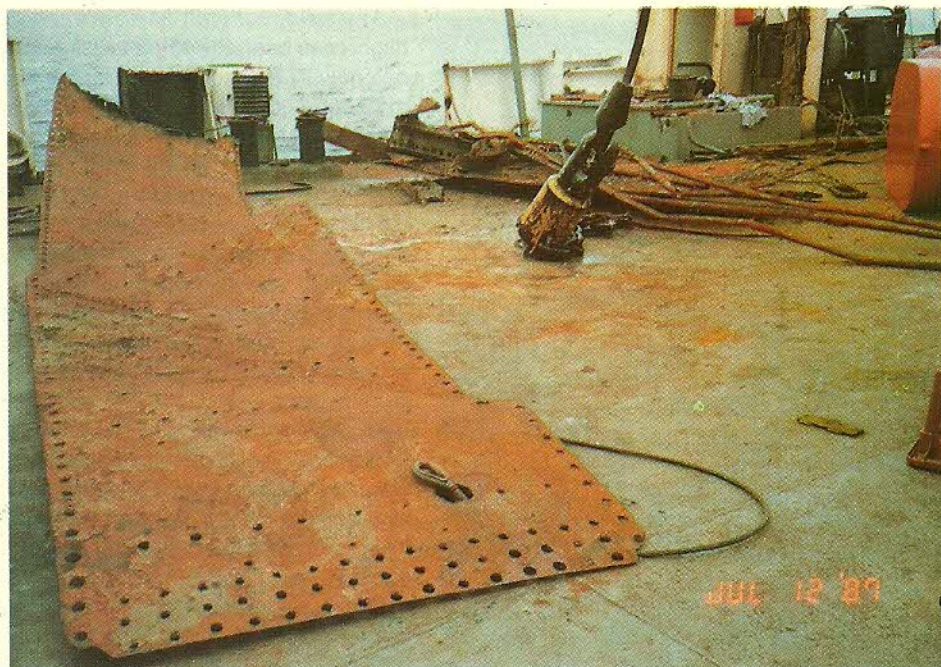
Mystery surrounds the crucial question of whether or not the *Republic* was in fact carrying the Czar's gold—financial papers of the day said that gold was being sent overseas, but didn't specify which vessel, for obvious reasons. But Martin Bayerle, who used to teach diving at a YMCA in a seedy part of Brooklyn, has done years of research and believes, along with Dr. Robert Polackwich, a Florida oceanologist and founder of Sub-Ocean, that the treasure is indeed down there, waiting.

Bayerle probed into government records for months and came up with a three-inch-thick report which several experts, including two *Titanic* historians, have endorsed. Bayerle found to his dismay that the National Archives and the U.S. Treasury have scanty records, but he did unearth a letter written in 1930 by Captain B. M. Chiswell, a Coast Guard commandant, which contains this tantalizing sentence: "Unofficial information at the time suggested that the *Republic* may have had on board \$3,000,000 in American Eagles." But Chiswell added that he couldn't be sure.

This and other material, though, was enough to persuade Polackwich, Sub-Ocean's chief financial officer, Mike Gerber, Bayerle, and naval architect Robert L. Stevens to mount a full-scale effort to recover the gold. The men formed a limited



The mini-sub returns to the surface. It carries no gold.



One of the biggest finds, a side panel from the sunken *Republic*, shows the rust of years and symbolizes the twisted wreckage below.

Crew members examine one of the more unexpected finds: a crate of wine cooled for decades in the icy waters of the Atlantic.



Not all portholes are round. Inspector crew members retrieve a broken window frame from the sunken Republic.



partnership—an informal affair, according to Bayerle, where Polackwich might get more funding after a series of talks with a fellow doctor or another professional man after an afternoon at the golf course. The men raised enough to buy a ship, the *Inspector*, while Stevens, since he lacked a contemporary blueprint of the sunken ship, had to reconstruct one from whatever sources he could find, and attempt to pinpoint the gold's location.

After the salvaging was called off in early September, due to the threat of storms, Bayerle conceded that his team was disappointed that the coin bags, hidden in an area "the size of a broom closet," had eluded them this time, "but we thought there was a 50-50 chance we'd find it."

"I'm very disappointed," complains diver Larry Dooling, 31, of Brookfield, Nova Scotia. "That was the major attraction, after all." Diver "Boom-Boom" St. Claire-Golding, 27 adds: "Sure, I'm a little unhappy that we didn't bring it up; we were busting our asses to try and get it. But I still

feel there's a good possibility of it being down there."

And to a man, every diver we talked to said he'd like to go back next summer and dive again despite the hazards. Former *Washington Star* reporter Philip Z. Trupp, author of "Tracking Treasure," likens a diver's calm professional bearing to the cucumber-cool stance of Chuck Yeager.

"A diver's a guy who's curious and equipment-oriented, the kind of fellow who's meticulous about every part of his gear; he also has a kind of derring-do macho about him," says Trupp. "And the majority of sport divers are lawyers, physicians, dentists—people who have disposable income, who can go down to the Caribbean two or three times a year."

Any solid research on where the gold might have been stored is crucial, since no one now living knows for sure; the Nazis may have complicated the effort when their planes bombed the Belfast offices of Harland & Wolff, builders of the *Republic* and *Titanic*; scuttlebutt has it that the original blueprints went up in flames, although the company refuses to comment one way or another.

Some people have furnished clues. Seventy-seven-year-old Philip Thornton, the son of the *Republic's* second officer, heard Bayerle being interviewed on the BBC and excitedly called up his sister to say: "Apparently the stories that Father told us about the gold are true!" Guided by Thornton, Bayerle went over areas of the ship he'd only skimmed previously, but found nothing.

Some salvors doubt there's any treasure down there at all. Barry Clifford, a former high school teacher who's spent three years stripping the sand to find millions of gold and silver aboard the *Whydah*, off Wellfleet, Miss., says he was offered a piece of the action by Sub-Ocean but turned them down. Reminded of this, Bayerle claims, "That's just sour grapes on his part," adding that Clifford, his former landlord on Martha's Vineyard, once played a part in locating the *Republic*.

But other authorities think differently. John P. Eaton, chief historian of the Titanic Historical Society and co-author of "Destination Disaster," his second book on the 1912 tragedy, has examined a 300-page technical report, compiled by Stephens and Bayerle, with his co-author Charles Haas. "We're very certain that they're on the right track," he believes.

Sub-Ocean also believes that should they bring up the gold as planned next

summer, it might well face a legal challenge from the Russians. "They have told us that whatever was the property of the Russian government will remain the property of the Russian government," Bayerle said. But Haas notes that international treaties have a distinct finders-keepers tinge to them: "International law says that if you do not take steps to recover material, you lose it. That's why Peter Gimbel was able to dive on the *Andrea Doria*."

After the *Republic* sank, Bayerle reports, a rumor circulated that she had \$3 million (in 1909 dollars) worth of American Gold Eagles aboard. "That rumor hasn't fluctuated and has stayed specific in terms of denomination and quantity; it hasn't escalated as most rumors do," he says.

"People said this has got to be a Navy payroll, or a relief shipment," for the victims of the 1908 quake in Italy that killed



Crew members examine more pieces of the sunken vessel. Conventional, round portholes can be seen in the foreground, encrusted with mud and marine life from the sea below. All the windows prove is that the *Republic* is down there. The missing gold remains another question.

82,000, Bayerle states. "Researchers, since the time the vessel sank, have always concentrated on those two theories, but when you look at the Navy payroll you realize that the entire budget for U.S. naval operations in 1909 was about \$6 million.

"So it's extremely unlikely that half of that budget would be put on one ship. Also, when you look at the relief possibilities, you see that the world wide relief effort was to the tune of three million. It'd be unlikely that all that would be on one ship. And what are earthquake victims going to do with gold?"

Relief monies, Bayerle notes, were wired for disbursement to European banks. "There'd be no need to physically transport gold. So researchers over the years examined these two avenues and concluded there was no gold."

But Bayerle and the others didn't give up. "We went one step further and did a complete financial analysis of New York gold markets," he says. "We were able to identify a specific transaction that occurred on January 12, 1909—three million dollars. The New York assay office [the precursor of the Federal Reserve Board] just happened to have exhausted its supply of gold bars three days earlier.

"The gold coins were drawn on the New York Sub-Treasury. They came from vaults in lower Manhattan, which I think are still there. So we found the transaction that matched the shipment. We then did a study of engagements, which is when a commercial transaction was consummated, an actual shipment of the gold. And we found the delay between normal engagement and actual shipment was a week to 10 days to two weeks or longer. So although the commitment was made to ship this gold on January 12, based on the standard delay between engagement and shipment, this falls within the parameter ... (because) the *Republic* sailed on January 22."

Bayerle says the ship's manifest has been missing for years, but he has records from the American and French governments to support his claim, as well as an 11-year import/export study of gold traffic between the two countries.

The salvors also have hopes that a number of rare books, including perhaps even a Shakespeare First Folio, may still be found, and if they are, may even be in fair shape, considering their 78 years in the drink; Mary Todd Glaser, a conservator with the Northeast Documentation Conservation Center in Andover, Mass., told a UPI reporter in July there was a "slim

"Mystery surrounds the crucial question of whether or not the Republic was in fact carrying the Czar's gold—financial papers of the day said that gold was being sent overseas, but didn't specify on which vessel."

chance" that such books could survive if they were tightly shelved.

But John Eaton takes such reports with a heavy grain of salt, and historian Walter Lord, author of "A Night To Remember," is even more emphatic: "That's simply impossible," he says. Agrees David Wright, a curator at the J. P. Morgan Library in New York, which bears the name of the financial mogul who built the *Republic* and the *Titanic*: "He didn't personally have anything to do with the ship, and besides, he didn't collect Shakespeare that much."

But the lure of all those bagged coins, whether it's accompanied by the promise of anything else or not, is more than enough to make the salvors put the dangers of their work in a philosophical vein.

One hazard involves the pressurization. Since daily decompression periods for the

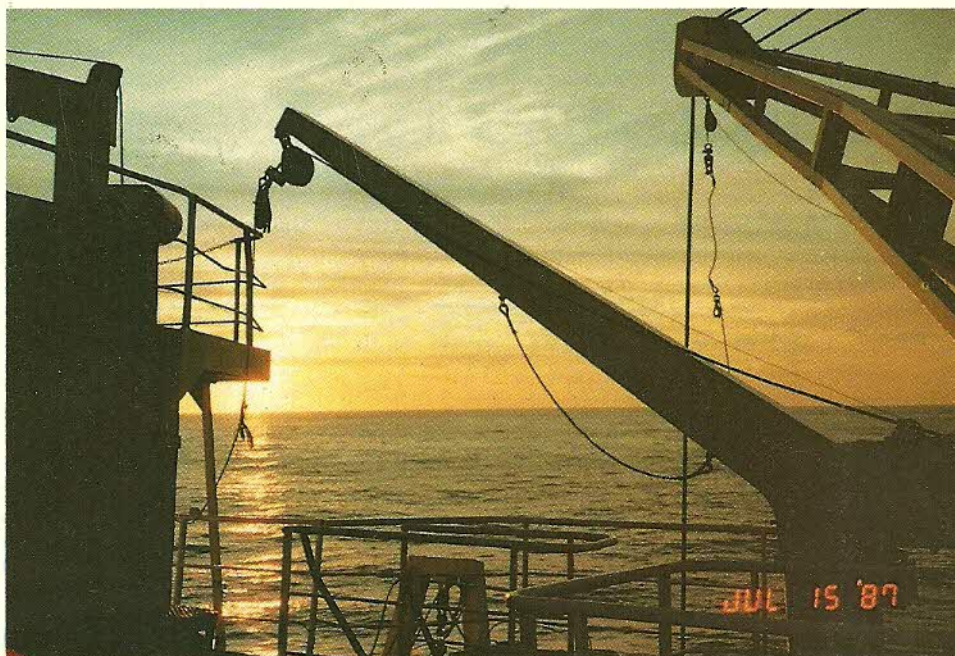
four to six divers who work each shift would eat up valuable time, the divers are brought into a diving bell at the sea bottom and go directly into a tank aboard ship where they breathe a blend of 91% helium and 9% oxygen for days on end.

"If you talked to them on the phone in there, they'd sound like Donald Duck," says Bayerle. But there's nothing amusing about what would happen if the tank's metal skin were to puncture. "The men would...well, just explode," says the former project director. "It'd look like what happens when you shake a 7-Up bottle and pop the cap."

Diver David Anstey, of Torbay, Newfoundland, says such a thing has never happened as far as he knows, and he's been diving five years. Anstey, who's 25 (diving is a young man's job, says Stevens; most 35-year-olds wouldn't pass the physical), says he was much more concerned when the ship's jagged metal would cut into a man's air line, his umbilical cord to life. "That happened three or four times to me and to some of the others," he says. "Our air was cut off. But when that happens, you reach for what's called a 'bailout bottle,' a canister of air you carry on your back. It gives you three minutes' worth of air, enough to get into that bell."

There's also the dangers involved when you're poking around a badly contorted and twisted wreck that, in Bayerle's words, "looks like it's been twisted like a dish towel." In many places, there are only 14-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 77



Notice the date stamp in the lower corner. The Inspector nears the end of its voyage. Still no gold has been found.

ASSETS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 35

or 15-inch gaps between the collapsed decks, and the oxyarc torches used to cut through them frustrated one diver, who says, "Next time, I'd want to use explosives... and a heavier crane."

Finally, there are always the sharks. Museum curator Robert Cembrola remembers that one diver passed within a few feet of one as he was trying to sandwich himself through a passage. "All the divers had black-and-white video cameras mounted on their headsets, and this fellow jerked his head up, just in time for the camera to catch the shark," the curator says.

"He didn't see it, but the fellows watching the monitors up on the bridge certainly did—they went nuts!"

But these divers had a blasé attitude about another unwelcome visitor that terrified the bridge one July morning about six—a Great White Shark, which Cembrola estimated at 20 feet. "Oh, you don't see any of them on the bottom," says Larry Dooling nonchalantly. "Besides, there's never been an unprovoked shark attack on a diver."

One big problem involves just getting inside the vessel. "You can't move laterally within the vessel," says Bayerle, "so you have to cut holes where you anticipate the compartments would be. It's like drilling for oil. Not only have the decks collapsed, but they've shifted on top of one another. It's as if you were to take a paper towel holder and twist it. She's lying on her starboard side, port side up, and her attitude on the ocean bottom will vary from almost sitting upright at her bow and stern to having rolled over almost 90 degrees on her midsection."

Sub-Ocean's divers and crew spent 48 nights aboard ship, from June 19 to September 5, but the night they remember most was the setting for an impromptu party after dozens of wine and champagne bottles had been liberated from the *Republic's* sunken wine cellar. Bayerle opened up several wine bottles and one bottle of Moët Chandon, which he pronounced "excellent... it was very, uh... robust, because it had had a little additional time to ferment." Dennis Barrington of Toronto, the diving supervisor, was less enthusiastic: "It tasted musty," he recalls, "almost as though all the sediment around the bottle had filtered through the cork."

Some of the divers' courage and fortitude failed them at this crucial moment, but chief cook Norman Gardner, who used to own a string of restaurants, remained steadfast; he bravely helped down several

glasses, aided by Bayerle.

Dennis Barrington, whose job it was to arrange the shifts and otherwise look after his divers, says supervising the men isn't hard. "A diving supervisor does have absolute authority, yes, but that's not something that you exercise," he explains. "It doesn't work if you try to order 'em around. The only discipline involved here is a man's own self-discipline."

In spite of the fact that men cooped up inside a saturation tank for weeks on end can get a little surly with their mates, Barrington says he didn't have to worry much as to whether two men who didn't get along with each other should be placed in the same tank. "But when it came to choosing pairs for the dives, I tried to pair someone who had the most experience with a man who had the least, so one could learn from the other."

Why do men become divers? "Hard to say," replies Barrington, 30, who's been at it for 11 years. "A lot of guys are looking for something that's a little different, that pays well, and this line of work does have interest. These men don't want an office job, or construction work." After a few years, the super suggests, the initial fascination of descending far down into a world without sun fades, and the work, as some of his men put it, becomes "just a job"—

although some are amateur marine historians, and have read about the sinking. Many of Barrington's crew are college educated or have some college, just about all are from middle-class backgrounds, and all are jacks-of-all-trades, the pertinent trades here being knowledge of hydraulics, electronics, engineering and so forth.

Barrington believes he's speaking for just about everyone on his team when he says that they'd all want to return next summer and have another go at the gold. "If it's not there after all, well, that's a chance we've all got to take," he reasons. Asked if there's any particular point which Stevens or Bayerle dug up which personally convinced him that he won't be again supervising a wild goose chase, Barrington said no. "But more than anything else," he points out, "no one has come out with a definite reason why it's *not* there."

Some of the divers from the *Inspector*, many of whom got their sea lungs in the Canadian navy, view last summer's work as just another job. Others dabble in marine history and were fascinated by what they found down there.

Ian Rodd, 31, of Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, pierced the muck inside a suitcase and pulled out a "sweet potato," a ceramic wind instrument. "You blow into

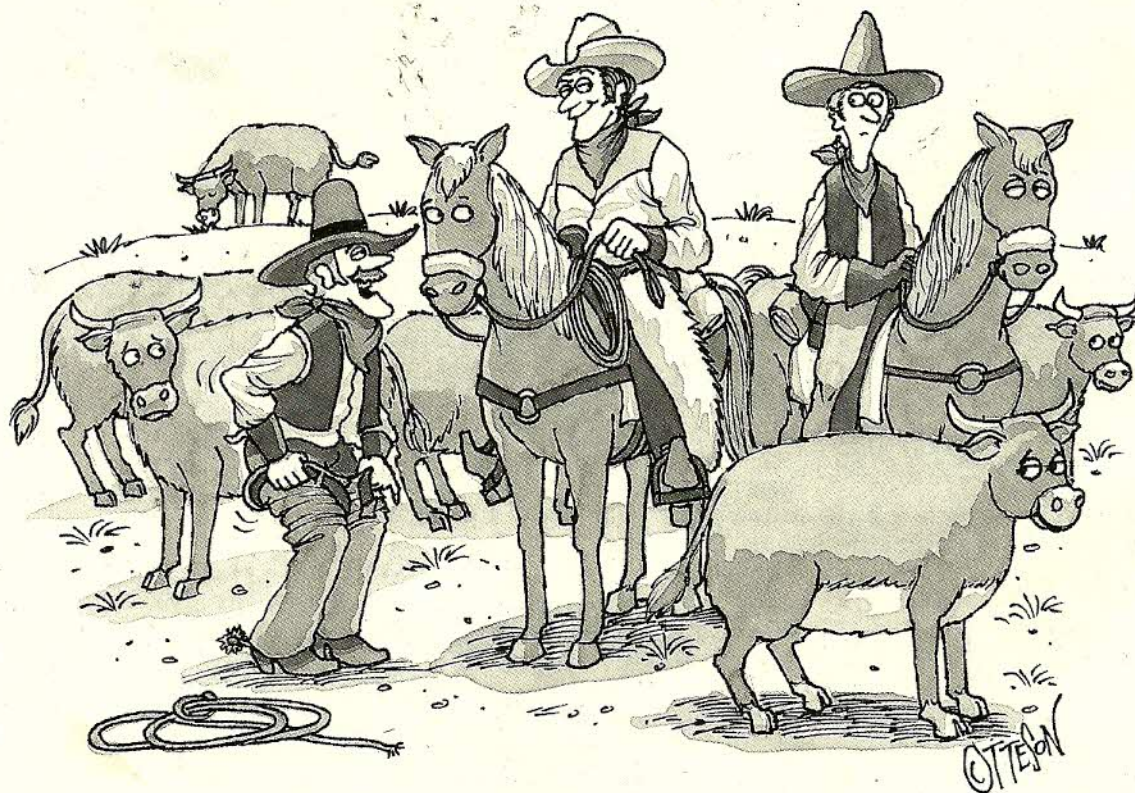
the top, using the ten fingerholes, like you'd play a flute, although this sounds more like a recorder," he recalls. "I didn't know exactly what it was until I happened to pass a shop near here that had one in the window."

The operations manager, Bill Flower, likened examining the finds to boring through a time capsule. "I went into a third class passenger's trunk, and a lot of muck came out," he remembers, "but inside I found some Italian newspapers and a Bible in pretty good condition, a top hat, shoes, and overcoat, a cummerbund, a bow tie, and a pair of socks."

Some of these finds will be put on permanent display at the Marine Museum in Fall River. The curator there, Robert Cembrola, already exhibits *Republic* material, but most of the artifacts will be auctioned off. Sub-Ocean's first candidate for those honors is the prestigious Christie's of New York.

James Wermuth, a senior officer of the American Institute for Conservation, who's been engaged by Sub-Ocean to care for the finds, says some of the more intriguing items include a 150-year-old bottle of Canadian whiskey, ship's fittings, and 300 dishes with the White Star Line burgee, or pennant, on them.

As confident as the divers are that the



"Well, Slim, let's show young Ned what punchin' doggies really means."

treasure is still waiting down there—and that they stand a good chance of finally getting it next summer, providing they have enough time and equipment—there's some likelihood that Sub-Ocean might not be able to make the attempt because of limited funds, if not outright bankruptcy. In fact, some six weeks into the operation last summer, it knew it didn't have anymore in the kitty to pay the divers and crew, but kept them on for two more weeks anyway. Flower says Sub-Ocean owes the divers \$50,000 in "saturation pay"—the time spent in the helium-rich-tank—not to mention other wages. Ian Rodd has had to drop out of school because he still hasn't received \$4,000 in back wages, and he's called Sub-Ocean's Tampa office three times, only to get a runaround. (Sub-Ocean didn't return numerous messages left by *Oui*.)

Bayerle claims the artifacts recovered so far might fetch from \$400,000 to \$500,000 if and when Christie's auctions them off—more than enough to pay the men and start the ball rolling again next summer. But Flower, for one, is tired of waiting, and he's hired an attorney in Florida to go after Sub-Ocean's officers, who he calls "a bunch of bloody selfish assholes." "I feel we've been screwed," he adds. "Why should we take this, when we've risked our lives for them?"

In spite of it all, Flower says he'd go back, as would the others, provided someone else takes over the salvage effort. "Sure, I'd go," he says. "This is what it's all about. This is what I do for a living."■

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