



Diving Deep To Catch Glimpses Of History

SCUBA ENTHUSIAST HAS EXPLORED SHIPWRECKS, CORAL REEFS

By **CHRISTIAN NOLAN**

It started out as simple chitchat around the water cooler at Cantor Colburn's Hartford office in 2000.

Daniel Brusco, a litigator for the intellectual property firm, expressed his interest to two partners there, H.M. "Bud" Bedingfield and Keith J. Murphy, about wanting to learn how to scuba dive. Both men were already certified divers.

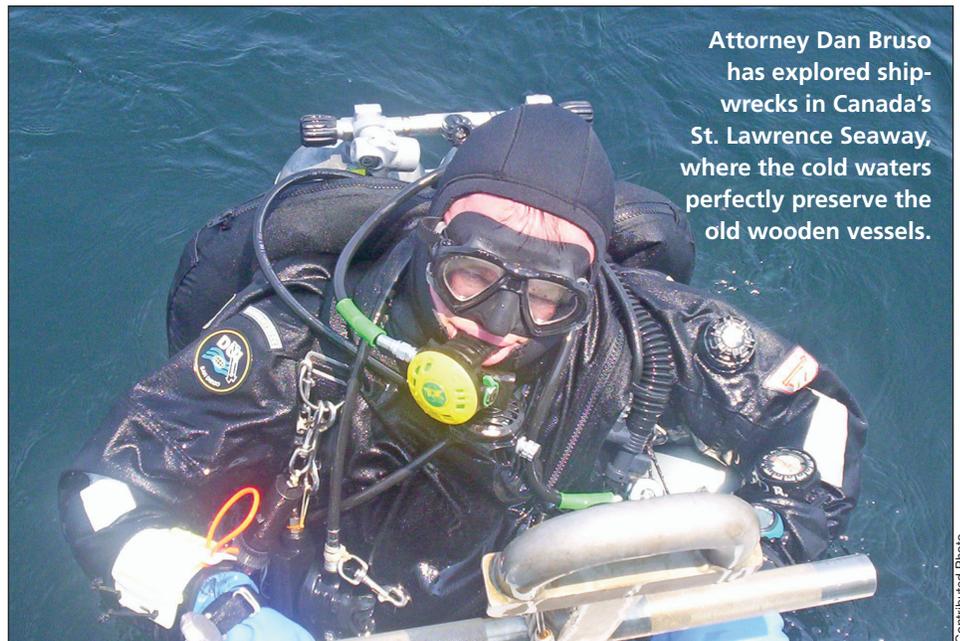
Brusco started out like most people do, wearing a wet suit with a single air tank attached to their body. But he literally and figuratively dove head first into his new found hobby.

In just a short time, he was wearing a dry suit (better insulated and designed for colder waters than a wet suit) with two tanks strapped to his back and two more around his waist. Not to mention, a nifty dive-propulsion vehicle to help him move along faster. And a machine to re-circulate exhaled gasses and filter in fresh oxygen.

After all, Brusco was no longer doing a basic 60-foot dive. He was literally swimming with the fishes at depths around 200 feet underwater.

His motive? To catch glimpses of history. He has traveled the country and the world to dive deep into lakes, rivers and oceans to view ship wreckage. "It's fascinating to observe a tangible reminder of history," said Brusco.

Among the shipwrecks that Brusco explored was a ship off Gloucester that sunk during the blizzard that ravaged the Massachusetts coastline in the winter of 1977. The ship split in half. He swam right through the bow of the ship, about 190 feet below the surface. "Reaching out and being able to see is amazing," said Brusco, explaining that most shipwreck explorers do



Attorney Dan Brusco has explored shipwrecks in Canada's St. Lawrence Seaway, where the cold waters perfectly preserve the old wooden vessels.

Contributed Photo

not touch the ship's remains.

Brusco learned to enter the ships through windows, holes in the hull or any opening he could fit through, and explore whatever is on the other side. Then he might make his way through the engine room and check that out as well.

Brusco said ships that sunk in Canada's St. Lawrence Seaway "are beautifully preserved" thanks to the cold fresh waters there. He said some of the shipwrecks there date to the 1800s when the boats were wooden. "They looked untouched," he recalled.

Perhaps Brusco's most memorable shipwreck dive was in Halifax, Nova Scotia. There, the western Massachusetts native explored a World War II military vessel that was part of the massive Allied convoys that went from Halifax to England.

"You could see this and know the number of people doing this at the same time were

very few," said Brusco, who spent eight years in the U.S. Army Reserves. "It was an amazing experience."

Plenty Of Planning

Brusco said when he was planning his most ambitious dives, it was no easy task. The preparation required all his time in the evenings for about three nights a week after work. Then, say, if the planned dive was on a Saturday, he was up at 3:30 a.m. and not home until 9 p.m.

Most of his planning was done on the computer. "I had written tables in a waterproof notebook that would tell me what I needed to do," said Brusco. "I memorized it, too. You never want to rely on anything you might lose."

The purpose of the planning wasn't just to map out the location of the wreck, but to make sure he could safely handle the decompression aspects of such deep diving.

**DAN BRUSIO**

Bruso explained that if he was exploring the ship wreckage for about 25 to 35 minutes, it would take another 45 minutes to an hour before he could leave the water. Nitrogen and helium that enters the blood-

stream when a diver is so far underwater is released from the body on the way back up. Divers who surface too quickly risk serious illness or even death.

Bruso now lives in Somers with his wife, their 6-year-old daughter and 3-year old twins. With free time more limited, Brusio has cut back some on his diving, although he still enjoys exploring coral reefs in the Caribbean and elsewhere. "I don't necessarily push the envelope as much," said Brusio.

STRESS busters

To fill the void for his exploratory fix, you can more often find Brusio these days riding his motorcycle all over New England. He regularly participates in charity biker rides and sometimes will ride on his own throughout New England in a day.

"I can explore, see nature. I can do it for 20 minutes. I can do it for eight hours."

Bruso said he prefers to ride on back roads and "find all these wonderful shops along the way... and just meet people." ■