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**Frank Pabst lecture
1973
ECHO project**

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Note: Moments where the speakers are unintelligible are labeled with the audio file name and timestamp for listeners' reference (i.e. C40_01.wav, 03:34)

PABST: There is a decent museum to deposit them in, which the North Country really is in a hurting condition to properly display the beautiful artifacts that they are. With underwater artifacts, they differ considerably from the things that you find on land. They go into an instant state of decay if there is any wood or soft materials the minute they break out of the water, so they're requiring extensive preservation technique of soaking them in sort of an anti-____[C40_01.wav, 00:26] solution. It's an ethylene glycol solution that gradually displaces the water and soaks back into the wood and prevents the wood from cracking and chipping and checking. To get into a situation where we would have a vat capable of preserving things properly is a logical impossibility right now. At some day, point and time, this we hope will take place and we also hope that there will be some state sponsorship involved, but at this particular point in time we have photographed and recorded just about everything that we've come across. Some of the things that were out where we were afraid that some other skin divers not so devoted and dedicated to history as our group is, we have removed. Some years ago two young lads were snorkeling off the Cliff Haven beach and they came upon a cannon. They came racing down to the clubhouse and said hey ____ [C40_01.wav, 01:17] we found a cannon, and I have heard this story a hundred times over and I hesitate to think of how many sewer pipes and old tree stumps and other things that I've put gear on to check out and verify that they were in fact not cannons, but these young lads did find two beautiful cannons. They dated back to 1748, and there has been a bit of controversy as to what they possibility originated on. One school of thought is they were from the Musculonis[C40_01.wav, 01:40], which was scuttled in there in about 1759, and the train of thought that I elect to follow is that they came from the Pregal [C40_01.wav, 01:50], which drifted ashore somewhere along that point. Along with the two beautiful cannons, and they are perfectly preserved, came the swivel gun, a beautiful saber, about 15 muskets, about 5 anchors, so I would tend to think that whoever it was that was tossing all their ordinance over the side was in a big hurry to get to shore and not have anything captured, so end product being there was a pile of ordinance scattered over about a mile of lake bottom. In order to properly search this we erected a grid pattern of buoys and worked divers off of sleds, and this is a device that tows behind the boat and you just systematically tow it back and forth so that you don't miss any particular area on that bottom, and we feel that if there was anything down there we certainly must have covered it. The only thing that we could do further is to cover the entire area with a metal detector, which would be

a rather long drawn-out situation. I brought some maps along. I'm going to pass these around not with any degree of advertisement to my dive shop, but it is in fact an advertisement to my dive shop and it's used by divers that come in from out of town to find the more obvious wrecks. It will help a little bit in the identification of some of the areas that I'll talk about.

While we're passing around, I'm just going to digress slightly and go over to the slides and run through some of the things that we come onto and some of the things that were. This particular shot is a diver in fairly warm water. I'm wondering if dowsing the lights would help any.

(crosstalk)

I beg forgiveness if some of these show up upside-down, but it's par for the course. When the water is not so warm, a diver has to resort to a little bit more equipment. This is some rather antique equipment on one of the boys, but nonetheless it did the trick. This is shot off one of the old maps and it indicates the battle line at Valcour Island, the American battle line stretching from what we call South Bay—that's the bay just south of where the lighthouse is—extending over to what we believe was the dock at Valcour Lodge. For any of you that have ever dined at Valcour Lodge, if you look out the dining room window toward their dock, about 300 yards out from the dock is where the Philadelphia was raised. The verification of this is that we have removed in a 300-yard radius of that dock better than 85 cannonballs and two 37-pound mortar shots with 4 pounds of black powder in them. Unfortunately we didn't realize that the 37-pound mortar shots were such and had them dry for a year before we realized that there was black powder in them, and after thinking about it, black powder gets extremely unstable after it has been wet and has been allowed to dry under more or less uncontrolled conditions. I'm reasonably sure that most of you would probably recognize this one. That's the wreck of the old Oakes Ames or the old steamer Champlain and it's situated just south of here off Steam Mill Point near Barn Rock Harbor. I guess it's probably somewhere about 8, 10 miles south of here. What remains of the Champlain today... Well first of all, the Champlain got there as one story has it that the skipper was... That's the flood of 1927; I'll go back to the Champlain. The skipper was taking a little bit of morphine for gout and he managed to get a snort too much and got a bit on the sleepy side, and the boat come up over that rock and broke her back.

(crosstalk)

The deckhouse, I believe, was removed and went over to Lake Winnepesaukee onto Washington, and I believe the engines went over in that general direction also. What remains today is approximately 180-foot long, which is about 100-foot short of what the boat actually is. The work on that boat is fantastic to see it today. One of the main keel timbers goes approximately 120 feet, is pure oak and about 36 inches square, and there is not the first indication or sign of any rot on it. If anybody needed a fantastically straight timber, it would be there. The thing that I was amazed at is trying to visualize the size of the tree that had to be to

produce a 120-foot long timber straight and 36 inches square at the narrow end. It had to be 5, 6 foot at the butt I think. But she was certainly a beautiful boat.

This is a bit of later day history. This is the William McAllister. That picture was taken in 1962 and on November 22, 1963 the McAllister hit the Ferris Rock reef off Schuyler Island, proceeded about 7 minutes past the Schuyler Island and sunk in about 150 feet of water. I've got the bell from it—I photographed the damages to it for the insurance company—and I've got one or two other little odds and ends that came off of it. We located it about 2 years later. That boat, if anybody were interested in the salvage, it could still be salvaged. The engine should still be good.

Diving in all the beautiful warm weather we had makes us think of when things are not quite so good. The group serves a dual function as a rescue team and we do insist that everybody gets at least one dive a month in summer or winter, and this is some of our winter experiences. If I remember correctly the temperature that day was somewhere in the neighborhood of 15 below zero and we were diving just to practice our techniques of diving under the ice. It sort of keeps you on your toes, and ice diving is perhaps not as bad as what you may think. Just plunge your hand into that frigid water when you're ice fishing and you've got instant paralysis, but amazingly enough the wetsuits that we wear usually will give us about an hour to an hour and a half underwater and under the ice without feeling any major discomfort. You'll start to chill after about an hour, an hour and a half. There are suits now that are a little more expensive and they keep you perfectly dry. You can dive under the ice all day long as long as your air will last and your time allows.

This is a sketch that we made of a wreck that we found out off The Inn of the Nations up in Plattsburgh. That's right at the Scotion Creek. Nobody ever knew the wreck was there. We were the first ones to come onto it and the only way we found it is that we happened to watch the wind change and the sand washed off of the wreck. The only thing remaining is a small portion of the deck pieces and some of the ribs coming up and part of the bottom. We did find on it a bundle of furs that looked like cowhide, pretty well preserved due to the sand, and we took a coin from the mast step that was dated at 1835, so we were researching and trying to find out just exactly what it was. It appears that the boat must have been a fur trader, obviously, from the bale of furs and had to have been anchored in at the Port of Plattsburgh and perhaps broke loose from its mooring or dock and drifted into the beach area there. With the prevailing south winds, that would've been a logical course for it to follow. As it hit the beach, it looks like somebody with a team must have attempted to drag it a little bit closer because they pulled the stem out of it, the valve, and it went down from there.

This is just a shot under a diver looking up at him. One of the most greatest experiences that I found is when I take a class of new students in the water and start them off their first time with a tank. They're like birds trying to leave the nest because for the first time they're completely without the feeling of gravity. They can rise or descend at will. They can do loop-to-loops, back flips and be completely mobile and flexible. It's just an enjoyable experience in itself, not to mention the things that you see.

That is the first slide I got upside down. I wasn't doing too bad up to that point. That's off the Ferris Rock reef. Unfortunately it shows too much of the diver and not enough of the reef. This is some of the boys working off one of our boats getting ready to go in. Ferris Rock reef looks underwater sort of like a moonscape and it's really a beautiful reef to swim over, watch fish work off of. (switches slide around) It's a beautiful reef to work off. At the present time there is a project funded by the state going on in Cumberland Bay where they're documenting the existence of wrecks in Cumberland Bay. Cumberland Bay is between Cumberland Head and the city of Plattsburgh, as you can see from the landmarks there. This is the approximate battle position as they feel existed in 1814, and this was the battle between Macdonough and the British fleet and after 8 hours of battle where the British fleet struck its colors and 14,000 British soldiers that were standing in Plattsburgh turned around and went back to Montreal. The battle was a definite victory for Macdonough and would've been an absolute disaster had it been any other way because we only had 3000 American troops staffing Plattsburgh at the time. The boat right in the center and lower end is the Prebold [C40_03.wav; 02:23]. That was disabled early in the battle and drifted ashore. The area where the major find was would be just even with the Sea of Cumberland and the ____ [C40_03.wav; 02:35] Cumberland of Plattsburgh, and right off the shoreline they're going from the bottom ____ [C40_03.wav; 02:42]. There are three little lines indicating creeks and it would be the middle line where we found the cannons, the muskets and the rest of the things. So I feel that the Prebold ____ [C40_03.wav; 02:51] logically could've blown in at that point. The representation there where the Finch is grounded is in a slight bit of error. The Finch actually came in at about a 2 o'clock position. Off of Crab Island is where the reef runs.

QUESTION: ____ [C40_03.wav; 03:05] the people was building ____ [C40_03.wav; 03:06]?

No, I didn't. I was talking earlier and understand that Essex contributed quite a few boats to the lake. We find them after they're down. I'm very interested in where some of them started from though. What we've done so far as far as Cumberland Bay goes, we've located one anchor for a reference point. We're trying to trace that anchor now to the particular vessel from its size, markings and numbers that are on it. The anchor is pretty well grounded in the mud, and we're working from that. If we can identify one vessel, then we can pinpoint from that to where the other anchors and vessels should be. I believe there was something better than a hundred anchors were used in the Battle of Plattsburgh. Macdonough spoke of a technique where he swiveled or pivoted his vessels by just releasing anchors and putting out four anchors on a boat and reversing his lines and spinning the vessel about so he could fire one broadside and then the other broadside instead of being limited to firing just one broadside, and the technique proved most valuable to him. I think it was one of the deciding factors. We do go out fairly well equipped. We've got a fathometer and that's a forward-searching sonar rig that we borrowed. That's an underwater metal detector. The ones that we've got now are a little more modern than that, just a small one-piece unit. Of course, transistors have enabled us to get many more smaller electronic units to use underwater. Some of the things that we come up with. That particular anchor went a little bit better than 900 pounds but unfortunately was not of any significant historical value. It was a fairly late commercial-type anchor.

QUESTION: How did you get it up?

PABST: That one came up with two rowboats. We took two rowboats and lashed a couple of logs across the top of them, drop the chain, ____ [C40_04.wav, 00:01] down from it and then hoisted the anchor up between the two rowboats. We've got a barge with a winch and a hoist on it that if need be, why we can haul it in.

And that's our diver swimming back to the boat after a beautiful trip through Lake Champlain. The Wreck-Raiders Diving Club also... We can have some lights on now. I'll get this ____ [C40_04.wav, 00:29] machine turned down. The Wreck-Raiders Diving Club, as I said, was dedicated to the preservation of history and for 8 years operated our own museum out of our own pocket expense, and the museum had something like 40,000 visitors through it. This was school groups, people traveling through the area. We'd staff it with our own people, and we found that many of the people from schools that went through the museum found the military history of great importance to them. They appreciated it very much. We got untold numbers of letters from various schools where they've been through it. The Historical Association in Plattsburgh has done a magnificent job of putting together a broad-spectrum museum. Ours was dedicated strictly to underwater artifacts. The museum that they've got today is an excellent representation of a cross-section of our history. Some of the things that our group does, we go into extensive photographic work. We've got black-and-whites of just about every artifact that we've identified and we have not at this point shared them with the State Education Department. We had rather a sad experience with the State Education Department and still don't feel that we can completely trust them. The two beautiful 1748 bronze cannons that we recovered now reside in two garages in the Cliff Haven area in Plattsburgh, and not to be sour grapes about it, the kids found the cannons and we said okay we'll raise them for you with our barge providing you put them in a museum, and the agreement went as such. Well when the cannons came up, I don't know how we were so fortunate to have 15 experts on antique cannons in the immediate area, but the appraisals started at \$1100 and wound up at \$10,000 apiece for them, which may or may not be the case, but in one parent's eyes I could see mink coats and Cadillacs in the others, and they said no way, they're going to keep the cannons at home in the garage and that's where the cannons reside today. Everything that we brought up has been or is on public display at this present time except for those cannons. I don't feel that anything that we find belongs to us. It belongs to further the education of everybody who wants to see it, who's interested enough in history. Unfortunately there are some people in the world today that want to grab it and hang onto it, and I suppose that's the way it's got to be.

QUESTION: What is the state law in regard to recovery of this sort of thing?

PABST: Section 33 of the State Education Law specifically states that no one will own, possess or recover, or remove from what is Lake Champlain to Lake George any historical artifacts.

QUESTION: ____ [C40_04.wav, 03:04]

PABST: No. No, so actually they could've nailed us for that. You know, they could've nailed us for that a thousand times over. The thing that we were upset about is that we insisted that the State go take possession of it and we wanted the State to go in and say look, these belong to the State of New York, not to you people.

QUESTION: How did they get them from the museum if you didn't remove them?

(laughter)

QUESTION: That's the question ____ [C40_04.wav, 03:25].

PABST: Yeah. Yeah, I imagine so. Not being a lawyer, I don't have an answer for you. But the fact remains that the State Education Department elected to weasel-word their way out of it and they did a beautiful job of talking and backing down. Under no point did they attempt to recover the cannons and turn them over to the college. What they did do is say that everything that was found in the area that we worked had to be turned over, so all the things that we found wound up going to the college with the exception of a few things that we got at about 2 o'clock one morning and we still maintain those, and it's a good museum. Whoever shows up, that's where they're going to go. We felt that they were too valuable to trust in someone else's hands. But there was a good liaison going and there could still be one going if they ever change their policy and decide to be honest people, but as it currently stands, why we're not too game to go along with it. We, as I said, have documented and photographed just about everything conceivable that we've come across. We've had silver shoe buckles. We've got clay pipes. We've got uniform buttons. There is one excavation that we did off Valcour with a metal detector and removed from this site with an airlift 6 brass toggled uniform buttons, some smaller uniform buttons, a clay pipe, silver shoe buckles. I would tend to think from the way they were found that it was somebody's gear that got knocked off the Royal Savage and got gradually covered over by mud, but nonetheless it's a fantastic find. This here we keep tightly guarded and I've shared the information with the Smithsonian. Mr. Lundeborg down there is a fairly good friend and I certainly can trust him. Everything that we've found we've sent duplicates of the photographs down to him. We do our own processing and send the information down there.

QUESTION: What did you find, if any, either ____ [C40_05.wav, 00:18] or sloop? Is there anything there? You know, right across the lake here. ____ [C40_05.wav, 00:24].

PABST: I have not ____ [C40_05.wav, 00:25] there. There is...

QUESTION: Sloop was ____ [C40_05.wav, 00:28] of Valcour Bay. Theoretically the Sloop was... Legend has it around here that Sloop was ____ [C40_05.wav, 00:39] and Hagglund had a very strong feeling—I talked to him about 10 years ago—that there must be some cannonball around Sloop. As far as I know, they never went to look.

PABST: I've dove Carleton's Prize. ____ [C40_05.wav, 00:56] Carleton's Prize, approximately 150 yards diameter around Carleton's Prize and I have not found any indication of any cannonball. I'm not saying that there's none there. It could be covered over by sand or overburden, but we didn't find any. I've never dove at Sloop or Picket Island. I was over to Rock Dunder. I understand there is a—if I can get my facts correct I believe there is a buoy related to it. The schooner Nancy is supposed to be over there with a couple of Model T Fords sitting on the deck. I understand she went in there heading for Burlington, hit Rock Dunder and sunk instantly because he had quite a load of coal ____ [C40_05.wav, 01:38] also, so we weren't able to find that. I did find enough wreckage to indicate that the schooner is there, but as many good things will happen just about when the trail was getting hot, I ran out of air, and I just don't like to ____ [C40_05.wav, 01:53] too much. We'll be back over there. I'd be very interested to see if I can find the remains of it. The Model T's could be in reasonably decent shape. We were working about in 90 feet of water at that particular time and the oxygen level at 90 feet is minimal. Deterioration of metal beyond 60 feet is minimal. We've come up with things out of 120 feet of water that look like they were the day they went down and they were 200 years old.

(crosstalk)

QUESTION: I wonder if you'd like to speak a little about Plattsburgh Bay and the problem we've got in there for me. ____ [C40_05.wav, 02:28]

PABST: This is a serious and a major problem that many people don't realize. You look across the waters in Plattsburgh Bay, they appear to be crystal clear and pretty. If you ever fly over them, they're not quite so. But to dive into them is reminiscent of plunging into a big bowl of pea soup. The mill for many, many years has produced good income for the good folks of Plattsburgh, but unfortunately it's produced a byproduct that is somewhat similar to cold oatmeal. It's a little bit too thick to swim in and too thin to walk on. I don't know what the devil you'd do with it other than leave it lay at the bottom of the lake. The depth of it is obvious from the Jackpot Motel or the State Barge Terminal dock, more commonly known as Wilcox's Dock. The bay from Wilcox's Dock to the Jackpot Motel is probably a quarter of a mile distance and in 1957 I could operate a 40-foot boat through there at low lake with no problem whatsoever. Today that's completely high and dry with this byproduct. The byproduct, mess, whatever you want to call it, it's something like an iceberg except a little more so. An iceberg, they say, you only see 10% of it. Well in this particular case you only see 1% of it because the amount that shows is approximately quarter to half mile area indicates that there's about 20-foot depth of this sludge. Well, as they keep packing on top, it keeps oozing out on the bottom. This sludge now extends to within a quarter of a mile of City Beach. It's about a foot and a half deep a quarter mile off City Beach, extends out to the Point of Cumberland Head by the lighthouse. It's about 8 inches deep out there, and at various and sundry places through the bay you'll find it anywhere from a foot to 12 foot deep. Needless to say, any history of low profile is preserved at the bottom of the lake. I bloody well think it's going to be preserved there for quite a few days to come until somebody can devise a magnetometer or a metal

detector sensitive enough to read through 12 foot of this goo and indicate that there's something down there beyond a bottlecap.

(laughter)

PABST: So, Plattsburgh Bay does present a number of difficulties. This is the first time, though, we've had the cooperation of the State College to actually put some of their resources to work in the recovery. The State College has a pretty decent boat. We've got about 12 boats in our fleet, but the State College's boat is designed with a ____ [C40_06.wav, 00:06] with test device winch capabilities for hooking in more electronic gear and this is the way that we located this anchor. I don't think we'd have found it by guess and by God. I think that the only way we could've found it is through the use of the college's boat. We have high hopes from identifying this we can work approximate boat lengths and distances to try and come up with the rest of the anchors, and, of course, the area in between this perimeter of anchors has to be filled with many other items—shot, things that may've fallen over the side, what's left of the people and whatever they were wearing as they fell over the side.

QUESTION: How much of an area is in this sludge bed?

PABST: I'd say about 70% of it, and of the 70%, I'd say probably 30% has a good 12 feet of that sludge over it.

QUESTION: That's what I wanted to bring out. It's there but you can't get to it.

PABST: Everybody says that there's a serious problem with it and I'm not that well ecologically oriented as to what the spin-off would be if you attempted to move this goo, but I did work a bit down in the Gulf Coast on hydraulic dredges and I've seen some fantastic things done with dredging, and this stuff is of such a semiliquid consistency that I'm reasonably sure a good cutterhead dredge could burn it's way right in there and break it down into a liquid and pump it a mile, 2 miles, 3 miles, 4 miles, however distance they had to pump it overland to whatever landfill area they would have. One big serious problem would be a disastrous smell for awhile until it finally settled down because it's a vegetable product and it ferments, and if you drive by it at certain times when the wind was right it'll smell like somebody's got a still going and other times it will smell like somebody knocked the outhouse over, so it's pretty tough stuff. Once you get it up, you've got to almost fill it instantly with some kind of dirt cover to cover it and prevent the smell from getting too bad, but you can't really move anything on it until it settles down and dries up a little bit.

QUESTION: Have you ever asked Georgia-Pacific if they'd consider anything like that?

COMMENT: They put it there. They won't take it out.

PABST: That's it. Plus there, again, weasel-word is one of my favorite expressions and it applies so accurately here. I don't know what the election issues would ever be in Plattsburgh if we

didn't have our sludge beds to bring up every 2 years or 4 years as the case may be, but everybody who wants to run for office seems to go under the pennant of by God I'm going to clean that mess up, and when he gets to the office he goes out there and sticks his finger in it and says well, so much for that. I truly don't know exactly what they can do with it or what they will do with it. Georgia-Pacific certainly has no intention of putting their money into it to remove it I don't believe and I don't think, I know certainly I haven't asked them. I imagine somewhere along the line someone must have approached them. They have put a fantastic amount of money into reducing the amount of effluent that they're pumping out. They're still pumping it. It's still going out there, but they're not putting as much out as they were before. I don't know. It's sort of like having a little bit of a broken arm, you know? Either you are or you're not.

COMMENT: I think the other item that might interest people is the story you told us over in Elizabethtown about the body recovered at Lake Placid. It's a little gross, but it's interesting.

PABST: If there are children present I usually don't go into it, but it's probably not all that bad. It does typify some of the preservative characteristics of water. In 1963 we totally destroyed a good day of beautiful diving in Lake Placid. Lake Placid has gem-clear water. You've got visibility of 40 or 50 feet down there as compared to Lake Champlain, where you may enjoy 20 to 30 feet or 15 feet more likely. At the level of 95 feet off an area that they call Pulpit Rock in Lake Placid, one of the boys discovered what he thought was a department store manikin, and upon grabbing ahold of the arm of the manikin, the arm came off and he saw a bone and he realized that they don't build manikins with that degree of accuracy. The end-product being that when we finally removed the so-called manikin... First of all, the guy that found her was really a true blue and he was diving with his buddy. He found it first. He broke the arm off. He realized what he had, so he turned to his buddy and he says, "You stay here. I'm going for help."

(laughter)

He left this poor guy down with a perfectly preserved corpse. After about a minute and a half, the guy's cool level started declining rapidly and he was reasonably sure he wouldn't be able to find it if he had to come back down to it again, so he did the only other logical thing. He tried to remember as much of the surrounding area as possible, grabbed ahold of it and bicycled for the surface. I take my hat off to him. Under a similar situation, I don't know if I would have had the same cool. I think had I known what I know today, I would've let the thing stay there because it was a mess for us after awhile. Nonetheless, we brought the body to the surface and the first guy comes up out of the water and about 10 feet below the surface he ripped his mouthpiece out and started screaming that he found a body, and by the time he got out of the water—you know how sound will travel, it echoed over the entire lake and in about 3 minutes' time we had 40 boats circling us like a group of sharks, and by this time the other fellow had surfaced with the body and says okay I got it, what the devil do I do with it? So we found as many things as we could that floated. We had Clorox bottles tied on it. It was sort of semi-buoyant, not that much negative. With a few Clorox bottles and a life preserver latched to it, while it managed to

float. Then he says well, that's it, we got it to the surface, let's go to the State Police, so the State Police came out and they said alright boys, you did well so far, why don't you get it to shore for us. You know, bring it in your own bloody boat. I don't want the thing on my boat. So we hauled the body onboard. And they're very persuasive. We got the body onboard and brought it back into the dock, but unfortunately the years of lying on the bottom had caused the body to become rather brittle. We went back and we recovered the head, the arm, one foot, and a few other odds and ends that had dropped off. Getting it back to shore was the amazing part of the story because when a coroner examined the body and the pathologist later on went through it, it was determined that the body was that of a Mrs. Mabel Smith Douglass who founded Douglass University in New Jersey, which now I believe is part of Rutgers. She had died in 1932. It was 1962 we found her. It was 2 weeks short of being 30 years that that body had laid on the bottom of Lake Placid. The water temperature where we found her was approximately 35 degrees. This was in the middle of August. The temperature was such that it preserved tissue long enough for the minerals and salts in the water—and this is the way they explained it to me—the minerals and salts in the water permeated the tissue and eventually formed a semi-calcified plastic cast of the body. The skin ceased being skin and turned into stone. Had she been there perhaps another 30 years, we might have had a Lake Placid ____ [C40_07.wav, 02:19] type thing. But it fouled us up because it tied us up for the rest of the week. The State Police divers at that time were not allowed to go beyond 50 feet and as we were working 95 feet at this particular point, they said well fellows, you know you're not through yet, so out-of-pocket expenses ran somewhere around \$175 to us, for which there was no reimbursement. We did recover everything that was missing, including a 50-pound weight that had been tied around her neck.

COMMENT: She didn't die of natural causes.

PABST: No. Well if you call a 50-pound weight around the neck natural, no. The police then ceased to appreciate us even more because who needs a 30-year-old murder mystery ____ [C40_07.wav, 03:09].

(laughter)

PABST: And here we were, you know, we were the good guys, but just trying to have a day's fun and then we brought this thing up, and I told Major Muller, who was the Troop B Commander, later on, I said, you know if I'd known now what I know now, I'd cut the ropes and let it go back down, would've gone back to the dock and had a beer and forgotten about the whole thing. He was like, I wish you would've. In researching it, the police found that her son and daughter committed suicide not too long after. The only strange thing was that the rope was tied some 15 inches away from her neck. When the fellow moved the body, his elbow was hitting the weight and his fingertips were at the body's neck, so it's highly illogical to assume that if she were to commit suicide that she would've tied this rope 15 inches away from her neck unless she would've knelt down on the floor of the boat to do it. To commit suicide, somebody's not going to really go through any extra work to do it, so it's reasonably sure that she was murdered and it's pretty hard telling who did it, but after 30 years have gone by I don't think

anything would've been proved or solved. I believe it just gave the State Police one more unanswered case. The preserving factor of the water is a fantastic thing. I had never realized that anything could preserve quite that well and the preservation was so accurate and so detailed that even the goose pimples on the flesh were still in clear evidence and good.

QUESTION: What was the water temperature?

PABST: 35 degrees.

QUESTION: Did you ever find that fellow that went down at ____ [C40_07.wav, 04:37]?

PABST: Nope. We dove on that the day following, found snowmobile tracks running up to some clear ice. The ice was probably about 2 inches thick, and we assumed we were dealing with about 100 feet of water. We found his hat, his corncob pipe and his tobacco pouch frozen up under the ice and we figured that he was going to be pretty well near where that material was found. We had a couple of hundred thousand candlepower submarine lights and started down and descending when we dropped the shot line with a 100-pound weight on it. We were going down the descending line, myself and a lad named Tommy McGowen, and at about the 150-foot level Tommy dropped one of the submarine lights, and these lights are designed that when they're dropped they're going to upend, but they're negative. They're going to continue going down. When he dropped the light, we started chasing it and we were just outrunning our air supply trying to catch up with that light. At about 175 feet we lost sight of the light and Tommy wound up losing many of the capillaries in his sinus passages. I wound up with the same problem in my eyes. My eyes looked like a couple of cherries in a glass of buttermilk for awhile. But, we came up from that dive and had laid plans to leave a marker there and come back when the lake was a little lower and a little warmer. I believe surface temperature was something like 15 below with a wind velocity of about 20 knots out there, so it was not really a desirable day for sport diving or recovery. After we had done it, some fellow down in Au Sable Forks, probably with all well meaning, wrote a letter to the paper to the effect that if these local yo-yos can't make it, I'm going to get some super-experts in from the Coast Guard. That's all I needed. I says okay baby, you get your experts and I'm through, and the experts haven't arrived yet.

(laughter)

It's a grizzly side of diving unfortunately. It's something that has to be done. We furnished Clinton County and all the surrounding area with a search and recovery rescue team.

QUESTION: You paid for that?

PABST: No. No, it's a matter of the fact that we're capable of doing something that most people are not capable of doing. The methods that we utilize are more efficient than any existing methods in the past and also, for the lack of a better word, perhaps a little more pleasant. Using a grappling hook and a drag hook to recover something or somebody is not

really an attractive sight for the rescuers or for the family that has to live on, that has to go on. But if a scuba diver can get down and make a recovery, and most of our recoveries up until this past year have been less than an hour from the time that we arrived on the scene until the time that we effected recovery. In most cases we were fortunate. We got a reasonable good fix as to where the subject was last seen. This past year we've had one that lasted 3 days for a fellow who went over the waterfall. We had another one that lasted 3 days, and he was found eventually but not by us. He had surfaced himself and then two young lads 2 weeks ago went down some fast water in the rivers. But with this search and recovery team, we try and preach and solicit public support for water safety. We can never say enough about water safety, yet people still go out there and treat the water as a swimming pool, and water is a fantastic fun medium but definitely deserves a considerable amount of respect and anybody using the water should educate themselves on how to survive that. It saves us from doing work. The rescue and recovery team was formed not too long after two lads ended their diving careers down here in Westport right around Barn Rock Harbor and that was one of the catalysts that formed us into a more viable group.

QUESTION: Did you ever recover either body?

PABST: No. I strongly suspect that they won't either.

COMMENT: One was a ____ [C40_08.wav, 03:35].

PABST: That was the young one at the Basin Harbor Yacht Club. No I don't think you will because there at 160 feet, which I believe was the reading that the diver was recovered at. Oh, the diver was recovered.

COMMENT: His body was, yeah.

PABST: His body was recovered, but the young Piper's wasn't. They couldn't find him. The thing is in that depth a body will be set, hit a thermocline and hold in the thermocline for awhile, and then descend further as processes cease.

QUESTION: Are there any underwater rivers or anything of that type?

PABST: Not so much. You're going to get subcurrents underwater. You may have a surface current going north and a subcurrent going south, and by the time you get down to 100 feet you're liable to have one pulling east or west depending on what your surface configuration is. In other words, wind hitting rocks is going to create pressure on the body. It's hard telling where the lad wound up. Whatever, the depth is such that the water temperature is such that he'll never... the thing that will bring the body up, of course, is gassing.

Again, this is not the enjoyable side of diving. The thing I prefer to think of is the artifacts, the history, just the plain beauty of it. Lake Champlain has lost a lot of the visibility it used to have. We've got high hopes with a few people being concerned about the quality of Lake Champlain

and perhaps some day it will return itself to a crystal clear lake again. Certainly many efforts are being made in many directions to work that way. I sincerely... Are there any questions and answers before I wrap up?

QUESTION: What did Mr. Marsh bring in?

(crosstalk and laughter)

PABST: It's a rib off of... Well, I couldn't say exactly whether it be commercial or military, and not knowing where he recovered it, but that's one of the old...

COMMENT: Beach between here and Willsboro.

PABST: That washed up on a beach?

COMMENT: Yes it did.

PABST: Between Essex and Willsboro?

COMMENT: Right.

(crosstalk)

PABST: That's, I would think, of military origin.

QUESTION: Why do you say that?

PABST: Well, because of the length of it. It looks like it could've come off a row galley.

(crosstalk)

PABST: Well it's a knee and a rib actually. It's all made out of one piece of wood. It's go in the forest and look for a tree that has the right configuration and cut the tree accordingly.

QUESTION: And you think it's military because of the length?

PABST: Well, your gunnels were lower on the row galleys. Your gunnels were anywhere from 3 to 5 feet and they would come up with that, maybe run a sister rib alongside of it, but the way that looks, it looks like it naturally terminated. It's hard telling without seeing the rest of the wreck it came from. Now there is a wreck off Schuyler Island. Matter of fact there are 5 wrecks off Schuyler Island, but one of them off Schuyler Island has ribs of that ____ [C40_09.wav, 01:22]. It could have broken from that.

QUESTION: Is this the right way up? Is this the deck part of it?

PABST: No. No, it would go exactly 180 degrees. That part would mount to the bottom of the boat and the short part would be on the bottom of the boat, the long part would be going up the gunnel, up the side. If you were to find that on a boat, you would find that bolted down through the hull from the bottom, or in that case it looks like she was riveted, and then your side would've been going up this way. Out just a short distance probably would've been the keel.

COMMENT: This would be on the lower timbers.

PABST: That's right.

COMMENT: of the bottom plank.

(laughter and crosstalk)

PABST: That's a little more later date. That looks like it might've come off an old lead barge. This here come off a smaller boat. That there is, it looks like it might've come off one of the old lead barges. You know, just the heft of the timber. You don't find anything on a row galley with that heavy of timber on it.

QUESTION: What happened to the remains of the Vermont that was up ____ [C40_09.wav, 02:32]?

PABST: I don't know. I'd like to know... One of the greatest injustices I think to some of the boats and one of the reasons why we don't raise things, unless we can take care of them. There were two boats up in our Ausable Chasm. One of them was one of Benedict Arnold's boats that come out of Arnold's Bay over here. It was raised on a juniper and I'm not sure of the year, but it sat up in this thicket and woods for, hell, since the time it was raised and just gradually decayed. The minute the wood come up and surfaced and hit the air, why it started to come apart. The other boat there was reported to be what was left of the steamer Vermont, which was the second successful steamboat in the world, and both of these have been moved. I don't know where they were moved to. I don't know what happened to them. I have not had the time during the summer to investigate where, what and how, but I would like to know where they went to. There should be something done to preserve a portion of it at least.

COMMENT: They were offered to the Essex County Historical Society and they have no way of taking them over or any place to put them.

(crosstalk)

COMMENT: That's where they built that KOA camp. That's ____ [C40_09.wav, 03:40] and leveled.

COMMENT: ____[C40_09.wav, 03:43] was raised ____[C40_09.wav, 03:45].

COMMENT: Oh is that it?

PABST: Yeah. Well I believe the ownership originated... There was a corporation formed

(blank tape)

PABST: a shed of sorts erected over them because really it's a shame.

(crosstalk)

PABST: Well, there's a book forthcoming on steamboating on Lake Champlain. A fellow named Jim Shaughnessy, a friend of mine out of Troy, who wrote a story about the D&H. Well Jim's doing one on steamboating and I'm shooting some photographs of the Champlain underwater, and if you folks would like when I run off a set of prints for him, I'll run off a set of prints of what Champlain looks like today.

(crosstalk)

QUESTION: How much of the Champlain is left?

PABST: About 180 feet of it is left. The stern section is facing the rocks perpendicular to the shore south of the Point, probably about 150 yards south of the Point. You can stand on its stern ____[C40_10.wav, 00:18] and get your head out of the water when the lake's running at about 95, 96 feet.

QUESTION: Where did Jim get the ____[C40_10.wav, 00:23] rudder?

PABST: Well, that's a sore grapes again. Stub Longware out of Elizabethtown, Jack Farrell labored many, many hours with a hacksaw cutting little notches so that the pintle and gudgeons could be removed and the rudder taken off of it. Just about when they're coming down the homestretch, the rudder showed up up here and I'm not going to say any more or any less about it. I don't want to get myself in the middle of a pail of worms. I'm glad that somebody got it up. I'm glad to see it being used with some degree of practicality. The brass work on it still remains and is a tribute to the builder of the boat. I'd love to see somebody have a use for that 36-inch keel timber because that certainly would be a tribute to the boat and the forest where it was cut. I'm not sure where the Champlain was built, but it had to be a beautiful boat. What's left of it today is a beautiful sight. You can swim down in the engine room. The decks are all blown off it. The port side is laying, well about half of it is laying down on the sand now. It's weakened and fallen off. The starboard side is still intact and rises about 15 feet off the bottom. You can swim through some of the old condenser discharge shoots on the side. Down in the engine room is probably a depth of about 25 feet and the cross timbers that held the ____[C40_10.wav, 01:52] cross shaft are still intact with a little tunnel going under

them, so you can have a little bit of fun whipping down in and out of this tunnel and chasing the fish.

QUESTION: ____[C40_10.wav, 01:59]

PABST: I'm not familiar. Barn Rock Harbor just south of it, there is a little T-shaped ____[C40_10.wav, 02:06] with a picnic table on it.

COMMENT: ____[C40_10.wav, 02:07] the call Steamboat Point and he alleges that's where the Champlain went aground.

PABST: I could show you on a chart real quick, but by the Higgins Place I'm not familiar with it. The point immediately south of Barn Rock Harbor, I'd say it's less than a half mile off the point of Barn Rock Harbor, and there is a little T-shaped peninsula where you can run a boat from the north right up into a fairly well-protected cove, a little makeshift picnic arrangement on that point that everybody manages to keep clean. At least the last time I was down there it was kept that way and respected, so whoever owns the land I don't believe has made any efforts to have people chased away. On the south end of that point is a rocky shoal that extends out into the lake and from the pictures of the Champlain this looks like it could be the shoal that the Champlain ran up and broke its back on. Immediately south of that, about 150 yards perpendicular to the shoreline, the Champlain is there. There is about 180 feet of it left. The bow section, which I would imagine is the section that snapped off or was the section snapped when she ran over the point, is gone and I was trying to think...

(crosstalk)

PABST: No. From what I gathered, it wasn't broken that badly and the ice moved it to this point. Now right at the 180-foot mark, I'd say about 200 feet from shore, 20 feet beyond where the boat is, you go into a sand cliff, which you'd have to see underwater to truly appreciate, but it's about a 45-degree angle of pure sand that descends. I've hit 130 feet there and still hadn't found the tapering out to meet lake bottom yet, still running at about a perfectly smooth 45-degree angle. I would tend to think that the bow section is down somewhere beyond the 130-foot mark. Usually I make a fairly strict policy in sport diving. I'll do most of my sport diving in 60 to 70 feet where you can see something and enjoy it, and when it starts getting below 100 feet somebody's going to come up with a bankroll for me. I don't go into extenuating conditions unless I get paid for it in most cases. The bow section is probably down in 130 feet plus of water right at that point.

QUESTION: Could you explain the picture you had there and it looks as if she had run up to about her paddle wheel and the ____[C40_10.wav, 04:22] portion was right up on dry land?

PABST: It was. Up on dry land and over the point.

QUESTION: And then what happened after that?

PABST: Well, the lake will usually get a little kick along about November and I imagine that the lake came up enough to give the bow a little bit of buoyancy and when the ice blocked around it, from what I gather, the ice moved that vessel off. I don't think that she was physically towed off. And when the ice moved it off, it backed off to that point and sunk. But it's a tragic end to a beautiful boat. I've seen a few of them. I've come onto a wreck of the D&H steamer right off... if you look on the map, it's right where the letter F is indicated. If you're ever sailing the Valcour area, there is a red buoy up there and there is a reef with about 8 feet of water over it at ____ [C40_11.wav, 00:06] lake and this steamer hit this reef and disintegrated. The boilers must have blown because I found pieces of boiler as far as a half a mile away. I found many of the tools that they had in the engine room and we also picked the rudder up to that. The reef descended down to about 45, 50 feet, and there is a quantity, and I'd say a quantity in excess of 200 or 300 planks, oak planks. They're white oak about anywhere from 20- to 30-foot long each, anywhere from an inch to 3/4 inch thick. Some of them were around 1-1/2 inches and they were about 18 inches wide. I've got enough of them raised and properly dried. I'm going to make a pretty nice coffee table out of them and also refinish my bar with them. They come up with a beautiful color. When you run them through a planer, the wood that's been down that long has a beautiful change in complexion, the grain, and I've never seen anything to compare with it when it's rubbed down. It comes out pretty. Off that particular wreck Hector Sandberg, the fellow I mentioned before that I'd done a lot of diving with many years ago, has reconstructed all but about five pieces of a ceramic altar with a Madonna and child in it, sort of a concave ceramic altar, and we got eight bushel baskets of china shards that we picked up down there and we spent I guess two winters tooling through these china shards trying to find out what's going to match up with this altar, but we've got all but about two pieces and I think I'm going to give up and make the two pieces out of plaster of Paris and paint them, but it came out very pretty.

QUESTION: Where did you say your museum is?

PABST: Our museum used to be... The city elected to sell it. Some smooth-talking carpetbagger come by and offered them \$2000 for the building and they sold it, so we no longer operate a museum. The bulk of our artifacts are in a carriage house at the Kent-Delord House. Some of our artifacts are in a museum at the 3rd floor of City Hall in Plattsburgh. As a matter of fact, I think they've got a clay pipe and they've got a French anchor that dates back to about 1650. In the days we ran our other museum, we had our own spokesman there to indicate what the things were, where they were found and what they represented, which seemed to be fairly effective. Mr. Smith does a fantastic job in showing the things that we've got, but his prime concern, I believe, is with the Kent-Delord family and not so much with the underwater artifacts. One of the anchors that sits out in the yard, according to Phil Lundeberg down at the Smithsonian, should be from the Compliance. This baby here is about a 700-pound anchor. From the indications we sent them down—the photographs and a release and traced off the crown of the anchor—why he felt that that's what it came from, that and the position that we located it in.

QUESTION: Have you done much diving on the Vermont side?

PABST: No, I've done very little diving on the Vermont side. There's so much to do over here. I could dive every day for the rest of my life and still not probably get south of Essex. I've seen divers go down on the Royal Savage reef and they'll blow a tank of air, they'll cover three-quarters of a mile and come back and say yeah, there's not a bloody thing there. I'll go down and I'll take a 4-foot square and I'll probably use a whole tank of air in that 4-foot square, but I guarantee you there's nothing in it when I'm done with it. You can't really just scan and speed your way through things. If you're in an area that you're reasonably sure there is something hot and historical, you spend a little more time with it.

QUESTION: How do you ____ [C40_11.wav, 03:39]? Do you actually go into the ____ [C40_11.wav, 03:42]?

PABST: Yeah. We run an airlift for one thing. We'll go down there and just fan the sand away if it's just a small excavation we're working.

QUESTION: How deep could you get ____ [C40_11.wav, 03:49]?

PABST: With an airlift we can keep on going until we hit bedrock. An airlift is a very simple device. It's a piece of downspout with an air line with a U-turn in it in the entrance of the downspout and a length of firehose that will blow the overburden anywhere from 40 to 50 feet away from you. You need a moderate-volume compressor or a source of air. I'd say you need probably about 50, 75 cubic feet a minute moving through this, and the air rushing up the downspout creates a Venturi, a waterflow with it, and as the water flows up the downspout it sucks the sand up with it and sand, stones and odds and ends. What you have to be careful of is you don't start blowing goodies through it too. You've got to be fairly careful and selective with your running this thing down. You just can't blindly probe into the bottom with it. You sort of vacuum off a little bit and you look, and vacuum off a little more. We've got one wreck that we're working that we found a few things on and we've erected a grid system over the top of it, and as we excavate down one level, we photograph, and then we'll remove what we've got and then excavate another level and photograph again. Why we're doing this and removing on this particular wreck is that it's in such shallow water we're afraid that any day we're going to be discovered and then the whole world will be in there jumping on it. But as it stands right now, we've managed to keep a reasonable degree of secrecy with it and the state wants to know where it is. Every now and then I send them a picture and tell them, you know, we're still going great. They get highly irritated and threaten to throw me in jail, but as yet they've not done it, so we'll sooner or later find out. One or the other of us is going to win. Any other questions folks?

QUESTION: That leads me to ask a question concerning the State Department ____ [C40_12.wav, 00:32]. Are they involved or do you want them involved, and if so, administratively, financially or otherwise?

PABST: To the best of my knowledge, they're not involved. Every dealing that we've had thus far in reference for permission to work a historical dig to identifying and documentation has been with a ____ [C40_12.wav, 00:51] Dr. Lewis Tucker of the State Education Department. At one time I sat on a committee to create close liaison between the State Education Department and the divers. I was President to the New York State Divers Association for 2 years, which represents approximately 1000 divers in the state of New York right now, and we were working in a direction. This is prior to this situation of the cannons. We were working with direction of the close liaison between divers and educators because we can teach the educators a lot, as we can learn a lot from the educators. It's a two-way street. Your Department of Archives I don't believe has ever been mentioned in any of the conversations that we've had. This committee seemed to have gone by the Board and last year I believe Senator Stafford proposed a bill to set up a committee on archeology consisting of 2 representatives from regions, 2 representatives from State Education, I think 1 from legislators, and 1 member of the New York State Divers Association, and the other people that were going to sit on this committee refused to sit on a committee, from what I gather, with one of our lowly grubby divers. You know, I guarantee you I'm perhaps not as educated as those people are, but in my own realm I bloody well know what I'm doing and it's a darn shame that the Ivory Tower can't be lowered down to a degree of reality where more things can be learned. There's a wealth of information and education laying at the bottom of this lake and many other bodies of water, but it's a difficult thing sometimes to get the liaison established to forward this education. Just recently up in Sacketts Harbor they've come up with 2 cannons, they've come up with a quantity of muskets. I guess this is part of the Sacketts Harbor battle, but it's off one of the islands there in an area where they least expected to find it, so they're working through Wally Workmaster with the State Education Department, who seems to have his feet on the ground pretty well, and they're getting a degree of cooperation. It's encouraging anyway to see that there's a small step being made. Perhaps the small step will pave the road for the better. In this particular case, when the State moved in on this find, they said okay, you guys found it and did all this work but you're not smart enough to do the recovery, and what they wound up doing... Of the 15 muskets that were in that ____ [C40_12.wav, 03:19], they damaged 8 of them raising them with special equipment. They had this plastic sheet that they laid down, they'd roll the musket into it, and they hoisted up to the side of the boat, and the guy would grab it by the end and throw it in the bottom of the boat. We went out at 2 o'clock in the morning and raised 3 of them in a blind and didn't damage a thing. So what can I tell you? Any other questions?

QUESTION: ____ [C40_12.wav, 03:45]

PABST: Yeah, this is true. This is true. But is legislation necessarily the answer? First of all there is the enforcement of the legislation, and I work in enforcement. I run the sheriff's patrol up on Lake Champlain on the northern end of it. Is legislation the answer? Sometimes we're over-legislated. Perhaps a cooperation would be more of the thing, getting down and then let's both get our hands in the mud and see what we've got down there. This is the thing. The divers are only too willing to cooperate and preserve, but they've got to have a shiny light to work toward.

QUESTION: As part of the public relations work that you seem to be interested in for your organization, would it be possible if we found one or two china cabinets with glass doors and keys to keep them locked, would it be possible borrow some of the smaller things like the clay pipe and send them down or have us get them down with little explanatory notes and perhaps get them back to you?

PABST: Do you have a building down here that you would be using as a historical area or would it be ____ [C40_12.wav, 04:55] the library?

QUESTION: I think we have a building don't we?

COMMENTS: No. No.

PABST: If you had a secured area to put them, I would think that there would be no problem whatsoever that we couldn't put together a representative selection of underwater historical artifacts and put them on loan with your group because our idea is to let more people see it, not just to keep it confined in Plattsburgh. We had it up at the Mining Museum for awhile. You know, we're game. We're only too glad to cooperate with people.

(crosstalk)

QUESTION: ____ [00:28] there ought to be people in there, so they'll be safe.

PABST: That's beautiful. Yeah, I would be only too glad to put something together. And if I don't note it I'll bloody well forget it.

(crosstalk)

QUESTION: How would a young teenager who is interested in ____ [C40_13.wav, 00:54] subject go from facemask breather to becoming a diver?

PABST: Depending on what area you're at, the YMCA and many dive shops will offer courses in diving. The way not to do it is to get a well-meaning friend who says hey, come on, I'm going to take you diving, because being able to breathe underwater and knowing what to do if you get into a tight spot underwater are two different things.

QUESTION: Is there anything in Plattsburgh that's available?

PABST: There's a course starting out of my dive shop on the 16th of August and there is a course starting at the YMCA on about the 20th of September. Either of the courses are nationally recognized. The dive shop course is National Association of Skin Diving Schools with 2.5 million certified divers from it. The YMCA, of course, is nationally recognized. The difference between the two, the YMCA emphasizes physical fitness in it and we emphasize a mental preparation to it.

QUESTION: What are the age limitations?

PABST: We set no age limitations. If a young man is able to understand, comprehend and make decisions, there is no chronological age that is going to knock him out of it. In other words, if he's... Some 12-year-old kids have more on the ball than a man of 25, and this is more what we look for. It's not necessarily a birth certificate date. Any other questions folks?

Being not, I thank you so much for the opportunity to let me share some of our underwater life, grizzly and enjoyable, and I thank you so much for the opportunity of being here.