

David Bright, researcher of Andrea Doria sinking, dies after dive at the wreck site

BOSTON (AP) - David Bright, a leading researcher into underwater shipwrecks, has died after diving to the site of the Italian luxury liner Andrea Doria off Nantucket where he was working in preparation for the wreck's 50th anniversary. He was 49.

Bright, of Flemington, New Jersey, resurfaced from a dive late Saturday with decompression sickness and went into cardiac arrest, according to the Coast Guard. He was pronounced dead at Cape Cod Hospital a short time later.

His wife of 23 years, Elaine Bright, said the circumstances that led to his death were not immediately clear and the family was awaiting an autopsy report.

Bright was an experienced historian and technical diver who had explored the Titanic, Andrea Doria and other shipwrecks many times - 120 times for the Andrea Doria alone.

The Andrea Doria was headed from Genoa, Italy, to New York when it collided with the Swedish ship Stockholm on July 25, 1956, killing 46 of its 1,706 passengers and crew. The Italian luxury liner lies at the bottom of the Atlantic in 200 feet (60 meters) of water, about 50 miles (80 kilometers) southeast of Nantucket.

Because of its depth, it is considered the Mount Everest of scuba diving.

Bright's research into the Titanic, Andrea Doria and other sites has been part of dozens of documentaries, and he lectured often on ship exploration.

He had an extensive personal collection of artifacts, and established the Andrea Doria Museum Project - based at the Nantucket Lifesaving Museum - which loans artifacts to museums. He owned two Andrea Doria life boats, including one on his property in New Jersey, his wife said. He was the founder of the Andrea Doria Survivor Reunions Committee.

"His passion has been growing for a little over 30 years, all kinds of shipwrecks and getting to know them," Elaine Bright said Monday.

"It's very traumatizing to his entire family but we know that he's happy. It's a very sad thing, but water, scuba diving was what he wanted to do," she said.

Bright started the Nautical Research Group about four years ago after his retirement from Pfizer Pharmaceuticals, where he worked for 12 years as a research scientist, his wife said. He had a bachelor's degree in biology and a master's degree in physiology from Pennsylvania State University.

He also spent two years working with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration on the exploration of the wreck of the Civil War ironclad, USS Monitor.

Capt. Robert Meurn, a professor emeritus at the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy and fellow Andrea Doria researcher, had been slated to speak about the ship with Bright later this month.

"He followed his passion, and he was trying to solve the mystery of why she did sink," Meurn said from his home in Harbor Beach, Michigan.

In addition to his wife, survivors include his mother, two brothers and three children.-AP

'Andrea Doria' boat claims another diver's life

BY BILL BLEYER

Newsday Staff Writer

July 10, 2006, 6:45 PM EDT

The wreck of the ocean liner Andrea Doria, which has claimed the lives of at least 13 divers since it sank off Nantucket 50 years ago this month, has added another to its tally.

David Bright, 40, of Flemington, N.J., who has written and lectured about the shipwreck extensively and appeared in numerous documentaries, collapsed about 7 p.m. Saturday after completing a dive on the Doria. The wreck remains a magnet for Long Island divers who use charters leaving from Montauk and ports along the South Shore.

Bright was to be involved in a reunion of Andrea Doria survivors to be held on Long Island on July 23 -- at the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy in Kings Point.

According to Coast Guard Petty Officer Luke Pinneo in Boston, "he was diving and had resurfaced. Shortly after returning onboard he went into cardiac arrest and CPR was administered by the crew" of the vessel, which is named Sirena.

The Coast Guard headquarters in Woods Hole on Cape Cod received a call at 7:05 p.m. saying Bright was suffering from decompression sickness. The Coast Guard launched a helicopter from Cape Cod at 7:20 p.m. that was on scene at 7:57 p.m. and hoisted Bright aboard. The air crew continued CPR and at 8:30 p.m. transferred the diver to an ambulance at Hyannis Airport. He was taken to Cape Cod Hospital, where he was pronounced dead on arrival.

Dive experts said it sounded like Bright had suffered from an embolism, heart attack or stroke rather than decompression sickness because he reported no symptoms, which would be expected with decompression sickness, which is caused by a buildup of nitrogen in body tissues.

Bright founded the Nautical Research Group in 2003 and served as its president. He was the founder and a member of the Andrea Doria Survivor Reunions Committee, whose function is to provide survivors and their family members with annual events to commemorate this sea disaster. He has established the Andrea Doria Museum Project -- the main site is at the Nantucket Lifesaving Museum -- which loans artifacts and historic treasures from the Andrea Doria to museums for display.

Kevin McMurray, author of "Deep Descent," a book about diving the Doria, said Bright was a friend and former dive buddy. "David was good for the dive community. He was well-known and well-liked and respected."

The deteriorating Italian liner, which lies in 240 feet of water after colliding in the fog with the Swedish liner Stockholm, is considered the Mt. Everest for advanced shipwreck divers who breathe a mixture of gases to cope with the depth. Many of the diveboats heading to the site leave from or are based on Long Island.

Captain Steve Bielenda
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July 11, 2006

David A. Bright, 49, Expert on the Andrea Doria, Dies

By MARGALIT FOX

http://www.nytimes.com/2006/07/11/us/11bright.html?_r=1&oref=slogin

David A. Bright, an internationally renowned authority on the sinking of the Andrea Doria who was helping lead preparations to commemorate the disaster's 50th anniversary later this month, collapsed and died on Saturday after making a dive into the wreck of the ship, about 60 miles south of Nantucket. He was 49 and lived in Flemington, N.J.

The exact cause of death has not been determined, said Petty Officer Rochelle Padilla of the Coast Guard Station at Woods Hole, Mass., which responded to an emergency call at 6:50 p.m. on Saturday.

According to the Coast Guard's report, Mr. Bright surfaced from the wreck; boarded his dive boat, the Sirena; and collapsed. Evacuated by Coast Guard helicopter, he was taken by ambulance to Cape Cod Hospital, where he was pronounced dead.

A scientist by training, Mr. Bright was a skilled wreck diver who had dived the remains of the Andrea Doria more than 100 times. He had an important collection of artifacts salvaged from the ship, including china and crystal, which he often lent to museum exhibitions.

The founder of the Andrea Doria Survivor Reunions Committee, Mr. Bright acted as a liaison between divers and survivors of the sinking. He had made Saturday's dive in part to help another diver photograph the wreck for the 50th anniversary reunion on July 23 at the United States Merchant Marine Academy at Kings Point, N.Y.

The reunion will take place as scheduled, now as a memorial to Mr. Bright, organizers said.

The Andrea Doria sank on July 25, 1956, en route to New York from Genoa, Italy, after it collided with another passenger ship, the Stockholm. Of the Andrea Doria's nearly

1,500 passengers and more than 600 crew members, more than 2,000 people were saved, in one of the most stunningly successful rescues in maritime history.

Mr. Bright was the 14th person to die while diving the Andrea Doria, Kevin F. McMurray, the author of “Deep Descent,” a book about diving the wreck, said in a telephone interview yesterday.

Mr. Bright, a diver for more than 30 years, routinely dived famous wrecks around the world, including those of the Titanic; the Monitor, the Civil War ironclad; and the Empress of Ireland, which sank in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, off Quebec, in 1914.

At his death, he was president of the Nautical Research Group, based in Flemington. The company, which he founded in 2003, does nautical archaeology and scientific research on wrecks and other underwater sites.

A frequent lecturer on shipwrecks, Mr. Bright contributed to more than 40 documentary films, for National Geographic, the Discovery Channel and the major television networks, among others.

His work was also featured in several books, among them “Deep Descent: Adventure and Death Diving the Andrea Doria” (Pocket Books, 2001), by Mr. McMurray; and recent editions of “Collision Course: The Classic Story of the Collision of the Andrea Doria and the Stockholm” (Lyons Press, 2004), by Alvin Moscow.

In the dangerous pastime of shipwreck diving, the Andrea Doria is considered one of the most dangerous wrecks of all, Mr. McMurray said yesterday.

“The Andrea Doria is considered the Mount Everest of wreck diving,” he said. “It’s very deep; it’s below what they consider recreation limits.”

The prescribed limit for recreational diving is 130 feet, Mr. McMurray said; the wreck of the Andrea Doria lies at about 250 feet at its deepest point.

Among the hazards a diver can incur at this depth are decompression sickness, familiarly known as the bends, which can result in an embolism; and oxygen toxicity, in which the oxygen in the gas mixture the diver breathes can become toxic under pressure.

David Alexander Christopher Bright was born on June 29, 1957, in Niagara Falls, N.Y. He began diving as a teenager, exploring the historic wrecks of the Great Lakes.

Mr. Bright received two bachelor’s degrees, one in biology, the other in German, from Pennsylvania State University in 1980; he earned a master’s in physiology from Penn State two years later. For many years, he worked as a research scientist for pharmaceutical companies, among them Pfizer, before turning to diving full time.

Mr. Bright is survived by his wife, the former Elaine Mueller, whom he married in 1983,

and their three children, Michelle, Matthew and Heather, all of Flemington; his mother, Ann, of Niagara Falls; and two brothers, Michael, of Philadelphia; and James, of Niagara Falls.

Mr. Bright was also involved in research on the Titanic, which lies nearly three miles down in the North Atlantic. In 2003 and again last year, he descended to the wreck in a Russian Mir submersible to study its progressive deterioration.

But he was most passionate about the Andrea Doria, colleagues said yesterday. Mr. Bright began diving the Andrea Doria in the 1980's, one of the first to do so. He was fascinated by the ship's collision and hoped one day to pinpoint its precise cause.

"That was David's passion," said Capt. Robert Meurn, an emeritus professor at the Merchant Marine Academy who is helping to plan the Andrea Doria reunion. "And he was going down this past weekend to see if the keel of the Andrea Doria had been breached by the Stockholm's bow."

Shipwreck researcher David Bright dies at 49

By KAREN TESTA, Associated Press Writer Mon Jul 10, 8:33 PM ET

http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20060711/ap_on_re_us/obit_bright_2

David Bright, a leading researcher into underwater exploration and shipwrecks, has died after diving to the site of the Andrea Doria off Nantucket, where he was working in preparation for the wreck's 50th anniversary. He was 49.

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Bright was a historian and an experienced technical diver who had explored the Titanic, Andrea Doria and other shipwrecks many times — 120 times for the Andrea Doria.

The Andrea Doria was headed from Genoa, Italy, to New York when it collided with the Swedish ship Stockholm on July 25, 1956, killing about 50 people. The Italian luxury liner lies at the bottom of the Atlantic in 200 feet of water.

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"His passion has been growing for a little over 30 years, all kinds of shipwrecks and getting to know them," Elaine Bright, his wife of 23 years, said Monday.

"It's very traumatizing to his entire family but we know that he's happy. It's a very sad

thing, but water, scuba diving was what he wanted to do," she said.

Bright started the Nautical Research Group about four years ago after his retirement from Pfizer Pharmaceuticals, where he worked for 12 years as a research scientist, his wife said.

He also spent two years working with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration on the exploration of the wreck of the Civil War ironclad USS Monitor.

Memorial services were planned in Flemington and in his hometown near Niagara Falls, N.Y. In addition to his wife, he is survived by his mother, two brothers and three children.

The Star-Ledger

Latest trip to Andrea Doria kills N.J. diver

Shipwreck expert David Bright, 49, of Flemington suffers the bends

Tuesday, July 11, 2006

BY MARK MUELLER

Star-Ledger Staff

Over three decades, David Bright spanned the world's oceans, donning tanks and a wetsuit to study shipwrecks.

From sunken military vessels to the Empress of Ireland, a rusticle-covered tomb in Canada's frigid St. Lawrence River, the 49-year-old Flemington man made thousands of dives. A leading researcher on underwater exploration, he was one of the few to see the Titanic up close, traveling three miles down in a submersible in 2003 and again last year.

But no sunken ship captured Bright's imagination quite like the Andrea Doria. The Italian luxury liner, 225 feet beneath the Atlantic Ocean's surface, is known as the Mount Everest of dives because of its many dangers, and Bright had conquered it. Again and again.

He made more than 120 trips to the 697-foot liner, becoming one of the world's foremost authorities on the ship.

On Saturday, the Andrea Doria claimed Bright, as it has so many other divers over the years. The Coast Guard said Bright resurfaced from a dive to the vessel with decompression sickness, more commonly known as the bends, late Saturday afternoon and went into cardiac arrest. He died a short time later at a hospital on Cape Cod, Mass. The Andrea Doria lies about 50 miles southeast of Nantucket.

"This is tragic, but we are so grateful he was doing what he loved on the boat he loved so much," said Michelle Bright, 21, one of Bright's three children.

Bright's latest dives were in preparation for the 50th anniversary of the Andrea Doria's sinking, on July 25, 1956. He was the founder and director of the Andrea Doria Survivor Reunion Committee, which had organized an event to be held later this month on Long Island.

Michelle Bright said her father set out Thursday with plans to dive that day, Friday and Saturday. She said family members were still awaiting word on precisely what went wrong.

The Andrea Doria, the most elegant cruise ship of its time, sank after colliding with the Swedish liner Stockholm, killing 51 of the 1,700 people aboard.

Divers have been enchanted by it ever since. But it is one of the world's deadliest wrecks, having claimed dozens of divers over the years. Five died at the wreck site in 1998 and 1999 alone.