

On Wednesday evening, August 13, 2008, fourteen divers met for Aqua Specialist's one-tank evening dive aboard the "Holiday." They met in Cleveland's Flats behind Terminal Tower on the Cuyahoga River. The divers were Shane Coppama, Tom Wares, Rhonda Miller, Jack Brodsky, Phil Bade, Larry Waitzman, John Norris, Jim Cooke, Chris Herbrook, Mike Gowan, Chris Pearson, Ann Stephenson, Cindy LaRosa, and Kevin Magee. Captain Francine Pate piloted the "Holiday" down the river under overcast skies and cool 75 deg F air temperature while Captain Wayne Bratton and the divers decided what to dive. Due to the stormy conditions over the past week, the water close to shore appeared stirred up. Therefore, it was decided to dive in deeper water three miles out in Lake Erie on the "Old Cleveland Crib."

The "Old Crib," or "Crib No. 5," is a submerged water intake in 50' of water off Cleveland. Despite its name, the "Old Crib" was built after the more famous above-water "5-Mile Crib," or "Crib No. 3," and is active supplying Cleveland with drinking water. Its tunnel was completed in 1917 and goes to the Division Avenue Water Works behind the Cargill salt mines near Whiskey Island. A large white buoy marks the "Old Crib," and the "Holiday" tied directly to the buoy at its bow, which was very convenient. Upon entering the water, the divers discovered the surface visibility to be poor at only about 3'-5'. Descending one of the two buoy mooring chains, visibility did not improve, and conditions became very dark after about 20', requiring a light to see. Both buoy chains are attached to concrete blocks on top of the crib, which is about 35' deep. The crib is constructed of many stone blocks all neatly piled to form a large circular mound with the intake at the center.

Swimming towards the center of the crib, one descends into the intake cavity, which is lined with large wood timber walls that form a box with a large metal grate at the bottom. The top of the grate is at a 45' depth, but little could be seen in this area due to the poor visibility. Descending over the sides of the crib, a layer of clear 5'-8' visibility water was found at a 40'-45' depth, but descending further resulted in visibility decreasing to just 3' or so close to the bottom at 50'. The sides of the crib and the surrounding bottom are littered with large limestone blocks, large wood timbers, grated structures, metal railroad rails, and other pieces of debris. The water temperature was a uniform 75 deg F from top to bottom with no thermocline evident. In the process of exploring using reels, some divers found a large sunken buoy on the bottom at 50'. It had a chain stretched across the bottom leading up to it, and it probably once marked the crib before being sunk under unknown circumstances. It lies on its side and has two solar arrays on top for powering the battery and the light beacon.

Upon surfacing, the calm weather was discovered to have increased to 1'-2' seas with a steady east wind blowing. As the boat headed back to shore, everyone enjoyed their sub sandwiches and drinks provided as part of the trip. For those who are interested, there will be two more trips aboard the "Holiday" this season on Aug 27 and Sept 10, and you can sign up at Aqua Specialists.