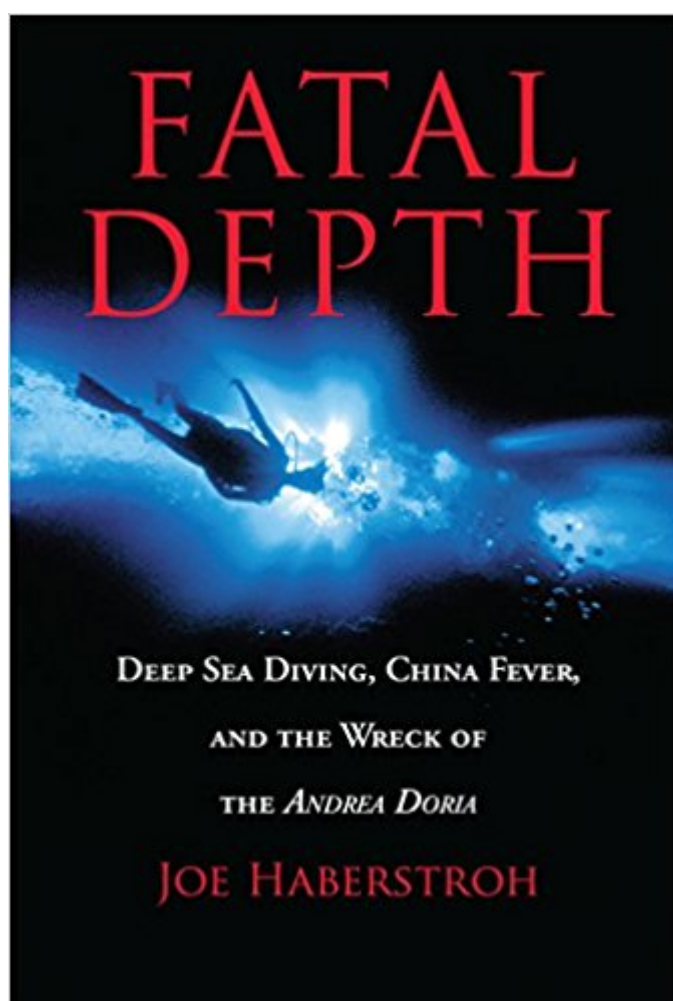


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# Fatal Depth: Deep Sea Diving, China Fever, And The Wreck Of The Andrea Doria



## Synopsis

At 11:10 p.m. on July 25, 1956, the luxurious Italian ocean liner Andrea Doria collided with the Stockholm forty-five miles south of Nantucket. Half a century later, the wreck of the Andrea Doria is still claiming lives. Professional and amateur divers the world round consider the Andrea Doria to be the Everest of diving. At 225 feet below the surface, the wreck lies at the very edge of human endurance and accomplishment; ordinary air becomes toxic and the divers who go there suffer nitrogen narcosis or "the rapture of the deep." Symptoms include confusion, lack of coordination, and perhaps most deadly of all, a loss of the ability to make clear decisions. As a result, divers use Trimix, an exotic blend of oxygen, nitrogen, and helium to descend through the strong currents, rusted metal, and twisted wires to the ultimate symbol of deep sea diving accomplishments: china teacups and plates from the wreck of the Andrea Doria. For serious wreck divers, these fragile artifacts are genuine proof of their abilities as divers. During the summers of 1998 and 1999, three elite divers lost their lives, all on separate dives from the top dive boat out of Montauk, the 65-foot Seeker. Craig Sicola was clearly suffering from "china fever" before he went down. He'd handled teacups brought up by veteran Doria diver Gary Gentile, and the gleam in Craig's eye was unmistakable. Craig dove on June 24, 1998. A few hours later, his body bobbed to the surface. He was carrying a plate. Joe Haberstroh, the award-winning Newsday reporter, watched events unfold during the summers of 1998 and 1999. In this remarkable and intriguing book he recreates what was the pride of the Italian fleet, how it sank, the dangers of the deep, and the gripping personal stories of the men who live or die for a teacup from its remains.

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## Customer Reviews

"A gripping true story of treasure hunting and tragedy on the Doria, the world's most dangerous shipwreck."--Daily News"Should be required reading for all divers."--Immersed"Well researched, well interviewed, and written without frills. It doesn't need frills. Wreck diving is already on the edge, an extreme sport with virtually no margin for error. Drama is built in."--National Geographic Adventure"[This is] a well-narrated tale. Haberstroh does a deft job of laying out the character and motivations of five ill-fated divers and their guide...And Haberstroh's restraint serves him well, giving the book a fully informed breadth . . . a solid, intriguing contribution to the genre." --Seattle Times and Post Intelligencer"Haberstroh gives about as close a look at the world below that you'll get without strapping on a set of steel 120s."--St. Petersburg Times"An extremely well-researched and fast-paced book."--East Hampton Star

At 11:10 p.m. on July 25, 1956, the luxurious Italian ocean liner Andrea Doria collided with the Stockholm forty-five miles south of Nantucket. Half a century later the wreck of the Andrea Doria is still claiming lives. Professional and amateur divers the world over consider the Andrea Doria to be the Everest of diving. At 225 feet below the surface, the wreck lies at the very edge of human endurance and accomplishment; ordinary air becomes toxic, and the divers who go there suffer nitrogen narcosis or the rapture of the deep. • Symptoms include confusion, lack of coordination, and perhaps most deadly of all, a loss of the ability to make clear decisions. As a result, divers use Trimix, an exotic blend of oxygen, nitrogen, and helium to descend through the strong currents, rusted metal, and twisted wires to the ultimate symbol of deep sea diving accomplishments: china teacups and plates from the wreck of the Andrea Doria. For serious wreck divers, these fragile artifacts are genuine proof of their abilities. During the summers of 1998 and 1999, three elite divers lost their lives, all on separate dives from the top dive boat out of Montauk, the sixty-five-foot Seeker. Craig Sicola was clearly suffering from china fever • before he went down. He'd handled teacups brought up by veteran Doria diver Gary Gentile, and the gleam in Craig's eye was unmistakable. Craig dove on June 24, 1998. A few hours later his body bobbed to the surface. He was carrying a plate. Joe Haberstroh, the award-winning Newsday reporter, watched events unfold during the summers of 1998 and 1999. In this remarkable and intriguing book he recreates what was the pride of the Italian fleet, how it sank, the dangers of the deep, and the gripping personal stories of the men who live or die for a teacup from its remains.

This book is good for scuba divers who wants to understand all the "hoo" about diving safety. First

of all, there is currently very little documentation ( I know of ) that details any terms of a DIVERS FATAL MISTAKES for scuba divers. Impossible to quantify with metrics, etc. If you are looking to learn from other people's mistake, this book is excellent. Hence, this book represents your chance to read about a few documented cases of such fatal errors, all of which scuba diving related. Second, the author does a good job in talking about the decision making process that "shakes" the life of a safe diver into acting in an unsafe way. It could happen to you. Oh, yeah!! Scuba divers are for the most part, constantly told about doing safe dives, keeping safe equipment, and thinking in a conservative mind set. Either by instructors, the dive shop, boat captains, their spouse, or close friends. So, why do people die from scuba diving? Mistakes. We all make the mistake of getting excited, impatient, and finally - acting impulsively. I started to cry, after reading the tragic events in this book. Scuba divers making a gasping effort to recover dishes, tea cups, and other fine china from the wreck of the Andrea Dora. The stories were in respect of the team supporting those fatal accidents. These were very experienced, very safe, and masters of the deep diving, to 200 feet plus. These divers live and breath the Atlantic ocean "repetitively" so as to complete their deep sea diving journey. Experienced divers!! Yet, something went wrong, and they may have pushed their limits beyond their knowing -- to a point of fatal results. Each of the eleven chapters has a story of a scuba diver who made a wrong decision. A fatal decision. The reader does not need to be a scuba diver, but want to learn about deep diving, and its dangers. How can experienced divers with excellent skills make stupid humans mistakes? Oh, it was sad, very sad. The book is timeless in the storyline, since the human mind continues to make the same common mistakes, sorry to say. The words were well written, and easy to understand. Nothing technically challenging for the reader. Be prepared to be "shaken." This book is a great read for anybody.

Whoever edited this book didn't do a great job. I read this after just reading Shadow Divers and the difference in writing skills are considerable. The author didn't do a good job of figuring out how to lay out the stories he wanted to tell. He'd go off on tangents in a jarring way that was off-putting, or expand on minutia that wasn't really pertinent to the main thread of the book. It was hard to become engrossed the stories as a result, unlike Shadow Divers. I would just skim quickly through pages when the narrative would digress and by the last half of the book, I was mainly reading it because, hell, I bought it. Do yourself a favor and skip it.

The review by Greg4408 "Greg" who gave two stars summarizes the book's quality well. To add a few of observations: 1. On the quality of writing: The author's command of the English language is

not stellar. It's a bit tedious and laborious read.<sup>2</sup> As the title indicates, the book is somewhat useful in that it conveys background surrounding the deaths of Doria divers during part of Crowell's tenure as Seeker charter operator. Unlike "Shadow Divers" (a related book) where significant insights are gained by the stories presented, facts presented could have been summarized in 5-10 pages and possibly made for a better read.<sup>3</sup> There is also an inherent conflict of interest that dive charters to Doria face which the book fails to mention: financial gain v. safety. Eventually reputation enters into the fray and one wonders if the "bus operator" excuse advanced by Crowell contributed to reducing Crowell's Doria customer base.

Having read most of the accounts of diving on the Andrea Doria and other deep diving sites I can say that this is the worst of the lot. The author is not a diver and admits it but obviously has not taken the time to have his work checked. Several references to "1-2 knots per hour" leave the reader wondering if the author has spent anytime on the water at all. Also some technical goofs where author makes clear he did not really understand some of what was communicated to him. Most aggravating is being left not knowing the outcome of the legal actions taken with regards to accidental drowning of Chris Murley. It was as if 1 or 2 chapters were missing from the end. Still some pretty good accounts of the mishaps aboard the Seeker from 1998-2001 as well as a reasonable retelling of the Andrea Doria sinking. In the end it is a worthwhile read as long as you look into the other books in this genre.

Cant wait to read, only read a couple pages in but it is well written and interesting for me.

If you've spent your life in Diving as I have, books like these should be required reading. An excellent case study of the good, bad and uggh-ly in sport diving.

great book for diverscaptivating story and grips you till the endsuitable for gift for for companion when travelling

This is a very good book dealing with diving on the Andrea Doria. It is a detailed account of two chapters in Deep Descent. I think it is a story that is written well enough that most people will glide past the proofreading errors. Hardcore divers will enjoy the book, but few others.

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