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Shadow Divers by Robert Kurson, Alfred E. Knopf 2004

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Recommended Readings



Shadow Divers

by Robert Kurson. Alfred E. Knopf 2004

Reviewed by Dick McGowan

Shadow Divers may be the perfect book for history buffs. The book recounts the discovery of a German submarine sunk off the coast of New Jersey.

But the boat appears in no military record and its identity is unknown. John Chatterton and Richie Kohler, weekend scuba divers, explore the wreck in 230 feet of water, attempting to find the artifact that would garner an identity for U-Who. *Shadow Divers* is worth reading if for no other reason than to understand deepwater diving-and its dangers.

Yet Kurson knows what good fiction writers know: character drives the plot, even a plot, or story, as wildly improbable as the book chronicles. Characterization is woven into historiography and explanations of diving equipment. The reader meets old u-boat captains, survivors of people lost at sea, military personnel with secrets to protect, recreational divers whose idea of relaxation involves diving 200 feet and exploring a wreck.

At the heart of the story, though, are the young German soldiers who perished underwater. Who are they? What were they doing? Why is there no record of the boat's demise? Who will speak for the lost souls aboard the ill-fated sub? Chatterton and Kohler both believe that the dignity of deepwater diving and the dignity of the U-boat's crew need preserving-and that means determining the identity of the boat.

Kurson has done a good deed by speaking for the crew. At the same time, he has done a very good deed for *Shadow Divers*' readers.

- Dick McGowan is a lecturer in Philosophy