

A Deep Love Affair

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Laura and Artie Ortmann are the very definition of loopers, having done The Great Loop in 2016 and now well on their way to completing the Albemarle Loop aboard their 47-foot Bayliner *My Leap of Faith*. And like all loopers, they have many stories to tell. Here is just one.

One day Laura heard an ad on her car radio about a school in Smithtown, Long Island, offering lessons on scuba diving. She had always wanted to scuba dive and said to herself, "If I don't turn this car around right now, I may never get another chance to learn how to do this." So off she went to the diving



school where she met her instructor, an experienced diver named Artie Ortmann. The two began diving together and have been doing it ever since.



The couple's most memorable dive happened in 1998 when they dove down 120 feet to explore the wreck of the USS San Diego, an armored cruiser sunk off the coast of Long Island in World War 1. The ship was upside down, but Laura and Artie managed to find the admiral's quarters partially buried in layers of silt. It was dark, but they had flashlights. After looking around a bit, Artie pulled something out of a sealed plastic bag. It was a five-

page letter on thick yellow pages that he handed over to Laura for her to read. It was a marriage proposal. When Laura was finished reading, Artie pulled a ring box from his bag, opened it, and pulled out something shiny. Then he dropped it in the silt.

Laura was frantic. She searched for the shiny object, but the more she looked, the more the cabin filled with floating silt until she could no longer see. Devastated, she did not notice Artie laughing all the way back to the surface. That's when Artie yelled, "Gotcha!" The practical joker had set the whole thing up, fake ring and all, including a welcoming party of friends aboard ship who were all in on the joke. When Artie produced a real ring, Laura insisted he offer it on his knees with a fresh proposal she could hear.



True to their love of the water, Laura and Artie celebrated their wedding with a brunch and a sunset cruise aboard the paddlewheeler *Lauren Kristie* out of Bayshore, Long Island. For their honeymoon they explored the shipwreck of the *Bianca C*, a cruise ship sunk in 150 feet of water off the island of Grenada.

But that's another story.

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Additional Notes:

Local knowledge for approach to Albemarle Plantation Marina can be found at <http://albemarleloop.com/videos.html> : and “[Albemarle Plantation Entrance Video - view the actual navigational courses and markers for entering the channel to Albemarle Plantation Marina](#)”