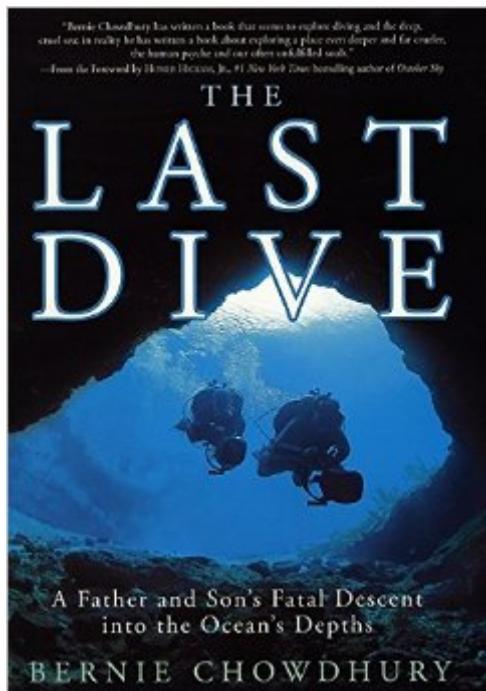


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The Last Dive: A Father And Son's Fatal Descent Into The Ocean's Depths



Synopsis

What price would you pay for adventure and knowledge? Chris and Chrissy Rouse, an experienced father-and-son scuba diving team, hoped to achieve widespread recognition for their outstanding but controversial diving skills. Obsessed and ambitious, they sought to solve the secrets of a mysterious, undocumented World War II German U-boat that lay under 230 feet of water, only a half-day's mission from New York Harbor. They paid the ultimate price in their quest for fame. This gripping narrative recounts the Rouses' growing lust for what many consider the world's most dangerous sport -- as well as for the cowboy culture of the deepdiving community. Father and son were only eighteen years apart in age, and their constant battles of will earned them the nickname "the Bicker Brothers." Many friends wondered which would win out if it came down to a life-or-death diving situation: Chris's protective instincts or Chrissy's desire to surpass his father's successes. In the surreal topographies of underwater caves and shipwrecks, divers can encounter the unfathomable. Some get lost until their air expires, some get hopelessly tangled in cables, some are drawn to deep chambers from which they never emerge, and some make simple human errors. The sport's best may eventually find themselves in silt-filled water, dark as night, and pinned by dislodged wreckage. If they panic and use up their air, they put themselves at risk of drowning or of what divers fear the most-decompression sickness, or "the bends." Author Bernie Chowdhury, himself an expert diver and a close friend of the Rouses', explores the thrill-seeking world of deep-sea diving, including its legendary figures, most celebrated triumphs, and gruesome tragedies. By examining the diver's psychology through the complex father-and-son dynamic, Chowdhury illuminates the extreme sport diver's push toward -- and sometimes beyond -- the limits of human endurance.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I am a technical diver with some wreck experience, although I do not possess the advanced training (Full Cave, Deep Air, etc.) of either the author or the father-and-son team who perished, the Rouses. I found Bernie Chowdhury's "The Last Dive" to be an exciting, well-told account of a very unfortunate accident, but I must respectfully say that the two divers featured in the title did not earn my sympathy.

I picked up Chowdhury's "Last Dive" after reading --and thoroughly enjoying-- Robert Kurson's excellent book, "Shadow Divers." (see my other reviews) If you read and enjoyed Kurson's book, be forewarned: this book isn't in the same league. In "Shadow Divers," Chris Rouse and his son Chrissy were among the divers involved in the quest to uncover the identity of a sunken German U-boat discovered in 230 feet of water off the coast of New Jersey. They (along with another diver), lost their lives during the six years it took to unravel the mystery. The Rouses were interesting characters. Seemingly always at each other's throats, they gave me the impression that watching them was sort of like witnessing a latter-day "Two" Stooges. No one doubted that they loved one another, but their antics and belittling comments to one another while aboard dive boats had become legendary by the time they took their final dive. Since the subtitle of this book is "A Father and Son's Fatal Descent into the Ocean Depths," I sort of expected that the book would be about them. Actually, its focus was seemed to be more on Chowdhury. Bernie Chowdhury was a friend of the Rouses, and also participated in the extreme sport now known as "technical diving." (As opposed to recreational diving, which imposes some pretty strict limits on depth and time for safety's sake.) Indeed, Chowdhury himself very nearly died, and was lucky to avoid being permanently crippled as the result of a dive accident. He writes rather extensively about this incident... and many others, involving other friends and acquaintances --thus filling a pretty significant fraction of the book's 356 pages. Don't get me wrong. The Rouse family IS discussed at length.

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