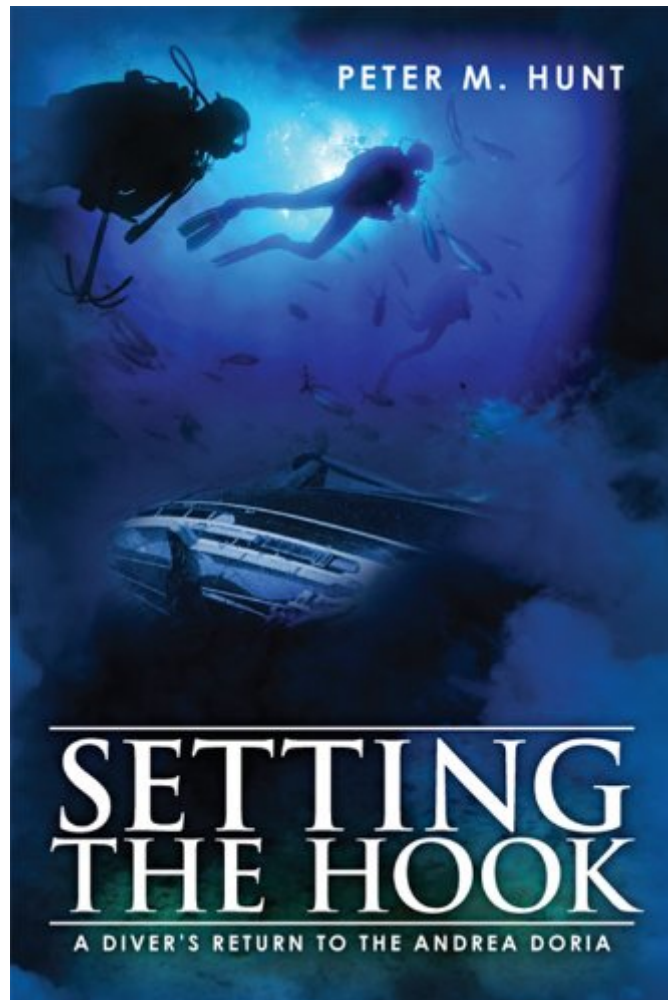




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Setting The Hook: A Diver's Return To The Andrea Doria



Synopsis

The 1956 collision of the Andrea Doria and the Stockholm triggered a night of sheer terror for the Andrea Doria's 1,706 passengers and crew and set in motion one of history's most dramatic rescues at sea. From the moment the Andrea Doria settled on the sea floor in 240 feet of water, skilled sport divers have risked their lives to simply touch the "Mount Everest of wreck diving." Not all returned alive. Peter Hunt crewed on five Andrea Doria expeditions during the early 1980s before becoming a Navy pilot and settling in Washington State. Nearly twenty years after first exploring the Andrea Doria - and following twelve months of training in the sport's amazing advances in equipment and techniques - Hunt hugged his wife and children goodbye and returned to New York to dive the Andrea Doria once again. The experience transformed him forever. *Setting the Hook* explores the Andrea Doria through an introspective odyssey of memory, heart-pounding adventure, and history as thirty years of extreme diving and enduring friendships merge in a personal tale of learning to accept life's oldest challenge.

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Customer Reviews

This independent but immaculately executed book tells the tale of a diver's relationship with the Italian cruise liner Andrea Doria that sank in 1956 and subsequently became the ultimate scuba adventure, the "Mount Everest of diving." There are many books about the wreck of Andrea Doria, the hunt for "artifacts," the feuds and rivalries between dive boats and personalities, and the 16 divers who have died to-date in the pursuit of this extreme diving adventure. While "Setting the Hook" covers the history of the Andrea Doria and provides much firsthand information on diving expeditions and dives to the wreck, this is also the story of a man's past and present, of assessing and reassessing life. Author Peter M. Hunt is a retired Navy and commercial pilot who as a young college student in the early 1980s crewed on the dive charter Wahoo that made regular trips to the Andrea Doria. Hunt dove the Doria several times and therefore knows what he's talking about. And the record of his personal friendships with some of the principals of that era adds to the fabric of written Doria history. The special angle of this book is the author's resolve to return to the Andrea Doria almost 20 years later, after life had gotten in the way, taking him away on a military career that included deployment in the first Gulf war. Much has changed inbetween, from the wreck itself, to deep and technical diving methods and technologies, and to the man himself who is now older and has a wife, career, and children. Setting the Hook (the title refers to crew diving down to the wreck to set the anchor, or "hook") alternates between four eras in time. There's the 1956 sinking of the Andrea Doria when she collided with another ship, the Stockholm, about 50 miles south of Nantucket and 100 miles east of New York City in a freak accident where blame is still being discussed over 50 years later. The slow sinking and rescue efforts (all but 51 of the 1,700 onboard were saved) is well documented, and the Hunt does a fine job describing the tragic event in considerable detail. There are several chapters devoted to the author's dives to the Doria in the early 1980s, recapturing the almost carefree thrill and camaraderie among crew and divers, portraits of the near legendary crew of the dive charter Wahoo (Steve Bielenda, Janet Bieser, etc.), gripping descriptions of dives and penetrations, including some of the tragic accidents and fatalities. There are chapters describing the intense training the author, by now pushing 40, required in 2000 and 2001 to reacquaint himself with deep diving and getting his trimix certification. Here you find interesting information on trimix training and use, as well as description of at times harrowing dives in the cold Pacific Northwest. Then there's the section about meeting old friends again, as well as the Wahoo and its crew, now 20 years older, too. The trip back to the Doria -- the diver's return -- brings a surprise that's very much in line with the overarching theme of this book, that of life's early thrills and drives, the later reflections and efforts at recapturing the magic, dealing with the conflicting priorities of passions, career and family, and finally being able to see everything in

perspective. While there are parallels between Kevin Murray's *Deep Descent* (published in 2001) that's loosely organized along a timeline from the ship's sinking in 1956 to approximately 2000 and primarily an account of the grand wreck and the people drawn to it, in *Setting the Hook* the ship, while a strong presence, is almost incidental. It is about life, youth, growing up, the many directions we're pulled. But unlike many books discussing life's issues, this one never wanders but maintains a laser-sharp focus on Hunt's own personal Mount Everest. Which means you essentially get two books in one; the story of a man's way of dealing with life, and a first rate account of diving the *Andrea Doria* and all that it involves. But that's still not all. While hinting that there may be more than meets the eye early in the book, at the end we learn that the author was diagnosed with early-onset Parkinson's Disease in 2005, at the age of only 43. That puts perspective -- the main theme of "Setting the Hook" -- onto a whole different level. Like an increasing number of books these days, *Setting the Hook* appears to be self-published. That is generally a bit of a red flag for me. Most of us are still so accustomed to the flawless editing, proofing and layout of professional print publishers that the new era of self-published efforts all too often yields unpleasant surprises. Hunt, very much to his credit, avoided all the self-publishing pitfalls. *Setting the Hook* is excellently written, well structured, and superbly proofed. There isn't a single error anywhere. That's quite an accomplishment by and in itself. Also nice are almost 40 pictures throughout the book that illustrate the narrative. While they are black and white and thus cannot convey the colors and lack of it underwater, inserting them in the right spots greatly adds to the reading experience. I greatly enjoyed reading *Setting the Hook*. The book initially caught my attention because of the scuba and *Andrea Doria* theme (and the great cover). It fully delivered on the diving, adventure and technical fronts, but it was the human angle of the author's very personal journey that elevates this much recommended book above a mere description of events.

I only give 5 stars to great works of literature so I give this a 4. As a former mid Atlantic wreck diver with health issues that now preclude deep diving I can really relate to this book. Like Peter Hunt diving was a large part of my life -- but the dog barks and the caravan moves on. Reading this book helped me put a lot of my diving experiences (and at times a desire to recapture these experiences) in perspective. Those who once (but no longer) practiced sports or hobbies that involve risk, physical challenges, and the drug like high that comes with achieving success will relate to this book.

The 2-3 star reviews are about accurate. There is nothing wrong with the overall storyline: kid works

on diveboat in the 80s, dives the Andrea Doria (with close calls), joins Navy, then UA as pilot, wants to dive the Andrea Doria again, takes tech diving courses to prep, meets old gang from the 80s before diving the Doria. Fin. The main problem with the book is the author. First, he is not a good storyteller. One gets the sense that there are interesting dive stories, perhaps even insights, buried in his experiences. They just never quite make it to the surface. Because of his subpar storytelling skills. Second, the author's command of the English language is limited. Yes, he can write grammatically correct sentences but prose they're not. If there is a case to be made that not everyone should attempt to write a book, this is it. Peter Hunt is a pilot. He seems to be a fine man. But he should stay away from writing. Toward the end of the book Hunt mentions that he has Parkinsons which is sad. Bad writing notwithstanding, he seems to be a champ and I hope he approaches the difficulties of his illness with the same attitude that he showed when flying for his country and diving with spirit.

There are those of us who watch National Geographic for our thrills, and those of us who breathe strange gasses and dive among the perilous crushing depths. This book took me from my chair and into the teeth of danger. Not only is the author a former naval aviator and airline pilot, he has confronted the greatest challenge our mortal lives can bring: the revolt of our own bodies. I highly recommend this read as a journey into the human spirit, a journey beneath the waves of the treacherous Long Island Sound, a journey to the wreck of a glorious ship pulled under in her youth, never again to see the light of day, condemned to rot among the snagged fishing nets and bottom mud of a dark world. I am grateful for this man's generous sharing as he grasped at new technologies, as he confronted his past, and longed--as we all do--for the simple days we have taken for granted. Buy this now, and regret it not!!! It is an incredible story of challenge, of overcoming, of the great circle of life and time. In the end, it is the story of man himself: we are here to exist; to be the best we can be! Peter Hunt has met this God-given goal, and can be proud for all he has done! Thank you for including us all!

What a wonderful book! Skillfully blending memoir, adventure and exploration; adroitly leavened with history, humor, diving physiology and technique, Peter Hunt's gripping account set the hook -- hard, very hard -- into me. The author intertwines diving the fabled Andrea Doria as a young man in the mid-1980's with his preparations to return to the wreck nearly two decades later. Hunt didn't "show" what it felt like to dive, he TOOK me there with him -- to the cold dark dangerous deep -- and I will never forget it. Part of what differentiates this book from others is how Hunt honestly examines

his motivations, conflicts, joys, and fears, and the changes that the passage of time wrought. Even though I'm a non-diver, I found myself gaining insight not only about the author but about myself. For that alone, this book is worth reading, and re-reading. This is a book about far, far more than diving and I predict it will become a classic in its field.

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