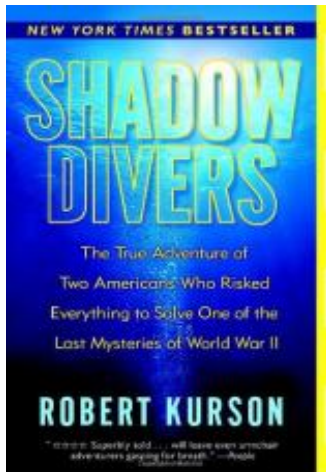


# Shadow Divers: The True Adventure of Two Americans Who Risked Everything to Solve One of the Last Mysteries of World War II

by Robert Kurson

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## About the Book

In the tradition of Jon Krakauer's **Into Thin Air** and Sebastian Junger's **The Perfect Storm** comes a true tale of riveting adventure in which two weekend scuba divers risk everything to solve a great historical mystery—and make history themselves.

For John Chatterton and Richie Kohler, deep wreck diving was more than a sport. Testing themselves against treacherous currents, braving depths that induced hallucinatory effects, navigating through wreckage as perilous as a minefield, they pushed themselves to their limits and beyond, brushing against death more than once in the rusting hulks of sunken ships.

But in the fall of 1991, not even these courageous divers were prepared for what they found 230 feet below the surface, in the frigid Atlantic waters sixty miles off the coast of New Jersey: a World War II German U-boat, its ruined interior a macabre wasteland of twisted metal, tangled wires, and human bones—all buried under decades of accumulated sediment.

No identifying marks were visible on the submarine or the few artifacts brought to the surface. No historian, expert, or government had a clue as to which U-boat the men had found. In fact, the official records all agreed that there simply could not be a sunken U-boat and crew at that location.

Over the next six years, an elite team of divers embarked on a quest to solve the mystery. Some of them would not live to see its end. Chatterton and Kohler, at first bitter rivals, would be drawn into a friendship that deepened to an almost mystical sense of brotherhood with each other and with the drowned U-boat sailors?former enemies of their country. As the men's marriages frayed under the pressure of a shared obsession, their dives grew more daring, and each realized that he was hunting more than the identities of a lost U-boat and its nameless crew.

Author Robert Kurson's account of this quest is at once thrilling and emotionally complex, and it is written with a vivid sense of what divers actually experience when they meet the dangers of the ocean's underworld. The story of **Shadow Divers** often seems too amazing to be true, but it all happened, two hundred thirty feet down, in the deep blue sea.

## Discussion Guide

1. Is there something you would risk everything - your family, sanity, and life - to discover?
2. Was it proper for Chatterton and Kohler to risk their lives, and the lives of others, by insisting that all divers allow the remains of the fallen U-boat sailors to remain undisturbed?
3. Chatterton and Kohler lost their marriages to their quest to identify the U-Who. Was it worth it?
4. Why weren't Chatterton and Kohler bothered more by the German sailors' mission - namely, to sink Allied ships and kill American sailors?
5. Do you think the U-Who's crewmen would have appreciated the efforts of Chatterton and Kohler to identify their submarine and explain their story?
6. The German government told Chatterton that all requests by scuba divers to explore sunken German war graves had been denied. Chatterton politely explained his intentions, then dove the wreck of the U-Who anyway. Was this morally acceptable?
7. Gisela Engelmann dearly loved her fiancé, U-869 torpedoman Franz Nedel, despite Nedel's fervent commitment to Hitler and Nazi ideals - and despite the fact that the Nazis had imprisoned both his father and Engelmann's father. Could you love someone whose political beliefs were abhorrent to you?
8. Despite claustrophobic conditions, many Germans preferred submarine service to army ground service, where they might find themselves dug into trenches and dodging enemy bullets. Which would you opt for?
9. Given the grave danger of Chatterton's final plan to dive the wreck of the U-Who, should Kohler have stuck to his first instinct and refused to accompany Chatterton?
10. Chatterton did not attend the funeral of his dear friend, Bill Nagle. He never completely explains the decision. Why do you think he didn't attend Nagle's funeral?
11. Divers continue to debate the ethics of removing artifacts from shipwrecks. When is it proper to take artifacts from wrecks? Are there circumstances under which artifacts should never be disturbed? Does your answer change if there are

human remains onboard?

12. Chatterton seemed emotionally ready for the Rouses to identify the U-Who. But he seemed incapable of accepting the possibility of a "greenhorn" diver doing the same. Why?

13. Kohler gave up diving for two years in an effort to keep his family together. Can a person ever surrender his true passion and hope to live a happy and fulfilled life?

14. Did the discovery of the U-Who hasten Bill Nagle's demise?

15. Given the intentions of the crewmen aboard U-869 - to attack and kill Allied ships - do you think the book treated them too kindly?

## Author Bio

Robert Kurson is an American author, best known for his 2004 bestselling book, *SHADOW DIVERS*, the true story of two Americans who discovered a World War II German U-boat sunk 60 miles off the coast of New Jersey.

Kurson began his career as an attorney, graduating from Harvard Law School, and practicing real estate law. Kurson's professional writing career began at the *Chicago Sun-Times*, where he started as a data entry clerk and soon gained a full-time features writing job. In 2000, *Esquire* published "My Favorite Teacher," his first magazine story, which became a finalist for a National Magazine Award. He moved from the *Sun-Times* to *Chicago Magazine*, then to *Esquire*, where he won a National Magazine Award and was a contributing editor for years. His stories have appeared in *Rolling Stone*, *The New York Times Magazine* and other publications. He lives in Chicago.

## Critical Praise

"A tremendously suspenseful story of discovery that comes as close as any book could to providing the reader with approximate sensations of deep sea diving and of life on a submarine at war, and that leaves us with a hell of an impression of the grit, guts, and compassion of a U-boat crew and the two American divers who risked everything to solve the mystery of their last mission."

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**Publication Date:** May 24, 2005

**Genres:** Adventure, History, Nonfiction

**Paperback:** 416 pages

**Publisher:** Random House Trade Paperbacks

**ISBN-10:** 0375760989

**ISBN-13:** 9780375760983