

Richard Meyers, chief salvage engineer, shows how he hopes to lift the luxury ship *Andrea Doria* from its grave 240 feet beneath the Atlantic, an unparalleled attempt.



The Italian vessel sank July 26, 1956, about 11 hours after colliding with the Swedish liner *Stockholm*. Fifty persons died in the disaster.

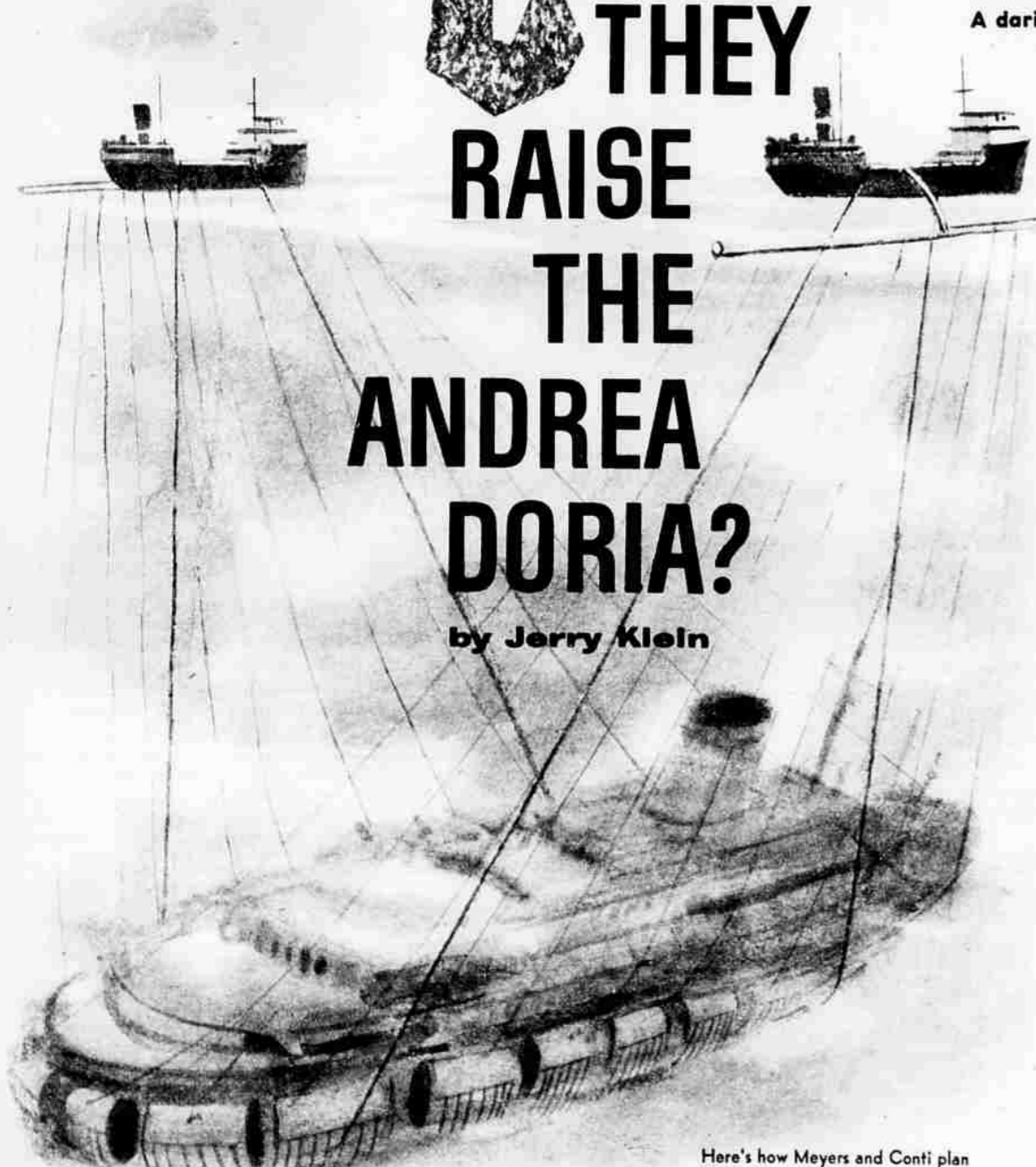


Meyers and Armando Conti, industrialist who is financing venture, demonstrate how slings may lift the ship.



CAN THEY RAISE THE ANDREA DORIA?

by Jerry Klein



A daring undersea adventure, led by

Horatio Alger immigrant, may salvage the ill-fated pride of the Italian passenger fleet.

TWO DAYS after the *Andrea Doria*, pride of the Italian passenger fleet, went down in a collision with the *Stockholm* in July, 1956, Armando Conti dispatched a telegram to his native Italy. In it he offered to raise the ship from its grave, 50 miles off Nantucket, Mass.

During the two years which have since gone by, a number of marine engineers have called this feat a virtual impossibility, or a project so complex and costly as to be impractical. Nevertheless, today finds the indomitable Conti preparing to bring the *Doria* to the surface, an accomplishment which certainly would rank among the greatest and most thrilling sea salvage efforts of all time.

To this challenging job, Conti brings: some experience in ship salvage, money, and an almost unlimited amount of determination.

The effort may fail. There are tides and sudden squalls to reckon with. Certainly the divers will be daring death every time they descend the 240 feet to the vessel's resting place. And even if the attempt succeeds, it might not prove financially worth the trouble.

On the other hand, lifting the liner from the bottom of the Atlantic may make millions, become one of the biggest news stories of the year, and shed new light on the cause of the tragedy.

Whatever the outcome, Conti is going "full steam ahead."

What is it that drives him on? Prof-it, perhaps, although Conti already is a solid success in money matters. More likely, the satisfaction of doing something the "experts" say can't be done, and restoring the *Andrea Doria* to the sea lanes as the romantic symbol of Italy's post-war renaissance.

"I know what the so-called experts are saying about my scheme to re-float the *Doria*," says Conti, "and frankly, I just don't care. My engineers have studied our proposed operation from all sides. They say that the *Doria* can be raised, and that's good enough for me!"

COMING HERE as an immigrant boy of 16 with only three years of schooling, Conti worked first in the coal mines of West Virginia. With the savings of seven years—earning 15c a ton—he moved to Trenton, N. J., and turned to selling automobiles.

But his business interests kept growing: real estate, liquor, banking, salvage, building. During World War II, he and his employees sold over \$5 million worth of Government bonds, and in 1956 he won a Horatio Alger Award, a recognition shared by such notables as Herbert Hoover, Bernard Baruch, and Dr. Norman Vincent Peale. Though white-haired, short,

and heavy-set, the "Trenton tycoon" has been compared with Howard Hughes and the late Mike Todd for his impulsive charm and aggressiveness.

Conti's engineers, Richard Meyers of Wyandotte, Mich., and Max Gene Nohl of Milwaukee, Wis., hope to raise the *Doria* in 1959 after probing the wreckage late this Summer. They first will test their salvage techniques on the \$2-million *Prins Willem V*, sunk in Lake Michigan off Milwaukee. Water, wind, and weather probably will alter their theories somewhat, but basically here's how they expect to raise both the *Willem* and the much larger *Doria*:

Divers will take down dozens of deflated rubber buoys and attach them to various parts of the ship. These cylindrical buoys are made of single sheets of corded rubber three-eighths of an inch thick. Inflated with air, they resemble floating tin cans—only they will measure about 500 feet long and 15 feet in diameter.

Meyers, Conti's chief engineer, says that when these buoys are hooked to the ship and pumped full of air, they will have a lift of some 18,000 tons and raise the *Doria* slightly off the ocean bottom. By placing the buoys properly, she can be lifted evenly.

The next step involves two ships that normally carry ore. Their sea cocks will be opened and their holds

flooded until they are riding low in the water.

Steel cables will be run from these ships down and around the wreck. Then, by pumping the water out of the ore ships, they will rise and lift the *Doria* still farther from her grave.

The vessel lies on a hard sandy bottom about 18 miles south of a shallower area called Davis South Shoal. The plan calls for letting the ship remain underwater, resting in the sling of cables, while the ore boats pull her toward the shoal, 120 feet deep.

"This portion of our blueprint is the most hazardous," Meyers says. "The success or failure of our operation will depend entirely on whether we can get the *Andrea Doria* onto the shoal." If and when the plan succeeds, divers would be able to work with comparative ease, seal the hole in the *Doria's* starboard side, compress air into her hull, and resurface her.

WHAT HAPPENS then? One possibility is that after being towed to a dry dock, it will be found that the *Doria's* wounds are mortal and not worth healing. As scrap, the 30,000-ton vessel may bring \$4 million.

Pieces of it probably would be in brisk demand as souvenir items. One manufacturer already has proposed chopping her up into cuff links!

That part of the cargo undamaged

by water might be worth another \$1 million. The purser's safe on C Deck is said to contain \$250,000 in currency, and the ship's safety deposit boxes, more than \$750,000 in cash and jewels. The hold has some 200,000 pieces of mail said to be worth \$1 million.

If the ship is made whole again, there's a possibility she will embark on a national tour, stopping at 50 Atlantic and Pacific seaports for public exhibit. It's been estimated that all in all, the raising of the *Andrea Doria* could conceivably ring up a profit of \$16 million.

On the other hand, the salvage attempt may cost \$3 million, and the imponderables of the Atlantic could wipe out in a day the investment of many months. There still is some question, too, as to what property rights are held by those who built the ship and insured her, to say nothing of the passengers on her last voyage, nor of who owns the wreck to start with. Bringing the *Doria* to the surface again might well start a long and infinitely complicated series of admiralty law cases that could exhaust the patience of all parties.

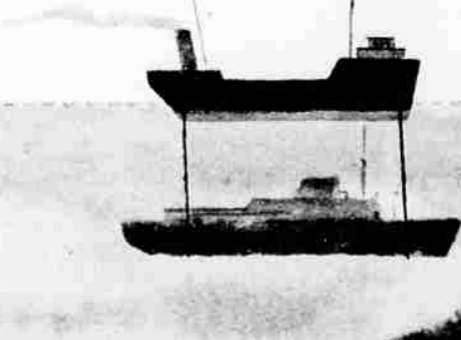
But right now, Conti and Meyers are hopeful and determined. "The *Andrea Doria* will be raised," Conti asserts. "And with luck, she will travel the sea lanes again, as bright and seaworthy as ever."



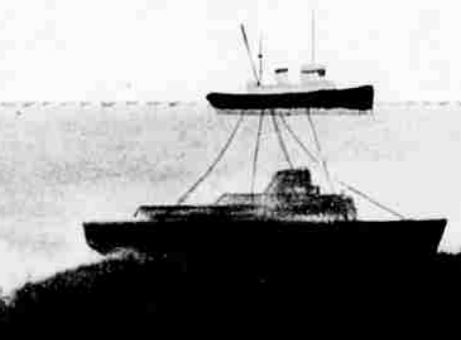
Initial step in historic salvage effort is to attach huge deflated rubber buoys to the sunken ship.



When inflated, the "balloons" will lift the *Doria* so that cables from ore carriers can be strung under



her. With the *Doria* in a sort of cradle, the ore carriers will drag her 18 miles to shallower water.



Divers take over once the vessel is in safer waters. They will repair hole, resurface Italian ship.

Here's how Meyers and Conti plan their daring gamble—with several experts betting on King Neptune.