
I have known Joe for decades and have always loved hearing his stories from the field. When he asked me to read an advance copy of *Outside the Frame*, I agreed as a favor to an old friend, dive buddy, and former student. I began the book out of friendship, but I finished it as an enthralled and eager reader.

There is always another layer to Joe, and once again, he caught me completely off guard. *Outside the Frame* is an incredible autobiographical adventure and a genuine page-turner. More than once, I found myself stopping to read passages aloud to appreciative friends and family.

A compelling story, exceptionally told, and a great addition to any library.

Terrence N. Tysall Sr.

Worldwide Training Director of



OUTSIDE THE FRAME

BY JOSEPH COCOZZA

What Television and Scuba Diving Taught Me About Pressure, Leadership, and Solving Problems

The Call

It was supposed to be a normal Saturday in October

At the time, I was working as a Field Technical Manager for NBC News. Like most people in network news television, my life existed in a constant state of partial deployment. Even when you were technically off the clock, you were never really off the clock. The phone could ring at any moment, and when it did, your life changed instantly.

That week I had been down at my house in Florida while working support on projects connected to Kennedy Space Center. When I had free time, I did what I had always done to decompress from the pressure of live television and breaking news.

I went cave diving.

That Saturday morning, I woke before sunrise and drove to Ginnie Springs for a long technical cave dive. For me, cave diving was not adrenaline. It was discipline. Precision. Procedure. A world where chaos could kill you quickly if you became careless.

The plan was straightforward by technical cave diving standards, though probably insane to anyone else.

I intended to run a staged decompression dive through portions of the cave system, set bottles and directional markers for the following day's exploration, and conduct a long traverse involving multiple jumps and circuits through the system. The dive profile required careful gas planning and multiple decompression mixtures staged throughout the cave.

In cave diving, there are rules that are absolute.

Maintain a continuous guideline to the surface.

Manage your gas correctly.

Never lose awareness of exit distance, depth, or decompression obligation.

The cave does not negotiate with mistakes.

I entered the water in side mount configuration carrying two steel HP 100 cylinders, along with additional stage bottles for decompression gases, oxygen and a 50 percent EANx mix for accelerated decompression during the ascent phase. The next day's dive would go farther, so part of this mission involved staging equipment inside the cave for later retrieval and use.

The dive itself was beautiful traverse through an underwater cave system.

Two and a half hours underwater. Silent passage through limestone tunnels carved out over geological time. White clay banks. Dark water disappearing into infinity beyond the beam of a dive light. Long sections where the only sound was the rhythmic inhale and exhale of breathing gas moving through regulators.

I ran the route, placed my markers, staged a bottle for the next day's dive, and began the long decompression schedule on the way out. By the time I surfaced, I had logged roughly thirty-five to forty minutes of decompression using my staged gases.

Everything had gone exactly according to plan.

Back at my truck, I began breaking down gear in the parking area. It was a relatively quiet day for a Saturday at Ginnie Springs. Divers moved slowly through the lot carrying doubles and scooters. Tanks clanked softly in the background. The air smelled like wet neoprene, cave water, and North Florida pine.

I climbed into the back of my truck and picked up my work iPhone.

The screen exploded with missed calls and messages:

"Call Marc."

"Urgent."

"Need you ASAP"

I immediately called my boss.

"What's up, Marc?"

His response was instant and direct.

"Joe, where are you?"

"I'm at my house in Florida."

“I need you to get on a plane. I need you in Amman, Jordan. Now.”

It was October 7th 2023.

Hamas had just carried out the largest terrorist attack in recent Israeli history.

And just like that, less than an hour after surfacing from a cave dive in rural Florida, I was preparing to cover another war.