



WHAT I DID ON MY SUMMER VACATION

By Kenneth Gwin



Most of my friends (and even some of the Reefers) know that I went to Alaska last month on a dive trip aboard the *Nautilus Explorer*. Pierre and Gerda have made numerous trips aboard the *Nautilus*, gone repeatedly to various locations to the north and boarded the same boat to go south to Mexico. Of course, not wanting to be left out, they made this trip too. They should have a plaque or something in their honor. But, then, our trip leaders, Phil and

Kim Sammet have gone more times than anybody I know. They should just commandeer the boat and be done with it.

I'm also pretty sure that Pierre will have something to say about the trip in the newsletter. I haven't been looking over his shoulder, but I just have this feeling.

I expect a thorough report. (see Stammtisch)

I'll just cover some of the high points.

This was my first trip north. It wasn't what I was led to expect. The first 'check out' dives were pretty ho-hum. Then it got better.

It got a lot better when we went on the wreck of the *State of California*. This was a planned deep dive. Past 200 feet. A lot of the divers who were not set up or

trained for this sort of thing had plenty to see at the bow end, taking pictures of the huge anchors, nosing around in the collapsed decks, etc. But Phil and I went straight for the deep end, straight for the stern. I've told the story before, but for those who have missed it, I'm repeating it here:

The *State of California* went down in 1913 (with 35 lost). It's a long sloping wreck, resting pretty upright. It's an intact shell with partly collapsed decks. But, we were on a mission, checking out the rudder and prop. This was great.

We headed back up on deck, making our slow ambling ascent. On the stern rail I spotted a (giant) great sculpin.

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This month's entertainment will feature another local diver, photographer, and conservation activist, Marc Shargel.

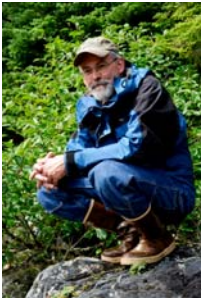
Marc has spoken to the club on a number of occasions over the years in various capacities. He has presented a group of his photographs. He has spoken about the overarching concerns of state and national ocean conservation, the advocacy groups involved, the government agencies involved.

Marc was also one of the leaders advocating for the "non-consumptive" divers' position during the recent Central Coast MLPA process.

He will be here to present his new photo book entitled "Wonders of the Sea:

North Central California's Living Marine Riches."

This book is a thoughtful look at the treasures of the marine world off our coast and the value of preserving it for future generations.



Der Stammtisch

By Pierre Hurter

The limo was in our driveway at 04:15a.m., early, but when you're heading for the airport that's almost always a good thing. We were traveling to Ketchikan, the flight, aboard Alaska Airlines didn't leave until 07:30, but traveling with Gerda, you get used to being at the airport early. Since we had booked our tickets before May 1st we were entitled a two-checked bag allowance rather than the current *one* bag (soon to be *no* bag) allowance. A handy thing since it's pretty much impossible to get almost two weeks of cold water dive gear into one 50-pound bag.

Ken had called on Thursday with a cryptic message concerning a conversation he had had with Frank and Ginny at Any Water Sports. I had conveniently broken the bulb on Gerda's canister light shortly after our last Cypress Sea dive. Canister lights are fiendish, those who have never had one snicker at those of us who have spent obscene wads of cash for the privilege of hanging one on our belts, but those who have felt the thrill of firing up a Binford Kelpburner 3000, well you either have or have not, there's no turning back.

Back to Ken ... I had dropped the light off and once home, lit a candle, sacrificed a chicken, all the usual gestures of appeasement to the capricious gods of dive gear repair. When I called the shop late Thursday afternoon, I was met with bitter disappointment; the replacement bulb had not arrived. So imagine my sense of anticipation when Ken called, casually talked about his conversation with the Barry's and told me to be on standby, as Jeff Zender would be dropping by his house latter that evening ... with a delivery.

Not to keep you all in suspense, the gods had apparently been unaware of my chicken sacrifice, fortunately Frank or maybe Ginny intervened on my behalf and there it was, swaddled in a black thinsulate vest, cradled inside a plastic bin marked AWS, ready for its job of piercing the cold, often dark Alaskan waters.

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REEFER'S RAP 2008

JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH
<p>01 - New Year's Day - Point Lobos Dive 02 - Officers Meeting 12 - Cypress Sea - (3 Dives) - Sat - Pierre - 415.810.6851 16 - Meeting - Sinbad's</p>	<p>06 - Officers Meeting 09 - Cypress Sea - (3 Dives) - Sat - Pierre - 415.810.6851 * 20 - Meeting - Sinbad's</p>	<p>05 - Officers Meeting 08 - Cypress Sea - (3 Dives) - Sat - Pierre - 415.810.6851 19 - Meeting - Sinbad's</p>
APRIL	MAY	JUNE
<p>02 - Officers Meeting 05 - Abalone Opener - Fort Ross - CenCal 12 - Cypress Sea - (3 Dives) - Sat - Pierre - 415.810.6851 * 16 - Meeting - Sinbad's 19 Dive into Earth Day -Del Monte Beach 19 - Historical Diving Society Meeting - Monterey</p>	<p>07 - Officers Meeting 10 - Cypress Sea - (3 Dives) - Sat - Pierre - 415.810.6851 21 - Meeting - Sinbad's</p>	<p>04 - Officers Meeting 14 - Cypress Sea - (3 Dives) - Sat - Pierre - 415.810.6851 * 18 - Meeting - Joint meeting with Marin Scuba Club 21-22 - Scuba Show - Long Beach Convention Center TBD - Abalone Closer</p>
JULY	AUGUST	SEPTEMBER
<p>02 - Officers Meeting 12 - Cypress Sea - (3 Dives) - Sat. - Pierre - 415.810.6851 16 - Meeting - Sinbad's</p>	<p>TBD - Abalone Opener 06 - Officers Meeting 09-12 - Channel Islands - Jim Vallario - 415.566.0784 20 - Meeting - Sinbad's</p>	<p>03 - Officers Meeting 05 - 07 - Lake Tahoe Dive - Norm Knutson 13 - Cypress Sea - (3 Dives) - Sat - Pierre - 415.810.6851 17 - Meeting - Sinbad's!</p>
OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	DECEMBER
<p>01 - Officers Meeting 11 - Cypress Sea - (3 Dives) - Sat. - Pierre - 415.810.6851 * 15 - Meeting - Sinbad's - Officer Nominations !!!</p>	<p>05 - Officers Meeting 08 - Cypress Sea - (3 Dives) - Sat. - Pierre - 415.810.6851 19 - Meeting - Sinbad's - Officer Elections !!! TBD - Abalone Closer</p>	<p>03 - Officers Meeting 13 - Cypress Sea - (3 Dives) - Sat - Pierre - 415.810.6851 * 17 - Meeting - Sinbad's - Christmas Party !!!</p>

SFRD AND SACRAMENTO SEA HORSES AT THEIR ANNUAL LAKE TAHOE RUBICON WALL EXTRAVAGANZA

When: Friday, Sept. 5th thru Sunday, Sept. 7th

Actual day of dive: Saturday, Sept. 6th

Where: at 10am in the parking lot next to Lester Beach inside D.L. Bliss State Park.

Come for the day or come for the weekend – your choice. Just REMEMBER, this might be the last time we'll be doing this for a long time as Norm (must have been hitting that milestone of 1000 dives) is retiring as coordinator of this fabulous weekend.

What's to see: The diving is high altitude diving at over 6200 ft. along the famous Rubicon Wall. Right off Rubicon Pt, the underwater wall drops down to over 900 ft, but we will be down around 60 ft max. The water is clear and fresh and the topography is surreal and like another world. It is also fun to just cruise along the wall and find some crawdads, free fall off an underwater ledge or find a swim thru.

For info on D.L. Bliss State Park go to http://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=505

Accommodations - D.L. Bliss State Park

For Reservations go to http://www.reserveamerica.com/camping/D_L_Bliss_Sp/r/campgroundDetails.do?contractCode=CA&parkId=120099&topTabIndex=CampingSpot

Other campgrounds are Sugar Pine SP, a County campground a few miles away and Camp Richardson (cabins and campsites)

Besides diving, you can kayak (bring one or be real nice to Norm, e.g. have an extra beer handy), hike, or just hang out on the beach. We'll close out Saturday with a Potluck, back at the D.L. Bliss campsite.

LAKE TAHOE DIVE SITE AND SAFETY INFO:

Lake Tahoe provides unique and challenging opportunities for divers. Just two miles to the north of Emerald Bay is Rubicon Point, a sheer granite wall which drops vertically over a thousand feet to the bottom of the lake and offers a wall dive with spectacular geologic formations. However, due primarily to the lake's average elevation of 6225' (1897 m) above sea level, diving at Tahoe should be undertaken with caution.

Listed below are recommendations for divers wishing to sample one of the world's most beautiful alpine lakes.

DIVING SAFETY

Lake Tahoe is a high altitude, cold water environment! Diving related accidents occur every year at Lake Tahoe.

It is essential that divers observe the following precautions!

- Do not use sea level dive tables while diving in Lake Tahoe! They are of no value at altitude, and if you dive the limits of the tables you will be well beyond your no decompression limits. If you don't already have them, purchase and use high altitude dive tables at one of the local dive shops (see below).
- Dive the tables conservatively! At this high altitude even small errors play a crucial role in a diver's safety.
- If you just arrived from a lower elevation, you have residual nitrogen and should consider yourself a repetitive diver. If you just arrived from Reno, you are in the B pressure group. If you just arrived from an area close to sea level, you are in the H pressure group.
- Dive with a Buddy! Solo diving in this remote location is asking for trouble. Divemasters and 20-year diving veterans have died here diving solo. Do not overlook all recommended pre-dive equipment checks.
- Open water or basic certified divers should limit their depth in Lake Tahoe to 48' (14.6 meters) which is equivalent to 60' (18.3 m) at sea level. Advanced divers should limit their depth to 96' (29.3 m) which is equivalent to 120' (36.6 m) in the ocean.
- Ascend no faster than 30' (9.1 m) per minute, and preferably no faster than 20' (6.1 m) per minute during the last 55' (16.8 m) of ascent. Perform a 5 minute safety stop at a depth of 10' (3 m) after each dive. In other words, come up slower than you would normally at sea level and do a safety stop in the shallows 10'-12' depth.

Summer Vacation from page 1

Oh, and there's another! I pointed the one out to Phil. Phil (showing off his brand new Salvo 21watt LED canister light) shined his light on him and gave him a nice bump to see if he would move.

Move? This seemed innocent enough until the fish turned and swallowed the entire lamp, the Goodman handle, and Phil's entire hand up past the wrist. This should be interesting, I said to myself. There we are, in total darkness at the stern of this wreck at 208 feet, and Phil is waving this monster around on the stump end of his arm--the fish is glowing like a Chinese lantern in the pitch black sea. This makes it hard to hold my regulator in my mouth. I'm finally seeing even more comic potential here. Is the fish going to let go or is he going to stay on his arm, and are we going to have to swim this thing back the entire length of the ship, up the line and back to the skiff to get it loose? It would look great with all of us back on the boat with the crew trying to pry this beast off Phil's arm. Of course, the fish eventually let go. Kind of a shame, since he would have made a great dive companion and a great accessory.



Clinton Bauder

There were a number of 'wall' dives next. Here is where the diving was incredibly different than our local diving. Not that we don't have challenging conditions here, but there the ecosystem is

entirely different, with brightly colored sponges and soft corals. The diving along these current swept areas is nearly tropical in color.

We spent a couple of days checking out the area.



Clinton Bauder

On one of the great wall dives off Inian Island there were a number of sightings of grunt sculpins. These are kinda rare locally, but not so there. These are the cutest fish in the entire ocean (the debate rages, however, about the spiny lumpsucker). I spot a nice one among the rocks. I signal Doug, my dive buddy, to come over and take a picture. Then I notice a red Irish Lord next to him on top of a rock. Ah, two great subjects!

Doug tried to get the strobes adjusted to get a good shot. Eh. He took a couple of pictures of the red Irish Lord instead and turned to swim away.

Well, I think I can urge the sculpin up a bit for a better photo. I wiggled my finger here, wiggled there, and the red Irish Lord lunged out and ate him. Crap! And he was so cute.

So I call Doug back over and he gets a good picture of the fish with the sculpin's tail hanging out of his mouth.

After Doug turned away I was still feeling bad about this cute little fish. Hmm. With the same determination the red Irish Lord

exhibited when he ate my little friend, I grabbed the red Irish Lord with two hands and give him a proper shake. He spit out the grunt sculpin. The little fish swam off in a shot. Whew! Free at last, Great Godamighty!



Doug Vanommeran

So, then, to complete the photo essay, I swam over to Doug and showed him the culprit, now empty handed and empty mouthed. In my best sign language I showed him that I have shaken the fish and my little friend has escaped.

I am redeemed.

As the trip slowly came to an end, there were also a couple of more wrecks. The Princess Sophia (down in 1918 with some 350 lost) and the Princess Kathleen (a 'modern' liner that went down in 1952 with no lives lost). These wrecks were also very interesting with plenty of recognizable structure. These wrecks were not so deep, probably around 150 feet, or so.

Wrecks. That's another subject. But here is the emergency steering mechanism at the stern of the Princess Kathleen.



Clinton Bauder

Stammtisch from page 2

I felt like a Jedi knight ready to do battle with my light saber poised to spring to life

One of the joys of traveling with dive gear is landing at a small airport like Ketchikan International with a pile of gear and trying to figure out the local transportation connections. Fortunately the young lady with her laminated sign proclaiming “water-taxi” was easy to spot and we piled our gear unto a hand truck and headed from the newly inaugurated baggage carousel the short walk down to the floating pier and the waiting taxi. At least one of our fellow passengers seemed skeptical of our water borne taxi, but the ride was smooth and dry.

Our captain stowed the gear, twisted the ends of his long, luxuriously waxed mustache and we were off! It’s a great ride towards old town and the bridge near Creek Street where we were staying. Along the way we watched half a dozen floatplanes arc in behind us, splash gently onto the water and seem to race us pell mell until they veered off to their moorings.

We had decided to stay at the New York Hotel. The sign outside proudly proclaims, “New York Hotel & Café Established 1925, reestablished 1991”. After poking around the internet and realizing that there weren’t all that many choices, we took the plunge and booked room five, towards the back and overlooking a beautifully overgrown garden balcony, located in the heart of old town, at the confluence of Creek Street and the main drag. The rooms are cozy, the staff helpful and the coffee at the Café

great! Definitely worth remembering if you find yourself I town. Ketchikan, whose nicknames include the Salmon Capital of the world, Rain Capital of Alaska and Alaska’s First City is also the fifth most populated city in Alaska. What would you expect of a place that boasts a population in excess of 8,000 souls? Did I mention that it’s sister city is Palm Desert? Palm Desert, for those of you who are geographically challenged is not far from Indio, home of the world famous Shields Date Garden featuring the “Romance and sex life of the Date” now available on DVD.



Named after the creek that runs through town, Ketchikan comes from the Tlingit, Kitschkin, which may mean the river belonging to Kischk or the thundering wings of an eagle or maybe something else entirely. In any event, the locals call it Ketchikan.

Among the highlights of the town, is the highest zip code assigned in the U.S., 99950. They also have more standing totem poles, supposedly than any other place in the world. Most of them are at Saxman Village, Totem Bight and the Totem Heritage Center, but a goodly number are planted in front yards of people’s homes.

Ketchikan is located at 55° 21’00” North and 131° 40’24” West on Revillagigedo Island about

235 miles south of Juneau. There is a half-mile wide span of water, the Tongass Narrows, separating Ketchikan from Gravina Island where the International Airport is located. You might remember this place, a few years back a Highway Bill provided for \$223 million to build a bridge connecting the airport to the mainland, that’s more than the airport cost. Nicknamed the “Bridge to Nowhere” it was never



built and the town and airport continue to be connected by ferry and water taxi instead.

We arrived in mid afternoon just in time to get settled in at the New York Hotel Café, five swivel bar stools looking towards the back bar mirror, with small tables scattered between the bar and the windows. We sidled up to the bar ordered lunch and waited for the 4th of July parade to pass by in all its glory.

This is the sort of town where people line the street to see the parade, homemade floats and local luminaries waving to the crowds. When the flag comes by people stand, mossy-oak camouflage pattern hats over their hearts. I know it may sound corny to some, but living in San Francisco, you miss the fact that not everyone is cynically jaded beyond any reasonable hope of redemption.

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More to follow next month ...



We highly encourage you to also support the other organizations listed below when you pay your annual dues. (Please indicate your membership options with the checkboxes below.)

- | | | |
|--------------------------|---|-----------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | San Francisco Reef Divers (SFRD) | \$25 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Central California Council of Diving Clubs (CenCal) | 15 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Sonoma County Abalone Network (SCAN) | <u>10</u> |

Show your support for all three! \$50

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ABOUT SAN FRANCISCO REEF DIVERS (SFRD):

The *Reef Diver Times* is the official newsletter of the San Francisco Reef Divers, a not for profit community organization dedicated to safe sport diving and the preservation of our ocean resources. Membership is \$25 annually, dues payable to "SFRD". The General Meeting is held 3rd Wednesday of the month at Sinbad's, located at Pier 2, Embarcadero Street, SF, CA 94111. Meet at 7:00pm for socializing, drinks and food and 7:30 pm for club business and entertainment. For more information, visit <http://www.sfreefdivers.org/>.

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