

DEDICATED TO SAFE SPORT DIVING AND THE PRESERVATION OF OCEAN RESOURCES

REEF DIVER TIMES

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE SAN FRANCISCO REEF DIVERS

ICE - DIVING IN SWITZERLAND

by Armin Luggen



Imagine this; a sunny day in February, a lake that is surrounded by majestic mountains, a moderately cool temperature and funny looking creatures, called divers walking on the surface of a frozen lake. ... Well, this happened to me, since I found myself part of that group. I was invited by a good friend of mine, to join six others, to get certified in Ice - Diving. No better place can be found for something that special then in the Swiss Alps.

Friday, February 15 at 6:30 PM, the class gathered at the Stingray Dive Shop in Schlieren/Zurich, Switzerland for the academics, and started with a general introduction, including name, age, level of certification and other interesting stuff one wanted to share. Most of the divers were Swiss, but we also had a South African Diving Instructor and myself - putting some international flavor to the experience.

We started out with a video about Ice-Diving, which captured our attention by kindling enthusiasms and healthy respect for the hard work that lay ahead in that cold environment, making us sweat and shiver at the same time for 15 minutes. Why in the world would anyone want to go diving in a frozen lake? Well, to late for second thoughts. The movie was playing and the course was in progress and we experienced a dry run of what was going to await us during the next two days. After a short break for a drink and some fresh air, the class was moved on to plan the whole dive.

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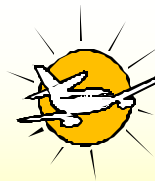


MARCH ENTERTAINMENT

- check it out and you will be ready for the
ABALONE OPENER WEEKEND (see page 4)

With abalone season coming up again, it is of course a prudent time to consider safety, equipment, techniques, and the new game rules.

In recent years, I have written articles on freediving techniques, invited freedivers to give presentations and pointers to the club, and once again, with the season and that unpredictable Spring weather coming up, I want to remind everyone abalone diving—it's a jungle out there. And with that in mind, our speaker this month will be one of our resident "experienced" abalone and freediving enthusiasts, Gene Kramer. For years, an abalone activist and diver, Gene is a great choice to talk to us about the basic skills of freediving for abalone. If you are new to the sport, maybe this will ease your anxieties. If you are "experienced," don't hesitate sharing fish stories with the rest of us in an informal discussion of how to chase down those speeding gastropods, make it look easy, and come back smiling.



BONAIRE - BELIZE - FLI???

Nina & Joe Steiner are coordinating a trip to sandy white beaches, palm trees and azur skies. When? The months of August - September- November are open for discussion. They know of some great deals and need to hear from you to finalize their planning. Interested in hearing more details? Contact them at (415) 759-6708 or mail: justmej69@hotmail.com

President's Corner

By Pierre Hurter



It's already March and the days seem to be slipping through my fingers like beach sand. The weather has been gorgeous; as if someone was fiddling with nature's clock. It's much too early for Spring, but I'll admit that I've been taking advantage of the weather while it lasts. On Saturday, February 23, a group of Reef Divers got together on the Cypress Sea. Conditions were great, a bit of surge, but great visibility and some interesting dive sites. For those who missed it, March offers an other chance to get on the boat. So far March looks a bit thin for club activities, anyone care to coordinate a dive?

April on the other hand looks as if it will be fully booked. First we have the abalone opener at Russian Gulch, coordinated by Ray Will. For those who have never been there, Russian Gulch is one of my favorite State Parks. The park has a total of 21,162 acres encompassing 7,630 feet of ocean frontage. In it's heyday, Russian Gulch was part of California's booming redwood based timber industry. Small inlets or "dog holes" became regular stops for the schooners traveling from San Francisco to Humboldt Bay. It's a beautiful spot, sometimes called the "Point Lobos" of the north coast. It's a great opportunity for the entire family to get together and hike, paddle or dive for the elusive mollusk. Hope to see lot's of you there.

While on the topic of Point Lobos, Frank Onstine is coordinating a dive here as well. The beauty of this dive is that it allows those of us without a boat to dive in the area around Bluefish cove. The Cypress Sea will pick us up within the preserve and then proceed to Blue Fish Cove.

There they will drop anchor on top of a pinnacle at around 65 feet, a nice depth for most of us.

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2002 SFRD OFFICERS

President	Pierre Hurter	(415) 285-6293 p.hurter@worldnett.att.net
Vice President	Robert Miché	(415) 661-5540 rmiche@mindspring.com
Treasurer	Bill Donnelly	(415) 924-5627 bdonnelly@18004INJURY.com P.O. Box 151223 San Rafael, CA 94915
Webmaster	Curt Degler	(707) 570-0457 cdegler@aquagraphy.com
Newsletter Editor	Gerda Hurter	(415) 285-6293 p.hurter@worldnett.att.com
Entertainment Committee	Bhushan Mudbhary	(415) 386-3714 mudbhary@hotmail.com
	Ken Gwin	(415) 648-7046 artfxsf@aol.com
AMCR Representative	Gene Kramer	(415) 339-2785 gene.kramer@adecco.com
CenCal Representative	Bill Galarneau	(510) 451-2370
Membership Chairperson	Kharmen Roman	(415) (415) 519-4655 kharmenr@melibe.com



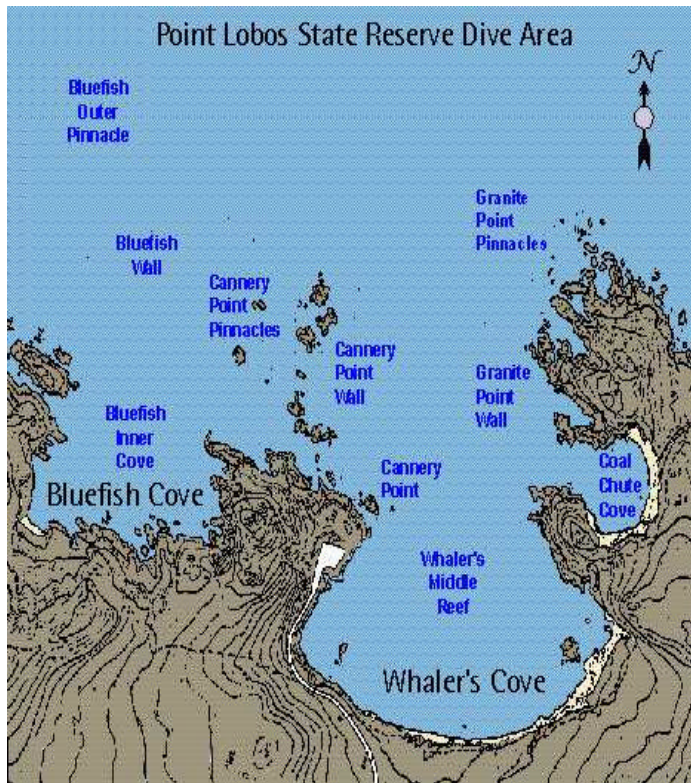
Payments for membership and activities should be mailed to:

Bill Donnelly
P.O. Box 151223
San Rafael, CA 94915

REEFERS RAP

JANUARY 02	FEBRUARY	MARCH
<p>01 - <i>New Year's Day Dive</i> Point Lobos</p> <p>13 - <i>Cypress Sea Boat Dive</i> Coordinator: Jim Vallario (415) 566-0784</p> <p>16 - <i>General Meeting</i> New Location: BOAT HOUSE</p>	<p>16 - <i>President's Day Dive</i> Coordinator: Peter White (415) 775-2052</p> <p>20 - <i>General Meeting</i> BOATHOUSE</p> <p>23 - <i>Cypress Sea Boat Dive - FULL</i> Coordinator: Jim Vallario (415) 566-0784</p>	<p>20 - <i>General Meeting</i> BOATHOUSE</p> <p>23 - <i>Cypress Sea Boat Dive</i> Saturday - 3 dives Coordinator: Jim Vallario (415) 566-0784</p>
APRIL	MAY	JUNE
<p>12 - <i>14Abalone Opener at Russian Gulch</i> Coordinator: Ray Will (510) 531-5971</p> <p>17 - <i>General Meeting</i> BOATHOUSE</p> <p>18 - <i>Point Lobos Boat Dive</i> Coordinator: Frank Onstine (707) 668-1671</p>	<p>15 - <i>General Meeting</i> BOATHOUSE</p> <p>23 - <i>Cypress Sea Boat Dive</i> Saturday - 3 dives Coordinator: Jim Vallario (415) 566-0784</p>	<p>19 - <i>General Meeting</i> BOATHOUSE</p> <p>22 - <i>Cypress Sea Boat Dive</i> Saturday - 3 dives Coordinator: Jim Vallario (415) 566-0784</p> <p>TBD - <i>Abalone Closer</i></p>
JULY	AUGUST	SEPTEMBER
<p>17 - <i>General Meeting</i> BOATHOUSE</p> <p>27 - <i>Cypress Sea Boat Dive</i> Saturday - 3 dives Coordinator: Jim Vallario (415) 566-0784</p>	<p>18 - <i>20 Channel Island Trip</i> Coordinator: Jim Vallario (415) 566-0784</p> <p>21 - <i>General Meeting</i> BOATHOUSE</p> <p>TBD - <i>Abalone Opener at Salt Point</i> Coordinator: Pam Radkey (510) 527-5282</p>	<p>18 - <i>General Meeting</i> BOATHOUSE</p> <p>22 - <i>Cypress Sea Boat Dive</i> Sunday - 3 dives Coordinator: Jim Vallario (415) 566-0784</p> <p>TBD - <i>Alcatraz swim/paddle</i> Coordinator: Pierre Hurter (415) 285-6293</p>
OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	DECEMBER
<p>13 - <i>Cypress Sea Boat Dive</i> Sunday - 2 dives Coordinator: Jim Vallario (415) 566-0784</p> <p>16 - <i>General Meeting</i> BOATHOUSE</p>	<p>20 - <i>General Meeting</i> <i>2003 OFFICERS ELECTIONS</i> BOATHOUSE</p> <p>24 - <i>Cypress Sea Boat Dive</i> Sunday. - 3 dives Coordinator: Jim Vallario (415) 566-0784</p> <p>TBD - <i>Annual Sea Ranch Weekend</i></p> <p>TBD - <i>Abalone Closer</i> Coordinator: Robert Miché (415) 661-5540</p> <p>TBD - <i>Salmon Swim</i> Coordinator: Frank King</p>	<p>18 - <i>Christmas Party</i> at the BOATHOUSE !!!</p>

Reefer Rap ... need to know more ...



Boat Dive April 18th

Frank Onstine is coordinating a Point Lobos Dive in conjunction with the Cypress Sea. The dive is planned for Thursday, April 18, and works as follows:

- Call Cypress Charters (408.244.4433) to put your name on the list.
- Call (831.624.8413), e-mail (ptlobos@mnbay.net) or go online (<http://pt-lobos.parks.state.ca.us/scuba/divereserv.html>) Point Lobos State Park to make your reservation.
- Call Cypress Charters and confirm your reservation with a credit card.
- The Cypress Sea will load divers at 9:30 am, with all their gear on, as they swim out to the boat from Whaler's Cove. From there it's off to Bluefish cove and two great dives.

The price for this trip is \$75 per diver, plus the cost of the Point Lobos reservation and parking fee. Make sure you **bring your C-Card**, you won't get into the park without one. If you have any questions, call or e-mail Frank at 707.668.1671 or franko@humboldt1.com.



Reef Divers Abalone Opener Weekend April 12th – April 14th

Locations:
Directions:

Russian Gulch State Park, Mendocino
It is about 150 miles north of SF (101N - > 128W - > 1N) and is about 3 miles north of the town of Mendocino on highway 1. Turn left at the sign, through the gate, to the left past campsites turn right. The group campsite is the grass meadow on the right.

Parking:

Reservations are for 10 cars and 40 people, but with considerate parking we can get more cars close to the site.

Fees:

The club has paid for the reservations. Members need to contribute \$10., adult guest \$20.

Saturday Dinner:

As for Reef Diver tradition, there will be a potluck feed Saturday night. Either make your best dish or:
G-M: appetizers, desserts, bread
N-Z vegetables, rice potatoes, beans
A-F salads

Don't forget:

y2002 Ocean fishing license and the **PUNCH CARD**, ab iron & gauge, camp chairs, stoves & fuel, plates, utensils, cutting boards, sharp knives, pounders, eggs & bread crumbs, rags & paper towels, camping gear or motel reservations.

Russian Gulch is one of the jewels of the State Park System - Great kayaking – diving – hiking - bicycling. Mendocino & Fort Bragg offer restaurants, supermarkets, bakeries and shopping.

Reservations:

To assure your tent space, seat at the table and parking pass, please call: Ray Will (510) 531-5971 or (510) 595-2120

President - from page 2

For those with the skills and a hankering for something more, you can drop to the bottom of the pinnacle at around 135 feet. A dive spot that has something to offer all levels of divers.

The weekend of March 9 was great. Saturday, Armin and I hooked up with Peter at Any Water Sports and after picking up some odds and ends caravanned to Monterey. A quick trip to Manta Ray to pick up some more tanks, fills, etc. and we were off to The Breakwater.



I know what you're thinking, Breakwater, how boring. I was trying out some new gear, a backplate and wings and I like to do my shakedown cruises somewhere other than jumping off a boat. Anyway we had two great dives, great wildlife, lots of jellies, sea cucumbers and two lemon nudibranchs, each at least two inches long. We capped the evening with dinner at "Le Bistrol" Pork chops on the bone, asparagus wrapped in tenderloin, caldari, espresso for dessert. Now if only I could remember the name of the Amador County Zinfandel we had.

Sunday, Armin and I rolled out of our luxury motel room into a drizzling early morning. Peter had headed back the evening before and we were on a mission. After a huge breakfast we headed once again to The Breakwater. This time we hooked up with Keith, a fellow student in Phil Sammet's

advanced nitrox course. We loaded our gear into Phil's RIB and headed for Hopkins Reef. Great boat, lots of room for the four of us and our gear, doubles, reels, stage bottles, and miscellaneous gear. I still think Phil should have sprung for the deck mounted .50 caliber machine gun, but that's just a personal preference. We spent the day making three dives, reeling in, reeling out, making great spider web tangles of line, switching gases, deploying lift bags and generally acting like a bunch of wannabe tech geeks. A great time was had by all and the weather cleared up into one of those smooth as glass sunny days that tourist and divers alike love to see.

After our grueling day we motored up Highway 1, stopping at the Davenport Cash Store, north of Santa Cruz, for dinner. Seafood fetuchini, Ahi tuna, a couple of house salads to restore our strength and ESB India Pale Ale to get the electrolytes back into balance. The whole topped off with a couple of espresso to stay awake and we where headed home. I love diving in northern California, it's so civilized.

On a more somber note Japan has announced plans to double its whale catch in the northwest Pacific. Japan notified the International Whaling Commission that it planned to kill 50 minke whales and 50 sei whales on top of the 440 minke whales currently taken in Atlantic waters each year. Add to that the 50 Byrde's whales and 10 sperm whales a year. There has been a moratorium on "commercial" whaling since 1986. In a statement released by the Japanese Embassy in Washington, the increased harvest was described as a "research program in a good faith contribution to the

scientific review of the effect of the moratorium on whale stocks." So the next time you happen to be in Tokyo and see whale meat on the menu, remember it's research.

Just so you don't begin to feel to self righteous about not eating whale meat, you might want to take a look at this. The California Academy of Science has a web site devoted to our use of the ocean's resources. According to the site, more than 70 percent of the world's fish stocks are overfished, depleted, or extinct as a food resource. For the complete article an listing of "Good Fish / Bad Fish" see:

<http://www.calacademy.org/calwild/winter2002/stories/fish2.htm>

Closer to home, our own Curt Degler has been nominated by the club to be a representative to the Regional Working Group developing the master plan for the Marine Protected Areas in California. The Marine Life Protection Act (MLPA) requires that the California Fish and Game Department develop a master plan for protected areas in California. In order to ensure that constituent groups have a voice in these plans a series of working groups will be established throughout California. Working groups can include representatives from kelp harvesters, commercial fishing, scientific collecting, charter and party boats, recreational divers, the US Department of Defense, etc. I think Curt, if selected, will be an excellent advocate for the interests of the recreational dive community.

Enough about foreign relations, government agencies and Machiavellian politics, we have a calendar full of dives, camping trips and paddles.

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President – from page 5

There is something for everyone, if there is nothing that appeals to you, pick up the phone, log on, write an article. Don't let another day go by without coordinating an event that you want to do.



Ice Diving - from page 1

The logistics for such a dive, involves a little more planning than a regular dive trip and we discussed in detail the locations of the holes that needed to be cut out of the ice, including two safety exits. Every hole had to have a different form and for the main entrance and exit holes, the shape of a Swiss cross was chosen (!!!).



This enabled two divers to get ready with a comfortable seating area and for two safety divers, to be prepared in an emergency or for the next dive. Time and location to meet the next day were discussed as well, as all necessary tools, nutritional items and anything else that came up. At around 9:15 PM the theoretical stuff was over and a good night sleep was sought after.

We all met the next day at an Autobahn Restaurant, enjoyed freshly squeezed juice and coffee and, for the hungry adventurers, a sandwich with some hearty dry-meats and cheese. When the group was complete we followed the Highway from Zurich to Glarus,

where the road separated and took us up to 2400 f/S through a windy area. The sky was a little cloudy, but held rain, snow and a cold wind away which made it so much easier. When we arrived at the lake, an artificial dam, we found an empty parking lot, parked our cars and headed right to the lodge, where we would stay and consume our next two days of meals and get some rest. The two or three person rooms available were clean, cozy and equipped with a bathroom AND a hot shower.

After another coffee/hot chocolate to get us going again, things got serious. We headed back to the parking lot and proceeded to put on our dry suits. In case you have any doubts, dry suits are a must in order to enjoy this experience. Wetsuits can be used as well, but I don't dare to think about how much I would have frozen. When everybody was ready, we joined the lead of our Instructor for this course, Armin Fehr, down to the water and inspected once more the thickness and the safety of the ice. Everything looked good with a minimum thickness of 25 cm (about 10 inches) of the ice platform.

A short walk on the ice got us right to some landing docks for the boats which are used for the summer fun on the lake. Half way frozen into the water, they provided an excellent platform for our gear. By now, part of the group had decided on the location for the entrance and exit holes, as well as the two safety holes. Everything was marked and a short lecture about cutting ice with a chainsaw was given by Roman Lorenzetti (also known as "Zetti"). The chainsaw turned out to be a prime Swiss example of a non-oil and noise, environmentally friendly device which turned the cutting into a pleasurable task.

The ice cubes, cut in small pieces of about 24" x 24" (60cm x 60cm) were then pushed under the ice platform to clear the entrance of each hole.



A tricky task, which required the assistance from several members of the team, since the ice tends to float more than to sink. But nevertheless, the hard work paid off and after securing the areas around the holes with some posts and yellow security tape, we all headed back to the restaurant.

The restaurant owner and cook, awaited us already and a delicious meal was served. Hot soup, prepared with left over vegetables, got your stomach going, and we couldn't wait to get to the main dish. Typical Swiss dishes were served for the next two days, and I started to get a little homesick, after all, this is still my native country. A dessert and a nice cup of coffee finished off a well-deserved break. Then it was time again to head back to the frozen lake and to the adventure we had signed up for. Nevertheless, we did stop and reflect upon our surroundings with its idyllic and mystic mountain chains covered in snow. Unfortunately, and I guess lucky for us, the winter had turned out to be more on the mild side and therefore no snow needed to be cleared away to access the lake.

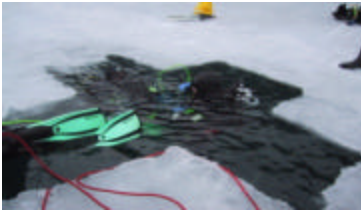
Equipped with our dive gear, we finally got closer to a new undiscovered part of our diving career. Diving in groups of two divers, with two safety divers on the surface, ready at any

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Ice Diving – from page 6

moment, we all waited our turn to move towards that hole that presented itself like a pool. Pregnant with questions about what would await us under this platform of ice, we cautiously proceeded on the slippery surface, anxiously trying to avoid any fall which would result in painful black and blue marks the next morning.

The water, cold at around 4 degrees Celsius (40 degrees Fahrenheit) was still warmer than the surrounding temperature and was a real treat when entered. After almost all got their chances to see what lies below it finally was my turn. Relatively relaxed and ready for this adventure I glided down from my icy seat, into the water. A couple adjustments, checking out the regulator and octopus, and we finally headed down under.



Secured by a safety line, which is attached to the lead diver and then continued to the second diver with a stack of about 2 meters (6 feet give or take), we were both taken in by the clear water and the cold at the same time. Visibility ranged from anywhere between 5 to 15 meters (15 to 45 feet), depending on the position. It was an incredible feeling. The formation of ice crystals on the surface of the heavy ice platform with the endless existing small openings and channels, where our exhaled air would find its way to the surface, was impressive.

Ten to fifteen minutes of spectacular and interesting

views, playing around by walking on the ice upside down, finally paid off the hard work and uncertainty of what was to await us. It was a great feeling and at least for me, in no way intimidating. I never had any feeling about not getting out from under there or any thoughts of danger, after all the line was held at a maximum of just 25 meters (75 feet) and there was always a buddy and a safety diver group ready to react. The line was not only used to find our way back again, we also employed some pull codes.

- a 1 time short pull on the line meant -everything OK
- a 2 times short pull on the line meant - need more line or take line back
- a 3 times short pull on the line meant - not OK, pull back for the divers or something not OK on the surface and a rapid return is demanded.

With these codes, a line and a line-watch-man on the surface a pretty secure way of planning and communicating was established for the dives. This was also the main objective of this course, that emphasized the right planning and execution of every dive of a team. Ice diving is risky like any diving activity, but with the right planning, and teamwork it can be fun.

After a second dive it was getting late and we decided to head back to the lodge. The area was secured again and all equipment stored in our cars. The Lodge owner was quite nice and provided us with a heated room where all divers were able to hang their suits and any other gear to dry and warm up. I wish this would be available when you pay \$120.00 for the one night stay in a motel in Monterey!

The restaurant was cozy and time just passed, especially when you had more than one “Devil of the Lake Coffee”, a specialty of the house. Sunday approached way to fast after another short night. After a hardy breakfast with fresh croissants, bread, jelly, ham and cheese, we headed back to the lake. More dives had to be completed and so diver-by-diver we plunged into the icy waters once more. It was fun and every dive presented something new. Like when the lines got kind of tangled in the icy entrance which had started to changed shape from our starting Swiss cross to something indefinable.

At around two in the afternoon, everybody had completed their dives. The last group retrieved the ice cubes from underneath the ice surface and the holes were closed. The yellow ribbons were left on the ice surrounding the area, to warn any visitors of the danger. Packed and ready to go, everybody left the area and headed once more back to the Hotel. A last hot shower and another lunch followed by last minute exchanges of addresses and signing of log books and proceeded the final good-byes. Off we were, on the way to the normal life on this finally sunny Sunday afternoon.

My trip was ending as well and my flight on Tuesday morning zapped me right back to reality. I had a great time and I am looking forward to my next trip in March - when I will be diving in the lake of Geneva and maybe able to try out a Rebreather. So more to come ... Gut Luft!



GAS CLASS TO BE OFFERED AGAIN

by Curt Degler

Bowing to popular demand, I've decided to again offer, to club members only, an inexpensive course to qualify and certify them to use recreational nitrox or enriched air.

Why earn an Enriched Air (AKA nitrox) certification? Breathing "recreational" nitrox, a gas mixture used in SCUBA with O2 percentages between 22 and 40, results in the absorption by your body during a dive of less N2 - the inert gas that causes decompression injuries. Consequently you can enjoy increased bottom times to moderate depths in both single and repetitive dives, or reduce your overall exposure to N2 decreasing the likelihood of an "undeserved" hit. For example, PADI "air tables" provide for a single dive no-decompression limit at 60ft of 55 minutes. Using a breathing mixture containing 36% O2 allows you to increase your bottom time to 115 minutes, almost double! The greatest benefit is realized on multi day, multi dive trips such as charter boat trips to the Channel Islands. Why do you need a class and certification? Dive operators restrict nitrox fills to those who can present certification cards because improper use of nitrox can result in severe injury (or worse). About a dozen club members have so far successfully taken the course from me.



(Copywrite The New Yorker)

Here are the details. The certification and educational materials will be from PADI. The fee to me for the course is \$70.00 (\$5.00 more than last year), and includes the PADI Enriched Air manual, three nitrox tables on waterproof slates and the certification card. Additional expenses you may personally incur include the rental of two nitrox tanks and fills for the required dives and a passport sized picture for your PADI certification card. Since there are at this time many members with manuals and tables it is possible for you to borrow, share or buy them second hand. If you do my fee is reduced to \$35.00. I need a minimum of four students in a class. The course work is as follows. Prior to the classroom session you MUST read the manual (about 90 pages) and complete the included "knowledge review" - 20 non-graded short answer question - many with table problems. The class session will be held during the week in a member's home in either San Francisco or the East Bay starting around 6pm. While eating some pizza or ? you will watch a 1/2 hour video, followed by a practical demonstration that will show you how to calibrate an O2 gas analyzer and analyze O2 percentages in various tanks. We will then go over each question in your knowledge review (these must be handed in), introduce some additional concepts, answer all other questions, and then administer the graded final exam, which takes 45-60 minutes to complete. Passing is 75% and so far no one has failed. (But no one has gotten 100% either!). Course prerequisites include either an advanced diver certification or ten open water

dives beyond the original certification dives. Contact me, Curt Degler, PADI OWSI #152761 at 707-570-0457 or cdegler@aquagraphy.com if you are interested or have any questions.



MCCOVEY COVE, FEBRUARY 17
by Pierre Hurter

Sunday, found a small band of Reefdivers converging at the Bay View Yacht Club, near the 3rd Street Bridge in San Francisco. Before you get the wrong impression, none of us are members of the club, just using the handy boat ramp. The "Yacht" club is one of those funky leftovers you still manage to see occasionally in the City. A quite reminder of a time when the waterfront was alive with blue collar unionized industry and America had a Merchant Marine that spanned the globe and was second to none. Back to the present, Bill, Regina, Jim, Mary Chris, Norm, Tim Gerda and I decided that we would take our chances with the darkening skies and launch our fleet in the direction of Pac Bell Park. The sky went back and forth ominously and from dark too gloriously sunny, with the tide running out and a breeze at our backs we launched around one o'clock. We paddled past the Independence, out of Honolulu, a passenger ship whose days of passengers dressing in black tie to dine at the captain's table seemed only a lingering memory. Still with a fresh coat of

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McCovey Cove – from page 8

white paint and the right itinerary ... Then past the Cape Horn and Cape Hudson, two twin gray ships, with a vaguely officious look t them. Complete with large signs warning small craft to maintain at least 100 hundred feet clearance. Well that wasn't going to work, not if were going to get a good view off the harbor seals resting on the rudder. Coming around the stern of the two

freighters, under the watchful eyes of a few of the crew, we came into McCovey Cove at last. Since there wasn't a game scheduled, we had the place to ourselves, aside from a few pedestrians that stopped quack. We paddled underneath Lefty O'Doul Bridge and then headed back to our launch site. On the way we were passed by the strangest boat I've seen in awhile.



“Splash Tours”, “It’s a bus, It’s a boat” painted across the stern. The captain honked his horn and promptly drove up the boat ramp, revealing a wheeled undercarriage as he drove away. We ended the day at “The Ramp” an other San Francisco dockside tradition. OK, the fish and chips are mediocre and the chowder not up to Boston standards. Still sitting in the sun like a lizard baking on a rock and sipping an Anchor Steam isn’t a bad way to end the day.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE REEF DIVERS

1970 TO 1993

by Ursula Bernhart

There appears to be some curiosity among newer club members as to the origins and history of the Reef Divers. Being the only one active in the club since its formation in the summer of 1970, I have been asked to write about it before it's too late and the last of us old fossils is gone forever.

By the time I went through my NAUI course at the Bamboo Reef after the 1970 ski season, it already was a proven fact that 80-90% of all new divers quit the sport soon after certification. Bamboo Reef instructors, staff and the 11 students in my class decided to form a dive club specifically aimed at the novice diver. After classes we convened at Tommy's Joynt or a nearby Pizza parlor to work out the details. At the end of our dive course the Bamboo Reef Dive Club was launched and we met next door at (Al) Giddings' Underwater Enterprise for awhile, later relocating for many years to the Lake Merced Boathouse, at which point we dropped the "Bamboo" from our name. The first few years the club was small, probably fluctuating between 15-25 divers. Our newsletters were 2-4 page affairs, sometimes handwritten. I still have one surviving copy from the early days, which is reproduced at the end of this article. (The old mimeograph print doesn't lend itself to copying).

I didn't keep a dive log or other records of the first few years, just a few photos. After 23+ years it's hard to remember all the events and their sequence. But I do know that by January 1971 we felt advanced and bold enough to plan an ice dive in Donner Lake. We stayed at an instructor's cabin near Truckee, dug our cars out of deep snow next morning, headed for the lake, suited up by the roadside with the snow still coming down, and went in from a narrow ice-free strip by the shore under the ice, two at a time. Most of us lasted only a few minutes until regulators froze up and inadequate wetsuits made things too uncomfortable. We thought it was a great time and tried again next year, but Donner Lake refused to freeze over, as it has most years since, and the annual ice dive turned into the annual ski trip.

From my few surviving photos of the early years I can tell that Ray Will, Mark Gibson and Emmett Malone were members of the Reef Divers by May of 1975, when we all were aboard the Bottom Scratcher dive boat our of San Diego on a 3-day trip to San Clemente Island. Rudy Erlar also was in the club by 1973. In the summer of that year we made our first of several annual surfmat trips down a 9-mile stretch of rapids on the Stanislaus River, which Emmett Malone instigated. Those were some memorable weekends which came to a sad ending with the flooding of the river by New Malones Reservoir. Robin Buckley is another Reef Diver veteran. In early December 1975 we made that boat dive at the Farallon Islands, out of Princeton Harbor, where he had his Great White Shark experience. Otherwise, that was a fabulous dive, with clear water, lots of big ling cod and very dense and colorful underwater flora and fauna.

In those early years, when we went on our weekend dive trips to Monterey or the North Coast, it was unheard of to stay in a motel. We camped at Deer Flats

(Veteran's Memorial Campground) in Monterey, Laguna Seca or sometimes just spent the night on the beach at Monastery. Tents were set up only in heavy fog or when it was raining. At Ted Barns, Salt Point, Van Damme, Russian Gulch, I don't recall having to make reservations. Someone drove up early and occupied as much space as we needed. It usually was a much smaller gathering than we have nowadays. There were even times when it seemed the club might become defunct for lack of participation.

By now we have evolved into an institution with a long and colorful history, strong membership and many accomplishments among multitalented individuals of our club. It seems to get better all the time, with great leadership, regular publication of a fine newsletter, many and varied diving opportunities and other activities. The San Francisco Reef Divers is a diving club we can all be proud of. Following is a reprint if one of the early newsletters - No date, but it is probably from 1971:

THE BAMBOO REEF DIVE CLUB

The Bamboo Reef Dive Club is a loosely formed organization designed to promote a continued interest in diving. The club is open to any certified diver who has made at least one dive with a club member. The idea of the club is to keep people diving as much as possible and to make each dive more rewarding and exciting each time.

There will be at least one or two club dives each month. The club will also sponsor each year contests in spear fishing, abalone diving, and underwater photography so that each member may find some particular interest in which they can participate. New ideas are always welcomed and will be appreciated so that the club can expand its horizons.

CLUB OFFICERS:

President: Rich Bergero
Vice Pres.: Ken Bonar
Secretary/ Treasurer: Bill Leckie
Activities: Rod Fuselier, Bob Moore
Special Events: Peter Capen

Club meetings will be held on the third Wednesday of every month, 7:30 pm, at Giddings' Underwater Ent., 578 4th St. and Brannan. Dues will be \$10 per year and this will include a Cen Cal membership. We hope that you will enjoy your membership in our club.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS:

Boat Trips:

November 15-20, Sunday evening 7 p.m. to Friday evening 5 p.m. Sacramento Reef, 5 day trip on the Bottom Scratcher". Cost \$150 Includes: Air, Food, Tanks, Weight Belts, and Mexican permits.

Extras: Transportation to San Diego, beer, cigarettes and anything else it takes to get you through a week.

January 16-17: San Clemente, Cortez Banks lobster Dive weekend.

Cost: \$60, includes: Air, food, tanks, weight belts.

Extras: Transportation to San Diego, beer, cigarettes, dramamine.

Club Dive: November 15: Monastery Beach, Carmel. Meet at 10:30 and bring food and drinks for a picnic.

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The San Francisco Reef Divers is a not for profit community organization dedicated to safe sport diving and the preservation of our ocean resources. The San Francisco Reef Divers general meetings are open to the public and are held on the 3rd Wednesday of the month at the Boathouse Sports Bar and Grill, (415) 681-2727, located at 1 Harding Rd, San Francisco, CA 94132 (For driving directions and a map for this location, visit our club web site: [http://www.sfreefdivers.org/.](http://www.sfreefdivers.org/))

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"/> Abalone Marine Resource Council (AMRC) | 10 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Central California Council of Diving Clubs (CenCal) | 15 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sonoma County Abalone Network (SCAN) | 10 |

Show your support for all four!\$60

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Home Phone:	(____) _____	Work Phone:	(____) _____		
Email:	_____	Birthdate (year optional):	___/___/___		
Diving Certification Agency:	_____	Level:	_____	Number:	_____
SFRD Membership:	<input type="checkbox"/> New member	<input type="checkbox"/> Renewal			
Are you a member of Divers Alert Network (DAN)?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No			
Please select the method of delivery of your monthly club newsletter (Choose one):					
<input type="checkbox"/>	I will download the newsletter via the Internet from the SFRD website (default)				
<input type="checkbox"/>	I want the newsletter mailed to my home address				

Please make checks payable to “San Francisco Reef Divers” and mail to:
Bill Donnelly, SFRD Treasurer, P.O. Box 151223, San Rafael, CA 949



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 the Boathouse Sports Bar and Grill, (415) 681-2727, located at 1 Harding Rd, San Francisco, CA 94132 in Harding Park on the shore of Lake Merced. 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/>.

SAN FRANCISCO REEF DIVERS
Reef Divers Times
C/O Gerda Hurter
515 Diamond Street
San Francisco, CA 94114