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The South Ender is the newsletter of the South End Rowing Club, published three times per year. We publish material by our members that reflects the ideals, purposes and accomplishments of the South End. We reserve the right to edit all submitted material. Articles, suggestions, inquiries and photos may be submitted electronically to: newsletter@serc.com. 900 word maximum for articles and minimum of 300 pixels per inch for photos. Please send articles as a Word file, not as a PDF. Thank you in advance for your contribution!

President’s Message
Bill Wygant

When is our remodel going to start? The answer is it all comes down to a gate. Several months ago, just as we were approaching beginning construction, the Department of Building Inspection identified that our path of emergency egress out of our backyard needed to be better defined and agreed to between the National Park Service, the city, and the club. As we wrote this agreement, the city also found it required a panic bar be installed on the small swing gate by the main gate to Hyde St. Pier. National Park Service representatives Kevin Hendricks and Lynn Cullivan have been very helpful in trying to help us solve this safety problem with the gate. Once the city knows this issue will be solved, then our permit to begin construction will be available to us in about seven working days. Dan McLaughlin, Miriam Hiser, Peter Ross, and I have spent a number of hours trying to get this issue fixed. We are close but not close enough to give you an exact date. At times we’ve had the impression that approval of the gate would be included in President Trump’s first State of the Union speech when he intones to the nation, “Although this is not the gate I spoke of, there will be a safety mechanism installed on Hyde St. Pier.” But we’re of course hoping for a quicker resolution.

However, with construction delayed this long we will wait until after the St Patrick’s Day Luncheon on March 12th to begin, regardless. The club has the longest-running St. Patrick’s Day celebration in the city. We want to continue that tradition and hope people will contact our entertainment commissioner, Jane Koegel, to volunteer and help put on a great event and keep that claim of having the longest-running St. Patrick’s Day luncheon in the city intact.

Fundraising for the project is still needed and continues. Peter Curley and Andrew Burrell have suggested a novel idea to help raise more money for us. Each year they support and participate in the St. Patrick’s Day Massacre charity bike ride, which takes place this year on March 20th. More information on the event is at www.stpatsmass.com. This year any South Ender who participates and raises at least $500 for the club through this event will also receive a name-brick to be placed in the patio. To register for the event as a South Ender to take advantage of the brick offer, visit this website: http://www.gofundme.com/sercbuildingprojec (note: no ‘t’ at the end of the URL). You can also contact Peter Curley with questions at petercurley@gmail.com or 415-513-8950.

Cover Photo: Bob Tandler representing the South End at the Explora Torres del Paine National Park in Patagonia.
Her cap is covered in bright, multicolored fabric flowers. She has swum the Golden Gate strait 91 times. She once touched a harbor seal in Monterey just to settle a score. Kathie Hewko, 69, is a legendary South Ender and storyteller who joined the club in 1978, shortly after the lawsuit let women join both SERC and the Dolphin Club. She’s seen a lot of swims and swum through a lot of scenes, including the Volga River, Loch Ness, and from the Isle of Capris to Ischia in Italy.

On a clear November morning we caught up with Kathie at the club to ask a few questions about her life aquatic.

What was your first big swim in the Bay?

It was a Golden Gate crossing. I moved to San Francisco in early 1976 and settled into an apartment across the street from the Jewish Community Center, so I started swimming there for exercise. There were a number of girls who were lifeguards and who swam there and they told me about an all-women Golden Gate swim in October. I said, “Are you crazy? That water’s freezing and there are sharks out there.”

But then I jumped in at Aquatic Park in June and it wasn’t bad. And there had never been any shark attacks in the Bay. So this group of girls, we’d meet up at the bleachers and swim around the cove.

Then it was time to do the Gate and I remember going up with some non-swimmer friends to the top of the Bank of America building and looking out at the bridge. It was only about an inch and a half long! And since everyone says you have to carbo load before an event, the morning of the swim I ate three chocolate-covered donuts I picked up on Chestnut Street.

Well, when I jumped in, it was kind of rough, and there were a couple of two-foot swells right away. It wasn’t a smooth crossing. I remember feeling sick because of the donuts and waves. In those days the Dolphin Club and South Enders would help out with rowing and support. I remember putting my hand up half way through and an old geezer from the Dolphin Club came over. I told him I wanted to get out and he said, “Shut up and count your strokes.” So I did. Had I gotten out, it never would have happened. And now I’ve done that crossing every year for 38 consecutive years and every time it’s a different experience. I’ve been guided by pelicans, which are good luck for me. I’ve seen harbor porpoises. One time we had to wait for a tanker, and another time we saw a pilot whale go out under the bridge.

You’ve had some run-ins with harbor seals, yes?

When you do a Gate crossing, you have to touch Lime Rock in Sausalito. One time I went to touch the rock, and here’s this harbor seal right in front of it. His eyes are like this [makes wide eyes] and I look over to see if anyone else saw it. My husband in a boat nearby said he did. But when I looked back it was gone, and I couldn’t even feel it leave. He just disappeared.
Once, when I was swimming in Monterey Bay by myself—well, my husband was on the beach—the harbor seals that had been on the beach and on the rocks got in the water and when I looked up, suddenly all these heads popped up, all in a half circle around me.

Another time in Monterey Bay, I felt something hit my foot, and I jumped out of the water what felt like 20 feet. So, on a subsequent swim, I saw a big fat seal sunning on a rock and I thought, you touch me, now’s my chance to touch you. I literally had to crawl up on that rock—I have the scars to prove it. But I touched him. He was too fat to move.

You joined the club in 1978. What did you like about it?

It was like an extended family. They just welcomed you in and made you feel like you were part of a family. When I lived in the city—I live in Petaluma now and it’s harder to come down—it was my home away from home. I’d ride my bike to the club, swim, walk to work in the financial district, walk back to the club, swim, and then bike home.

Did you do anything else at the club other than swim?

I rowed, I ran, I biked. I had a different activity partner for each one. No one else did all four!

When you dream, do you dream of swimming?

Yes. I started swimming when I was eight, and I used to dream of this one pool that was marble. It was the most beautiful pool I’d ever seen. I didn’t know where it came from. Then when I was 20, living in Boston, a girlfriend and I went to the Y for a swim. We walked in and it was the pool I was dreaming about all those years! And of course I dream about swimming and breathing underwater. I usually also swim pretty fast.

Message from Outgoing Running Commissioner
By Brenda Austin

By now most SE runners probably know that Tara Sweet is our new running commissioner for 2016 (and perhaps beyond). Welcome, Tara! She is a great runner and is currently training for the Oakland Marathon, which is one of her favorites.

Dominic Spinetta earned the title of 2015 Runner of the Year. Dom not only completed the DC Escape from Alcatraz Tri (DCEFAT) but he set a new age group record. We’ll have to outlast Dominic and keep on moving.

In 2015, Jim Grant won the Boitano Cup yet again. Jim is a consistent runner. Someone better come out and challenge him this year!

It would be impossible to list all the accomplishments of all Southie runners. Suffice it to say that for a good number of us, running is not our primary sport. We run to cross-train and to move through the great outdoors in a manner that is land-based and a little slower than a bike. Swimmers beware, gravity and weight-bearing exercise is actually good for the health.

Message from New Running Commish
Tara Sweet

Hi! I’m Tara, your 2016 running commissioner. Since I’m a relative newbie, I’ll introduce myself with my SERC story. In October 2013 I was about to head to New York to run the NYC marathon. I was well prepared for a PR (personal record) and so excited to run a marathon in front of my East Coast family. But 10 days before the race, a short speed workout resulted in a stress fracture in my shin that would end up taking over six months to heal. I couldn’t run NY. I couldn’t run at all. I could barely walk. After about a month of feeling sorry for myself, I just couldn’t take it anymore—I needed to get some exercise somehow and swimming was just about all I could do with a lame leg. I’ve always loved the water, I swam before I walked, but I’ve never been a “swimmer.” Pools are intimidating! People in their lanes with their flip turns and their fancy strokes, all knowing what they’re doing and knowing that I have no clue. I kept marking it on my calendar and then finding an excuse not to go. One December day, an old friend invited me to come down to Aquatic Park with her for a swim (in our wetsuits) after work. It was dark and cold and scary and awesome, I was hooked! After a near-theft of our belongings on the beach, Deborah and I decided to join the club. Deb picked the South End because it seemed more salty, less rules, more fun. I trusted her blindly and sent in my check. My first skins swim was a cool,
sunny day in February, water temp 52—Lynn was reading in the sun (in my memory she was topless, but that might just be because I know her now) and said she’d stay to make sure I survived. I did, and that day I hung up my wetsuit for good. Diana and Denys took me out of the cove for the first time, scrambling down the rocks at Ft. Mason before dawn on a king tide. I was terrified and laughing and smiling so big it hurt, and I’ll love them always for that. I realized quickly the club had still more to offer—Brenda heard I was a runner and had me out for occasional Wednesdays and Dipseas as soon as I was healed. I couldn’t resist the beautiful boats so I started going to Boat Night, met some of the nicest people in the world (seriously), and finally took up rowing. I think I’m a better rower than swimmer now thanks to Jerry’s rigorous workouts. I haven’t taken up handball, that one still intimidates me, but I’ll get in there one of these days.

As running commissioner, as I see it I really only have one job: to secure a win in the running portion of the Interclub Tri. To do that we need two things: 1) runners! and 2) just a bit of training.

In preparation, we’ll continue the tradition of Wednesday morning runs—out the door at 6:00am. The general route will be the tri course to Ft. Point and back (~7 miles), everyone is welcome so go at your own pace and feel free to turn around sooner/later. If you’re training for anything else please let me know! Some of us are running the Kaiser Half, Oakland Marathon, Bay to Breakers, Dipsea, etc.

Please mark the following events on your calendar:
Boitano Cup (one-way Dipsea): 5/21/16
DCEFAT: 9/24/16 (Note: Applications will probably come out 7/1/16; these must be submitted same-day, otherwise you’ll be waitlisted)
Interclub Tri: 10/15/16

Hope to see you Wednesdays!

P.S. In November 2014 I did get another try at the NYC marathon—I PRd by about half an hour. I credit the swimming and rowing (and maybe the steroids I was on for poison oak) for that success.

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Message from the Swim Commissioner

We have 20 swims planned for 2016! We had 110 swimmers for the NYD swim. All but two swam back to the club! We had excellent pilot coverage! The water has been much more therapeutic this year. I personally think if you take your cap off in the cove you get a better effect. By the time you read this the water will probably be back to 55 degrees.

In late January we had our first Sunriser Special for the year. Seven swimmers swam from the club through Farnsworth Gap all the way to Anita Rock against a 2.6 flood! Then swam the easy way back with a good push back to the club! They all made it in under 2.5 hours. This year there will be more aggressive Sunriser Special aka Nutcracker Training Swims. They are the swim mythbusters! There are many who said it can’t be done but they will do more and more impossible swims! The best way to prepare for a long difficult swim is to swim against the tide! The water will train the mind and body how to deal with breaking through obstacles!

Also I hope to add a newbie swim later this year when the water warms up. Keep an eye out for updates on the website and the listserv.

I look forward to having another great year as swim commissioner! There is no way it could be done without all the amazing help everyone has provided to the program! See you in the water!

Tom Linthicum, aka Reptile

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Life member South Ender
Jim Miller has published a book of new poetry. Catch him on his book tour or check out some samples of his new work at www.wetpoetssociety.com
Fleet Week Doubles at the South End
By The Scoop

Saturday, October 10th was “Fleet Week” handball. Traditionally an “age” bracket, i.e., “120 years division” = 50 yr old + 70 yr old, this year was more casual, a fun play day before the Blue Angels roared overhead at 3pm. The South End Handball Commissioner Jim Silla was on hand helping with the food and pounding the ball in a couple of early-morning matches. He promises to bring back the “age” bracket next year if possible.

The Blue Angels had been practicing on Friday, thundering overhead, sending cats and dogs sprinting under tables and beds all over the city. Bearded dragon lizards might have cocked their heads ... at best.

But the fans, and the players, came out. The South End had many dignitaries show up, like Hall of Famers Kevan Del Grande and Wayne Black. Handball action started at 9am and went through to the afternoon. Top open player Coleman McGrath and his dad Tom owned court #1 for most of the morning. But there are a lot of new challengers, such as Justin and Nate ready to bring “Youth and Power” into any match.

Weather—perfect. Warm, light breeze ... helped us forget the $50 mandatory parking charge at all the garages. Oh well, helps underwrite the whole Fleet Week event, right?

Lots of naval officers walking outside the South End, lots of swimmers inside jumping into fairly warm Bay waters, and thousands of fans covering every inch of real estate to welcome the airshow.

Bottom line—there is no better viewing of the Blue Angels than from the roof of the South End. Next year, be there. Early, of course ... and stay overnight to enjoy the city and avoid the gridlock leaving the city. Good views, good handball, good food, good show thanks to the hospitality of the South End Rowing Club.
The Men’s Locker Room … Unlocked
By Cy Lo

I was simultaneously horrified and fascinated when shown the men’s locker room on my first day at the club. I inhaled the charm, decrepitude, and uniqueness of this dirty, smelly, and historic place, so cold that some call it the “Meat Locker” (ed. note: I doubt that’s the only reason it’s called that).

The planned upgrades to the women’s locker room during the upcoming remodel had me thinking that someday a new woman member will think: Who were the former residents of my locker? Were they rowers, handballers, swimmers? Were they rogues, heroes, priests, workers? Probably all of the above, and then some. Ulysses S. Grant was president when the club was founded, and he’d fit right in.

Locker waiting lists aren’t unique to the women. There’s an unsubstantiated story of a club member on the edge of consciousness, lying on the locker room floor, friends gathered around him; a pal knelt over him and asked, “If you die, can I have your locker?”

Today’s locker users are as quirky as the old-timers; clothes and exercise equipment aren’t the only things kept inside. Alcohol is a common item, saved for special-event saunas, but there are other things as well.

Here are some pictures of the lockers, inside and out. (Sadly, some locker doors aren’t for the faint-hearted [ed. note: we have the faint-hearted at the South End?] and cannot be shown!)
Welcome, New Members!

Joseph Asiano          Melody Hernandez          David Sotomayor
Tim Attell            Gabrielle Hildebrand      Michael Stortz
Sally Bahowick        Brian Ip                Norman Stupfel
William Baynes        Harry Jacobs            Joe Toboni
Cameron Bellamy       Andrew Johnson           Stephen Townsend
Veronica Blanco       Robb Kapla              Daniel Turner III
Zachary Bondurant     Justine Lam             Caroline Wallace
Kate Bowerman         Vanessa Lea              Georgia Wells
Julia Brashares       Hilary Lewis             Damian Westray
Claudia Bruno         Alex Lin                 Michael Wrigley
Monica Burgos         Zach Margolis
Romeo Carambas        Jane Mason
Michelle Choy          James Mayfield
Laura Collins          Terry McKellips
Rich Conder           Ken Mignosa
Vanick Der Bedrossian Suzanne Mitchell
Tumua Fa’asua          Nora Murphy
Joyce Gagnon           Stephen Nixon
Mezhanskiy Gleb       Sheila O’Brien
Marc Glomb            Justin O’Reilly
Vince Grimaldi        Daniel Prieto
Marty Guess           Laurent Rains
Dan Hagan             Danny Rimer
Thomas Hale           Richard Schaefer
Tina Harrison          Donna Schumacher
Peter Hayden           David Smith