August 2018          |         A Publication of the South End Rowing Club          |          www.serc.com

THE
SOUTH ENDER
The South Ender is the newsletter of the South End Rowing Club, published three to four times per year since 1931. We publish material by our members that reflects the ideals, purposes, and accomplishments of the South End.

It’s our members who make this newsletter, so send articles, short items, archived newspaper clippings, bawdy songs, and high-resolution photos to newsletter@serc.com.

We reserve the right to edit all submitted material, but we’ll be nice about it, we promise.
Letter from the President

By Simon Dominguez

Hello SERC friends,

Simon your president here. Welcome to another fun-filled and interesting South End Rowing Club newsletter. Dylan Tweney and his team have done a great job capturing some of the unusual things that South Enders are doing, and as we head into summer, we have already had some heroic adventures completed by our members that we hope to be able to chronicle in future editions of this publication.

As some of you know, my focus when joining the club was to find a place where I could train for some long marathon swims. My family thought what I was doing was crazy, my friends thought I had lost my marbles, but my new friends at the SERC thought that the long hours in the water (which were needed to be ready for a marathon) were a normal part of life.

I remember talking with current Swim Commissioner Kelley Prebil about the six- or eight-hour training swims we had just done one weekend as though that is what a normal person would do. Is getting into the water at 10 at night and swimming until 6 the next morning extreme? At the time I didn’t think so. Nor did many Southies.

Due to injury, I am now not able to do any more marathon swims. But that doesn’t matter (because I hear that some people also run marathons). The fact that I joined the club for one particular reason and that reason has changed is not an issue. I feel that as I am able to pass my knowledge and experience on to others, then this is what it is all about.

So if you have any hefty goals or want to seriously investigate doing something that is outside your comfort zone, something that non-club members think is not possible, please reach out to those South Enders around you who might have already done it. You will be surprised how much our members will be willing to help you to reach your goals—the crazier the better.

I mention the above to remind everyone that we are all members of a very special and inclusive club. Are we all normal? I’d say no! And I think we should celebrate this. I feel we are amazingly abnormal in the way we support and encourage each other to do supernatural things. And our members are completing extraordinary adventures all the time.

Let’s celebrate diversity and encourage those around us to push their personal boundaries. We all become stronger from it.

Regards,

Simon
A Brief History of the Barge South End

By Bob Barde

Editor’s Note: The South End barge was rechristened on June 2, 2018, after a 12-year restoration by numerous South End volunteers. Here is the backstory on this old boat.

A four + cox barge by the name of South End was acquired and launched by this club in 1891. It lasted just a little over 20 years, but boats can wear out.

In January of 1914 the board "undertook to draw up plans and specifications, suitable for an eight oared pleasure boat [emphases added] to accommodate twelve passengers."

Mere chance did not drive the timing of this decision. An event much larger than the South End was looming large on the horizon: the 1915 Panama Pacific International Exposition, one of the great triumphs in the city's history. On February 23, 1914, the city staged "year before opening exercises" with "aquatic races a feature." Ed Scully was on the aquatic planning committee, and it was likely that the South End saw the need to gear up for the many aquatic events that would be part of the PPIE itself. Thus the club put out to bid an order for a new and different boat.

"Al Rogers, the Boatbuilder presented his plans for the proposed eight oared pleasure barge." But Rogers was not the only bidder, nor was his bid of $1,000 the lowest. In August, Al Rogers threw 'em a curve: he offered "to build a six oared pleasure barge similar in specifications to those submitted for the eight oared boat, for the sum of $750."

A month later Rogers showed up in person to discuss the new six-oared boat. It is unclear why the smaller, cheaper craft appealed to the committee—perhaps simply because it was cheaper. In September, the deal was signed.

Who Built the Barge?

Alfred Rogers wasn't just another boatbuilder. Long before George Pocock, he was the preeminent builder of racing rowing craft on the West Coast. And his clients weren't limited to the locals. Rogers built a ladies' gig for the San Diego Rowing Club and for the Royal Hawaiian Boat Club. Around 1887 he built the six-oared pleasure barge John Wieland for the Dolphin Club.

Like most boatbuilders, Rogers knew something about boats from having rowed them. In 1875 he was reported to have rowed stroke for the Pioneers in a Thanksgiving Day race against the Neptunes.

Innovations and being at the forefront of rowing technology would be a hallmark of Rogers's career. A barge he built for the Ariels included "seats fitted with four rollers on elevated slides—quite a new arrangement on this Coast." Whenever the Pacific Association of Amateur Oarsmen discussed possible changes to permitted designs, Rogers was part of the discussion.

The 1914 agreement with the South End was that Rogers would deliver the new, six-oared pleasure barge in three months. The $750 purchase price, equivalent to over $18,000 in 2017 dollars, stood for over 40 percent of the total amount that the club collected from its 131 members in 1914 ($1,721.50). The big boat was a big deal for the South End.

The First Christening

On February 13, 1915, the club took possession of the South End. She was rowed the 10 miles from west Alameda to Black Point Cove (now Aquatic Park) in an hour and 10 minutes by a crew of distinguished South Enders, with Captain Ed Scully as stroke. Al Rogers and Tommy Beggs, the club's mascot, were also in the
boat. (Chronicle, February 15, 1915) Somehow, 20 people found places in the barge without swamping it (the Call claimed it could hold 25!), and for good measure, they rowed around Alcatraz and back.

On Valentine's Day 1915, our long love affair with the South End officially began. The christening ceremony of "the largest and finest [barge] of its character on the Pacific Coast" drew some 300 people—more than double the club's membership—to watch 9-year-old Marion Deremer, daughter of past club president Fred R. Deremer, who named the new boat South End, after breaking a bottle of champagne across the bow.

The South End clubhouse was tarted up well and fancy. The building in the photograph looked newly painted, like a posh country club or yacht club. American flags hung from the balcony, the gents were decked out in their dark suits, white shirts, and dark hats. Ladies, a decided minority as guests at this all-male bastion, were dressed in their Sunday finery—although none of them but Miss Marion seem to have been allowed on the dock for the boat's christening.

A brass band enlivened the festivities. In the photo the uniforms are hard to identify, but they were in all likelihood a police band, given the large numbers of Irish and policemen who were members of the club.

The boat itself ought to have been the center of attention. We have but three photos of this joyous event and the South End, of course, is in every one: being admired by the assembled crowd, being christened and, finally, being presented much like a prize heifer at a 4H club fair with those who raised her. Yet in none of these shots is the boat the center of attention. The photographer seemed more intent on capturing the people gathered there to make it an event.

Try as we might, we cannot fully recreate that day over a century ago. Nor can we capture all the adventures that the South End has had in the intervening hundred years.

What we can do today is to celebrate the foresight of Ed Scully and our South End ancestors in bequeathing to us the boat—this vessel full of history—that has been lovingly restored by many volunteers so that our South End descendants can enjoy it another hundred years from now.
Women’s Handball: It’s a Thing!

By Kim Howard

About a year ago, Louise Bea came to a South End happy hour for the first time in eons. She used to come to happy hour almost every Friday after playing handball with the guys, but has tapered her playing time over the years.

“How would you like to learn to play handball?” she asked me. “I would not,” I replied. She laughed and explained that the Dolphin Club board was discussing getting rid of their only remaining court due to lack of use. Without their court, the South End would not be able to host our world-class tournaments because we need a minimum of three courts. (We use the Dolphin court in exchange for maintaining it.)

I reluctantly agreed to try it out for a couple of weeks, since it was for a good cause; after all, the handballers were instrumental in the creation of our Friday night happy hours and many of them are friends of mine.

One week in I was hooked. Handball is equally demanding physically and mentally. An hour of play feels like less than 15 minutes because a) it’s fun and b) I’m so focused on hitting the ball. My Fitbit offers proof after every game that it’s the best workout of my life. It’s a thousand times harder than it even looks, which keeps it forever challenging, and chasing a ball makes me feel like a kid again.

Handball is ridiculously fun, and it’s one of the most social sports because of all the time we get to talk while warming up, in between games, and definitely afterward, when we sometimes share bubbly or beer. It’s fitting that our courts straddle our bar.

Anna Sojourner is the only South End woman who’s been playing handball consistently in recent years but she’s too advanced for newbies, so I went recruiting. It was easier than I expected. Enthusing about handball in the sauna and at happy hour last year enticed Karla Ocampo Valle, Ann Dunn, Janie Bryant, and Ann Rea.

To help us along, many of the guys as well as Louise Bea and Diane Davis—two of only a handful of women I know of who played handball at the South End over the last century—played patiently with us, showed us drills, taught us how to warm up, and encouraged us to keep at it.

Then, earlier this year pro handball player Tracy Davis joined the South End, attracted to our tight-knit handball community, which she likened to New York, where she grew up. She jumped right in, leading clinics for us and even volunteering at happy hour.

The male handball players have been supportive of us all along, but got more actively involved in our development as they witnessed us sticking to it, particularly Rory Moore, Wayne Black, Tom McGrath, and Rich Vasquez. And to our great appreciation, Carlos Ocampo is leading conditioning clinics for us all summer.

Momentum is growing quickly, and now we have more than 25 women learning and playing!

The U.S. Handball Association (USHA) got word of how many women are learning the game here and sent us a huge box of free handball gear, and

**Want to learn handball?**

Newbies generally play:

- Tuesday and Thursday evenings, 5:00 – 8:00 PM
- Sunday mornings, 8:00 AM – noon
- At the South End and Dolphin courts or Golden Gate Park
- Contact Kim Howard to learn more
USHA Assistant Development Director Matt Krueger visited us for the first of Tracy’s June clinics. That night we got treated to a who’s who in handball, with Erik Torres (one of the top 20 players in the world) taking the lead in coaching us and bringing with him Loren Collado, also one of the top 20. With stupendous good luck, Colin Crehan (#6 in the world) had just arrived from Ireland and world champion Merv Deckert happened to be visiting from Canada—and they both stepped in to help coach us as well.

And now the ball is really rolling. On June 28, eight South End and Dolphin women played against eight Olympic Club women in the first-ever OC vs. SERC Women’s Handball Invitational. This rare event was organized by their handball coach Anthony Collado, who knows from playing around the world that girls are encouraged to play handball much more ardently in other places (his Lake Forest handball team had equal numbers of men and women), and he wants to foster that kind of environment here.

At the June invitational, Allison Kalhammer, Karla Ocampo Valle, Elizabeth Glass, Heidi Barberini, Colleen MacDonnell and I, plus Dolphins Diane Walton and Mee Lee, played our hearts out and had a blast with the OC women, ending the evening with cheers to repeat the event soon. Judy Irving participated in the pre-tournament clinics that night and I have no doubt she’ll want to play in the next invitational.

Then, on July 1, 16 of us were treated to a special handball coaching session at the Golden Gate Park courts, led by Northern California Handball Association (NCHA) coaches Mike Linnik and his wife Sharon, Tom Fitzwater, and Tracy Davis, followed by lunch compliments of the NCHA.

All of these clinics and coaching sessions are coming at just the right time, because we just got official approval from Handball Commissioner Rory Moore to have the first annual South End Women’s Handball Tournament on Saturday, October 20. Woo hoo! First ever—like ever, ever. Come join us and be part of history! Rory says if we train “harder than ye have ever trained before” the men handballers will cook and run the bar for the event. Now that’s a role reversal I’m eager to see and happy to oblige.

Also learning handball are South Enders Darlene Bagley Comstedt, Sarah Glazer, Elizabeth Kurfess, Laura Mancuso, Rebecca Reilly, Megan Stewart, and Karée Stubbs, as well as Dolphins Charmaine Leonard and Johanna Pitocchelli. Come join us while we’re still new to the game and be part of The Wave. You won’t regret it.
Q&A with the Building Commissioner

By Jim Bock

Q: What’s a building commissioner and why do we need one at the club?

A: The building commish does everything from ordering cleaning supplies and managing the cleaning crew to overseeing the larger capital projects of the building. This includes everything from the front of the building to the dock, and from the sewers to the top of the roof.

Highlights from this month: replaced a dishwasher in the cookshack, made room for another bike rack, began repairs to the stairs leading to the roof deck, did a walk-through with a government entity to assess ways we can save money on lighting and electrical costs, worked with the cleaning crew to sign a new contract to have them there six days a week.

Q: OK, so you are sort of a building whisperer?

A: I do this professionally outside of the club and come to it with over 25 years in the trades. I started out as a framing carpenter for houses, then moved on to building sets and doing lighting for theaters at ACT and Santa Fe Opera. I also taught at UCSB, so I come to this with a strong aesthetic approach to my “handy-manning.”

The biggest concern to me is catching things before they cost more. For example, I like to make sure the water intrusion in the building is kept to a minimum, so we are only spending for paint and caulk and not rebuilding a portion of a water-damaged wall.

Q: How many entities and government agencies does our building come in contact with (who you have to deal with)?

A: Just off the top of my head there are elevator inspectors, fire inspectors, fire extinguisher service people, plumbers, HVAC folks, the NPS, and that “other club” I need to take into consideration when approaching the maintenance of the building. My tack is to keep the powers that be happy enough, but not to draw attention to us.

Q: So building commissioning is partly about dealing with inanimate structures, but it’s also in large part dealing with members of the club, and also dealing with unicellular organisms (mold, bacteria, amoebas) … can you elaborate?

A: 98 percent of the 1,300 members are appreciative. There has been some “entitlement” around the club recently. But just remember, I am a volunteer, not paid staff. So, I am doing the best I can with the long list I have.

As for mold and creepy stuff like that: We are working hard to keep the “ick factor” down. And when I say “we,” remember that this job is way too big for one person to do well, so “we” refers to the volunteers who help me out.
Q: **Jim, this sounds superhuman. How do you do it?**

A: Aw, shut your wet mouth ... tell me about my eyes ... seriously, I think one of my strengths is organizing and working with volunteers. If it were not for the Last Sunday volunteers, not even a tenth of this stuff would get done.

Volunteerism is what makes the club work. If suddenly the volunteers stopped, the club would literally cease to exist. That is not hyperbole. There are volunteers at every level. They do our financials. They plan and run our rowing, swimming, handball, and running programs. They plan and help with our parties and happy hours. They put out the fires between the strong personalities in the club, and they negotiate our lease with Rec and Park and the NPS.

I cannot put this more simply: we need volunteers, or the club will shut down.

It’s not magic, it is the hours of hard work behind the scenes that allow all of us to walk through these doors. Last Sunday is part of that.

**Q: So, Last Sunday is a bit trade school, a bit occupational therapy ... part marriage counseling ... and 100 percent civic pride. How do you not charge people to do this?!**

A: The cool thing is we have music going, you will get fed, and, what I think is the coolest thing is, you will meet people outside the normal roles we have in the club and learn some new things about them.

Also, you can take on any task that you feel comfortable with. So, if you would like to learn more about carpentry, there are usually a few people around who can show you the many magical ways of the miter saw or table saw. If not, get your hands in the dirt and pull weeds. Painting, cleaning, organizing or even washing my truck ... all are skill sets we can use at Last Sunday.

**Q: What are the projects you and the Last Sunday crew have done that make you the most proud?**

A: That is easy: Building a sense of community within those who volunteer. We are often goofy, hardworking, and goal oriented, but it is seeing each other in a new light that strengthens the bonds in the club.

*Editor’s note: This interview was facilitated by Zina Deretsky.*
The New Garbage Program

By the Recycling Rapid Response Team

We have a big announcement about the South End Rowing Club garbage program: there is now a South End garbage program!

Now, for many of us, the South End is a second home. And we know that members come to this home from many different cities around the Bay Area and around the world.

So sorting trash, San Francisco-style, may not come naturally to all of us.

Here’s the short version: You’ll notice three containers in strategic locations. Black bins for landfill, green bins for compost, blue bins for recycling.

Thanks to one of our artists in residence there will be illustrated guides to “what goes where” available at each location for your edification.

Below, we have spelled out in detail how the recycling program will work. Please read, observe, and comply with our new garbage program so that Recology won’t fine us, so we can become better stewards of our bay environment, and so you won’t get reprimanded by Sue Free.

Thank you all for participating!

Your Recycling Rapid Response Team

Details:

There are more than 11 compost-recycle-landfill bin triplets throughout the club: in both locker rooms, in the cookshack, in the restrooms, in the day room, in the upper boathouse, in the lower boathouse, even by the logbook ...

This means you’re never more than a few steps away from a place to throw something away. And as the stewardess (almost) says, “the nearest garbage may be behind you.”

The bins are new and standardized across the building. All bins are now lined with compostable bags.

New, shiny signage was made from Recology materials, but customized for the types of things South Enders specifically would be throwing away.

In the cookshack after cooking and eating, most waste will go in either compost or recycle.

The club has two types of disposable cups:

➤ The clear plastic ones (with the leafy design) go in recycling.

➤ The paper ones with “Compostable” written on them on a green band go in compost.

In general, always check your disposable plates, forks, spoons, knives:

➤ Do they say “compostable” or have a “BPI” symbol? If yes, put them in compost

➤ Are they paper with foodstuff that dirtied them? Compost

➤ Are they paper, and clean? Recycle

➤ Are they plastic? Recycle

Anything with a shiny wrapper—e.g., a potato chip bag or a Gu—goes in landfill.

IF YOU HAVE ANY DOUBT about where to throw something away:

➤ Look at the pictures on and/or behind the bins and try to match them.

➤ If you’re still not sure—chuck it in the landfill/grey garbage bin. It’s more important NOT to contaminate compost or recycle with landfill items than for a few compostable or recyclable items to end up in the landfill bin.
Why I Am a Member of Both Clubs

By Suzie Dods

It might be fun to know why I am a member of both the Dolphin Club and the South End Rowing Club.

In 2006, I was a DC member and on the board of governors. I had just gotten a work permit to be a swim guide for Swim Trek (my dream job!). I was going to be resigning from the board in May, since I was going to be out of the country for six months.

In March or April, U.S. Masters Swimming approached the DC and SERC and asked for help in putting on an Alcatraz swim for their Nationals participants; the Nationals were to be held at Stanford in August.

SERC jumped right on board and said “heck yeah, let’s do this,” even though the date set for the swim didn’t have super-favorable tides.

The DC board of governors hemmed and hawed, throwing out words like “insurance,” “tides,” “liability,” and what have you.

This made no sense to me because the DC, like SERC, was insured by USMS and the event was sponsored by USMS, so the insurance concern was a red herring. I got verbal assurances that the DC would vote for helping with the swim, under the auspices of SERC.

I resigned from the BOG as planned, then went off to Croatia and Greece to work for Swim Trek while getting very tan and thin.

Fast forward to July 2006. I’m sitting at a computer in a small hotel on a small island near Sibenik, Croatia, checking my email on a dial-up modem.

I see on the DC listserv that the DC BOG had voted to not support the Alcatraz event. I was furious, and immediately downloaded a SERC application, wrote a check (on paper—we still did that then!) and mailed them off from the teeny tiny post office on the island of Prvić Luka.

I’ve been a member of both clubs ever since.

Now, I still don’t have a key that works, but I do have a locker!

I may be mistaken, but I do feel that I now “float” between the two clubs pretty well and aim to be a good dual member of both clubs.

When I get ticked off at one club, I can go hang out at the other one. For example, when the SERC board refused to sponsor the 24 Hour Relay a few years ago, I had the DC to fall back on.

I have two great groups of people to meet and hang with.

And I do think knowing how different and much the same they both are is helpful to members.

There was an article written by an SF “society” magazine a few years back in which I was quoted as saying “the clubs are exactly the same and completely different.” I stand by that comment!
Thirsty San Francisco Bay Needs More Fresh Water

By Sejal Choksi-Chugh

A lack of fresh water is tearing apart San Francisco Bay’s web of life.

Salmon hatch in rivers and migrate to the ocean at a young age. They mature there and return to the river where they hatched to spawn—leaving the eggs of a new generation. The bay once teemed with salmon from the two main river systems, the San Joaquin and the Sacramento, that flow into the delta and then to the bay. A local fishing industry thrived.

But over the past century, water has been increasingly diverted from the river systems to irrigate farms and supply cities. Salmon are rarely able to spawn in those rivers and have become scarce. Another fish, the delta smelt, which has long been a scientific indicator of the health of the bay-delta ecosystem, is on the brink of extinction.

Salmon and smelt are the most visible examples of a collapsing ecosystem. The bay’s mixture of fresh river water and salty ocean tides has created a uniquely diverse ecosystem that has sustained a variety of fish, birds, seals, and other creatures. But it’s all under threat.

The bay and delta are thirsty. They need more fresh river water. And this month, regulators are taking an important step that may make a difference. The State Water Resources Control Board is expected to adopt a plan that could increase the fresh water flowing into the bay from the San Joaquin River, and reduce the amount diverted to cities and farms.

The plan uses a percentage of naturally occurring flows as a baseline for how much water needs to remain in the rivers. That’s scientifically valid and a good first step. The plan calls for 40 percent of the natural flow from three San Joaquin tributaries to reach the delta. This is an improvement over some recent years, when the amount of water diverted to cities and farms was as high as 95 percent, with only 5 percent reaching the delta and bay.

But 40 percent is not enough to help fish populations rebound and keep the river, delta, and bay ecosystems healthy. So Baykeeper and our partner environmental groups are advocating that the regulators take the next step, and provide what scientific experts say the bay and delta actually need: to restore 50-60 percent of the entire San Joaquin River basin’s natural winter-spring runoff, not just runoff from the three tributary rivers.

Increases at this level would require new limits on water diverted to Bay Area cities, including San Francisco. But that’s not as dire as it sounds. Existing water storage was more than enough to get us through the last drought, with years of water in reserve. And our region’s cities are already beginning to tap new, sustainable water supplies. We’re making more use of recycled water, and there’s lots of additional potential there. We can also capture more rain that falls here, store it, and use it during the dry season. Other California cities should use these methods to better balance the needs of fisheries, wildlife, and people. Our state can also incentivize farmers to use more efficient irrigation systems and grow crops that require less water.

Individuals can help, too—by making water conservation our way of life. The overwhelming majority of Bay Area residents have shown we’re willing and able to conserve water to benefit our beloved bay and its diverse wildlife. We’ve also shown we can conserve and still maintain a healthy economy. A thriving San Francisco Bay-delta ecosystem is an achievable goal—and that’s what Baykeeper will continue to fight for. To learn more about Baykeeper’s work to protect the San Francisco Bay, visit us at baykeeper.org.

Sejal Choksi-Chugh is the executive director of San Francisco Baykeeper. To report pollution in the bay, call Baykeeper’s hotline at 1-800-KEEP-BAY (1-800-533-7229), email hotline@baykeeper.org, or click “Report Pollution” at baykeeper.org.
A Mermaid’s Lesson About Quitting and Persevering in Lake Tahoe

By Meg Omainsky

Tom: “Try again Friday, Meg?”
Me: “Absolutely.”

Some of you may know that I attempted to swim the length of Tahoe in July, only to quit after a mere 6+ miles. At that point, I sincerely thought I would never try another marathon swim again. 48 hours later, I stood in the dark at the south shore again, meandered through the moorings, and then swam the full 21.3 miles to Hyatt Beach in a time of 12:01:56.

Afterwards, I sat on the “Robin Rose bench” and cried, not from joy, but from pain and the relief that I was finished. I want to share what happened in the hopes that my experience might be helpful to other swimmers considering such an undertaking.

What worked well?

1. During the second attempt, I fed from the boat instead of the kayak so I could get fun, goofy interactions and encouragement from my crew; this changed the whole dynamic. I really enjoyed the swim and was able to focus on having a strong stroke. I felt super strong and solid for 17-18 miles and it turned out to be the perfect swim and everything I had imagined it would be.

2. Thanks to Amy Gubser, I tossed some Pepsi and ginger ale into my feed bag. For several hours in the night I fed on ginger ale and Gu, which worked very well for me and kept my stomach in check while giving me fuel.

3. Although I didn’t plan to, I stayed happy in my mind by singing the happiest song I know, “Zip-a-Dee-Doo-Dah.” It just came to me after about an hour into the swim, I went with it, and it ended up being the best song ever!

4. On both attempts, I carbo loaded with 4 x 32 ounces of coconut water & pineapple mixed with Carbo Pro. I have done this twice, and both times managed to avoid cramps, headaches, vertigo, and nausea, which have plagued some other swimmers in Tahoe.

5. Keep it simple. Throw out your lists and expectations and just ask your crew for what you want as you go along. Be happy the whole time!

What didn’t work?

Although the first 17-18 miles were amazing, I eventually “hit the wall” and hit it HARD. During the last 3.5 miles or so, I lost my most of my speed, stamina, and patience. I wanted to stop all feedings and just get to the end; however, I could not. Ugh. I would swim about 300 yards or less, then stop. Sigh. Look around. Swim breaststroke and then stop. Grunt. Look around. Swim another 100 slow freestyle strokes. Stop. Look around. Grunt. Repeat. This continued for the remainder of the swim. In the end, I couldn’t even swim 4 minutes without stopping. This was the hardest physical challenge I have ever done.

Try it again?

Yes.

Anacapa, Lake George, Great Lakes, Angel Island, English Channel … who knows what I’ll tackle next!
South End Represents at the 2018 Santa Cruz Pier-to-Pier Race

By Scott Tapley

It’s 5:55 a.m. in Capitola and the morning sun peeks over the Santa Cruz mountains. The forecast calls for patchy fog and gusty wind arriving early. But for now it appears to be another perfect day at the beach. In two hours, despite recent great white shark sightings and thick jellyfish blooms, 16 brave swimmers will enter the cool Pacific, leave Capitola beach, head two miles out to sea, turn right, and swim west to Cowell beach in Santa Cruz. This is the Pier-to-Pier, a 10-kilometer open water swim.

In the late 1970s the Pier-to-Pier swim was a grassroots race among friends. It eventually became part of the Pacific Masters Open Water series, organized by Joel Wilson, who is the head coach of Santa Cruz Masters Swimming and a longtime SERC member. The race was eventually dropped as an event and went dormant for several years, until the Monterey Bay Swimming Association brought it back in 2015.

The Monterey Bay Swimming Association was formed to promote and support marathon swimming in Monterey Bay, and to unite the swimming communities between Monterey, Santa Cruz, and San Francisco. All five of the Monterey Bay Swimming Association founders are members of the South End Rowing Club and this year, 11 of 16 Pier-to-Pier swimmers and half of the support paddlers are South Enders.

The sand is warm as swimmers prepare their feeds and contemplate the swim ahead. Standing at the water’s edge beside the brightly colored Venetian Hotel, the horn sounds and they’re off. Passing the end of the Capitola wharf, each swimmer pairs with their paddler. Frances Sawyer is paddling for Mathiew Fuzellier. He takes off like a torpedo and the lead boat steps on the gas to avoid being overtaken. Close behind him are Van Cornwell, guided by Brian Ip; Mathew Williams piloted by Ryan Nelson; and Evan Morrison with John Chapman. The South Enders are off to a speedy start.

Swimmers pass the first turn wearing huge smiles. One South Ender who is always smiling, even in gnarly conditions, is Sarah Roberts. She is teamed with husband and expert paddler David Roberts. Another family duo is Kirk McKinney and daughter Maya McKinney. Families who play together ...

During the first hour conditions are perfect. The water is 60F, the wind is calm, and the sky is blue. But, as the group heads west toward Santa Cruz, the fog rolls in and the wind arrives on cue. The greyness slowly engulfs them one by one. South Enders Dylan Tweney (with Naji Ali), Kim Hedges (with Uta Grieshammer), John Jeha (with Marta Bechhoefer), Susan Blew (with Cathy Harrington), and Kelley Prebil (with Miguel Melendez) are flying blind.

Swimmers are now a half-mile offshore, swimming parallel to land, passing Pleasure Point, the Santa Cruz Harbor, and the Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk. Although safety boats have every swimmer in sight, the fog and wind make navigation challenging and the gusty wind and currents continue to push swimmers off course toward land. Soon, the fog lifts and reveals the Santa Cruz Wharf in the distance. The water temperature drops, as low as 55F in some spots.

Under very challenging conditions, the mighty South Enders forge onward. One swimmer with severe leg cramps exits the water on the east side of the wharf, while the others continue around to Cowell Beach, completing the infamous Pier-to-Pier. Most swimmers record swim tracks ranging from 6.3 to 6.8 miles, making this year’s race a 10K+ and an unofficial South End Nutcracker.

As the final swimmers approach the beach, the sun breaks out, champagne is popped, high fives and congratulatory hugs abound. The smell of cotton candy, corn dogs, and the rattle and screams of the nearby Giant Dipper roller coaster fill the air. This is what open water swimming is all about.
Summer Swimming Reading

By Marc P. Cruciger

When you're not swimming, why not read about swimming? Here's a short list of 12 books that I found to be terrific reads ... perfect for those lazy summer days.

Swim: Why We Love the Water by Lynn Sherr

“Sherr immerses the reader in the history, lore, science and trivia of swimming. In barely 200 pages of buoyant prose illustrated with photos, diagrams and swimming art, Sherr presents an enormous amount of aquatic info [...] Best of all, Sherr captures the physical thrill of the one human activity that takes place in a completely alien element. Dive in.” Sports Illustrated

The Devil’s Teeth: A True Story of Obsession and Survival Among America’s Great White Sharks by Susan Casey

“From its startling opening description of scientists racing to the bloody scene where a shark has decapitated a seal, this memoir-cum-natural and cultural history of the Farallon Islands—‘the spookiest, wildest place on Earth’—plunges readers into the thrills of shark watching.” Publishers Weekly

Tides: The Science and Spirit of the Ocean by Jonathan White

“A wonderfully paced account [...] White offers clear explanations of how tides work and scientific giants such as Aristotle, Copernicus [...] and others helped us get where we are today.” The Wall Street Journal

Deep: Freediving, Renegade Science, and What the Ocean Tells Us About Ourselves by James Nestor

The ocean, journalist Nestor reminds us, is “the final unseen, untouched, and undiscovered wilderness.” It is also a frontier extremely difficult to explore. The pressure is so intense that at 30 feet down our “lungs collapse to half their normal size.” Yet Nestor watches divers descend to 300 feet without scuba gear at a freediving competition. Booklist

Blue Mind is a fascinating study of the emotional, behavioral, psychological, and physical connections that keep humans so enchanted with water. Nichols examines seas and oceans, lakes and rivers, even swimming pools and the contents of our bathtubs in a study that is both highly readable and rooted in real research. Washington Post

Sex in the Sea: Our Intimate Connection with Sex-Changing Fish, Romantic Lobsters, Kinky Squid, and Other Salty Erotica of the Deep by Marah J. Hardt

“[Hardt’s] fascination with the sheer variety and kinkiness of sex in the ocean is unbounded.” Sierra

Swimming Anatomy by Ian McCloud

“Buy Swimming Anatomy and treat it as the authoritative liftoff into the world of aquatic strength and conditioning.” Swimming World

Venomous: How Earth’s Deadliest Creatures Mastered Biochemistry by Christie Wilcox

“A lively tour [...] Whether she’s discussing snakes and pufferfish or Komodo dragons and spiders—not to mention octopuses, snails, platypuses, and bees—Wilcox relates technical biochemical and physiological information in a manner that is accessible and enjoyable.” Publishers Weekly

Spineless: The Science of Jellyfish and the Art of Growing a Backbone by Juli Berwald

“Spineless is as mesmerizing, surprising, and beautiful as the jellyfish itself. Every page contains some astonishing treasure. If you cherish the sea, if you care about the environment, if you relish life on this sweet, blue planet, you will love this book.” The New York Times

Haunts of the Black Masseur: The Swimmer as Hero by Charles Sprawson

Sprawson, an English art dealer who swam the Hellespont, has produced a delightful, profound
cultural and literary history of swimming, bathing, and the social meanings of water from ancient Greece to the modern Olympics. Publishers Weekly


“Lynne Cox’s books are the works of a singular mind. That was true for the bestsellers Swimming to Antarctica and Grayson, and it is true for [this book], a 300-page paperback instructional that is the most unlikely page-turner you could put on your summer reading list. She’s written a sort of fantasy in which you, the reader, are the protagonist. You can’t swim half a mile? Cox will put you on a program to swim 10!” Sports Illustrated

Where the Crazy People Swim by SERC member Steve Walker

What drives a person to swim long distances in cold water? Why attempt something could kill you? Where the Crazy People Swim lays bare the mind of a swimmer who honestly and candidly describes his fears, his motivations, and his ultimate goal—not only in swimming, but in life.

Remembering Rosemary McNally, 1947-2018

By Jeyn Duncan, Karyn Noel, Tina DiRienzo and Cathy Bump

“So … how did YOU get here?” Unsuspecting SERC newbies would often get asked this by Rosemary. She knew we all had a unique journey that ended with us joining the South End, our club like no other. Our sport is special and Rosemary thought of open water swimming as much more than just a sport. It was community, friendship, a way to challenge yourself or just to experience the bay, a way to belong to something bigger than yourself.

She encouraged new members to take risks, even if they came in DFL. She was inclusive, humble in her own athletic capabilities, and fun-loving. Whether she was race directing, kayaking, body marking (her favorite), timing, registering swimmers at 5 a.m., or doing a RTB (round trip boat), she brought her own brand of humor. Her costumes were legendary and her white faux fur coat will remain a Rosemary trademark.

Rosemary joined the South End Rowing Club about 12 years ago with her dear friend Trudy Molina. Their annual Tahoe and Donner swims weren’t enough to make them “real” cold water swimmers. Trudy suggested they swim more than twice per year, to which Rosemary said, “Let’s join the South End Club.” Trudy’s suggestion that they look at the Dolphin Club also was met with a no from Rosemary. That’s how Rosemary got here! We were graced with her presence.

Watching an exuberant life cut short is heartbreaking, but Rosemary left us with a responsibility. One of the final wishes she expressed to some South End members while sick was this: “I want everybody to know that anyone can do this. We can all have a place in the master’s community. We don’t have to be stars.”

We’ve got your back on that one, Rosemary! We’ll be more inclusive, fun-loving, and humble. We’ll remember to ask people how THEY got here. And maybe we’ll throw in a few costumes while we’re at it.

Thank you for leaving your mark on the Mighty South End. You are and will continue to be missed. We love you!
South Enders Down Under

By Angelina Calderon and Lauren Gilbertson

In May a crew of 21 South End swimmers and their guests made their way across the Pacific to the fair city of Sydney, Australia—home of the iconic Harbour Bridge, Opera House, and our dear friends at the Bondi Icebergs. The South End has been the official sister club of the Icebergs since 2013, and this trip marked our third visit there.

Despite this trip being the start of their winter swimming season, there was nothing winter about it. The weather was hot and sunny and the ocean was calm, clear, and warm. We were welcomed with open arms by their former president Alan Gow, current president Benn Dullard, swim captain Ben Morrissey, and many others for a fantastic residency filled with adventurous swims, sausage sizzles, and social hours (... and hours).

Here are a few highlights from our trip, presented in the hopes that in reading this you'll be just as inspired to welcome the Icebergs to San Francisco in 2019 as we were to visit them.

**Bronte Beach to Bondi Swim**

This swim marked the first of our athletic events together and was a warm, surf-filled 1.2-mile swim from Bronte Beach north to Bondi. We swam out of the beach in a rip current, up and over some three-foot swells, and around the cliff-filled coastline back to Bondi. Just short of the Icebergs’ finish line—they call it the bogey hole—I remembered Alan's directions and stopped short to catch a gentle wave, which helped me glide over the reef and right up the steps to their deck. This was my favorite swim, and it was incredible to see the open Pacific to my right while still being so close to shore. The biggest learning from this swim was that, unlike on our swims, the Icebergs generally don't have a lot of strong current to contend with—it’s the wind and surf conditions that matter more.

**Race across Bondi Bay**

The Icebergs have a strong tradition of timed races, which are done in two ways: first, a person can win a race by having the fastest time and second, another person can also win if their time is the closest to their predicted time, which is written down by the race captain prior to the start.

This year’s race was a quick jaunt out and back across Bondi bay from the club to a jetty in north Bondi, where we swam with a goal of not just being the fastest, but the most accurate. Rules were strict for this one: We had to all start at once, we couldn’t wear any watches lest we know how fast we’re going, and we couldn’t
glance at others’ predicted times. The swim was quick, warm, and delightful. And we had the added benefit of winning! This year’s fastest swimmer was Emily Buskirk, and the most accurate time went to Kim Peinado Howard, who came within 10 seconds of her predicted time. Well done, ladies.

Winter Swimming Opening Day

This is. It. The first Sunday in May marks the start of winter swimming in Australia. Many swim and surf lifesaving clubs participate, and out of these the Icebergs host the first race day. We arrived that morning to see festive banners hoisted around the club, the barbecue firing up, and a party atmosphere building. Hundreds of people from many different swim clubs were coming in, local and national government officials arrived, and, more important, we suited up and made our way to the race board to see which heats we’d been placed in. Like many a South End club event, we enjoyed the sun, swam our races, listened to some speeches, and enjoyed a fabulous party the rest of the day. Unlike our club events, we opened the season by each holding an old-fashioned block of ice and plunging into the pool all together to “cool the water down.” It was fabulous!

Looking Ahead

There are so many stories to tell beyond this one article, and many more people involved than can be named here. Check out the feed from the trip on the South End Facebook group, ask our president, Simon Dominguez, about visiting the Icebergs, and brainstorm with the originator of the sister club relationship, Joe Butler, on how we can show the Icebergs another amazing adventure when they come to San Francisco.

Our next reunion will be in summer 2019 when the Icebergs visit San Francisco, and we hope to make it their best trip yet. We alternate visits each year, so 2020 is our next turn to head to Sydney. Many of us from this year’s trip are planning to return and we hope more South Enders will join us. Onward!
Welcome New Members

By Kathy Bailey, Membership Commissioner


In Memoriam

Don Birrer

September 12, 1935 - May 24, 2018
Life Member and played handball for over 60 years

Save the Date!

SERC Holiday Party: A Snowy Starry Night

Saturday, December 1, 2018, 5 to 8 p.m.

Formal dress welcomed: snowy-white gowns, frozen crystal encrusted dresses, midnight-blue suits, black or white tuxes.

Five white-lit, shimmery Christmas trees, approx. 7 feet tall, will be available directly after the party for a donation to SERC. $500 for all five — or best offer. Contact Jane Koegel at entertainment@serc.com.
South End Rowing Club
500 Jefferson St.
San Francisco, CA 94109

Photo by Jeff Cooperman