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.

You can find digital copies of this and past issues, many in color, at serc.com/about/newsletters.

It’s our members who make this newsletter, so please send articles (up to 650 words), poems, jokes, and high-resolution photos to newsletter@serc.com.

Notes: The article on the Alcatraz Invitational in the November 2018 issue neglected to mention swim commissioner Kelley Prebil, who organized the kayak flotilla. The article on SERC Ironman swimmers in the same issue overlooked Joe Oakes, who participated in the famous Hawaii triathlon in 1980 (on Oahu), 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984, and 1985. Also, the photo of Bill Wygant on page 28 of the Fall 2017 issue (with the article “How to Be a Pilot in Seven Easy Steps”) was taken by Janie Bryant.
The Importance of Volunteering

By Cy Lo

“If you don’t like the news, go out and make some of your own.”

—Scoop Nisker, DJ, KSAN/KFOG, ’60s-’70s

Longtime San Franciscans may remember this radio sign-off from Scoop.

This applies to volunteerism for our club. We’ve got over 1,400 members in our little club, and that number is still growing. There is only one paid person, our bookkeeper Susan Wintersteen, and a three-person cleaning staff. That’s it. Everything else is done by volunteers. There are members who do amazing things with huge responsibilities keeping this place running. Many of these people get paid professionally for doing what they provide for free at our club. Thank you!

We’ve got an amazing energy: nationally-ranked handballers, rowers, swimmers, runners, and other world-class athletes coexisting with people who come in every day to enjoy our sports. It’s only possible because of the ecosystem we’ve built by putting our hearts into the club rather than dollars for staff.

As we walk around the club or use the facilities, we all have moments where we think “shoulda/coulda done this,” “Why can’t we do/have...” “Why don’t they just...” If you have these questions, jump in and do it yourself!

Ask the question we all love to hear: “How can I help?” I guarantee, you won’t be turned down.

It isn’t necessary to rebuild stairs, repair a boat, organize the Invitational, run a sports event, or cook. It’s just as important to help those who do, use a broom when you see sand, clean out the hair in a drain, wash dishes, wipe down a table, barkeep a happy hour, or pick up after yourself.

Don’t have the time? Give up one swim, one row, or one game, and give that time back to the club. Do the little things. Pretend that this is your house — because it is!

And by the way, when you see people helping out, give them a thanks!
I started my rowing ‘career’ as a curious freshman who walked onto the UCSD women’s crew team in 2002. I had no idea what I was getting into: the rush of competition, the drive to keep getting faster, and a rowing family that spent most of their waking hours in boats, in the gym, and at the dining hall. It flashed by in an instant, and then it was over.

This fall I had a chance to race with my SERC family, and those all-too-familiar feelings of anticipation, excitement, and community came flooding back!

When our 2018 rowing commissioner, Oliver Gajda, first mentioned the World Rowing Coastal Championships at a meeting last winter, I thought he was crazy. Some of us at that rowing meeting were experienced university rowers. Some learned to row on the waters outside of SERC. And a couple (!) were still novices learning to row. We joked about jackets and hats, and making sure we’d look good.

But then we trained. And we showed up. And in October, we represented SERC at the 2018 World Coastal Championships!

**Notes from the Road**

*Forty-eight hours ago I was on my way to the airport with a new South End Rowing USA ‘uni’ and a familiar tingle. We’d transformed our little crew into quite the mighty team and for the first time ever, SERC will compete in the World Rowing Coastal Championships.*

*As I sit here tonight, I’m writing from a big house in Victoria surrounded by our team. We’re tired from our first day on the water and we’re super excited to master the illustrious ‘beach start.’ We will meet rowers from some of the 20+ countries rowing this week. A team from Hong Kong helped me with my boat, a quick guy from France whirled by us on the course, and two women from Germany plowed into (and overturned) an inflatable buoy. I know this week will flash by in an instant, and then it will be over.*

*As good as it feels to race again, it’s topped by the feeling of being part of a team. By the time this story is published, we will have represented the Mighty South End in (1) women’s double, (3) mixed doubles, (1) men’s double, (2) women’s singles, and (2) men’s singles.*

*By any account, we’ll have represented the South End and Team USA well.*

**The Aftermath**

We had an amazing trip bonding as a group and training amongst the world’s top coastal rowers. While in Victoria, we met rowers from all walks of life—some recreational, some professional, and every kind in between! The community is very welcoming and supportive, sharing tips during warm-ups and high fives at the finish line. We even had a chance to speak with leaders from US Rowing, and learned about new momentum to bring coastal rowing races to the US in 2019.

A year ago I joined SERC to stay in shape. I came for the sport and I’m staying for the family.
One of the high points of South End rowing history came in 1933. Bob Cumming had paved the way in 1931, when he took second at the national championships on the Schuylkill River in Philadelphia. Two years later he went east again, this time accompanied by the crew of the club’s four-oared shell with cox. Also along was Pete Donlon, stroke on the Cal crew that won gold at the 1928 Olympics, who had joined the South End and coached the crew. They took their shell on the train to Chicago to row in the National Association of Amateur Oarsmen “Centennial Exposition” championships on Lake Michigan. As there was no collegiate regatta in 1933, this was that year’s national championships.

The “powerful boatload from the South End Rowing Club … included three members of the 1932 eight-oared Olympic champions” of the University of California. The South Ends rowed away with the winners’ medals, defeating the South Side Boat Club of Quincy, Illinois, in their three-quarters-of-a-mile finals by ten lengths.

Among that South End crew was William Van Voorhis (No. 2), whose son, Bruce, shared this story of William’s route to the National Championship:

He just missed out being selected as the alternate from the [Cal] Junior Varsity team for the 1932 Olympics in Los Angeles. He had a somewhat disappointing Varsity season but did earn his block C varsity letter. Feeling a bit unfulfilled, he continued rowing after Cal. In 1933, he continued to work out at the South End Rowing Club with four others. They shared a common goal [and] raised enough money from the community to pay for taking the train with a shell back to Chicago for the National Association of Amateur Oarsmen National Championships in August, 1933. They entered the four oarsmen and coxswain competition. Because of the Great Depression, there was no collegiate championship. This meant that the NAAO meet was very well-attended by respected college and university teams. As a walk-on team, the SERC team was hardly a favorite … Although my father was always very proud of this accomplishment, he stopped rowing, but he never stopped considering himself a Texan, a Cal Bear, and a national champion oarsman on the SERC team.

Adding to the success of the trip, Cumming took second in the 145-pound single sculls. The City had contributed $1,000 to cover the crew’s travel costs, but this was an anomaly for the Depression era. That successful trip of a South End crew to face national competition back east was never to be repeated, probably because the cost and the logistics were just too daunting for a small West Coast club.

And that, to my knowledge, was the one and only time a South End crew has won an open national rowing championship.
I’ve had an awesome two years being your boathouse captain, and want to say thanks for the opportunity. I was chosen to be the leader, but in reality was just the facilitator for the enthusiastic people who did the work. My talent was to challenge the crew and get out of their way.

We’ve created a motivated and talented group and accomplished a lot in these two years: We built an efficient workshop, got the South End barge in the water, and improved maintenance of the wooden fleet and the shells. We’ve gotten two new shells and the Lite boat. We’ve doubled the volunteer crew and raised the boat-building skills of every volunteer. Boat Nighters collectively volunteer 900+ hours each year towards the boat program, eliminating the need for costly professionals. We’ve been blessed to have amazing cooks for all 50 sessions of Boat Night and we’ve had 29 different cooks feed us over the year.

Say aloha to next year’s boathouse captain, Tom Wurm. With him the program is in good or better hands. Tom has taken boat-building courses and is knowledgeable and skilled in boat repairs and woodworking, and he’s also a good mechanic. He’s a longtime member who was working on the boats before there was a separate boathouse captain position. Tom was a shop foreman in the City and has organizational and safety skills, which are perfect for the program. Also an accomplished rower, Tom rowed and coxed the South End from the old days. He’s been described as the club’s mellowest coxswain. He’s mellow, perhaps, but his experience and knowledge of bay currents will often beat brute strength.

So, I say aloha to you as a boathouse captain and look forward to being a regular Boat Nighter again.

Please join me and all the Boat Nighters every Thursday from 6:00-8:30 p.m. Use your skills and learn new ones, meet fun people, and help keep our boats beautiful. And dinner is served afterwards. Or, come cook for us—we love our cooks!
The HoHoHo Row  
By Tony Gilbert

The HoHoHo Row has been a South End holiday tradition since it was founded five years ago.

Every South Ender contributes to making this event possible. Toys are donated by club members, and we donate these to the SF Firefighter Toy Program. Lots of love goes into the toys, and in fact rower Steve McDonald is so talented that he builds handmade wooden toys to donate every year.

The SF Firefighter Toy Program is a worthy and special charity. This is not just seasonal giving; the toys are actually given year-round to kids in need, such as those displaced by floods or fires.

The HoHoHo Row promotes the sport of rowing, and this is a fun way to spotlight the South End’s beautiful wooden boats, which are maintained by all-volunteer work.

We decorate the wooden boats with holiday decorations, including streamers and lights.

All the South End rowers wear costumes, including Santas and elves. And we row to the Pier 39 Marina, where we deliver the toys to a waiting fire truck. Then we sing Christmas carols and pass out candy canes at Pier 39.

From the beginning, Pier 39 Marina and the SF Firefighter Toy Program have been so helpful to make this happen.

SERC Competes in US Rowing Masters Nationals  
By Niland Mortimer

The 2018 USRowing Masters National Championships were held August 16-19 on Lake Merritt in Oakland. This year’s regatta was the largest West Coast masters rowing championship to date. One hundred and one clubs from across the country competed, with 1,700 entries in more than 200 categories.

South End rowers Diane Davis, Kimberly Pross, Brenda Austin, and David Nelson competed—earning top placements across many events.

South Enders Laurel Condro, Jessica Gamell, and Vanessa Blythe Marlin also competed, rowing for the Lake Merritt Rowing Club.

The Lake Merritt rowing venue is one of the country’s most unique rowing opportunities. The course is a 1,000 meter, eight-lane, fully buoyed course with stakeboats.

Congratulations to our USRowing Masters champion rowers!

Results of South End-specific boats included:

- Mixed F 2x
  - 5th Place
  - Composite Boat - David Nelson and Diane Davis

- Women’s Open F 1x
  - 2nd Place
  - Diane Davis

- Men’s Lightweight F 1x
  - 5th Place
  - David Nelson

Results of composite boats included:

- Women’s Open C Quad
  - 1st Place
  - Composite Boat - Liz Thoron - Marin Rowing Club, Racheal Perry - Dolphin Club, Abigail Smyth - North Bay Rowing Club, and Kimberly Pross in bow

- Men’s C 2x
  - 5th Place
  - Composite Boat - Liz Thoron, Marin Rowing Club and Kimberly Pross in bow

- Women’s Lightweight F 1x
  - 5th Place
  - Brenda Austin

- Women’s Open E 1x
  - 3rd Place
  - Diane Davis

- Men’s Lightweight G 2x
  - 1st Place
  - David Nelson, Don Hunt (Composite)

- Men’s Club G 4X
  - 2nd Place
  - David Nelson (bow), Steve Shafran, Don Hunt
South End Handballers Make History

By Kim Howard

We did it! We hosted the South End’s first All-Women’s Handball Tournament on October 20, and learned along the way that it was also the first such event on the entire West Coast. It was hands-down the most inspiring event I’ve participated in in a very long time.

Thank you to each and every one of you South Enders, Dolphins, Olympians, Cal Bears, SJSU Spartans, YMCAers, and Golden Gate Park players who played in, coached for, and supported the tournament.

And an EXTRA BIG THANK YOU to all of our sponsors and donors for making the tournament possible. Not only did you contribute enough to cover the many costs that player registration fees alone can’t, you turned it into a rare unicorn: a tournament so profitable that there’s extra to support the general South End handball program.
The Tournament by the Numbers

27 women competed
25 beginners
2 pros, ranked #3 and #4 in the world (South Ender Tracy Davis and Courtney Peixoto de Melo)
Youngest competitor: 19
Oldest competitor: 72
3 clubs: South End, Dolphin Club, Olympic Club
2 universities: UC Berkeley and San Jose State University
1 famous shout-out from TV handball pioneer David Vincent: “Most exciting thing happening in handball, frankly”

2 glass trophies, won by Karla Ocampo Valle, Heidi Barberini, and Emily Gable
2 Division-1 upsets: Karla defeated #1 and #2 top seeds Ann Dunn and Allison Kalhammer in the semifinals and finals, respectively
1 Division-2 upset: Newcomer Heidi Barberini beat out a Dolphin, an Olympian, and a Cal student less than half her age
119 gasps of disbelief and admiration while watching the pro women’s match
17 volunteer coaches and mentors: Louise Bea, Jay Capell, Killian Carroll, Steve Chen, Anthony Collado, Loren Collado, Diane Davis, Tracy Davis, Paddy Dunne, Tom Fitzwater, Jay Grenfell, Mike Linnik, Rory Moore, Tom McGrath, Carlos Ocampo, Gary Steadman, and Erik Torres
3 Olympic Club-vs.-South End ladies’ nights leading up to the tournament
1 commanding tournament control chair (Dennis Dunne)
2 charming bartenders (Jay Capell and Vic Aissa)
75 shirts sold to supportive fans
23 cash and in-kind sponsors
$4,415 in sponsorships and donations
16 green balls, 10 White Ace balls, and 3 pairs of gloves donated by Wayne Black
6 pounds of smoked salmon from Mike, Paul, and Nick La Rocca of La Rocca Seafood
50 Caesar salads and chicken scaloppine donated for lunch by Paul Capurro of Capurro’s
21 pounds each of mussels, shrimp, and chicken for Rory Moore’s paella
24 bottles of bubbly donated by AQUA Wines, one for each player of drinking age
1 amazing swim auction orchestrated by Sylvia Lacock of Pacific Open Water Swim
75 cupcakes donated by Kara’s Cupcakes
2 Sports Basement gift cards for winners
4 New Delhi Restaurant gift certificates from Tungsten Advertising
2 kegs donated by Lagunitas Brewery
2 amazing photographers (Jay Grenfell and Andres Acosta)
1 instigator responsible for launching the unprecedented number of women learning handball now: Louise Bea

Immeasurable gratitude from me to everyone who played, volunteered, and supported this historic event

For a fleshed-out version of the tournament recap and more photos and videos, read my write-up in issue #4 of my Backwall Betty brief at https://www.getrevue.co/profile/backwall-betty.
A Note from the New Swim Commissioner

By Van Cornwell

Happy 2019 to all of you South End swimmers (and non-swimmers)! I’m excited to start the new year as your swim commissioner, thrilled to have a part in the amazing history of our club, and honored to be among some great legends of the sport.

If you were at the annual swimmers’ meeting this year you might have heard me talk about how much I love this club, the sport, and the community of open-water swimming. Whether you’re getting into the bay for the first time or training for a new record-breaking swim, I’m driven to support your efforts. I want to work diligently to promote an environment that uplifts our athletic efforts and encourages swimmers to do more. To that end I’d like to focus on three things:

➤ **Accessibility** – Everyone who wants to swim should be supported in that effort. This means fair and equitable opportunities for every member and support of the most audacious swimming goals.

➤ **Harmony** – Promoting an environment that encourages us all to be at the club and enjoy the water with each other.

➤ **Fun** – The most fundamental thing we all come to the South End Rowing Club for. If we aren’t having fun something is wrong.

By focusing on these priorities I want to continue to keep our club a place we all love and enjoy.

2019 Club Swims

Our swim calendar for 2019 is set and we have a stunning field of volunteer swim directors who have stepped up. If you have not seen the calendar please look out for it on the bulletin board at the club entrance or see it at https://tinyurl.com/2019SERCSwimCalendar. There is still room if you want to co-direct or be a swim director understudy.

To promote accessibility (fair and equitable opportunities) all club swims will open for registrations exactly two weeks before the swim. But remember, if you don’t get into a swim, please be ready to volunteer. It’s a super fun way to still be a part of the event.

Sunriser Swims

We have some extremely dedicated and giving pilots who are willing to keep us going to far-reaching places for Sunriser swims. These are a great way to keep getting in the water even if you can’t make club swims or they fill up too fast.

Keep your eyes out for lots of Sunrisers this year!

Lt. Swim Commissioner

I’m thrilled to share that Sarah Roberts has agreed to work closely with me this year serving in the newly created role of lieutenant swim commissioner. This role will provide support to me as the commissioner, and potentially create a smooth transition from one swim commissioner to another (without any obligations or commitments).

Volunteering

Nothing we do as a club can happen without volunteers. Look around next time you’re at the club and consider all of the ways other members are helping you. Give thanks to those pilots, cooks, people who repair boats, maintain motors, and run swims. Hug your favorite volunteer. And then get involved as a volunteer yourself!

New Members/New Swimmers

Starting from scratch but want to know more about swimming at the club? Want to learn about tides and currents? About hypothermia? About seemingly superhuman feats of swimming endurance? In January and February some very experienced members will host dryland lectures to orient new swimmers. Later in the year keep an eye out for swim clinics to boost your swimming skills. More info is on the club website.

It’s my wish that every one of us who swims at SERC ends 2019 feeling that we have done something amazing in the water. Let’s have a terrific year of swimming at the South End Rowing Club!
2018 Swim Program in Review
By Kelley Prebil, 2018 Swim Commissioner

2018 was a big year for our biggest program at the club! We had 21 swims including five led by new swim directors Felix Rieseberg, Guy Peluso, Erika Gliebe, Zach Margolis, and Melissa Blaustein. Everyone did a great job directing their swims and I can’t thank you enough for stepping up to lead them! It wasn’t so bad now, was it?

We’ve promoted six new pilots to our ranks with accompanying pilots Nic Comstedt and Brian Ip, pilots Amy Jakobsson, Sarah Roberts, and Kelley Prebil, and lead pilot Neil Heller. Joe Butler started the monthly Sunday Drivers this year, which allows newbie pilots a chance to learn how to drive the RIBs without the pressure of doing it during a swim event. I have little doubt that Joe’s ingenious idea has given the club newly minted pilots with more coming up in the future. Sunday Drivers seems to have revitalized our piloting program as people have been eager to learn how to drive the boats in this more informal setting.

The Pilot Committee has had some reshuffling with Jim Bock and Reptile stepping down due to commitments elsewhere. Thank you Jim and Reptile for your service to the pilot program and your continued support of our swims in the RIBs. We added Jenn Yao and Don Margolis to the pilot committee. For those who don’t know, the Pilot Committee consists of a select group of senior pilots and the swim commissioner who review and decide on the guidelines for the pilot program at the club. Other members of the Pilot Committee are Josh Sale, David Brown, and Joe Butler.

Bryce Goeking is finally, officially, for real this time, stepping down from leading the kayaking clinics. He will continue to do kayak maintenance and ensure that they’re seaworthy. Thank you Bryce for all your work on the kayaks and leading countless kayaking clinics! Naji Aji and I will be splitting the kayaking clinics for the next few years (at least) so we can continue to have about four a year.

Researchers from the California Academy of Sciences lectured us on pinnipeds, Gary Emich taught us how to read the tide books, the U.S. Coast Guard gave us a private Boater Card certification class. Vanessa Lea and Rick Mulvihill continued their monthly stroke improvement clinics with a couple of special winter dryland clinics led by Jeff Gunderson and Jeany Duncan about hypothermia and winter swimming. Robin Rose, Reptile, Amy Gubser, and I led a Marathon Swimming Roundtable to help provide advice to and answer questions from people aspiring to do longer swims whether they’re club swims, Nutcrackers, or marathon swims.

As you are probably aware, our swim program took a huge hit this year with the losses of Rosemary McNally, Bob Roper, and Dianna Shuster. We had a memorial for Rosemary earlier this year complete with her ever-present white coat. A few of us had an informal memorial happy hour for her at The Interval at Fort Mason complete with rosemary sprigs in our cocktails. Roper is why the swim program is so large now as he created the Sunriser

Due to windy conditions, the traditional New Year’s Day Alcatraz swim became an inside-outside plus a cove. Photo by Joe Boone.
program and Nutcrackers. Next year is the 50th anniversary of his Golden Gate record. We all know that it’s 17 minutes 21 seconds and it’s incredible that in 50 years, no one has been able to break it! His memorial will be fittingly on Saturday, February 9 after the Dreaded 9th Swim (a nutcracker he created and had always directed). Reptile will be directing the Dreaded 9th Swim in 2019, which is fitting as Reptile is one of Roper’s disciples. Dianna was one of our most respected pilots and completed 849 Alcatraz crossings. She had high standards and earned the nickname of “Lady Di” at the club. Her memorial is scheduled for Saturday, January 19. The currently unnamed C3 boat will be named the Bob Roper and the new C4 boat will be named the Lady Di. We miss all three of them.

We proudly supported several swim events outside of the club’s activities. While these events are not necessarily officially sponsored by South End, many of the volunteers are South Enders, which shows the extent of our volunteering and giving back to the local community. Along with supporting our Dolphin neighbors’ Escape from Alcatraz, we also supported the following events (with contact names if you wish to help next year!):

- Navy SEAL Foundation’s San Francisco Frogmen Swim (Ryan Nelson, Kelley Prebil)
- Swim Across America (Randy Brown)
- Pathstar Alcatraz (Nancy Iverson)
- Take the Rock (Kirk McKinney)

All are wonderful charity organizations and they’re always looking for volunteers to help! Both Pathstar and Take the Rock help train swimmers to swim from Alcatraz to Aquatic Park and could use angel swimmers for the training swims and main event also. Feel free to contact me if you’re interested in helping with any of those events and I’ll put you in touch with the organizers.

And we ourselves swam too outside of the club events! We had an amazing number of marathon swims and I apologize if I leave any off the incredible list! South Enders successfully swam across Santa Monica Bay (27 miles), Anacapa to Oxnard (12.4 miles), the Catalina Channel (20.2 miles), the English Channel (21 miles), Manhattan Island (28.5 miles), Santa Cruz Pier-to-Pier (10 km), the Vikingsholm (Tahoe, 10.5 miles), the Godfather Route (Tahoe, 12 miles), the True Width of Tahoe (12 miles), the Length of Tahoe (21 miles), Semana Nautica (10 km), Swim the Suck (10 miles), END-WET (36 miles), the North Channel (35 km), the S.C.A.R. Swim Challenge (4 days, 4 swims [10–22.8 km]), the Tsugaru Strait (19.5 km), the Cook Strait (23 km), etc. A gaggle of South Enders were on a Southern California-based Catalina Channel circumnavigation relay team (ATI Team, 74.7 km).

Special notes for some incredible firsts with Ken Mignosa being the first to do a round-trip Santa Cruz Island (41 miles) where he circled around Anacapa and touched base on Santa Cruz Island before swimming back to the mainland. Cameron Bellamy became the first to circumnavigate the island of Barbados (60 miles)! Cam’s swim is also the fourth-longest solo sea swim in history. South Enders Meg Omainsky, Cathy Harrington, and Alice Ma became the first relay team to circumnavigate Anacapa Island (17.5 km). Also, a special note about the Santa Cruz Pier-to-Pier is that out of 16 swimmers, 13 of them were South Enders (supported by almost as many South Enders on kayak)! The event was basically an extension of our Nutcracker program. There are probably more that I’ve forgotten about and I apologize if I left any off!

I couldn’t be prouder of how many of us push our limits both within our club swim program and outside in the open ocean, lakes, rivers, etc. We truly are swimming all over the world. Paula Selby, board member for the Catalina Channel Swim Federation, calls us a “tough bunch”!

Thank you for allowing me to be your 2018 swim commissioner. I was honored to lead the program and help build upon the accomplishments of my predecessors. We go into next year as a force to be reckoned with powered by big love for each other and the sport.

I can’t wait to see what 2019 has in store for us!

New Pilot

Congratulations to Amy Jakobsson, recently promoted to pilot!
Ken’s Cruz

By Ken Mignosa

In the fall of 2017 I had a hare-brained scheme to swim from Oxnard to the east side of Anacapa, swim through the arch there, then swim along the south side of Anacapa, cross the channel between Anacapa and Santa Cruz Island, get to Santa Cruz Island, and then return to Oxnard. I looked forward to seeing more of the clear waters and life that abounds around the Channel Islands. I joked with Evan Morrison that I was planning to be a tourist on the swim.

I had already been doing long training swims for months prior to receiving sanctioning from the Santa Barbara Channel Swimming Association (SBCSA) for a round trip Santa Cruz Island by way of Anacapa. However, once the swim was sanctioned in late April 2018, it was more “real,” and I was concerned about how I’d do when exhausted after more than 24 hours of swimming.

So my training swims got longer still. I also added a few other swims as training for the round trip Santa Cruz Island swim. I did a swim out and around Angel Island in July that turned into a 11-hour, 18-mile journey. While on holiday in New Hampshire in August, I swam an 18-mile round trip in Lac Massawippi in Quebec, the day after a 10-mile swim in Gloucester Bay. I next completed the 20 Bridges Swim in September.

Any of these swims would be accomplishment enough for lots of swimmers. This isn’t meant as a boast, but I considered all of these swims to be preparation for my round trip Santa Cruz Island, and I worried that none of it would be enough.

Somewhere in the midst of my summer training, I received a sponsorship from Ron Willey, and I decided to put the money toward T-shirts for the crew. I told my family that the shirt needed a headline more interesting than “Round Trip Santa Cruz Island.” My son, Sean, came up with the name that stuck, “Ken’s Cruz.” Zina Deretsky did a wonderful design, and I gave out the shirts to the crew after the pre-swim briefing.

Also somewhere in the midst of my summer training, I learned that no one had ever even tried this swim before, let alone completed it. So if I succeeded, I’d be the only person to swim from the mainland to Santa Cruz Island, and the only person to complete a round trip Santa Cruz Island. No pressure ...

After the pre-swim briefing, I and my crew all went aboard my pilot boat, “Lucky Us,” to sign the boat captain’s waiver. This was the only time that I
was aboard the boat. "Lucky Us" is a 38’ Hunter sailboat that sleeps four, and has a galley, a bit of storage space, and a head. Miguel Melendez, one of my kayakers, said that it was awfully nice of me to arrange a one-and-a-half-day boat ride for him, the other kayakers, Amy Gubser (crew chief), the pilots, and the observers.

The swim began on Silver Strand beach in Oxnard at about 11:00 p.m. on September 19, 2018. I entered the very mild surf on the beach, and headed out toward Anacapa. Six hours later I reached the east side of Anacapa. It was full dark when I arrived at the arch on the eastern end of Anacapa, and it was too dangerous to navigate the rocks and kelp forest and make it through the arch safely. So my pilot, Dawn Brooks, and kayaker, Ryan Rockenbach, took me around the eastern edge of Anacapa toward the south side of the island.

Currents did not cooperate on the eastern side of Anacapa, and it took about three hours to get around. It was as beautiful as I’d expected once I reached the south side of Anacapa and the sun rose. I got to swim through kelp forests, see caves both above and below the water, and see quite a bit of life. Dolphins, seals, rays, and large schools of fish were all to be seen along the way to the Anacapa-Santa Cruz Island channel.

I reached Santa Cruz Island on the afternoon of September 20 after swimming against a current that was pushing me away from the island for two hours. I exited at a rocky “beach” for a 10 minute “interlude” during which I put on more sunscreen and Vaseline. Then it was back to the swim. Somewhere around 26 hours into the swim, I got a little grumpy. I didn’t think I was getting anywhere, and I told my crew as much. They urged me to swim on, and encouraged me by telling me that while the going was slow, I was making progress.

Slow progress ensued, and I started to get cold. I had done three-plus-hour swims in sub-50 degree water; why was I getting cold in 68 degree water? Later I’d realize that I was just getting fatigued, but in the moment I realized I’d need to use one of my backup feed plans: warm chicken stock with Carbopro. I joked later that the warm stock saved the swim.

Nearly 29 and a half hours and 43.6 miles after leaving Silver Strand beach, I finally knew that the training over the last year had been enough. The swim was completed around 4:30 a.m. on Friday, September 21, within only a few feet of where it began. I was pretty wiped out, and I joked with my wife, Tammy, who met me on the beach, that everything was sore.

As I write this it is a little over two weeks since I completed Ken’s Cruz, and I’m still recovering. I suspect I will be for a bit longer. I have been asked by lots of folks, “What’s next?” and “How did you do that?” For the moment, my only plan is to recover from Ken’s Cruz, and I’ll figure out what follows later.

As for how I did the swim, I’m really not that sure. Perhaps it’s as simple as something Sarah Roberts said in a message to me before the swim: I just kept swimming. I’m good at that.
My New Swim Friend?

By Ken Mignosa

On November 1, 2018, at about 6:40 a.m., I headed out from the beach at the South End Rowing Club for what I intended to be a “Sarah Lap.” A Sarah Lap is a trip out to Gashouse the long way, outlining each of the piers along the way, then a trip to Creakers, and back to the opening of Aquatic Park. This lap was dreamt up by Joe Butler but swum by Sarah Roberts (and others) extensively in the spring, summer, and fall of 2018.

The swim started in the dark, and by the time I reached Fort Mason pier 3, it was first light. I swam to the foot of pier 3 and then cut across to pier 2. Shortly after heading to the end of pier 2 my foot bumped into something. I assumed it was a bit of debris in the water as I’ve often bumped into stuff in the waters of San Francisco Bay. Two or three kicks later I bumped something again. A dozen kicks or more later I bumped into something yet again, and now I started to wonder what could it be.

When I stopped to look, a small harbor seal popped up its head at my feet and stared at me. It looked for a good long while. Somewhere I learned that staring at pinnipeds is threatening to them. So I looked away. The seal didn’t seem to be interested in harming me, and other than nuzzle my feet, it hadn’t done anything untoward.

The seal continued to follow me to the end of pier 2, around the end, and back toward the foot of pier 2 between piers 2 and 1. I became a little concerned for my safety, and hoped that by altering course I might leave the seal behind. I cut across directly to the western edge of pier 1, aka Gashouse, and the seal did not follow.

A few minutes later a group of swimmers came out to Gashouse and we talked about the seal. They headed back toward Aquatic Park, and I hoped that the group of swimmers had scared away the seal. I resumed my Sarah Lap. I swim down to the foot of pier 1, across to pier 2, and up to the end of pier 2.

There I was met by the same seal. For some reason—probably abject stupidity—I continued my Sarah Lap, outlining each pier on the way back. All the way along I was accompanied by the seal. It nuzzled my feet. It swam up beside me—leaning into my right side—and swam along. Sometimes when it was right up against me I could reach down and “pet” the seal with my hand. The seal also swam under me and around me, and sometimes it simply paralleled me for a few strokes.

At the end of pier 3 I encountered another swimmer and we talked about the seal. We talked about heading back to Aquatic Park, but I decided to complete my Sarah Lap. The seal continued to stay with me to the foot of Pier 3. It followed along as I cut across to the old Alcatraz pier. Then it tried a new game and swam up under my legs, and pushed my legs up and me forward. I guess I was going too slow to suit the seal!

The seal stayed with me to the foot of Muni Pier, near Farnsworth Gap, and followed me about halfway around to the opening. After this, I neither saw nor felt the seal any more.

The seal and I ended up spending about 15 minutes together on my way out to Gashouse and over 40 minutes together on my way back toward Aquatic Park.

Fran Hegeler has sometimes joked that I’m a human seal because of the amount of time I spend swimming. Somehow the seals got the message this morning!
Taking a Stand for Your Sand

By Sejal Choksi-Chugh

A corporation is mining sand from the bottom of San Francisco Bay and selling it for a profit. But the bay’s sand belongs to you and me. And taking sand out of the bay harms Dungeness crab, San Francisco’s Ocean Beach, and other Bay Area beaches and wetlands.

One main area where companies mine sand lies between the San Francisco waterfront and Angel Island. Young Dungeness crab travel there along the bay bottom toward the Golden Gate on their way to the Pacific Ocean, where they live out their lives. But strong suction from sand mining equipment can interfere with the crabs’ path. Other important species, including sturgeon, also migrate through this area, and sand mining can impact them, too.

Moreover, removing sand from the bay reduces the supply of sand for Ocean Beach, which is rapidly eroding. This erosion destroys the habitat of the snowy plover, an endangered shorebird, and threatens a major San Francisco sewer pipe and the Great Highway.

The bay’s sand is also a key resource needed to protect shorelines from future sea level rise. As the bay levels increase, wetlands and shorelines will be at risk of vanishing under rising tides. The normal movement of the bay’s sand can help build up wetlands and shorelines—but only if enough sand is left in the bay.

This natural resource has moved through the bay for centuries. Sand washes down riverbeds from the Sierra Nevada, through the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, and into the bay, where it is joined by sand from Bay Area rivers and creeks. Some sand stays in the bay, some accumulates on the bay’s shorelines, and some washes out the Golden Gate. Currents carry sand mostly south to Ocean Beach and beaches down the coast.

But for decades, the California state government has allowed private companies to interrupt this natural process. The companies are allowed to remove far more sand from the bay than naturally washes in. Lehigh Hansom, Inc., is currently allowed to harvest 1.5 million cubic yards of bay sand per year. The company sells the sand to make cement and concrete used for buildings, parking lots, and roads. But other sources of sand for these uses are readily available.

Baykeeper has stood up to protect the bay’s sand for more than six years. We advocated before regulatory agencies for lower limits on sand mining, and the agencies cut it back by 25 percent. But that’s not enough. According to the California Coastal Commission, to protect coastal beaches, a reduction of 85 percent is needed.

So our attorneys also went to court to fight for the bay’s sand. Last month, a California court of appeal unfortunately ruled that the current unsustainable rates of sand mining can continue for five more years.

However, the court also expanded the law, saying the sand belongs to the public and making it harder for state agencies to give our natural resources away to private companies. This important ruling could help reduce harmful mining in any California lake, river, or stream, or in coastal waters.

Baykeeper is not giving up. When the sand mining leases come up for renewal, we’ll be there, armed with this legal precedent and sound science that shows the bay needs more sand.

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), e-mail hotline@baykeeper.org, or click “Report Pollution” at baykeeper.org.
SF Trail Running Book Coming Out

By George Rehmet

Falcon Guides’ *Best Trail Runs San Francisco* is the newest in a series of regional trail-running guides written by Nancy Hobbs, executive director of the American Trail Running Association, and Adam Chase, president of the American Trail Running Association. Their best-known book is *The Ultimate Guide to Trail Running*, and all of their books are available on Amazon.com. (Or go to [www.indiebound.org](http://www.indiebound.org) to get a copy from one of our excellent local bookstores. — Ed.)

The trails described in this book are very doable to the novice-to-average trail runner. But even the most hardcore trail runner will enjoy these trails on their easy days. The book contains tips for folks to have a safe and fun day running on the trails. Each trail comes with a map and a turn-by-turn description. In addition, there is information about how to get to the trail, cell phone coverage, and parking availability. Finally, there are a variety of beautiful scenic photos that add to the quality of this book.

So how did I end up on the front cover? Through my work with the Road Runners Club of America, I got to know Nancy Hobbs. Last year, Nancy came out to the Bay Area to map the local trails. Given the great number of trails we are blessed with in our region, Nancy enlisted my help. I mapped out most of the trails in San Francisco, San Bruno Mountain, Mount Tamalpais, and Sweeney Ridge. I also provided feedback on the other trails that Nancy and others had mapped out.

Finally, Nancy asked me to get a photo that would scream “trail running in San Francisco.” So with my brother-in-law, who enjoys photography, we hiked around the Marin Headlands and took a variety of photos to capture the trails and the Golden Gate Bridge. There were a variety of draft covers that were developed until the publishers settled on the one that now graces this book.

A couple of hidden gems that I enjoyed mapping out were Sign Hill in South San Francisco, where one can see the words “South San Francisco, the Industrial City” from afar; and Rancho Corral de Tierra, located north of Half Moon Bay. The most difficult mapping was through Golden Gate Park, as I wanted to capture the most scenic parts of our iconic park while trying to stay on its trails.

In the end it was somewhat time-consuming. However, it was exciting and a pleasure to discover new trails. So if you need to find a gift for a trail runner (or even yourself!), then go out and get the Falcon Guides’ *Best Trail Runs San Francisco*.
SERC Bootcamp

By Tony Williams

When walking to the club on certain early mornings, the air is cold, the sun has yet to rise, the cove is barely visible, and other than the fog, nothing is moving; however, you could have sworn that you caught movement out of the corner of your eye.

As you get closer to the club, as well as the shoreline, you notice several shadows moving along the beach through the darkness and wonder, “What the H. E. double hockey sticks!” But as your eyes adjust, it dawns on you that this is not some horrifying figment of your imagination, it is just members of the Bootcamp Crew.

The South End Bootcamp Crew is a handful of motivated, slightly crazy individuals working out twice a week as a group to achieve fitness goals while undertaking challenging, sometimes asinine activities for the pure joy and satisfaction of physical activeness. This challenging yet fun group is made up of South End members of all ages, sexes, races, fitness levels, and various other differences, but with three very specific ideologies in common: teamwork, challenging yourself, and dedication.

The group began a few years ago as an offshoot of our great club. We actually blend a few of the official club activities, such as running and swimming, into a Frankenstein of workouts, combining aspects of Crossfit, military training exercises, aquatic work, cardiovascular conditioning, and other challenging activities. But the essence of this workout group is the teamwork.

Another aspect of this group is to encourage all of its participants to challenge themselves both physically and mentally. What this means is: Do things that you are not entirely comfortable with and embrace the challenge. Each session is led by a different member, offering various styles and physical trials, while introducing new workouts or ideas that we personally enjoy or would like to work on.

The majority of the activities are undertaken on the beach just west of the club, providing us with natural challenges and obstacles that may include exercises involving rocks and sandbags, water runs, sprint swims, boxing, plyometrics, cardiovascular training, and many more diverse activities. Other notable favorites are buddy body drags, ascent of man, bear crawls, core training, passing the rock while treading water, obstacle courses, deep sand interval activities, speed and agility drills, and any other activities we can conjure up while utilizing our beautiful, special surroundings.

Lastly, dedication is a major aspect of this group, because the bootcamp starts promptly at 6:00 a.m. The group will rest in plank position until the stragglers arrive. Participants are encouraged to make as many of the sessions as possible since many of the planned workouts will be team-driven, with team and paired activities. By having a commitment, the group can plan the biweekly sessions to best challenge everyone involved.

Yes, some of the activities are difficult and physically challenging, but this bootcamp is designed to push all involved, while challenging us to do things that are difficult yet doable, while building teamwork skills and having fun.

As with all SERC groups, everyone is welcome to join! We just ask that you follow our three main tenets of teamwork, challenging yourself, and dedication.

The group meets every Tuesday and Thursday morning at 6:00 a.m. on the dot, at the light pole by the shower west of the club.

2019 might be the year to challenge yourself and add a little more to your physical fitness repertoire.
Don Birrer and Lou Signer

By Jay Çapell

The South End lost two handball legends recently, men who left their mark on our sport and on our club.

Lou Signer (November 14, 1934–November 2018) was a native San Franciscan who started at Riordan High School with another South End legend, Bob Roper. Lou excelled in football, basketball, and track, teaming with Roper to propel Riordan to new athletic heights.

Following school, Lou turned to handball as his sport of choice. He competed for many years, representing the South End in both regional and national events. This quest culminated in Lou winning a national title in 2007. His later years were spent at UC Berkeley, where he volunteered his time teaching and coaching young handball players.

Lou was a strong left-hander who competed hard, with great serves and exceptional court coverage. He gave back to our sport for many years and will be missed by all the beginners, veterans, and competitors he helped.

Don Birrer (September 12, 1935–May 24, 2018) was the consummate South Ender. Although handball was his sport, he gave back so much to the South End. He swam, rowed, served on the board, and was club president, all while working for the City on major engineering projects that are part of present-day San Francisco.

Handball was his passion. He played the sport with precision, both serving and tactically evaluating his opponent, all with that faint Birrer grin. He was an excellent player who, in all the years I observed him, never uttered a foul word on the court.

Watching him play was a valuable training lesson for younger players. Shot selection was his strong point. He could always end the rallies with multiple shots, always keeping his opponents back on their heels.

In the days of modern athletic shoes, Don always wore his signature Converse Chuck Taylor high tops. He was one of a kind.

As a final gesture of his love of the game, a thimble of his ashes is being kept for when court number 1 is repainted. Don wanted those ashes to be mixed into the paint so his presence will be noted. Is that Don, or what?

Even with all of Don’s on-court prowess, I enjoyed him off the court even more. Catching him in the Day Room was always a treat. Well versed, well traveled, and always willing to talk: That was the real Don. If you caught him with his eyes closed before a match, he always said he was strategizing for that next match.

What a gentleman, what a player, what a treasure he was.
Dianna Shuster

By Bill Wygant

Dianna Shuster, a 17-year member of the South End Rowing Club and former swim commissioner, passed away on December 14, 2018, after long battle with pancreatic cancer. The strength of her character is shown by her surviving for over two years a disease that often kills people in eight months.

Until her cancer diagnosis she was the executive director of Pocket Opera, a small but growing opera company in San Francisco producing operas with English translations by the legendary Donald Pippin.

Prior to Pocket Opera, for 27 years she was the artistic director of the American Musical Theater Of San Jose (AMTSJ), which in its heyday (that she helped inspire) was one of the largest subscription theaters in the Bay Area. Her productions won over 100 awards for excellence. She had a truly uncommon sense of the musical theater genre, especially for the works of Sondheim.

Dianna joined the South End Rowing Club at a difficult time for her, and often credited swimming here as virtually saving her life. She swam on relay swims across the Catalina Channel, the Santa Barbara Channel, Tahoe, the Maui Channel, and the English Channel. She was a founding member of the infamous ASSes and completed 849 Alcatraz swims.

Swimming was a lifelong activity for Dianna. As a young woman she founded the first USS youth swim team in Atascadero, CA. She was beautiful to watch in the water. A picture of her swimming under the Golden Gate was for a time the cover photo for a book on open water swimming by club members Gary Emich and Joe Oakes.

Dianna is survived by her husband Bill Wygant, daughter Megan Wygant, new arrival grandson Henry, mother Margaret Schuster, brother Gerald, and sister Vivian. She was an amazing daughter, woman, wife, mother, and friend to many at the club.

During her illness she said to me, “I’m glad I’m dying first because I’m getting all the attention.” A view that was not shared by all.

A celebration of her life took place at the club on Saturday, January 19.
A Snowy, Starry Night
By Jane Koegel, Entertainment Commissioner

Wow!

We sold over 300 tickets to our Starry, Snowy Night holiday party. Guests came, as suggested, dressed up. You all looked elegant! What fun to see everyone in their finery! Guests were documented in the photo booth and in the group shot, and captured candidly and directly by our talented photographers and on guests’ cell phones. We were fed in the grandest of Southern styles by our Head Chef Alan Lapp and his myriad sous chefs. Drinks were doled out to the thirsty by our smiling baristas. Awards were given to deserving recipients!

The boathouses were cleared and transformed by the boathouse captain, the entertainment commissioner, and the graciousness of volunteers who swept, hung lights and snowflakes, picked up and dropped off linens and rental tables, decorated the ticket booth, put out and picked up trash bins, did dishes, ordered supplies, organized the sound system and music, and more. Cookies and desserts were baked and decorated and displayed and replenished by volunteers. Holiday trees were removed after the party (thank you!) in exchange for a donation to the club.

Hundreds of hours of volunteer time created the setting, which you all filled so superbly! Thank you thank you all, volunteers and guests, for making this a holiday party to be remembered.

SAVE THE DATE

Saturday, March 9, 2019
SERC’s 146th Annual St. Patrick’s Day Luncheon
Join us for a corned beef and cabbage lunch followed by live entertainment including Irish dancers and music.
Bar opens at 11 a.m., lunch at noon.
Life Members’ Corner

*By Allen Luong*

Name: Charles Dunning (Chuck)
Age: 82
Member since: August 1975 (43 years!)
Sports: Runner, handballer, swimmer (still comes to the club and swims on the weekend)
Profession: Retired schoolteacher/principal in Modesto

Chuck’s story: “I love this place because I grew up by the coast ... I can’t find a better place to play handball ... and now I swim.”

Rudy Stadberger, another life member, describes Chuck as having "good stamina ... Chuck would swim around the cove after playing handball tournaments!"

For a short video story of the South End featuring Chuck, go to: [https://youtu.be/o2HW0f-SvKA](https://youtu.be/o2HW0f-SvKA) (or search for "sercvideo" on YouTube).
Membership Overview

By Kathy Bailey, Membership Commissioner

At year end, with a total of 1,552 members, there is a fairly well-balanced representation of age groups from 30 -70 years.

Moving?
To continue receiving The South Ender, be sure to send your new address to us at: membership@serc.com.

Welcome, New Members

Alena Gravilenko  David Schach  Justin Yau  Nancy Bernard
Annette T Tran  Dennis Polston  Kat Hall  Nick Stielau
Aristotle Smith  Edward del Bonta  Kathleen Peggy Richards  Peter Kline
Aubrey Clark  Elliott Endre  Katie Meek  Randy Radmer
Barbara Knox  Eric Friedland  Kelly Joerger  Robert Van Zant
Becca Roy-o’gorman  Felix Kubin  Kevin Lowry  Robert W Peiser
Bill Post  Giovanni Elia  Kevin Shalvey  Ross McKegney
Brian Liepe  Heidi Hoffman  Kimi Ueda  Scott Pasternak
Carol Hayden  Iana Simeonov  Kyle Haas  Stein Petersen
Catelyn Kindred  James Sharpless  Laurent Divol  Steven Chan
Catriona Fallon  Jesse Clark  Laurie Elliott  Steven Perham
Chris Doherty  John Cunnie  Lisa Mceachern  Ted Woods
Christian Weiss  Jonathan Murphy  Lisa Newton  Tim Kreutzer
Claudia Lisbona  Jose Salazar  Lisa Sorani  Wayne Martin
Clyde Valdez  Josh Lehman  Maureen Keefe
Colin Purmal  Josiah Child  Mee Lee
Dav Zimak  Julie Pearson  Melanie Kaplan

Congratulations, Life Members

Peter Ross  Laura Small  Daniel Macchiarini
Nancy Iverson  Jeff Gunderson  Greg Holzman
Dan Merer  Pedro Ordenes

In Memoriam

Louis Signer (November 14, 1934–November 2018)
Life member and longtime handballer

Dianna Shuster (May 4, 1949–December 13, 2018)
Former swim commissioner; wife of past SERC president Bill Wygant; mother of members Megan Wygant and Scott Wygant.
Balclutha (1886) returns, with masts a bit out of whack. Photo by Pauline Yeckley