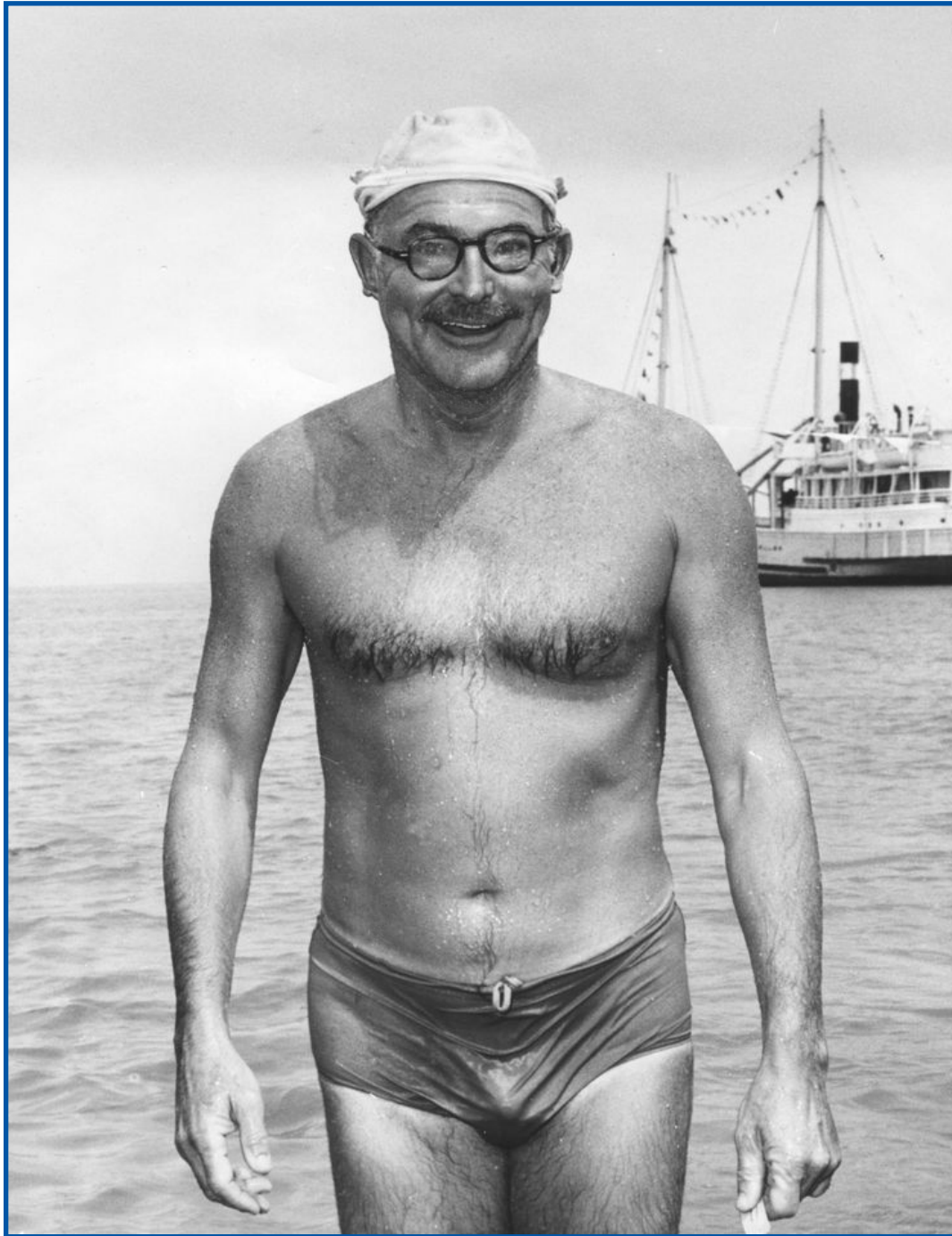


SUMMMER 2025

DOLPHIN LOG

THE BULLETIN OF THE DOLPHIN SWIMMING & BOATING CLUB • SAN FRANCISCO • ESTABLISHED 1877



Bill Powning
Father of the Polar Bear

Dolphin Log

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Ocean Swimming in Santa Barbara

by Terry Kleid

Calling all Dolphins! Come swim with us in Santa Barbara! I am a lifetime Dolphin member and still swim at Aquatic Park when I'm in San Francisco. When you're in Santa Barbara, join the Ocean Ducks (aka Los Patos Del Mar). We are a ragtag group of swimmers who have been plying the ocean together since 2004. We have no president or elected officials, but we are enthusiastic swimmers of all ages and abilities.



Butterfly Beach in Santa Barbara

You will find us at the west end of Butterfly Beach on Sundays at 9 a.m.

There is plenty of street parking on Butterfly Lane and Channel Drive. There are steps leading to the beach and we gather to the right, where we have a card table filled with food. We put our stuff on the big boulders that surround the beach. There are no changing rooms or bathrooms. Those amenities can be found at Ledbetter Beach, another Ocean Duck hangout at various times during the week. (Google *Ledbetter Beach*, 801 Shoreline Drive.)

Conditions vary throughout the year. Our summer water temperatures can reach into the low 70s, and our winter temperatures recently plunged to 51.5 degrees. The surf can be pounding, the sand can be swept away leaving some rocks, or it can be sandy and lovely getting in. In the summer there are buoys for we swimmers that follow the coast for over half a mile. On a clear day you may see lots of fish, a leopard shark, octopus, and other ocean gems. We often see pods of dolphins, seals, squadrons of pelicans, occasional ospreys, and other coastal birds.

Just like you Dolphins, we Ducks enjoy after-swim camaraderie with a table of goodies, including carafes of hot coffee. We've even had a group of drummers come to help us celebrate birthdays. For many of us, the Ocean Ducks have become an important community in our lives.

You can contact us through our group email: ocean-ducks@googlegroups.com
We send you Dolphins a hearty Quack and hope to see you.

Editor's Note

The 50-year history of the Polar Bear Challenge would not exist without the *Dolphin Log Archive*. Rich Cooper created and maintains this trove of Dolphin Club lore. All the Dolphin Logs (1949 – 2024) are online! For people interested in exploring the rich narrative of the Club, this is a fascinating and invaluable resource. For immediate access use the link: <https://tinyurl.com/DolphinLogs>.

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Bill Powning – The Man Behind the Polar Bear

by Matthew Sheridan

(Adapted from Fall 1999 Dolphin Log)

Bill Powning was quite fond of telling people, “I never miss a party, and I never miss a swim.” He could be spotted from afar at any Dolphin social event, usually sporting a madras jacket and sipping a martini. Bill and his wife, Jacqueline Powning, brought a certain style and class to the Dolphin Club.

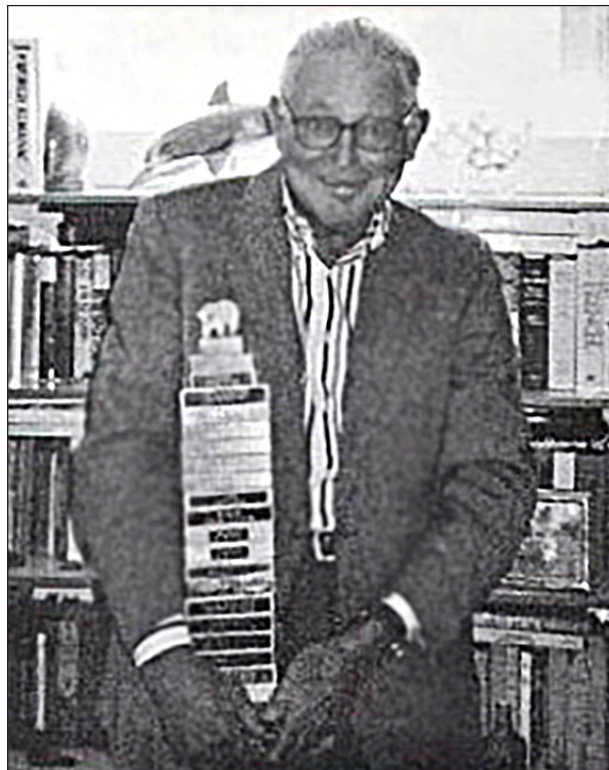
As a young man growing up in Connecticut, Bill spent his summers swimming in Long Island Sound, readying himself for his future cold-water exploits. A graduate of Yale University, he enrolled in Harvard Business School, believing there would be no war. When World War II did break out, despite having been awarded a scholarship, Powning passed up Harvard to make his contribution to the war effort.

The U.S. military was not an option because of his nearsightedness. Instead, he joined the civilian American Field Service (AFS) as a volunteer ambulance driver. He served with the British 8th Army in North Africa and Italy, and later with the French army in Germany and Austria. When Germany surrendered, Bill drove his newly acquired BMW to Paris and resigned from the AFS. In France, he got a job with the U.S. State Department, where “six months turned into three years.”

Being a young man who spoke French fairly well, with a good car and access to gasoline through his State Department position, he soon found himself in an enviable situation. “During that time, I came across Jacqueline Soubiran,” he recalls. “She was really pretty.” They married in Montréal in 1948.

Bill was a carpet salesman in Florida and Georgia, and then in San Francisco in 1953 and 1954. From 1957 to 1964 he was the general manager of Tai Ping Carpets, living in Riverside, Connecticut. When that job ended, Powning headed straight back to San Francisco, having loaded his wife, kids, and two dogs in his new convertible. He spent the next 15 years in the carpet business and another 15 years as a real estate broker with Pacific Union.

He was introduced to the Dolphin Club in 1968 and started swimming five days a week, always wearing his eyeglasses. By the end of the year, he completed his first Dolphin Club swim: the Golden Gate. Over the next 30 years he completed no fewer than 303 Dolphin Club swims. After creating the Polar Bear Challenge in 1974, Bill accumulated 23 marble blocks in a row, maintaining the longest continuous



Bill Powning displays his Polar Bear Stack

streak of any Dolphin until being surpassed by Vincent Huang.

His son, Will Powning, joined the Dolphin Club in 1985. In honor of the 50th anniversary of the Polar Bear, Will swam 50 miles this year.



Obsessive Compulsion & 50 Years of Polar Bear History

by Larry Scroggins

Nineteen seventy-four marked the birth of an event that has grown, morphed, and ruled people's lives for 50 years. Dolphin Club members Bill Powning, "Doc" Howard, and Lou Marcelli formed the locus of a small group that swam all year round. Bill wanted to increase winter companionship in the Bay and in the sauna. In conversation with Lou, he conceived the creation of a small marble block in the shape of an ice cube to award fellow Dolphins who swam more than a minimum number of miles between December 21 and March 21, inclusive. A quick glance at the trophy case in the Staib Room reveals the allure of trophies, cups, and awards to the Dolphins of the time. The original goal was 18 miles and, 50 years later, it's obvious that Bill's idea became a roaring success.



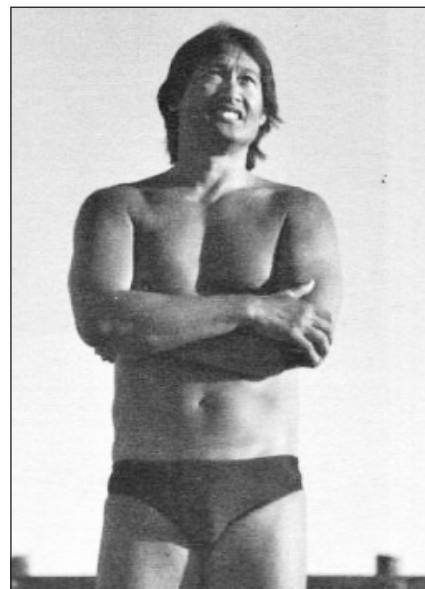
Powning's Polar Bear Stack

That winter of 1974-1975, 30 Club members participated in the first Polar Bear Challenge. 21 met or exceeded the 18-mile minimum requirement and their marble block came complete with a miniature polar bear figurine. Modesto Lanzone obliterated the field with a total of 82 miles. In fact, 9 swimmers posted more than 30 miles, including Bill Powning. Thus was born an annual tournament of evolution, excess, and obsession.

The winter of 1978-1979 saw two evolutions. For one, the required distance increased to 24 miles. For another, three women completed the challenge for the second time—Joni Beemsterboer, Morgan Kulla, and Pavla Podolska. The required mileage increased to 30 starting with the 1982-1983 season. In 1986, the co-swim commissioners, Vincent Huang and Tom Hoffman, made the hugely controversial decision to raise the mileage requirement to 40.

Obsessing the streak

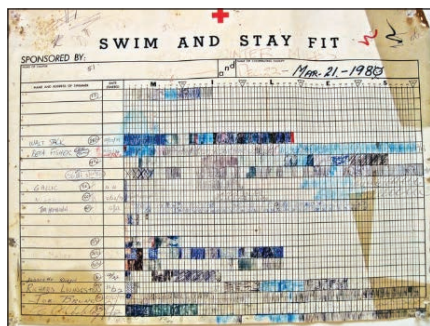
When Vincent joined the Dolphin Club in 1978, the Polar Bear recording document was on a regular sheet of paper. Someone would draw a bunch of lines and people would put their names and mileage down. At the time, Vincent was heavily involved in the Red Cross and had access to their stockroom. He walked in, saw their official mileage charts, and said to himself, "This is what we've got to use!" The Red Cross charts had room on each line to record up to 50 miles. Vincent imagined that the challenge would incrementally increase to 50 because he was thinking, "God—all this wasted paper!" As a step in this direction, Tom and Vincent announced that the new mileage goal was increasing to 40 and not everyone was ready to get on board. "That became a big stink," Huang says. "This was a time before email and texting and everything else,



Vincent Huang ponders his streak

so when people didn't like you at the Club, they'd stick notes in your locker. I'd get these notes posted on the bulletin board. I got messages on my home phone. It was just crazy!"

Vincent survived this barrage of complaints and now stands apart as the holder of the most consecutive Polar Bear trophies. His latest marble block counts as number 47. "When I first joined the Club, my goal was just to swim across the Golden Gate. I'm kind of an obsessive, compulsive individual, so I said, 'I'm going to do every Golden Gate; I'm going to do every Alcatraz. And then when the Escape [from Alcatraz Triathlon] came, I'm going to do every Escape. I'm going to do every Polar Bear swim.'" However, over the years, various circumstances interfered with the streak for each event other than the Polar Bear. "I remember being in the sauna with all the morning crew and telling people, 'I just completed my 25th consecutive Polar Bear,' and people were amazed." Thus, the passion was fueled and renewed. Vincent's string was almost broken when he had a heart attack. "It was December 13 when I had the heart attack and all I could think about was the Polar Bear. When the Polar Bear came,



Original Red Cross Chart

the doctor said, ‘You shouldn’t go in the water and blah, blah, blah.’ It wasn’t until January 3rd that I got in the water. No one in my whole early morning group of about half a dozen people wanted to swim with me because I was such a liability. I think I did about 43 miles, so it was one of my bigger accomplishments.” By the following year, he was mostly fully recovered with his streak still alive. “After 40 [consecutive marble blocks], I was on my own and now I have to make it to 50. The joke is that I thought, ‘If I do enough of these, I could tile my whole bathroom.’ After 47, it’s nowhere near enough to do my bathroom. So now, they’re all glued together in a stack that stands 37 inches tall.”

Obsessing the championship

As Vincent says, “This is the time of year when you see everyone turn on their OCD during these three months.” One expression of this obsessive-compulsive disorder manifests itself as the Polar Bear “champion.” This is the person who swims the most miles during the winter season. The Club created the perpetual championship trophy when Elmer Tosta broke the 100-mile barrier in 1984-1985. The bar was set, and the next year George Kebbe hoisted the bar to 200 miles. This set the stage for the first Polar Bear championship battle royale, complete with ruses and skulduggery. In the Dolphin Log of Summer 2006, Keith Howell tells this story:

“The rivalry that will go down in history was in 1987 between George Kebbe and El Presidente

Stan Hlynsky. It all began when Stan, who was first to 40, overheard George scoffing at the idea that Stan could keep it up. Stan stepped out from behind a row of lockers and said, ‘I’m not going anywhere.’

George retorted, ‘I’m younger and faster.’

‘I’m older and stronger,’ Stan replied, more of a rower and weightlifter than a swimmer.

To make up for his slower pace, Stan swam out in the Cove with the tide but kept to the beach against it. Still, it meant putting in long hours in the water.

‘I ate five meals a day,’ says Stan. His then girlfriend, Suzanne Heim, who had urged him on initially, never saw him and began to wonder if he was having an affair.



Stan Hlynsky

When Stan would stagger out of the water, all he could think about was making it to the foot bath. One day, the [foot bath] water was frozen over and he didn’t even notice. After four hours in the water one morning, Stan was afraid he couldn’t make it back to the beach. As he sat recovering in the sauna, he remembers George saying, ‘That crazy bastard is going to kill himself. But he’s not going to kill me.’

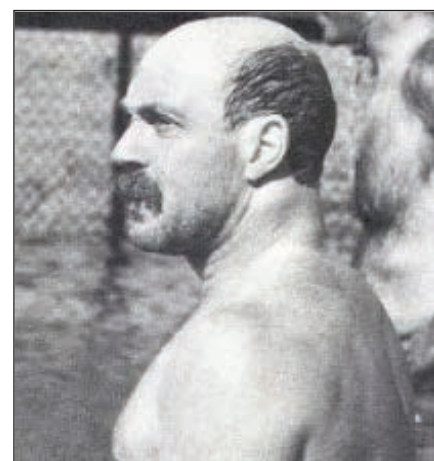
Still, [the competition] could get tense, such as the time that Stan locked an exhausted George out of the building after a swim. And both of them complained that they came in to find their lockers shut fast with crazy glue.

At the end, George felt that he could make up a small remaining deficit. That is, until he came into the Club to find that Stan had put on six miles overnight. With a little help from Jon Bielinski, he had taken a tide ride from bridge to bridge.”

The mileage Stan racked up that season set a new Polar Bear record of 230 miles. Three years later, Mike Roller also cracked the 200-mile barrier with 217. Then, in 1993, Patrick Freilinger set yet a higher bar. In some ways, Stan Hlynsky shared the new record. Stan assumed the substantial organizational, administrative, and logistical burden to conduct several multi-mile, tide-assisted swims. He encouraged (or perhaps bullied) Patrick into devoting his winter to moving the Polar Bear milestone to 232.

The next year, George Kebbe locked into Polar Bear battle with Laura Merkl. She took the prize with 174 miles and became the first female champion. Defeat in this competition only served to fuel George’s competitive fire. In 1995, he set a new record of 255 miles. Afterward, the irrepressible George would come into the men’s sauna laughing and slapping his belly and exclaiming, “So, Larry! Do you think anybody is going to beat 255? I don’t think so! Ho! Ho! Ho!” I replied, “George. You’ve put it on a shelf that no one can reach.” WRONG.

In 2003, Suzie Dods swam 256 Polar Bear miles and became the second female champion.



George Kebbe

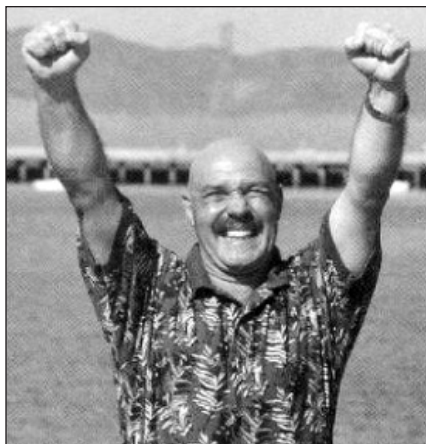


Suzie Dods

In the years between 1995 and 2003, George had taken up a new vocation as flight instructor and had pretty much retired from swimming at the Club. Suzie's new record brought him screaming back. In 2004, he crushed the old mark with a total of 356 miles. Of course, he came charging into the sauna saying, "So, Larry! Do you think anybody is going to beat 356? I don't think so! Ho! Ho! Ho!" Ever willing to be the useful idiot, I said, "George. You've really put this on a shelf that no one can reach now."

No swimmer broke the Polar Bear 200-mile barrier after that until 2007 when Ralph Wenzel tied the record at 356. Krist Jake tells the story this way:

"Born in East Germany, low-keyed and modest, Ralph Wenzel owns and manages the renowned San Francisco bakery, Schubert's. In the 2006-2007 PB season, Ralph swam each of the 91 days of winter to achieve his goal of 356 miles, to equal, but not exceed, the record set by Kebbe in 2004.



George Kebbe after 356

According to the famed *San Francisco Chronicle* reporter Carl Nolte in a laudatory SFGate.com article, on the last day of PB, 'With a chance to break the record and set a new mark, he stood up and walked out of the water. It was clear he could have gone back in the Bay, taken another lap around the Aquatic Park lagoon, and torn up the record book.' 'I don't feel like going back in again,' he said. Asked why he didn't break the record, he shrugged and walked away to the sauna. In times when records are made to be broken and winners are hailed as superheroes, Wenzel seems to be a throwback to another age.'"

In the succeeding years, no one posted more than 200 miles with the single exception of Nigel Killeen, finishing with 208 miles in 2008. Then came "Three-pete" Peter. Purposely swimming exactly 356 miles during the 2012-2013 winter, Peter Perez tied the record shared by George Kebbe and Ralph Wenzel.

It was not pretty. Commenting on his victory picture on the cover of the Dolphin Log, Peter says, "A close look at the photograph shows what looks like sand on my side. It's not. It's actually a raging rash from shingles. And my smile doesn't reveal the missing crown that exposes a raw nerve. I lost the crown a week before but there had been no time to deal with it. I was physically and mentally busted up and exhausted after 420 or so swims during one of the coldest water winters in our collective Club memory.

When Michael Matthay diagnosed my growing rash as shingles, I lost two days and was banned from the sauna when I returned. Michael never gave me a chance to throw in the towel. Instead, he calculated how I could finish on time and his enthusiasm was so great that I didn't have the heart to disappoint him.

I kept going even though it took a week of seven to eight miles a day to catch up. Michael is clever that way." Peter chose to tie the record. He wrote, "No one who was there at the time will forget the astonishing news that Ralph [Wenzel] would



Peter Perez and Ralph Wenzel

intentionally not break George's record. The surprise was quickly followed by admiration. In this age of overpaid athletes with over-the-top egos, here was an example of real sportsmanship. I set out also to not break the 356-mile record. In doing so, we would have three Club members who hit that mark and it would be more than a three-way tie—it would be a new Club tradition." Peter hoped that subsequent swimmers who tied the record would be known as having done a "George."

Then came Duke Dahlin. In 2015, at the age of 67, he decided to set a new Polar Bear record at 400 miles. Duke writes in the Dolphin Log, "I [had] been contemplating breaking the record for years. My original goal was to swim 5 miles each day, breaking my routine into 4 segments.



Duke Dahlin

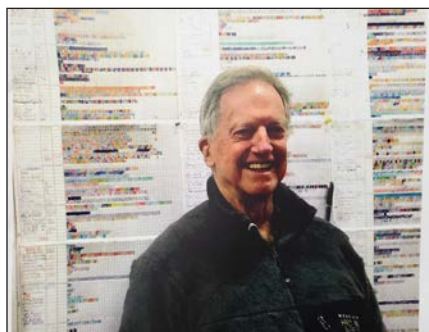


Polar Bear Championship Trophy

Why do I want to break the record? Why not? I come from a competitive background and records are made to be **BROKEN!**" At the very beginning of the season, after having racked up 10 miles in two days, Duke took a planned 6-day vacation to spend Christmas in Las Vegas with family. Then, on January 10, he caught a bad cold that hung him out to dry for 5 days. While on his sick bed, as Peter had before him, he recalibrated and decided to start swimming 5½ miles per day on his return. He wrote, "This doesn't sound like much but those ½ miles started to add up." Duke completed all 400 miles on March 20, the day before the official end of the Polar Bear. When asked if he did that because this was a leap year which contributed an extra day to the PB season, he didn't really answer. He just grinned sheepishly and shrugged.

Just plain obsessing

In a Polar Bear category of his own is Joe Illick. Joe first won the Polar Bear championship



Joe Illick won the Polar Bear four times

in 2001 with 141¾ miles. He was 67 years old. He won again in 2002 with 147 miles. In 2006, Joe entered the Polar Bear battle with Rick Avery. Rick tells this story. "We were battling it out. We were both keeping an eye on each other. Then Joe had a mild heart attack and he got right back in the water. I went to him and said, 'Joe. Come on. Let's not continue this fight. Let's pick a mile number and call it a tie.' He agreed to that and we both slowed down a little bit because we were both just going crazy. We were swimming 2 to 3 to 4 hours a day, double- and triple-dipping." In 2006, Joe tied with Rick at 152 miles.

Joe won again in 2014 with 140 miles. Counting these four championships, he swam more than 100 miles in fourteen distinct Polar Bear seasons. This includes exceeding the 200-mile mark in 2003 with 203 miles but still losing the championship to Suzie Dods.

In March of 2023, Joe was executing his regular routine of "double-dips." However, he was not his normal ebullient self in the sauna. For a couple of days, after the first "dip" he complained about feeling tired and cold and hesitant to return to the water. He never revealed his motivation for stressing over his squares that season. He also ignored entreaties to "listen to his body." He had well over the 40 miles necessary to claim a complete Polar Bear.

On his last swim, he returned to the shore with a halting and uneven stroke. He may have been making 20 strokes per minute and they were quite ragged. He walked out onto the sand on his own power and began climbing the steps to the rear deck, gripping the railing with one hand. Daniel Handler writes, "When I came down to swim, Joe was climbing up the short staircase from the beach and he looked in a bad way. He moved slowly and awkwardly as if in a daze, and his facial expression looked like he was searching for something. A woman at the deck showers immediately thought something was wrong and

asked him if he was OK. He said yes, faintly and unconvincingly. I said hello to him and he said hello to me—in a way that felt more like social instinct than really being aware, although he did use my name. Then he started to tilt and you could see his entire body didn't know what to do. He grabbed wrongly, he turned around and then seemed to change his mind—it was all a mess of limbs and slow decisions. And then he fell, the worst way he could have. Something was wrong when he got out of the water, and there was no time to make it right."

Joe crashed headfirst into the bottom wooden step. The tide was very high that day and the water surged around his head on successive waves. It took a collection of almost half a dozen people to hoist him off the steps and onto the deck. The paramedics were onsite and attending to him within 15 minutes and then rushing him to the hospital, which he never left. He was 89 years old.

First to Forty obsession



Peter Perez

Thinking that the Polar Bear season lacked sufficient cause for obsession, swim commissioners Tom Keller and Ted Tilles invented the "First to Forty" challenge. In the 2005-2006 season, Rick Avery completed his 40 miles in 11 days and became the first speed champion. Then Peter Perez decided to bring his fierce determination coupled with an analytical approach to

the competition. Writing in the Spring 2007 Log, Peter said, “Rick Avery set the record by finishing the 40 miles in 11 days. I want to do it in four days. In fact, I’m the last person anyone would expect to be the First to 40. I’m a scrawny, 50-year-old man—a slow swimmer who is consistently one of the last to finish a Dolphin swim event. The idea was intriguing. The record of 11 days was less than four miles a day. With ample recovery time and rest between swims I was sure I could do five miles a day. That would be an eight-day Polar Bear. What if I did six miles...?” Peter conducted multiple trials with swimming and heating times, keeping a detailed diary on water temperatures, swimming distances, and recovery times. “During these experiments, people began to notice me taking notes and re-entering the water. There was no avoiding the subject while in the sauna, but I needed to keep my rapidly developing plan a secret. If a faster swimmer tried the same thing, there would be no hope of my being first to 40. So, I did what anyone would do — I lied.”

As December 21 approached, he finalized his plan. He did his Christmas shopping early, cleared his calendar between the 21st and 26th. He bought a large array of supplies, including energy foods, light sticks, and Bag Balm. He even made a large pot of chicken soup. “Nobody knows what I’m up to. I’ve decided not to lie about how far I’ve swum if asked but I’m avoiding even small talk. ‘How far did you swim?’ is the question of the day, and as the day progresses my answer is a source of growing anxiety for me. I



Rick Avery

cannot win a race to 40 against a fast swimmer—unless I have a huge and discouraging lead.” The appearance of 40 colored squares on the chart the second day of the Polar Bear caused quite a stir. Some people were checking with him to make sure he knew how to mark his squares correctly. On his next to last swim on the fourth day, with a ½ mile to go, he was climbing the stairs to the Club and heard the dead bolt slide shut. It’s 11 pm and the gatekeeper is locking up for the night. “Luckily, he sees me. When we tell him that the Club President okayed our staying after hours he agrees to lock up when we leave.” After warming and swimming the last mile, he set the new First to Forty record at four days and 40 minutes.

The next year, Lauren Weisenthal obliterated Peter’s mark by swimming 40 miles in 2 days and 12 hours. She was younger and faster than Peter—less than half his age and more than twice his speed. Peter was right to believe that no amount of guile and cunning could overcome these advantages by a determined swimmer. Twice after Lauren’s accomplishment two other swimmers attempted to swim 40 miles in one day. Both were strapping young men who were exceedingly fast and fit. Not only did they not beat Lauren’s record, one had what appeared to be a nervous breakdown in the shower and neither man returned to the Club. Since then, the First to Forty champions have been dedicated, but (sort of) sensible people.

The 3,000-mile obsession

Laura Merkl has swum more than 3,000 miles in San Francisco Bay during winter in nothing more than a swimsuit, swim cap, and goggles. This means walking into Bay water from December 21 until March 21 and swimming mile after mile, day after day, and year after year when the temperature is as cold as 47 degrees and almost never warmer than 53 degrees Fahrenheit. Laura Merkl is the solitary human to have done this.



Laura Merkl

Although she swam through the winter, for the first couple of years of membership Laura remained unmindful of the Polar Bear mileage charts festooning the entry to the Dolphin Club. Then, in the 1986-1987 season, she decided to partake. Since she was living nearby the Club and working downtown, she felt like the 40 miles required at the time for a marble block was insufficient and thought, “100 sounds good.” Sure enough, slightly more than 120 miles later, Laura had earned her first Polar Bear.

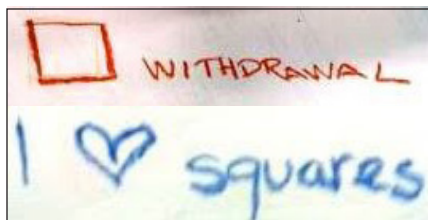
Then in the winter of 1993-1994, she was again on target for more than 100 miles. When she attended the Old Timers dinner in February, Dolphins asked her about her aspirations to be the Polar Bear champion that season. She said, “I don’t know what that is.” Her friends excitedly told her, “Well, there’s the Polar Bear and then there’s the Polar Bear CHAMP! You could be the CHAMP!” Alerted to this possibility, Laura quickly learned that no woman had ever before been the Polar Bear champion. She says, “I’ve never felt anything negative being female at the Club,” but the idea of being the first woman champion held substantial appeal.

She and fellow member George Kebbe were closely matched in swimming speed and had developed a friendly and competitive relationship in the Club-sponsored events. As it turned out, George

also had his eye on the Polar Bear championship. In order to win the Polar Bear Laura had to swim more miles that winter than George and more winter miles than she ever had swum before. Club members avidly monitored the race in slow motion, regularly checking the mileage log in the foyer as she and George spurred each other along through the remaining weeks of the Polar Bear.

Their colored squares leapfrogged one another in a simulacrum of a fiercely contested Olympic event. Laura had plenty of support. Women would regularly find her almost sleeping in the sauna and bring her strong coffee. Stan Hlynsky, president of the Club the year before, would leave voicemails on her office phone with words of encouragement including advice to “eat more.” And eat she did. She had recently started a new job and three bagels for a morning snack were common. Her gob-smacked co-workers were left marveling at where she put all this food on her lean frame. By March 21, 1994, her determination had produced 174 miles and the first woman’s name to adorn the Polar Bear Champion plaque.

The next winter Laura cruised to a leisurely 101 miles. Then she moved to San Carlos and took a job in San Jose, leaving herself a daily commute of over 100 miles if she wanted to



keep up her string of Polar Bears. In the next four seasons, she swam 50, 78, 80, and 75 miles: admittedly short of 100, but still a mind-boggling display of discipline. In the winter of 1999-2000, with her commute dramatically reduced, she swam 150 miles and tied with Scott Haskins to once again affix her name to the championship trophy.

For the next six years, she posted 100 miles or more. Then came a five year stretch during which her

South Bay commute resumed and she could only manage to chart mileage in the 80s and 90s. In the 2011-2012 season, the scourge of extreme athletes struck and she began to suffer severe shoulder pain. She finished with a measly 68 miles. Of course, she postponed the necessary rotator cuff surgery until after the Polar Bear was over.

As she recovered from surgery and pondered her goals for the coming year, her accounting instincts kicked in and she realized that she had accumulated more than 2,600 winter miles in the Bay. It occurred to her that people bike 3,000 miles across the U.S. They hike 3,000 miles across the U.S. No one can swim 3,000 miles across the U.S. But isn’t 3,000 a good number for Polar Bear attainment? By March 21, 2017, she had racked up 3,035.75 miles. She now has over 3,200 miles in her wake and has not formulated another goal beyond, “keep it up.”

Obsessing the squares

Swimmers often refer to the distance they’ve covered in a day in terms of squares—an artifact of Vince Huang’s Red Cross charts, where four squares equals a mile. “We did four squares today—at least a mile.” Since 1984, earning a Polar Bear requires swimming forty miles (or 160 squares) in the San Francisco Bay or equivalent cold, open water. For swimmers over the age of 60, the benchmark is 80 squares. Over the course of a winter, the tally sheet develops a personality as members exercise artistic license to record their daily distance. Making these individualized marks on the chart after each swim bestows a sense of completion and confers a coda on the cold-water plunge. The chart becomes a touchstone, a measure of resistance to mortality. The deep satisfaction associated with marking squares creates a craving that any addict would immediately recognize. When the chart was moved one winter to allow workers to repair the lobby floor, many Club members experienced “square shock.” Our beacon was



mislaidd. Our anchor had dragged. Although realization dawned quickly, the feeling was visceral—a shock to the polar plexus.

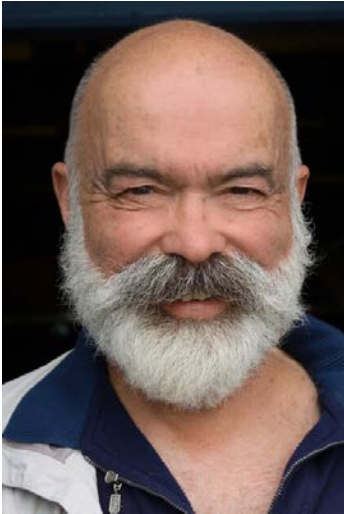
When the Polar Bear is over at the end of a long, cold winter, the chart is dismantled and square withdrawal sets in. The chart is not just temporarily relocated. It is gone. It is history—now 50 years of history and counting. The unique configuration of colors and patterns contributed by the 135 participants this year is obliterated like a Tibetan sand mandala. It leaves a vague, empty space in our souls. Who can wait until next winter?

The 50th Polar Bear Challenge is now concluded and it seems only fitting that Vincent Huang should have the last word. “The annual Polar Bear Swim/Challenge has historically been steeped in both lore and intrigue. Over the three winter months, December 21 to March 21, and particularly the last week of the Polar Bear, one would have to turn a blind eye to not notice the number of members consumed by a compulsion to finish. Days off, illness, business trips, and winter vacations often led to a mental frenzy of math recalculations ensuring completion by March 21,” Vince says. “I always thought the PB could provide a great case study on OCD for anyone studying behavioral psychology. The PB, after all, became all about the squares.”

**Polar bears call them squares
And it’s true they have right angles.
But no matter the tides,
If you measure the sides,
They really are rectangles.**

— Joe Illick

In Memoriam



Elmer Tosta



Al de la Peña



Suzie Royce

Elmer Tosta – Quintessential Dolphin Spirit

By David Zovickian and Jill Tosta

Elmer Tosta was many things in his 76 years. Most importantly he was devoted to his family: husband to Jill for more than 50 years, father to Ariel, and grandfather to Ava and Jackson. Following his discharge from the Air Force he was a fixture in North Beach. For many years he ran Galletti Bros. Shoe Service. If you had a pair of Birkenstocks, chances are you got them from him or he resoled them. More recently he roamed SFO working for Virgin and Alaska Airlines. When Virgin America started up and set Burlingame as its headquarters, Elmer figured it would be a cool job so he applied. Initially he worked at the pre-security area: the ticket/bag check counter. It wasn't too long before his people skills were recognized and he began covering more areas. He was responsible for training and supervising pretty much any area where employees interacted with customers: ticketing, baggage, and gate. When something was blowing up, he was the fireman. When Alaska bought Virgin, he pretty quickly found

himself in the same roles in spite of being from the acquired company. These past several years he was the guy who would escort VIPs through the airport and give tours to visiting executives.

In the 40-plus years I knew Elmer, he embodied the quintessential Dolphin spirit. Elmer contributed to the Club in just about every means imaginable. He took as much time as was needed to share stories with fellow Dolphin Old Timers or reminding new members of the importance of good citizenship in the Club. He served on our Board of Governors; was by my side at “zero-dark-thirty” in my stint as Swim Commissioner; supported countless training swims for several English Channel aspirants, including a couple of excursions across “The Pond;” put many hours into the building of the *Cecco* and *Bruno*. He was equally at ease behind the wheel of the *Arias* as he was paddling about on a rescue board.

Elmer was all in for the Club, whether picking up a shovel to

help excavate the boathouse for its new foundation, or completing a Fort Point swim (after a rigorous night of training at The Saloon and the Grant and Green). He was always ready to row the *Weiland* to Sam's for brunch with a half dozen seasoned Dolphins, a case of beer, and a few tubs of Vaseline to keep the leaky vessel afloat. Water Pigs quaked at his sight in the Trans Tahoe Relay Swim. Elmer was the cheerful guide to a magical spring of beer that would flow at the Santa Cruz Pier Swim BBQ from the mini keg that we would bury in the sand before the sun came up and the park rangers came on station.

I will miss our epic swims to the flag (and back), lunches at Joe's, the search for the perfect milkshake, and nightly beverage photo ops. We were a couple of Dolphins who loved what our city, and this club, had to offer—a place to make friends and develop deep, lasting relationships. That's what the Club gave me and Elmer. I truly hope that each of you will find such joy in our special Club.

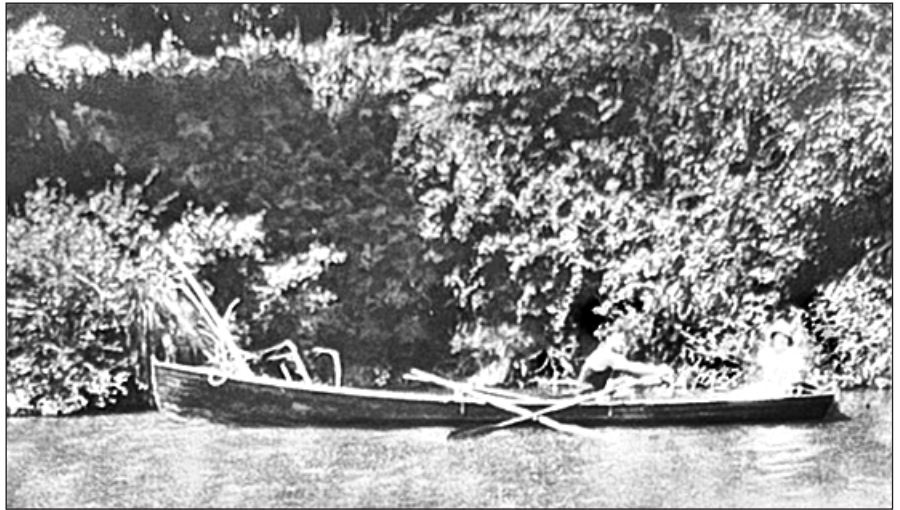
The Untold Story of the *Viking*

by Richard Cooper

The Dolphin Club is proud of its fleet of historic rowboats, hand-crafted from wood, some more than a century old but still used daily. The fleet consists of twenty such boats, and their histories have been documented in every detail just as if they were rare, classic automobiles. However, the pedigree of one special boat, *Viking*, was missing, lost decades ago along with some other Club records. Who built it? When? How did the Club acquire it? Only vague stories had been passed down and often repeated, indeed becoming legendary.

According to the legend, in the early 1900s several unknown carpenters working in the Washington-Mason Street cable car barn built a two-man rowing boat in their spare time. It then spent years on the Russian River. Upon the death of an owner, not identified, it was donated to the Dolphin Club in the 1930s, some said 1950s.

The legend contained clues, but systematic detective work would be needed to discover the real story. The search turned to public sources including old newspapers and other publications, the Maritime Library, the San Francisco Public Library History Room, Bancroft Library, and anyone who might have information. For a month or more the effort was frustrating, but then a breakthrough came in an article found in the May 4, 1943, issue of the *San Francisco Chronicle*. It mirrored the legend by describing the unique boat, its use on the Russian River, and the donation to the Club. Also, the article identified the owner, a Dolphin Club member. Finally, with a date and name in hand, the Club archives proved productive. Also, public sources were revisited. Genealogy websites provided birth and death records, census records, and city directories. Several living descendants were traced and interviewed.



The Harris Family photo album showing the Viking on the Russian River

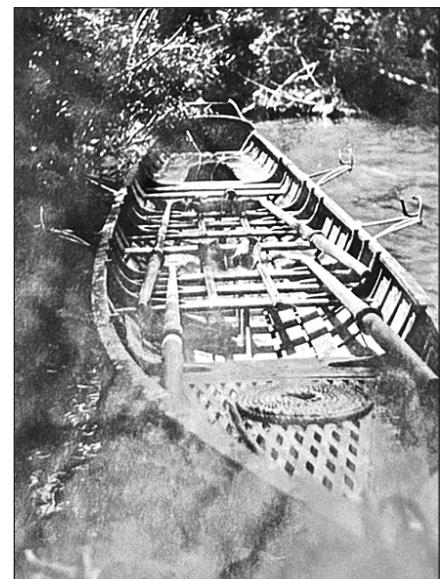
The loss of many records in the 1906 earthquake and fire limited this research, but here are the findings: James Harris built the boat with his sons in 1900, or a few years earlier, in the California Street Cable Railroad building on the southwest corner of California and Hyde Streets. James Harris was born in 1847, a native of Pictou, Nova Scotia, Canada. The 1879 Pictou Directory and 1881 Census of Canada stated his occupation as “Boat Builder.” In 1885, his family emigrated to San Francisco. Here he was a carpenter, repairing cable cars between 1886 and 1906. James became a member of the Dolphin Club along with two of his sons, William and Thomas. The sons rowed on championship crews in the early 1900s, and their names are honored on several Club trophies. Later they both served as presidents. William F. Harris died while Club president in 1911 at age 34 from typhoid fever, after rescuing a person in Richardson Bay.

In 1942 a fire destroyed the summer home of Thomas Harris on the lower Russian River near Guerneville. His boat, a 22-foot pleasure gig, survived, and in 1943 Thomas donated it to the Dolphin Club. Thomas W. Harris passed away in 1950 at age 68.

Possibly the Harris family chose the name *Viking* for Nova Scotia

with its Viking past, and the design, a long sleek gig, for their Scottish heritage. *Viking* was unique, quite different from other boats in the Dolphin Club fleet which were either heavier, utilitarian doubles or light, fragile racing boats. *Viking* soon became a much-admired craft on San Francisco Bay, but there were no others like her to compete in regattas. Until, in the late 1970s, nearby rowing clubs commissioned replica boats, and a new class was born, the Cable Car Gig. May the legend live on.

For more about *Viking* today: <https://archive.org/details/dc-viking-and-her-descendants>



Our Wooden Boats Wow the Judges at the Boat Show

By Nanda Palmieri

Since 2019, the Dolphin Club has participated in the Master Mariners Wooden Boat Show, held each June at the Corinthian Yacht Club in Tiburon. This year, Club members Diane Jackson, John Thorpe, Jon Bielinski, Liz Donahoe, Scott Simmons and myself rowed two wooden Dolphin doubles to the show — the *James L. Cronin* and *Lawton C Hughes*. The boats wowed attendees and judges, and brought home a prize: Honorable Mention for Best Preservation Effort. In an article published

in *Latitude 38*, one of the judges, John “Woody” Skoriak, describes the boats as “Absolutely exquisite. And they are used daily, year-round! Unbelievable. They looked like they were brand new.” The two doubles were built for the Dolphin Club by boatbuilder Bill Richards in 1938, and restored by Jon Bielinski in the 1980s/1990s. They are kept in fantastic working condition in the DC boat shop by the two Club boatbuilders, Jon Bielinski and Julia Hechanova, along with many, many volunteers.



Dolphin Club Swim Results – Summer 2025

Coghlan Beach—April 26, 2025

We had perfect conditions for a swim—the sun was shining, the current was strong, and the wind was mild. All 61 swimmers enjoyed a great push from the flood, and the first place finish was under 19 minutes!

Thank you to all the volunteers and pilots who made the swim possible.

Place	Name	Swim time	LCP	Place	Name	Swim time	LCP
1	Joby Bernstein	18:48	10	32	Lindzy Bivings	27:08	
2	Lissi Knell	19:11	9	33	Denise Sauerteig	27:15	
3	Matt Korman	19:24	8	34	Marci Glazer	27:18	
4	Ben Zovickian	19:39	7	35	Nancy Hornor	27:21	
5	Henry Saunders	19:45	6	36	Chloe Noonan	27:30	
6	Lauren Brinkmeyer	20:11	5	37	Liam Ronan	27:36	
7	Juliet Cox	20:58	4	38	Tommaso Trionfi	27:40	
8	Stephen Balhoff	21:02	3	39	Georgii Barber	27:52	
9	Steve Schatz	21:12	2	40	Laure Darcy	27:56	
10	Bill Gardner	21:35	1	41	Haile Kampman	27:59	
11	Jeff Citron	21:54		42	Peter Bostelmann	28:16	
12	Kim Gorcyca	22:05		43	Holly Reed	28:32	
13	Steve Carlson	22:45		44	Lisa Domitrovich	28:47	
14	Tovia Sobel	23:00		45	Andy Stone	28:54	
15	Sean Lavelle	23:18		46	Pete Neubauer	29:09	
16	Anna Schatz	23:20		47	Peter Cullinan	29:15	
17	Don Thornburg	23:47		48	Kathleen Duffy	29:18	
18	Logan Craig	23:55		49	Bobby Carp	29:34	
19	Katrina Garry	24:11		50	John Hornor	29:51	
20	Elizabeth Mayer	25:10		51	Hal Offen	30:28	
21	Beth Stein	25:27		52	Farrah Spott	30:50	
22	Danny Wohlner	25:32		53	Jim Frew	31:08	
23	Ernst Halperin	25:46		54	Vicki Stolberg	31:28	
24	Eric Wind	25:50		55	Eliana Agudelo	32:23	
25	Bobby Lu	26:08		56	Arnie Thompson	32:36	
26	David O'Reilly	26:18		57	Phil Gaal	32:54	
27	Michael Halby	26:24		58	Clara Ault	33:01	
28	Brandon Esenther	26:50		59	Kati Hopman	33:26	
29	Chris Igo	26:59		60	Ashley Hazel	34:00	
30	Daniel Silva	27:03		61	Sheila Gleeson	34:04	
31	Elizabeth Ozer	27:04					

Pilots

Lead Pilot: Ben Chun

Lead Swim Commissioner: Alex Kroeger

Tim McElligott, Maeve Lavelle, Ben Chun, KC Crowell, Alex Kroeger, Heather Kremer, Josefina McAuliffe-Rocha, Ellen Offermann, Damian Guenzing, Dave Buchanan, Dean Badessa, Barry Christian, Tom McCall, Brian Kiernan, Diane Walton, Matt Stromberg, Tom Corcoran, Ryan Dalton, Rebecca Tilley, Jeffrey Tong, Ken Coren, Jon Bielinski, David Wagner, Miranda Rouse, Nanda Palmieri, John Thorpe, Heather Warm, Maggie Lonergan,

David Zovickian, Kelsey Dean, Erika Giste, Joshua Loman, Chris Kocher, Tony Foe, Connor Clark, Allison Arnold, James Dilworth

Volunteers

Alix Marduel, Sue Garfield, Mark Lenz, Zach Del Duca, Diana Pray, Julia Peterson, Erika Kettleson, Merryl Levy, Robin Rome, Scott Simmons, Chris Kelly, Rob Blum, Emily Nogue, Andrew Cunningham, Christophe Crombez, Diane Campbell, Mike Thoreson, Sue Robbins, Andrew Cassidy, Tom Hunt, Tamar Besson, Elizabeth Mayer, Elizabeth Ozer, Sheila Gleeson, Kathleen Duffy, Vicki Stolberg, Ashley Hazel, Lisa

Domitrovich, Anne Diedrich, Nanda Palmieri, Monica Savini, Ken Schwarz, Eric Shupert, Lauren Brinkmeyer, Lissi Knell, Anna Schatz, Steve Schatz, Lorna Newlin, Andrew Dietrich, Scott Halsted, Anne Hamersky, Henrietta Scholars, Kathy Wallace, John Henderson, Sarah Mulchand, Fiona Donald, Eva Adamson

Test Swim

Alex Kroeger, Ben Chun, Maeve Lavelle, Marci Glazer, Steve Carlson, Madeleine Crow, Jim Frew, Nancy Hornor, Sunny Mckee, Beth Stein, Michael Tschantz-Hahn, Heather Kremer, Dean Badessa, Ryan Dalton, Diane Campbell, Rebecca Tilley

Walt Schneebeli Over 60 Cove Swim—May 10, 2025

The annual over 60 cove swim is named in honor of Walt Schneebeli, a Dolphin Club member who joined in 1948 and swam in the cove for nearly 80 years.

The weather was excellent for this swim—sunshine and very little wind. There was a fairly strong push from a flood in the cove, so the courses ran clockwise.

We had three different course options this year:

1. to the second buoy and back
2. to the flag and back, and
3. a full cove

58 Dolphins came out to swim and everyone made it back to the dock. Many swam out on the buoy line with inner tubes and enjoyed the free ride back to the club from the flood. Some folks remarked that it was odd swimming along Hyde Street Pier without the familiar sight of the Balclutha, Thayer, and Eppleton Hall.

Thank you to all the volunteers and pilots who made the swim possible.

Walt Schneebeli Swim Results, cont.

Pilots

Lead Swim Commissioner: Alex Kroeger

Kelsey Dean, Erika Giste, Joshua Loman, Brian Kiernan, Robin Hart, Katrina Garry, Joey Murphy, Ken Coren, Era Osibeg

Volunteers

Derrick Rebello, Sue Garfield, Kathy Wallace, John Hornor, Julia Peterson, Bobby Lu, Eva Adamson, Holly Reed, Steve Schatz,

Scott Halsted, Miranda Rouse, Maeve Lavelle, Beth Stein, Chris Igo, Dave HK, Kim Gorcyca, Ben Clark, Lorna Newlin, Peter Neubauer, Dana Watt, Anne Hamersky

Swimmers

Norman Degelman, Kathleen Duffy, Lawrence Remstedt, Paul Wolf, Ernst Halperin, Kelley Heye, Jennifer Weller, Janice Wood, Diane Walton, Fiona McCusker, Joe Ferrero, Peter Cullinan, Monica Towers, Bob McKenzie, Robin Rome, Kathy Wallace, Cheryl Wallace,

Pia Hinckle, Lorna Newlin, Andrew Ach, Nancy Hornor, Chris Igo, Diane Campbell, Dorian Dunne, John Henderson, Vicki Stolberg, Sandy Bardas, Laura Merkl, Morgan Kulla, Phil Rollins, Will Powning, Anne Sasaki, Alix Marduel, Chris Kocher, Don Thornburg, Sarah McCuskey, Mark Lenz, Margaret Keenan, Krist Jake, John Lennox, John Hornor, Sheila Gleeson, Eileen David, Jeff Citron, Jeffrey Tong, Keith Nelson, Neal Powers, Beth Stein, Mary Cantini, Raphael Noz, Joni Beemsterboer, Daragh Powers, DJ Niccolls, Hal Offen, Catherine Singstad, Anne Hamersky, Peter Neubauer, Phil Gaal

Yacht Harbor—May 25, 2025

We had less than ideal conditions with wind speeds over 14 knots which lead to our LP deciding to reroute the swim to an inside/outside + cove. The conditions were rough; we had about 20 people finish the whole course, and we had the remaining swimmers do an adjusted route from there. We had all our motor craft out as well as most of our pilots to ensure the safety of everyone. Considering all the adjustments, it was a good swim!

Place	Swimmers Name	Swim Time	LCP	Place	Swimmers Name	Swim Time	LCP
1	Allison	Arnold	33:49	12	Denise	Sauertieg	46:47
1	Felicia	Lee	33:49	13	Jeff	Citron	47:23
3	Lissi	Knell	37:11	14	Ben	Clark	48:50
4	Mackenzie	Kirk	37:44	15	Steve	Schatz	49:30
5	Kalani	Leifer	40:11	16	Anna	Schatz	50:06
6	David	Holscher	40:19	17	Hannah	Holscher	50:11
7	Marlin	Gilbert	40:37	18	Pete	Cullinan	56:03
8	Thorston	Anderson	44:25	19	Edwin	Purselle	56:36
9	Stephen	Balhoff	44:07	20	Heather	Warm	58:28
10	Juliet	Cox	44:54	21	Rebecca	Groves	82:00
11	Lawrence	Remstedt	45:22				

Pilots

Lead Pilot: Ramsey Williams

Lead Swim Commissioner: Lindsay Stripling

Blair Adamson, Susan Allen, Jon Bielinski, David Buchanan, Sara Chang, Paul Chong, Ben Chun, Madeleine Crow, Joe Gannon, Erin Gasser, Erika Giste, Damian Guenzing, Lewis Haidt, Stephen Hattwick, Terry Horn, Diane Jackson, Brian Kiernan, Maeve Lavelle, Charmaine Leonard, Joshua Loman, Dominic Lusinchi, Tom McCall, Abby Mohan, Nanda Palmieri, Will Powning, Antoine Roux, Gina Rus, Kathleen Sheridan,

Ally Sillins, Scott Simmons, Andy Stone, Peter Strietmann, Jeffrey Tong, Diane Walton, Ramsey Williams, Eric Wind, David Zovickian

Helpers

Thorsten Anderson, Stephen Balhoff, Cynthia Barnard, Joni Beemsterboer, Robert Blum, Diane Campbell, Mary Cantini-Norkin, Andrew Cassidy, Ken Coren, Juliet Cox, Christophe Crombez, Peter Cullinan, Lisa Domitrovich, Joe Ferrero, Jim Frew, Ernst Halperin, Anne Hamersky, John Henderson, Pia Hinckle, Kati Hopman, John Hornor,

Jessica Huang, Carolyn Hui, Chris Igo, Chris Kelly, Paul Kretkowski, Jean Lamming, Felicia Lee, Merryl Levy, Alix Marduel, David O'Reilly, Lawrence Remstedt, Jennifer Rogers, Eric Shupert, Tovia Sobel, Farrah Spott, Rebecca Tilley, Dana Watt, Janice Wood

Test Swim

Lewis Haidt, Alix Marduel, Kathleen Sheridan, Tovia Sobel, Amanda Ernzer, Diane Jackson, Dominic Lusinchi, Kristoffer Milonas

John Nogue Pier 15 Swim—June 14, 2025

In relatively calm conditions, we celebrated John Nogue's spirit and legacy with a fast swim from Pier 15. Emily and Sofie Nogue joined us on the Adventure Cat, and oversaw all 54 swimmers completing the 2-mile route. Emily related a sentiment from one of John's journals about coming to the Dolphin Club to swim, but staying for the people. After the day's events, we all shared this feeling..

Pilots

Lead Pilot: Nathaniel Berger

Lead Swim Commissioner: Ben Chun

Lilian Tsai, Dominic Lusinchi, Nanda Palmieri, John Thorpe, Scott Simmons, Jon Bielinski, Diane Jackson, Tony Foe, Alice Ma, Tom McCall, Will Powning, Barry Christian, Evan Hirsch, Dave Zovickian, Cathy Huang, Danny Wohlner, Daniel Cavey, Otto Williams, David Buchanan, Emily Pimentel, Terry Horn, Stephen Hattwick, Felicia Lee, Brian Kiernan, Bobby Carp, Mickey Lavelle, John Robiola, Tim

McElligott, Mike Walsh, Nathaniel Berger, Steve Hagler, Maeve Lavelle, Mackenzie Kirk, Steve Carlson, Gina Rus, Ben Chun

Volunteers

Derrick Rebello, Jessica Huang, Sue Garfield, Pia Hinckle, Carolyn Hui, John Hornor, Nancy Hornor, Sam Maslin, Bobby Lu, Robin Hart, Chris Kelly, Tamar Besson, Ellen Hathaway, Ashley Hazel, Tommaso Trionfi, Nancy Booth, James Glasnapp, Chloe Noonan, Daniel Silva, David Holscher, Hannah Holscher, Joby Bernstein, Lewis Haidt, Kathleen Duffy, Kim Gorcyca, Tom Neill, Andrew Cassidy, Aaron Rosenthal, Duke

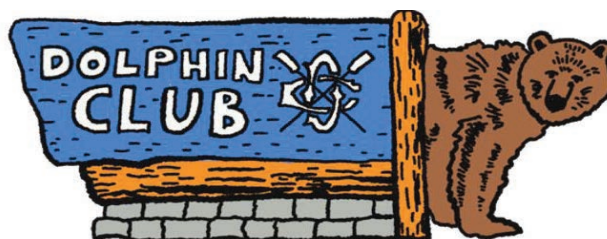
Dahlin, Emily Schmitz, Ben Zovickian, Denise Sauerteig, Sophie Nogue, Keith Gray, Logan Craig, Teddy Chivetta, Nick Churcher, Alisha Kewalramani, Rebecca Groves, Ed Nunez

Test Swim

Dominic Lusinchi, Wafaa Sabil, Daniel Cavey, Forrest Carroll, Brooke Blume, Nathaniel Berger, Alex Kroeger, Damian Guenzing, David Buchanan, Kathleen Sheridan, Maile Smith, Gina Rus, Steve Carlson, Denise Saurteig, Ben Chun

John Nogue Pier 15 Swim Results, cont.

Place	Name	Swim time	LCP	Place	Name	Swim time	LCP
1	Joby	Bernstein	0:31:25	28	margaret	keenan	0:44:52
2	Allison	Arnold	0:31:28	29	George	Chamales	0:45:32
3	Jessica	Huang	0:32:24	30	Megan	wachs	0:45:46
4	Ben	Zovickian	0:33:52	31	Tom	Neill	0:46:20
5	Lissi	Knell	0:34:07	32	Miguel	Gonzalez	0:48:11
6	Dominick	Kirk	0:35:32	33	Daniel	Silva	0:48:48
7	Amanda	Ernzer	0:36:48	34	Connor	Clark	0:49:22
8	Alex	Kroeger	0:36:50	35	Chloe	Noonan	0:49:45
9	Steve	Schatz	0:36:53	36	Maxwell	Audette	0:50:11
10	David	Holscher	0:37:20	37	Damian	Guenzing	0:50:17
11	Emily	Schmitz	0:37:29	38	Nancy	Hornor	0:50:28
12	Ken	Schwarz	0:37:59	39	Gretchen	Coffman	0:50:42
13	Thorsten	Anderson	0:38:10	40	Pia	Hinckle	0:50:43
14	Kim	Gorcya	0:38:15	41	Brooke	Wentz	0:51:12
15	Taylor	Nanfria	0:38:24	42	Robert	Blum	0:51:24
16	Tor	Lundgren	0:39:24	43	John	Melcher	0:51:51
17	Joe	Dinan	0:40:45	44	Lisa	Domitrovich	0:52:18
18	Hannah	Holscher	0:40:56	45	Kathleen	Duffy	0:52:29
19	Sean	Lavelle	0:41:22	46	Peter	Cullinan	0:52:36
20	Georgie	Alcock	0:41:26	47	John	Hornor	0:53:23
21	Heather	Warm	0:41:45	48	Julia	Brashares	0:54:00
22	rohin	daswani	0:42:22	49	Donna	Schumacher	0:54:11
24	Lawrence	remstedt	0:42:44	50	Aaron	Rosenthal	0:55:12
23	Tom	Reynolds	0:43:15	51	Lewis	Haidt	0:55:26
25	Virginie	Eskenazi	0:44:06	52	Kati	Hopman	0:56:25
26	Clara	Ault	0:44:27	53	Carolyn	Hui	0:57:11
27	Beth	Stein	0:44:47	54	Keith	Nelson	0:57:00



Grizzly Bear Challenge

The Grizzly Bear Challenge is an annual winter event at the Dolphin Club, where members aim to erg 100,000 meters on rowing machines (ergs) between Thanksgiving and New Year's Eve. It's a test of endurance and dedication, with members often exceeding the 100,000-meter goal. The challenge is not a race but a personal goal, encouraging members to stay active during the holiday season.

Name	Distance	Name	Distance
Mark Cullen	723,000	Christine Sutcliffe	109,500
Corey Masao Johnson	403,827	Chris Kocher	108,500
Daniel Marshall	292,955	David Brownstein	107,621
Tom O'Connell	250,000	Riley Culligan	104,773
Marlin Gilbert	190,000	Laura Zovickian	102,500
Fiona Smythe	147,674	Maryann Murphy	102,109
Jonathan Vaknin	139,970	Luke Rajlich	101,354
Natazha Bernie	139,950	Joey Gracey	101,110
Maile Smith	131,631	Arnie Thompson	100,500
Andrew Dunbar	128,121	Zack McCune	100,500
Robert Larson	125,967	Dorian Faust	100,097
Rebecca Isaacs	111,564	Ally Sillins	100,000
Roger Hansen	110,533		

Wall Stack Challenge

The Wall Stack Challenge happens every year after the Polar Bear swim season and runs from March 22nd until May 31st. Walt Stack was one of the Dolphin Club's most beloved members and was an avid runner, regularly seen running and waving across the Golden Gate Bridge. His motto was "Start slow, then taper off" which we love and try to abide by. To accomplish a "Tall" stack you must run 225 miles during the challenge. A "Short" stack requires 100 miles during the same period. This is a great way to avoid "square withdrawal."

Tall Stack Finishers – 225M

Name	Miles	Name	Miles
Paul Wais	687.94	Tom McGraw	288.3
Marlin Gilbert	485	Stan Ades	258.83
Lolly Lewis	359.33	Eric Wind	240
Michelle Jew	342.67	Derrick Rebello	238
Jonathan Vaknin	334.67	Marie Sayles	233
Katrina Garry	311.57	Joey Gracey	231.65
Gabriella Wong	308.6	Randy Edwards	227
Erika Giste	305	Clay Tucker	225.77

Short Stack Finishers – 100M

Name	Miles	Name	Miles
Riley Culligan	218.44	Diane Walton	130
John Gibbon	204.59	Dave Malong	120
Kelley Heye	195.7	Gina Bianucci Rus	119.7
Joey Murphy	185.41	Sunny McKee	118
Sue Garfield	180	Alisha Kewalramani	115.5
Madeleine Crow	176.72	Deanna Micros	115
Kati	170	Madhuri	115
Nick Churcher	158	Ruby Lipscomb	110
KLB	140	Heather Rhide	110
Beth Stein	140	Sean Lavelle	110
Bret Dougherty	137.88		

Finishers	Miles
Total Short Stack	15
Total Tall Stack Finishers	20
Totals	35

Photo: Jana Ašenbrennerová



2025 Polar Bear Champion Oliver Fader and Swim Commissioner Ben Chun

2024-2025 Polar Bear Results

* First to forty

** 47 consecutive Polar Bears

First	Last	Miles	First	Last	Miles
Oliver	Fader	200	Jamie	Robinson	50
Christophe	Crombez	115	Carter	Seddon	50
Tom	Neill	102	Joe	Spallone	50
Stephen	Balhoff	87	Tamara	Straus	50
Michael	Tschantz-Hahn	82.75	Heather	Warm	50
Kalani*	Leifer	80	Adam	Goldberg	49
Ben	Hu	75	John	Mervin	49
Ted	Tilles	75	Jean-Marc	Nugent	48
Amanda	Ernzer	69	Steve	Hanson	46.75
Thorsten	Anderson	67	Matt	Johnson	45.75
Alice	Ma	65	Vince**	Huang	45
Maryann	Murphy	65	Sean	Lavelle	45
Perjmun	Haghighi	62	Phillip	Scarborough	45
John	Ottersberg	62	Rebecca	Tilley	45
Neal	Powers	61.5	Eliana	Agudelo	44
Andrew	Wynn	61	Erik	Cufino	44
Tatyana	Ovcharova	60.5	Colin	McMahon	45
Randy	Edwards	60	Egon	Terplan	43.5
Pia	Hinckle	60	Henry	Dombey	43.25
Mike	Morales	60	Daniel	Handler	43
Barnaby	Payne	60	Pieter	Kruit	43
Elaine	Van Vleck	60	Felicia	Lee	43
Peter	Cullinan	59.5	Elizabeth	Mayer	43
Kati	Hopman	58	Daniel	Ryan	43
Tony	Payne	57	Kellen	Dammann	42.75
Gary	Arabatyan	56.5	Keith	Gray	42.5
Lawrence	Remstedt	56	Mike T	Walsh	42.5
Kristoffer	Milonas	55	Mackenzie	Kirk	42
Mike	Thoresen	55	Larry	Scroggins	42
Arnie	Oji	54.5	Kristen	Steck	42
Bill	Gardner	54	Madhuri	Yechuri	42
Caius	Vannouhuys	53.25	Alex	Buehlmann	41.5
Kamran	Atabai	53	Jill	Rice	41.5
Anna	Schatz	53	Kim	Harris	41.25
John	Stassen	53	Eric	Boyle	41
Steve	Schatz	52.5	Nick	Dolce	41
Jonathan	DePriest	52	Lisa	Domitrovich	41
Jeff	Citron	51.5	Morgan	Kulla	41
Steve	Carlson	51	Juan	Tellez	41
Karin	Christensen	51	Mike J	Walsh	41
Heather	Kremer	51	Joni	Beemsterboer	40.5
Catherine	Singstad	51	Brooke	Blume	40.5
Fasica	Alemayehu	50.5	Ben	Chun	40.5
Peter	Badertscher	50	Zachary	Del Duca	40.5
Laura	Burtch Zovickian	50	Anders	Dillan	40.5
John	Gibbon	50	James	Glasnapp	40.5
Tor	Lundgren	50	Daid	Holscher	40.5
Elizabeth	Ozer	50	Pejman	Moshfegh	40.5
Tony	Phillips	50	D	Nielsen	40.5
Will	Powning	50	David	O'Reilly	40.5

Polar Bar Results, cont.

First	Last	Miles	First	Last	Miles
Eric	Reed	40.5	Jeanne	Hallacy	27.5
Miranda	Rouse	40.5	Anne	Barbarett	27.25
Nikolas	Tomasevic	40.5	Jeffrey	Tong	26
Daniel	Rosario	40.25	Joe	Gannon	25
Allison	Arnold	40	Keith	Howell	25
Peter	Bartu	40	Lolly	Lewis	25
Joel	Bleskacek	40	Michael	Matthay	25
Peter	Bostelmann	40	Robin	Rome	25
Tom	Brown	40	Kate	Matthay	24.75
Michael	Caniglia	40	Stuart	Moulder	24.5
Bobby	Carp	40	Ernst	Halperin	24.5
Lindsey	Collins	40	Bob	Tandler	24
Logan	Craig	40	James	Bennan	24
Ryan	Dalton	40	Rusa	Chiu	23.75
Kathleen	Duffy	40	Nancy	Lange	23
Brandon	Esenther	40	Peter	Neubauer	23
Jak	Fa	40	Monica	Towers	23
Erin	Gasser	40	Gabriella	Cross	22.3
Humaira	Ghilzai	40	Dorian	Dunne	22.25
Marlin	Gilbert	40	George	Robin	22.25
Miguel	Gonzalez	40	Terry	Horn	22
Kim	Gorcyca	40	Kevin	McAlea	22
Damian	Guenzing	40	Beth	Stein	22
Robin	Hart	40	Joe	Mannion	21.75
David	Hua	40	Daragh	Powers	21.75
Brian	Johnson	40	Theresa	Kolish	21.5
Mickey	Lavelle	40	Aniko	Kurczinak	21.5
Jean-Marc	Lelu	40	Tom	McGraw	21.5
Bianca	Liederer	40	Chris	Igo	21.25
Emily	Ozer	40	Hal	Offen	21.25
Derrick	Rebello	40	Kevin	Shanahan	21.25
Holly	Reed	40	Greg	Amoroso	21
Aaron	Rosenthal	40	Ken	Coren	21
Brendan	Sheehan	40	Nancy	Hornor	21
Laura	Vartain Horn	40	Natazha	Raine O'Connor	21
John	Hornor	34.75	Wolf	Richter	21
Laura	Merkel	34.5	Rebecca	Smith-Bindman	21
Ken	Miller	34	Deb	Sullivan	21
Claire	Perry	33.5	Kathy	Wallace	20.75
Ruby	Lipscomb	32	Peter	de Castro	20.5
Mike	Smith	32	Anne	Sasaki	20.5
Christine	Varon	31	Krist	Jake	20.25
Julie	Haas	30	Michaelynn	Meyers	20.25
Elsbeth	Farmer	30	Dulke	Dahlin	20
Sunny	McKee	29.25	John	Dugan	20
Stu	Gannes	29	Jim	Emery	20
Andy	Stone	29	Sue	Garfield	20
Diane	Campbell	28	Anne	Hamersky	20
Joanne	Sakai	27.8	Mara	Iaconi	20
Denise	Dugan	27.5	Beth	Ohanneson	20
Jim	Frew	27.5	Mark	Robinson	20

Our Changing Cove



The *Eppleton Hall* prepares for relocation



The *Balclutha* leaves the Cove through the Opening



The newly naked Hyde Street Pier



Vallera Vallera invade the beach



The Dolphin Swimming
& Boating Club
502 Jefferson Street
San Francisco, CA 94109

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2025 DOLPHIN CLUB SWIM & EVENT SCHEDULE

Event	Day	Date	Current/Tide (Gg)	Jump
New Year's Day Alcatraz*	WED	1 Jan	09:42 1.7kn F	07:00
New Year's Day Cove	WED	1 Jan		09:00
Pier 41*	SUN	2 Feb	05:30 2.0kn E	07:30
Valentine's Day Singles Regatta	SAT	15 Feb		
Old Timers' Lunch	SUN	16 Feb		
Gashouse Cove*	SAT	1 Mar	09:54 1.8kn F	08:30
End of Polar Bear	FRI	21 Mar		
Start of Walt Stack Challenge	SAT	22 Mar		
Pier 39*	SAT	22 Mar	08:54 1.5kn E	08:00
Blackaller Buoy Run	SUN	13 Apr		
Coghlan Beach*	SAT	26 Apr	09:12 1.6kn F	08:30
Walt Schneebeli Over-60 Cove	SAT	10 May		07:00
Master Mariners Regatta	SAT	24 May		
Yacht Harbor*	SUN	25 May	09:24 1.6kn F	09:00
End of Walt Stack Challenge	SAT	31 May		
Start of 100 Mile Swim	SUN	1 Jun		
McCovey Cove Mixer	SAT	7 Jun		
John Nogue Swim For Science - Pier 15*	SAT	14 Jun	05:18 2.3kn E	07:00
Pride Swim*	SUN	22 Jun	08:24 1.4kn F	
Angel Island Picnic & Overnight	SAT	28 Jun		
Bay Bridge*	SUN	13 Jul	05:12 2.5kn E	07:00
Alcatraz Regatta	SUN	20 Jul		
China Beach**	SUN	10 Aug	11:00 1.8kn F	07:30
Santa Cruz 1 Mile*	SAT	16 Aug		
Santa Cruz 2 Mile*	SUN	17 Aug		
Doc Howard 45+ Swim*	SAT	23 Aug	10:42 2.0kn F	11:00
Ft. Point*	SUN	7 Sep	09:48 1.8kn F	07:30
Escape from Alcatraz Tri (EFAT)	SUN	14 Sep	09:06 0.9kn E	06:45
Swim Across America	SUN	21 Sep		
Alcatraz	SUN	28 Sep	08:30 0.7kn E	07:00
DC/SE Interclub Tri*	SAT	4 Oct		
Joe Bruno Golden Gate	SAT	25 Oct	06:24 0.9kn E	09:15
End of 100 Mile Swim	FRI	31 Oct		
Angel Island Regatta	SAT	1 Nov		
Veterans Day Swim (Cove)	SAT	8 Nov		08:00
Pilot Appreciation Dinner	SAT	8 Nov		
Thanksgiving Day Cove	THU	27 Nov		
New Year's Day Qualifier & Holiday Brunch	SUN	14 Dec		08:00
Start of Polar Bear	SUN	21 Dec		

Swim Program Rules

- Club scheduled swims are restricted to Club members, who are current on their dues and fees and in good standing.
- Swimmers must have current USMS membership, and abide by each organization's rules and requirements.
- Swimmers are required to wear orange caps on all scheduled swims.
- Swimmers cannot use swim aids, including fins and wet suits, on any scheduled swims.
- New members are not eligible to swim in scheduled out-of-cove swims for either 6 months from the start of their membership, or before successfully completing the 100-mile swim, the Polar Bear swim, or the Accelerated Out-of-Cove process.
- All out-of-cove swims require a pilot:swimmer ratio of 1:3.
- Time limits may be imposed at the discretion of the Swim Commissioner(s).
- All Club boats are reserved for scheduled swims. Co-pilots are encouraged. Riders are prohibited.
- Swimmers must register during check-in and attend the swim briefing in order to swim.
- Swimmers must successfully complete at least two qualifying swims and help on at least three swims to qualify for Alcatraz and Golden Gate Swims.
- Out-of-town members must have successfully completed two of the last three Club scheduled Alcatraz and/or Golden Gate swims or meet Rule 10 above.

(Nothing in the above rules shall contravene any applicable Federal laws and statutes.)

*Qualifying Swim. Need 2 qualifying swims + 3 helps to qualify for Golden Gate and/or Alcatraz.

**Requires special qualifier, details TBA

2025 Swim Clinics

Day	Date
SUN	4-May
SUN	8-Jun
SAT	12-July
SUN	3-Aug
SAT	6-Sep
SAT	18-Oct

Alcatraz
Island
1.4 miles

Pier 411/2
1.2 miles

Pier 43
1 mile

Aquatic Park
Cove

Gashouse Cove
1 mile

Yacht
Harbor
1.5 miles

Crissy
Field
2.5 miles

Fort Point
3.5 miles

All times approximate & subject to change. TBA = to be announced