

## In the beginning -- by Ed Gulley

*These final memories are from Ed just before he passed-away on 9-24-04. I received several handwritten pages from him dated 9-21-04. In typing them for him, and for all of us to read, the intent was to preserve the wording verbatim as much as possible, That is to retain his original wording and meaning as much as I could. -- bobsellers*

Over the last few years, some people in the club have asked me about how the Fathomiers was formed.

Well -- You might say Al Schuck and I got into skindiving late in our lives, as we were both out of the Army, married and raising kids. During this time in our life, the very early 1950s, we lived in the Silver Lake and Echo Park areas of Los Angeles. Even before the Fathomiers was organized, Al had already been diving with a friend of ours, Ronnie Hayes, and Gates Brown who owned a mail-order skindiving supply company and who was a member of the Kelptomaniacs skindiving club located out in the San Fernando Valley area. One day, Ronnie took Al and me out on his boat to the L. A. Breakwater and as I was just getting into photography then I only went along to take pictures, etc. After that trip, I also became hooked in diving, and, soon enough we had a few more friends from our area interested in diving along with us. We dived a few years from Laguna Beach to Leo Carrillo beach, but mostly at the L. A. Breakwater and the Palos Verdes area. In the early 1950's we could drive out to the top of the cliffs at P. V. and hike down the few existing trails to the water. In those days, we only had wool socks and sweaters to help keep us from freezing to death. The best equipment we had then was the gum rubber *duck-feet* and the *arbalet* spearguns. Eventually we got our own 1/8 inch wet suit kits, which we had to glue together ourselves.

In our own little group, Al Schuck, Bob White, Bob Garcia and I had gone to grammar school together so naturally we were very close. In addition, there was Ed Anderson and Jim Sikes who had begun diving along with us. At the same time, Al and I, with a few others from our little group had been diving some with a few members of the Kelptomaniacs. Al mentioned that he was going to try to join the Kelptomaniacs, so I figured I would also try to join after him. At this time, I was working as a machinist at Gladding Mcbean Ceramics Company and Jim Sikes worked there in the lab. If anything, Jim Sikes planted the seed to form a club. He just wouldn't stop bugging me to start a club. I kept telling him that he should start one, but he wouldn't pursue it. I told him I was thinking of joining the Kelptomaniacs along with Al. However, Al changed his mind about joining that club. Meanwhile, I had told Al about Jim bugging me to start a club. Al and I after discussing it over decided we would start our own club. After a lot of thought about what we would name it Al said, we should have a number somewhere in the name of the club. I didn't think too much of the idea at first, but at the same time I was

trying to think of a number that goes with water, when all of a sudden, it was too easy! I said “Fathom”, instead of six (6). That’s how we decided to name the club the Fathomiers.

Al was a draftsman with the city and was very artistic. He created the design of the club patch, and we both agreed on the design and the colors. We decided on a navy blue windbreaker jacket with the club patch on the left breast and the L. A. Council of Dive Clubs patch on the left shoulder. At that time, we were friendly with the council President Homer Lockwood and we decided that all club members should join the council to help promote diving. About this time, we met Ed Hope who was the manager of a dive shop just south of the Malibu pier. Ed said he also would like to join our club and said he had a few other guys that would like to come along. Al and I agreed that would be great. We decided that we wanted to get the club set up the way we wanted it, and then invite Ed and the others to come in. It wasn’t that big a deal, but we didn’t want to complicate things, we simply wanted to set up the club our way. One of the main things was that we didn’t want an initiation where you had to prove how macho you are. The main thing we wanted from the members in the beginning was a sincere passion to dive and an interest of belonging to a well-connected group. We only wanted people who really liked to dive, make three meetings and three beach dives in three months. In hindsight, we really had no realization of just how far or where the club would go; we just wanted to start out right and with a good purpose.

We had a couple preliminary meetings at my house and had our first official meeting, where we officially became a club, at Al’s house in March of 1957. At that time, Ed Hope brought Howard Conrad, Mark Patterson and Tom Phillips into the club with him. We all became very close friends and had many great times together during those early years. I don’t think I missed a meet or meeting for the first twelve years of the club. After we had the club organized and on its way, we would take our families with us regularly to the beach meets. We had joined the council, but didn’t focus on any one particular thing then. In the early sixty’s we had a lot of fun. We threw some big open parties, with lots of seafood (abalones, lobsters and fish) live music and dancing with all the works. Together with the council, we co-sponsored a very successful and publicized starfish clean up at the L. A. Federal breakwater. We became involved in competitive diving around 1959 and early 1960 and quickly realized it was so important to scout and be on time during the meets! We had a lot to learn! All that changed when George Boss came into the club in 1963 and begun to get the club focused on the competitions. Ken Pitcher and Bob Sellers had already been promoting the competitions. As time went on our equipment kept getting much better. Ken Pitcher had begun making spear guns out of exotic hardwoods, which really looked nice. Andy Levario had joined the club and was making some nice mahogany spear guns at home. Bob Sellers talked Andy into helping us build our own guns by helping each other. Using the “Addict” mechanism design I made all the parts from stainless steel while Andy and Bob did all the woodwork with mahogany and other exotic hard woods and put them all together. The guns were beautiful. After that, I don’t think Bob has ever stopped making his own guns. Besides having better spear guns and other equipment, one of the best things to come along was the introduction of the paddleboards, which we use today.

**Although I was the secretary for the first few years, I've always regretted we didn't have a real club historian to preserve and maintain control of the more important club records as so much of the club history has been misplaced along the ways.**

**After all these years, I feel proud to have been associated with the club and to have made life-long friends that are really like a family. I hope the club keeps progressing and goes on for many more years.**

**Ed Gulley  
9/21/04**

### **Remembrance**

**On September 25, 1964, Al Schuck came to visit me riding his new ten-speed bike he had just recently bought. It was at night and on the way back home, he was involved in an accident and was killed. It was like losing my own brother!!**