

Mementos

Al Schuck

On March 4, 1957, Al was one of a handful of ten (10) individuals listed as the original charter members of The Los Angeles Fathomiers skindiving club. It was Al, together with Ed Gulley, who originally came up with the idea of forming their own diving club. There's a story about how the name Fathomiers was decided (a story for Ed Gulley to tell). As a draftsman by trade and somewhat of an artist Al designed and made up the first club patch which we still use today. He served as the very first club President and was presiding again for the second time in 1964, in his very last year. Al was always directly involved in trying to make the club better.

Al was an all around athlete involved in most all sports and possessed the natural physical and mental requirements to do almost anything. He was totally a natural in the water, capable of diving in any conditions; he seemed to dive deeper and stay down longer than anyone else. He could have been one of the top competitors of the time, if only he had the desire. Among his many other experiences Al served as an L. A. County Certified Skin and Scuba Diving Instructor for several years.

More than anyone else, Al Schuck and Ed Gulley are the true founding Fathers of the Fathomiers. For these reasons, we honor the name of Al Schuck. In our regular monthly intra club dives, we pay homage to him by accumulating the Al Schuck Memorial Trophy points and awarding the trophies at the end of the year. His name should rightly be remembered right along with the name of Los Angeles Fathomiers.

On September 25, 1964, late in the evening, around 9 -10 PM, while returning home from visiting his friend Ed Gulley who lived nearby, he was killed in a collision between an automobile and the bicycle he was riding.

That was the first tragic loss of life for the club membership.

Larry Staat

Larry became a member in April 1967. He had been diving with members of the club for over several months and had quickly developed a reputation as an aspiring young athletic type, natural born spearfishing enthusiast, and was an incredibly nice young man. Those of us who knew him and spent time with him in the water could see he showed real promise of possibly becoming one of the top free divers of the time. Larry had an amazing ability to hold his breath and dive at incredible depths and stay longer than anyone else. He was “at home” in the ocean; every time out there was an adventure. His young wife shared his enthusiasm. On occasions, she would sit patiently on the rocks for hours on hours alone waiting for him to return (sometimes even after dark). Larry strived to better himself in competitive spearfishing techniques and was gung ho in everything in which he participated. He was physically and mentally qualified for what it takes to become the best, and was always pushing himself to do better. He was everyone’s favorite young friend.

On November 5, 1967 while participating in a pole spear contest in Shell Beach, California, he was found floating on the surface unconscious, never to be revived. His team member then was George Boss, later to become one of our Life Members. It was determined the cause was SWB. Suffice to say it was a terrible shock to all of us.

To honor the memory of Larry the membership decided to create the annual “Larry Staat Memorial Pole Spear Meet”. It is a handicapped meet, aimed primarily for the benefit of the new aspiring young divers, as was Larry.

This was the first tragic loss of life for the club membership directly related to diving activities.

Steve Redding

Steve became a member in April 1990. Before then he had been working at Body Glove in Redondo Beach for some time and had already been exposed to the spearfishing scene, as some of the members would bring in their big WSB there for weighing and bragging rights. He couldn't take it any longer, so right-a-way he acquired one of Bob S's custom made guns and immediately began to make good use of it. By the end of that first season, that gun had more than paid for itself with lord knows how many big WSB and YT. He was good. Along with being one of the most congenial, fun loving and popular people you'll ever know, Steve had incredible talents in almost anything he endeavored. Not only was he widely known as an accomplished spearfisherman and surfer he was equally recognized as an artist. His artwork was renowned especially around the south bay area. To know Steve was to like him, he had many fans, not the least was his family. With his mother and dad, he must have shared all his big fish stories with them. We, especially the few of us within the area, shared some incredible WSB and YT seasons together. There were times with almost daily reports of someone getting something big. If at any time, we wanted to hear the latest big fish story of the day from Steve and he wasn't available at the time his mother, Muriel could and would recite all the nitty gritty details, either of them could give an academy award performance of the day. It was all a lot of fun! Among all his other activities, he was rapidly becoming very proficient in underwater photography and during his last few years, he produced some real quality films. We feel blessed to have had him share some of his work with us.

June 14, 1998 was a very sad day for the spearfishing community. The club had lost another great person. Steve was the victim of a SWB while retrieving a big yellowtail tied up in very deep water off San Clemente Island.

What better way is there to remember Steve than to create a new perpetual award in his name; thus, we have the "Steve Redding Memorial Trophy". See specifics elsewhere.

This was our second tragic loss of life directly related to diving activities.

Steve Seo

Steve became a Fathomier in March 2003. He was an amiable young man with high expectations of contributing to the club and enjoying all the real benefits associated with his newly found diving brothers. He was very enthusiastic in learning all he could about how to improve himself in the techniques of underwater hunting and diving, and was well on his way of fulfilling his wishes. Unfortunately, disaster struck on New Year's Day January 1, 2004, and Steve was lost while attempting to retrieve a large grouper holed up in deep water off the gulf side of Baja California, near Santa Rosalia. His body has not been recovered; however, it is believed that he was a victim of a SWB.

This is our third tragic loss of life directly related to diving activities.

Charlie Sturgill

There has always been this special relationship between Charlie and the club, the Fathomiers. In addition, for all of us who know it's been a family affair from the beginning.

Charlie's early involvement in skindiving was something new to everyone and as they were a close, fun loving and water-orientated family, the entire Sturgill family shared his passion. They were all involved in the sport, and each one in his/her own way has earned a place in the skindiving community. In addition, in her earlier days, Laura had been an accomplished swimmer in her own right. The following generations of Sturgills have it in their genes and it's no surprise that the entire family is today revered by everyone.

They are: Lori Lee Meistrell- daughter and Richard Sturgill-son. Grandchildren are: Monica Hall-granddaughter, Kenny Hall-grandson, and Anna Sturgill-granddaughter

With some of the very best spearfishing spots in the entire country practically in his own back yard along with all his enthusiasm and his knowledge about the sport was reason enough for Charlie to quickly become recognized as an expert of the time in spearfishing equipment and techniques. Throughout the entire diving community, he was known as the person to go to for customized diving equipment. He was the original pioneer for machining and producing specialized spearfishing stuff for all of us living around the greater L. A. area. He was truly the legend, the most famous for all of us who live in Southern California, and especially the South Bay area. His reputation, his natural congenial personality drew spearfishermen from all over. His place, his garage, was like everybody's favorite meeting place, conveniently located up the hill not far from some of our favorite hot spots here in P. V. Whether you needed any kind of his specialized machined parts, which he was famous for, or if only hanging out with the usual interesting crowd, that was the place to be! We've always said: if you want to meet up with someone in particular just stick around Charlie's long enough, especially on the week-ends. Many of us have very pleasant memories of spending some time there in that world famous garage! It was absolutely amazing how he could find anything in that place, but, only he knew exactly where every little bolt and nut was!! You've missed something if you haven't seen it. (no malice intended, only a lot of affection). Hope you know what I mean!

Charlie had to be one of the most popular and friendly persons you've ever had the good fortune to meet. Those of us who were around during those great days and had the opportunity to know him and spend some quality time with him feel truly blessed.

Charlie was National Spearfishing Champion in 1951 while using only his famous pole spear. The U. S National Meet held that year in Laguna Beach, California included

approximately fifteen (15) participants from areas around the country from where organized activities in competitive spearfishing was still in it's infancy. Charlie was a member of the Southern California Skin Divers Club, which was one of the very first organized spearfishing clubs in the area at that time. Something else that not everyone knows is Charlie never had any use for a snorkel!!! Hard to believe, but all the times we've seen him in the water he never used one.

Beginning in 1966 Charlie's many friends within the greater Los Angeles area created the annual Charlie Sturgill Pole Spear Meet to honor our most revered Icon.

As it implies, only hand held pole spears are allowed. It's one of the most popular and fun filled events of the year with many of the top competitors of the area participating. The staging area historically has been at Charlie's and Laura's home, although in recent years it's been held at Charlie's granddaughter's (the apple of his eye) place in the Palos Verdes peninsula area. Everyone is welcome to participate in the event either as a competitor or as a spectator. Last few years the event has become another meet that the L. A. Fathomiers club is proud to sponsor.

Charlie passed away in 1985. We spread his ashes on that cold, rainy, windy day out there over "Charlie's Reef" near Flat Rock in the Palos Verdes area. An armada of boats lead by Captain Billy Meistrell loaded with those dear to Charlie really celebrated his life there that day!!

bobsellers
8/31/04