



FATHOMIERS NEWSLETTER

• FREEDIVING • SPEARFISHING • COMPETITION

December '98

The Last Word

By Paul Romanowski

I have written many articles for Cisco while he has published our newsletter, and very unfortunately, this is the saddest, and last, article Cisco has published on my behalf. Thank you, Cisco.

After the stunning success of our trips to San Francisquito last year, the only question was "When do we go back?"

Everyone decided to do it again at the same time; but we tried a week earlier. The Baja 1000 was on our original date; no rooms, no boats, no space available. So, we rescheduled for exactly the same week as our first trip last year; the weekend prior to Thanksgiving.

I planned the trip; set the date, recruited divers from all 3 spearfishing clubs, got all the food for a small army, and, as usual, was working on my truck when the guys all showed up at my house. We were all set, and the guys to the south were all set. We were even on schedule – a rare occurrence. With much space juggling, we packed our 3 trucks, and headed south, around 11:30 p.m., November 18 1998.

Our first stop was to pick up Gil Aja, a good friend who introduced me to all my friends in San Diego, several of whom were on this trip. We cruised into La Jolla to meet up with the rest of the group, and for everyone to get acquainted.

And what a group it was! There were 4 divers who had done this trip last year: Bob Dawson, Gil Aja, Cisco Serret, and myself. We had an unbelievable 8 divers who had never been to San Francisquito; although many had dove all over the world.

There was Jeff Wright, an experienced diver who had come to some Fathomiers meetings, Tim Driskell, who is an experienced scuba diver who recently began freediving, and Richard Balta, one of our club's newest and most dedicated members – Steve Castro, who was to have been our lone diver from the Neptunes, was buried in work on one of my jobs and could not make it.

Diego Freedivers. Peppo Biscarini had signed up, and so had his 19 year old protégé Tommy McCain. The San Diego group would ride in the beautifully prepped Suburban of Adi Davidesco, and his 13 year old son, who is a big part of his life, Elan, was skipping school to run away with Dad for the weekend. We were ready and we were fired up.

I still can't believe that we were on schedule, as we topped off gas and got insurance. Good! No flying to make up time! We would have the luxury of cruising in the dark. About an hour and a half into Mexico, I got really tired, and passed the driving over to Jeff. I tried to set the trip up as safely as possible, warning everyone to get all the sleep they could, to pass off when tired, and we made sure that every truck had an experienced baja driver on board. Jeff woke me at sunrise asking about gas, and I told him to switch tanks. We were just north of San Quintin, and I was geared up for a long, long day.

After gassing in San Quintin, we all touched bases at El Rosario. Peppo had taken over, I was back at the wheel, Cisco was driving, and Tim had gotten ready for his day shift. I told them in about 2 ½ hours the real driving would begin, on the long, 80 mile kidney killer to our destination. The jokes were flying, and we were on our way. At the last chance gas stop at Catavina, gas came from drums. No big deal to Cisco and I, but Tim and Adi were leery. I told Adi "Top it off – it's a Long walk back from San Francisquito.

We hit the banos, and hit the road. It was 9 a.m., November 19, and we were just cruising down the road. A stiff reminder came in front of me as a trailer with a dune buggy on it crossed into my lane, causing me to do a major brake test; that or go off a cliff. I explained to Jeff in some detail how I would repay that guy if we ever met again, but the rest of the road was empty, and we made it through.

At 10:15 a.m., November 19, 1998, our convoy was headed south on Mex 1, 17 ½ miles from the L.A. Bay Turnoff at Punta Prieta. I was the lead truck, with Jeff, followed by Cisco and Richard, followed by Peppo, Adi, Tommy, Gil and Elan. They, in turn, were fol-

I approached an uphill, left hand corner, off camber, at 60 m.p.h. I let off the gas, and got ready to glide through the corner, just like so many others, when a big, white van (I'm not sure what kind, or where it was from) came over the hill quickly, and he was in my lane about a foot.

I moved over as much as I could, but did not yield the entire road, thinking it would push him back in his lane. It did not work. I knew we were really close (Cisco later told me that our mirrors were only an inch or so apart) and as I went over the hill, I saw some swerving in my mirrors; but I only thought "Maybe some gear had shaken off, and they were avoiding it. "One truck had already lost a boogie board, and the wind was going like 15 or so.

But when Cisco hit the top of the hill, he was sideways, and stopped. I thought "That's pretty stupid of you, Cisco", but then it hit me. Something really bad just happened. I spun my truck around as soon as I could, and raced back over the hill, and it looked like Beirut. Croatia. Yugoslavia. You name it. It looked like a bomb went off – stuff everywhere.

I thought for a second "Whoa! Somebody FU*#!ed up! Wonder who it was. Where is our Suburban?

OH-MY-GOD!

It wasn't the van, or some other truck, like the other times. It was US.

People were everywhere. Gil was standing at the roadside, looking down. His hands were on his head. Richard, Tim, Bob – a blur, moving all over at once. Screaming – "I've got a pulse." Jeff and I move in. It's almost surreal – like Hollywood, or a dream. But at 170 m.p.h.

I scream "Where are the kids?, Where is the kid?!", Bob yells, "He's in Cisco's truck." "Okay, but where is Tommy? Where in the FXXK is Tommy?" Again Bob answers. "He's over here. He was thrown."

"Oh no. Oh no – On NO!"

I ran over to Tommy. Unconscious; but breathing. "Cisco – go for help!" I did not yell it – but they were so right. We needed help, like we never needed help before in our lives.

Bob stayed with Tommy, and I went back to the wreck – Peppo was out in the drivers seat, and Adi –

Words do not even describe – Adi was strapped into the passenger seat. There was more carnage there than I have ever seen with a friend – if you never, ever believe me again, believe me now – this was horror. Adi was losing blood like blood never flowed before. and

his gigantic body shook softly. My whole program failed; as I'm sure everyone's did, for even a hardened combat surgeon would have stalled. A big part of Adi was missing – as Gil put it "I saw something you just don't see." When I finally realized that Adi was out of my hands, and in God's hands, I concentrated on Peppo.

I screamed at Peppo, just as I had at Adi – Loud. But, Peppo responded.

"Oh, thank God!"

"Peppo, do you hear me??"

"Yes, I hear you."

It was weak, but I'll take it.

"Can you move? Can you move?"

"No"

OH Shit! Maybe he's paralyzed – Check him first.

"Peppo. Do you feel this? Or this? How about this?"

I went from his neck to his legs, and he felt all of it – so maybe he would be okay.

Someone yelled we should send a truck south for help – Cisco had been gone about 5 minutes, and we were way beyond desperate. I knew the road, so I went south.

If you've never seen a truck fly, I can tell you that I flogged that poor machine for 17 ½ miles like it had never been beaten before. And while I went for help, Richard and Jeff had the unenviable job of rebuilding Adi, and trying to stop his massive bleeding.

A paramedic showed up, and told them to move the victims – Taboo here at home, but the only way in the desert.

A good samaritan gringo was at the yard where I stopped, and he offered to help. We emptied his truck, and flew north to the accident scene, where we loaded Adi and Tommy into the truck, and I followed with Peppo on board.

Laurenz, the driver of Tommy and Adi, simply flew off down the highway, and I was close behind.

Gone is the feeling of Guerro Negro being an 'almost there' marker.

For me, it will be a hopelessly stranded marker, the place where my friends and I forever parted.

The doctors did all they could, and Jeff worked like an animal on the phone to secure life flights for Tommy and Adi.

I watched, and checked, and watched for Cisco and Elan. I went to the border checkpoint, and explained our situation. They said no white truck had come, and if it did. they would send them to us.



It was now 2:30 p.m., 11/19/98. The afternoon sun was running away, the planes were being arranged, Jeff and I were going nuts, and our friends were firmly entrenched in their positions. Adi was now on a respirator, still unconscious. He had awoken and spoke a few words, vowing to fight but he had since succumbed to his massive injuries. Tommy was still unconscious, and he had never shown any real signs of improvement. The best response we ever got from Tommy was when we talked to him.

His breathing was short and very ragged. As we would talk to him, and hold him, his breathing would soften, and he would quit shaking. I would rub his forehead softly, and tell him he needed to open his eyes, just once, to show me some sign.

His eyes would dance under his eyelids; they would crack open the slightest bit, . . . but he was too injured to respond. Then, his pain would return, and his breathing would go hard again, and he would begin to shake a little. It was too much for me to take, and I would have to leave and go see Adi or Peppo. As each of my friends slipped, I would have to move to another, until I was just choking on my feelings and spinning from bed to bed.

I left the hospital – I had to. It was the worst feeling I can remember. I was useless. I'm not used to that. I had invited them – what on earth had I done?

I had invited more – many more.

Where were they? Where was Cisco? Where was Elan? How were the guys – all 6 or 8 of them?

What in the hell happened?

I located Jeff. I found Laurenz – our makeshift ambulance. We discussed our lousy position, and I expressed the feeling that we needed to check on the others, and especially to find Cisco and Elan. We couldn't figure out why they had not come. Another accident? Heart attack? Why no kid, no Cisco?

We agreed that very, very soon, Jeff and I would have to leave. No food and no sleep make for a bad trip, and we were already way beyond our limits.

Jeff made one last phone call, and I went to see our friends. Laurenz had agreed to stay until the planes had come and gone.

I went to Adi. He was all wrapped in bandages, and he was resting, out cold, but his body was relaxed. I laid a kiss on his cheek, and said goodbye. I moved over to the room where Tommy was. I talked to him – cleaned his forehead, his cheek. He was much more subdued. In a deep shock. Still, he was in there. Trying.

His breathing changed again, but this time I could only tell him to rest – a plane was coming; soon he would be home. He was more calm, and I cleaned his left cheek. I gave him a kiss; told him how sorry I was, and told him goodbye.

I hugged Peppo, and fought back my tears. We both knew that our lives were changed, and all we could do was to soldier on. There was still lots to do.

.... Meanwhile, Cisco sat with Elan on the side of the road in his truck, roughly 13 miles north of the accident scene. His truck had mysteriously lost all of its oil pressure, and the emergency lights came on. He limped his injured ride to a safe spot, and pulled off the road. Oil was everywhere. What had gone wrong? Well, fate has a strange way of playing your cards out to you. Cisco's truck had an aluminum oil line which had chafed on the truck frame, and was now ruined. The good news was that he was okay, and he didn't fry his engine, but the bad news was that he was stranded, in the middle of nowhere, with a broken truck and a hysterical 13 year old boy who's father was in unknown bad shape. I do not know what was going through Cisco's mind, but I'm certain that the words hopeless and miserable topped the list. I can't believe that he didn't lose his temper and kill the truck. As he waited for the tow truck, he did his best to save face with Elan, and the both of them just hunkered down and accepted that this was the worst day of their lives.

I think that this was one of those terrible road days – hell, I KNOW it was. And to prove it, some idiot in a truck cut Jeff and me off when we were going north to Punta Prieta, forcing me off the road. My gut instinct was to kill this guy, but then my logical side took over – I would beat him to death slowly, and rip him to pieces. Jeff did not agree, and I had to settle for throwing a fit. Anyways, we got to the guys with no more surprises, and believe me, we were done driving for the day.

We were all full of questions – where were the guys – on a plane? Were they alive? Why didn't Cisco bring the kid? What do you mean Cisco's truck is dead? We gotta get home. We're stranded 'till at least Saturday afternoon? Really? Ouch. That hurts.

Amid our wild ideas, we realized we had shot our wad for the day – we were all crazy on adrenaline, and now we were coming down. We needed to rest, and rest – and eat. I felt sick – but I knew food and sleep would help.

The guys set about a makeshift camp, and I made the



best dinner I could muster up. I had been looking forward to cooking for an army. And I did. But cooking for a defeated army is no fun. We ate, and made a fire, and sat around in disbelief, waiting to hear from Laurenz and Michelle.

When they returned, they told us that Peppo and Tommy had gone first, and the second plane had to come from New Mexico for Adi. We were shocked! That's like 1,200 miles for a rescue plane – the only one available. Our spirits were sinking, and we told Laurenz that Gil and Elan would be taking a bus back to the border. Laurenz was pissed off instantly, and understandably. To take the bus was crazy, he said. Why didn't we go home? He asked.

"We can't. Cisco's truck is down for a while."

"So what," he said, "Send someone else. Take him yourself."

Well, I would have liked to. Really. I trust me on the road most. And if someone were to split for a couple of days, and drive back, I would nominate myself.

But I couldn't, you see, I invited everyone I knew to go on this trip. Almost a dozen of my friends had come down, and now 3 were missing. 2 more needed to get home, but there were five others, 3 of which were new to our trips, new to this part of Baja, and there was no way I was stranding them any further. Tim had the other working truck, but Tim was in no condition to challenge Mex 1 with a 13 year old kid who was in a panic. We had to think about what was safest for the survivors, and splitting up again was not acceptable. Besides, I had the tools, and the most mechanical experience, and the most miles on those roads. I also have a cargo boat that doubles as a truck – and there was lots of stuff to haul out. So, Laurenz agreed to take Gil and Elan home for us, although he had trouble believing we were going to try and soldier on. Well, what else were we going to do? Stay there for 3 or 4 days, looking at the suburban, waiting? We would all go insane. We gave Laurenz \$50 from the Fathomiers for gas, and parted ways. Gil and Elan headed home, and we headed to our destination, San Francisquito.

But why go to dive? I'll tell you why. Lots of us use diving as a form of therapy, for a type of release. We needed, and still need, a way to work this out of our systems. So, we went to a familiar place where we could rest and regroup, and get ready for coming home to all the problems and questions which were now festering and eagerly awaiting us.

All our divers did well. especially the new guys. Not

many fish were taken, and no giants. The opportunities were there, but you have to be at your best. We all were; back on the highway. But now, we were more in a survival mode, and we all had on our poker faces. So, we trudged through, got several new species, which is always a good thing.

I was just happy to have everyone come up breathing after every dive.

We got lots of sleep – as much as we could, but we knew, and talked a lot, about what we would face when we returned home. We packed up, settled our tab, and went up to the boneyard on Sunday eve. At night, the desert was so peaceful, it was hard to believe that so much terror had come to us. The road is very, very rough. 3 ½ hours. I could cut an hour, but my back and tires would definitely suffer. Forget small trucks. It's at least twice as bad as last year.

We slept in front of the boneyard, and in the morning we woke the guys who ran it. Let's just say they were much less friendly than last time.

They roused Cisco for more money, argued about everything, and had not fixed Cisco's truck. Also, it would take 3 or 4 more days to get the part. Wonderful.

I got under Cisco's truck, and started thinking about how to fix it – soon I figured it out. Flange the pipe ends, used double clamps, tighten the hell out of it . . . and it held. Time to get out of here. So, with our tails dragging, we took 3 heavily loaded trucks and split for the border. My truck was such a mess, the border checks just gave up on searching me. Imagine – 20 or so spearguns on my lumber rack, about 8 or 9 large ice chests, 10 weight belts, 8 gear bags, tools, every form of crap you can think of! Tim and Cisco's trucks have mountains of soft luggage, sleeping bags, tents, gas cans, more junk, and 6 very heavy hearts.

The girl at the border debates secondary; my truck is a nightmare. But she realizes we want to go home, and passes us. Good.

We start burning the phones. No one is home, and I don't want to talk to Tommy's parents, but no one else is home.

His father was very nice, and understanding, and when he told me Tommy had gone home with Jesus, I choked. I knew, deep inside, that one of my friends would probably pay the ultimate price, but to hear it, to know it, burned inside me. My heart dropped. My poker face folded, and all this pain overflowed. Jeff stayed pretty calm, and reminded me that I was driving, and I had to stay on the road. I nulled over in San



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Clemente for a minute, got myself together, and went home.

When the guys all met up at my house, we stored all the extra gear in my garage, and it hit us like a bomb. Seeing it all, knowing that Tommy and Adi would not be calling for their gear – they would never go again with us; knowing that we lost this one . . . Some guys left, some cried, we all faked it till we were alone. I cried for a long time, and then I felt better. I wanted to talk to someone, so I called Gil. He was finally home.

We talked for a while – I felt so bad – I had invited them – What had I done?!

I Asked them to go. Told them how beautiful it was. Told them how much fun it would be. I felt as though I had suckered them in, then betrayed them.

Yeah, I know. It's a car accident. It just . . . happened. But I still can't shake the bad thoughts, and I feel so sorry and so helpless. Gil tried to comfort me, and told me something that I figured would be coming. A diver called Gil and said they were sorry, and they were sorry that the rest of the group hadn't helped.

“What?!? Where in the hell did someone get that idea? Where did they hear that crap?” As Gil explained how he had explained what happened, and how someone had told the story without the facts, but for me, for Monday night, it was too much.

It left me on the floor, until I was too sore to scream or cry. Then, I went to bed, and did it all over again, while my wife tried to make me feel a little better.

Tuesday, November 24, 1998. We joined Tommy's family in laying him to rest. Way over 500 people came to say goodbye. We met Adi's daughter, and his wife. We met Tommy's brothers, his sister, his parents. They wanted to know what happened, all of it. Why the crash. Why the planes. Why did we stay behind.

All of the guys on this trip came together in a desperate time, and they stayed strong. But we, like the rest of you, need to try and put this to rest, and learn from this tragedy all we can. It was not easy for me to write this, but I did it for the families, so, when they are ready to hear it someday, I can tell them without forgetting anything. And, I wrote it so that you may understand what really happened, from those of us who were there.

So, say a prayer for Tommy and Adi.

- Paul Romanowski – 12/1/98

IMPORTANT BAJA PHONE NUMBERS

These are some numbers I gathered from the Internet. As you can see it is not complete. I hope we can gather all the information together soon and print it in a pamphlet that could be made available to our members and also to other clubs.

- Cisco

When calling Mexico from the United States, dial the international code and country code, 011-52, then the city code and then the local phone number.

San Jose Del Cabo

Area Code (114)
Prefix code from U.S.: 011-52-114
Police 2-0361 & 2-0884
Cruz Roja (Red Cross) 2-0316
Highway Patrol 2-2450
General Hospital 2-3713 & 2-0013
U.S. Consulate 3-3566

Cabo San Lucas

Area Code (112)
Prefix code from U.S.: 011-52-114
IMSS Hospital 3-1444

La Paz

Area Code (112)
Prefix code from U.S.: 011-52-112
City Police 2-0781 & 2-4692
Cruz Roja 2-1111
ISSSTE Hospital 2-2789
IMSS Hospital 2-7377
Salvatierra Hospital 2-1496 & 2-1596
Green Angels 5-9677
State Jud. Police 2-6610 & 2-1399
Fed. Judicial Police 2-0393 & 5-2665
Highway Patrol 2-0369 & 2-5735
Port Captain 2-0243 & 2-4037

Rosarito

Area Code (661)
Prefix code from U.S.: 011-52-661
Police 060
Fire Department 065
Cruz Roja 066
Cotuco Tourist Info 2-0396
State Tourism 2-2000
Immigration 3-0234
American Consulate Tijuana (66) 817400
after hours US (616) 585-2000

Cities with hospitals that I couldn't find numbers to:

Tijuana, Mexicali, Ensenada, Guerrero Negro, Santa Rosalia, Ciudad Constitucion

Anticipation

By Scott de Firmian

It was a morning like any other, calm seas, clear skies and the air filled with anticipation. Anticipation of potential things to come. As we approached the east end of Catalina the anticipation mounted as it always does when you get near places that have provided lots of fish and excitement in the past.

The decision to go beyond Catalina to San Clemente came just as we exited the harbor that same morning. But Catalina just "Felt Right" - you know that unshakable feeling you get as you pass a favorite location.

Any how onto San Clemente. We rounded the end of San Clemente and neither of us knew where to go. So I said to Peter "This spot looks good. What do ya think?" Peter's reply was let's go on up a little further so Peter engaged the drive of his 22' (feels like 30') Livesay to move. But just as soon as we were underway Peter must have got that same "Feeling" I had, and quickly went about (turned around, for you less nautical types) and said "You know what, let's give it a shot". So I jumped up to the bow (front of boat) to drop the hook (anchor). It looked like 25' - 30' vis. With pod's of surface kelp. But loads of the stuff just below the surface. Peter and I proceeded to get ready and got in.

Typically as most w.s.b. hunters do we went our own way. The water looked and felt "right". But there just wasn't any game fish. As I was turning back towards the boat after about 30-40 minutes suddenly there just appeared a fish. However I wasn't sure what it was. I dove down along it (10') to get an eye level view to I.D. this fish. Turns out it was a small (20") w.s.b. Then I noticed movement just beyond this little guy. It was another, however it did a u-turn and disappeared. So I kept following this little guy slowly. When he decided he no longer enjoyed my company he left me alone in open blue water. Just as I turned to my right, right there in front of me was a vision. A w.s.b. hanging just below the surface broadside under a kelp frond motionless. I swam to close the gap. As I was coming within range for my gun the fish became nervous and slowly started to move away. Well, I figured that was as close as I would get (I estimated this fish to be about 45 lbs.) I set up for the drop in the shaft, aimed and fired. I watched as the shaft went all the way out. Just as the shaft reached the fish the fish spun and did a 180 degree and then froze. The shaft never touched the fish!

When I realized how far out the fish must have been it dawned on me that this fish was closer to 60 lbs! Oh well.

CORRECTION: In the last issue it was incorrectly stated that Gerald Lim was awarded the Athlete of the Year award from the USOA. That award is actually given by the IUSA, the International Underwater Spearfishing Association. The Athlete of the Year award is a long running tradition with the IUSA.

Tourists mutiny over holiday in hell

SYDNEY (Reuters) - A group of American and Spanish tourists mutinied and tied up a dive boat captain after he threatened them with a flare gun and the boat hit a reef off Australia's tropical north, a passenger said on Saturday. "It was a nightmare from day one, and we paid A\$3,000 each (US\$1,860) to be part of it," New York doctor Federico Farin wrote in The Daily Telegraph newspaper on Saturday.

Marine investigators are examining the circumstances which led to the passengers and four crew members overpowering skipper Troy Dallman and tying him to a bunk after he threatened to abandon them in the Coral Sea.

Australian media reported on Saturday that Dallman had been admitted to hospital on Thursday Island off Australia's northern tip, 2,200 km (1,320 miles) north of Brisbane, after being bound during a 22-hour trip back from the reef last Sunday.

The six American and two Spanish passengers had booked what they hoped would be a relaxing eight-day trip diving on the coral reefs of the Great Barrier Reef.

But it soon became the holiday from hell when Dallman became increasingly agitated over a series of mechanical problems on board the 20-meter (66 foot) Reef Explorer after it left the exclusive resort town of Port Douglas on Monday, October 19.

A mechanical breakdown left the boat stranded and it began to drift while the passengers were diving. When they returned they found Dallman raving at the crew and threatening to cut the anchor chain with a hacksaw.

Farin said he decided to speak to other crew members about the skipper's behavior. It was then that Dallman began to threaten the passengers and crew with a flare gun, he added.

The boat drifted off course while they were trying to calm Dallman and they soon heard the hull scraping over coral. The crew and passengers wrestled Dallman to the deck in the ensuing confusion before tying him to a bunk.

The bizarre episode comes just three weeks after a Queensland state coroner laid manslaughter charges against the skipper of another dive boat that left two U.S. divers stranded on the Great Barrier Reef.

Cairns coroner Noel Nunan found on October 9 that Thomas and Eileen Lonergan, Peace Corps workers from Baton Rouge, Louisiana, had drowned or been killed by sharks after being left at a reef off north Queensland in late January.

ROSTER UPDATES:

ART and KIERSTEN ALDRICH
374 S. NOTRE DAME ROAD
CLAREMONT, CA. 91711
Home (909) 626-9984

MARCOS PINHO
We need your info!

FATHOMIERS 1998 "OUTSIDE CALIFORNIA" RECORDS

SPECIES	LBS	OZ	DIVER	LOCATION
Gulf Grouper	75	0	Steve Sanford	Baja, Bay of LA
Snapper, dog tooth	56	0	Gerald Lim	Baja, La Paz





SECRETARY'S REPORT

Fathomiers Monthly Club Meeting
November 9 1998

1. 7:54 pm meeting called to order.
2. Candidates for 1999 Officers:

Richard Balta	-	Recorder
Bob Sellers	-	Treasurer
Mitch Walker	-	Secretary
Jose Shaur	-	Vice President
President	-	a) Bob Dawson
		b) Carlos Serret
		c) Paul Romanowski
Editor	-	Scott de Firmian
(volunteers)		Jim Losey
		Luis Rosales
3. Eddie Ota won the Al Schuck Trophy.
4. Diving video from New Jersey and North Shore was shown courtesy of Nelson Dooley..
5. Fish Stories:
 - a) Mitch Walker bagged two 9 lb. Lobsters.
 - b) Nelson Dooley along with other divers had successful abalone hunting at Fort Bragg.
6. 9:00 p.m. meeting adjourned.

GREEN ANGELS

The "Green Angels" are a government-sponsored fleet of assistance vehicles which travel the major highways of Mexico. They can be identified by their bright green color with white lettering on the side. In theory, there is to be a green angel truck passing any fixed spot twice each day. The driver and/or helper may speak English, and will carry gasoline and a few common spare parts. In the worst situation, they should be able to summon additional help. I've never needed their assistance, but they are quite evident on the Baja road. Its a great idea, and I try to give them a friendly wave when passing on the road.

In line with the idea of assistance, the Mexican Ministry of Tourism maintains an "800" number in Mexico City: 91-800-90-392. I've never used this, but they are reported to have some English-speaking operators.

LARRY STAAT MEET

Sunday, November 15
Nicolas Canyon

The Larry Staat Polespear Meet this year had weak participation due to bad weather leading up to the date. But two intrepid Fathomiers didn't mind the weather and showed up for the competition. Conditions on the day of the meet were actually ok, with reportedly 15 ft. of visibility. The handicap has not been figured into the scores below, but it probably won't change the standings. Richard Balta will get the snazzy trophy at the Awards Banquet.

1st. **Richard Balta** 10 Fish 15.00 lbs.

CALENDAR

FATHOMIERS COMPETITION – SUNDAY, DECEMBER 6

The last meet of the year will be at Malibu Colony. Go north on the 405 Fwy, West on the 10 Fwy, exit going north on PCH. Left on Webb Way then a quick right. The entrance for the public is down about 1 mile. Start time 8:00 a.

CLUB MEETING – MONDAY, DECEMBER 14

The December Fathomiers Club meeting will be held at the Round Table Pizza on the south-east corner of Hawthorne Blvd. and Redondo Beach Blvd. Voting will be conducted

THE FATHOMIERS NEWSLETTER IS THE
OFFICIAL MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF THE
LOS ANGELES FATHOMIERS

**The Fathomiers is a Southern California club dedicated to
Freediving and Competitive Spearfishing.**

Membership is open to the public. To become an Active member, you must fulfill obligations and conditions. You can also become an Associate Member for \$20. Contact the Fathomiers for further information.

CONTACT NUMBERS

PRESIDENT	Nelson Dooley	562.938.7374
	email: spearhnr@email.msn.com	
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Project aims to revive ailing kelp

By PAT BRENNAN
Orange County Register, Nov. 29 1998

Edison will cultivate artificial kelp forests to replace those destroyed by a nuclear plant.

An ambitious plan to create an artificial kelp reef off the Orange County coast will be unveiled Dec. 10 by Southern California Edison. It is a project meant to compensate for the destruction of natural kelp forests by the San Onofre nuclear plant.

Edison environmental officials will explain their proposal to dump rock or chunks of concrete across 150 acres of ocean bottom about half a mile off San Clemente. The material will act as attachment points for kelp, a type of algae that provides habitat for a variety of fish, crustaceans and other animals.

If all goes well, kelp spores floating in seawater will begin growing on the rocks without human intervention, eventually forming the undulating kelp forests that are among the more spectacular ecosystems found in near-shore waters.

"It's like the proverbial field of dreams," said Frank L. Melone, project manager for Edison's kelp reef. "If you build it, they will come."

The public meeting, to be held at the San Clemente Community Center, is only the beginning of a lengthy series of public sessions, and approval by government agencies, needed before work can begin on the reef.

Melone hopes Edison will be ready to start the first phase of the estimated \$50 million to \$60 million project by fall 1999.

Edison will start with an experimental 16.8-acre plot to test ideas for how best to build the kelp reef. Although the science behind the construction of artificial kelp reefs is relatively new, two such projects off the San Diego coast have proved successful in recent years.

Still, the California Coastal Commission, which ordered Edison to build the reef, wants the company to study whether reefs are best built of rock or concrete fragments, Melone said.

The experimental plot will include a series of 42 modules that will contain different proportions of rock, concrete and sand.

Melone hopes the concrete, gathered from road projects and construction sites, will prove the best option.

"We think there are a lot of advantages to concrete," he said. "We would be using material that is a waste product, and using it in a way that helps the environment."

Concrete also would be far cheaper than rock. And quarrying rock, whether from Santa Catalina Island or the mainland, would involve far more trips by diesel trucks, increasing the amount of air pollution caused by the Edison project, he said.

Assessing the effect on air quality is one of the main themes of an environmental impact report prepared on the project. Edison would be required to make up for any significant air pollution – for example, by reducing the number of truck trips or purchasing new low-polluting diesel engines.

In the worst case, the project would be built entirely of rock and take eight years to complete, Melone said, resulting in large quantities of air pollution.

The reef construction itself will be watched closely by a variety of governmental agencies and environmental groups. It is the larg-

will yield important scientific data.

"This presents an opportunity to learn quite a bit about how to do this right," said Dennis Bedford, a marine biologist who is coordinating the state's artificial-reef program for the Department of Fish and Game.

He said Edison's program appears to be on track.

Kelp forests have been severely depleted off the Southern California coast, disrupting sportfishing and diving. A warming of ocean water by El Nino caused the die-off, although Bedford said there are signs of a reversal.

"Recruitment for kelp seems to be really good this year," he said. Although the area where Edison plans to build its reef is lacking in kelp spores, there will, with luck, be plenty by the time the project starts, he said.

The reef project has had a rocky history. Concern about the San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station's effect on kelp beds began in the late 1980s, when a scientific panel concluded that the spreading fine sediment caused by the power plant was interfering with anchorages of the kelp forests. The gradual burial of the rocks left the kelp with no solid surface on which to grow.

The Coastal Commission ordered Edison to grow 300 acres of kelp in compensation. In 1996, Edison asked for a reduction in the amount of kelp it had to grow, arguing that new scientific data showed that the nuclear plant's effects on kelp were far less harmful than estimated.

The commission eventually settled on 150 acres.

Edison must also restore 150 acres of degraded wetlands in San Dieguito Lagoon as part of the deal, at an estimated cost of \$60 million, and continue producing white sea bass at a fish hatchery.

The kelp reef will be monitored by the Coastal Commission for many years to ensure that it thrives; Edison will pay for the monitoring, expected to cost \$200,000 to \$300,000 a year.

How long the monitoring lasts depends on how long the San Onofre plant continues operating. The plant is scheduled to be shut down in 2013; Melone said the monitoring would probably have to continue for 15 years after that.

The Coastal Commission can reduce the monitoring if the kelp appears to be healthy.

METEOROLOGICA

Weather -

Los Angeles (213) 544-1212, Santa Barbara (805) 897-1942

Surf Reports -

Ventura (805) 644-8338 and (805) 962-7873, Zuma (310) 457-9701, Malibu (310) 457-9701, Hermosa (310) 379-8471, Cabrillo Beach (310) 832-1130, Orange County (714) 650-5783.

Online NOAA Redondo Beach Bouy -

[http://www.ndbc.noaa.gov/station_page.phtml?\\$station=46045](http://www.ndbc.noaa.gov/station_page.phtml?$station=46045)

Online Surf Cams -

<http://www.hbonline.com/bchcams.htm>

Online Surf Forecast -

<http://www.ocregister.com/ads/ocean/surf.html>

Online Tide Tables -

<http://facs.scripps.edu/cgi-bin/tidegen.pl>

Time is running out for the 1998 Fathomiers Fish Records. Remem-



Fathomiers November Meet – 3 fish meet

Divers at the November meet had conditions with near zero visibility. Eddie Ota didn't let that stop him though. He went out and shot a nice sheephead for the Al Schuck point.

Place	Name	Fish	Weight	Percentage
1st	Eddie Ota	3	20.26	100.00%
2nd	Richard Balta	3	4.60	32.67%
3rd	Mitch Walker	3	4.48	32.16%
4th	Fil Labastida	3	4.34	31.56%
5th	Jim Losey	2	3.14	22.10%

Biggest fish: Eddie Ota, sheephead, 17.21 lbs.

Al Schuck Memorial Tro-

Diver	Points
Eddie Ota	1

Looks like Eddie Ota is making a run for 2-in-a-row for the Al Schuck trophy.

The diver who gets the biggest fish in a regular Fathomiers meet gets one point towards the Al Schuck standings. The diver must be a current Active Fathomiers member to win the trophy. The first diver to accumulate 4 points wins the trophy. Then the points start over again.

Eddie Ota won the trophy in October of 1998.

FATHOMIERS 1998 "IN CALIFORNIA" RECORDS

SPECIES	LBS	OZ	DIVER	LOCATION
Barracuda	6	8	Bob Dawson	Santa Barbara Is.
Bonita	10	0	Ed Glass	San Clemente Is.
Cabazon	9	0	Scott de Firmian	Mendocino
Calico Bass	9	0	Rene Rojas	Catalina
Corbina	2	3	Bob Dawson	La Jolla
Dorado	15	0	Scott de Firmian	Catalina Is.
Halibut	29	10	Todd Bergenbring	Palos Verdes
Ocean Whitefish	8	3	Gerald Lim	Santa Cruz Is.
White Seabass	53	0	Todd Bergenbring	San Nicholas is.
Sand Bass	7	3	Paul Romanowski	John Raya's
Sheephead	26	2	Paul Romanowski	John Raya's
Triggerfish	4	8	Fil Labastida	Point Dume
Yellowtail	28	0	Scott de Firmian	San Clemente Is.
Abalone, Red	9	5/8"	Scott de Firmian	Mendocino
Lobster	9	5	Mitch Walker	Reef Point
Scallop	7	1/16"	Mitch Walker	Reef Point



Fathomiers 1998 Competitive Stand-

**CHECK YOUR
SCORES!**

Place	Diver	Jan	Feb	Mar	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Current
1st	Eddie Ota	100.00	---	----	100.00	67.92	100.00	----	0	45.16	100.00	100.00	513.08
2nd	Fil Labastida	59.26	0	61.44	30.52	----	83.89	----	0	43.84	67.15	31.56	377.66
3rd	Carlos Serret	59.84	---	34.00	0	26.42	0	20.21	90.05	0	54.33	----	284.85
4th	Cisco Serret	63.94	---	67.66	0	52.83	38.29	----	14.41	0	44.39	----	281.52
5th	Mitch Walker	----	---	----	----	----	37.88	100.00	----	58.81	42.54	32.16	271.39
6th	Marcos Pinho	----	---	----	----	100.00	90.96	----	39.56	----	----	----	230.52
7th	Jim Losey	----	---	100.00	0	67.92	----	----	0	----	----	22.10	190.02
8th	Bob Dawson	----	---	----	13.50	----	89.56	44.07	0	0	----	----	147.13
9th	Richard Balta	----	---	----	16.68	----	----	----	0	----	88.52	32.67	137.87
10th	Gary Thompson	69.79	---	----	----	56.60	----	----	----	----	----	----	126.39
11th	Scott de Firmian	----	---	----	----	----	----	----	----	100.00	----	----	100.00
12th	Paul Romanowski	60.62	---	----	28.36	----	----	----	0	----	----	----	88.98
13th	Doug Van Mullem	85.96	---	----	----	----	----	----	0	0	----	----	85.96
14th	Skip Hellen	----	---	----	----	84.91	----	----	0	----	----	----	84.91
15th	Stathis Kostopoulos	----	---	----	----	56.60	----	----	----	----	26.14	----	82.74
16th	Erez Abayov	----	---	----	24.11	----	42.32	----	0	----	6.56	----	72.99
17th	Tyler Dubberly	----	---	----	----	49.06	17.26	----	----	----	----	----	66.32
18th	Howard Saxton	----	---	----	----	----	----	----	60.49	----	----	----	60.49
19th	Dustin Ellis	----	---	----	----	----	----	18.24	----	35.29	----	----	53.53
20th	Thom Fogerty	52.63	0	----	0	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	52.63
21st	Nelson Dooley	----	---	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	49.00	----	49.00
22nd	Al Schneppershoff	----	---	----	----	----	----	----	0	----	----	----	48.61
23rd*	Bill Cantarini	----	---	----	----	26.42	----	----	----	----	----	----	26.42
24th*	Yooenn Leru	----	---	----	----	----	21.04	----	----	----	----	----	21.04
25th	Zoilo Velazquez	----	---	----	19.17	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	19.17
26th	Gerald Lim	----	---	----	----	----	----	----	17.99	----	----	----	17.99
27th	Louis Rosales	----	---	----	----	----	----	----	----	12.32	----	----	12.32
28th*	Steve Martell	----	---	----	----	9.43	----	----	----	----	----	----	9.43
29th*	Rodney Wilson	----	---	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	11.73	----	4.56

* prospective/non member

scores for the October meet had been entered incorrectly. They are corrected now and caused some changes in the standings. There's only one more meet to end it looks like the current 5 top divers will probably get the trophies, since only Marcos Pinho and Jim Losey can possibly get into the trophy area. Eddie has had a banner year with 5 first place finishes. The date of the first 1999 competition dive will be in January and will be set by the new Fathomiers Board.

