



FROM THE PRESIDENT

The Florida State Freediving Championship Tournament at Bayport was a huge success with eleven teams competing. Be sure to visit the FSDA-WCC web site to see the excellent display of photos.

John Schmidt, did an outstanding job in working with our web site developer to lay out the pages which feature Allen Patrick's photos. Tom Morris and John have worked endlessly to make the Freedive, WCC Tournaments and Southern Open Tournament exciting events. I ask all of you to support the spirit of comradery which they are promoting. You will notice that the Calendar lists other events such as the local "St Pete Open", the "Spearboard", and the "Tarpon Springs" Tournaments. Also, the Cape Hatteras "Blue Water Open". Get your buddies fired up and enjoy as many as you can. Don't forget to patronize the Sponsors who have contributed so many items for the prize tables. - Dave

DATES TO REMEMBER

A printout of the latest Calendar of Events is included. Go to www.fsd-wcc.com for the most current updates. The WCC Tournament Rules have been updated. The updated section is included with the Calendar



ROWDIES

A FOSSILING WE GO, not once but twice. In March we went back onto private property – avoiding the deposits left by the cows – to a really pretty area along the Peace River with high hopes of finding the BIG one(s). We waded in, shovel and screens in hand for an enjoyable day. Our new member Mike Brown did unearth an interesting fossilized humerus (not as in funny) from an unknown species. Eileen Miller found some great horse teeth fossils and all of us found some shark teeth. But no one found the BIG one. OH WELL.

You could have heard me scream under water! YES!! This time I wasn't "skunked." It was a 3 1/8" tooth of the legendary Carcharodon – prehistoric giant white shark of the Miocene to Pliocene epoch – 2 – 28 million years old. (Yeah, I copied that out of the shark tooth ID book.) Ruthie Kisco had arranged another expedition, this time on a boat out of Venice in May. I was worried when the first group of shark tooth divers unloaded showing off their treasures. Did they leave any for us?? We loaded up on the "Hammerhead" and headed out about a mile to a spot we were assured that teeth would be there. I ended up with 6 whole Carcharodon teeth and two broken ones. I suspect that Ruthie was being really nice as she wouldn't show the one(s) she found letting me bask in my glory. I have a ways to go to beat the beauties that Steve and Ruth have found – just cast your eyes on the ones they wear around their neck! We all are planning on doing this another time.

Have you noticed there are goliath groupers (jewfish) in the Gulf? Steve and Ruth have seen them. There is an article about their return in May's "Sport Diver". Interesting. A big turtle came after Ruth on one of her dives in April. The shell was unusually clean for a turtle that big. It might have been one that had been released and was used to humans. Maybe this is the year of the big ones – they found a Horse Conch 19 1/2" long. I guess they get as big as 28 inches. Ruth also reported having the US Coast Guard helicopter swoop down to check their boat out four times! Steve was still down and she tried to mime that everything was OK on the boat. They found out some one had been in trouble. It's nice to know they are out there when we need them.

Several Rowdies are going over to West Palm for drift diving in June and in July it is off to Key Largo. We have been trying a good Thai restaurant for our 3rd Tuesday meetings lately. Keep watching our web site to keep up to date: <http://home.1.gte.net/bgedz>.

(1st Tue meetings still at the school) Get Wet, Sonia



OCEAN-FEST 2003 was held May 16-18 at Fort Lauderdale Beach this year. It was a nice change from last year – mainly because the weather was so much better. Thanks go to Lisa Tatro and Mary Bergin for helping to set-up and tear down the Ocean Pals Poster display booth. Also with us were two ladies who we had the pleasure to meet when we went to the BTS show in NY last March. They came down and helped Ken and I out with the booth when they weren't tending to BTS business. Of course we really appreciated the help from Ed Grubicy, photographer for BTS who lives in FL.

We had the pleasure of having Jean-Michel Cousteau stop at our booth. (Well, we dragged him over to see the posters.) He has always helped promote Ocean Pals, especially at the NY show. To our surprise he drew a picture on the mural paper I had on the table for the kids – and he signed it! Two other artists at the show did the same, Ron G. Stevens who goes by Rogest, and Pascal LeCocq. Both have distinctive artistic styles. In fact, Ron's booth was just across the aisle from us and he is a fun person to be around.



Pascal took several NY and Florida Ocean Pals students posters to be part of the "World Festival of Underwater Pictures" in Antibes – Juan-Les-Pins, France to be held Oct 29 – Nov 2nd 2003. He selected a Florida poster two years ago for this show.

I really need to go to supervise displaying the posters there – don't you think?

I mentioned that Ken & I went to the BTS show in NY last March. This is the first time in the 12 years with the Ocean Pals that we have gone up there. It is really an outstanding show. We were treated like VIPs! They do a lot of fund raising for good projects. They are supporting a new concept in building a children's hospital. I was very impressed.

Sonia Smith, Florida Ocean Pals Director



SEA BUNNIES

Rita is off to Curacao and had no time to write an article. She did send me a couple of items which were sent to her.

Lisa Boing writes that she and Scott had an eventful dive trip with Dan Curran. The 30 mile trip out was fast and enjoyable as the winds were down. However, the breeze caused goose bumps on top of goose bumps when they came up from the 70 deg water. She had a bit of a problem with being chilly and was weighted light for the first dive but managed to shoot a ten pound black grouper and a four pound snapper. She found that it was not so smart to have reduced one layer of neoprene for the second dive but she and Scott managed to bag a red and a black. They weighed their fish and had the tanks filled at Jim's Dive shop to participate in Jim's "Quarterly Dive Tournament". He is going to have a party and prize affair at the end of the year. Check it out. She and Scott just returned from a seven day live aboard dive trip from St Maartens to St Kitts, Statia and Saba on the Caribbean Explorer. Lots of pictures were taken of the breath taking mountains, underwater

creatures and smiling faces. The crew was great and they had the added bonus in that underwater pro Rod Klein was aboard. He was updating the web page for the boat. She recommends that you check it out. I found the trip featured on

www.explorerverventures.com

Mary T reports that “The competition is on” for posting your catch on the “Bunny Board”. She tells of being very light on a dive with Lowell and came to realize that she forgot to put her weight belt on. A head cold posed a threat if she was to rise to quickly so she proceeded to the bottom and loaded up on coral. She then borrowed one of Lowell’s weights to finish the dive. Adventuresome people always find a way. - Art

SUNSHINE FINS

The FINs thank all of our local armed forces people for their sacrifices and contributions in bringing a swift and decisive end to the Iraq conflict. We extend a free membership to any of our diving veterans as a reward for your service to the country. Contact Ron at 727-409-8395 for details. “God Bless America”

Congratulations to Leesa Belcher for receiving the FINs “Diver Of The Year” award, and to John Belcher for being voted “Member Of The Year” Thank you both for all of your contributions to our club.

Sun City Center Chamber of Commerce named diver Mike Langjahr as “Business Person Of The year” Mike is the owner of the Sun City Center funeral home. The criteria for the award included being active in the community, and exhibiting ethical business practices. Good work Mike! The FINs are proud of you! See you in the water soon.

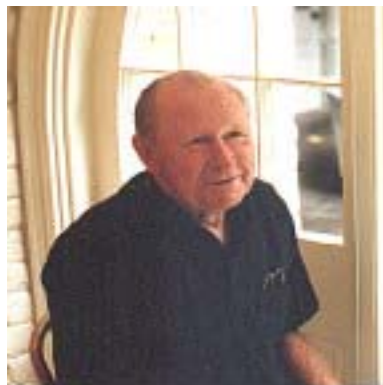
We Had a blast at Dave’s 50th birthday party which was held at the Butlers Tarpon Springs estate. The evening was made complete with roasted pig, exotic sea food, pies, and fun drinks. Great music was furnished by Tom Morris and his band. Even the Tarpon Springs police made an encore appearance in appreciation of the “Great Sounds”. Wonderful job Adreanne – Can’t wait for the next party.

The FINs enjoyed their Annual Picnic, which was held at the Fort Desoto park on the last Sunday of April. Good food and companionship, plus super weather made the day. See you next year!!

Ron had the pleasure of diving a newly created Artificial Reef at Mexico Beach Fl, over the Memorial Day weekend. He placed a plaque on the reef which is dedicated to his father-in-law, Dr. Garfield Wilson. Dr. Wilson is founder of the Artificial Reef program at Mexico Beach and the surrounding communities. The reef sets at 55 ft with an amazing amount of growth. It has schools of fish and one large Jewfish, all calling the “Wilson Reef” their home.

SUNCOAST SEALS

The Seals were saddened to learn of the death of Art Ballweg. Art was the founder of our club. He worked with Harold Drake, Ray Odor and Jim Zumwalt to create and develop the FSDA. He served with excellence in all of the offices of the organization. He was the first recipient of the WCC Norm Wyman / Papa Taylor Award. We offer our condolences to his wife Dianne, and his family.



*IN MEMORY OF
ART BALLWEG*

*Art was an exciting and adventurous man
Who loved to challenge the sea
Adventurous men rely on their instincts
So their spirits tend to be free*

*Most fishermen are satisfied to stay in the boat
And fish with minnows or squid
But Art had an urge to dive below the surface
To join them where they lived*

*He saw a fantastic world of aquatic life
That few had ever seen
The dredging of channels had not begun
So the water was clear and clean*

*His dive gear consisted of mask snorkel and fins
This style became known as "Free"
He soon became an expert in spearing fish
And enjoyed the mysteries of the sea*

*His excitement spread to his fellow workers
So he formed the "Sperry Seals"
The membership expanded to the "Suncoast" area
And the name changed to "Suncoast Seals"*

*His endless enthusiasm and ability to organize
Were shared with Harold Drake
They initiated the formation of the statewide group
That is known as the FSDA*

*It was my fortune to know him in his later years
He dove with me and my buddy Fred
We knew very little about the diving sport
So we listened to what he said*

*We were amazed at the way he could navigate
With a compass and a watch
The activities of the birds and surface shadows
Would get us on the spots*

*In his warm relationship with Dianne and Jeff
They shared both thick and thin
When an injury put limitations on his life
They were always there for him*

*He sensed the natural spiritual force
That tells birds where to fly
And gives the creatures of the sea
The knowledge to survive*

*The sea and sky were his cathedral
He viewed them both in awe
He knew that there was more to life
Than what most people saw*

*We often refer to “mother nature”
To explain things we don’t know
Like the mystery of an “afterlife”
Or where our souls might go*

*Art had a reverence for natural things
And the mysteries that were there
So it’s natural that he will forever be
In “mother natures” care*

Art Pearson



Submitted: Bill Hardman

Who’s New?

We voted in two new members in recent months. Congratulations to these two new SPUC’s: **Frank McCallister and Gerald Guerra, Sr.**

Member, **Geoff Apthorp**, hasn’t been diving much lately. He has been preparing for his Tae Kwon Do tournaments. Well, it definitely paid off! Geoff competed in the U.S. National Tae Kwon Do Championships in New Orleans, Louisiana on May 22nd through the 25th. Geoff won First Place in the over 40 Year Old Fighting Division and he took Second Place in the Forms Division. Way to go Geoff, now you can get back to the underwater world and pick a fight with a big fish. They might not kick you but as you know it pretty hard to hold on to a slimy 90lbs. Amberjack while he’s slapping the crap out of you in in 180 feet of water.

The 2003 St. Pete Open

Dates: We will once again put on the St. Pete Open at Tierra Verde Resort
August 15, 16 & 17, 2003

Rooms: If you have not signed up to get on the waiting list for a room at the Tierra Verde Resort for the tournament, please call Bill Hardman at (727) 344-3483. Room availability will be tight so please sign up soon if you are interested.

To Sign Up: Visit our website and download the entry form. Make sure you fill it out completely and mail your entry and entry fee in before the deadline.

For More Info: www.spearfishgspuc.org

See You At The Open!