

# The Scuba Sports Club of Westchester, New York

Our 46th year serving the local and northeast dive community !

## The Scuba Sport Club's Spring/Summer 2021 Newsletter



### The Anchor Line Melissa Lonquich, President



To those of you new to the Club, welcome! To our long-time members, thanks for sticking by us all these years...and through all the changes! As your newest president please allow me to tell you a little about myself and my SCUBA diving history! I started snorkeling the summer before my 18<sup>th</sup> birthday (well...that was my first encounter in a tropical environment where I could truly appreciate it) and after only a few times I realized how much I loved the underwater world and needed to see as much of it as I could! The more and more I experienced it, the more I realized I just had to see the ocean in all its glory and all the amazing creatures in it, from a better view than just skimming the surface! It was at that point I made a commitment to myself to get trained to SCUBA dive in order to have a more up close and personal view of what I grew to love. I finally received my open water certification back in 2008. After becoming a more active diver, I started taking specialty courses to learn more about the sport I grew to love. Eventually I achieved the rating of master diver, years later crossed over to the "pro side" as a dive master and have been a PADI open water instructor since 2019. As a long-standing member of the club, and previous board member as the social director for years, I decided to take on the challenge of being president of TSSC to give back to the club that has given me so much joy over the years!

TSSC has become an increasingly more active club through the years with many trips and events for all to enjoy. Unfortunately, when COVID-19 happened that put a damper on everything around us and diving was no exception! As a club we couldn't just stand by without keeping in touch with each other and sharing our love for the sport so we implemented Zoom as a means to continue our meetings with one another. Although we all missed being together, on the plus side we were able to secure speakers that otherwise would not have been able to present to us in person due to location restraints. Many of our trips were cancelled and our social activities stopped! Oh, what a year and a half it's been...but we've made it this far! It feels so good to see that cases have been going drastically down and amount of people vaccinated have gone substantially up! We're finally at the point where we've all noticed that more and more things are slowly getting back to normal and TSSC is no exception!

As a recap, these are some of cool things we've been able to do as a club so far this year: A group trip to Roatan, which everyone that went on raved about! (Personally, sitting home seeing everyone's wonderful posts I was most jealous of the 3 toed sloth our members got to meet! How cool is that!!), some environmentally conscious social events such as assisting the River Keepers with their clean up in Yonkers (my home town!), the Orchard Beach clean-up (which came back this year), and a super informative refresher workshop at SCUBANY taught by our very own dive safety officer Joe Rinaldi!

### Gary Lehman, Newsletter Editor

*Welcome to the Spring / Summer 2021 issue of The Scuba Sports Club's Sea Swells! It is great to be back in action!* We invite all members of the diving community to contribute; please contact Gary at [gary.a.lehman@gmail.com](mailto:gary.a.lehman@gmail.com) with your articles and photos! Our Club Newsletter includes features about our Club's diving and social calendar, diving adventures, social/educational events, occasional equipment and health issue discussions, and profiles on some of the more colorful and intrepid characters in our local diving community, and other features of interest.

2020 was a rough year for many of us, and dive operators. But things are finally picking up where we left off. Many of us have gotten wet, not letting this pandemic obliterate our diving. We'll read about some adventures in this issue! And we'll read about the Club's environmental stewardship, all-important 'back to diving' education/refreshers, and amazing sea creatures, too! We've



adjusted; our Zoom meetings have broadened our base of presenters! This will all be in the rear view mirror soon, **and our best tribute to our Club founder Zig is a giant stride off the stern or backward role off the zodiac into warm, blue water with colorful fish! Just a little longer, and we'll get back to normal.**

Stay safe in the meantime - Dream of diving, make your plans, and make your dreams come true with... **The Scuba Sports Club...Gary**



Some things to look forward to: We're getting closer to being able to meet again in person soon for meetings (we anticipate this will begin in September with the option to Zoom). More and more trips are being planned (like our upcoming liveaboard trip to Belize, and our summer trip to Roatan), the annual summer BBQ on the lake will be back this year, our annual holiday party will be returning, and more in the works! I can't wait to get continue to take more and more steps to get back to normal and see each and every one of you in person sooner than later... hopefully while donning neoprene!

**As always, thank you all for being the best part of TSSC, without each and every one of you we would not be the great club we are today! VT Yours, Melissa Lonquich President, TSSC**

This "Anchor Line" dedicated to the great Armand "Zig" Zigahn who unfortunately passed away this past February. Zig was not only the founder of our Club but the founder of **Beneath the Sea** which we all have loved for years! Zig was a pioneer who brought SCUBA diving to the masses and gave back with his charitable endeavors and with organizations/scholarships he created and supported



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## TSSC CLUB OFFICERS and DIRECTORS 2021

( ...We always welcome our Club membership to join the Club's leadership team !!! )

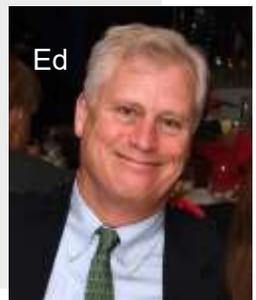
|                             |                  |
|-----------------------------|------------------|
| President                   | Melissa Lonquich |
| Vice President              | Ed Van Dolsen    |
| Secretary                   | Michelle Memoli  |
| Membership                  | Kevin Cushing    |
| Dive Planning               | Jack Ricotta     |
| Treasurer                   | Sheri Buchman    |
| Program Director            | Amanda Slattery  |
| Director at Large           | Gene Miceli      |
| Executive Director          | Kenneth Salstrom |
| Past President              | Al Miller        |
| Newsletter                  | Gary Lehman      |
| Environment and Legislative | Judy Keznord     |
| Safety and Education        | Joe Rinaldi      |
| Social Director             | Liza Handziak    |
| Webmaster                   | Gene Miceli      |
| Founder                     | Zig Zigahn       |
| Co-Founder                  | Soliman Shenouda |



Joe



Kevin



Ed



Michelle



Amanda



Melissa



Al



Sheri



Jack



Kenny



Gene



Gary



J-U-D-Y



Liz

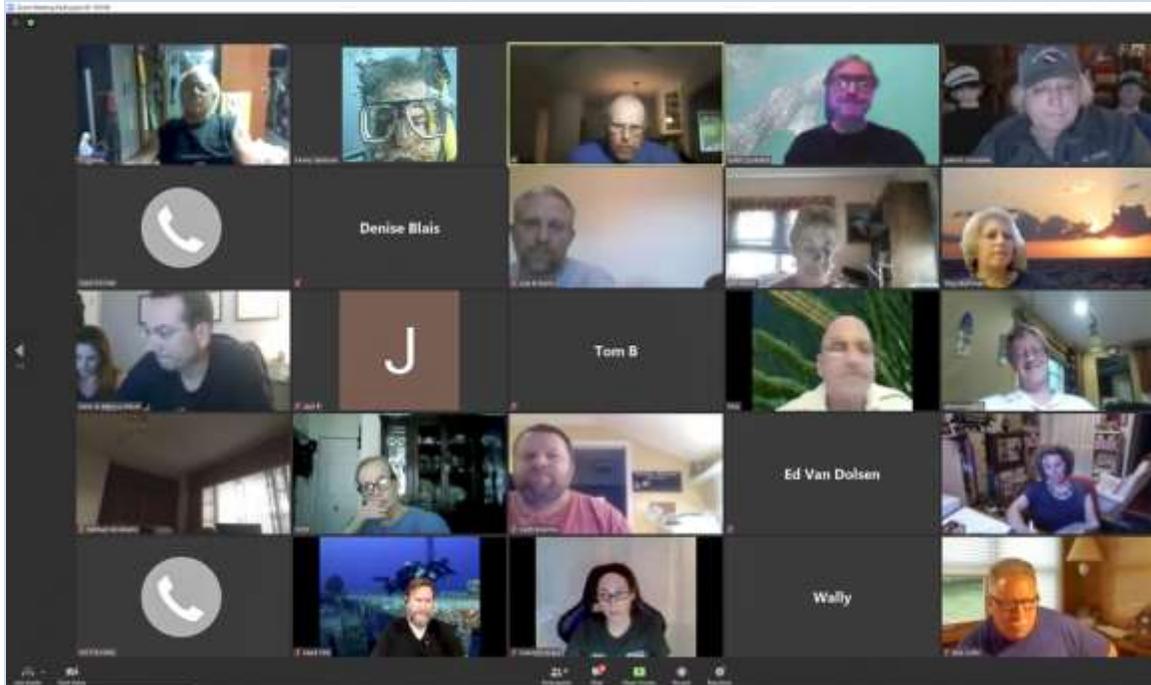


# What's ZOOM ?? (..We all sure found out...)

**Kenny Salstrom , Executive Director  
Gene Miceli, Director-At-Large**



**Our General Meetings have been working out on Zoom....**



**Keeping our Club together, in style !  
Keeping our scuba diving dreams, ALIVE !!!**





**Club Dive Trips 2021/2022**  
***What's on the radar !***  
**Jack Ricotta, Dive Planner**



It has been a while since I have been able to write you. We all know what 2020 was for this industry (and for so many others in the travel sector) -- and for all of us scuba divers. But as you can see from this issue, we are coming back, coming on strong ! Together, we conquered -and are getting wet again!

Some of us managed to get in some trips just in the nick of time before the contagion hit in February/ March last year, and some ventured back into the water when they felt comfortable.

But your Club has not been out of action. We've Zoomed our way monthly to new adventures, just waiting for the right chance. We are happy to report that our Club's dive calendar is starting to fill back up, and we couldn't be happier about it! We are refreshing our diving and dive safety skills, servicing our gear, shaping up and getting ready to ship out -- and backward roll into adventure!



This year, many of us in the Club enjoyed what we are calling 'Roatan I'. And you can read all about it in this issue starting on page 28. *Roatan II is set to embark in July 2021!*

**AND WE ARE EXCITED to REPORT: AGGRESSOR IV BE-LIZE LIVEBOARD- OCT.16-23, 2021 - SOLD OUT!!!!**



We are working on additional ideas for Winter 2021/Spring 2022 Caribbean and Mid-Atlantic diving also.  
**=====>>> Let us know your suggestions! <<<=====**

2022 is shaping up to be an exciting year of diving, and exotic locations once more...

***We'll be headed back in May 2022 to Egypt for ROUND THREE on Liveboard MV Heaven Saphir --- with an exciting preceding land excursion!***



**And....**



***In July 2022 ---Join us for Sea of Cortez aboard ROCIO DEL MAR !***

You can read all about the liveboard in the article by TSSC's Michael Ferrari on page 16 of this issue.

***ALL ABOARD FOR ADVENTURE DIVING WITH THE SCUBA SPORTS CLUB !!***





**In Memory of... Our Club's Founder**

## **Zig Zigahn**



***(...Article reprinted from the 2015 40th Anniversary Sea Swells Newsletter... Gary Lehman )***

On the occasion of the 40th anniversary of The Scuba Sports Club we decided to circle around, get back to our roots, and spend some quality reflection time with our Founder Emeritus, Zig Zigahn. I was favored also to spend quality time with Zig's wife JoAnn. It was an inspiring and spell-binding interview which shined light on the past, present and future of our Club - and the sport of scuba diving. We met at our 'happy place', namely Pete's Saloon in Elmsford. Proprietor Pete Riekstins is a long-time Club member, runs a great restaurant and saloon, and as many of us know, is a supremely skilled underwater (and topside) photographer. I suspected we'd be in for a treat when I spied a Nikonos underwater camera and Nikon D2X digital SLR on exhibit up on the mantel piece!

Before the interview with Zig and JoAnn got underway, Peter, his wife, and Zig, JoAnn and I spent some moments greeting each other and chatting. We were then treated to an impromptu photoshow of some prints of Pete's riveting underwater photography. Breathtaking and inspiring are the other adjectives which come to mind! Pete has a portrait of a white shark from Guadalupe Island (Mexico) which is arrestingly beautiful and at the same time brutally honest about the form, function and life of this apex predator. One has to just see the portrait; truly - it is beyond description. The hallmark of a fine portrait photographer is mastery of the art of conveying the spirit of the subject. In this, Pete succeeds brilliantly. The artistic merits and emotional impact of Pete's underwater images are matched by the sensitive and informed marine environment advocacy emanating from his images, and by the towering technical excellence of the photographs. Pete maintains direct artistic end to end control by meticulously printing all his own photographs. Following some insistent urging, Pete will consider founding a website of his photographs, and has decided to exhibit some of this work at the Saloon - magnifying for all of us the draw of this special place!

The photo show granted by Pete was actually a perfect on-ramp to the conversation with Zig and JoAnn, because the unifying theme was respect, love and concern for the future of threatened marine environments, their inhabitants - and all of us who ultimately rely on the oceans for sustenance. Zig is disturbed by the damage and destruction of the waters he has experienced and cherished over the years, and is dedicated to restoring and preserving them. Protection of marine areas was a big part of Zig's motivation to found Beneath The Sea in 1976. But first things first!



## In Memory of... Our Club's Founder

### Zig Zigahn



#### Zig grows up in Utah ....and a Life Dedicated to Advancing Scuba Diving and Marine Environments

Zig hails from Utah where he was an athletic youth engaged in all kinds of sports - skiing, tennis, hiking...and being a rascal. Utah however is a location in the continental United States which is just about as far away as you can get from the ocean environments which he is now so committed to protecting! So how did that happen? Maybe he learned the love of the oceans during his youth, perhaps in the Navy? Nope: Zig served in the US Air Force after high school, where he learned the mysteries of the growing, vital field of telecommunications. Anyone who has ever flown over Utah and looked out the window will have been inspired by the soaring, multi-colored and dramatic landscapes. Zig must have been as well, because he chose to study geology in college. Upon graduation, Zig was commissioned as an officer in the Air Force. Because he was a telecommunications whiz, Zig was ordered to report as Telecommunications Instructor to his Air Force comrades. Thus in Zig's early adulthood, he mastered the sky and its ways and means as an Air Force officer - and he also understood the Earth below his feet as a geology major. Throughout his scuba diving career and through his travels all over our world, Zig's knowledge of geology has served him well, deepening his understanding of and connection to our Earth and its oceans.

Upon discharge from the Air Force, Zig was grabbed by a rapidly-growing IBM Corporation, hungry for the very best technical and business talent. Zig served twenty five years as a systems engineer, designing / building / operating IBM's challenging, rapidly expanding internal systems during the period of IBM's most prodigious business growth - and spanning a period of the radically increasing technical complexity of online interactive systems (like online banking and instantaneous worldwide airline reservations, which today we blithely take for granted). Generations of IBMers who followed Zig (...myself included) owe Zig a very deep debt of thanks for building the business that bought us our homes, educated our children, and provided gainful employment for us over so many years.

So now Zig finds himself in the inner sanctum of IBM internal IT operations here in the Northeast US - very far indeed from the freedom of the crisp air of his beloved western deserts and mountains. Instead, he is buried deep underground inside datacenter bunkers, bathed in fluorescent lighting, surrounded by humming display stations, rattling printers, gray connecting cables, blue connecting cables, yellow and orange connecting cables, datacenter raised floors, big blue computers twenty foot long and seven feet high (along with plumbing to keep them from melting down), acres upon acres of non-descript gray disk drives storing corporate data, rows and ranks of communications equipment, slightly foul programmers who need some fresh air (and a bath), and their ill-tempered supervisors. But we can count on Zig to *find a way to stay sane*; so Zig finds a sports-based social club called Single Grapes.



## In Memory of... Our Club's Founder

### Zig Zigahn

#### **Single Grapes : Sure Beats the Decadent Nightlife... (Or More Accurately —> IS the Decadent NIGHTLIFE ?)**

Single Grapes was a fun and happening place in the early 1970's! Members enjoyed being together hot air ballooning, playing tennis, enjoying invigorating white water canoeing and rafting, hiking, and decompressing with frequent DJ'd dances, and just generally raising <fun> cain all over Westchester and the Northeast! Stratton Vermont was the winter hangout for skiing, the Delaware River for white water canoeing in the summer, and West Hampton, out on Long Island for reportedly epic beach parties! ... and year-round, legendary 'Purple Toes' dinner parties !

And... Single Grapes was... SCUBA DIVING. Zig certified in 1972. After all, this was generally in the era of Lloyd Bridges playing Mike Nelson in Sea Hunt, and the captivating adventures of The Undersea World of Jacques Cousteau - which revealed to all of us landlubbers for the first time the wondrous undersea environment; and it was also the era of the groundbreaking film Blue Water, White Death by Peter Gimbel and Stan Waterman (which presaged the genre of the 'summer blockbuster' movie, the first of which soon followed BW/WD – and which was called... Jaws).

Zig and the Single Grapes did a lot of challenging but rewarding northeast diving in the early 1970's. Zig attended the Boston Sea Rovers consumer scuba diving exposition, and the resulting relationships between him and the leaders of the Boston Sea Rovers (as well as the companion Chicago-area scuba Expo) combined to start a fire in Zig to create a similar Exposition to serve the greater NY metropolitan area headquartered in Westchester. Thus was founded Beneath The Sea in 1976. Early BTS Expos were held at the State University of New York /Purchase campus, and later at the White Plains Marriott, the White Plains Hotel, the Crowne Plaza and then ultimately at the Westchester County Center when BTS outgrew all other Westchester exhibition venues.

#### ***Zig and Joann – a Transformational Collaboration!***

1980 witnessed the stirrings of great things happening resulting from the transformational collaboration of Zig and JoAnn. That year Zig, JoAnn, Soleiman and other members of The Scuba Sports Club sojourned to Sharm El-Sheikh near the southern tip of the Sinai Peninsula which at the time was almost devoid of hotels; Howard Rosenberg had a lonely motel there and a dive boat, and he pioneered what has now developed into one of the major world dive resorts. The lucky participants in this historic dive included Vreni Roduner, Bob Abrams, Hester Abrams, Luba Fineson, Eileen DiRuocco, Lila Perry, Med Fernandez, Tina Barros, Peter Richter, Tina Martinez, Pat Pruitt and Soleiman Shenouda. The team also dove Ras Mohammed at the southernmost tip of the Sinai Peninsula, just a little south of Sharm El-Sheikh, with Egypt to the west across the water and Saudi Arabia across the water to the east. The diving was spectacular, an impressive sight were the huge amphorae from a 500 yr. old Turkish Cargo ship, some with mercury and we plaid with it in the sand. (JoAnn was NOT certified at that point but was supported on her dives by some of the very best divers, and she was captivated for life. Upon return, she was instructed by Leroy Bonapart at the Mount Kisco YMCA; this must have been something of a letdown; it is tough to imagine going from the virgin, undived paradise of Sharm El-Sheikh to the Mount Kisco YMCA, but it was critical for JoAnn to get properly trained and so she did!)





## In Memory of... Our Club's Founder

### Zig Zigahn

#### **Wetsuit Fashion... (...You can have Any Color J, as long as it is Black... L ) or... JoAnn's Amazing Technicolor Women's Wetsuit !**

All of this 'dive stuff' was new to JoAnn; her professional background was garment/textiles, women's fashion, and showroom sales including modeling of swim suits. Back in the day, you could get a wetsuit in ANY COLOR YOU WANTED, as long as it was BLACK. Scuba diving was a heavily male-dominated sport. JoAnn – with Zig's support and encouragement, took the world of scuba diving by storm and brought it into the world of fashion! Dive attire including wetsuits for women transformed - and the world saw the introduction of lime greens, hot pinks and yellows! "...Lites, brites and Innovation for the 80's"!! NO LONGER was a wetsuit strictly black! All the industry leaders got on board, and Zig and JoAnn had unprecedented and first-name easy access to the leadership teams at Scubapro, Dacor, Henderson, Oceanic and Solar Swimwear.

These collaborations produced a sea-change (no pun intended) in color schemes, and introduced the concept of FASHION into the world of scuba diving. Now, wetsuits could be pretty – and so could the women divers be pretty even inside their facemasks! JoAnn organized at first fashion luncheons; then later full-fledged fashion shows; and she wrote the narratives for the shows. These show helped accelerate the 'lite and brite' fashion tidal wave. which soon become the standard in women's aquatic swimwear.

And it was not long at all before children's swimwear for aquatics and snorkeling also started benefiting from this transformation! ALL the best dressed aquatic kids were sporting snappy, appealing swimwear fashions in wetsuits, snorkels, fins, booties, and dive skins. This was a direct result of JoAnn's professional background in women's wear fashion merging with both her own and growing women's active participation in the sport of scuba diving. Harvard Business School could write an enthralling case study of JoAnn's entrepreneurial inspiration and phenomenon!

#### **Positive Change for the World via Beneath The Sea's Ocean Pals Initiative - One Child at a Time**

Zig, JoAnn and Beneath The Sea are inseparable concepts; the good work of BTS is the frame of reference for this couple. For Zig and JoAnn, it was surely never about just swimsuit 'fashion'. BTS always has had a social conscience as well as commitment to environment education and advocacy; many of us know that this BTS team has been working long and hard to achieve positive change not only for marine environments, but also for our world on a global scale through their work. It is inspiring to first consider two aspects, before turning to other, operational aspects of BTS.

Ocean Pals is JoAnn and Zig's initiative to involve children into the world of marine environment advocacy through art. Ocean Pals was started in 1986 when Zig and JoAnn were invited guests of Daniel Mercier, who was organizing the Antibes (France) Film Festival and the formative concept of marine environment awareness through art was born. JoAnn and Zig developed the concept and brought it to life here via BTS. Luminaries in the world of marine environmentalism and the scuba dive industry have all given their heartfelt endorsement to this initiative. Dr. Sylvia Earle in particular has advanced Ocean Pals as a 'hope spot' analogous to the others which she draws upon. Many cherished awards have been conferred on the program, including PADI's Environmental Awareness Award. Artists of the towering international stature of Wyland have also been drawn to Ocean Pals and hold the initiative dear. Currently this effort involves thousands of children across the world whose awareness is drawn to marine conservation and protection through the Ocean Pals Program. Those of us who have been to the Beneath The Sea Expositions have seen the children's wonderful posters; marine conservation through the eyes of kids. We all remember our own childhood's most cherished art projects and thus it is easy to understand





## In Memory of... Our Club's Founder

### Zig Zigahn

how these children's projects will in the future forge a frame of reference for these kids; heaven knows that protection of our marine environments is proving a formidable challenge and it is good to know that Ocean Pals is creating a future annuity of awareness and concern into the fight. It is also amazing that we too, can learn from the children. The theme in 2015 was "My Wetlands - Water Is Life!"; JoAnn aptly observes that the kids are portraying wetlands all over the world, bringing new understanding for the rest of us by showing us things about wetlands that we never knew. After all, children are participating from Africa, China, India, The Philippines, Turkey and Japan! And so the kids brought their understanding of wetlands in their countries -- to all the rest of us!

JoAnn's other initiative involves the Maria Ferrari Children's Hospital at Westchester Medical Center. Aquariums with colorful fish and sea life can be greatly soothing during times of illness and resultant stress; some of us know that only too well from our own personal experiences and family circumstances; and there is surely no greater anguish to family than when children are in hospital. Thus, I will just say that big-hearted JoAnn – by virtue of having conceptualized and created the BTS/Bed Bath & Beyond's Aquarium at WMC, has provided comfort, light, emotional warmth and support - and enjoyment under the most trying circumstances - to those families who must visit their kids at The Children's Hospital at Westchester Medical Center. Deepest respect, and thanks to JoAnn - and to the financial sponsors at Bed Bath and Beyond - for this sensitive and deeply humanitarian outreach.

The BTS leadership team does not stop there! Those of us favored to have connection with BTS know that their work includes close to ten different scholarships for youngsters and young adults who are embarking on a marine career! What better way to engage young people into marine environment advocacy, ecology, conservation and research than to recognize their efforts and support their marine-related endeavors, including also photography, marine and diving technology. Allied with BTS's program to provide scholarships is the BTS Marine Careers Program, and this is a very exciting initiative. Marine Careers is a component of the Ocean Pals program and was established in 2008 at Beneath the Sea. The objective is to introduce kids and young adults to the marine community and careers. High schoolers who have an interest are teamed up with BTS-membership marine industry careerists who can mentor, guide and counsel the kids (and up to college-age students) into different marine career paths. Being mentored by experts committed to helping guide the students will help the kids further define their interests. Many of us remember the guidance we received during our youth with great respect and admiration, and BTS is facilitating this process in this unique and personal way.

For BTS's Marine Careers, for the Marine Scholarship Program, and for the Maria Ferrari Aquarium at Westchester Medical Center --- and for BTS's Ocean Pals Children's Marine Environmentalism Through Art Program , we all owe a heartfelt and big thanks to BTS's leadership!

BTS of course is best known as the US's largest consumer scuba dive and travel show, and we all LOVE to patrol the highways and byways of BTA at the Meadowlands Exposition Center. Of COURSE we all need new gear and of COURSE there are show specials and of COURSE the guys all have slush funds to use on new stuff and of COURSE the dive travel vendors have to welcome crowds of admiring prospects, and of COURSE I am going to need an underwater housing for the new prosumer digital camera that I am going to need to bring with me on that 'once-in-a-lifetime' dive adventure. And BTS also provides exceptional advanced dive education opportunities, and enriching, awareness-raising presentations. Not to mention the opportunity for inspirational encounters with the luminaries in the dive world; and the Film Festival, which brings the world of diving in exceptional locations to those attending the Film Festival. We can thus 'visit' and experience thrilling dive spots the world over which would be





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### Zig Zigahn

unattainable in *several* lifetimes. And so THESE are the reasons that for so many us, the BTS Expo is one of the top shelf events in the yearly lifecycle of scuba diving. Brought to you by Zig, JoAnn and all the volunteers at BTS – a good number of which are in fact members of the very scuba diving Club (one and the same,) founded forty years ago by Zig!

#### **Zig's Optimistic Counsel for The Future for Our Scuba Sports Club!**

Our interview together for this article was engaging, enriching, exhaustive... and exhausting. But with the final subject, we all found a burst of renewed energy for the crucial subject: What is the direction for The Scuba Sports Club's NEXT forty years! Zig quickly had several earnest, heartfelt recommendations for our Club going into the future. In alignment with BTS initiatives, Zig is advocating MORE DIVING, and specifically more local diving to build fellowship, camaraderie and shared sense of community amongst the divers of The Scuba Sports Club and other dive clubs in our area. Zig further believes that an active training program to skill-build, using perhaps Squantz Pond or Dutch Springs, can initiate increased, active diving and Club relationship-building. Zig furthermore is a HUGE proponent of safe diving, and would look with great favor upon our efforts to advance the safe diving skill base. Zig is deeply concerned about the marine environments of today and tomorrow, but actually is optimistic metaphorically about the day AFTER tomorrow – because Zig believes that there are indeed 'hope spots'; and that BTS has helped light the path forward for future generations of kids and young adults committed to a better future for the world's oceans. Zig supports the idea of photography and art to get the word out about the marine world and environmental activism; and he and JoAnne strongly endorse and encourage our Club's beach cleanups and community awareness building to cleaner waters. Finally, Zig encourages a renewed partnership between BTS and The Scuba Sports Club to achieve these and other important goals, and looks with confidence to our shared future. To which I and so many of us at The Scuba Sports Club wholeheartedly agree!



Respectfully submitted,

Gary Lehman  
Vice President, The Scuba Sports Club

JoAnn can be reached at [oceanpalsjo@aol.com](mailto:oceanpalsjo@aol.com)

## Open Letter to Beneath the Sea Volunteers and Staff

Maria Hults  
Executive Vice President  
Beneath the Sea

It has been a long Covid time since last we have seen each other or spoken. In that time, much has transpired to move society as we knew it to a very different place. Most, some, or all of you know that during this past Covid year Beneath the Sea's Founder, Executive Director, and mentor, Zig, passed away. We have established a scholarship honoring Zig and his love of the ocean, but more about that shortly.

Some of you know that shortly before Zig passed and just before Christmas, JoAnn Beneath the Sea's President was hospitalized and finally is recovering at home. Please, write her a note, send her a card, but if you have a mind to send flowers, JoAnn asks that you make a donation to Zig's memorial scholarship fund instead -- more about that shortly. There is optimism for JoAnn's eventual recovery and her actively taking the reins of Beneath the Sea.

In the interim, as Executive Vice President, I have picked-up the lead under JoAnn's instruction. With the assistance of the Board of Trustees, we are again moving forward.

Let me speak to the Beneath the Sea exhibition weekend first. As you know, two weeks before Beneath the Sea 2020 was to open its doors, Covid 19 upstaged us, closed the show, and turned the Meadowlands Exposition Center into a field hospital for many months. Caught unawares, we quickly scheduled the show for October 2020. When October came, we still were in Covid quarantine and state mandated not to hold an exhibition.

Like the rest of you, I hope, we went home, stocked the refrigerator and freezer, turned the TV to a news channel, and took our seats on the couch. Today, a year later, we are still on the same couch. True, we sit more comfortable in high winds with the extra pounds we have, and we have managed to get our two vaccinations, but when in public we wear our masks and social distance.

Ok, March of 2021 then. Not to be, still state mandated and quarantine restrictions, airports open but only barely, and everyone we spoke to exhibitor and attendee alike said they would not be there. The hall is paid for, hotels booked, and paid for, a world of financial commitment committed to and no way to run an exhibition.

So then we move to March 2022. However, we were Covid wiser now and had trimmed our sails to serve the wind, and that wind was only light breezes and only blew now and then. We can not take that chance!

## Open Letter to Beneath the Sea Volunteers and Staff ...

Beginning April, we, our exhibitors and attendees, begin our second Covid year. Everyone is stir crazy and going broke. The Board of Trustees could uncover no enthusiasm to make further commitments to run a show in March 2022. Experience, the Fates, and Dr. Fauci all recommended against such an enterprise.

We contacted the friendly folks of the Meadowlands Exposition Center, March 24, 25, 26, 2023 seemed like the next best window of opportunity for Beneath the Sea. Those are the new show dates.

As you might imagine, the big question to be asked and answered is whether there is an industry left to respond to us. Here you will find a small optimism. Vegas is open. If Vegas can stay open for November, the DEMA show should reveal the state of our industry and their readiness to get back in the spotlight at Beneath the Sea.

By then, JoAnn should be well into recovery and back in the saddle of this bucking bronco called Beneath the Sea.

That brings you all as up-to-date as I can manage at this time. Yes, the office is for sale, and Beneath the Sea has trimmed its sails to ride close to the wind until we get to calmer waters, and we will get to calm waters. The website may be a little ragged for a bit as we are moving it and redoing it. Social Media is active, and we serve it as we can. Until JoAnn is fully back with us, please use my address and phone number: Beneath the Sea, Maria Hults, 143 Bay Avenue, Hampton Bays, NY 11946 (1.631.728.2285) if you need an address. phone number, need any help, or have a question.

I regret it has taken so long for me to write to all of you. Forgive me. The times with its cruel events, the Fates weaving their unpredictable cloth of life has left me with little to say to you other than wait, stay with us, be patient and wait, cross your fingers and wait, go to whatever church you go to pray for JoAnn and wait. Know that I will thank you for your patience.

As might be expected, Zig's untimely passing hit all of us at Beneath the Sea hard. I will not even try to imagine what it must have been like to be in JoAnn's shoes at that time, but on some dark and rainy Monday, you might make a big drink and think about how she must have felt lying in a hospital bed very ill herself and being told her husband, Zig had passed.

Enough! Time for some fresh air and bright sunlight, so let me now tell you about Zig's scholarship. JoAnn's request was that no flowers be sent to either herself or Zig but that anyone who cared enough about Zig makes a donation to a memorial scholarship in his name. Take a look:

## Open Letter to Beneath the Sea Volunteers and Staff ...

### Armand "Zig" Zigahn Memorial Scholarship

**This Memorial scholarship will seek an adult (25 years old or above) whose experience, love of the ocean, skills, and leadership abilities demonstrate strong advocacy to educate the world about our precious oceans and creatures.**

Zig was a man with a vision, a spirit that inspired others, and a strong leadership ability. He wanted the world to learn about and care about the beautiful oceans and their creatures. Some of the ways he did this include:

Engage the scuba diving sports community to learn about and participate in his vision by becoming the Founder and Executive Director of Beneath The Sea (BTS). BTS is the largest consumer ocean exposition, dive, and travel show in America. By becoming the founder of BTS, he brought together scuba diving people from all corners of the world to share their knowledge of and interest in the ocean and its myriad forms of sea life.

- Co-founded the Sea of Tomorrow Society charitable group raising close to a million dollars to support unique underwater projects. These projects contribute to the healing process of children confined at the Maria Fareri Children's Hospital at the Westchester Medical Center.
- Board member of the Education Committee at the New York Aquarium; former Executive Vice President of the Underwater Society; Co-founder of the Women Divers Hall of Fame; and a Captain in the United States Air force.

Zig and his wife, Joann Zigahn, co-founded Ocean Pals. The youth-oriented environmental education section of Beneath The Sea. They then went on to found Marine careers, a daylong symposium for students seeking assistance and direction in their pursuit of careers in the worlds of marine technology and arts.

Zig received numerous awards from many domestic and international organizations that recognized his exceptional leadership and his advocacy for educating the world about the beauty and importance of our oceans and their creatures.

In 2000, Zig received the Nick Icorn award for establishing the Beneath the Sea Museum of Diving History. Zig has been a non-voting board member at the Academy of Underwater Arts and Sciences, who in 2004 awarded him their prestigious NOGI Award for Sports and Education. 2008, Zig received the Accolade award from the Island of Bonaire for his contributions to the Island and the sport of scuba diving. 2012 The International Scuba Diving Hall of Fame inducted Zig and Joann for their contribution to the sport. In 2019 the DEMA (... continued on page 15 ...)

## Open Letter to Beneath the Sea Volunteers and Staff ...

(Dive Equipment Marketing Association) awarded Zig and Joann their coveted Reaching Out award for Beneath the Seas contributions to the dive industry.

Across the years, Zig has received Diver of the Year awards from the Long Island Divers Association (LIDA), the New York State Divers Association (NYSDA), The Scuba Sports Club, and the Handicapped Scuba Association. He has also received awards from Lifeguard Systems Service and the Divers Alert Network (DAN). In 2010 Beneath the Sea surprised Zig by awarding him their Diver of the Year award for Service. In 2011 the Aquatic Adventures dive club honored Zig and Beneath the Sea for what they have done for the sport of diving.

Westchester County issued a Proclamation honoring Zig for his charitable work promoting education and community service. Other awards hanging in Zig's office are from PADI's Project Aware Foundation and Sea Space/PADI for Environmental Awareness. He is an honorary member of the Yonkers Police Scuba Club.

Now it is your turn. Look into your hearts and remember all the good times you had because Zig made them happen. Remember the years of Beneath the Sea and the friends you made who are bound to you as you are to them because out of thin air Zig created a show called Beneath the Sea and made it happen for almost forty-five years.

If you are generous enough to donate to the scholarship fund, please make your check out to Beneath the Sea and forward it to Maria Hults, Beneath the Sea, 143 Bay Avenue E, Hampton Bays, NY 11946 - 2861.

We will send you a grateful thank you letter which you may use for tax purposes.

I look forward to our future together, continuing the celebratory spirit of Beneath the Sea, and our fellowship in the diving community.

Maria Hults  
Executive Vice President  
Beneath the Sea



## Socorro Bound !

Michael "Dino" Ferrari



I had the pleasure of going to the archipelago de Revillagigedo April 22-May 1, 2021, aboard the *Rocio del Mar* liveaboard. The area is more widely known here in the USA as Socorro. Socorro is made up of four islands: Socorro, San Benedicto, Roca Partida and Clarion. These islands are 250 miles off the coast of San Jose del Cabo, Mexico, and are a spectacular magnet for the largest ocean pelagic animals in the world.

We flew into Cabo San Lucas airport (a direct flight from Newark Liberty Airport). The next day we had an overnight cruise (around 24 hours) from Cabo San Lucas to the Socorro islands.

Together with 15 other advanced scuba divers from all over the world, we participated in 26 dives at the following sites:

San Benedicto Island: The Boiler, El Canon

Socorro Island: Cabo Pearce, Punta Tosca, and The Aquarium

Roca Partida

The diving is not casual diving; it can be challenging. All dives are from Zodiac inflatables. No one guarantees placid waters. It is pelagic in nature. There are currents. The group might get scattered despite best efforts of the divemasters and the Zodiac drivers. Generally, the dives are 50-80'. There are shore excursions to Baja. The brochures and websites are right on the mark. The sea life – BIG animals – are all over the Socorro Islands in abundance – tuna, barracuda, swarms of jacks, hammerheads, whitetip reef sharks, silky sharks, whale sharks, dolphins and manta rays ruling the oceans! There are also humpbacks but different procedures may be in place for diving/snorkeling with them, and this is seasonal as you might expect.

Regarding "care and feeding"--- the crew was amazing! Chef Jorge prepared outstanding meals. We even enjoyed a full barbecue on the top deck hosted by the entire crew. They offered homemade tacos and margaritas. The panga drivers were phenomenal, constantly watching for bubbles throughout our dives. They were right there to pick us up at the end of each dive. The divemasters and crew treated us as 5-star guests. No detail was left unattended; no task too small for anyone, including the captain. Even the owner and operator, Dora Sierra, was on board. It was the dive trip of a lifetime!

I am looking forward to cruising again aboard *Rocio del Mar* with Dora and her crew to the Sea of Cortez and Midriff Islands in 2022. *Rocio del Mar* and her brother ship, *Quino el Guardian*, have special offers for dive clubs and they would love to have TSSC travel with them next year. It is a perfect destination for our dive club to organize a group diving trip!



## Socorro Bound !

Michael "Dino" Ferrari





## Backgrounder on the Socorro Islands

Gary Lehman



### Where are the Socorro Islands?



### Why are they such a big deal?

For starters, how about 366 fish species —26 endemic (not found anywhere else) and loads of sharks and rays – which are true indicator species. This archipelago is a ‘caravanserai’ of life and respite for migrating species, stopping off to rest and eat before carrying on their migratory mission.

### How did they form?

Volcanic eruption, like Iceland, Galapagos and Hawai’i (among so many others). You can see the similarities between the landscape of Socorro and the Galapagos.

### Why are the Socorro Islands such a biodiversity hot spot?

It has not been destroyed by overfishing and habitat destruction. Hopefully, it never will be. Especially since to its very great credit, the government of Mexico in 2017 declared the Socorro area as North America’s largest Marine Protected Area. NO fishing will be allowed there. I hope that this is enforced, unlike the intrusions and extractive fishing around the Galapagos which continues. Why is this area so critical? It is a vast sea life nursery. Whale sharks and other species congregate there to mate and rear their young. It is a massive cleaning station for species to ‘groom’ their bigger brother and sister species and rid them of parasites. Cold Humboldt currents mix up with warmer waters of the North Equatorial current, which creates upsurges and blending of food from the bottom to the top – like stirring your yogurt. “Life finds a way” and thrives in these waters. Migrating species make a stop over at Socorro to rest and feed. It’s a marine par-tay!



## Backgrounder on the Socorro Islands

Gary Lehman



### Is there any danger involved in diving there?

Maybe the unasked question here is about sharks. The truth is that diving Socorro (as elsewhere...) requires careful attention to following established diving procedures; having your buddy around to help you out in the event of trouble; serviced and tested equipment before the dive to avoid surprises related to equipment failure; keeping current on training; ...'failing to plan is planning to fail'; listening to your 'inner voice' about the dive -- these are the key safety factors. Yes, there are tiger sharks which can be big – up to 17' for the tigers. They are generally just curious. The divemasters know the habits of these animals, the risk factors and how to avoid them. They know when to and when NOT to dive with tigers. Christina Zenato once said that she would prefer to NOT do the 'tonic immobility' dance with a 14' tiger shark. She respects them as should we all. Do attacks occur? There can be no guarantee they won't. We all know a tiger shark bit a financial manager off Cocos Island, Costa Rica who perished—and later that year, a swimmer off Chatham by a white shark. These incidents made the news *precisely because this is such a rare occurrence*. And as we all know, seeing a shark in the water while diving is a gift; let us just hope that our kids and grandkids will be able to see sharks while diving in the future!

## HÉROES DEL MAR —- Heroes Of The Sea !

Take a couple of minutes to review the *Heroes Of The Sea* website at <http://quinoelguardian.com/heroesdaelmar/> .

Here you will learn about the outstanding work being done by the owner/operator of *Rocio del Mar* and *Quino el Guardian* liveaboards, Dora Sierra—and her team of marine biologists, mission specialists, and the crews aboard the liveaboards.

Dora's mission is to inspire a whole new generation of home-grown ocean advocates selected from youth in the rural and fishing villages of Mexico. These youth leaders will always cherish the time spent aboard these liveaboards which is intended to transform these kids into influential and committed advocates for the marine environment which sustains us all. This is sacred work, and The Scuba Sports Club extends warmest wishes to Dora and her team - and most of all—to the kids who participate in the program! May they become leaders and forces for positive marine advocacy in future years. The oceans desperately need their energy & stewardship!



## Riverkeeper Sweep 2021

Amanda Slattery



On a VERY breezy Mayday morning an intrepid group of TSSC members gathered at John F. Kennedy Marina and Trevor Park in Yonkers to join the 10<sup>th</sup> annual Riverkeeper Sweep, a day of service for the Hudson River and its tributaries. Volunteers met at the north end of the JFK Marina parking lot where a table with balloons, complimentary water and snacks was set up.

The event was extremely well organized. Pre-registration had been required, staff checked us in and equipped each of us with a large garbage bag and a long trash picker. Garbage team leaders wearing fluorescent vests were being assigned volunteers, initially alphabetically by surname. However a swift negotiation succeeded in getting all TSSC members assigned to the same leader. Then we were off!

Evidently each team leader had been assigned a starting area and we were led to the entrance ramp at the far end of the parking lot. "The wind blows a lot of garbage up against the ramp" we were told. Our leader was correct and mercifully the ramp provided some degree of shelter from the northwest wind. We worked hard. Kevin unearthed two car tires, Sharon found a bicycle, Liza braved the sprouting poison ivy to release a couple of large rubber bins from the undergrowth.

There was not much opportunity to converse as we tackled our tasks so Liza had arranged a Deco Stop lunch to follow our labors. Due to time constraints a change of venue was necessary and, with a quick search of the internet, Kevin found Bread and Brine in Hastings-on-Hudson. What better place for divers to eat than one with a swim-up bar?! It was a very enjoyable lunch. Sitting down to a meal with a group of fellow divers, in person after so many Zoom meetings, was the best possible way to end the morning.

....Photos on next page !



# Riverkeeper Sweep 2021

Amanda Slattery





## A Truly Amazing Year of Diving—Despite Covid!

“...Damn the COVID, FILL THAT TANK ! ”

### TSSC Intrepidity Award to... **Steve Reichenbach**



January was a quiet stay at home month, but I returned to normal in February with a dive trip to DiveTech and InnerSpace on Grand Cayman where I had the pleasure of diving with two of their top instructors, Serena Evans and Sonya Kim. Six days of rebreather diving like you can only have on Grand Cayman! Both operations are top notch with a truly professional staff. Plus the ‘apres-diving’ isn’t bad either!



DiveTech instructors  
Serena & Sonya

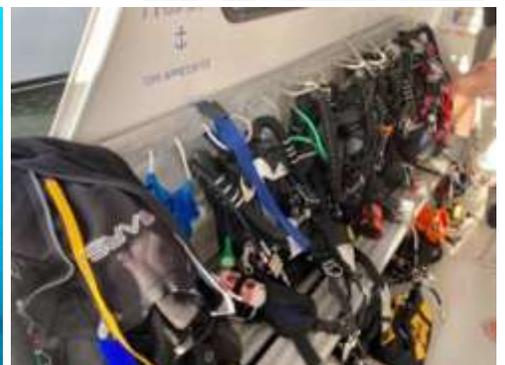
Steve celebrating his birthday  
on the *Belize Aggressor*



That was quickly followed by a three-day KISS Rebreather event in Fort Lauderdale hosted by Woody Alpern at his Ocean Treasures Hotel which is on the ocean and is completely diver-friendly with gear lockers, rinsing tanks and close-by restaurants for great apres-diving! I guess my first taste of Covid came in March when I flew to Belize on the 13th to go on the *MV Belize Aggressor IV* liveaboard. Most of us arrived on the 13th to meet and greet, but two arrived on the 14th and were not allowed to enter the country as the airport was closed at midnight on the 13th. Good timing for most of us, and I ended up with my own cabin as my cabin mate was one of the two who came in late.

April and May were washouts with several planned events cancelled or rescheduled to this year. June brought back local diving and a long weekend in Delray Beach with friends /TSSC members Jack, Stephanie and Craig from the north country, also with local member Sandra. That was followed by a short trip to the Everglades for some alligator watching.

July and August were becoming more normalized with local diving with friends from the north and a dive trip to Pensacola where we dove the *USS Oriskany*, the largest artificial reef in the world and a decommissioned oil rig that was lionfish heaven (see separate article).





**A Truly Amazing Year of Diving—Despite the Covid!**



September saw a trip to Africa postponed till this coming August, so I went in for some maintenance, and had a pacemaker installed which has been working quite well. However it has limited my diving to the 200-foot depth. I did a recovery stay on Cabbage Cay, an old Inn on an island near North Captiva that was quite interesting.



**' Scratch one lionfish! '**



**The Stars and Stripes at *USS Oriskany* !**

October was another month of cancelled trips but gave me time to complete my recovery and make a short trip to the Keys. November picked up with a trip to Cabo San Lucas and nine days aboard the *MV Nautilus Explorer* for some fantastic diving in the Socorro Islands. (Photos from Florida Keys and Cabo...)





## A Truly Amazing Year of Diving— Despite the Covid!



Socorro !!



December was two weeks in St Augustine using up some leftover timeshare points, it is a very interesting city and I was able to spend time with Bill and Lois Drake who I had not seen in years. It was an enlightening trip since I could never remember where I was when the moon landing took place, turns out I was at the Drakes. It is possible I was over-served.

The holidays came and I headed for a week in Cozumel for New Years and another KISS Re-breather event, followed by a quick trip to the Keys to dive the *USNS Vandenberg* and the *USCG Duane*. Eating way too much of the local seafood!

And that about wraps it up, I am hoping that a lot of last year's cancelled and postponed events take place this year so I don't have to sit home so much. All things considered it was another great year of diving, meeting new divers and traveling to new dive sites. Dealing with CV19 was an issue but was dealt with. And, we didn't have to wear two masks underwater! Trusting 2021 holds as many and more terrific adventures !





## TSSC Olympus Dive Center -- Round Two from 2020

Steve Reichenbach



The trip started off as a TSSC make-up dive trip to Olympus Dive Center in Morehead City, NC. The original trip had been cancelled in 2019 due to weather. The 2020 trip saw all the NY and CT divers bail out since they would have had quarantine issues when they returned home. I recruited three of my KISS dive buddies in Atlanta to join us in Morehead City and headed north. We left a day early to break up the drive and ended up in Yemassee SC driving through rain most of the way. That night we were contacted by Olympus and told that the whole week of diving was cancelled due to Hurricane Isaias.

Not to be deterred from a good diving trip my friends in Atlanta (they hadn't left yet) got on the phone and after several tries found two dive shops in Pensacola that were open and had vacancies. The next morning we turned around and headed for Pensacola and Woody, Gus and David headed south from Atlanta. We met up in Pensacola and the weather and water were perfect.

Friday morning we went with H2O Below for a trip to the *M/V Antares* - a 387ft steel freighter which sank in 1995 at a depth between 80 and 130 feet. It was a good hour and half warm-up dive with a lot of sea life.

Saturday and Sunday we switched over to Shark Quest Dive Shop and dove the *USS Oriskany* on Saturday and the Chevron Oil Tower on Sunday. The *Oriskany* is the largest artificial reef in the world at 911' long and rests on the bottom in 220' of water 22 miles south of Pensacola. It is massive, with the top of the tower being at the 80' level and the flight deck between 140' and 150' depending on which side you are on. As we had planned on being in NC where the bottom is 130', we were not set up for a deep trimix dive to get below the flight deck and into the hanger deck. We saved that for another trip. Just being on the flight deck was amazing, you could see neither the bow nor the stern. Once again we did an hour and a half dive to a max depth of 150'.

Sunday was a fun day, another long boat ride, but the weather was great and the seas were calm. The Chevron Oil Rig was donated and repurposed as part of the 'Rigs to Reefs' Program in 1993. It is 80' to 130' deep, and is overrun with lionfish. It is a fun dive—like being in a giant erector set—full of all kinds of sea life. (There were however, about 40 FEWER lionfish on it after we surfaced; we actually did an hour and forty-five minute dive because we were having so much fun dispatching these destructive lionfish!)

Pensacola was a fun town with plenty of waterfront restaurants to choose from. Both dive operators ran roomy, safe boats with professional crews. Since we were all on KISS rebreathers they let us do our own dive plan, and we didn't use a guide. The dives are not for everyone and the seas can be iffy, but if you are looking for some fun dives, I recommend a few days in Pensacola. Please contact me if you have any questions!

# **USS Oriskany – One of Our Essex-class Aircraft Carriers**

Gary Lehman

## **USS Oriskany – By The Numbers !**

|                 |   |
|-----------------|---|
| Built:          | May 1944  |
| Launched:       | October 1945  |
| Commissioned:   | 1950  |
| Saw Service in  | Korea, Vietnam, and Cold War in various capacities              |
| Repurposed as   |   |
| Artificial reef | 17 May, 2006  |
| Displaces       | 31,000 tons (original design but much higher later)             |
| Length          | 911'  |
| Beam            | 129'  |
| Draft           | 30.5'   |
| Speed           | 33+ knots   |
| Crew            | Korea/Vietnam 2,600 officers and enlisted sailors               |
| Aircraft        | varies over lifetime, but 90-100 various aircraft types is fair |

She was carefully scuttled by the US Navy to be an artificial reef, and per the intention, she sits essentially upright on the bottom. Flight deck at 135-145' and the top of the carrier's "island" is at 70'.

**FOR A TOUR!**      <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=shSw4X9BI-g>

*USS Oriskany* is an *Essex*-class aircraft carrier. This ship type is the most significant in American history. The war in the Pacific theatre of WWII was won in large measure due to the one-two punch of the US Marines and the *Essex*-class airpower and force-projection against enemy warships and installations delivered by the Avenger bombers/torpedo bombers, Dauntless and Helldiver dive bombers and the swarms of Wildcat, Hellcat, and Corsair fighters which wreaked havoc with Japanese aircraft and installations.

In total, 24 *Essex*-class carriers were built; 14 saw service in WWII. The *Essex*-class carriers were not done after the end of WWII! Many of us have read *The Bridges at Toko Ri* by James Michener, which highlights the life and times of carrier pilots during the Korean Conflict. *USS Oriskany* was one of eleven fighting *Essex*-class aircraft carriers engaged in the Korean War.

*Essex*-class carriers also were critical parts of the US space program, participating in the ocean recovery of the *Mercury*, *Gemini*, and *Apollo* space capsules which splashed down in the Pacific and Atlantic.

*Essex*-class carriers were heavily engaged on all oceans of the world and in a wide variety of missions fighting the Cold War. The versatility and refit potential of the ship design allowed repurposing and re-missioning of the ships to meet changing requirements such as anti-submarine warfare.

Thirteen *Essex*-class carriers also were engaged heavily in the Vietnam War. In fact, Lieutenant Commander John McCain flew his A-4 Skyhawk off the *USS Oriskany* on October 26, 1967. During that mission he was shot down and spent the next 5 ½ years in the 'Hanoi Hilton' as a prisoner of war.

## ...USS Oriskany – One of Our Essex-class Aircraft Carriers

Several *Essex*-class (and other earlier) carriers are named after Revolutionary War American victories or references. These include Lexington, Saratoga, Valley Forge, Bonhomme Richard, Ticonderoga, Yorktown, Randolph, Bunker Hill, Bennington, Oriskany and Princeton.

The Scuba Sports Club visited an *Essex*-class aircraft carrier, the *USS Intrepid* several years ago on a field trip. She is a museum ship on the west side of Manhattan; any time you drive down the West Side Highway in midtown Manhattan, you can't miss her haze gray massiveness! It was a wonderful day with our Club, and I recommend a return trip! There are several *Essex*-class aircraft carriers around the country which are now continuing their service as museum ships: *USS Hornet* (Alameda, California), *USS Lexington* (Corpus Christi, Texas), *USS Intrepid* (Manhattan, NY) and *USS Yorktown* (Patriot's PoU.S. Navy photo by Photographer's Mate 2nd Class Jeffrey P. Kraus, Charleston, South Carolina). SCUTTLING CHARGES GO OFF: <https://youtu.be/XavoiJxK0ck>



USS Oriskany off Midway, US Navy public domain



*Oriskany* starting her final journey...  
U.S. Navy photo by Photographer's Mate 2nd Class Jeffrey P. Kraus Public Doman.



*USS BonHomme Richard* (left), *USS Oriskany* patrolling in the Gulf of Tonkin in 1970. US Navy, public domain





## Roatan ! 2021

Al Miller  
Mike Wilhelm



After more than a year of Covid 19 Social Distancing and hunkering down at home, The Scuba Sports Club packed their bags and were on the way to Roatan, Honduras.

Prior to departure a negative Covid test and a Honduran Immigration Pre-Check form were requirements. Additionally, the Honduran government also indicated that facemasks, social distancing and the use of hand gel must be utilized.

TSSC members Jack Ricotta, Stephanie Hernandez, Gene and Melissa Miceli, Mike Ferrari, Katelynn Krack and Al Miller were departing on American Airlines from Laguardia and met our Oklahoma members for the connecting flight in Dallas Fort Worth. Oklahoma members Mike and Kelly Wilhelm arrived with Mike Wessinger and Hugh (Hank) Hill, two of our newest members. Mike Wessinger's nephew, Chris, also joined us as a guest from Texas. A Florida TSSC member, Steve Reichenbach had arrived in Roatan a bit earlier.

Upon arrival in Roatan and going through the normal immigration procedures, we were greeted by the folks from Seagrave Plantation & Resort for our transfers to our accommodations for the week.

Seagrave Resort is a family-owned operation and, true to its name, a family member was always there to care for your every need from the office, the restaurant, the dive shop, the boat and underwater.

Our first day of diving is what I would have described as "Unimpressive". The second day began with an eagle ray sighting as soon as we entered the water. That began the next several days of creature sightings that included numerous turtles and eagle rays. We were also treated to octopus, stingrays, squid and seahorses. It was like diving in an aquarium. There were even a couple of wrecks to explore.

The most incredible dive that took place, though, was our night dive within a few minutes of sailing from the dock. After entering the water we were guided to a patch of sand amidst the coral reef. Once there, we shut down all of our light sources in order to witness a phenomenon called "The String of Pearls". This amazing display of





## Roatan ! 2021

Al Miller  
Mike Wilhelm



bioluminescence appeared as if pearls were hanging from a string and was similar to Christmas lights hanging from the eaves of houses. The dive masters also took each of the divers on a brief tour to see the water light up as we passed through it. From the reaction of everyone in our group that witnessed this display, I believe it is safe to say that no one was disappointed with this night dive.

The package at Seagrape Resort included breakfast and lunch but, we did have to make about a mile walk to the West End town for dinner each night. The cost for these meals was very reasonable and began with a stop at the local watering hole for frosty drinks which included the “calorie free” drink known locally as a “Monkey LaLa”.

While it was my preference to dive all week, others in the group opted to visit the sloth and monkey sanctuary on Thursday afternoon. Everyone really enjoyed meeting, holding and taking pictures with ‘Charlie’ the sloth. It was fascinating that Charlie had his own large tree in which he lived and was unconstrained. He seemed very happy. Our group was surprised just how SLOW sloths move. Slow Motion comes to mind. Charlie would have had a tough time making a break for it. The group also got to feed and hold monkeys and tropical birds. Such a unique experience. Finally, tree top zip lining was also available at the sanctuary and experienced by the TSSC attendees. They were impressive to see like acrobats flying through the air!

Our weather for the week included intermittent showers as it was the rainy season but it did not interfere with our plans. On Saturday morning as we prepared to depart for home, the winds were howling and the waves were crashing onto the shoreline. The dive boat would not leave the dock. We were fortunate that our dives were never canceled.

As we traveled home, we reflected on our new member/friends and the week that we had just enjoyed together. My thoughts included a return to Roatan and, as luck would have it, TSSC will be returning in July 2021.

Thank you, Jack Ricotta for another wonderful trip put together by you and your dedication as TSSC Dive Planner.





# Roatan ! 2021

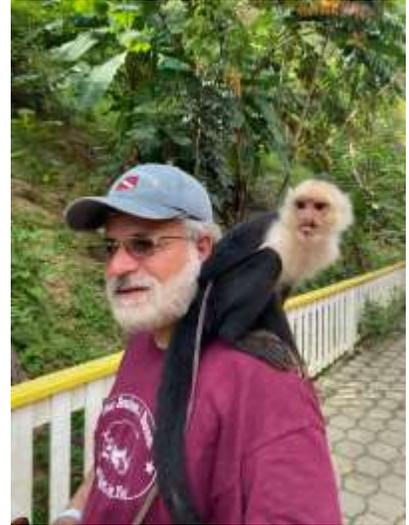
Al Miller  
Mike Wilhelm





## Roatan ! 2021

Al Miller  
Mike Wilhelm





## Roatan ! 2021

Al Miller  
Mike Wilhelm





## TSSC Refresher Workshop



**Joe Rinaldi**  
**TSSC Safety Director**

In an effort to address the concerns of several TSSC members who have been away from scuba diving for an extended period of time due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the TSSC Board of Directors arranged for a scuba refresher workshop at SCUBA New York. TSSC President Melissa Lonquich took care of the important administrative details like securing the SCUBA New York facility and sending out announcements to the TSSC participants as well as maintaining a list of TSSC members who were interested in attending the refresher workshop. TSSC Safety Director Joe Rinaldi presented the workshop with a lot of assistance from Nick Lappano (the previous TSSC Safety Director).



After reviewing how long each participant was away from scuba diving, and inquiring about any particular skills the participants were interested in addressing, the participants took a “Quick Review” of their scuba knowledge, then it was off to the pool to work on Skills. After setting up their scuba kits, the participants entered the pool and were given a review of how to conduct a proper Pre-dive safety check with their dive buddy. The participants then worked on how to recover and clear a scuba regulator second stage. Next up was work on buoyancy control through fin pivots and hovering, followed by different techniques for sharing an alternate air source. The workshop then ended with a demonstration of ways to deploy a Surface Marking Buoy (AKA SMB or Safety Sausage) from both the surface and below water.



Alas the refresher workshop time passed much too quickly and both the presenters and the participants would have liked to have had more time to make adjustments to their scuba kits or simply swim around underwater. Nevertheless, the TSSC participants who did attend the workshop should be more familiar with the basic skills before they make their next dive. A big thank you to all of the TSSC members who worked together to make this refresher workshop happen!



# TSSC Refresher Workshop

Joe Rinaldi  
TSSC Safety Director





## Featured Creatures

Rick D'Amico



### The Atlantic Silverside (*Menidia menidia*)

Also known as “spearing,” the Atlantic silverside is a small fish found in the western Atlantic Ocean. It ranges from the mouth of the St. Lawrence River to central Florida.

Silversides are members of the family Atherinidae, known as “Old World Silversides.” They are found in tropical and temperate waters throughout the world. Some of them are strictly freshwater, while most are estuarine/marine. There are 74 species of atherinids.

#### PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

The Atlantic silverside is a small fish, generally less than six inches in length. They have small heads and relatively large eyes. They have thin bodies.

The silverside is grassy green or greyish green along the upper portion of its body. It is white along its lower body, although it is often translucent near the tail. Along the midbody, it has a silver stripe that runs from just posterior to the gill cover to the base of the caudal (tail) fin.

#### FISH THAT CAN BE MISTAKEN FOR SILVERSIDES

##### SMELT

The rainbow smelt (*Osmerus mordax*) has an adipose fin on the dorsal surface near the tail, similar to trout and salmon. It has a single dorsal fin. Its mouth is larger than is the mouth on the silversides. While the silversides inhabits our area during the mid-late summer, the smelt can be found during mid-winter, so it is very unlikely that both species will be in our area at the same time.



##### BAY ANCHOVY

The bay anchovy (*Anchoa mitchilli*) can be distinguished from the silversides by its considerably larger mouth and that it has a single dorsal fin.





# Featured Creatures

Rick D'Amico



## HABITAT

In our area, the silversides is generally found in inshore areas from around mid-July through September. Typically, they're found when water temperature reaches approximately 70 degrees F. As the inshore waters become cooler, they migrate offshore. They're found along beaches, in embayments and in estuaries. They will travel upstream into tidal rivers to brackish water. Typically, they can be seen near the water's edge. Silversides are generally found in dense schools (see pic to the right). Because their nearshore habitat will have rapid changes in salinity, silversides are tolerant of a wide range of salinities.



## FEEDING

The silverside has a little mouth, and thus, most of its food is small. It eats small crustaceans, algae, worms, and a variety of zooplankton, including: shrimp, copepods, amphipods, squid, and insects.

Silversides are food for a number of predators. They are consumed by fish such as striped bass, bluefish and mackerel. They are an important forage species that can be plentiful in the nearshore areas, such as salt marshes, estuaries and tidal creeks. Often it is the most abundant fish in these areas.

Most young anglers, when they begin fishing in Long Island Sound, will pursue "snapper blues," or baby bluefish. Spearing is generally the bait of preference for "snappers."

## REPRODUCTION

Depending on their latitude on the Atlantic coast, silversides spawn from March through August. They have been reported to spawn five and twenty times during spawning season. Atlantic silversides spawn during full and new moon phases, suggesting that greater tidal ranges encourage their spawning.

An interesting and somewhat unusual aspect of silverside spawning is that the water temperature appears to play a role in the sex of the offspring. When spawning occurs at the lower end of the spawning temperature range, the overwhelming number of offspring will be female. Conversely, upper-level spawning temperatures tend to favor male progeny.

Atlantic silversides do not live for a long time. Young-of-the-year fish migrate from the shallows of the inland waters to deeper offshore waters by winter. They typically die in the winter after they spawn.



## **Featured Creatures**

Rick D'Amico



### **DO YOU WANT TO KNOW A SECRET?**

We don't see silversides in fish markets (bait shops, yes, fish markets, no). Nonetheless, they're very good to eat. Probably the easiest way to catch them is with an umbrella net.

They're easy to prepare. Cut off the head, slit the gut, pull out the innards and rinse. The bones are small enough that they're eaten with the fish (a little extra calcium in the diet). Dust them in flour and fry them in oil until crispy. Drain them on a paper towel. See pics below. They make excellent finger food.



**(.....Editor's note.....**

**ALL ABOUT THESE , THANKS RICK !!!!!!!!!!! .... )**

***PASS THE DRAWN GARLIC BUTTER AND A  
ROLLING ROCK PLEASE !!!!!***

# And Around The Dive Shop.....

## LOCAL DIVE SHOPS.....AT YOUR SERVICE!

*Looking for dive-related gifts? Need to upgrade your gear?*

*Here is a list of shops that may just have the right one for your best dive buddy or for yourself!*

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|  <p><b>Abyss Scuba</b><br/>Where the fun begins!<br/>www.abyss-scuba.net<br/>(914) 244-3483<br/>29 Marble Avenue, Pleasantville, NY 10570</p> |  <p><b>Captain Mike's Diving School</b><br/>530 City Island Ave<br/>City Island, NY 10464<br/>Tel. 718-885-1588<br/>www.captainmikesdiving.com</p>   |
|  <p><b>Oceanblue Dive</b><br/>108 Bedford Street<br/>Stamford, CT, 06901<br/>www.oceanbluedive.com</p>                                      |   |



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