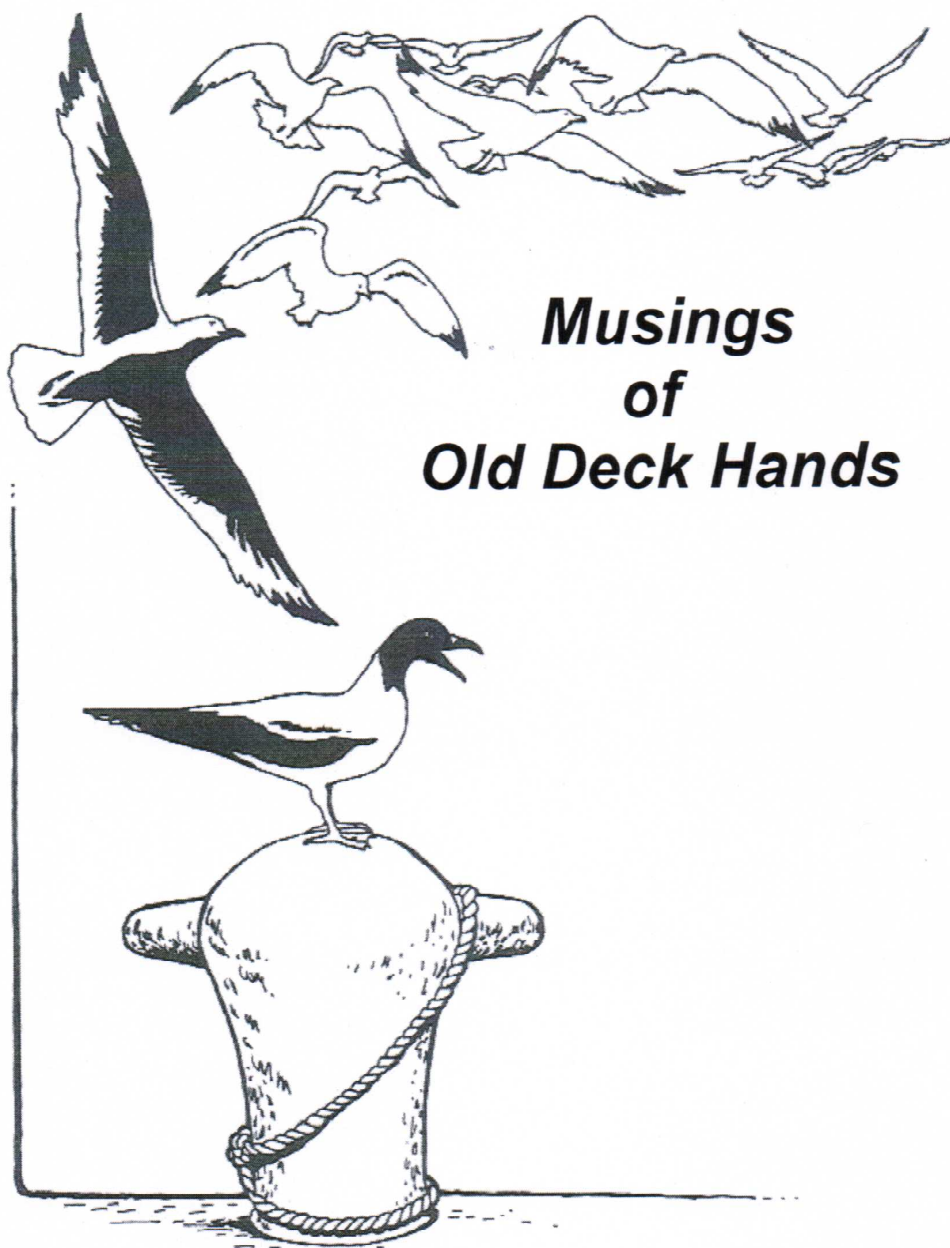




***Musings
of
Old Deck Hands***



Musings of Old Deck Hands

Louise Priest, Editor

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Foreword

In early 2007, I wrote a very short "article" for a newsletter Grace Reynolds was doing, and I called it "Musings of an Old Hand". The fate of that article is unknown, but the title captured my interest, and I thought that perhaps I could get a number of "old hands" to muse about their experiences in aquatics. So I put together a list of a few people I knew, and proposed that they each write and send me a short piece; thus, *Musings of Old Deck Hands* was born. It was going to be just a fun little project, but somehow it grew and grew. I had email responses and phone calls from people I hadn't talked to in YEARS.... and it was indeed great fun. It was also a major pain: I hadn't



anticipated the WORK it would entail. It would have helped if my computer skills had been greater! I hesitated to ask a publisher to publish it. Fortunately, Sue Grosse stepped in and volunteered to put it on disk. She also suggested that it would be possible, in "future editions" to add new material, if others wished to be included.

The items received varied greatly. I had given no guidelines (as a better editor would have done), and not even suggested topics, so some things were recollections of events, some were observations on different aspects of society, but all were interesting. Some made me laugh, some made me cry, but all reflected the joy found in aquatics.

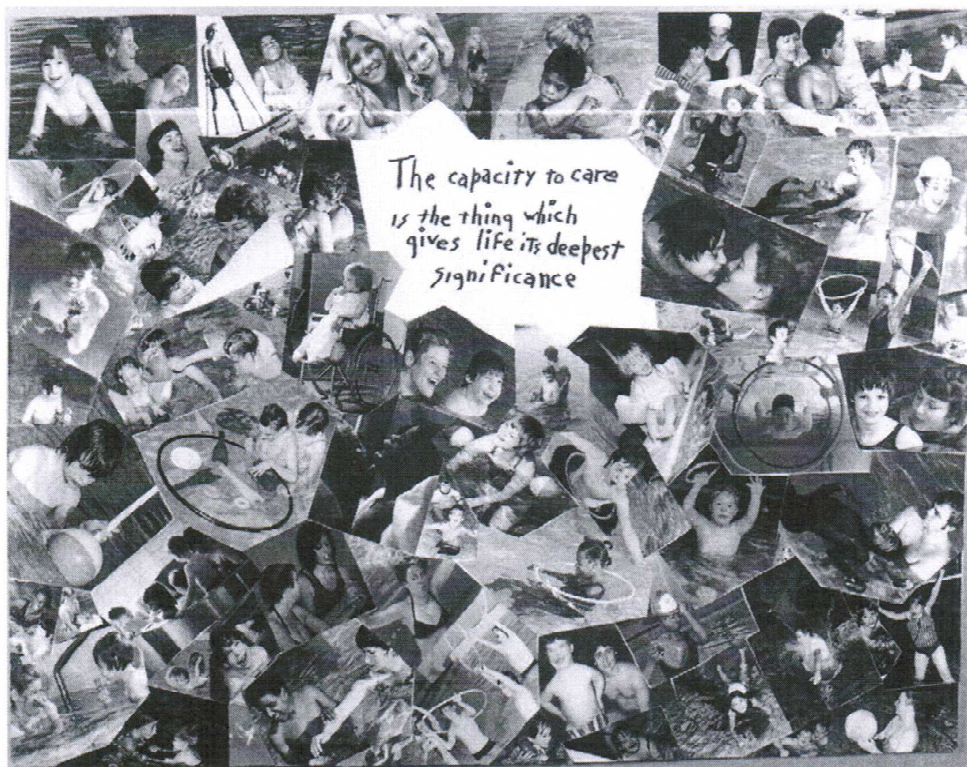
Having difficulty deciding how to organize the information, I made the rather obvious choice of including items alphabetically by author's names. Finally, I did very little editing. Each musing appears almost exactly as sent to me, hopefully retaining those very special nuances that make each author the very special aquatics person they are.

In a small way *Musings of Old Deck Hands* became what, early on, Ruth Sova suggested it would be: a history of aquatics that is FUN. I hope you enjoy it as much as I have. I wish to add my thanks to those who have taken time to contribute to *Musings*. The project has brought me many hours of pleasure: hearing from old friends, reading their contributions, remembering the many things we shared. Loosing Suity was so very hard: she died unexpectedly February, 2009. We had really enjoyed rekindling our friendship, and recalling many events and 'happenings' over the years. As Sue Grosse reminded me, I should be grateful that we had the opportunity to 'reconnect' and enjoy all the emails, etc. Actually, I had a list, one day, of six people I wanted to tell about Suity, and to ask about the status of the Longfellow Society, and was traumatized by learning that the first five on the list had died. When I called the sixth, John Goetz, I was totally thrilled to learn that he was out "teaching flying". It prompted me to contact many others with whom I had lost contact.

Life often causes our paths to lead us away from old friends. I am now making an effort to reconnect, to say 'thanks for the memories', to become, again, a part of the matrix of

friendship. As I write this, Suity died last week; when my time comes, know that thoughts of you and shared memories brought much joy to this old deck hand.

Louise Priest



Mermaid Memories

Alison Osinski

I learned to swim, and to respect but enjoy the water at a very early age. This single fact has had a dramatic impact on my life. It shaped who I am. It influenced my hobbies, how I choose to spend my spare time, and where I go on vacation. It paid for my education. It helped me develop unique skills. It led to a successful career. It allowed me to travel the world and have adventures that most people will never experience. It brought joy and appreciation of natural wonders to my life. Most importantly, it introduced me to like-minded friends who also love being in, on, under and around the water.

Thanks to all my Mermaid friends – a wonderfully diverse group of aquatic professionals, talented friends, relatives and colleagues. We are the lucky ones, who are able to truly enjoy our water planet.

Things I have been able to do because I learned to swim and enjoy the water:

Marine Life

- ✓ Hitch a ride on a giant manta ray.
- ✓ Watch otters hunt for food, and rest in a kelp bed while seated quietly nearby in a sea kayak.
- ✓ Have a near collision with a whale.
- ✓ Watch orcas from the deck of a ship while sailing through Alaska's inside passage.
- ✓ Watch a bald eagle catch a salmon so large that he flapped his wings all the way to shore while holding the fish in his talons.
- ✓ Scare salmon fry in hatchery tanks with my shadow.
- ✓ Be followed by a shark while SCUBA diving on the Great Barrier Reef.
- ✓ Have a giant clam spit at me.
- ✓ Snorkel in a shallow cove with leopard sharks at the University of Southern California's Wrigley Institute for Environmental Studies.
- ✓ Have swimming races with dolphins.
- ✓ Learn to train marine mammals at Sea World.
- ✓ Watch whales watch TV.
- ✓ Catch grunion on the beach during a grunion run.
- ✓ Flyfish for salmon in Alaska and dorado in the Sea of Cortez.
- ✓ See fish fly.
- ✓ SCUBA dive in the Blue Hole off Belize.
- ✓ Sleep underwater on several occasions.
- ✓ Explore tidepools.

Underwater Adventures

- ✓ Write my name in bioluminescence (like sparklers) while sitting in a circle with friends on the bottom of a lagoon at midnight.
- ✓ Watch a video of the dinner scene in Disney's version of "20,000 Leagues Under the Sea" while eating lobster and key lime pie in an underwater habitat, with lobsters watching me through a porthole.
- ✓ Dive in lava tubes and an inactive submerged volcano off of Kona.
- ✓ Dive in rivers and caverns of the Florida aquifer where the water was so clear you had a sensation of floating.
- ✓ Dive in the Suwannee River on the 4th of July, bank to bank butts in inner tubes above.
- ✓ Find buried treasures.
- ✓ Play Underwater Monopoly in a aquarium tank at Sea World.
- ✓ Uncovered and touched the timbers of a wooden ship that sank in a hurricane more than 200 years ago.
- ✓ SCUBA dive in inland lakes and rivers, and the oceans of the world, dive in caves and caverns, through wrecks, under ice, and in pools, aquariums, kelp forests, and coral reefs.

Sailing, Sailing

- ✓ Sail up the Niger River to Timbuktu.
- ✓ Ride out a hurricane aboard a ship in the Bahamas.
- ✓ Watch man made satellites and shooting stars move across the dark sky not affected by light pollution, from the deck of a boat more than a thousand miles from shore.
- ✓ Be buzzed by Navy fighter planes for accidentally wandering into war games in the middle of the Pacific ocean.
- ✓ Steer the African Queen.
- ✓ Steer a cruise ship while gray whales played on the bow wave.
- ✓ Organize the "Tour of the Monuments" canoe trips on the Potomac River.
- ✓ Canoe in the Tidal Basin next to the Jefferson Memorial with the cherry trees in blossom.
- ✓ Watch the sun sizzle into the ocean at the horizon.
- ✓ Sail under the Golden Gate Bridge while shooting off cannons from the deck of an old wooden ship.
- ✓ Canoe through in the Jersey Pine Barrens.
- ✓ Sail in world rallies like the Baja Ha-Ha and Sail Asia.
- ✓ Sail a 16 day, 2,500+ nm sailing trip from Dana Point, California to Hilo, Hawaii.
- ✓ Travel by air boat through the Everglades.
- ✓ Rowing the shell "Aurora – Goddess of the Dawn" on the Potomac in the early morning.
- ✓ Accidentally "winning" the America's Cup by crossing the line first during the Connors catamaran v. New Zealand keel boat final race, closely beating out the Dirty Dan's strip club boat.

- ✓ Be followed by a Los Angeles Class submarine.
- ✓ Sail in the world's largest international yacht race – Newport to Ensenada.

Once a Lifeguard, Always a Lifeguard

- ✓ Rescued a Basset hound who jumped off a boat and was in danger of drowning.

Just for the Fun of It

- ✓ Attend Spring Break in Fort Lauderdale (more than a dozen times).
- ✓ Know the words to "Under the Sea".
- ✓ Make a Curious George paper boat.
- ✓ Never get tired of watching the movies "Capt. Ron", or the "Little Mermaid".
- ✓ Rope swinging into the water from a bridge.

What a Way to Make a Living

- ✓ Company motto – No clients in crummy places.
- ✓ Explored the Hearst Castle swimming pool pump rooms.
- ✓ Influenced the design of pools and water features all over the world.
- ✓ Trained pool operators, organized the first water polo game, and helped start an interest in aquatics in the country of Belize.
- ✓ Make a good living doing a job I enjoy.
- ✓ Wrote off business trips to 49 of the U.S. states and more than a dozen foreign countries.
- ✓ Got paid to spend the day lounging on a beach, watching and filming the surf.
- ✓ Got paid to spend days riding water slides, and to play in waterpark pools and water attractions.
- ✓ Learned to build sand castles from professional sand sculptors.
- ✓ Worked on the worlds largest sand castle "Lost City of Atlantis" as a volunteer, Guinness Book of World Records.
- ✓ Behind the scenes tours of Olympic aquatic venues, Disney amusement parks, and Las Vegas water features.
- ✓ Began teaching water fitness classes when milk jugs and recycled plastic frozen dinner plates were still state-of-the-art equipment.
- ✓ Know enough minute' about pool equipment, hydraulics, water chemistry, pool design, maintenance, management and operation to bore a person to death, but have still enthralled juries with some of this information.
- ✓ My involvement in competitive water fitness activities allowed me to be an ambassador for the sport of water walking.

Regrets

- ✓ Not asking San Diego neighbor Ted Guissel (Dr. Seuss) to autograph my copy of "One Fish, 2 Fish, Red Fish, Blue Fish" – one of the first books I learned to read at age 5.

- ✓ Putting that stone fish I found hidden in a hollowed out coconut floating in the surf into the reception room aquarium at the Florida Keys Marine Institute.
- ✓ Not giving my crazy Key West neighbor Mel Fischer \$100 when he asked me to invest in his Treasure Salvors company – a couple of years before he found the Atocha and became the most successful sunken treasure finder of all time.

Mysteries of Life

- ✓ Laying on my back underwater and looking up at the sky as sunlight or moonlight streams down through the water.
- ✓ Watching jellyfish pulse through the ocean and wondering why they don't tangle their tentacles.
- ✓ Understanding why ancient mariners thought the earth was flat and they could sail off the edge – the “flat dish phenomena” is so obvious when sailing far away from land.
- ✓ Flash of green at sunset.
- ✓ Rafting up during a night time kayak trip on the ocean with an astronomer who brought along glow-in-the-dark star charts, so we could easily see the heavenly bodies she was pointing out.
- ✓ Full moon sets over the ocean.
- ✓ Celebrated the sunset in Key West's Mallory Square a hundred times and never getting tired of the show.
- ✓ The way lights reflect off the water at night.
- ✓ Being able to find a tiny island in the middle of the ocean after blue water sailing or sailing in fog, and still being surprised that navigational skills really work and the island is right where its supposed to be.

Swimming

- ✓ Swimming in tropical rainstorms.
- ✓ Swimming in the early morning with fog rising off the pool.
- ✓ Learning to swim at Neptune Lake, Mentor Headlands, and Cedar Point (before the big amusement park was there).
- ✓ Jumping off a boat in the middle of the Pacific Ocean in 2,500 feet of blue water for a swim.
- ✓ Swimming in the Atlantic and Pacific oceans on the same day.
- ✓ Swimming the distance between two islands.
- ✓ Laying partially submerged in the cool water of the Virgin River looking up at the wonders of Zion National Park, after a long and dusty 100° temperature, summer drive across country.

Aquatic Therapy

- ✓ Juliana Larson doing Watsu for me and cousin Diana in a mineral hot spring pool in the mountains of Oregon while a light snow fell, with an icy cold river running at near flood stage only feet away – the same river where they filmed some scenes of Meryl Streep in the River Wild. Eating home made 3-berry pie afterwards.

- ✓ Sitting on the beach at sunset and watching the afterglow.
- ✓ Falling asleep while reading a book laying in a hammock under a palm tree on a tropical island.
- ✓ Waking up on a beach to the sounds of sea birds, breaking waves, and the incoming tide.

Celebrities

- ✓ Met Olympic athletes who let me try on their gold medals.
- ✓ Met aquatic legends like John Coutts, Forbes Carlile, Esther Williams, Lynn Cox and Diana Nyad.

It's a Small World:

- ✓ Coincidentally running into colleagues while SCUBA diving under their glass bottom boat on the Great Barrier Reef, 12,000 miles from home.
- ✓ Spotted a submarine below while parasailing off Maui.

Gifts from the Sea

- ✓ Collecting sea shells, sponges, sand dollars and beach glass.
- ✓ Collecting sand from beaches all over the world.
- ✓ Catching my first big fish (catfish in Neptune Lake) at age 4 using a plastic toy fishing reel and string, purchased at a dime store.
- ✓ Catching 3 marlin in less than 2 hours off of Zihuantaneho.
- ✓ Catching marlin on a fly rod.
- ✓ Catching big saltwater fish on a fly rod using flies I designed and tied.

Goals

- ✓ Retire on an island.
- ✓ Live in a light house.
- ✓ Travel to Antarctica and to South Dakota (only State where I've never been) – and have clients pay me to do so.
- ✓ Have unlimited time to sail, and drop anchor in a different location every night.

Grateful For

- ✓ Diesel engines in sailboats.
- ✓ That I can still boogie board after age 50, occasionally with my 70 year old friends, and show up some of the younger kids.
- ✓ Being sought out for my advice and expertise in aquatics.

Favorite Inspirational Mottos

- ✓ If we don't leave the dock until we know everything we need to know, we'll never learn everything we need to know.
- ✓ Ever notice that "what the hell" is always the right decision?

- ✓ Either you decide to stay in the shallow end of the pool or you go out in the ocean. [Christopher Reeve]
- ✓ In case of sudden and temporary immersion, the important thing is to keep the head above water. [Winnie-the-Pooh]
- ✓ You cannot discover new oceans unless you have the courage to lose sight of the shore.
- ✓ If you don't care where you are – then you aren't lost.
- ✓ Paradise isn't a place – it's a state of mind. [Bob Bitchin]
- ✓ You can't own what God gives away – the sun and the sea and the wind and the waves. They're there for the taking. It just means breaking away. [Ken Gill]
- ✓ Life should NOT be a journey to the grave with the intention of arriving safely in an attractive and well-preserved body, but rather to skid in sideways, margarita in one hand, strawberries in the other, body thoroughly used up, totally worn out and screaming, "WOO HOO what a ride!"

Special Thanks

- ✓ Special thanks to: Mary Rafalovich, for introducing me to many leaders in the field of aquatics, and encouraging me to make conference presentations when I was still relatively young and not sure of my expertise.
- ✓ Special thanks to: Louise Priest, for involving me in CNCA, giving me the opportunity to speak to national audiences, and publishing some of my early articles.
- ✓ Special thanks to: Barb Hansen and Barb King for giving me opportunities in college to make a living from aquatics.
- ✓ Special thanks to: Aunt Barbara & Uncle Walter for letting me spend my summers at Neptune Lake.
- ✓ Special thanks to: Mom & Dad for setting up the vinyl pool in the back yard and taking me to the beach on summer vacations.
- ✓ Special thanks to: Barb Hanson for trusting me, at age 20, to run the Hillsdale College community summer swim program. And especially to the college, for being too cheap to pay me and my assistant Kay the salary we requested, and instead suggesting we pay the college \$200.00 a week for pool maintenance and chemical costs and keep whatever else we could make. We learned to be entrepreneurs, and made a killing that summer.
- ✓ Special thanks to: Billie Wright for taking a chance and offering me my first full-time university job in aquatics
- ✓ Special thanks to: George Pearson for making graduate school fun, and encouraging me to take risks and continue on with my education; and for teaching me to work hard and play hard, and that you're never too old to have a rhythm band parade.

