

The Calsurf

Volume 31 No. 2



*The Official Newsletter of the
California Surf Lifesaving Association*

2025-2026 EXECUTIVE BOARD

President: Gus Avila
Vice-President: Sean Carey
Past President: Mike Beuerlein
Secretary: Nikki Bryant
Treasurer: Tony Sholl
1st Delegate: Jay Butki
2nd Delegate: Coral Kemp
3rd Delegate: Austin Trinkle
4th Delegate: Lola Swank

COMMITTEES

Bylaw Committee Chairman: Tony Sholl
Certification: Vince Lombardi
Exchange: Casey Graham & Vianne Kelly
Fundraising: Brandi White & Byron Kine
Grants: Nikki Bryant
Junior Lifeguards: Joseph Sholl
Legislation: Adam Sandler
Sport & Fitness: Jay Butki & Skip Prosser
Membership: Charlotte Graham
Newsletter: Sierra Gibson
Professional Standards: Sean Carey
Public Education: Devon Beebe & Lola Swank
Public Information Officer: Adam Sandler
Public Relations/Social Media: Coral Kemp
Special Awards: Austin Trinkle
Statistics: Ian Burton
Training: Brennan Howard & Hayden Paul
Ways & Means: Tony Sholl
Website: Steven Himes

THE CALSURF NEWS

The CalSurf News Magazine is the official publication of the
California Surf Lifesaving Association
P.O. Box 366, Huntington Beach, CA 92648

www.CSLSA.org

Editor

Sierra Gibson

email: newsletter@cslsa.org

Contributors

James Bray on behalf of John Higgins, Karissa Fleming, Vianne Kelly, Justin McHenry, John McMullen, Lynn O'Harra, Eric Sandy, Lola Swank, Austin Trinkle, Anais Moise

Photo Contributions

Eric Sandy, Austin Trinkle, The White House, Lola Swank, Santa Cruz City Lifeguards, Vianne Kelly, Anais Moise

Public Information Officer (PIO)

Adam Sandler email: pio@cslsa.org @CSLSAPIO

INSIDE THE CALSURF NEWS

Award Recipients | Page 3
Del Mar LG Assoc. Patrick O'Harra Memorial Scholarship Award | Page 3
Reflections on a White House Visit | Page 4
Across the Pacific: Meet Our California Exchange Guards | Page 6
Oceanside Lifeguards Celebrate 100 Years of Service | Page 7
USLA National Lifesaving Conference & Expo Fall 2026 | Page 8
Partnership and Tragedy Built the Modern Ventura Harbor Patrol | Page 9
Remembrance of Richard L. Miller | Page 9
Agency Profile: Santa Cruz City | Page 12

EVENTS CALENDAR 2026/27

Fall 2026 CSLSA Board of Directors Meeting
Dates: October 8-9, 2026 | Location: Santa Cruz, CA
USLA 2026 National Lifesaving Conference & Expo
Dates: November 9-12, 2026 | Location: Jacksonville, FL
Spring 2027 CSLSA Board of Directors Meeting
Dates: TBD | Location: TBD
Spring 2027 USLA Board of Directors Meeting
Dates: TBD | Location: TBD



dermasport

DragonSkin



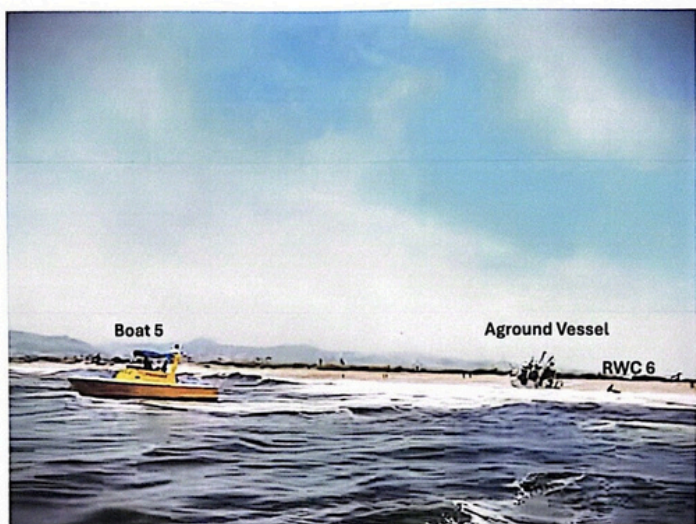
MEDAL OF VALOR & HEROIC ACT AWARD

Christian Bennett, Garret Winter, Nick Givens

Ventura Harbor Patrol

On May 25th, 2025 around 12:27 PM, Ventura Harbor Patrol Boat 5 and Rescue Watercraft 6 responded to a 40-foot trawler that had run aground in the surf zone about a mile south of Ventura Harbor. With the boat's bow grounded and its stern free-floating, the vessel was pitching and yawing heavily in 4-foot surf.

Boat 5 with **Rescue Boat Captain Garret Winter** and **Rescue Swimmer Christian Bennett** arrived on scene. Bennett deployed into the surf zone to communicate with the three non-English speaking occupants on board. Rescue Watercraft 6 arrived on scene shortly thereafter with **operator Nick Givens**.



One by one, the fully clothed non-swimmers began jumping from the transom into the surf. Bennett successfully secured the first two victims and swam them to RWC Operator Givens, who shuttled them safely to shore. However, the third victim timed their jump poorly.

A sudden, significant movement in the stern sucked both the victim and Bennett directly underneath the unstable, 20-ton vessel. While underwater and recognizing the imminent danger of the victim drowning or being crushed, Bennett selflessly shoved the victim out from under the boat to safety. While the victim escaped, Bennett was sucked entirely underwater to the other side of the vessel. He faced the extreme risk of being knocked unconscious, crushed on the ocean floor, or struck by the ship's propellers, which were still in gear because the autopilot remained engaged.

Defying the odds, Bennett emerged on the other side of the vessel and immediately rejoined RWC 6 to complete the rescue of the third person. His profound physical courage, decisive action, and willingness to risk his own life to save others perfectly embody the extraordinary valor recognized by this award.

For their heroic lifesaving actions, **Nick Givens and Garret Winter** are hereby awarded the **California Surf Lifesaving Association** and the **United States Lifesaving Association's Heroic Act Award**.



For his heroic lifesaving actions, Christian Bennett is hereby awarded the California Surf Lifesaving Association and the United States Lifesaving Association's Medal of Valor Award.

Del Mar Lifeguard Association Patrick O'Harra Memorial Scholarship Award

Ben Kuleto and Taylor Lyon

Del Mar lifeguards **Ben Kuleto and Taylor Lyon** were awarded the 2026 Del Mar Lifeguard Association Memorial Scholarship, honoring former lifeguard Patrick O'Harra. The scholarship recognizes lifeguards who demonstrate excellence in college academics and make significant contributions to the Lifeguard Association and the community.



Ben Kuleto is an honor student studying Kinesiology at San Diego State University and was named Lifeguard of the Year by his fellow Del Mar lifeguards.

Taylor Lyon graduated from California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo, and demonstrated strong leadership throughout the summer through team-building workouts, weekly Lifeguard Association activities, and community involvement, while continuing to excel in her daily lifeguarding responsibilities.

Patrick would be proud to know that the high caliber of Del Mar lifeguards continues to be recognized through the scholarship established in his honor. Submitted by Eric Sandy.

Reflections on a White House Visit: A Moment for Lifeguards Everywhere

Story from Justin McHenry, Assistant Chief - Aquatic Safety, LEESD



When the Seabright rescue video took off and made its way around the world, none of us expected the response it received. As lifeguards, we're used to doing our work quietly—no cameras, no crowd, just the task in front of us. So, seeing public support grow so rapidly was surreal. Even then, none of us imagined the story would find its way to the President's desk. Receiving an invitation to the White House was an honor that felt larger than any one person or program. It symbolized recognition of the lifesaving work lifeguards perform every single day.

The trip itself took a tremendous amount of coordination, and our thanks extend to Law Enforcement and Emergency Services Division Chief Alex Luscutoff and the administrative and executive staff who pushed through the logistics and approvals to make it possible. It truly was a team effort.

Inside the White House, we were met with genuine interest and respect. The President and staff asked thoughtful questions and made the delegation feel welcome. While we waited, several officials stopped by to meet Ryder, Nathaniel, their families, and the State Parks team. Later we were joined by members of the press, turning an already small Oval Office into a very full room. The moment offered an unexpected platform to highlight the professionalism of lifeguards and the work being done here in California and challenges that lifeguards face.

Seasonal Lifeguard I Ryder Williams, Santa Cruz District, and President Trump during a press conference at the White House on Aug. 17. Photo from the White House.



The California State Parks delegation with President Trump, rescuer Ryder Williams, victim Nathaniel Rai, and their families. Photo from the White House.

Continued on next page...

Before the press conference, the delegation received a private moment with the President to witness Ryder being formally recognized. Ryder was presented with a Presidential Certificate of Commendation in an intimate ceremony that underscored the significance of his actions. We also had the rare opportunity to explore the Oval Office's historical items, including an original copy of the Declaration of Independence. After the press event, the President spent time speaking casually with guests about careers, sports, and life—an uncommon pause in the pace of the day.



Left to right: Chief Ranger Mike McMenamy, Santa Cruz District; Chief Lifeguard Justin McHenry, Law Enforcement and Emergency Services Division (LEESD); Seasonal Lifeguard II Aaron Bohnen, Santa Cruz District; Seasonal Lifeguard I Ryder Williams, Santa Cruz District; LEES Division Chief Alex Luscutoff; and Chief Ranger Joel Dinnauer (former Lifeguard Training Lieutenant), Ocotillo Wells District, gather in front of an original copy of the Declaration of Independence during a visit to the White House on Aug. 17. Photo from the White House.

Watching Ryder and Aaron manage the spotlight was a moment of immense pride for everyone present. They carried themselves with professionalism, composure, and humility; the hallmarks of California State Lifeguards. Most of us know firsthand that making a rescue can feel easier than standing under the scrutiny of national media, but they handled it with the same calm they bring to their towers.

The worldwide reaction to the rescue has been just as impactful. Lifeguarding is often a thankless job; countless rescues unfold with little more than a nod of acknowledgement. Seeing one rescue cast global attention on the profession has opened doors for public awareness and safety messaging. If this increased visibility encourages even a handful of families to take swim lessons, wear life jackets, learn CPR, or simply talk with a lifeguard before entering the water, then the ripple effect of this rescue will have been profoundly positive.

What the long-term influence of this visit will be is hard to predict, but it has already sparked important conversations and advancements in legislative action. It highlights what we already know and live every day: lifeguarding is a profession, a career, and a calling. It requires physical and mental stamina, extensive training, constant vigilance, and the willingness to respond in an instant. As aquatic recreation continues to rise to new levels, our role becomes even more critical.

For current guards, alumni, and those considering the profession, moments like this reaffirm what lifeguards have always known—that our work matters, even when the spotlight isn't on us.

It's a great day to be a State Lifeguard.

Seasonal Lifeguard I Ryder Williams engages with the press. Photo from the White House.



Across the Pacific: Meet Our California Exchange Guards

2026/2027 New Zealand Lifeguard Exchange Program

By Vianne Kelly

It is with great pleasure that I present to you this season's California Exchange Guards! **Cooper Call** and **Dean Frizzell** submitted their applications and shone above all in their interviews, and we are confident that they will represent CSLSA well with all they have to offer through their lifeguarding and life experiences.

Cooper Call started his lifeguarding career in 2021 at Lake Mission Viejo. Since joining the department, Cooper has become EMT certified and joined the dive team at LMV, where he participates in search, rescue, and recovery assignments, as well as leading dive training for lifeguarding staff when necessary.



He has also taken on the role of Training Supervisor, where he spends eight weeks leading up to the summer season training lifeguard recruits to provide quality emergency medical responses as needed on the job.

As of September 23, 2026, Cooper Call has also been promoted to the full-time lifesaving staff at Lake Mission Viejo. Cooper holds a bachelor's degree in Psychology and brought to our attention that we haven't sent a lifeguard from Lake Mission Viejo since 1985. Good on you, Cooper, for putting Lake Mission Viejo back on the map for the exchange program!

Dean Frizzell started working as an Ocean Lifeguard Specialist for Seal Beach in May 2021. He is a versatile candidate with a background in swimming, water polo, photography, and a Bachelor of Science in Biomedical Engineering.



For his department, Dean is certified in EMT, rescue diving, and rescue boat operations. Dean has always had an affinity for the ocean. He began his aquatic safety journey as a Junior Lifeguard at Sunset Beach and grew up regularly taking voyages on his boat with his family.

While on the exchange program, Dean looks forward to gaining a deeper understanding of the oceanography and bathymetry of New Zealand's coastline to strengthen his knowledge of wave formation and how to approach rescues when he returns to Seal Beach.

We have endless praise for Cooper and Dean as they volunteer their time to travel across the Pacific Ocean to represent the lifesaving association.

Good luck in New Zealand, Cooper and Dean!



Oceanside Lifeguards Celebrate 100 Years of Service

A Century of Lifesaving, Tradition and Commitment to the Oceanside Community

By Lola Swank

OCEANSIDE, CALIFORNIA — In 2026, the City of Oceanside proudly celebrates an extraordinary milestone: 100 years of professional lifeguard service.

What began in 1926 with one paid lifeguard stationed at the Oceanside Municipal Pier has grown into a modern, year-round lifeguard operation responsible for protecting residents and millions of visitors who enjoy Oceanside's beaches, harbor, and ocean waterways.

A century later, one thing has remained unchanged—the commitment of Oceanside lifeguards to protecting lives and serving their community.

Where It All Began

The Oceanside Lifeguard Service began in 1926, when increasing beach attendance and a growing number of water rescues led the City of Oceanside to recognize the need for a dedicated lifeguard at the Oceanside Municipal Pier.

Those early lifeguards worked under conditions that would be almost unimaginable today. Rescue equipment was limited, communication was minimal, and lifeguards often responded to emergencies with little or no assistance.

Early rescue equipment included metal rescue buoys known as "cans." Although today's rescue buoys are constructed from modern materials, the familiar term "lifeguard can" continues to connect today's lifeguards with those who served generations before them.

Rescue boards also became an important part of Oceanside's lifesaving history. Early hollow plywood paddleboards were heavy and difficult to maneuver compared with today's equipment, but they became invaluable tools for both rescue and ocean training.

Those boards also helped create an unexpected connection between Oceanside lifeguarding and California surfing history.

Surfing legend Phil Edwards, who grew up in Oceanside, was part of Oceanside's early Junior Lifeguard Program as a young teenager. The beaches and waters protected by Oceanside lifeguards became a training ground for generations of watermen and women and helped contribute to the rich surf culture that continues to define the community.

Generations of Lifeguards

Throughout its 100-year history, Oceanside has had 21 Beach Lifeguard Captains, each helping guide the service through a changing coastline, increasing beach attendance, new technology and expanding responsibilities.

The history of the service also includes pioneering women who helped change the profession. In 1954, Betty Jo Hoskins became Oceanside's first female lifeguard. More than two decades later, Nancy Golding became the city's second female lifeguard in 1975.

Their service is part of a much larger story of generations of Oceanside lifeguards who have dedicated summers, careers and, in many cases, decades of their lives to protecting the public.



Mary Lee Christensen 1976

Many began as Junior Lifeguards, became seasonal lifeguards and ultimately moved into careers in public safety. Others carried the lessons learned on Oceanside's beaches into fire service, emergency medicine and professions throughout the community.

From Rescue Cans to Modern Marine Safety

The tools available to Oceanside lifeguards have changed dramatically during the past century.

An early lifeguard standing watch with a metal rescue can and wooden paddleboard would eventually be joined by patrol vehicles, modern rescue boards, inflatable rescue boats and personal watercraft.

Today, Oceanside Lifeguards protect 3.7 miles of coastline, stretching from the Oceanside Harbor entrance to the city's southern boundary. The service operates seven days a week throughout the year and is part of the Oceanside Fire Department and the 911 emergency response system.

Modern Oceanside lifeguards respond to far more than swimmers in distress. Their responsibilities include ocean and boat rescues, emergency medical incidents, search and rescue operations, enforcement, and other coastal emergencies.

Another significant advancement came in February 2023 with the creation of the Marine Safety Unit. The 24-hour Lifeguard and Firefighter/Paramedic unit provides lifeguard, emergency medical and marine firefighting services to Oceanside Harbor and the surrounding coastline.

Continued on next page...

The equipment and capabilities have changed, but the mission remains rooted in the same purpose established in 1926: protecting lives along Oceanside's coastline.

Building the Next Generation

Perhaps one of the greatest legacies of Oceanside Lifeguards is the commitment to preparing the next generation.

The Oceanside Junior Lifeguard Program began in 1949 with just four participants. Today, more than 1,000 young people participate annually, learning ocean safety, lifesaving skills, physical fitness, teamwork and respect for the ocean.

For many participants, Junior Lifeguards is much more than a summer program. It becomes their introduction to public service.

Generations of Oceanside lifeguards first learned to read waves, identify rip currents, paddle rescue boards and care for others while wearing a Junior Lifeguard uniform. The program has created a direct connection between Oceanside's past, present and future.

That tradition continues today as current lifeguards mentor young people who may someday stand the same towers and patrol the same beaches as the generations before them.



Celebrating a Century of Service

The 100th anniversary of the Oceanside Lifeguards is more than a celebration of an organization. It is a celebration of the people who built it.

It honors the early lifeguards who stood watch without radios, Personal Watercraft or modern rescue equipment. It recognizes the captains and leaders who strengthened the service through the decades. It celebrates the seasonal lifeguards who returned summer after summer and the career lifeguards who made protecting Oceanside's coastline their profession.

It also honors the families, firefighters, dispatchers, city employees, Junior Lifeguards, community partners and generations of Oceanside residents who have supported the lifeguard service throughout its history.

On October 17, 2026, current and former Oceanside lifeguards will come together to commemorate this historic milestone, reconnect with generations of guards and celebrate the traditions that have shaped the service. For more information and to purchase tickets please visit the website: <https://heretomakeadifference.com/>

There will certainly be stories told—stories of memorable rescues, big surf, long summers, legendary lifeguards, old equipment and friendships that have lasted decades.

Because while equipment, uniforms, towers and rescue techniques have evolved considerably since 1926, the heart of the profession has not.

For 100 years, when someone has needed help in the water, an Oceanside lifeguard has been ready to respond.

It's been written that: "Lifeguarding in its purest form is the struggle against nature by one human endeavoring to save the life of another"



USLA members from across the country will gather in **Jacksonville, Florida, November 9–12** for the 2026 USLA National Lifesaving Conference & Expo.

This year's expanded conference brings together USLA business, education, networking and an exhibit hall featuring products and services for the lifesaving community. The education program reaches beyond traditional lifesaving topics, with sessions focused on lifeguard leadership and officer development, media relations, evolving spinal motion restriction practices, beach event management and response to complex incidents. Attendees can also experience a pool-based rip current simulator designed for public education and participate in a 90-minute hands-on airway and resuscitation workshop.

The conference will also feature committee and Board of Directors meetings, the President's Reception, Exhibit Hall Social and the inaugural USLA Awards Banquet. Members may register for the full four-day conference or attend the Education Days and Awards Banquet on November 10–11.

Registration is open through October 31. Hotel reservations at the Hyatt Regency Jacksonville Riverfront are available at the USLA group rate through October 18, subject to availability.

Learn more and register at usla.org/events.

Force Multiplying the Coast: How Partnership and Tragedy Built the Modern Ventura Harbor Patrol

Shared by Lt. James Bray, CA State Parks, on behalf of
Chief John Higgins, Ventura Harbor Patrol

Ventura County encompasses roughly 42 miles of dynamic mainland coastline, defined by powerful swells, river-mouth sandbars, and heavy recreation. Yet, unlike neighboring Southern California regions with dedicated, year-round municipal ocean lifeguard agencies, Ventura's civic leaders have long prioritized seasonal summer coverage over full-time ocean services. Historically, the county's only year-round ocean lifesaving presence has rested with California State Parks at Point Mugu and Ventura.

The Pacific, however, adheres to no seasonal calendar. Bridging that operational void required a devastating catalyst, decades of vision, and an unprecedented inter-agency partnership.

The Catalyst and Paradigm Shift

On an unprotected stretch of South Beach, Ventura Harbor Patrol Officer Paul Korber lost his life while attempting an ocean rescue. His sacrifice forced a major departmental paradigm shift. Many Harbor Patrol officers already had backgrounds as veteran ocean lifeguards; moving forward, open-water lifesaving and true watermanship became the agency's primary core competencies.

The Harbor Patrol immediately began working alongside regional fire departments, introducing standardized training curricula, rigorous qualifications, and formal certifications that advanced water-rescue competency across all local agencies.

Stepping In to Bridge the Gap

In the early 2000s, an additional critical gap emerged when the City of Ventura ceased funding the single seasonal lifeguard tower at Harbor Cove (locally known as Mother's Beach). Refusing to leave beachgoers unprotected, Harbor Patrol leadership worked closely with the Port District General Manager and Board of Port Commissioners to secure District funding.

Rather than working in isolation, the Port District contracted directly with California State Parks to staff that lone tower. The partnership delivered immediate results. As public safety advanced, so did the footprint: the program expanded from that single post to three lifeguard towers and a dedicated roving patrol truck. A coastline formerly seen as hazardous transformed into one of the region's safest, most popular beach destinations.

Building Toward Operational Self-Reliance

Over the ensuing years, California State Parks leadership and the Ventura Port District coordinated a phased, multi-year transition plan. State Parks worked hand-in-hand with Harbor Patrol leadership to establish seasonal Marine Safety Officer (MSO) positions within the Harbor Patrol, achieve formal United States Lifesaving Association (USLA) certification as an Aquatic Rescue Response Team (ARRT), progressing to full Open Water Lifeguard Agency certification, and standardize equipment, personal watercraft (PWC) rescue operations, winter-month mutual-aid response and guidelines across agency lines.

Side by side, Harbor Patrol officers and State Lifeguards trained, patrolled, and responded to critical surf rescues outside the breakwater through punishing winter swells.

The Next Chapter: Force Multipliers on the Water

Today, that multi-year preparation culminates in a landmark milestone: the Ventura Harbor Patrol is formally launching its internal Marine Safety Division and directly assuming ocean lifeguard operations within its jurisdiction.

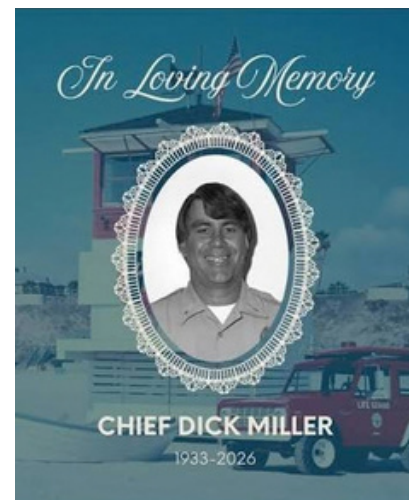
This alteration is not a replacement, but an intentional force multiplier. Born from a line-of-duty tragedy and sustained by two decades of professional collaboration, the alliance between California State Parks and the Ventura Harbor Patrol models public-sector synergy—combining resources, training, and operational vigilance to deliver stronger, seamless lifesaving coverage across Ventura's coastline.

Remembering One Who Made a Difference

Richard L. Miller 1933-2026

Excerpts from a speech at the Long Beach Yacht Club
Long Beach, CA at a memorial for Richard "Dick" Miller
on September 24, 2026 by John McMullen, reproduced
with permission of the author/speaker.

My name is John McMullen. Dick Miller was my friend, my coach, my Lifeguard Chief and an inspiration for many of my aquatic activities throughout my life. But more importantly, he was an example of how to be a kind person and how to live a good life. Dick and (his wife) Melva have touched so many lives over the years and Dick's story is widely known, but the high points bear repeating, and I hope to give you some insight into aspects of Dick's life that may not be so well known.



You could say that Richard Miller's destiny was set at an early age. Born in 1933 in Long Beach, his Uncle Roy Miller, Dutch, had already set the global standard for innovative lifesaving techniques as Chief of Lifeguards in Long Beach. Dick's father, Vic, worked alongside his brother and managed the motorized rescue activities and operated Rescue Boat 1, one of the first of its kind and the precursor to modern surf rescue techniques to access victims caught in rips or to assist vessel rescues. **Continued on next page...**

In November of 1947, Howard Hughes flew his Hercules H-4 Heavy Transport Flying Boat for 1 mile over our local waters. You know it as the Spruce Goose. Young Dick Miller was 14 years old. He was onboard RB 1 with his Dad. Fortunately a water rescue was not required that day.

By some accounts he was already saving lives at the age of 17, working the Colorado Lagoon beginning in 1950. Raised in Belmont Shore, Dick spent plenty of time at the beach and in Alamitos Bay. By the time he entered Wilson High School, his leadership skills and his aquatic abilities were apparent. He was elected Captain of his Water Polo and Swim teams. Dick's coach was Pete Archer, himself an aquatic athlete who was later inducted into the US Water Polo Hall of Fame and whose mark on US Rowing is unparalleled. At this time the indoor pool at Wilson had yet to be built. Workouts were conducted at a place where Dick was already too familiar.... the Colorado Lagoon. Pretty chilly water there during most of the school months.



Dick then attended Junior College at Fullerton JC. There he was coached and influenced by the great James R. Smith. Jimmy Smith was the early Dean of US Water Polo Coaches, himself later inducted into the US Water Polo HOF. By the time Dick arrived at Fullerton, Smith had already coached Monte Nitzkowski and Bob Horn, both men becoming Olympians and masterful coaches in their sports.

After Fullerton JC, Dick moved up north again, this time to San Jose State. Still competing in his sports, but like most students, needing money to pay for school needs. It's here that Richard L Miller makes a Life-Changing Decision. In fact, a brilliant decision. He becomes a hasher in a sorority house, a paying job serving meals and bussing dishes to sorority girls. The Law of Unintended Consequences took effect immediately when he locked eyes with a beautiful coed named Melva Sperling, from Avenal, CA.

Melva told me it was truly "love at first sight". Dick won Melva's heart with his big smile, sparkling eyes...and I can't believe I'm saying this "his hot lifeguard body" ...Melva's words here.

By 1955 Dick and Melva were married and had settled back into Long Beach. Dick was pursuing his master's degree at USC with the plan to teach school. During this time he also played polo and travelled internationally for Jimmy Smith, who was coaching the esteemed Navy Water Polo Club as the Los Alamitos Naval Air Station.

But most importantly, certainly to me and many other small kids in Long Beach, Dick began teaching kids how to swim (at a pool at a local motel) as a way to supplement his income. On the first day of swim lessons after watching Dick do a hot lap in that pool....I had to quickly admit to myself that I knew nothing about how to swim properly.

Like many other moments to come with Dick Miller, that one changed my life and became the foundation for my many aquatic adventures. Dick put me into my first competition, the Long Beach All-City Swim Meet....held where else? The Colorado Lagoon. At the time our city didn't have a suitable pool, so we made do with what we had. Melva mentioned to me that when Dick was done teaching swim at the Motel, he hopped on his bike to hustle down to his chair at 68th place, stopping first to check-in at the first convenient phone to Headquarters located at 55th so he wouldn't be marked as being late to his shift. Classic Lifeguard Style there!

As a young kid I knew what Lifeguarding was based on stories my Dad shared with me. But it wasn't until I saw Dick Miller in his prime that I realized how important the job was. Our family spent our summer weekends on the Bay at 65th. This gave me the opportunity to wander down to 68th to see Dick and watch him work. All sorts of activities unfolded before my young eyes: rescues, first aid with real blood and fishhooks, lost kids and frantic moms, and lots of people wanting information from him all the time, and finally...swimming breaks while you work....I knew right then that I wanted to be a Lifeguard someday.

By the mid-1960's Dick had moved over to Millikan High School to continue teaching and coaching. He also had a thriving swim program at the Los Altos Y where over 200 kids had the benefits of his coaching.

In 1968 Dick took a one-year sabbatical from teaching and the Millers moved to Yokkaichi, Japan, an industrial port city. Some years earlier The Port of Long Beach, where my grandfather was President of the Commission, and the City of Long Beach had entered into a sister city relationship with Yokkaichi to stimulate trade and improve international relations. Who better to send to Japan to represent Long Beach and the United States of America than Dick, Melva and their young family?

They lived in a tiny one room home. Jennifer told me that she still remembers the entire experience. Melva's comment was "I loved every minute" of their experience in Japan. Dick taught ESL at the local YMCA to women and children. Even 11-year-old Melissa helped the Japanese students with their writing lessons. Melva homeschooled her three daughters.

Dick's communication skills and his genuine interest in people helped him parlay the ESL job into a new endeavor working with Japanese businessmen. He taught them how to navigate visiting America for trade purposes. Everything from reading a menu to understanding the quirks of our culture.

Three years ago, a diplomatic mission from Yokkaichi paid a four-day visit to Long Beach to commemorate the 60 year relationship between our cities. Dick Miller was a Guest of Honor at the Anniversary dinner.

When the Millers returned to Long Beach in 1969, Dick resumed his responsibilities at Millikan. On the swimming side, he had assembled a hungry corps of sprinters who gave us Wilson swimmers fits. Once I became a guard in Long Beach, I quickly realized why there were so many Millikan guys on board. Dick's High School teams were his recruiting grounds for capable swimmers. He would assemble his guys down on the beach, weeks before tryouts, and coach them in the open water and beach runs.

Dick cared deeply for his aquatic athletes and for his city's lifeguard department, always wanting the best results possible and earning those results with his calm, encouraging demeanor.

Continued on next page...

When it comes to Lifeguarding and Richard Miller, our city and its citizens owe a huge debt of gratitude to Dick Miller-and to the entire Miller family for their multigenerational devotion to operating a professional lifesaving program. For any guard who worked in Long Beach in 1974, Dick Miller's appointment as Lifeguard Chief was welcomed.

Dick Miller also believed that lifesaving wasn't a provincial activity confined to California beaches and Long Beach in particular. Much could be shared and learned to improve water safety anywhere. The United States Lifesaving Association, a nascent group founded in 1963, elected Dick to its Presidency in 1979 and he served through the early 1980's. Today he is listed as a Life Member of USLA, an honor given to a very limited group of people who have made extraordinary contributions to Lifesaving.

Before we move off the beach, I have to tell a story from my own experience which I think illustrates what kind of a man Dick Miller was. I had come to Long Beach after learning surf rescue techniques as a California State Guard at Huntington Beach. My first summer as a guard in Long Beach was largely spent under the tutelage of my Sergeant, John Patty at...where else...the Colorado Lagoon. After a few summers, I'd finally worked my way into a 10-6 shift at Bayshore and loving every minute of it.

As he was apt to do with me, one day I got a message that Dick wanted to speak with me on my break. I didn't think I was in trouble, so it was probably another of his schemes to get me off the beach and into another role. At various times he had me working the Marina administration, or working the 1920-era switchboard which was the main communication hub at Lifeguard Headquarters.

What Dick told me about that day was the beginning of a change that he saw happening not only in Lifeguarding, but everywhere first responders aided people. He told me he was committed to making that change happen here in Long Beach. He knew from his experience coaching female swimmers and raising three daughters that women could become part of lifesaving organizations. As a surfer and as a competitive swimmer most of my life up to that point, I had experienced the aquatic power of my female friends... I needed no further convincing.

The job he had already volunteered me for was as an instructor in the relatively new Junior Lifeguard program that he and Pat Flynn created for Long Beach. It was the first year young women were asked to join the program. Dick made it abundantly clear to anyone who was involved that it was our duty to train young women and to lead by example to create an environment where women were welcomed as equally capable as men in rescue situations and in dealing with the public. In 1976, Carla Albano was made the first female Long Beach Lifeguard.

Among the many important aspects of Dick Miller's legacy as Lifeguard Chief and later as the Director of the Marine Bureau, the creation of the JG lifeguard program with Pat Flynn and the inclusion of women as lifesavers ranks right up there.

Dick and Melva's retirement was, in a word, busy. Joining the Long Beach Yacht Club was going to be a way to have fun and socialize. And it was. Dick served as Commodore and as the Club's first official Chaplain. (En route to Commodore) you are elected as Port Captain and then spend the next 4 years learning every aspect of Club management and governance prior to your year as Commodore, then time after that as senior governance.

Dick and Melva took on that challenge, it's more than a one person job, with their usual grace and energy. Because Dick had served our city as Director of the Marine Bureau he was intimately familiar with all aspects of our marinas and waterways. He was also experienced in our municipal government which proved very helpful to his tenure as Commodore.



Based on comments from several past Commodores, Dick approached his responsibilities with his usual management style. Calm, minimal controversy or drama, listening, collaborating to solve problems, using humor to diffuse difficulties....and above all....having fun.

Another aspect of Dick's busy retirement came with the 2008 creation, along with Tom Shadden, Lenny Arkinstall and John Callos, of an organization formed to recognize and promote aquatic activities in our City. These men recognized the rich history of aquatic athletes that (Long Beach) has delivered to the world: Olympians, All Americans, World Record holders, National Champions, and stand out Coaches and Educators. All aquatic sports including not just Swimming and Water Polo, but also Sailing, Diving, Surfing, Paddling, Rowing, Water Skiing.

Today, Long Beach's Aquatic Capital of America organization is a major contributor to teaching kids to swim and be water-safe on our beaches as well as promoting Long Beach through our history of aquatic excellence.

Here are a few things that Melva told me that Dick loved, obviously each coming after his love for Melva, his daughters and his lifelong love of Lifeguarding:

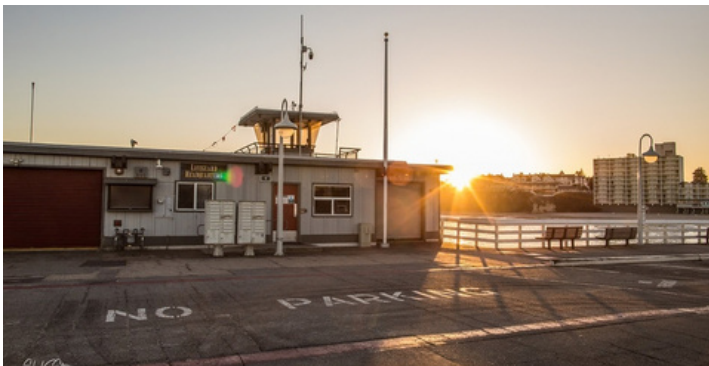
He loved people. He loved food. And when he loved something, he loved it a lot. Hot dogs. Chocolate ice cream. He tried everything—all types of food. In Japan, he even ate food that was still moving. He loved rainy days. I wonder if they became a time for reflection, or if he simply loved the fact that he didn't have to worry about lots of people on the beach. He loved swimming.

Here are a few things people told me about Dick as I prepared for this speech. Someone who met him said he was someone you met and knew right away you wanted in your life. He gave me inspiration by always telling me I had more talent and to believe in myself. Dick was my favorite coach. He told me to keep working at what you do and it will pay off, but you have to devote yourself to it. He was kind, such a kind man. He was funny, and used humor often as a way to break the tension. So positive, always positive.

And so many people had the same response: "I loved that man."

Folks, that was the Richard L. Miller that I knew all my life.

Thank you.



A Quick Look at the Santa Cruz City Lifeguards Santa Cruz Fire Department Marine Division Host of the Fall 2026 CSLSA BOD Meeting



- **Creation:** 1966
- **Coastline Guarded:** Primary response zone—7 miles, Mutual aid—29 miles
- **Permanent Lifeguards:** 1 Marine Safety Captain, 3 Marine Safety Officers
- **Seasonal Lifeguards:** 55
- **Beach Attendance:** ~2 million annually
- **Rescues:** ~350 annually
- **Junior Lifeguards:** 990 per summer, 20,000+ in program's history

The Santa Cruz Surf Lifesaving Association provides beach lifeguard and emergency medical services to Cowell and Main Beaches, Municipal Wharf and surrounding areas. Lifeguards patrol the coast within city limits and provide mutual aid to agencies responding to water and coastal emergencies along the 29 miles of Santa Cruz County coastline. The Marine Division of the Santa Cruz Fire Department delivers water rescue and emergency medical aid to the residents and visitors to the city of Santa Cruz.

Marine Safety Captain:

Captain David Bodine

Lifeguard 68

Santa Cruz Fire Department

dbodine@santacruzca.gov

For Agency information:

<https://www.santacruzca.gov/Government/City-Departments/Fire-Department/Marine-Safety-Division>

Social Media:

[@scsls.a](#) and [@santacruz_fire](#)

