

Cal-Surf News

Volume 5 Number 1

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Carrying a Junior Lifeguard victim out of the water, Don Rohrer began his lifesaving career in the mid-1940's.

This Issue is Dedicated to CSLSA and USLA
Life Membership Recipient Don Rohrer.



Inside the Cal Surf News....

President's Report	2
San Diego Lifeguard Awarded Medal of Valor	3
Letter to the Editor.....	3
Dick Miller Retires	4
Don Rohrer Receives Life Memberships	5
Long Beach Lifeguard/Fire Merger Update.....	6
Ira Gruber Hangs Up His Rescue Can.....	7
Financial Crisis Impacts Eight L.A. County Beaches	8
Swiftwater Rescue, a Joint Agency Approach.....	9
A Safer Future for Mexico's Beaches?	9
Mud Run!.....	10
California/Auckland Lifeguard Exchange	11

President's Report

By B. Chris Brewster, San Diego

When I'm asked, "Why should I be a member?" I always mention that USLA membership dues support advances in lifesaving professionalism. But just what does this mean? Recent work by the CSLSA Executive Board is emblematic.

A few years ago, the USLA Board of Directors approved a historic program to certify the hiring standards and training programs of ocean lifeguard agencies. It was the first and remains the only program of its kind and it has already had a profound impact on lifeguard professionalism nationwide. But the program isn't perfect. It's constantly being reevaluated and updated.

In a handful of places in America,

lifeguard employers actually assign their lifeguards to rent or sell items to beachgoers while the lifeguards are simultaneously responsible for water safety. In some areas, lifeguards are even given a commission for their sales activity.

In our view, this combination of public safety and commercialism is clearly antithetical to the goals of USLA and professional lifesaving. Unfortunately, as originally written, the USLA Lifeguard Agency Certification Program could conceivably allow certification of these agencies. When we realized this, we took immediate action.

At the May 1995 Board of Directors meeting in Alexandria, Virginia we proposed that USLA take a position that would

proscribe certification of agencies operating in this manner. Unfortunately our initial effort, though hotly debated, was not supported by a majority of the Board of Directors.

Undeterred by this setback, we prepared to raise it again at the November 1995 Board of Directors meeting. We began by sending a letter to all USLA Executive Board members and regional presidents providing extensive justification for our position.

Ironically, the November meeting took place in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, where the assignment of ocean lifeguards to sales activities is commonplace. At first we thought that this would be a bad location for the debate. As it turned out however, the potential impact on local lifesaving programs brought intense media scrutiny that worked in our favor.

The headlines from the Myrtle Beach Sun News tell the tale. After the first day of the Board of Directors meeting, the front page headline blared, "Critics Say Lifeguards Shouldn't Rent Chairs." We, of course, were the critics.

On the second day of the meeting, the host chapter invited the owner of one of the local lifeguard providers to make a presentation. He acknowledged that as a result of the newspaper headline that morning he had received numerous telephone calls asking him what he would do if USLA took a position opposing sales and rental activities by lifeguards. He was obviously feeling pressure.

On the front page of the paper the next day, the headline warned, "Certification Up for Vote in Lifesaving Group." Another local lifesaving official however, was quoted as declaring that regardless of the vote, "We're not going to change."

(Continued on p.10)

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The CSLSA is a nonprofit organization incorporated in the State of California. Its principal goals are water safety education and the promotion of professional lifeguarding standards. These goals are accomplished primarily through beach safety presentations to school groups, educational exchange programs with members of the International Lifesaving Federation and participation in regional and national competition.

Letter to the Editor

I am not sure if I expressed myself very well at the meeting in Newport Beach this last October. I want to make it clear that I am very honored to have been awarded the CSLSA Medal of Valor. I was a bit overwhelmed by the attention I received and slightly under prepared for the importance given to the award by those at the meeting. Typically I'm the guy in the crowd clapping for these things, not the guy in the front of the room saying, "Thank you." Thank you for the perspective - it's one I won't forget. Thanks also to Eric Bauer, the Newport Beach guards and again to all the CSLSA members for the hospitality and generosity they showed me. I was impressed, honored and proud to be one of you. Thank you all very much.

Sean D. Cicchetto
San Diego Lifeguard Service

Editors Note: Lifeguards up and down the coast save lives every day. Sean Cicchetto's actions that day were heroic and by no means a routine rescue. When lifeguards like Sean place their own personal safety in jeopardy to the benefit of others, we are all proud to be lifeguards! Thank you, Sean, for your dedication and commitment to the lifesaving profession.

San Diego Lifeguard Awarded with Medal of Valor for Heroic Service

By Greg Buchanan, San Diego

During the CSLSA General Board Meeting in Newport, the heroic acts committee, chaired by Ms. Latta, presented the Medal of Valor Award to Sean Cicchetto for a courageous rescue performed in April of 1993. Sean also attended the National Meeting in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina and received the USLA Medal of Valor.

Cicchetto has been working as a lifeguard for the City of San Diego since 1987 and currently works in the Southern District at Ocean Beach. Though Cicchetto's rescue was successful and heroic, it was not without its negative side.

to work. Cicchetto's dedication and perseverance should serve as a motivating example for all of us and we wish him the best.

Sean was nominated for and received the Medal of Valor based on the rescue described below:

On April 25, 1993, Sean Cicchetto was assigned to a surf rescue vessel with operator Jo Wade. The rescue vessel was stationed in the La Jolla area due to the rescue activity and surf size. On that Sunday afternoon, the surf was 4-5 feet from the NNW.

At approximately 1220 hours, while

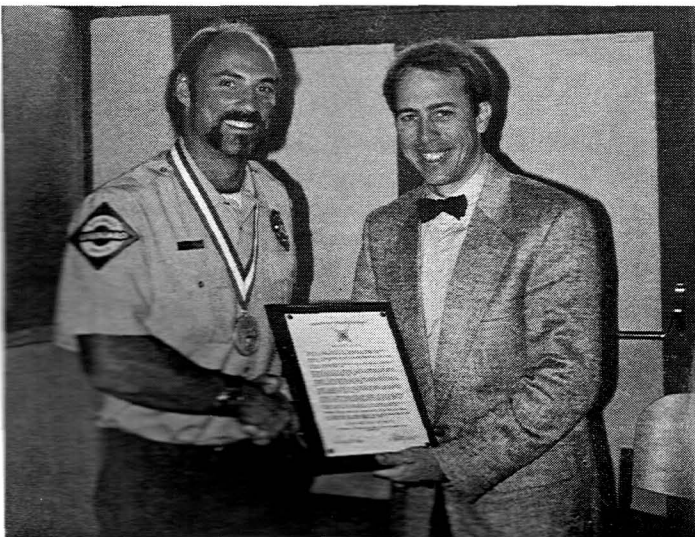
"As Cicchetto made his way back down to the victim, they were both met with a 6-foot wall of white water and racked across a 25-foot section of barnacled covered rock."

Cicchetto was out of work for 9 months due to injuries he sustained during the rescue which later required surgeries, one for his shoulder and the other for his lower back. However, Cicchetto is tough to keep down and had completely recovered by the beginning of summer and went back

on routine patrol Cicchetto and Wade witnessed three people jump from the cliffs in La Jolla known as "The Clam". This activity is illegal and, on this afternoon, considered very dangerous. Two of the jumpers were able to scamper back up the cliff edge to safety, but the other jumper was caught by a large set wave and dragged 15 feet down the cliff edge back into the Pacific Ocean.

Both Cicchetto and Wade witnessed this activity and responded to render assistance. Cicchetto entered the water and made contact with the victim, who was near the rocks and the cliff. Cicchetto formulated a rescue plan which involved swimming the victim north to a flat rock ledge to an area referred to as Sunny Jim's Cave. Cicchetto informed his victim of his plan and emphasized the necessity to act quickly due to the powerful surf. Wade waited on the outside of the breakers, keeping a close eye on the rescue.

Cicchetto waited for a lull in the surf so they could safely exit up the cliff path. (Continued on p. 6)



Cicchetto Receives Medal of Valor.

Former USLA President and Long Beach Chief Lifeguard, Dick Miller Retires

Family Lifeguard Legacy Continues

By Joanne Warzola

December 25, 1995 marks the end of an era for the Long Beach Lifeguard Department. On Christmas Day, Richard L. Miller will be retiring after 31 years of public service for the City of Long Beach. Eighteen of those years he served as a lifeguard and thirteen years as Manager of the Marine Bureau, Parks and Recreation Department.

In 1951, Dick was hired as a seasonal lifeguard for the City of Long Beach. In 1974 he was appointed Chief of Lifeguards. Dick followed a long line of Millers into the lifeguarding profession. His uncle, Roy "Dutch" Miller Sr. founded the Long Beach Lifeguard Department in 1915 and was appointed the first Captain of Lifeguards in 1922. Dick's father, Vic Miller, began his career in 1922 and in 1924 pioneered the use of rescue boats in lifesaving. His cousin, Roy "Bunny" Miller Jr. was a rescue boat operator for 32 years, and Dick's daughter

Melissa was a seasonal lifeguard for two years. Currently carrying on the family tradition are Dick's nephew, Jason Hudson, a Rescue Boat Operator, and his son-in-law Grant Jeffries, a Marine Safety officer.

Dick Miller's impact on lifeguarding has reached far beyond the City of Long Beach. In 1974 Dick was appointed to the Executive Board of the United States Lifesaving Association and then was elected president of that organization in 1978. He served in that capacity until 1982. Some of Dick's fondest memories are from the USLA meetings and the friendships that he formed and solidified there. He enjoyed the camaraderie and exchange of ideas and information with lifeguards from across the country. Dick found the same sense of tradition and loyalty that existed on the West Coast was just as strong in the depart-

ments from Chicago, Hawaii, Florida, New Jersey, New York, Texas and the rest of the country. According to Dick "the USLA increase the public's awareness of lifeguarding, competition, and comradeship." Many of these memories include legacies like Bruce Baird, Tim Dorsey and Vince Moorehouse, who he considered a personal mentor.

The influence that Dick Miller has had on the Long Beach Lifeguard Department has been profound. To many of us he was more than a lifeguard chief. He was our Junior Lifeguard instructor, water polo or swim coach, high school teacher, and/or mentor. But above all else, he was our friend.

Wherever Dick's retirement plans take him, his home will always be with us, the Long Beach Lifeguards.

Camp Pendleton Swiftwater Rescue Team Receives The Honorary Higgins and Langley Memorial Award

By Vince Lombardi, Camp Pendleton

On September 21, 1995, the Camp Pendleton Swiftwater Rescue Team received the Higgins and Langley Memorial Award for outstanding achievement in the field of swiftwater rescue.

The swiftwater rescue team consists of lifeguards and firefighters from Camp Pendleton. The team has grown considerably from two members in 1992 to thirty-four members (making up five teams) as of November of 1995. The need for a swiftwa-

ter rescue team came in January of 1992 when the rains created severe flooding on

"They developed an excellent training program, and they saved many lives in the process, Mrs. Langley said."

Camp Pendleton. With the low-lying areas of the base under six feet of water, the

rescue services aboard Camp Pendleton found themselves undermanned and unequipped. Fortunately, swiftwater teams from Oceanside and Encinitas joined in the effort with Camp Pendleton to rescue over sixty people from the floods. Since the flood of 1992, Camp Pendleton has become one of the largest and best equipped teams in Southern California.

The swiftwater rescue team received
(Continued on p. 7)

L.A. County Chief Donald C. Rohrer Receives CSLSA and USLA Life Memberships

By Robert Moore, L.A. County

Don Rohrer, Chief Lifeguard of Los Angeles County was recognized for his achievements in lifesaving both on the regional and the national level. Thursday, October 12, 1995 at the USLA Board of Directors meeting, Rohrer received the highest honor possible from both organizations.

Rohrer began his career in 1952 with Los Angeles City pools. In 1953 he passed the exam to become a recurrent beach lifeguard, also for the City of Los Angeles. Rohrer became a permanent lifeguard in 1958. He worked all of the beaches in the Los Angeles City area as well as Crowley Lake in the High Sierras. His background in ocean and open water advanced him to the rank of Lieutenant in 1962. Working Will Rogers, Venice, Dockweiler and Cabrillo beaches, and having been a rescue boat operator, he was promoted to Captain in 1972. In 1975 the City of Los Angeles Lifeguard operation was merged with the County of Los Angeles Lifeguard operation, forming one agency that would have responsibility for all beaches within Los Angeles County with the exception of Long Beach. Rohrer worked as a relief Captain to all areas to learn and share expertise between both agencies that were now one. He later became the Boat Section Captain that had a fleet of nine 32' twin engine rescue boats. Having been the leader in all of the sections, he was recognized for his professionalism and talents, was promoted to Chief Lifeguard in 1990. Rohrer continues to lead as Chief.

While Rohrer was advancing in lifesaving, he attended Santa Monica City College, University of Southern California, and California State University at Los Angeles. He earned his Bachelors Degree



The Rohrer family, from left to right: Jeff, Beverly, Don and Matt.

in Physical Education with a minor in Health and Safety and Biological Science. Rohrer also earned a California Standard Secondary Teaching Credential.

Rohrer, in the early 1960's, was a founding Board Member of the National Surf Lifesaving Association. He served as the first Treasurer of what is now the USLA beginning in 1964. This was a result of years of negotiations between the lifeguard agencies in Southern California. Rohrer, along with Doug D'Arnall of Huntington City, Bob Shea of San Diego City, and Richard Mark of Los Angeles City wrote the first textbook. This effort took years of writing, rewriting, compromising, etc. to satisfy all of the Chapters of the organization. Rohrer has been a supporter of the CSLSA and the USLA both personally and indirectly. When priorities changed or other

obligations arose, he would always support other employees' participation. He was active in the American Red Cross and was an Affiliate Faculty member of the American Heart Association. He was a member of the Los Angeles County Underwater Instructor Association and NAUI.

Rohrer's most recent contribution to the USLA was his participation on the second edition of the Textbook. He attends both Regional and National meetings to stay involved and continues to believe in the message - to educate the public and fellow lifeguards. As busy as he was, Rohrer did have time to marry Beverly and have two sons, Jeff and Matt. Both the CSLSA and the USLA thanked Rohrer and appreciate his dedication to public education and water safety.

**Cicchetto Receives
Medal of Valor**

(Continued from p.3)

When that time came, Cicchetto prepared his panicked victim and they were ready to ascend. As Cicchetto made his way up the cliff, the victim froze and remained in the impact zone. Cicchetto yelled to his victim to climb, but to no avail. At this point Cicchetto realized that he might lose his victim unless he descended the cliff. The victim made the situation more difficult by maintaining a firm grasp of Cicchetto's rescue buoy. As Cicchetto made his way back down to the victim, they were both met with a 6-foot wall of white water and racked across a 25-foot section of barnacled covered rock.

Wade had observed the situation and desperately attempted to maneuver the rescue boat closer. He saw Cicchetto raise his arm for assistance and knew he was injured. According to Cicchetto, when he surfaced everything was black and he could not see. He could hear the onlookers yelling above but he wasn't able to comprehend what had taken place.

When the victim finally surfaced next to a cliff wall, he was struggling to stay afloat. He was yelling for help and in extreme danger of drowning. From this point on, does not remember anything until he found himself back on the rescue boat. However, according to Wade, Cicchetto's lifesaving instincts took over when he reacted to the calls for help and swam to the victim. Cicchetto placed the victim on the buoy and swam the victim through another 5-foot wall of white water and made his way toward the rescue boat. Wade was able to position the boat next to Cicchetto and assist him into the vessel. Both Cicchetto and Wade brought the victim on board to safety.

Throughout the rescue, many unpredictable events had occurred. However, the most heroic aspect of the incident was that during the dramatic rescue, Cicchetto had suffered fractured ribs, a ruptured disk at

One Year after Merging with Fire Department, Long Beach Lifeguards' Reorganization Tests Positive

By Louis Martinet, Long Beach

In June of 1994 the Long Beach Lifeguard Service was reorganized under the Long Beach Fire Department. The Marine Safety/Lifeguards are now a division under the Bureau of Support Services. There have been significant changes in how both Fire Operations and Marine Safety provide services to the public.

The most notable change has been to the rescue boat operations. The Marine Safety Division now operates two rescue boats 24-hours a day. These boats are responsible for all rescue work, fire suppression, emergency medical service and harbor patrol activity. The Alamitos Bay rescue boat is staffed with a Sergeant/Rescue Boat Operator and Fire Captain/Paramedic. This rescue boat is dispatched as a Paramedic Assessment Company. The Downtown Marina Rescue boat is staffed with a Sergeant/Boat Operator and Marine Safety Officer. This rescue boat has been set up as an EMT defibrillator/Advanced Airway pilot program. This is the first such program in the United States. The crews on these rescue boats work 24-hour shifts.

Another area of change has been that of standardized training and equipment. The Lifeguards have been integrated into the Fire Department's E.M.S. continuing education program. This program allows Lifeguard personnel and Fire Operations personnel to be trained side-

by-side. This has helped to break down some barriers that existed in the past. All Lifeguard land units and rescue boats and fire engines now have standardized E.M.S. equipment.

The Lifeguard Dive Team has recently been expanded. The Dive Team has been reorganized into three platoons that coincide with the rescue boat shift work. Each platoon has a divemaster that is responsible for all dive operations and training. There is a total of four divers assigned to each platoon. All platoons have assigned training twice a month, and all platoons dive together on joint exercises on a quarterly basis.

The Marine Safety Division is now finalizing an order for two new rescue boats. A contract has been awarded to the Seaway Boat Company for one 32-foot boat with an option for a second. These new boats will be outfitted with a third engine dewatering fire pump. We are hoping to receive the first boat by summer of 1996.

The Lifeguard Fire Department merger has been successful due to the hard work by many people. There has been a tremendous amount of negotiation and cooperation between the Lifeguard Fire Administration and the Long Beach Lifeguard Association. This merger enabled the City of Long Beach to increase the level of service and decrease cost, something that is unique in today's world.

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L-4, injuries to the jaw and skull and significant lacerations to his right leg and left foot. On that beautiful day, Cicchetto demonstrated instinct, courage, skill and strength that would make any professional lifesaver proud. Sean Cicchetto had literally risked his life so that another man's could be saved.

Ira Gruber Hangs Up His Rescue Can

By Robert Moore, Los Angeles County

Executive Board member Ira Gruber calls it quits. Ira stepped down as the Alternate Delegate at the completion of his term on December 31, 1995 and retired from Los Angeles County as a Lieutenant assigned to Santa Monica Headquarters. Gruber began his career in 1958 working the Los Angeles City Pools. He moved to the County pools in 1959, and in 1960 he took the beach tests for both Los Angeles City and County.

Gruber decided to stay with the City and worked on the beach until 1963 when he moved over to the boat as a deckhand. By 1965 he worked year round as a recurrent and was the boat operator in the summer. He was promoted to permanent in 1967.

In 1975, the Los Angeles City lifeguard service merged with the Los Angeles County lifeguard service to form one agency now known as Los Angeles County Lifeguards. As a County guard, he joined the dive team and became Dive Master in 1977, and continued until 1985. In 1986 Gruber was promoted to a 6-month lieutenant position and worked as the administrative lieutenant. He was promoted to a full

time lieutenant position in 1991 and reassigned to the Central Section Headquarters in Santa Monica. Gruber worked as the scheduling officer until he pulled the plug in October of 1995. Throughout his lifeguarding career, he worked all beaches in Los Angeles as well as Crawley Lake and Hanson Dam, which were in Los Angeles City's jurisdiction prior to the merger.

Gruber received his Bachelors Degree from Cal State Los Angeles. He served in the U.S. Army and Air Force National Guard. While working as a lifeguard, Gruber attended school at night and during his days off to earn his Juris Doctorate. Yes, Gruber is also an attorney.

Gruber was President of the Los Angeles County Lifeguard Association, LACOLA, for six years. He has been Executive Director of LACOLA for the past three years and is expected to continue in that role. Gruber served on the CSLSA Executive Board for four years.

Gruber has competed over the years and most recently has won seven National Titles at the USLA Championships in the Veterans category.

Higgins and Langley Memorial Award

(Continued from p. 4)

the award for their efforts in developing a training program and performing rescues at Camp Pendleton and the outlying area. The memorial award is named after Higgins and Langley, two firefighters who died while trying to save lives during a swiftwater emergency. The award honors an individual or group that has either performed a heroic swiftwater rescue and/or developed an exceptional swiftwater rescue program. Many rescue agencies were competing for the award, but Karen Langley and Nancy Higgins, relatives of the late firefighters, felt Camp Pendleton surpassed the other competing agencies.

"They developed an excellent training program, and they saved many lives in the process," Mrs. Langley said. "That's why we're honoring them above others."

Camp Pendleton's continuing efforts to enhance the swiftwater program has included joining with the San Diego City Lifeguards to found the San Diego County Swiftwater Rescue Committee. In the first six months of the new committee, many lifeguard agencies, fire departments, sheriffs and military search and rescue teams have participated in the committee. The committee's main objective is to upgrade all county swiftwater rescue teams to a similar level of training and response capabilities.

The Camp Pendleton Swiftwater Rescue Team would like to extend a "special" thanks to Encinitas, Oceanside, and San Diego for their mutual aid during the floods of 1992 and 1995 within Camp Pendleton and Fallbrook.



Shawn Stuebner
Larry Giles

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Financial Crisis Impacts Eight L.A. County Beaches

By Steve Long, California State

The summer of 1995 will be remembered for the unprecedented replacement of L.A. County Lifeguard service on eight State owned beaches, which for decades had been operated by the county. A continuing financial crisis within L.A. County government, and the inability of the State and County to reach agreement on the transfer of ownership of these beaches to the county resulted in the replacement of L.A. County lifeguards by a contingent of California State Lifeguards from throughout the State. With a need to place 150 lifeguards on the eight beaches of Royal Palms, Redondo, Manhattan, Topanga, Las Tunas, Malibu, Dan Blocker and Pt. Dume, the state enlisted the help of lifeguards from practically every agency on the coast. Lifeguards from as far away as Florida, New Zealand and South Africa joined the effort as word spread in the lifeguard community, and lifeguards responded in typical fashion to a call for help.

State lifeguards and maintenance personnel were ordered on six-month immediate assignments to assemble at Manhattan Beach and gather the resources and personnel to assume full operation on May 3. A massive military-type operation began with equipment and supplies being diverted from throughout the state to the Manhattan State Beach administrative facility. Extra lifeguard training sessions were scheduled; extra tryouts and a new category of "transition lifeguard" was created, allowing veterans from other agencies to begin work for the state immediately. Daily meetings and briefings between County and State were critical to the transition process. Efforts toward a political remedy continued to the absolute last hour; dramatically they failed and the State assumed operation on the morning of the 3rd.

Fortunately the public hardly recognized the overnight change because the preparation and teamwork set in motion by the State paid dividends. An advance team of State lifeguards had spent several weekends during the summer of '94 touring L.A. County lifeguard operations developing an outline in the event political negotiations failed. Combined with more than six months of administrative planning and support from the State's Sacramento State Park Headquarters, the transition proceeded with remarkable ease. From the outset the State Park approach was based on the principals of quality management and good customer service. Recognizing that occasional failures and mistakes would occur, the team focused on developing sound operating processes, allowing the results to happen as they would. Adopting an attitude of continuous improvement, problems were rapidly identified and remedied. Veteran lifeguards from every agency, including L.A. County, participated in creating a new lifeguard service, incorporating the very best of their representative services. Not knowing whether this was a temporary or long-term situation, the team planned for an indefinite stay.

While an emotion wrenching experience for the county guards, the professionals from all agencies set a tone of mutual cooperation as daily operations took place. Despite having been displaced from their beaches, L.A. County lifeguards continued their dedicated service to the communities of the Santa Monica Bay, responding to every request for mutual assistance from the State Guards. Likewise, the county found themselves the recipient of the same spirit of mutual aid that exists elsewhere in the lifeguard community.

The County Lifeguard union, LA-

COLA, recognized that the future of L.A. County lifeguard existence hung in the balance, since the State also owns the three beaches of Dockweiler, Santa Monica and Will Rogers, with future operating agreements remaining to be negotiated. LA-COLA lobbied both the County Board of Supervisors and the State Legislature throughout the summer of '95, and was finally successful in influencing legislation that transferred title of the eight beaches to the County of Los Angeles on September 20th. By the 6th of October, the State had completely dismantled what had become one of the largest District operations in the State Park system. During the five months of existence more than 14,000,000 visitors attended the eight State Beaches. Slightly more than 4000 swimmers were rescued and most significantly, no drownings occurred on those beaches. The success of this operation was due to the cooperation and enthusiasm of every person who participated, from the core of former L.A. County Junior Lifeguards, who became the State rookies of their home beaches, to the recycled veterans who gave the operation a slight flavor of the "Foreign Legion".

Certainly the profession of lifeguarding will continue to reap the benefits of this political and economic lesson. This issue was not "who are the better lifeguards". This was a message to all lifeguards to take control of their own destiny. While the public may love our image and appreciate us for what we do, the politics of available financial support and an understanding of public expectation will dictate our future. Our efforts must always remain united and focused toward outstanding, efficient service to our public. Let us never be complacent and always strive for continuous improvement.

Swiftwater Rescue, a Joint Agency Approach

By Fire Chief George, Solana Beach and Marshall Parks, San Diego

On the evening of January 12, 1995, the Santa Margarita River was at flood stage. The Sandia Creek Drive crossing near Fallbrook was under four feet of fast-moving water and had been barricaded in an effort to prevent people from attempting to cross in their vehicles. As often happens, a citizen decided to ignore the barricades and attempted to ford the river in his pickup truck. The result was predictable, both he and his truck were washed downstream by the raging current. Other motorists witnessed his predicament and called for help. Rescue personnel from four different agencies were dispatched to the scene and after a joint effort, the victim was rescued.

Although the rescue was successful, it was apparent that there were significant problems created by the lack of familiarity between the responding agencies. As a result, a small group of fire service and lifeguard personnel met soon after to discuss coordinating efforts during swiftwater rescue incidents. This small group has grown to include 24 separate agencies, which made up the San Diego County Swiftwater Response Committee. This committee has established its mission as to "identify and organize swiftwater rescue resources within the county in order to provide coordinated effective regional interagency rescue."

The committee has worked to establish training and equipment standards for a swiftwater rescue team, develop a resource directory for those agencies wishing to participate in swiftwater rescue, develop a comprehensive communication plan that would allow agencies to access swiftwater rescue teams, develop an incident command structure to be utilized during swiftwater rescues
(Continued on p. 12)

A Safer Future For Mexico's Beaches?

By Matt Karl, Huntington Beach

Since the 1970's, surfers have been traveling to a small fishing village on Mexico's Pacific coast to challenge themselves in large dangerous surf. Dubbed the "Mexican Pipeline", this awesome wave turns the sport of surfing into more of a bullfight than a casual leisure activity. The powerful currents and shallow sandbars contribute to year-round "red flag" conditions. Puerto Escondido is truly a lifeguard's worst nightmare.

It's hard to imagine that up until a few years ago there were no lifeguards on this 3-mile stretch of beach. The few volunteers working here now are making rescues in conditions that would make all of us think twice. Yet these brave young locals have chosen to put themselves in danger to help prevent the numerous drownings that occur here every year. With very limited training, a handful of supplies and no paycheck, the "salvavidas" are struggling to keep personnel on duty. Many lives depend on them being able to continue.

Fortunately, members of the California Surf Lifesaving Association (most notably Bob Burnside, retired Chief Lifeguard from Los Angeles County) have stepped in to help, first by bringing down a few supplies and conducting some basic training. Chief Burnside has recently met with government officials to call their attention to the need for a safer future on Mexico's beaches. It is hoped that the country's first lifeguard service here in Puerto Escondido will eventually serve as a role model throughout Mexico.

To make this far off dream a reality, the salvavidas will need a lot of support from their brothers and sisters to the north. To find out what you and your association can do to help, please contact Matt Karl c/o Huntington Beach Surf Lifesaving Association at (714) 536-5281. For a donation of \$50 or more, the installation of a Mexican saltio tile with your name and country will be permanently affixed to the first headquarters station.



Puerto Escondido, October 1995. Photo by Matt Karl.

President's Report

(Continued from p. 2)

CSLSA leaders met for long hours with representatives of other USLA regions to garner support for our proposal. The critical vote was held on the third and final day of the meeting. On the board floor, I had the privilege of making a presentation in favor of our initiative.

The Board's decision was trumpeted on the front page of the Sunday paper under the headline, "Lifeguards Can't Run Rentals Too." The first sentence was, "[Local] lifeguards must stop renting umbrellas and moving beach chairs if they want the blessings of the US Lifesaving Association." Our initiative had carried on a vote of 24-10.

The Associated Press also ran the story and it seems that every regional paper reprinted it. Headlines were hard hitting: From the Beaufort Gazette: "Lifeguards Not for Rent." From the Charlotte Observer: "Beach Lifeguards Can't Rent Umbrellas and Stay Certified." From the Carolina Morning News: "Lifeguards Told to End Distractions." From the Aiken Standard: "Lifeguards Denied Accreditation." And so on.

The USLA Board action sent a powerful message that commercial distractions have no place in lifesaving. Specifically, the Board of Directors adopted the position that, "Lifeguards assigned to water surveillance shall not be assigned to any duties other than public safety." Immediately after the vote, local lifesaving representatives assured us that they would be changing their practices to conform to the new USLA position.

My hat's off to all of the members of CSLSA whose dues supported our successful effort to sway national opinion in favor of this momentous decision. You each had a part in a critical advancement in American lifesaving. For those of you who are not yet members, I ask you to join with us in helping shape the future of our profession.

Mud Run!

By Eric Sandy, Del Mar

"We're there!" yells Jim Poland. We are all over that!"

That's when I first knew we were in trouble. When Jim gets all pumped about some obscure competition and then challenges the crew to follow him. I always know we're in for it. Jim is one gnarly lifeguard and always enjoys a rigorous good time. He slyly explained that "mud" just referred to all the dirty water on the race course and that with our water skills, we'd just dominate a bunch of Marine Corps recruits. "And, after all," Jim said, "It's only six miles!" To add some spice he told the Oceanside guards that we would wager a case of their favorite beverage on us beating them. (They were smart. They never showed.)

Ever gullible, we rounded up a team of seven, and magnificent we were. Besides the instigator Mr. P., we had Pancho Maxwell, Jason "Cover Boy" Rubio, "Daring" Dave Magnuson (who ended up running in socks), Bad Brady Brown, and my personal caddy Bryan Cunningham.

The loosely followed rules required us to wear fatigue pants and five of us also decided to run in combat boots. The sucking effect of the mud also meant that we needed to duct tape shut our pockets and tape our pants onto the boots. We should have taped our ears, eyes and mouths shut too!

We got to the Camp Pendleton obstacle course early Saturday morning and joined over 1300 other wild mudders. We named our team "Mud Guards" and got ready to grovel. As the drill sergeant was explaining the course we began to realize the messy magnitude of "only 6.2 miles".

The start was like a stampede and we stayed dry for at least two hundred yards. That's when they turned on the fire hoses. This, we understand, was to make sure we all got in the right frame of mind.

At first, running through the woods, the creeks and the sand pits was *(Continued on p. 11)*



Participants showing off their mud after the race.

Mud Run!

(Continued from p. 10)

just a mellow sprint, at least the first half mile was. Then came the hills. Running up a loose dirt trail in soaking wet fatigues was nasty. And that was before we crawled, hands and knees, through this foul smelling cesspool called the "lagoon" by some masochistic Marine.

The first obstacle wall, about six feet high, was almost a relief since we had to stop and wait for the Marines to quit wrestling in the mud pit. Jumping out of shin deep mud to grab the top of the wall was bad enough, but the jump over the other side was messy and goopy. Hard humor was provided by the Marine who did a swan dive from the top of the wall into the mud.

The course continued through more steep hills, come so muddy people were sliding back down from halfway up, taking the crowd with them. Then came the long slog through waste deep slime mixed with what smelled a lot like biffy water. Some of the comedians next to us wanted to see the "boys from babewatch" swim in this slop. Rescuing anyone from that mess would have taken a tank with a wench.

Soon we realized that nothing could get any worse. All we had to do was stagger to the finish, now only two miles away.

But first, the final indignity, the low crawl.

Here was spectator heaven for those that get perverse enjoyment from watching others suffer. We slithered into the mud pit on our bellies and began to crawl forward under a series of low slung wires. To get under the wire meant going face first into the slop. Just ahead of us, two Marines started wrestling and jammed the wires down on top of us. So where does a good water man go at such a time? Of course, under the water! Except, this wasn't some tropo lagoon or even the shore break at Malibu. This was Yek!

Somehow, we made it out of the pit. Then, through the brown haze over our (Continued on p. 12)

California/Auckland Lifeguard Exchange Delegates Selected

By Kai Weisser

It is almost that time of year again, late December, to send two lucky CSLSA members to Auckland, New Zealand. Congratulations to Charlotte (Lotte) Smits Van Oyen of Los Angeles County and Todd Bartlett of Huntington City for being selected as the 1995/96 CSLSA delegates. They can look forward to an adventure in Kiwi land lifeguarding and taking in the beautiful sights New Zealand has to offer.

This past summer we saw the Kiwi delegates Guy Roger and James Taylor complete their exchange touring the Southern California coast with much enthusiasm. Guy and James wished to once again thank all of the outstanding hosts, chapters and agencies for their hospitality. Without these hosts and contact people, the exchange would not be the success that it has been for so many years. On behalf of the CSLSA and the Kiwis, THANK YOU HOSTS!!!!

Those of you CSLSA members who are interested in future exchanges, check it out and get involved. The best way to help is to become one of the designated hosts! Then, the chance of being selected as a delegate bound for New Zealand is quite good. The Auckland/California lifeguard exchange is a chance of a lifetime and one most lifeguards just can't pass up.

Starting this January, I will pass the exchange committee torch to the very capable A. J. Summers of Seal Beach. He is excited to accept the challenge and I am sure the CSLSA will reap the benefits as well as the future exchange guards.

It was a pleasure to chair this committee for the past five years. Of course, there are some incredible memories and stories that will be told more than once. And who knows, I may just apply for the exchange once again and refresh my New Zealand tour of 1985 - without a bottle of "purple death", of course.



Attention Women Competitors

How many times have you stood on the beach watching a dory race and said to yourself or a friend, "I could do that" or "I would like to try and do that?" Well, now is the time to give it some serious thought. It's time to determine just how much interest women have in forming female dory crews on the West coast for the 1996 rowing season, and competing in the All Women's Lifeguard Tournament next year in New York.

If interested, please FAX the follow-

ing information:

- Rowing experience, if any.
- Do you have a rowing partner?
- Do you have access to a dory and oars?
- Will you need a dory coach?
- Can you provide transportation for your equipment locally?

Please provide your name, telephone number, and convenient time to be contacted for more details about the upcoming season. FAX #(310) 545-5929

Swiftwater Rescue

(Continued from p. 9)

incidents and a public education program.

Currently, there are five subcommittees that make up this organization. They include Training and Team Standards, Equipment/Resources Directory, Communications, Waterways and Mapping, and Participating Agency Directory. Commit-

tee meetings are held monthly and are hosted by participating agencies. The first joint training took place during December at the warm water jetties in Carlsbad. It's our hope that the efforts of this committee will benefit the citizens of San Diego County during times of flooding. Just as important, it will increase the safety of rescue personnel involved in joint agency swiftwater rescue.

Mud Run!

(Continued from p. 11)

eyes, we noticed that the last hill was just ahead. We also saw that same group of Marines that had hassled us about our affinity for clean ocean water. We charged up that hill like zombie maniacs, catching our tormentors and letting them know who ruled. They just screamed "hooorah".

By the time we finished, the adrenaline was pumping and we could have run the course again. But good sense prevailed. Our Marine hosts cheered us loudly and were great sports about us passing them on the last hill. But they did remind us that usually they run the course under live fire.

Like any competition, this one offered the great team building boost and the pure sense of pride, camaraderie and spirit de corps.

For me, the magnificent seven from Del Mar, the "Mud Guards", will always be my "Mud Brothers".

Thanks, Jim, we needed that.

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