

THE TRIDENT

A Monthly Newsletter , The Long
Beach Neptunes

January 2021 | VOL. 71 Issue 1



Painting by Jewely Aguilar

2021 Board Members

President

Paul Zylstra
562-254-7717
zflattie@gmail.com

Ex-Presidio

Jeff Benedict
562-230-5698
dive4sanity@gmail.com

Vice President

Byron Quinonez
949-244-7691
wjw0603@yahoo.com

Treasurer

Jon McMullen
562-810-7188
jonathan.d.mcmullen@gmail.com

Tentative Manager

John Hughes
310-704-4657
johnandmena@sbcglobal.net

Newsletter Editor

Juan-Carlos Aguilar
310-569-3316
juanmilliondollars@yahoo.com

Recording Secretary

Brandon Ward
714-321-1707
brandonward.info@gmail.com

Club Historian

Paul Byrd
949-500-1459
pbyrd@argosx.com

Conservation Liaison

Terry Maas
805-642-7856
tmaas@west.net

The Trident is the official newsletter of the Long Beach Neptunes, a non-profit organization. The Trident is published monthly and is provided free of charge to the members of the Long Beach Neptunes and associates.

2021 CALENDAR

- January 1st - Happy New Year!
- January 6th - Monthly Neptunes Club meeting
- March 17th - Spiny Lobster Season Closes
- April 30th - Deadline for Lobster Card Submission
- June 5th - Blue Water Meet
- September 29th - Spiny Lobster Season Opens
- October 9th - Fall Classic
- November 25th - Thanksgiving
- December 25th - Christmas

FISH STANDINGS

CALIFORNIA

Calico Derby
Calico Bass
White Seabass
Yellowtail
Halibut
Sheephead
Bonito
Barracuda
Dorado
Bluefin Tuna
Lobster

OUT OF STATE/COUNTRY AWARDS

Yellowfin Tuna
Reef Fish
Pelagic, non-tuna

Kent McIntyre Award

Open

Perpetual Big Fish Trophy

Open

Open
Open
Open
Open
Open
Open
Open
Open
Open
Open
Open

Open
Open
Open



President's Letter



Hello fellow Neptunes. It's an honor to hold the position as president of the club and I'm happy and humble to be that person for 2021. Jeff Benedict and the 2020 board did such an incredible job through an unprecedented 2020 year and they deserve a lot of credit. Thank you for all your dedication and support.

Just as the 2020 board navigated the club into and through the Covid mandates, our goal for the 2021 board is to navigate the club out of and through the mandates and get back to what we know as "normal" club activities when we can. 2021 will come with unknown challenges too but we will always do what is best for the club.

The Blue Water Meet is set for June 5th. The Fall Classic is set for October 9th. I love these tournaments so much and all the competition between members and clubs. Just say no to perch! Big fish is what it's all about!!

The anticipation of what fish will show up in 2021 and who will spear them is exciting.

Lastly, when I served on the board with Byron in 2014, we focused on what we can do as divers to be safer. In light of recent tragic losses coupled with a huge influx of new divers into the sport I think it's time again to refocus on some of those safety aspects.

I'm looking forward to a great year,

Paul Zylstra

President - Long Beach Neptunes

EDITOR'S NOTE



Hello Neptune brothers and sisters.

It is with great honor and excitement that I have been cast as the newsletter editor for 2021. This is my first year as a Neptune, but I have had the pleasure of being a friend of the club for many years. During that time, I have enjoyed all the newsletters, and I can only hope to keep up the tradition of high quality publications for our membership.

I want to thank Eric Bodjanic for his help, as well as commend him for a fantastic series of newsletters he put together for 2020. I'm sure I'll be leaning on him in the coming months for advice and leadership. I would also like to thank the other Board Members of 2020 for an outstanding job of managing what can best be described as a challenging year. All their hard work paid off, and the club managed to have both tournaments, and some great meetings in between.

I can only postulate about the stories that will appear in the newsletter in this coming year, but I'm sure they will be full of good times, dead fish, and the camaraderie that the Long Beach Neptunes have always provided.

Please feel free to write something up and submit it for publication, or if you prefer, just give me a call and tell your tale.

The newsletter is brought forth by the Neptunes, for the Neptunes.

Thank you, and I hope to see you on the water!

Juan-Carlos Aguilar

MY LIFE AQUATIC



The Lure of the Sea

The Early Years

My relationship with the water began when I was just a wee little man. My Father worked as a military contractor and after being born in the USA, I spent the first 5 years of my life living in Italy, with Italian being my first language long since forgotten. While living there I was stung by a Portuguese Man-o-War and my life aquatic almost came to an early end.

After moving back to the USA, I was glued to the TV and would marvel at the reruns of the adventures of "Flipper" and Lloyd Bridges in "Sea Hunt", later learning that those double tanks he threw over his head were made of balsa wood. Then of course came Jacques-Yves Cousteau from that point on, I was a citizen of the underwater world.

We had finally settled in Michigan which is known for the Great Lakes, but also has thousands of little lakes and rivers. I got in the water every chance I could. My early snorkeling adventures were going to lakes and freediving down to find driftwood. Michigan driftwood is really just the extensive root structures of trees that had been buried in the lakes depths for many years. Some of these were 5 feet across and took quite a bit of doing (working off an aluminum rowboat) to first locate, then bring to the surface. They made interesting artwork and my parents had a couple hanging on the wall for the past 45 years. We would head out each summer to Virginia Beach, Virginia for a week. The routine was always the same, starting as a 9 or 10 year old kid, my parents would drop me off at the pier with a lunch and fishing pole at 8 AM and then pick me up each day at 5 PM. *Imagine doing this today!* I would spend all day fishing, swimming, and snorkeling the pier pilings.

Every Christmas, Easter, and at least 1-2 weeks in the summer we would head to Florida and spend much of that time up and down the Florida Keys. Every day, I would grab a mask, fins, and snorkel and spend the entire day swimming in and around the islands. Sometimes swimming to little uninhabited islands offshore. The water did not get deep quickly, so you could swim a mile offshore and still be in 20 feet of water. This is where I first discovered currents – but that is another story. I would collect conch shells and other sorts of things (you could do that back then). I ran across more than a few sharks, mostly nurse sharks and an occasional hammerhead which were pretty unnerving as a kid.

Enter the World of SCUBA

While in High School, one of my teachers was an avid SCUBA diver. He would tell us stories of diving shipwrecks and the rivers for historical items. When I turned 16 (think 1976), I got certified to SCUBA dive. A few things people don't realize about Michigan:

1) The waters around Michigan contain loads of historic items. Cities were built around the rivers and when people were done with something, they would just toss it in the river. We have recovered all sorts of bottles, clay pipes, tomahawks, and even cannons that were discarded in the river.

2) The Great Lakes have over 10,000 recorded shipwrecks dating back into the 1700's and many are as of yet, undiscovered. Shipwreck diving is a big deal there.

3) The Great Lakes are so big, that the water below about 30 feet is usually 42 degrees year round (in the winter it is strange that when you ice dive, the surface water temperature is 32 degrees and as you go deeper, it gets 10 degrees WARMER). For that reason, the water can be very clear, with visibility often exceeding 50 feet.



My family was pretty poor when I was a kid (imagine tent camping in the Florida Keys in the summer). I worked through high school and barely had any money. When I bought my first wetsuit, it was a 2 piece, 7mm, waist high pants, 5 zipper suit and was stiff as a board. When I started diving in the 42 degree water, it was almost unbearable, but I didn't know any better – I guess you call that dedication.

I was certified in a rock quarry and then graduated to river diving for treasures, the Great Lakes to explore and recover artifacts from shipwrecks and was even on a boat where a new shipwreck was discovered. I then took my skills back to Florida where I could explore the keys on scuba and snorkeling. It was during my college years I became an avid Cave Diver (back before there was official training – it is a wonder I survived). I was a hunter of things from the beginning and to this day, it still provides my inspiration.

After a few very close calls Cave diving and doing some deep shipwrecks (think 160ft depth), I figured I better improve my skills or I would not be long of this world. I became a PADI Master Scuba Diver Trainer back in the mid 80's and was certified to teach 11 different specialties. I must have learned something along the way as I am still here.

The Move to California

I moved to California after graduating from Michigan State University with a degree in Chemical Engineering. I continued my passion of the water and was fortunate to work in Newport Beach. I got in water every chance I could virtually every weekend and after work several times a week.

I had a disastrous attempt at surfing (yet another story) and decided to stick to diving. This is where I got introduced into hunting the ocean. I bought a big inflatable boat capable of Catalina trips and started to explore California waters.



The Defining Moment

I will never forget the day I saw my first real freediver. It was my Birthday weekend and a few of my friends had booked a weekend on the "Last Bite" charter boat to Catalina Island. The weather was perfect, visibility was close to 100 feet, and we were on the back side, diving for scallops on Farnsworth Banks. I remember doing my safety stop hanging on the line. I could see in the distance some people floating on the surface, then watching them as they would dive down. I could not believe they could hold their breath that long and how deep they were getting. After the dive, we pulled in to Cat harbor and I jumped overboard to see if I could dig up a flattie. As luck would have it, I nailed a very nice halibut with my 38 Special.

When I came back on the boat, I noticed that the boat that had those Freedivers was anchored very close to us. It was an orange hulled boat with a couple of "old men" on it. They saw me come up with my halibut and shouted over to me to congratulate me on my fish. I felt like a stud, holding my fish up proudly. I told them I had seen them out there and asked if they had caught anything. They were pretty humble and said they got a few Yellowtail, which I had never seen in the water before other than at a distance. I asked if I could see – to my shock, they each held up 2 YT each and of those 4 fish, they were all in the upper 30lb range (back then it was hard to judge). They said they had a boatload of them that size. I was completely floored feeling pretty impotent about the whole matter. Turns out those 2 were Dale Cote and Dwayne Smith. I had to figure out what this "freediving" was all about.

I started inquiring around asking people if they know any freedivers and how to get in to the sport. I met a guy named Rich Todesco who did both SCUBA and freediving. His kids went to school with my kids and he was my first freediving dive partner, unfortunately, he died in a freediving accident in Mexico (yet another story).

He showed me his Riffe #3 gun, how it was rigged, etc. and got me connected to Jay Riffe to buy one of his guns. At that time, Jay was working out of his garage circa the mid to late 80's. I would go over to Jay's house and learn what I could and ended up buying a couple of guns from him. By that time, I had left Chemical Engineering and was now doing computer work and I would help Jay and his company out in exchange for equipment and knowledge. I would go diving with Jay, spend time at his shop, and absorbed everything I could about freediving. I installed the first computer systems for Riffe International. Jay took me under his wing and became my sponsor for the Long Beach Neptunes in 1991. Becoming a full member in 1995.

During those years, I spent a lot of time diving in CA trying to get my first White Sea Bass and going to Mexico to hunt Pargo, Wahoo, and Tuna.

Just after I became a Neptune, I bought a Grady White boat. Julie Riffe was just at the cusp of really getting in to Freediving. For the first annual Bill Kroll meet in Ensenada, Jay, Julie, Chris Lankford, and myself went out on my boat.

We found the fish and I took 1st place in the tournament, with the boat taking 1,3,4,5th place respectively (Larry Heinrich who later became my normal dive partner took second). We shot 17 White Sea Bass and YT, all of good size that day and they were literally piled up on the deck (after filling a 250qt cooler).



That is the trip that Julie Riffe got her first White Sea Bass. She did not have a knife or stringer with her and after shooting her fish, she had to bite through the kelp to free it and had strung it through the eyes with her shaft.

I saw her in the water while bringing a fish back and told her that her Dad would be so proud. We both got on the boat and I got my camera out to make sure I documented it. That picture has become somewhat of an iconic picture of Julie on the back of my boat.

Since becoming a Neptune, I was the Newsletter Editor 3 times from 1996-1998. Some of you may remember that I published the Newsletter in color for the first time on hard stock. It was quite a project but really came out well. Only recently with the Digital Age has this been surpassed. I still have some old newsletters around – maybe I will bring them to a club meeting for historical sake.

I held other offices as well for the Neptunes, being the secretary in 1999, and Vice President in 2000 (maybe when I fully retire I will be looking to join the board again). I also became King Neptune #39 and probably my greatest honor is becoming a life member in 2019.

I have won more than a few fish trophies, but first place in the BWM still eludes me.



I have been fortunate to have some great diving buddies and we have shared many adventures in both California, Mexico (including driving down to LaPaz and breaking down twice, but that is another story), and some great times in outrageous costumes at the now defunct Dragon Swim. My core group of divers are Larry Heinrich, Ethan Smith, and Masahiro Mori and regularly take others out. That has given me the opportunity to dive with many Neptunes and others over the years.

I try to get out most weekends if weather permits (and now some Fridays as well). I have upgraded my boat again to a pretty tricked out 26' Twin Vee with extended gas tanks and have a slip in Redondo as well as a trailer when I need to be on the move. Now I have the range to get out to Cortez Banks and the Tuna Grounds- more adventures to come.

Experiencing the Life Aquatic

I have been absolutely blessed to see and experience some of the most incredible things wonders of the ocean. I have been the first to discover ships lost beneath the sea for almost 200 years, complete with rigging, cargo, etc. I have found historical items such as 100 year old bottles off the bottom of the Detroit River, my brother even found a week old dead guy on a dive. I have crawled deep in to UW caves, both in Florida and Mexico, that were so clear it looks like you are suspended in air. I have ridden Whale Sharks and Manta Rays many times in many places. I have been in pods of literally thousands of dolphins in gin clear waters, some coming right up to me and seen schools of 300lb tuna swimming just out or range of my shot (largest I ever landed was 100lbs). I have been spearfishing in the Bahama's using power heads and free shafts (quite an interesting experience). I have had Manatees try to eat me (it thought I was its mother and wanted to nurse, taking my arm in its mouth to suckle).

More recently, I have taken on the passion for hunting Megalodon Shark Teeth (one of the rare times I put on a SCUBA tank since it involves considerable decompression diving).

I am also fortunate to be married (version 2.0) to a great woman who is also a SCUBA diver and an awesome cook (which is why I am so damned fat).



We are both avid underwater photographers (complete with the monster DSLR housings, strobes, etc.). We travel a couple of times a year to exotic locations all over the world (Indonesia, Philippines, Micronesia, Caribbean, etc.) to shoot UW photos. My wife will only dive in warm water so these trips are the price I pay for getting to freedive the rest of the year – I know, I am a giver. I used to take UW pictures in CA, but the last time I did this was 25 years ago as my time in the water is mostly spent hunting here.



The Future

I am 61 Years old now, and consult as a Chief Information Officer (I have a geeky side). This now gives me most Friday's off going forward. I lived in Orange County the first 25 years of my working career, then Woodland Hills for another 11. For the past 6 years I have lived in Santa Barbara and don't plan on moving any more. This makes it harder to get to meetings in person (Zoom meetings have been great for me). I still keep my boat in a slip in Redondo and make the drive down to go out most weekends when the weather is kind. I also have a trailer so I have options and have pulled the boat to explore the Northern Channel Islands.

I need to get more clued in on spearfishing the Northern Channel Islands and along this coast (at least I have found where big Yellowtail are, regularly seeing 30lb+ fish up here). I am currently saving my pennies hoping to buy a boat in Santa Barbara. Once I get that boat and figure out where the fish are, maybe I can get some of the Neptunes to join me for some Northern Channel Island adventures instead of me always driving to Redondo Beach.

In the meantime, I continue to improve my freediving skills and am in the middle of freediving course with Seamus Callaghan. If you have not taken it, I HIGHLY recommend you do, it will really up your game.

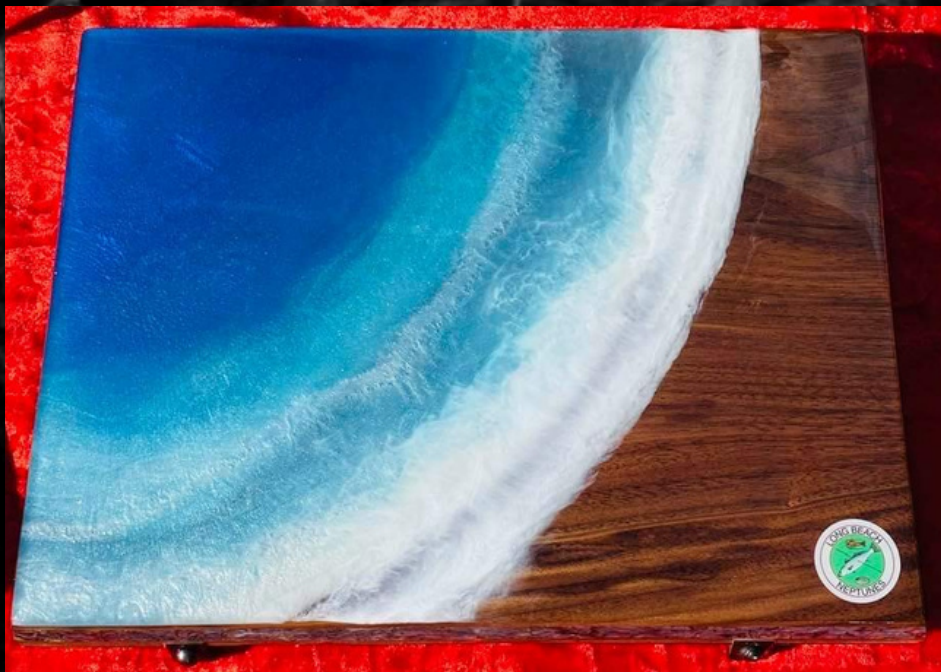
I am continuing to pursue UW Photography as well. I am told I have some skills by some professional UW photographers, but generally I keep all of those pictures just for myself. I may even try and get my camera rig out freediving (but so many fish are in line begging for my attention first). If nothing else, I will start using my GoPro camera more to document my freediving times.

I am thankful and blessed to be involved in a sport that brings so many people from varied walks of life together for a common interest and allows us to be some of the privileged few who see and are part of the wonders of the underwater world. I am also so thankful to so many Neptunes along the way who I have shared in those experiences and have learned so much.

Finally, I wish to thank my wife who is so understanding of my passion for the water and encourages me to pursue it relentlessly (and not because she might read this). I hope you have enjoyed a glimpse of my life aquatic and welcome any of you to reach out if you are ever interested in hopping on my boat one day.

John D. Johnston





I wanted to share the thoughtful and beautiful creation bestowed upon me by our talented and generous Todd Norell. Todd created this one of a kind Emperors Geta, which is used to enhance a gourmet sushi experience to a supernatural level. I have watched Todd's talents continue to expand during his time with us as a Neptune, and I am excited and honored to add this amazing piece to my collection of works by Todd.

Forever grateful
Jeff Benedict
2020 President





SO LONG 2020
THANKS FOR ALL THE FISH



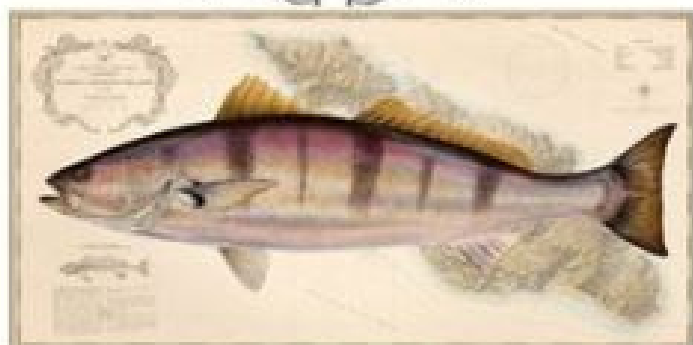
The Long Beach Neptunes are proudly supported by the following entities

**ATOMIC
AQUATICS**



**HERRANEN
SPEARFISHING**





PACIFIC
WILDERNESS



UNDERWATER
HUNTER

