

The Explorers Club Northern California Chapter

January 2014

In color at our web site: <http://www.explorersnorca.org>

LOCATIONS

Note venues and dates with care.

In San Francisco, CA,
our next meeting is 6:30 pm
January 31, a FRIDAY,
at City Forest Lodge

Deep Diving (But He Has Been Deeper!) San Francisco—January 31, 2014

Capt Don Walsh HON'61, the Honorary President of The Explorers Club will speak about *the best and worst lunch I've ever had!* As our January speaker, he will be flying down from his Oregon ranch to speak to us on dives he made on the Titanic.

Likely the most decorated and honored speaker we have encountered, his explorations over the past half century are the stuff of legends. Don is a retired naval deep submersible pilot, a PhD Oceanographer who has taught and written over 200 publications, worked in both the Arctic and Antarctic on over 50 expeditions, and is a member of the National Academy of Engineering, has travelled to over 112 nations, served in two wars, graduated from the Naval Academy and Texas A&M and hails from Alameda.

In 2001, he was cited as one of the great explorers in Life Magazine's book, *The Greatest Adventures of All Time*. With Jacques Piccard he dove Trieste to the deepest place in the Worlds Oceans: 35,840'. The year was 1960. Only in 2012 did this feat meet its match when James Cameron became the third man in history to accomplish such a feat—to be welcomed at the surface by Don.

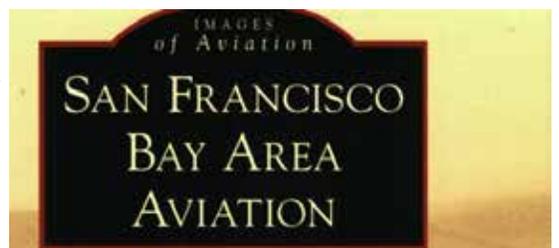
Over the last half century, Dr./Capt. Walsh has participated in dive operations in more than two dozen submersibles, including numerous dive expeditions using a pair of Russian MIR submersibles to the RMS Titanic, resting at 12,500', and the WWII German battleship Bismarck, at 15,500'. (Your Chair was in place in 2006 to dive Titanic on one of these trips, but the Russian government cancelled the expedition when the MIRs were required in the Caspian Sea). This evening's talk will describe the half-day dives to these famous shipwrecks and what it was like to enjoy a modest box lunch while sitting on the decks of these ships.

Capt. Walsh is a long time member in our Chapter. His humor and delivery will spellbind you and give you the opportunity to meet this World Class Explorer in person.



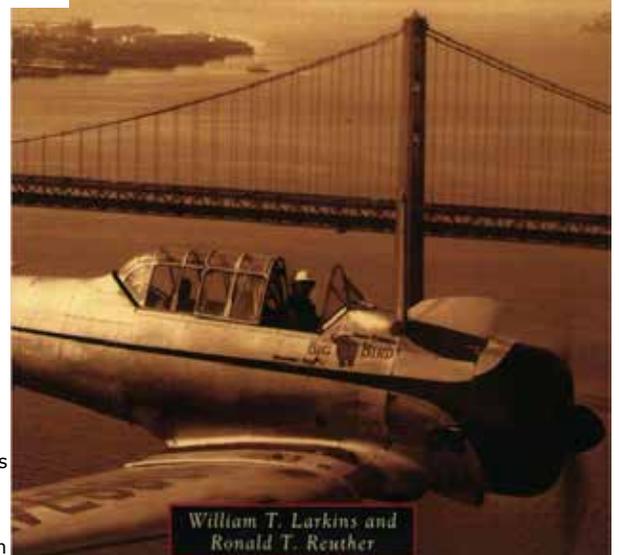
Taken during a dive expedition in front of the MIR (above).

The young lad in the rear of the *Big Bird* is none other than our speaker—evidence of a young explorer's curiosity! (Cover of the late Chair Ron Reuther's book with co-author Bill Larkins).



LANGAN

Don Walsh while attending last year's TEC Board Meeting in Tiburon



Volcanology 101 — November 22

Bob Christiansen laid a foundation about the hows and whys of volcanology as a preface to one's understanding that these latent inanimate beasts can be very dangerous to man and the environment. He described the inner working of our earth and the driving forces that create these dramatic vents of the heat that lies beneath at depth. It is now accepted that the earth's 'plates' (floating islands of the planet's shell) move about over eons of times. Look at the globe to visualize how continents fit together like a spherical puzzle. Earth tectonics describes how they have drifted apart (and continue to do so). Where the plates collide we find earthquakes and volcanoes; the massive forces release the pressure that builds.

Many of these active vents surround the Pacific Ocean as a "Ring of Fire". Some can be found far inland where the colliding of plates is at work deep within: the enormous Yellowstone Caldera is one such. Some volcanoes explode; witness Mount St. Helens or Mt. Vesuvius over Pompeii. Some ease forth with molten lava flows; the Hawaiian chain has been built in such a way.

It is best to move away when possible. If not, heed the warnings that precursor mini-quakes can predict. Unfortunately such evidence of activity, while clearly an alert, is not yet adequate in precision to give unambiguous warning.

The St. Helen's 1980 eruption as one of the best examples of a lateral volcano blast with a collapse. From March 25, a rapid and frequent series of earthquakes led to a visual crack in the crater, a fault that created two craters. On April 6, an eruption blast and major landslide caused an avalanche and subsequent deposited fan.

Bob was among the first to recognize and map the super-volcano in Yellowstone. He explored the caldera on horseback and followed its ash and lava flows to the Mississippi River. Its enormous potential intensity is a calculation based on the distribution of ash.



Chair Rick Saber (left) and our speaker, Dr. Robert Christiansen

In response to where he thought the next major US volcanic eruption would occur, his answer: Mt. Shasta near the Oregon border. Historically it has erupted every 200 to 600 years, and the last eruption took place more than 200 years ago.

Years of study have brought respect and appreciation for these monumental movements in our earth. We are gaining knowledge and can predict the potential danger, but not exactly when it will occur. Take heed.

CAPT. CHARLES J. MERDINGER, PhD FE'78 1918-2013

It is with great sadness that we pass word on the loss of one of the Senior Fellows in our Chapter and our Club, Dr. Charles Merdinger. A civil engineer, naval officer and academic administrator, he was born in Chicago, attended Marquette University and was awarded a Bachelor of Science from the U.S. Naval Academy, Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Civil Engineering from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute and Doctor of Philosophy from Brasenose College, Oxford University where he was a Rhodes Scholar. Capt. Merdinger led many organizations, foundations and left his mark on engineering projects worldwide. Active in our Chapter since 1978, Capt. Merdinger leaves behind his wife of 69 years, the former Mary McKelleget of Cambridge, Massachusetts. We salute you, Captain!

Many will remember the wrapt tale he told us at the Marine's Memorial Club on December 7, 2005. Chuck had been trapped aboard the *USS Nevada* when she beached herself (to prevent blocking the entry channel to Pearl Harbor) after being the only ship to get underway on the fateful day in 1941. He spent seven hours submerged before making his way through an air vent to fresh air. Chuck Merdinger was a truly accomplished gentleman and officer who contributed every day he lived.



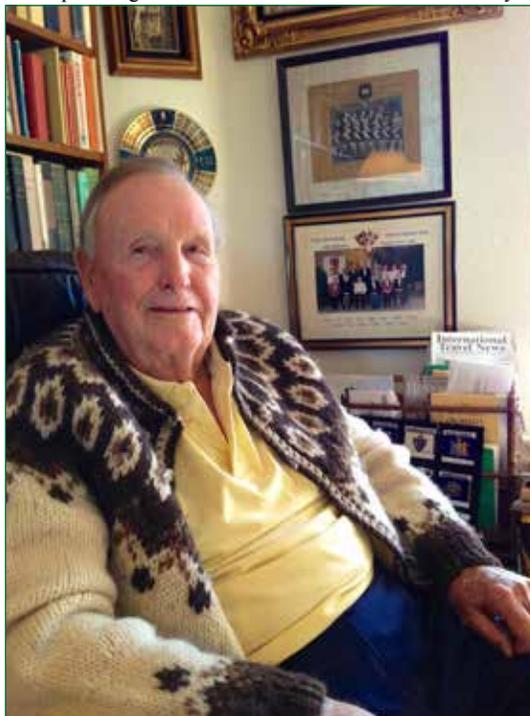
A Member Moment with Tom

Hall— Dr. Tom Hall is an epidemiologist who has studied the distribution of disease throughout the world; he has gone into the field and published widely. He is also an athlete who rides his bicycle widely, a small boat advocate who has plied coastal waters over broad regions—and kayaked nearby his anchorages, and he is a pilot. He shared one particular achievement this evening: he once reached 31,000' solo in a glider! Think about it, higher than Everest!

Tom was towed aloft near the Air Force Academy after being checked out. For a few hours he rode the cumulus thermals and managed to rise to the levels of the highest Rockies. Having met this challenge he decided to try to ride the standing wave that creates those dangerous lenticular clouds along the Front Range. Done right one can gain much higher altitudes; a miscalculation can be deadly.

He took us along for the ride, where (with permission of Denver's Air Control) he was successful. Had his oxygen lasted, he could have glided higher? After hours aloft, it was time to land. On his descent, Tom executed six chandelles in celebration of his feat and landed excitedly after 6.5 hours, knowing he had flown to an altitude that few other glider pilots had equaled.

It was an enjoyable tale.



LONDON



SUSAN SHUMAKER-LIND

Dr. Merdinger in 2013 at his retirement office in Los Altos surrounded by cherished trophies, including a photo of his Oxford Rowing Team (left). In 2005 he showed his Naval Academy sword 'lost' when his cabin was blown apart on December 7 but found months later when the ship was refloated.

From the Chair— Our Holiday Party capped a rather spectacular year for our Chapter. Your Chair is proud of what we of NorCA accomplished. *Solar Impulse* support was an immense project for Exploring green energy and its future; seen up close by the forty who attended our Field Trip to Ames Research, we felt as one with this ambitious project. Rick Blake's *Black Mine Field Trip* set a new benchmark for events in which we both learn an unfamiliar subject and enjoy camaraderie. ECAD drew 18 of our own members, seated at upper tables (thanks to Lee Langan) commanding the best view of ceremonies honoring James Cameron and numerous World Class Explorers. (I managed a one-on-one talk with the late Scott Carpenter, second Astronaut to orbit earth fifty years ago). We had a packed house for our Monterey weekend with Dr. Zahi Hawass who flew from Cairo to join us, followed by a day-long photo expedition led by Peter Hemming.

Sixteen bells have now sounded, announcing the end of 2013 and ushering in the New Year! (True! This is a custom on Naval ships where 8 bells are rung just prior to midnight followed immediately by 8 bells signifying the expression ringing out the old and ringing in the new. Our Chapter most definitely rang out on those high notes, described above. For 2014, we have in place many speakers set to surprise and inspire us until Autumn leaves come tumbling down. Don Walsh MED'61, Honorary Explorers President, will start our year with tales from one of his many dives on the Titanic. February highlights another Chapter Explorer, Dr. Lynn Rothschild FN'04, astrobiologist working at NASA who will speak on Extremeophiles and the search for life in our universe, a subject pretty far out of my league! The Ides of March will salute HRH the Crown Prince of Bhutan, at a reception at Stanford. Sadly, we lost one of our Senior Chapter Members, Capt. Charles Merdinger FE'78; see notice in this newsletter. You will notice a slight rise in our monthly event charge for Don Walsh. I've been courting his return, as speaker, for over two years. He last spoke to us in 2006 about *Diving on the Bismarck*. I'm sure you will agree to this increase when hearing his talk and meeting, in person, this well recognized explorer.

Lastly, a wish for a Happy, healthy & prosperous New Year to all fellow NorCA members, Sirdars and Friends in our growing Chapter.

—Capt. Rick Saber MN'01

New Chapter Dues

Policy— Our experiment to seek voluntary contributions to support the Chapter newsletter and other costs has not proven effective, as a minority responds. Much discussion has led to the solution of simply billing each class early in the year, i.e. January—now!. Follow-up billing in early February will include a notice to those unpaid by March 15 that printed newsletters will be withheld until payment is received (members). For Sirdars, similar billings will be followed by the notice that electronic newsletters will be withheld until dues are brought to date.

Dues, effective January 1, 2014 are: \$25 per year for Chapter members and \$50 per year for Sirdars.

Please send payment by check or Paypal to Steve Smith.

2014 dues prepaid since September will be honored.

Holiday Cheer at Chapter Christmas Party

The halls were decked with Christmas cheer at the Saber home on December 8; the decks were as well on a chilly Marin County evening. Northern California explorers gathered to celebrate good tidings and another fine year of being exposed to adventures and visiting new places. It was a festive crowd. **Dave Moor**er back from Afghanistan, **Eric Stackpole** describing his submersible robots with wine in hand, **Don Walsh** deep in conversations all evening, **Bob Schmieder** describing a recent trip to Tasmania, Sue Estey offering cogent suggestions, **Joan Bekins** describing a new Club opportunity, **Joan Boothe** welcoming each and all, host **Rick** and hostess **Aldeana** everywhere with their warm hospitality. **Von and Jim Hurson** organized the wonderful wines; so many filled a groaning table. There were many more stories being told and just-plain-visiting going on. The evening extended well beyond the designated times; no one wanted to leave. As all things must, guests peeled away into the night, each to be regaled by the decorated colorful yachts at San Rafael's marina as they made their way home.

Thank you Chair and Mrs. Saber!



PHOTOS BY VON HURSON



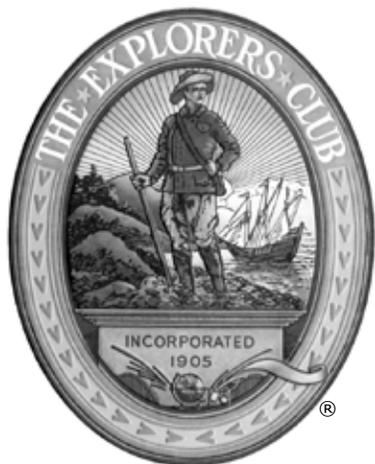
(top, l-r) Rick Blake, Harry Hicks, Lee Langan; Karine Langan (middle, l-r) Peggy Day, Rick Saber, Aldeana Saber, Dede Whiteside Hicks, Peter Hemming (bottom, l-r) Mike & Deanna Diggles, Don & Joan Bekins; Don Walsh & Rick Saber

From the Board The Explorers Club Board meets next in New York in late January. Meanwhile it is not too early to plan for the annual meeting in March. The festive ECAD fundraiser at the Waldorf is scheduled for March 15 and promises to be as elegant an affair as it was in 2013. If you can come, contact Rick Saber to join a NorCA table, which adds to the enjoyment. The Annual Meeting is the next day, when a new Board class is announced; be sure to vote for your choices. The ballots will be mailed at month's end.

—Lee Langan FN'99



January 2014



Chair: Rick Saber
415 457-0345
eagle@rsaber.com
Vice Chair: Joan Boothe
415 346-5934
hoodooskr@aol.com
Treasurer: Stephen E. Smith
925 934-1051
ecnca@oceanearth.org
Secretary: Dede Whiteside Hicks
Webmaster: Mike Diggles
Newsletter: Lee Langan

January 31, 2014 – Don Walsh Dives

Northern California
Calendar of Events

(Venues are identified as soon as known.)

Our Next Event

January 31, 2014 Honorary President Don Walsh
Meals aboard the Titanic. . . City Forest Lodge

Upcoming Events (2014)

February 28, 2014 Dr. Lynn Rothchild
Is there life in space. City Forest Lodge
March 15-16 ECAD
Exploration & Technology Waldorff=Astoria, NYC
March 18 Stanford University
HRH Crown Prince Jigal Ugyen Wangchuck
April 25 Dr. T. Mark Harrison
Mountain Building City Forest Lodge
May 23 Dr. Meg Lowman
Forest Canopies City Forest Lodge
June to be set FIELD TRIP
USS Hornet Oakland

Earlier Chapter Events (2013)

April 26 Bob Schmieder
Clipperton Isle City Forest Lodge
April 29, 2013 Solar Impulse visit
Moffett Field Mountain View
May 11, 2013 NorCA Field Trip
Black Diamond Coal Mine, Contra Costa
May 24, 2013 Nicole L. Crane
Conserving Ocean Resources City Forest Lodge
June 9, 2013 - NorCA Picnic
Angel Island "Expedition"
September 27, 2013 Former Chairs
Selected Tales, 40th Anniver. City Forest Lodge
October 25-27, 2013 - Monterey Weekend
Dede Whiteside Hick's event
November 22, 2013 Robert Christiansen Ph.D
Volcanology-Hazards City Forest Lodge
December 8, 2013 Saber residence, San Rafael
Holiday Party

USE PAYPAL!

January 31, San Francisco @ City Forest Lodge

Date FRIDAY, January 31, 2014
Place: City Forest Lodge
254 Laguna Honda Blvd
San Francisco, CA 94116-1409
(415) 753-8326
Time: 6:30 - reception
7:15 - dinner — 8:00 - program
Cost: \$55 in advance; \$65 after 27 January
Students: \$40. (2014 dues: members, \$25; Sirdars, \$50)
Reserve ____ spaces
Name: _____
Address (if changed): _____
Companion: _____
Meal choice*: _____
Please mail reservation information, checks & dues to Steve Smith,
email ecnca@oceanearth.org, call (925) 934-1051, or
mail to 402 Via Royal, Walnut Creek, CA 94597

We have an established PayPal account.

For those of you who have an account, you can sign up and remit dinner costs to the NorCA Chapter by transferring money to: explorersnorca@gmail.com
There is a PAYPAL BUTTON on our website (www.explorersnorca.org); easy to use!
(There is a slight extra fee of \$2 for this service.)

*January Meal Options (select your choice)

chicken marsala; salmon – Vegetarian option: pasta primavera

In 2012, the City Forest Lodge was sought out as a meeting place in the heart of San Francisco. The lodge is hidden in a driveway just south along Seventh Avenue as it turns into Laguna Honda Boulevard. The Lodge has the catering and space needs we require, and our meetings this year have proved it is working!

Location details should be researched in advance

There is parking, and the location, while unfamiliar to some, is easy to find tucked away just across from the City's Laguna Honda Hospital. Once the lot is full, park within the neighborhood, just uphill to the west. Muni access is VERY easy from downtown via the light-rail Taraval 'L' Line and Ocean View 'M' Line. Exit at the Forest Hill station and walk a block north. These lines can be reached by BART and the Peninsula's CalTrain. (Forest Hill Station is located deeper underground than any other Muni Metro station; so much so that, unlike other stations, most people use an elevator to reach the platform at Forest Hill.)

Send address changes and corrections by email to Dede at dedewhiteside@aol.com