

# The Explorers Club Northern California Chapter

April 2018

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

## LOCATION

Note venues and dates with care

April 27, 2018, 6:30pm

The Dolan Law Firm  
1438 Market Street, SF 94102

## StratEx - A Scuba-like system for Stratospheric Exploration

Alan Eustace FN'15, Northern California Chapter Member

Friday, April 27, 2018

Pressurized capsules/cockpits are the traditional mechanism to provide communication, telemetry, and life support at very high altitudes. Such systems introduce a lot of weight, cost, and complexity. The StratEx project explored whether it is possible to provide all of these vital functions in a self-contained form factor more like traditional scuba diving.



The three year development and test program included 5 airplane jumps from 18,000 feet, and 3 balloon jumps, from 57,000, 105,000 and 135,890 feet, setting 3 skydiving world records, including the highest exit altitude.

This talk summarizes solutions to critical issues like redundancy, emergency aborts, CO2, fogging, spins, drogue deployment, and balloon launches, along with photos and videos of the key milestones.

Alan Eustace has held various positions at Google, including SVP of Engineering from 2005-2012, and SVP of Knowledge (Search/Maps/Research) from



2012 to 2015.

His lifelong interest in flying, skydiving, and engineering has lead him to work with the world-class StratEx team to design, build, and fly, a scuba-like system for the exploration of the Stratosphere.

In the final tests of this system, Alan and the StratEX team have set three new skydiving world records, including the highest exit altitude (135,890 feet, 41,422 meters).



## MEMBERSHIP ELECTS LATEST CLASS OF DIRECTORS TO THE EXPLORERS CLUB.

In a brief presentation at the March meeting, NorCa's Lee Langan spoke on the various reports to the Annual Meeting presented by the Explorers Club Directors. Lindley Young announced the new directors who will serve three years ending in 2021: Stephen Kindberg, Martin Krauss, Bill Liss, Michele Maas, and Eric Zember. Of the over 3500 members, only 934 votes were received; of those, 86 votes were rejected for lack of paid dues; of the 848 votes counted, all but 25 were electronic.

VP Steve Pigott reported that we now have 20 national chapters and 11 international chapters: Switzerland is just formed. The 2018 Lowell Thomas Dinner will be in Boston. In 2019, the Washington Group will again host the LTD in DC.

More about the Annual Meeting in New York can be found on page 3 in Sandra Cook's Dispatch from ECAD and on page 5.

## THE JOURNEY WITHIN

OR

## WHY WOULD ANYONE SWIM WITH THE SHARKS BEFORE BREAKFAST?

by NorCa Chapter Member Kim Chambers, MN '16, Friday 30 March 2018

The latest Explorers Club Northern California Chapter meeting was a remarkable description of what it took one person to become a world class marathon swimmer. Kim Chambers' story of overcoming her early physical difficulties and growing into a lifetime goal of physical achievement was a gripping tale that held her audience mesmerized. From growing up on a sheep and cattle farm in New Zealand, with a goal at 17 of a career teaching ballet, Kim came to UC Berkeley to study, sustained a crippling injury, and confronted the rest of her life. She spent the next 2 years learning to walk again.

She took up swimming as an alternate sport, was challenged to swim in San Francisco Bay, joined the SF Dolphin Club and became the first female on a club relay swim team where she heard about swimming for charity. This led her to form the first all female swim team, The Mermaids, and then leading them on a relay swim from the Golden Gate to the Farallon Islands. A marathon relay swim is one in which each member of the swim swims for an hour before being replaced from the team boat by the next member until the whole route has been swum.

Kim then became the first woman to complete a solo swim from the Farallon Islands to the Golden Gate Bridge. Considered by many to be the hardest marathon swim in the world, that 30-mile stretch of water is known for frigid temperatures, swirling currents and the world's largest Great White sharks. Prior to Kim's feat, only four other people, all men, had completed the swim. She

completed that swim in 17 hours and 12 minutes, wearing only a regular swimsuit, cap and goggles. Additionally she is the 6th person ever (3rd woman) to complete the Oceans Seven challenge, known among swimmers as the open water equivalent to the Seven Summits mountaineering challenge.

At home in New Zealand for a visit, she did a solo swim across the Cook Strait, from North Island to South Island. She remembers with pleasure being followed by dolphins the whole way. Back in California, she soloed Lake Tahoe, 21 miles from south to north. The next major challenge was to swim from San Francisco to Santa Barbara. This swim had to be aborted because of all the electric shocks she received from the floating jelly fish (*Physalia physalis*). One of the rules for a true solo swim is that the swimmers must get themselves out of the water by themselves. Finishing the Molokai Channel swim was not so easy, as this photo shows.

Subsequent swims included the Strait of Gibraltar (32 hours), the Catalina Channel (with lots of bioluminescence along the way), the English Channel (north to south, 48 hours), the Tsugami Strait in Japan, and the North Channel from Scotland to Ireland. Upon recovering from electric eel contacts in the North Channel, Kim repeated her solo swim from the Golden Gate to the Farallones.

What started as a program to overcome her early handicap, has become an investigation into just how much she can develop her own body to a level of

physical performance to achieve specific physical challenges. Along the way she has worked to raise financial support for selected non-profit enterprises that she believes in such as the Veterans Administration.

Kim writes: "I joined the Explorer's Club to connect with like-minded individuals who feel compelled to nudge the boundary of what is possible for mankind, while being mindful and respectful of the environment within which we compete. My sport is very much an adventurous endeavor – oftentimes I am the only human in the water. I feel tremendously blessed to have had some incredibly positive and life affirming interactions with wildlife; dolphins have escorted me on most of my swims. To be accepted in their environment – simply as a passerby – is magical. In addition to my non-profit work assisting veterans, I am a staunch advocate for ocean conservation, supporting the Farallon Islands sanctuary, Farallon Patrol and Shark Stewards."

Some questions were asked. How do you sustain yourself while you are swimming? (By consuming a drinkable slurry of protein and liquid every half hour.) Why do you use a mask when swimming the Dead Sea? (Because the water is toxic and should not be ingested). Do you achieve a 'detached state' while marathoning? (Yes.) What's your resting heart rate? (43 bpm). **AJ**



12 Hawkins Biggins

Climbing the rocks after the Molokai Channel Crossing



Masked swimmers during the Dead Sea Crossing

## Dispatch from ECAD, New York, March 9-11, 2018

ECAD weekend began on Friday night, March 9, with the New Members Reception and General Reception at the Club headquarters, the beautiful Lowell Thomas Building at 46 East 70th, NYC. Almost as soon as I entered the building, I saw NorCa Chapter stalwarts Anders Jepsen and Lee Langan, seated on the sofa in front of the fireplace in the Members Lounge. The club was crowded for the reception of new and old members. This fine evening was followed on Saturday by several activities and outings in which ECAD registrants could participate (for details, see your emails or the website)

The actual Explorers Club Annual Dinner (ECAD) on Saturday night was held at the Marriott Marquis, Times Square. I finally arrived at the level with the cocktails and silent auction, and the "exotic" hors d'oeuvres. The scorpion itself tasted as though it had been soaked in gin for a month, so I still have no idea what scorpion tastes like, but I chewed up and swallowed the entire thing except for the pincers/claws, which were like cast iron. I moved on to the iguana ("be careful of bones") and several kinds of fierce-looking fish—all completely delicious. I passed on the tarantulas and cockroaches.

I then moved to the silent auction tables to bid on a few items. There was a snag - each item had an iPad by it which one could use to bid with, but the system was down. The whole silent auction was at a standstill. Insufficient bandwidth at the Marriott? Finally, I scribbled a few bids on pieces of paper and at the sound of the bagpipes (one of my very favorite things), followed the procession into a huge ballroom for the dinner.

Those who complained about Ellis Island as a venue for ECAD would have been pleased with this ballroom - an excellent sound system with many huge TVs around the perimeter, affording everyone a good view of what was going on at the podium. Operational iPads were on the dining tables - the silent auction was now back in business.

The Buzz Aldrin Space Exploration Award award went to Jeff Bezos, boy wonder and founder/CEO of Amazon. Jeff gave a great talk. The founder of Blue Origin, an aerospace company

with plans to travel beyond Earth, Bezos started off by saying that he'd been fascinated by space travel since he was five years old. He spent a good deal of time making the case for the absolute necessity of space exploration and colonization, concluding that earthlings weren't farther along in this regard because of the prohibitive cost of traveling into and exploring space. This was the problem he is out to solve. His solution/contribution to space travel and exploration is to drastically reduce the cost of going into space - to make space travel cheaper.

The next highlight of the evening was the live auction with a professional auctioneer from Christie's. This was very rousing, with lots of goading and hollering by the audience to increase the amounts being bid. I understand that the party went way into the night, and that a wild time was had by all.

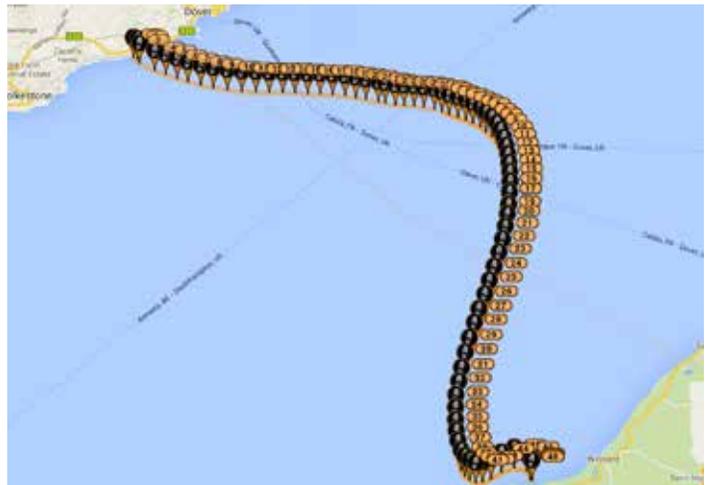
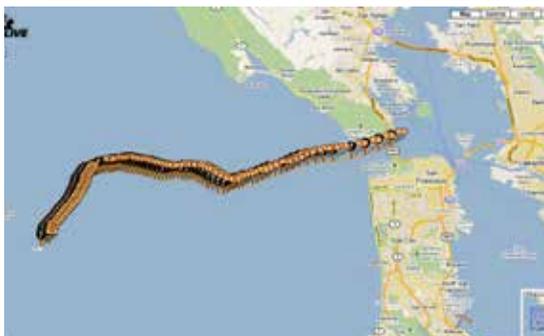
One last remark about the Saturday night venue. Neither the hotel nor the location was very attractive, from my point of view. Perhaps others from the NorCa chapter felt the same and therefore didn't attend. However, I was told that there are only a few places in New York that can hold 1,200 revelers, and that the more dramatic locales (especially the Museum of Natural History) had been exceedingly expensive.

Sunday was my favorite day of the ECAD weekend at The Club. At the morning business meeting we saw an orderly transfer of presidential power from Ted Janulis, to another boyish-looking fellow, Richard Wiese. He talked about the need for fund raising to keep the Club afloat fiscally, and urged members to contribute to the new Famous Firsts initiative; then the 5 newly elected Directors were introduced. After the morning business meeting and a fine buffet lunch, the afternoon was filled by excellent exploration presentations by various Club members.

I'm glad I attended ECAD. It is a great celebration and full of important accomplishments and interesting, even outlandish, people. I plan to attend again next year!

**Sandra B. Cook PhD MN'16**

From previous page, routes actually swum by Kim:



Upper Left: Strait of Gibraltar, Spain to Morocco

Lower Left: Golden Gate to the Farallones

Above: English Channel, North to South

HONOR ROLL

MEMBERS

Amaral, Julia  
 Beer, Michael  
 Bekins, Joan  
 Blake, Rick  
 Bolt, Kendra  
 Boothe, Joan  
 Chase, H. Keith  
 Cheeseman, Ted  
 Cook, Sandra  
 Cooper, Alan  
 Dehmel, Rick  
 Diggles, Mike  
 Dolan, Tom  
 Dolan, Daniel  
 Durbin, Thom  
 Dvorak, Don  
 Dvorak, Elaine  
 Dyal, Palmer  
 Estey, Sue  
 Ewing, Lesley  
 Ford, Art  
 Fox, Susan  
 Freitas, Anna  
 Freitas, Paul  
 Griffith, Jerry  
 Hemming, Peter  
 Heydorn, William  
 Heyneman, Donald  
 Hicks, Harry  
 Higgins, Robert  
 Hurson, Jim  
 Hurson, Von  
 Hutchison, Alan  
 Isherwood, William  
 Jake, Krist  
 Jepsen, Anders  
 Klein, Ronald  
 Klotz, Suzanne  
 Kvenvolden, Keith  
 Langan, Lee  
 Lapham, Ellen  
 LeBonte, Alison  
 Lidicker, William Jr.  
 Lingl, Herb  
 Macbeth, Pierre de St. J.  
 McMillan, Peter H.  
 Meniketti, Marco  
 Miller, Gregory  
 Nichols, Alan  
 Prigoff, James  
 Rygh, Rebecca L.  
 Saber, Rick  
 Schmieder, Robert  
 Skade, William  
 Smith, Steve  
 Straka, Bill  
 Tarter, Jill  
 Von der Porten, Ed  
 Weil, James  
 Whiteside, Dede  
 Wren, Sherry

SIRDARS

Barnes, James  
 Boothe, Barry  
 Cohn, Lawrence  
 Cooper, William Scott Jr.  
 Crowder, Wendy  
 Durighello, Joy  
 Elkus, Nancy  
 Engstrom, Dafne  
 Heyneman, Louise  
 Hirzel, David  
 Hutchison, Ann  
 Isaac, Nancy  
 Jepsen, Kathy  
 Judd, Kathy  
 Kidd, Joe  
 Langan, Karine  
 Loew, Tim  
 Longo-Cohn, Mary  
 McLoughlin, Liz  
 Nikas, A. James III  
 O'Keefe, Bonny  
 Patterson, Tom  
 Phelps, Laura  
 Saber, Aldeana  
 Stewart, Zach  
 Straka, Barbara  
 Van Austen, Bob  
 Van Austen, Judy  
 Weiman, Mark

## From the Chair

We enjoyed another excellent meeting in March featuring an inspirational presentation by Kim Chambers, MN'16. Kim's recounting of her trials and tribulations as a marathon swimmer left most of us wondering how anyone can submit themselves willingly to such physical stress (practice by sitting for hours in a kiddie pool full of ice) and others of us thinking we need to start working out more often. Thank you to Kim for reminding us that challenges met are among life's highest rewards.

My evening's introduction included some information from the ECAD weekend and the business meetings that transpired in New York. Sandra Cook recounted, among other things, her first experience eating a scorpion and Lee Langan filled us in on some additional initiatives being planned by headquarters, including the Famous First's fund raising effort. Thank you to Lee for representing the chapter at the annual business meetings.

Our Logo Contest is moving forward. We have already received some interesting designs, and many of the meeting's attendees supplied their ideas for iconog-

raphy that represents Northern California. Suggestions ranged from Monterey Bay to Half Dome and of course included the Golden Gate. By far, most often mentioned was some variant of the giant sequoias. All ideas were food for thought. Keep them coming.

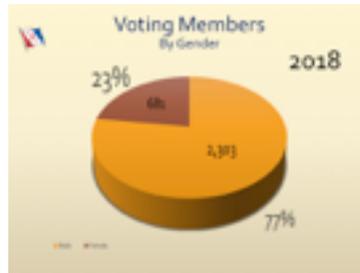
I thought I would share a couple of statistics presented at the New York Board of Director's meeting that I found especially interesting. Your NorCa Chapter is currently the fourth largest of the national chapters with official membership soon to break the 200 member level. Keeping in mind that the Club presently has about 3500 members overall, I invite you to interpret what the current demographics represent. At the very least I suggest that the club may look quite different in the next ten to fifteen years, no doubt in a good way.

Finally, I received the notice for a private presentation, described below, with the message that NorCa Chapter Members were welcome to attend as well. All it takes is an advance reservation. I heartily recommend it.

**Stephen E. Smith FN'96**



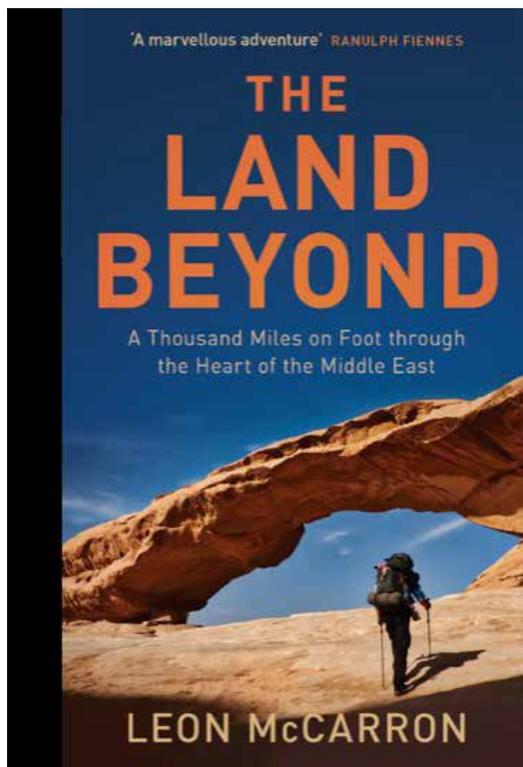
Voting members by age. Peak member age is 60-70



Voting members by gender. 77% male, 23% female



Voting members age <30. 53% female, 47% male



### EC Public Lecture Series with Leon McCarron

A Northern Irish adventurer, author, and filmmaker, McCarron is a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society and specializes in long distance, human-powered expeditions.

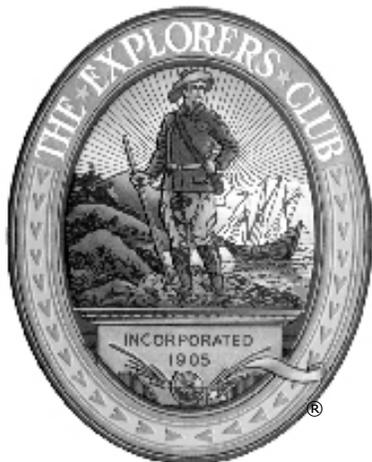
Monday April 23<sup>rd</sup> ECHQ New York

Or

A Private Event (ECNCa Invited)  
 April 19<sup>th</sup> 11:30 am  
 CLIF Bar Headquarters  
 1451 66<sup>th</sup> Street  
 Emeryville

RSVP Required by April 13<sup>th</sup>  
 Email Steve: [ecnc@oceanearth.org](mailto:ecnc@oceanearth.org)

*April 2018 Issue*  
**Northern California Chapter**  
*Established 1973*



Chair: Stephen E. Smith FN'96  
 925-934-1051(messages only)  
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 lesleycoastal@gmail.com  
 Secretary: Von Hurson MN'10  
 Trekking@sonic.net  
 Treasurer: Joan Boothe MN'07  
 hoodooskr@aol.com  
 415-233-1697  
 Webmaster: Mike Diggles FN'92  
 Newsletter: Anders Jepsen FN'03  
 ajviking@aol.com  
 925-322-8893

**Chapter Calendar of Events**  
 (Venues are identified as soon as known.)

2018  
 April 27 . . . . . Alan Eustace  
 The Stratospheric Jump . . . . . Dolan  
 May 30 . . . . . 3 Term EC Members  
 Explorers Grant Reports/Annual mtg . . . Dolan  
 July 21 . . . . . Picnic TBA

**Earlier Chapter Events**  
 2016

November 18, 2016 . . . . . Dr. Bob Schmieder  
 2016 Heard Island Expedition . . Grace Luth Ch  
 December 11 . . . . . Holiday Party  
 Home of Chapter Chair Joan Boothe

2017

January 27 . . . . . David Helvarg  
 The Blue Ocean . . . . . Grace Luth Ch  
 February 23 . . . . . David Rumsey  
 Rumsey Map Center . . . . Stanford University  
 March 31. . . . . Eric Weiss  
 Expedition Medicine . . . . . Grace Luth Ch  
 April 28. . . . . Sandy Ross  
 Afghanistan pre-Taliban . . . . Grace Luth Ch  
 May 26 . . . . . J.R. Skok  
 Seeking Life Signs on Mars Spengers, Berkeley  
 June 24 . . . . . Chapter Picnic  
 . . . . . Angel Island  
 September 22 . . . . . Dr. Anders Jepsen  
 Drones to map landmines . . . Grace Luth Ch  
 October 27 . . . . . Dirk Rosen  
 Save Deep Sea Corals . . . . Grace Lutheran Ch  
 November 17 . . . . . Jordan Fisher Smith  
 Engineering Eden . . . . . Grace Lutheran Ch  
 December 17 . . . . . Holiday Party  
 . . . . . Home of Joan and Barry Boothe  
 January 26 . . . . . Dr. John All  
 Climate Change on Mt. Everest. . . . Dolan  
 February 23 . . . . . Dr. Sherry Wren  
 Surgical Approaches in the Ebola Crisis . Dolan  
 March 30 . . . . . Kimberley Chambers  
 Swimming With Sharks Before Breakfast . Dolan

Send address changes and  
 corrections by email to  
 ecnca@oceaneearth.org

**Call to Chapter Artists and Graphic Designers**  
**Second Call**

The Northern California Chapter needs a Chapter Logo. Many of our National and International Chapters have one and we should too. Your Board is looking for ideas for an image which could be used on various items associated with our chapter (shirts, hats, cups, etc.) as well as being featured on awards and our website.

Some general design guidelines would include:

- \* Easily reproducible in print, online, and material applications.
- \* Imagery evoking Northern California and/or exploration.
- \* Serve as a unique representation of one of The Club's largest chapters.

Design submissions need not be final proofs. A simple line sketch will suffice to communicate your idea to Chair Steve Smith at ecnca@oceaneearth.org

**Demonstrate your creativity!**

**Lee Langan's Notes from Annual Meeting (continued from page 1)**

VP R&D Julie Chase reported: grants were offered to 37 students at an average of \$1300 each; 42 Explorers were given an average of \$1200 each. These modest grants totaled about \$100,000 while the applications requested \$1,000,000.

Ombudsman Brian Hanson reported that Astronauts James Lovell (Apollo 13, etc.) and Charles Duke (10th Moonwalker) are new Honorary Members.

Library & Archives Co-chair Faanya Rose reported the Club received \$154,000 from the auction of 78 non-exploration books.

VP Membership Alex Wallace reported the member database has been successfully converted to a capability provided by Salesforce at no cost, an exceptional resource which will allow rapid access to member details and interests plus coordination with financial and fund-raising abilities.

Treasurer Bruce Blanchard stated that member dues do not even cover staff payroll. TEC is a charity (as defined by the IRS) whose purpose is to support scientific exploration and field research. We cannot pay for activities of members not directed as such. Member's dues are unrestricted "donations", and all events are anticipated to return at least 15% on their investment. The Famous First campaign is designed to further support unrestricted costs.

**A NOTE OF THANKS**

Those of you who attended the last meeting probably noticed how the visuals in the new venue were working much better. This is thanks to the efforts of the Dolan IT specialist James Barnes, who is the husband of Chapter Member Nancy Elkus. If you have a chance at the next meeting, be sure to thank him for his efforts to make that part of our meeting run smoothly. AJ

**CHAPTER MEETING**  
**Friday, April 27, 2018**

Place: The Dolan Law Firm  
 1438 Market Street  
 San Francisco, CA 94102  
 Time: 6:30 - reception  
 7:15 - dinner; 8:00 - program  
 Meal Options: chicken picatta / tri-tip of beef  
 Veggie option - pasta primavera  
 Cost: \$49 in advance, \$60 after 27 March; Students: \$35.  
 (2018 dues: Members \$25, Sirdars \$50)  
 Please mail reservations, checks & dues to Steve Smith  
 email: ecnca@oceaneearth.org; or Call 925-934-1051  
 or mail to 402 Via Royal, Walnut Creek, CA 94596

**We have an established PayPal account.**

With an account, you can sign up and remit your meal costs, dues, etc. to the NorCA Chapter  
There is a PAYPAL BUTTON on our website ([www.explorersnorca.org](http://www.explorersnorca.org)); easy to use!