

# Presentation to City of San Diego Parks and Recreation Board

## Item 101: Proposal for Bottom Scratchers Commemorative Plaque at Ellen Browning Scripps park



The original Bottom Scratchers—1939 La Jolla Caves Area  
Left to Right: Glen Orr, Jack Corbaly, Ben Stone, Bill Batzloff, Jack Prodanovic

Presented by: Volker Hoehne, San Diego Freedivers  
February 15, 2024

# BOTTOM SCRATCHERS

First Spearfishing Club formed in La Jolla

“The Bottom Scratchers, organized in 1933, is the oldest and most exclusive skin-diving club in the world. In forty-five years, the group has accepted only nineteen members. [All have passed]. In the sport of diving, which they freely admit to inventing, there is no more prestigious a title than Bottom Scratcher. They are the grandfathers of scuba diving because they are the fathers of skin diving. The club’s members developed or discovered the fundamental equipment and techniques for encountering the ocean beneath its surface, and in so doing unzipped it for the probing and hungry hands of future generations.” (Neal Matthews, San Diego Reader, 1978)



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# BOTTOM SCRATCHERS MEMBER CONTRIBUTIONS

- Fathers of underwater spear fishing (goggle diving, skin diving, and breath-hold diving)
- Invented speargun reel, Power head, double action speargun trigger
- Initiated creation of La Jolla Ecological Reserve
- Pioneered underwater photography
- First diving club in the United States (some say, in the world)
- Founders of San Diego Port District dive team
- Founding director of Hubbs Sea World
- First Diving Chief of Scripps
- CO2 activated safety float
- Model for sustainable one fish spearfishing competitions

## **Approved Verbiage by La Jolla Parks and Beaches**

“Since 1933, offshore from this beach access, the seafloor bears memorial markers to name and honor San Diego’s most heralded underwater pioneers.

The San Diego Bottom Scratchers Dive Club.

The Bottom Scratchers dedicated every dive to preventing the waste of sea life and to helping others appreciate the wonders of the sea.

All who enter here fall under oath to do the same.

Plaque donated by San Diego Freedivers”



Bronze plaque  
donated and  
attached to  
boulder by San  
Diego Freedivers.

Installation of the  
plaque will be in  
collaboration with  
Parks and  
Recreation



Plaque size 12 in across and 16 inches high





# Location

- The Memorial Plaque would be placed on a preexisting cement footprint next to the bench





# Underwater Memorial Markers





# Memorial Markers in the News



OPENDIVESITES.ORG  
SAN DIEGO SCUBA GUIDE



EVERYDAY CALIFORNIA

SAN DIEGO  
Reader

Top-Rated.online

Tombstones memorials - Historical landmark in San Diego, United States

LA JOLLA LIGHT

SAN DIEGO  
MAGAZINE

Secret San Diego

## Supporters

- La Jolla Parks & Beaches, Inc.
- Coastal Conservation Association of California (CCA CAL)
- San Diego Freedivers
- Watermens Alliance
- La Jolla Cove Swim Club, est. 1976
- Ocean Access Advocates
- Friends of Childrens Pool
- North County Depth Finders
- Boomer Body Surfer Group
- San Diego Council of Divers
- A. Palinkas, citizen and diving historian.

I would be appreciative of your support in honoring local legends and their contributions to marine conservation and diving.

**Please approve the installation of this commemorative plaque at  
Ellen Browning Scripps Park**

THANK YOU  
Volker Hoehne 619-994-4175