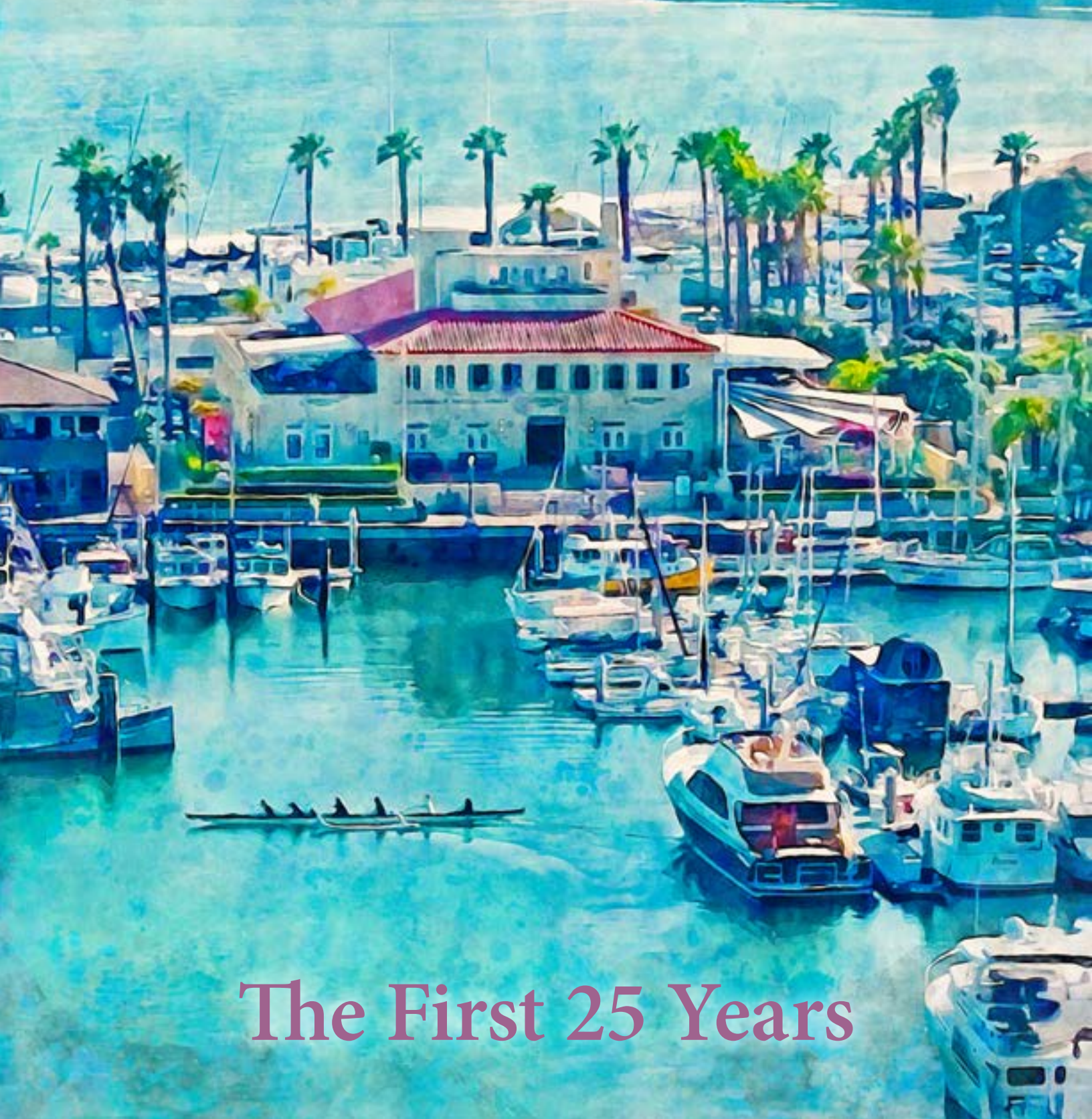


Santa Barbara Maritime Museum

Logbook of a Legacy



The First 25 Years



It started with an idea — backed with tenacity, will power, and a wanting to succeed. Weekly meetings turned into action, each step in the process leading to another step, and then another. Through stewardship and dedication, the dream of a maritime museum was realized.

The pages within this book tell many stories — of the early founders, staff members, volunteers, and more. Collectively, these stories recount the history of the Santa Barbara Maritime Museum’s first 25 years — just the beginning of a long-lasting legacy.

Today, SBMM is a place where community is built, and connections are made. Where the interconnectedness to the ocean, maritime history, and the marine environment continues to be explored. As we look back, we are reminded of how far we have come. As we continue to steer the SBMM ship onward, we look forward to “fair winds and following seas” — may we have gentle breezes and calm waters ahead.

Bob Kieding: A Steady Hand at the Helm of SBMM's Founding

Bob Kieding's life has always been shaped by the sea. Born in Illinois but raised in Santa Barbara, Bob grew up sailing with his father and eventually became a captain bringing boats up the California coast from Los Angeles to Santa Barbara. One of his early sailing experiences — returning from Hawaii to the mainland aboard a motorless boat after the Transpacific Yacht Race — left a lasting impression. The rhythm of the ocean, the sound of the wind and waves, and the long stretches of watch duty all furthered his love of sailing and the sea.

“It has come a long way,” he says. “Originally, we were going to get a small portion of the building, and now it has become bigger than we could have imagined. I am very happy with how it turned out.”

Bob's passion for sailing and maritime history found its most lasting expression in the founding of the Santa Barbara Maritime Museum. When the city received the old Naval Reserve Building and wasn't sure what to do with it, Bob gathered like-minded individuals to preserve the harbor's history. From those early meetings at his business, the Chandlery, the seed of the museum was planted. Bob became the point person, working closely with designer Nick DiNapoli and architect Barry Berkus. The project was greatly bolstered by a chance encounter with philanthropist Charlie Munger, who walked by the Naval Reserve Building one day when Bob happened to be out front. Bob shared the plans with Mr. Munger who declared, “I love museums!” before offering crucial funding needed to build momentum for the project.

Bob's leadership was both practical and visionary. He was out front promoting the museum to the public and behind the scenes securing artifacts



like the historic flagship *Ranger*, which lent instant credibility to the fledgling museum. He also contributed personal maritime items — from etchings to old outboard motors — and helped write exhibit descriptions. As the museum began to take shape, it was Bob who kept pushing it forward, ensuring that it would reflect the rich, complex maritime story of the Santa Barbara coast.

In the early days, the city had plans to turn the harbor area into a shopping mall, but the vision Bob and his team presented changed minds. Working alongside a dedicated team, Bob championed the early exhibits, always emphasizing that history includes both triumph and hardship — and that both must be shown.

Today, Bob reflects on the museum's growth with pride. “It has come a long way,” he says. “Originally, we were going to get a small portion of the building, and now it has become bigger than we could have imagined. I am very happy with how it turned out.” What started as a dream has become a cornerstone of Santa Barbara's cultural life — and a premier museum at the heart of the Santa Barbara Harbor.

Building a Legacy: The Founding of the Santa Barbara Maritime Museum

Originally from Los Angeles, John Poucher went to school in the Bay Area and earned a law degree before settling in Santa Barbara. He spent his career working for Hollister & Brace, focusing on business and real estate and related litigation, also representing local business owners in legal matters, transactions, and civil litigation. John was connected to Bob Kieding, who at the time was working toward the creation of a maritime museum. Bob soon brought John into the inner circle of individuals meeting regularly to make this dream a reality. “At the time, Bob owned the Chandlery, and the group would meet weekly in Bob's office,” said John. “I believe we met for at least three years before the museum opened.”

In the early stages, there was no building, no funding, and no formal organization — just a shared belief that Santa Barbara needed a space to celebrate its maritime past. John assisted in the preparation of essential documents such as the original Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws. These steps were critical, and the swift completion of SBMM's 501 (c)(3) status allowed Jack Morehart to donate the historic vessel, *Ranger*. The flagship served as a visible, tangible symbol of the museum's potential — an asset that helped galvanize public and political support at a crucial moment. “It was due to the persistence, vision, and dedication of one man — Bob Kieding — that the museum happened,” said John. “Bob was at the center of it all, and the museum never would have come to be without his leadership.”

When the Naval Reserve Building on the waterfront became available, competition for its use was fierce. But the maritime museum team, backed by a growing network of supporters, packed a public meeting to demonstrate overwhelming community interest. With help from advocates like Council Member Rusty Fairly, the City of Santa

Barbara eventually agreed to lease the building for the museum's use. Still, the challenges weren't over. The structure required \$1 million in seismic retrofitting before it could safely open to the public. Bob Kieding once again stepped up, raising the necessary funds and working with major supporters such as Jean and Barry Schuyler and Helen and Ed Wilson. “We were hoping, in our initial conversations, to find a place where we could establish maritime exhibits and tell the history of maritime activities in the Santa Barbara area and the channel,” said John. “It was fortuitous that the Navel Reserve Building went back to the city otherwise we might not be along the waterfront. It took a lot of fortitude, but we were able to move forward with the perfect location.”

What started as an ambitious idea in a small office became one of the region's most beloved cultural institutions — a reminder that big dreams, when matched with perseverance, can leave a lasting legacy. “One thing led to the next, and each step broadened the possibilities as the museum was built up step-by-step,” said John. “In hindsight it might look like it was meant to happen but really at the time it was not destined. It only occurred because of Bob's hard work and dedication.”



Roger and Sarah Chrisman: Preserving the Past, Shaping the Future at SBMM

Roger and Sarah Chrisman have long been a steady force behind the Santa Barbara Maritime Museum's growth, influence, and longevity. Lifelong boaters and passionate community members, their story with SBMM began with a shared love for the ocean and a deep appreciation for the region's maritime legacy.

"In the beginning, it was a Yacht Club project," Roger recalls. "But it quickly became a broader vision for the entire Santa Barbara community." It was friends and early supporters Jean and Barry Schuyler who first invited the Chrismans to get involved. Since then, they've remained integral to the museum's development, not just as generous supporters, but as visionaries who helped shape its core mission of conservation and education.

One of their proudest contributions is the acquisition and preservation of the Point Conception Lighthouse Lens, a First Order Fresnel Lens crafted in France in 1854. "It's not just a piece of history — it's a work of art," Roger explains. The intricate process of relocating the massive, 6,000-pound lens from the remote lighthouse to the museum was no small feat. "We had to fly parts out by helicopter. The logistics were wild, but the reward was seeing it light up the exhibit space. It was a turning point for the museum," he says.

The lens is now a beloved centerpiece and a powerful symbol of SBMM's mission. Roger even discovered an original electric lightbulb from the lens — in a Santa Barbara burger joint, no less — bringing humor and serendipity to an otherwise daunting undertaking.

Beyond exhibits, the Chrismans have been strong advocates for expanding SBMM's educational programs, particularly those that get students out on the water. "Boats like the *Spirit of Dana Point* and



the *Mystic Whaler* have been incredible platforms for learning," Roger notes. The programs connect students with hands-on maritime experiences, local ecology, and ocean stewardship. "Kids remember these moments forever," Sarah adds. "It's one thing to read about the sea; it's another to sail on it."

The Chrismans believe SBMM's true strength lies in its people — board members, volunteers, and staff. And looking ahead, they envision deeper collaborations with local organizations.

With a passion rooted in action, Roger and Sarah Chrisman have helped transform SBMM from a fledgling idea into one of the top maritime museums in the nation. As the museum celebrates its 25th anniversary, their legacy continues to inspire. "We're proud of what SBMM has become," says Roger. "And we're even more excited for what's next."



"Kids remember these moments forever, it's one thing to read about the sea; it's another to sail on it." — Sarah Chrisman

Brad Proffitt: A Founding Spirit of SBMM's Legacy

Before the Santa Barbara Maritime Museum opened its doors in July 2000, Brad Proffitt was already helping lay its foundation. Introduced to the project by longtime marine education advocates Tom Fuller and Miriam Polne-Fuller, Brad joined the museum effort in 1998 — when it was still just architectural renderings and a bold vision.

“We would table at local festivals and share our vision for the future,” said Brad. “We’d tell people that one day there would be a maritime museum here at the harbor.” He helped compile SBMM’s very first volunteer list, affectionately referring to those early contributors as the “dirty dozen.” They were the heart of the Preview Center — now the location of Dart Coffee at the harbor — answering questions, rallying support, and building community momentum.

While working at GM Delco/EDS, Brad became involved with the Jason Project, a science education initiative founded by Dr. Robert Ballard, famed oceanographer and discoverer of the RMS *Titanic*. With support from EDS, and beginning in 1998, Brad helped bring the Jason Project to SBMM. The program continued through 2006, and a highlight came in 2003 when SBMM hosted the project for two weeks, presenting science programming focused on the Santa Barbara Channel and Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary, inspiring thousands of students and families.

“I barely got through the first page of my proposal, and then-SBMM President Rusty Fairly said, ‘I like it. Let’s do it,’” Brad remembers. “If you influence even one child or parent, it’s worth it.”

Although not involved in the installation of the periscope in the submarine exhibit, Brad feels a deep personal connection to it. Both his father, Floyd Proffitt, and family friend Bill Azbill served as

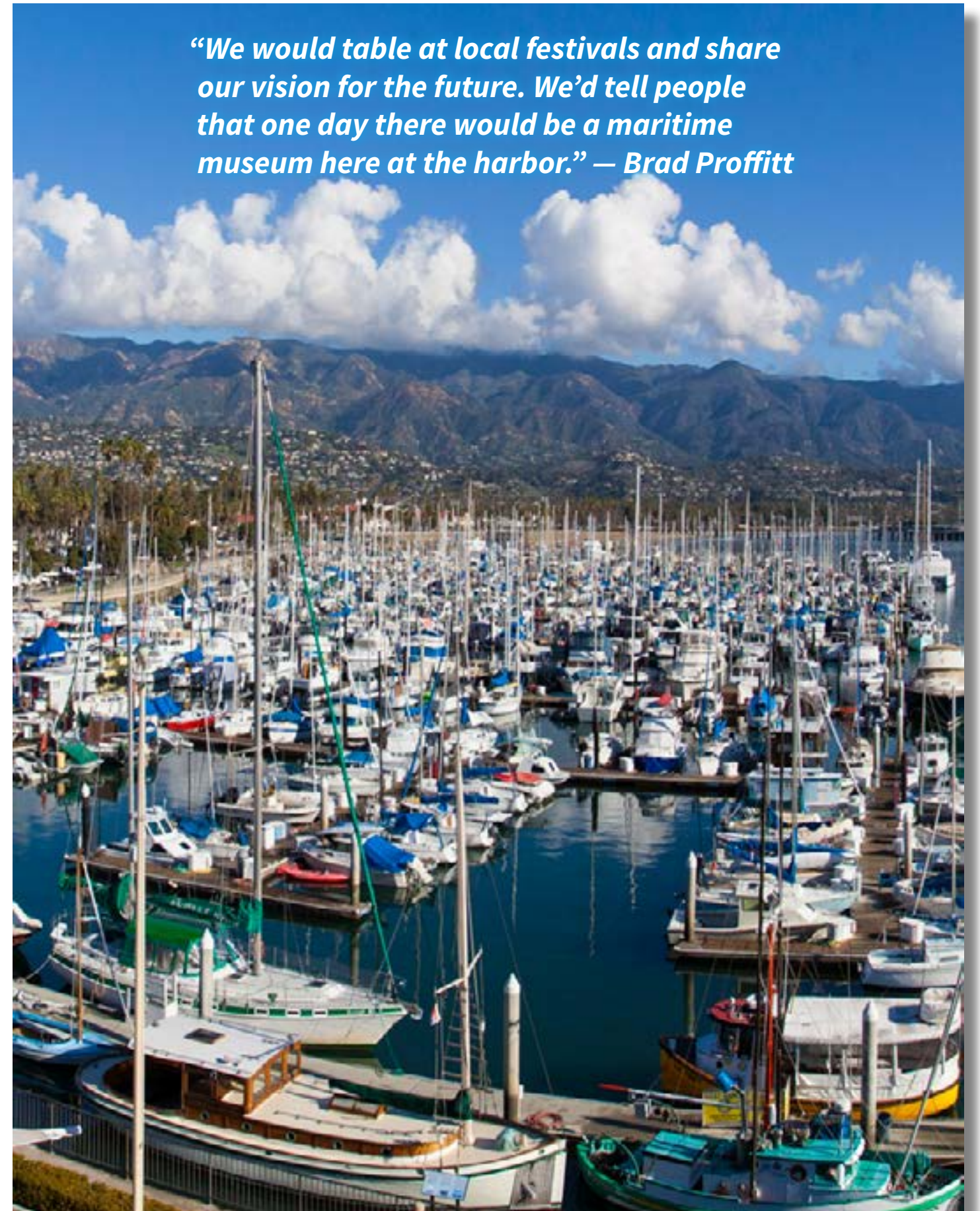


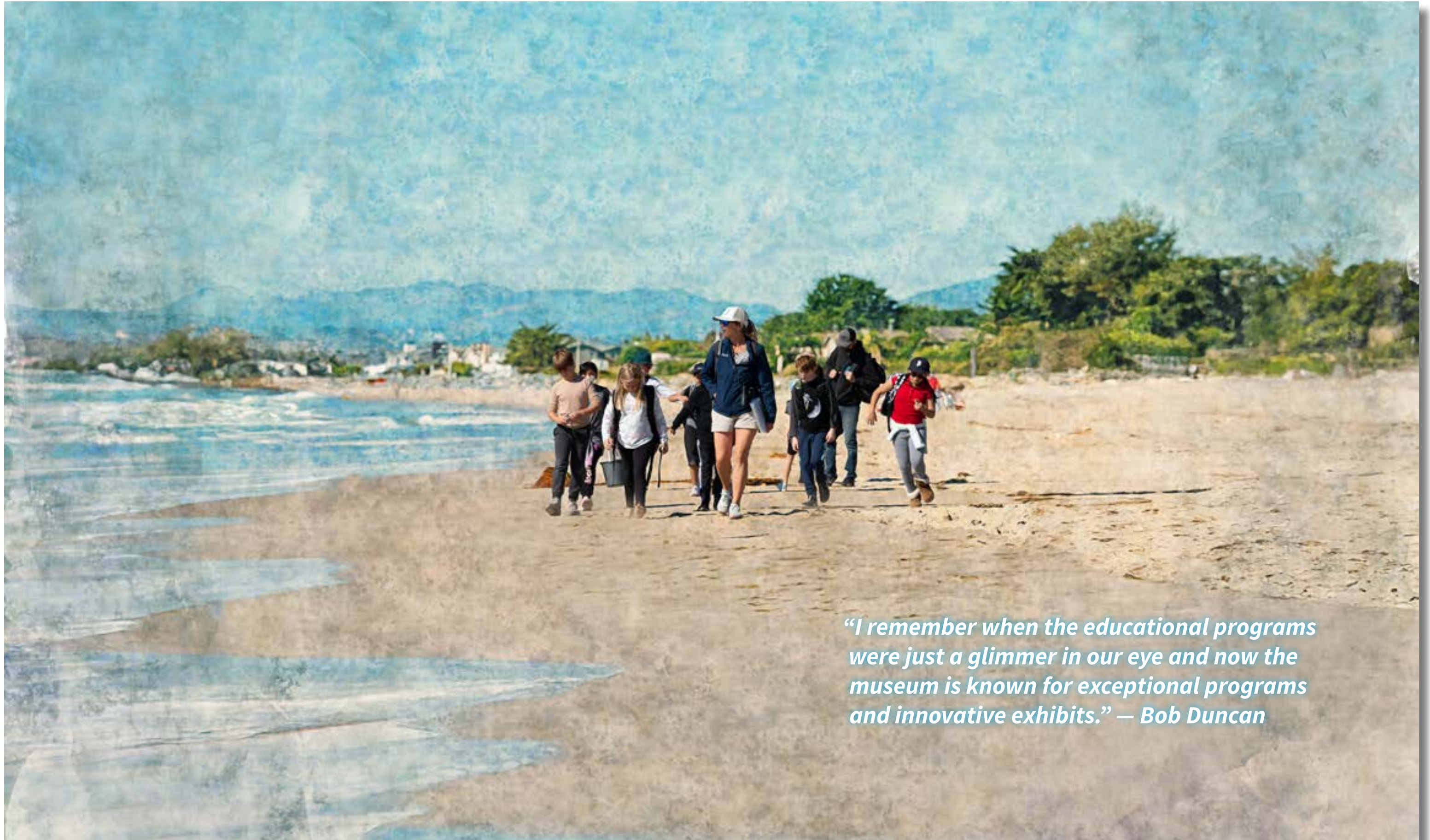
submariners during World War II. Azbill generously donated funds to help bring the periscope to SBMM, making its presence at the museum especially meaningful to Brad and reinforcing the importance of honoring maritime history and those who lived it. From early Science Nights to decades of volunteerism, Brad has worn many hats — docent, educator, team leader, and steadfast supporter — as SBMM evolved from a dream into one of the top maritime museums in the nation.

“I was a baseball player — teamwork is in my spirit,” he says. “Just being around great people, working toward a shared mission for the harbor and the community, has been a blessing.”

As SBMM celebrates its 25th anniversary, Brad remains humble. “Legacy? I don’t know about that. But I do know I was lucky to be part of something special. The Jason Project, the events, the volunteers — we started small, and look how far we’ve come.”

“We would table at local festivals and share our vision for the future. We’d tell people that one day there would be a maritime museum here at the harbor.” — Brad Proffitt





“I remember when the educational programs were just a glimmer in our eye and now the museum is known for exceptional programs and innovative exhibits.” — Bob Duncan

Anchored in Legacy: George Writer Leaves Lasting Impact on SBMM

Before moving to Santa Barbara in the early 2000s, SBMM Emeritus Board Member George “Geoie” Writer had visited the city for years. A seasoned sailor who came to the sport in his late 30s, Geoie enjoyed racing a variety of boats before finally purchasing his own. Over the years, he raced competitively, even participating in the prestigious Transpacific Yacht Race a few times. Sailing is still a passion for Geoie – one that he continues to enjoy through his crew of friends and connection to the Santa Barbara Harbor.

Geoie was introduced to the Santa Barbara Maritime Museum through Barry Berkus, a longtime friend and colleague. Invited to attend an event, Geoie and his wife Judy walked through the doors of the museum and straight into an unforgettable moment. The power went out, and Barry asked Geoie to speak, announcing to the crowd that Geoie — whose grandfather had been part of the tragic Honda Disaster — would share the story. Having just read a book on the topic, Geoie captivated the audience for five minutes until the lights returned. That spontaneous storytelling marked the beginning of a long and wonderful relationship with the museum.

Shortly after that first museum event, Geoie was asked to join SBMM’s Board of Directors. At the time, the museum had only a fraction of the exhibits it showcases today, but its potential was clear. Over time, he served as treasurer, vice president, and president; also playing a key role in navigating one of the museum’s greatest financial challenges — its expensive lease agreement with the city. Alongside Jean Schuyler and other community leaders, Geoie helped renegotiate the lease, ultimately arranging a buyout that led to significant monthly savings for the museum. As co-chair of the Fundraising Committee, Geoie played a pivotal role in making the deal a reality.



Beyond the lease buyout, Geoie also helped shape the museum’s executive leadership and long-term fundraising strategies. He has witnessed the board evolve and grow, with increasingly talented members helping to elevate the museum’s reach and impact. Under his guidance and that of his peers, the institution has continued to thrive and serve as a cornerstone of the Santa Barbara waterfront.

For Geoie, the Santa Barbara Maritime Museum will always be a special place, and he is especially fond of the *Storms at Sea* exhibit and the museum’s impressive First Order Fresnel Lens. Looking ahead, Geoie is optimistic about the museum’s future. As he reflects on SBMM’s journey, he remains positive. “I am hopeful we will remain on the same trajectory we are on now. That would be fabulous.” For someone whose first visit began with a blackout, Geoie Writer has certainly helped ensure the museum’s light shines on for generations to come.

Farewell to a Legacy: Greg Gorga Reflects on His SBMM Journey

After 18 years as the executive director of the Santa Barbara Maritime Museum, Greg Gorga leaves behind a legacy of growth, resilience, and community impact. Greg takes immense pride in his role at SBMM, describing it as the most rewarding position of his 40-plus-year career. Under his leadership, the museum weathered difficult times yet still managed to grow and thrive.

Two key achievements stand out for Greg: the buyout of SBMM’s lease, which ensured the museum’s long-term sustainability, and the successful installation of the Point Conception First Order Fresnel Lens, a project that became a focal point of the museum. “I remember we had to coordinate with the United States Coast Guard and ranch owners to transport the 6,000-pound historic object to its new home, which was a massive undertaking,” said Greg. “But in the end, it was worth it to see visitors spending much time admiring this incredible lens, probably the most significant maritime artifact on the California coast.”

Beyond the physical exhibits, Greg is proud of the relationships he has built over the years. He fondly remembers working with prominent figures in the maritime community, such as Ernie Brooks, Jean-Michel Cousteau, Lad Handelman, Bob Kirby, Shaun Tomson, and Renny Yater, as well as his dedicated team of staff and volunteers.

As he prepares for retirement, Greg’s hope for the museum’s future is clear. He wants SBMM to continue bringing in top-notch art exhibits and inspiring young people to care for our oceans. The museum’s commitment to education has garnered national recognition, bringing thousands of local students to the water and fostering a love for the ocean. He remains emphatic about the importance of bridging the education gap for students in Santa



Barbara, a county with high levels of poverty, by providing them with hands-on, project-based learning experiences. “Those kids are going to go on to do great things,” he said.

Greg is especially appreciative of the donors, members, and foundations that have provided support to SBMM over the years. “It is through their generosity that the museum has been able to create high-quality, interactive exhibits and provide our project-based, nationally recognized education programs free of charge to thousands of Title I schools throughout the county. We could not continue to grow without them.”

As Greg transitions into his next chapter, he leaves behind a thriving institution that has become a cornerstone of the Santa Barbara community. His leadership, vision, and passion for both the museum and the people who make it great will be remembered for years to come.

Navigating Futures: How One Educator’s SBMM Partnership Transformed Lives

Ron Maderas, a passionate educator for more than 30 years, and dedicated advocate for enriching student experiences, has a long-standing connection to SBMM that has profoundly impacted his students and his community. His story reveals the transformative power of maritime education and the enduring relationship between a small-town school and a cultural institution.

A Serendipitous Start

Ron first encountered SBMM while serving as the dean of students at Olga Reed School, a K-8 school located in Los Alamos, California. His principal handed him a brochure about an educational program offering students the chance to spend a night on a tall ship. Intrigued, Ron reached out to SBMM, forging a partnership that would become a cornerstone of his school’s fourth-grade social studies curriculum. “From the very beginning, it was clear this was no ordinary field trip,” Ron shared. “The tall ship experience was immersive. Students spent the night on the ship, took part in watches, and truly felt like sailors. It wasn’t just educational; it was transformative.”

A Growing Bond

Over the years, Ron nurtured his relationship with SBMM. He worked closely with museum staff, ensuring his students would benefit from SBMM’s many programs. The Tall Ship program was just the beginning. Ron’s students also participate in Marine Science, where they learn about the local harbor ecosystem. “Having had the unique privilege and distinct pleasure of bringing hundreds of my students to share in the exceptional educational opportunities provided us by SBMM has been one of the personal highlights of my 30+ years teaching career,” said Ron. “To this day, both parents and former students visit to share with me their warm remembrances of these once-in-a-lifetime experiences. Each of us participating teachers owes



a debt of gratitude to the truly wonderful folks at SBMM, for all they’ve done to support our teaching of both California history and the vast resources off our coast through their Marine Science program.”

Looking Ahead

As Ron approaches the end of his teaching career, he hopes the programs he helped champion will continue to thrive. He remains a steadfast supporter of SBMM, grateful for the memories it has created for his students and their families. “The Santa Barbara Maritime Museum isn’t just a museum,” Ron said. “It’s a beacon of learning, creativity, and community — a place where lifelong memories are made.”



“The Santa Barbara Maritime Museum isn’t just a museum, it’s a beacon of learning, creativity, and community — a place where lifelong memories are made.” — Ron Maderas

Family Legacy Lives on Through SBMM Former Board President Chuck Wilson

When Chuck Wilson joined the SBMM Board of Directors, he knew he had big shoes to fill as his parents Ed and Helen Wilson were both founding keystone members of the museum when it opened in July 2000. Chuck has fond memories growing up in Santa Barbara before leaving to attend college at USC, ultimately receiving a master's degree in public administration and city planning. He later built a career in city planning and community development in the Orange County area while maintaining a close connection to his family in Santa Barbara. "I remember coming to Santa Barbara to visit my parents and my father wanting to show me something at the harbor," said Chuck. "He brought me to the Navel Reserve Building, which at the time had a large basketball court inside. He said they were going to build a maritime museum, and I was thrilled my parents got to see the museum open its doors during their lifetime."

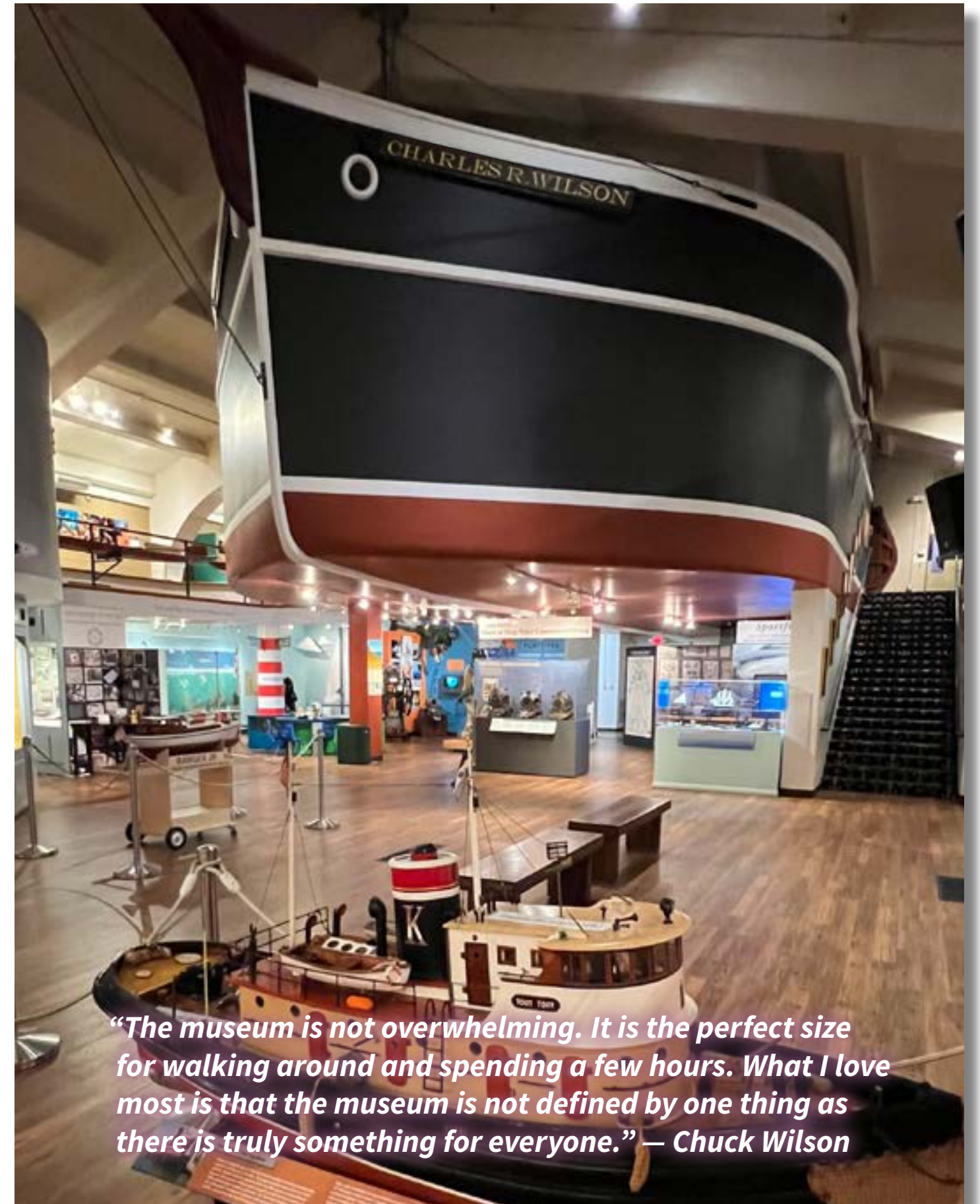
The Wilson family has a deep connection to maritime history, especially in the Pacific Northwest. In the late 19th century, Chuck's great-grandfather Henry Wilson moved from Sweden to Aberdeen, Washington, where he and his brothers founded the Wilson Bros. & Co lumber mill business on the banks of the Chehalis River in Aberdeen. The company later expanded into the shipping business and owned more than 15 large sailing schooners and steam vessels during its career. They delivered lumber products to many ports including Santa Barbara. "Both of my parents, but especially my father, were excited about starting a maritime museum because my father had old documents from the shipping company," said Chuck. "It was important for me to stay involved after my parents passed away, joining the board in 2014 as a second-generation legacy."

Just as his parents before him, Chuck and his wife Mary are very interested in the museum's



educational programs and the opportunities the museum provides for youth to learn more about the ocean. "Our work looks to the past but also moves into the future as we tackle important issues facing the ocean and conservation," said Chuck. "The artifacts and the history are the foundation, but we also go beyond our walls — collaborating with others so that we can do the best for our community."

Chuck appreciates how multifaceted the museum remains as it is constantly evolving to include changing exhibits and interactive components while highlighting cornerstone objects such as the First Order Fresnel Lens. "The museum is not overwhelming. It is the perfect size for walking around and spending a few hours," said Chuck. "What I love most is that the museum is not defined by one thing as there is truly something for everyone."



"The museum is not overwhelming. It is the perfect size for walking around and spending a few hours. What I love most is that the museum is not defined by one thing as there is truly something for everyone." — Chuck Wilson

Melissa M. Moore: Bridging Worlds Through Maritime Education

Melissa M. Moore has long cherished the coastal beauty and maritime culture of Santa Barbara, where she grew up. Today, as a dedicated marine science teacher at Lompoc High School, she’s not just teaching; she’s igniting curiosity in her students while fostering deep connections to the ocean. Each year, she brings groups of students from Lompoc on field trips to the Santa Barbara Maritime Museum, as many have never had the chance to explore Santa Barbara Harbor or set foot in a museum. For these students, stepping into the museum or experiencing the ocean aboard a boat opens the door to new passions and career paths they may never have considered.

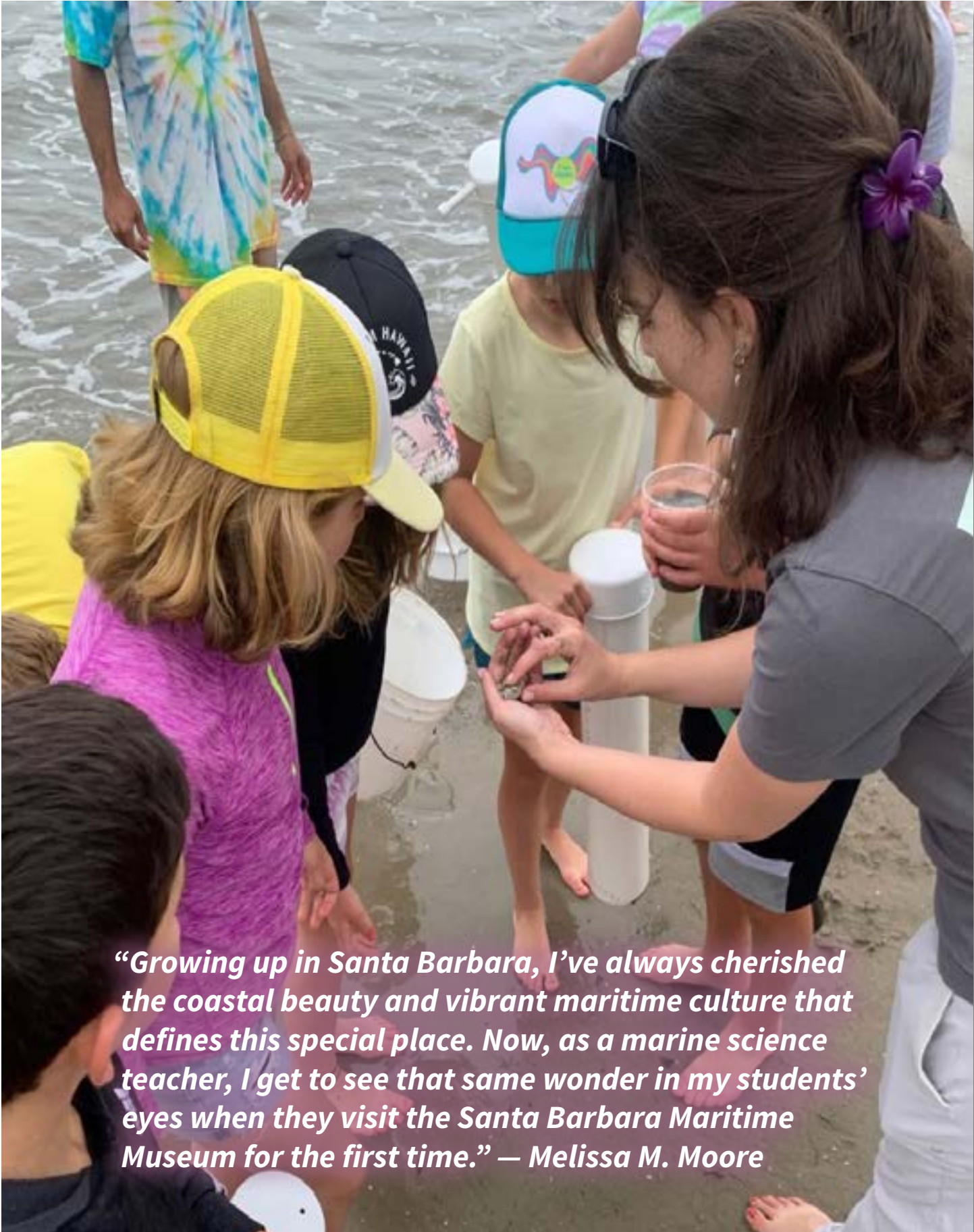
SBMM’s education programs offer Melissa’s students unique opportunities to engage with the history, science, and maritime culture of the Santa Barbara Channel. Throughout the field trips, wide-eyed students listen to docents share captivating stories of shipwrecks, rescues, and local heroes. Melissa has seen her students’ curiosity ignite as they explore the exhibits, capturing photos of intricate boat models, and even tying traditional sailor knots. Experiences like hearing personal accounts from local diving legends create lasting memories that spark interest in marine sciences and a deeper connection to their coastal heritage.

“Growing up in Santa Barbara, I’ve always cherished the coastal beauty and vibrant maritime culture that defines this special place. Now, as a marine science teacher, I get to see that same wonder in my students’ eyes when they visit the Santa Barbara Maritime Museum for the first time,” said Melissa. “Many of them, despite living nearby, have never had the chance to explore our harbor or set foot in a museum. These experiences ignite curiosity, making sure every child has a chance to discover the ocean’s magic and find inspiration along Santa Barbara’s coast.”

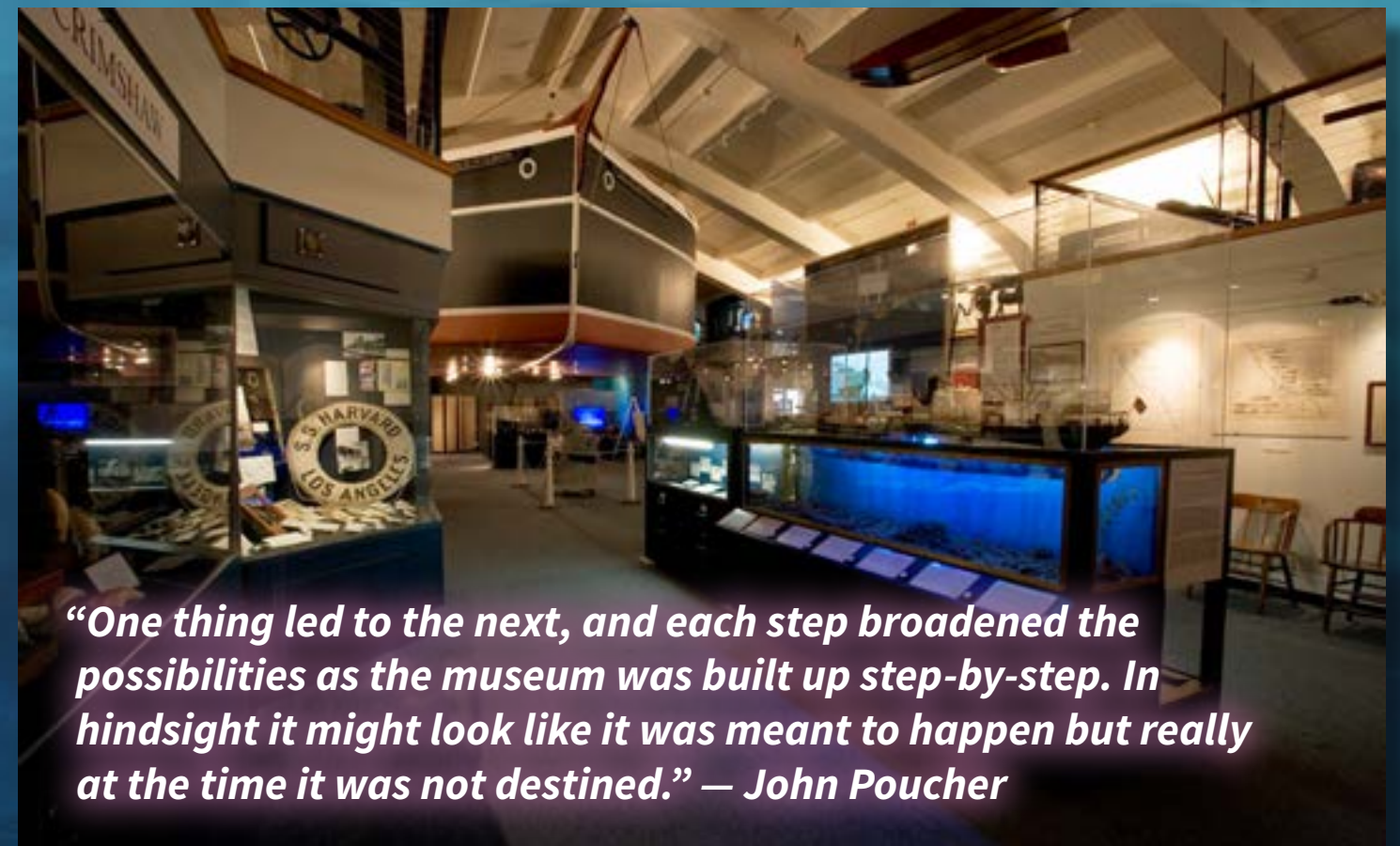


Reflecting on the museum’s role in her life and her students’ lives, Melissa acknowledges the museum’s unique ability to bridge communities across Santa Barbara County. “North County is part of our maritime culture, too,” she says. Her own connection to Santa Barbara’s history is deeply personal; her father worked for the Santa Barbara newspaper as a photographer, and her family’s roots in the area have influenced her dedication to her community. Through her involvement with the Santa Barbara Maritime Museum, Melissa’s legacy is already unfolding — one student, one field trip, and one newfound curiosity at a time.

“I invite everyone to help preserve and expand this incredible legacy by supporting cultural institutions like the Santa Barbara Maritime Museum,” said Melissa. “Together, we can ensure that future generations have the opportunity to explore, discover, and be inspired by the beauty and history along Santa Barbara’s shores.”



“Growing up in Santa Barbara, I’ve always cherished the coastal beauty and vibrant maritime culture that defines this special place. Now, as a marine science teacher, I get to see that same wonder in my students’ eyes when they visit the Santa Barbara Maritime Museum for the first time.” — Melissa M. Moore



“One thing led to the next, and each step broadened the possibilities as the museum was built up step-by-step. In hindsight it might look like it was meant to happen but really at the time it was not destined.” — John Poucher

Chad Makela Feels the Spark of Engagement for SBMM

Board Member Chad Makela has always loved the ocean. As a youth, he was a competitive surfer and a certified lifeguard. On weekends, his family would spend time on their boat in the harbor. Chad has seen SBMM grow and evolve — engaging with the museum through youth programs when he was young and now that he is an adult, serving as a legacy board member. “The experience of coming through SBMM really changed me,” said Chad. “I know the impact SBMM had on me personally, and I see the benefits of getting involved. The museum’s mission is tangible to me as I have lived my life in and around the ocean.”

Chad was around 10-years old when construction began on the museum and he remembers walking up the stairs to take a peek. Once the doors opened, he loved all the interactive exhibits, especially *Sportfishing*. As he got older, he often volunteered with his brother Cody, serving as a docent for the Tall Ship program. “As a volunteer, I saw kids who were hesitant to get on a boat. And then, at the end of a two-hour program, didn’t want to leave,” said Chad. “Once participants go through something like the Tall Ship program, it lights a spark that really changes them.”

As a youth, Chad became aware of the Jason Project, which was put on by *National Geographic*. Dr. Robert Ballard (who discovered the *Titanic*) would go to different locations across the globe to highlight specific environmental problems and issues in these regions. When the Jason Project came to Santa Barbara (to conduct research on the Anacapa Island fox), Chad was selected to be a local argonaut, which meant he was an ambassador in his community. “To participate, I needed a sponsor, and locally, the maritime museum was one of those sponsorship organizations helping kids get involved,” said Chad. “Two years later, I was a national argonaut. The museum gladly sponsored



me again in addition to becoming a local hub for the public to view the expedition’s live broadcast.”

After the Jason Project, SBMM continued as a touchstone for the Makela family, with Chad’s mother Cindy serving on committees and as a long-time board member. “It was especially nice for my family to be able to give back to the organization,” said Chad. “Watching my mom run businesses and then seeing her volunteerism at the maritime museum, I could see her passion for this work. It was great to have my mom guide me when I became a board member at SBMM.”

For Chad, maritime history remains an important part of the fabric of Santa Barbara. He has seen the museum evolve — really from the ground up — growing in its community outreach and educational programming. “Being a kid who grew up in and around the museum, I can tell you this facility is really something special,” said Chad. “Out of all the museums locally, there is something about the maritime museum. I don’t know if it is the visual experience or the hands-on experience, but the museum is alive for me. Because of this I stayed involved, and plan to stay involved forever.”

Emily Duncan Comes Full Circle in Her Role as SBMM’s Development Director

As a youth, Emily Duncan spent a lot of time at the Santa Barbara Maritime Museum. She recalls running all over the museum, enjoying the *Sportfishing* exhibit and helping with fundraising events. SBMM was a very magical place for Emily, and as she got older the connection grew. Today, she is the organization’s development director, helping to raise funds for a mission that is near and dear to her heart. “Coming back to the museum in this role is really a full circle moment for me,” said Emily. “Some things are the same, but a lot has changed, and it is exciting for me to see the museum’s evolution over the last 20 years.”

“SBMM has come to life in the community it has created. The museum has individuals who are connected to the Channel Islands, individuals who are connected to coastal history and commercial diving, to name a few. It started as such a small organization and now it is amazing to see how much it has grown.”

Staying connected to the ocean has always been a priority. Emily is a certified diver and member of the California Channel Islands All 8 Club (designated for individuals who have set foot on all eight Channel Islands), a membership she shares with her father, former SBMM Board President Bob Duncan. Growing up, Emily’s family had a boat at Santa Barbara Harbor, and she would help her father work on the boat on Saturday mornings before getting lunch at Sushi Go Go. Sometimes, they would take the boat out for a little cruise to Goleta before heading back home for the day. “I was three-days old the first time I was on a boat, and have been connected to the water ever since,” said Emily. “I spent a lot of time as a kid at the harbor either at the museum or down on the boat in Marina One.”

Being on staff has given Emily an even greater perspective on SBMM’s presence and local



importance, as well as a better understanding of the diverse programs and opportunities SBMM provides in the community. “As a staff member, it is pretty great to see the museum in action,” said Emily. “SBMM has come to life in the community it has created. The museum has individuals who are connected to the Channel Islands, individuals who are connected to coastal history and commercial diving, to name a few. It started as such a small organization and now it is amazing to see how much it has grown.”

Emily has seen the museum’s upward trajectory for more than two decades and is excited to see what will come in the future. “Staying involved and supporting the museum is the ultimate form of trust,” said Emily. “We are all engaged with the organization because we want it to continue in perpetuity. When you support the museum, you help to create the next generation of individuals working to preserve maritime history.”

Anchoring a Sea of Memories: Andy Cooper’s SBMM Journey

Andy Cooper’s journey with the Santa Barbara Maritime Museum began serendipitously. At a community lecture about tall ships, he struck up a conversation with a fellow attendee — a volunteer from the not-yet-open museum — who invited him to get involved. His wife Mary Jane gently suggested he, “find something to do,” and, as Andy puts it, “the rest is history.”

He started volunteering at SBMM’s Preview Center, which showcased plans for transforming the Naval Reserve Building into a museum. What began as a short-term gig quickly turned into a long-term passion. From docent tours to exhibit builds and small repairs, Andy became a vital part of the team — always ready to help where needed.

Over the years, Andy led countless tours for kids, families, and senior groups. He fondly remembers navigating fourth-graders preparing for sleepovers as part of the Tall Ship program. He also enjoyed pulling the *Merry Time* vessel at Science Nights. This interactive program featured a rudder, compass, and playground activity that allowed kids to chart a course with one child steering, one navigating, and Andy pulling them through it. “Great fun and very popular,” he recalls.

Andy’s contributions are literally built into the museum. He rebuilt the torpedo rack and constructed the cannon’s big blue display box from a design by Nick DiNapoli, one of SBMM’s earliest exhibit designers. He also remembers the “controlled chaos” of early museum life — relocating offices, organizing the Salinas Street collection, and



assembling furniture. “It was a mess,” he says, “but a satisfying one.” Before the museum developed permanent exhibits, they relied on traveling displays like *Titanic* models and postcard panels.

In 2016, Andy joined SBMM’s Board of Directors, helping guide the museum through accreditation and growth. He is now an emeritus board member and is especially proud of his early role in education outreach, which helped to spark maritime curiosity in the next generation.

Andy’s presence at SBMM has always been marked by his sense of humor, hands-on spirit, and dedication. As the museum celebrates its 25th anniversary, Andy Cooper’s story reflects what makes SBMM thrive: community, creativity, and a love of the sea.

While the *Merry Time* vessel no longer exists, Science Nights are still going strong. SBMM serves more than 1,000 students every year across all the school districts in the greater Santa Barbara area.

Dr. Charlotte Tyler: Early Docent, Lifelong Advocate for Maritime Education

For Dr. Charlotte Tyler, the Santa Barbara Maritime Museum has always felt like home. “Our names are up there on the founding plaque,” she said with pride, reflecting on her and her husband’s early involvement. As avid sailors with a 40-foot boat, the Tylers were naturally drawn to the museum’s mission — and quickly became docents after its doors opened in 2000. Though their work schedules eventually made it difficult to continue in that role, the experience left a lasting impression.

Charlotte fondly recalls guiding children through early exhibits, especially the tomol and the hallway filled with historic maritime artifacts. “They loved the *Sportfishing* game, the deep-sea helmets, and those old-fashioned bathing suits,” she laughed. “And I always made sure to tell them that Stearns Wharf is technically a pier — a wharf runs parallel to shore, a pier sticks out!”

“These kids are so smart,” she said. “That’s what I love about it.”

Her love of teaching and science infused every tour. One of her favorite moments came when a fourth-grader pointed out mislabeled submarine models — correctly identifying them because he had stayed overnight on a similar vessel in San Francisco. “These kids are so smart,” she said. “That’s what I love about it.”

Charlotte’s commitment to science and education extended beyond exhibit tours. As a passionate environmentalist, she’s excited by the museum’s efforts to highlight local marine ecosystems, especially the kelp forests. “People don’t realize how important they are — for the coastline, for biodiversity, even for things like salad dressing and ice cream,” she explained. “And kelp isn’t a plant — it’s algae!”



Over the years, Charlotte has watched the museum evolve — from a modest collection to a dynamic institution filled with art, lectures, and hands-on learning for all ages. “I’m proud of how far it’s come. SBMM Executive Director Greg Gorga has done a wonderful job expanding its reach and programming. SBMM Curator Emily Falke has brought in wonderful art and lectures that appeal to both adults and children.”

From leading tours to organizing group visits, Charlotte has remained deeply connected to SBMM. “It’s a great place,” she said. “And now that the docent program is more structured, it’s even better.” With a warm laugh, she added, “Let your curiosity set sail — there’s something at SBMM for everyone.”

SBMM's First Breath: Leslie Leaney Recalls the Early Days

In the early 1990s, after working for King Hussein of Jordan and managing musicians in Hollywood, Leslie Leaney co-founded the Historical Diving Society USA (HDSUSA) in Santa Barbara. An English immigrant with no local roots, no family ties, and no dive buddies in town, Leslie was, in his own words, “starting at ground zero.” His biggest challenge? Not knowing a soul. “I wasn’t from Santa Barbara. My American career was in Hollywood. I had to earn trust from scratch,” he says.

“Through launching HDSUSA, I had become very friendly with Lad Handelman and he told me to go down to West Marine at the Santa Barbara Harbor on a Monday evening,” Leslie recalled with a laugh. “He said that there were some guys trying to start a maritime museum and that I should represent the interests of local divers. I was in awe of Lad, and it was more an order than a request. So, I went down to see how I could help.”

At those early Monday meetings, Leslie found himself among a handful of maritime locals like Clyde Kirkpatrick and Bob Kieding. New faces rotated in and out of the group, but Leslie remained, helping to ensure the diving community had a place in the museum’s emerging story.

But Leslie had two invaluable assets: the momentum of HDSUSA and a passion for preserving diving history. Thanks to the encouragement — and insistence — of Lad, along with support from respected figures like Bob Ratcliffe of Oceaneering, and Bev Morgan, Bob Kirby, and Skip Dunham of Kirby Morgan, Leslie channeled his marketing experience into action. He launched the *Journal of Diving History*, a publication that would go on to attract subscribers in nearly 40 countries. As SBMM drew nearer to completion, Leslie stepped down from the founding committee/board before SBMM



officially opened in 2000. He remained a strong supporter, and as an SBMM founding trustee and Advisory Board member, he used items from his personal collection to establish early diving exhibits, advise on representation, and create international awareness of SBMM through the HDSUSA journal. “I’m proud that both SBMM and HDSUSA not only survived but thrived,” he reflects. “There was never any guarantee for either.”

To this day, Leslie remains a global ambassador for diving heritage, holding positions in Asia, Europe, and the United States. His early role in helping to shape SBMM’s ability to honor commercial diving alongside sailing and fishing is one he will always cherish. “The museum raised the standard over the years,” he says. “And I’m very glad I was there at the beginning to help it take its first breath.”



“I’m proud that both SBMM and the Historical Diving Society USA not only survived but thrived,” he reflects. “There was never any guarantee for either.” — Leslie Leaney

From Sailboats to Steelwork: A Life Anchored in Santa Barbara

As a young boy growing up in Santa Barbara, Vince Wood spent countless days at the harbor with his friend Fred Hayward. Vince and Fred each had a small moon boat, which they would moor for just \$1.20 a month. “I loved sailing around the calm waters of Santa Barbara,” said Vince. “Eventually, Fred and his dad (who was also a sailor) moved up to flatties, and I had the chance to crew for them, gaining even more time on the water. Though high school brought new interests, I never lost my fondness for those early boating days.”

Vince left Santa Barbara to attend college in Colorado, becoming a petroleum engineer and spending time in the United States Marine Corps. He eventually returned to Santa Barbara and purchased Central Machine & Welding. Through his company, Vince got very involved with the construction of the Santa Barbara Maritime Museum, providing the steelwork needed to bring the vision of the revitalized building to fruition. “I was asked to bid on structural work for the new museum building, including footings for the Munger Theater and a foundation to support the 8,000-pound periscope,” said Vince. “My company handled the steel, and I worked alongside designers like Nick DiNapoli and Barry Berkus to help bring it all together.”

The maritime museum will always hold fond memories for Vince, as he remembers its start as the Naval Reserve Building and the basketball court housed inside. He can recall a time when the fourth floor was a radio room, with enormous cables running all the way to poles on Leadbetter Beach, and that the United States Coast Guard used to patrol on horseback along the shore. And now in retirement, Vince has found new purpose through the museum. “At 88-years old, I volunteer once a week, mainly on the fourth floor where I can sit and chat with visitors who come to enjoy the harbor view,” said Vince. “I like meeting people and sharing



stories about the exhibits — especially since I have so many personal connections.”

From humble beginnings, SBMM has become a cultural hub and jewel along the Santa Barbara waterfront. “The museum today has incredible exhibits in addition to being a thriving educational center. I often tell people that if they’re going to volunteer, they need to believe in the mission — and I truly do,” said Vince. “My favorite exhibits include diving history, petroleum, and *Sportfishing*, and I especially enjoy talking about the cattle ranching history out on the Channel Islands. The transformation of the museum is something no one could have predicted, and it stands as a testament to the hard work of its board, staff, and community.”

Volunteer Ann Howard Brings Passion for Art and Sailing to SBMM

Ann Howard is both a volunteer docent and a board member, bringing with her great enthusiasm for both roles. She discusses her passion for art and sailing and how the museum became the perfect outlet for her love of volunteerism.

SBMM: Are you from Santa Barbara originally?

ANN: I arrived in Santa Barbara after graduating from high school in the late 1960s so that I could attend the Brooks Institute. I chose Santa Barbara because it was so beautiful, and because at the time, Brooks had a fine arts school. Photographer Ernie Brooks wanted the photography students to expand their knowledge and to see how photography could be included into other mediums so the school had ceramics, painting, drawing, and a glass blowing studio. As a student, I studied figure drawing and ceramics.

SBMM: When did you discover your love for the ocean?

ANN: I worked several different jobs in Santa Barbara before finding my way to the harbor, where I met an abalone diver. He had a boat, and he gave me a job working as a tender. We would go out to the Santa Barbara Channel Islands, and he would harvest abalone. And there I was helping! That was really my first experience on the ocean, and it ended up having a lifelong impact on me.

SBMM: How did you find out about SBMM?

ANN: I took a few plein air art classes from artist Thomas Van Stein, and he was the person who brought me to SBMM for the first time. When I discovered how fabulous the museum was, I bought a membership as I feel strongly about supporting local art and local businesses.

SBMM: What do you like best about volunteering?



ANN: My favorite thing about volunteering at SBMM is the people and the visitors who come to the museum. I have met many individuals from the boating/sailing world including divers and crews and have interacted with people visiting from all over the world. I feel rewarded every day I volunteer at SBMM as I am learning so much about the history of the Channel Islands. Just hearing these stories has enhanced my curiosity and my interest in learning more about everything the museum has to offer.

SBMM: Why do you continue volunteering?

ANN: SBMM is the perfect place. It is history, marine life, and my favorite people on the planet including sailors, fishermen, and artists. For me, the museum is the perfect blend of everything I like best.

THE RHYTHM OF THE SEA

Paintings by Kevin A. Short

"There is magnetism in looking at glare and the effects of sunlight. There is something magical and calming in the glare. We will drive hours to simply sit and watch that dance of light. Somehow our troubles seem smaller, our thinking becomes clearer. I am recording those moments and those feelings." -Kevin A. Short



On view August 11, 2022 - December 31, 2022

Sponsored by:
American Riviera Bank, Mimi Michaelis, June G. Outhwaite Foundation,
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"I want people to feel alive and moved by their time at the museum, leaving with a sense of the pulse of what is behind the history, artifacts, and art on view." — Emily Falke

From Passion to Purpose: Robert Duncan’s Enduring Impact on SBMM

Robert Duncan’s love for the ocean began in childhood, fostered by sailing trips with his father. Together, they would spend weekends on a Cal 28 sailboat and had countless adventures up to the Channel Islands — especially to Catalina. These formative experiences cemented Bob’s deep connection to the islands, earning him a place in the prestigious California Channel Islands All 8 Club, alongside his daughter Emily, who holds the distinction of being the youngest member to visit all eight islands. “I was nine years old when I started sailing,” said Bob. “It was great to be with my dad, as we were always connected through our love of the ocean.”

“I remember when the educational programs were just a glimmer in our eye and now the museum is known for exceptional programs and innovative exhibits.”

That lifelong appreciation for the sea naturally led Bob to engage with organizations preserving our oceans and maritime culture. He served on the Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council before becoming deeply involved with the Santa Barbara Maritime Museum. His tenure as the museum’s seventh president in 2004 came during a critical time of organizational growth and transition. Despite the challenges — such as turnover in executive leadership — Bob embraced the opportunity to shape the museum’s direction and strengthen its roots in the community. “During my time as president, it felt like SBMM was in its adolescence phase,” said Bob. “I remember when the educational programs were just a glimmer in our eye and now the museum is known for exceptional programs and innovative exhibits.”

Bob reflects fondly on the people who helped the museum flourish, especially Jean Schuyler, whose leadership in fundraising and advocacy helped establish the museum as a cultural mainstay in



Santa Barbara. He credits Bob Kieding with the idea and creation of the museum and emphasizes that many individuals put in hard work to build a lasting institution. Today, Bob sees the museum as a thriving nonprofit that has gone far beyond what he and his peers once imagined. “There are some great, wonderful people who for me were part of the joy of the maritime museum past and certainly the present,” said Bob. “The museum today has exceeded my expectations, evolving into a vital hub that has become a real fixture in the community.”

Looking ahead, Bob hopes to see a significant endowment established to provide lasting financial security for the museum. His favorite exhibits, like the *Sportfishing* and *Jack Tar* displays, always bring him nostalgia and joy. For Bob, the maritime museum is a tribute to the past and a beacon for future generations. “I was honored to be the president and to help move the ship forward,” said Bob. “It is phenomenal to see SBMM take its place as an important community resource and to see how it continues to anchor and connect those of us who share a love for the sea.”

Emma Lossing Inspired by Girls in Ocean Science Conference

Emma Lossing’s connection to the Santa Barbara Maritime Museum began when she was a young girl visiting from Lompoc. A family sailing trip near the Santa Barbara Channel brought her to the museum for the first time, sparking an early fascination with the ocean and marine life. However, it wasn’t until high school that she reconnected with SBMM in a meaningful way. Her aquarium science teacher encouraged her to attend SBMM’s Girls in Ocean Science Conference, representing her high school’s aquarium science program.

Emma was captivated by the event and recalls being “so amazed” by the program’s opportunities. She had expected a day of simple activities, but instead found herself immersed in marine science, going on boat trips, and conducting hands-on research. The experience proved transformative, showing Emma that women can thrive in STEM fields traditionally dominated by men. “It really is possible for a woman to do it,” she said, reflecting on the power of seeing female role models in science and technology. Through the Girls in Ocean Science Conference, Emma furthered her passion but also found a supportive community that celebrated young women in science.

Growing up in Lompoc, Emma witnessed significant educational disparity in her community, where access to resources and opportunities often depended on socioeconomic status. Through



the Girls in Ocean Science Conference, Emma felt a sense of connection and motivation to make a difference while strengthening her belief in the museum’s power to shape lives and foster a deep respect for the environment. “SBMM is improving so many lives,” said Emma. “I can see how an impactful gift from a donor today would then empower the next generation of scientists. For me, SBMM’s legacy is evident in its ability to build a future where young people are equipped with the knowledge, passion, and drive to make meaningful contributions to the world.”

SBMM’s Girls in Ocean Science program is an initiative that connects young women with leading female scientists to explore careers in ocean science and marine research. This annual conference provides middle and high school students with the opportunity to spend a day conducting research in labs, collaborating with scientists from renowned institutions like Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary and Benioff Ocean Science Laboratory, and even venturing out to sea as citizen scientists. For many students, this experience is transformative, opening doors to future academic pursuits and careers in ocean-related fields. The Girls in Ocean Science Conference is generously sponsored by the Steinmetz Foundation.

From Ideas to Impact: How Two Educators Helped Shape SBMM's Educational Programming

When Linda Stirling first got involved with the museum, she saw the potential for expanding SBMM's educational opportunities. With her background in teaching and passion for meaningful learning, Linda believed that if the museum was going to make a difference, it needed continued good ideas, and educators who understood children. She began recruiting others who shared this vision, including longtime educator Kate Ford, whose retirement and return to her hometown aligned perfectly with this opportunity. Together, with committee members such as Holly Lohuis and Sondra Weiss, in addition to SBMM Education Director Lis Perry, they built the museum's early educational initiatives on a belief that real learning comes from engagement — not just textbooks. "When I first joined the museum, it was my goal to provide opportunities that did not already exist in the community that were unique and different and specific to Santa Barbara," said Linda. "The authenticity of what we are doing — this really cannot be undervalued. The maritime museum offers programs that no one else is providing."

That commitment to authentic, educational experiences deepened with the launch of Maritime on the Move, an innovative, award-winning program. Through this opportunity, students engage in immersive activities with locally trained naturalists, bringing hands-on ocean education directly into communities. "The focus is on kids and what kids need. What they like, how to engage them, and real experiences," said Kate. "It is not any less true today than it was 10 years ago — programs like these reach kids who have never seen the beach or been on a boat, despite growing up just blocks away."

The impact of SBMM's programs is undeniable. The Girls in Ocean Science Conference brings young women together to learn from talented female scientists in an annual one-day conference. Marine



Science takes students out to sea for a two-hour floating lab aboard a local vessel. The Tall Ship program teaches students what it was like for merchant sailors of the 1800s. SBMM is providing experiences that are more than just fun — they are often transformative. "As an educator, I know that the more authentic you can be in creating learning experiences for children, the more they will learn and remember," said Linda. "The more real you can make it — and plant the seed for what could be — to imagine what the future could look like for these students, is huge. These experiences are inspiring for the youth who participate, and that is what keeps us going."

For both Linda and Kate, the goal has always been to create something lasting and meaningful — programs that are authentic, enriching, and rooted in the Santa Barbara community. "We are providing programs that encourage students to become stewards of the ocean, to understand the beauty of the California coast, to learn how to work with each other, and to share in leadership," said Kate. "Through these experiences, we are creating inquisitive, thoughtful, caring citizens of the world. It is a lot more than just having fun and digging in the sand. What we are doing is pretty powerful."

Diane Kirchner Loves Sharing Santa Barbara's Rich Maritime History

Diane Kirchner started volunteering at SBMM during the COVID-19 pandemic and never looked back! In this interview, she discusses her favorite memories and interactions with museum visitors. Having volunteered for a few years now, Diane feels the most rewarding aspect of this work is walking with visitors as she shares the museum's maritime history.

SBMM: What inspired you to become a volunteer at the Santa Barbara Maritime Museum and what initially drew you to the mission?

Diane: I am a long-time volunteer with the Channel Islands National Park. I received an email saying SBMM was looking for volunteers, and even though I had never been to the museum before, I decided to volunteer at the Outdoors Santa Barbara Visitor Center located on SBMM's fourth floor. When I started docent training a short time later, I realized how much synergy there is with the volunteer work I do at the Channel Islands National Park and the Trails & Rails program. Volunteering at the museum gives me an opportunity to continue to learn and to help educate others.

SBMM: Can you share a favorite memory or moment during your time volunteering here that stands out for you?

Diane: There are so many I'm not sure I have just one. On the fourth floor, it was the first time the elevator doors opened, and the visitors said, "Oh wow!" Or the shift when I had 115 visitors. In the museum, it must be the kids' events — like making whales or lighthouses. And of course, fishing or "getting a tattoo" at the tattoo exhibit.

SBMM: What has been the most rewarding aspect of working with visitors and sharing the museum's maritime history?



Diane: Getting a chance to share what a big role Santa Barbara has played. Until I started volunteering here, I didn't realize how pivotal Santa Barbara was in commercial diving, deep sea diving, and offshore oil. I didn't realize Santa Barbara's influence on surfing. The folks who come in have a genuine interest and it is fun to share tidbits of information with them. And frequently, they share information with me.

SBMM: If you could encourage someone to join SBMM as a volunteer, what would you tell them about the experience and impact?

Diane: This is one of my favorite volunteer activities. The staff, docents, and visitors are terrific. I learn something every time I am in the museum!

Restoring History, One Plank at a Time: Tom Elliott's SBMM Journey

For Tom Elliott, it all started with a suit—a heavy gear diving suit. Around 2015, he began volunteering at the Santa Barbara Maritime Museum after being recruited by diving legend Bob Kirby. The two became a crowd favorite, staging engaging diving demonstrations out in front of the museum.

“We’d get dressed in full gear,” Tom recalled. “And before the crowds arrived, Bob would place fake abalone on the rocks. Then I’d go down in the suit, pry one off, and show it to the audience.” The performances blended history and humor, drawing in visitors curious about underwater exploration and the gear that made it possible.

But Tom’s journey didn’t stop with demonstrations. In late 2016, as the classic sportfishing yacht *Ranger* approached her 100th birthday, Tom found himself lending a hand with restoration. “She needed some TLC,” he said. “We had a crew of 11 at one point, stripping varnish, sanding down wood, and making her shine again.” By *Ranger*’s 2017 centennial celebration, complete with cannons and a fireboat salute, Tom was hooked — and soon became the de facto project manager for the vessel’s ongoing preservation.

Eventually, he was invited to join the SBMM Board of Directors and now chairs the Collections and Exhibits Committee. In that role, he supports not only *Ranger* but also broader museum displays — working closely with SBMM Curator Emily Falke and the exhibits team. “Our *Ranger* crew helps hang art, move artifacts, and build things. We’re all in.”

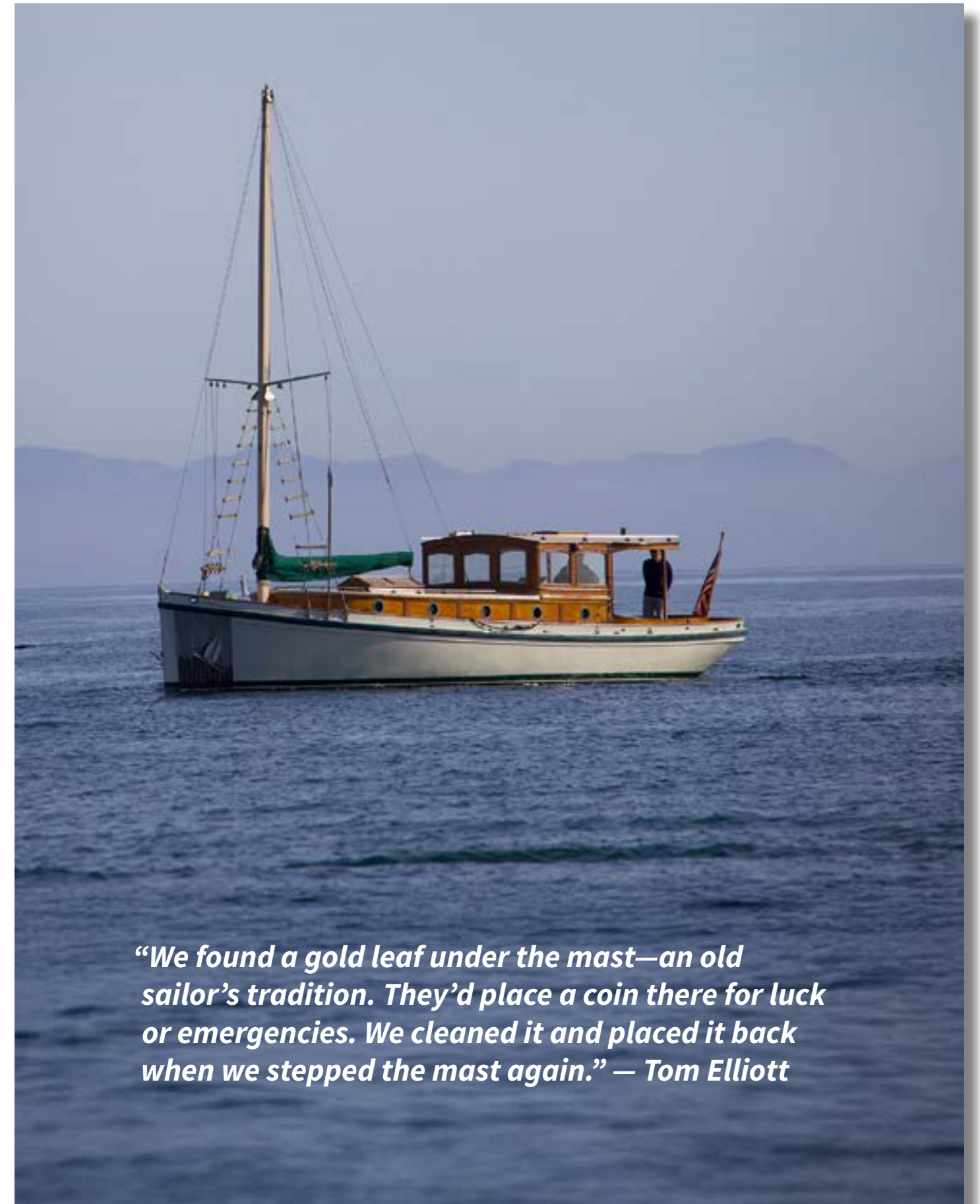
One of the biggest undertakings came in 2023, when *Ranger* entered the boatyard for a seven-week overhaul. From hull cleaning and mast restoration to replacing rotted sidearms and re-rigging with professional support from Ocean Aire, the project was meticulous. “We found a gold leaf under the



mast — an old sailor’s tradition,” Tom shared. “They’d place a coin there for luck or emergencies. We cleaned it and placed it back when we stepped the mast again.”

That spirit of tradition and reverence for the past drives much of Tom’s work. Restoration efforts have also included rebuilding interior bulkheads eaten by termites, repainting, and replacing fittings, rails, and rigging. “She’s the oldest boat in the harbor, and we’re proud to keep her looking good,” he said. Tom and crewmate Mark Wardman even cover the cost of varnish and sandpaper themselves — “our donation to *Ranger*.”

What started as a simple invitation from Bob Kirby has become a legacy of leadership and craftsmanship. “I love the museum. I love the people,” said Tom. “Mark, Don, Glenn, Becky, Paul — we’re a team. I look forward to coming down to the harbor every week and working with this amazing crew.”



“We found a gold leaf under the mast—an old sailor’s tradition. They’d place a coin there for luck or emergencies. We cleaned it and placed it back when we stepped the mast again.” — Tom Elliott



“Whales teach us about empathy and compassion. We want to see more whales off our coast while instilling a sense of responsibility to ensure that their habitat thrives. We are investing in youth now as they are the future scientists and conservationists in our community.” — Holly Lohuis

Whale Heritage Area Looks Toward the Future of Ocean Conservation

The Santa Barbara Channel Whale Heritage Area supports responsible eco-tourism in the channel while furthering youth educational opportunities and ocean conservation research. The organization’s founding co-directors Hiroko Benko and Holly Lohuis discuss their connection to the maritime museum, goals for the Whale Heritage Area, and hope for the future.

SBMM: How did the Santa Barbara Channel Whale Heritage Area begin?

Hiroko: When Dana Point became a Whale Heritage Area, conversations began around the possibility of the same status happening here in Santa Barbara.

Holly: The maritime museum agreed to become the fiscal sponsor, and it was SBMM Executive Director Greg Gorga who recommended Hiroko and I as co-directors for the project. Since the application process takes time, and requires financial support, the museum was the perfect home for our fledgling organization. We were influenced by Jean-Michel Cousteau, whose lifelong dedication to ocean conservation and involvement as the honorary president of the World Cetacean Alliance was a real inspiration for us.

SBMM: What was the application process like?

Holly: We received candidate status quickly as the pillars for what constitutes a Whale Heritage Area were already well established here in Santa Barbara. It took two years to go through the application process, build a Steering Committee, and gain community support before we received Whale Heritage Area status in October 2023.

SBMM: What are your current goals for the Santa Barbara Channel Whale Heritage Area?

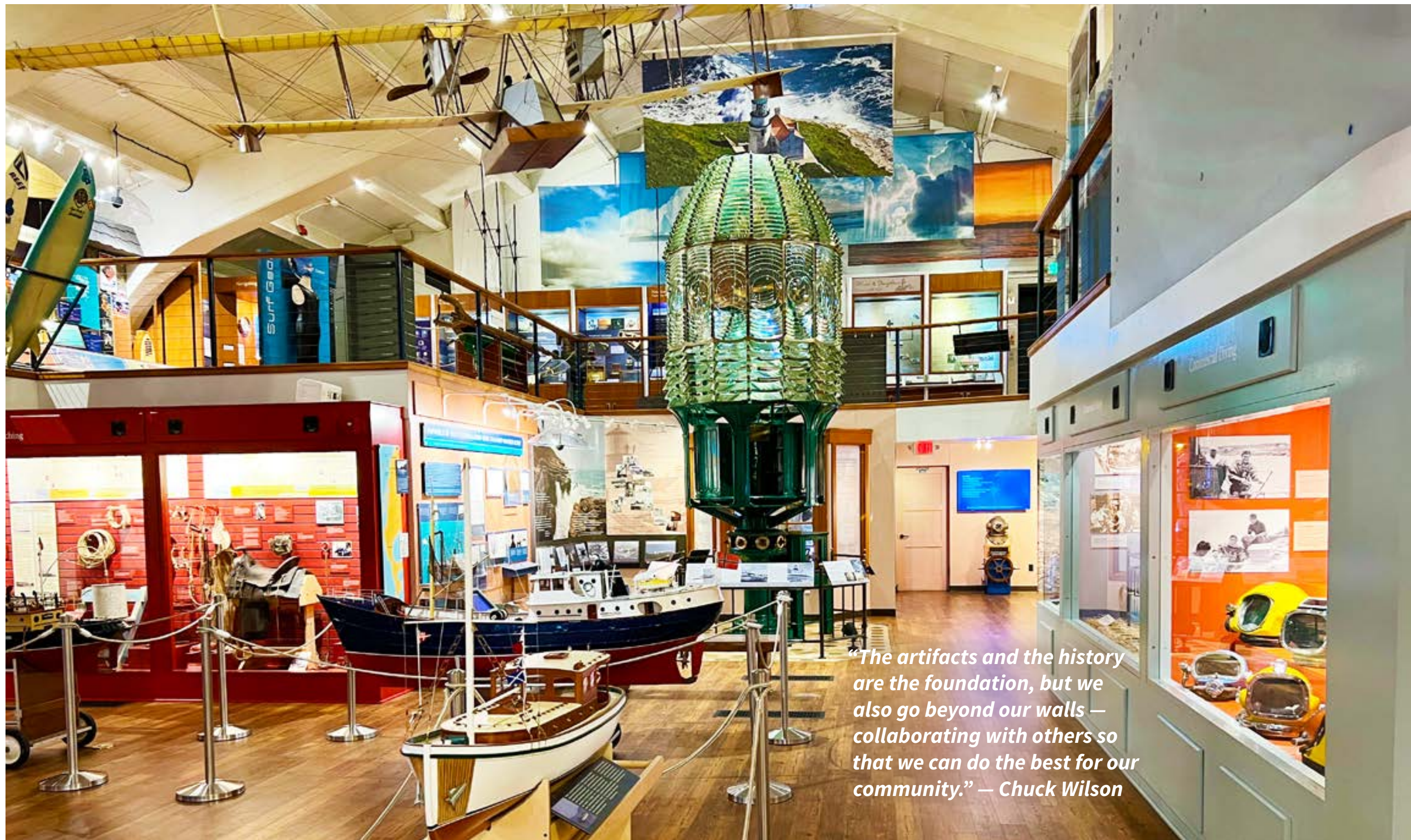


Holly: Our initial goal was awareness around conservation, and to get people to have their own emotional connection to fall in love with whales. Now, thanks to the support of the *Condor Express*, Island Packers, and all our sponsors and donors, we are getting kids out on the water. We have also donated funds to research in support of local ocean conservation.

SBMM: What is your hope for the future?

Hiroko: I saw my first whale when I was 18-years old off the coast of Siberia. And because I was born in Japan, which is an island, I have seen whales there as well. My hope is that we begin to see more whales at the same time as we are getting more children in contact with the ocean as it is imperative that we provide these experiences for the next generation.

Holly: Whales teach us about empathy and compassion. We want to see more whales off our coast while instilling a sense of responsibility to ensure that their habitat thrives. We are investing in youth now as they are the future scientists and conservationists in our community.



“The artifacts and the history are the foundation, but we also go beyond our walls — collaborating with others so that we can do the best for our community.” — Chuck Wilson

Marie L Morrisroe: A Journey Rooted in Community and Legacy

A California girl at heart, Marie L Morrisroe was raised in downtown Los Angeles. While she did move with her husband to the East Coast for a time, as promised by her husband they made their way back to California, settling in Pasadena for 25 years. They eventually found their way to Santa Barbara looking for a peaceful weekend getaway — somewhere pet-friendly, by the beach, and no more than two hours from Pasadena. After a long search, they discovered Montecito Shores, and what began as a small weekend escape soon became their full-time home. “My husband and I moved in permanently in 1996, and after his passing over two decades ago, I remained here, grateful for the life we built together,” said Marie. “To sum up, I have been in Santa Barbara now for almost 30 years, and I am so happy that I have found a place where I can meet people and continue to be active in the community.”

An active volunteer, Marie gives her time to the Santa Barbara County Courthouse Docent Council, an organization she gravitated toward after spending 22 years as a court reporter for the Superior Court in Los Angeles County. “My experience naturally led me to volunteer at the courthouse after retirement, where I am now active on the Docent Council and run the information booth,” said Marie. “I find the work incredibly satisfying, meeting visitors from around the world, sharing the courthouse’s rich history, and engaging with a delightful group of fellow volunteers.”

Marie’s connection to the Santa Barbara Maritime Museum began when she attended a talk at the museum given by her former doctor, Roger Dunham. That single lecture sparked an enduring interest in the museum’s lecture series and outreach programs. Today, Marie is the signature sponsor of the museum’s Maritime Distinguished Speaker Series and appreciates the variety and quality of



the speakers. “After hearing Dr. Dunham’s lecture, I started coming to the lecture series. I was impressed by the staff’s dedication and the museum’s role in the community — especially its outreach programs,” said Marie. “I have invested in SBMM’s mission ever since, and plan to continue my investment into the future.”

To further her investment, Marie has joined the museum’s Flagship Society, a program for those individuals making a planned gift for the museum. Through her gift, Marie is ensuring SBMM’s legacy will continue in the community. “Santa Barbara offers so much — culture, education, nature — and I feel fortunate to live in a place that supports such vibrant community involvement,” said Marie. “Whether attending inspiring SBMM lectures or welcoming guests at the courthouse, I’ve found pleasure, connection, and purpose here. Through my legacy gift and ongoing volunteer work, I’m proud to honor the people and places I love — and to remain actively involved in the community that has given me so much.”

Charting a Shared Course: John & Tracie’s Story of Connection and Community

John and Tracie Doordan’s paths to Santa Barbara may have started in different places — the East Coast and Arizona, respectively — but both were ultimately drawn to the area by the rich cultural life of this coastal city. Tracie arrived in 1978 and immediately immersed herself in her passion for scuba diving — beach diving from Hendry’s Beach at least once a week. John, meanwhile, found his way to California after his parents moved to the Bay Area and through his time in the Navy, which brought him to San Diego. He later had a global career with QAD, and although he traveled extensively, was finally able to make Santa Barbara his permanent home 23 years ago. The couple first met through their work at QAD and now enjoy a shared life steeped in their love of history, the ocean, and the Santa Barbara community. “I feel like anyone coming from the desert seeks the ocean,” said Tracie. “So, for me, coming from a desert climate to Santa Barbara was like a dream. We enjoy living in this community and are grateful for the friendships and connections we have built here.”

After retiring, John became increasingly involved in the local scene, joining the Santa Barbara Club and becoming involved with the Santa Barbara Trust for Historic Preservation. Eventually, he discovered the Santa Barbara Maritime Museum, where he now serves on the Board of Directors. It was curiosity that first drew him in, but it was the history — both maritime and local — that hooked him. “History drives me,” said John. “Maritime history has always intrigued me, and my involvement with the museum allows me to share my love for maritime history and the history of Santa Barbara.”

Both John and Tracie are passionate about the museum’s educational opportunities and are particularly enthusiastic about the ability of SBMM’s programs to introduce youth — many of whom have never visited the ocean — to the marine world. For



John, witnessing the museum’s growing educational outreach — especially initiatives like Girls in Ocean Science — has been one of the most rewarding aspects of his involvement. As a certified swimming teacher, Tracie is enthusiastic about providing youth with experiences that take them near or into the water. “When my son was little, I volunteered to teach swimming to his Cub Scout troop so that they could receive their merit badge and was shocked to see how many of the scouts could not swim despite living less than a mile from the beach,” said Tracie. “SBMM’s educational programs expose youth to new opportunities, which in turn expands their thinking to new possibilities.”

For the Doordans, the museum is more than a building — it is a living part of the harbor. Whether it is seeing people pause at the diving monument or watching school groups come through, they’re reminded of the museum’s expanding role in the community. “I really started to get involved with the museum about six or seven years ago,” said John. “What really cemented it for me was the terrific education programs. It is thrilling to see their success and amazing to hear about the positive effect on our county’s youth.”

Sigrid Toye: A Voice, a Vision, and a Flag for the Harbor Community

Sigrid Toye’s journey with the Santa Barbara Maritime Museum began — like many good stories — with a lunch invitation and a bold proposition. Jean Schuyler, one of SBMM’s founding visionaries, invited Sigrid to the Santa Barbara Yacht Club and made her intentions clear. “I think you should get involved with the Maritime Museum!” It was direct, it was memorable, and it worked.

Though Sigrid was commuting daily to her office in Calabasas and volunteering at the Santa Barbara Yacht Club where her husband was commodore, she couldn’t resist the opportunity. She started on the gala committee, drawn in by the camaraderie and the hands-on nature of helping with events. “We did it all,” she recalled, “from decorating tables to collecting auction items from local businesses.” It was grassroots, community-driven, and full of heart. She loved it.

In 2013, Sigrid officially joined the museum’s board, and eventually found herself on the Executive Committee. Not shy about asking questions and fostering open dialogue she explained, “If I don’t understand something, I ask,” she said. “It’s how you learn; and how you make others feel heard.”

Sigrid’s leadership style was deeply collaborative. As board president, she believed strongly in listening. “I knew what was needed,” she said. “A team effort, all the key players on board feeling heard ... and I learned so much from listening.” She focused on unity — between the board, staff, and volunteers, fostering communication and committee chair meetings to break down silos and encourage shared understanding across the organization.

But perhaps her most visible legacy is the Santa Barbara Breakwater Flag Project, which she launched in 2007. Originally created by Santa Barbara Art Museum Director Paul Chadbourne



Mills, the project had languished for years. When the Waterfront Department sought to revive it, Sigrid stepped in. Under her leadership, and in partnership with the Santa Barbara Yacht Club and the Waterfront Department, the project was reinvented as a celebration of the city’s nonprofits. “It’s the thing I’m most proud of,” she says. “It reflects who we are as a community.”

Over time, Sigrid’s appreciation for SBMM’s mission deepened. What began as a volunteer role became a personal passion, rooted in the museum’s growth and expanding reach. As SBMM looks ahead to the next 25 years, Sigrid offers this advice to future board members and volunteers: “Create connection. Offer orientation. Make people feel welcomed, heard, and part of something greater than themselves. That’s what turns an organization into a family.” And for Sigrid, SBMM is exactly that — a family, a harbor, and a home.

The Mural, the Lens, and the Mission: Emily Falke’s SBMM Story

As Emily Falke walked up the Naval Reserve Building steps for the first time, she took in the sights and sounds of the harbor. Moving to Santa Barbara from Bakersfield was quite a change, and one that she was ready to embrace with open arms. As SBMM’s new curator and education director, she was stepping into a vibrant institution with exhibits dedicated to deep sea diving, surfing, sportfishing, and Chumash history. “I began my role at SBMM in 2010 — a good decade into the museum’s existence,” said Emily. “It was exciting to see how far the museum had come at the time and thrilling for me to bring my own vision and perspective.”

In her dual role as curator and education director, Emily jumped in with both feet. Under her guidance, the visitor experience expanded to include rotating art shows in a new gallery space, allowing the museum to collaborate with both local and international artists. She also implemented new permanent exhibitions in addition to creating a children’s gallery space, which visually introduced children to the museum through a beautiful Patti Jacquemain mural. “For me, the mural is the anchor for a child’s first encounter of the museum, visually encapsulating key elements of our museum’s history,” said Emily.

In her educational role, Emily introduced SBMM’s first Marine Science program, integrating hands-on labs and field trips. She also developed permanent exhibits that highlighted key moments in Santa Barbara’s history. She is especially pleased with the exhibits describing oil in the Santa Barbara Channel as everything from the geology of oil to fracking to the 1969 oil spill in Santa Barbara are represented. “It was a bold and important topic to take on, but I am proud of how we covered it,” said Emily. “For better or worse, this is our history in Santa Barbara, and we addressed the topic in a way that was even and fair in how we presented the history to the public.”



But, for Emily, helping to secure the Point Conception Lighthouse First Order Fresnel Lens will always be an unforgettable experience. Today, the lens stands as a monumental item for SBMM’s collection that many believe is the most important maritime artifact along the Santa Barbara Channel. “Standing in the wind beside Point Conception and watching the helicopter lift the prism pieces felt like history in the making,” Emily said. “It was a blustery day, which made it both precarious and thrilling to see the helicopter buzzing overhead. It was a true moment in time that I will never forget.”

When you walk through the doors of the museum today, you see exhibits that are interactive and engaging — inviting you to learn more about our region’s rich maritime history. “For me, the design of the show is just as important as the artwork,” said Emily. “I want people to feel alive and moved by their time at the museum, leaving with a sense of the pulse of what is behind the history, artifacts, and art on view.”

From Navy Service to Community Legacy: Douglas Washington’s Journey to SBMM

Originally from Los Angeles, Douglas Washington has lived in Santa Barbara for more than 20 years. As a youth, he joined the Navy right out of high school, ultimately serving in Vietnam. After his discharge, he enrolled at California State University, Northridge using the GI Bill, and studied political science. In addition, he received professional designations from UCLA in public relations and advertising. An influential UCLA professor told him he was a “broker of information,” and indeed he was, with a lengthy career at *The Wave Newspapers* in South Central Los Angeles. He worked as a staff writer, music critic, and director of community affairs.

Tiring of LA’s notorious traffic and smog, and with a good friend in Goleta, Douglas moved to Santa Barbara where he worked for the Economic Development Department and the American Automobile Association (AAA). He remembers learning about SBMM after reading about the museum in the *Santa Barbara Independent* and decided to come for a visit. He discovered the museum’s volunteer opportunities and has been volunteering in various roles at the museum for the last 10 years.

Douglas has maintained a 401(k) but with no beneficiaries, he found himself with some tax



consequences. Browsing SBMM’s website, he saw a video about the museum’s Flagship Society and how to join. “I really had no experience in estate planning, but it could not have been easier. SBMM Planned Giving Committee Member Amanda Thomas guided me the whole way and it was great!” he said. Now SBMM is the beneficiary, and the museum is thrilled to have Douglas Washington as one of its Flagship Society members.

SBMM Flagship Society

Leave a Legacy that is Anchored in the Community

Create a promising future and legacy by making a bequest or other planned gift to the Santa Barbara Maritime Museum. Your support allows the museum to inspire creativity through engaging exhibitions; build community through gatherings and events; and participate in important initiatives — all while highlighting 13,000 years of maritime history. Your planned gift will have a lasting impact on the community, and for future generations. Start the conversation by contacting the museum at (805) 456-8742 or emailing development@sbmm.org.



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