

Repair and, while it doesn't currently have a buoy marking, it is still a common swimming destination. Because it doesn't have a buoy, people of various swimming speeds can go to the Repair and arrive at the same time. For those that are afraid to swim close to the pier and the fishing and crabbing lines, the Repair is more of a notion than an exact spot.



Roundhouse, Opening, and Jacuzzi

Muni Pier ends in a bulbous plaza that Dolphins call the Roundhouse. It is possible to swim under the Roundhouse. There are broken, barnacle-encrusted pilings to negotiate at the perimeter, but it's not terribly difficult. When it's very dark and the water is clear, a swim stroke produces a sparkling luminescence that is beautiful and magical. The quality of light under the Roundhouse is also remarkable at dawn and dusk. SouthEnders call this structure the "Wedding Cake."

A cigarette buoy resides just beyond the confines of the Roundhouse. It sits between the Muni Pier and the Breakwater. In the 1980's, a string of used tires provided scant protection for the cove. Storm surge and wakes from passing ships rolled freely into Aquatic Park making it a much wilder place to swim than it is today. With the construction of the concrete breakwater extending from Hyde Street Pier to Pier 41, our swimming hole experienced a major upgrade. The cigarette buoy marks the Opening. The Opening, like the Flag, is common terminology among all swimmers.

At the Hyde Street end of the Breakwater is a structure with concrete piers radiating from a circular capstone. When the current is flowing strongly in San Francisco Bay, this area is subject to incredibly forceful swirls of moving water. Owing to the water jet effect, many swimmers refer to this structure as The Jacuzzi. As it turns out, the capstone of the Jacuzzi is flat on top but has a pronounced recess underneath. When the highest tides bring sufficient water to seal off the outside of the capstone, 2 to 2 ½ feet of air remain trapped in the underside nook.

In order to enter this space and breathe the trapped air, the swimmer must dive beneath the surrounding capstone and surface in the center chamber. The radiating cement piers create a bit of an obstacle course so the prudent aqua-spelunker will feel around under the capstone for an opening before diving. Since this part of the structure is very rarely in contact with the ocean, it's completely free of barnacles, starfish or other abrasive critters. The concrete is still quite hard, though, so a more experienced and chastened diver will advise a hands-first-not-head-first approach.

East of the Jacuzzi is a large orange buoy to which the hay scow, the Alma, is moored. This buoy was a favorite target for one of the faster Dolphins, Becky Fenson. When she was training for her English Channel swim, she cruised around this landmark many times. This buoy demarcated the boundary beyond which Dolphins were forbidden to swim at the time. The then-current president of the Dolphin Club was taking the motorized club boat, Arias, out for a spin one day and spotted her swimming two yards east of this point. He spun the boat around, leaned over the pontoon, shook his finger and shouted, "Bad Becky!" A large group of Becky's friends delighted in this story and decided to name the buoy the Bad Becky. Since then, the National Park Service has installed a cigarette buoy slightly beyond clearly designating this as protected swimming area. Nevertheless, the name has stuck and its origin has faded into history. Many people now wonder who was Becky and what was it that she did here that was so bad.

The cigarette buoy just north of the Bad Becky acquired its own name in 2013 when Peter Perez tied the then-current Polar Bear record of 356 miles. Not a supremely fast swimmer, Peter set this record by swimming three or four times every day while working full time. He soldiered on through a severe case of shingles and clearly earned a buoy of his very own.



Balclutha

Moored at the north end of Hyde Street Pier is the 300 foot Balclutha. It is a steel-hulled, three-masted sailing ship built in 1886 and had a starring role in the film "Mutiny on the Bounty." At her stern is a mooring buoy called the Kebbe. Mr. Kebbe is the first person to have swum 356 miles during a Polar Bear. This amounts to almost four miles every day for 90 days. When Dolphin Club member, Peter Drino, was crafting a series of fifty courses around the cove for his "Polar Bear Challenge" event, he needed names for buoys

that had none. He decided to honor George for his Polar Bear achievements. Some years later, Tom Keller recreated the Polar Bear Challenge and renamed this buoy the "North S'more" because its rusted white crust makes it look like the camper's toasted marshmallow treat.

The mooring buoy at the bow of the Balclutha has many names among Dolphins. Peter Drino named it the "Luigi" in honor of the Dolphin Club commodore, Lou Marcelli. In Tom Keller's nomenclature, this is the S'more. Some people call it the "Wenzel" to honor Ralph Wenzel, the second person to match George's record of 356 miles for the Polar Bear

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