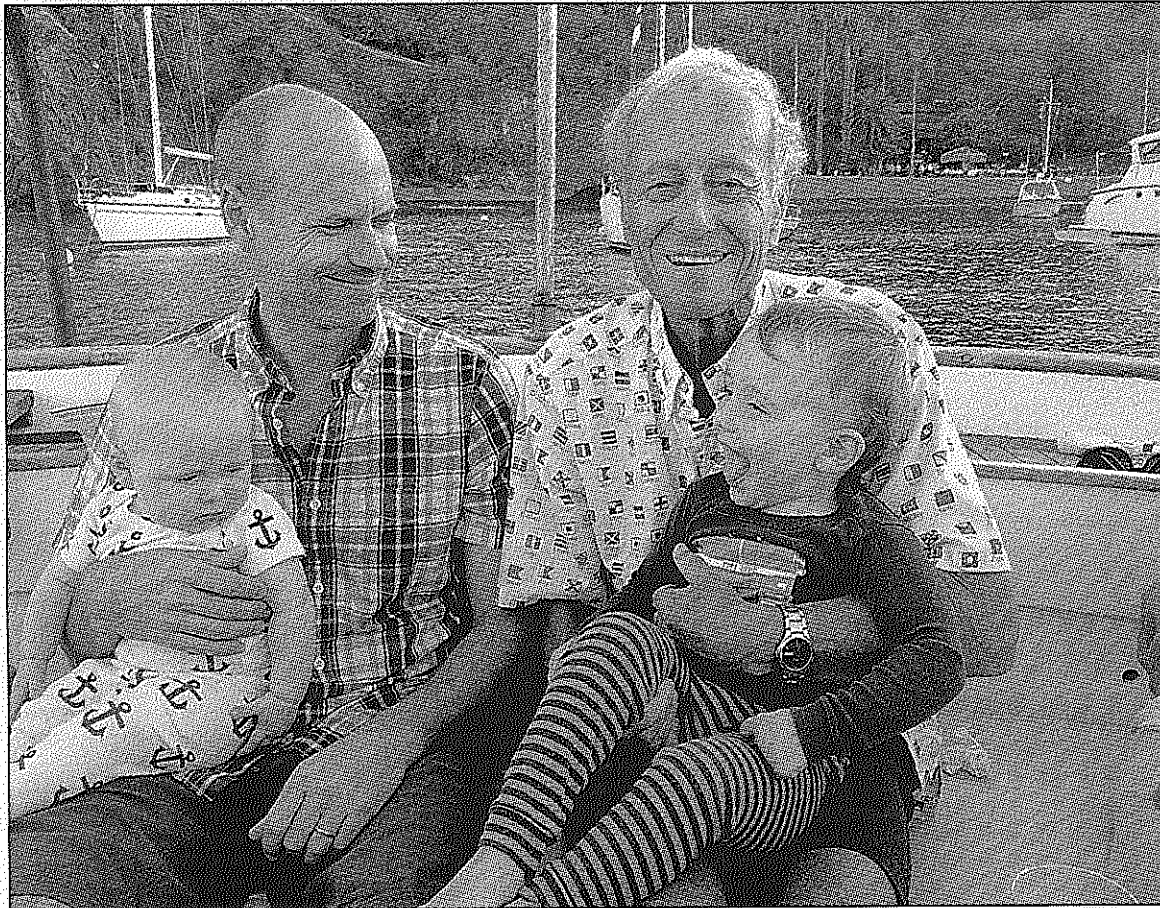


A Lifetime of Catalina Memories Fuels Interest In Catalina Island Conservancy Membership

By Laura Mecoy



Long-time Conservancy member Seymour Beek, right, with his son, Clark Beek, and grandchildren, Henry, 3, and Lena, 1, on the stern of his boat, Vamos, at Moonstone Cove. Photo courtesy of the Catalina Island Conservancy

Seymour Beek has a lifetime of Catalina Island memories. He first came to the Island at the age of five with his father, who owned the historic Balboa Island Ferry that transports vehicles and passengers between Newport Beach and the popular island getaway.

He remembers kids diving for coins tossed into Avalon Bay by passengers on the old steamboat. He recalls returning to Catalina's Moonstone Beach after World War II and finding it littered with debris from military training operations, and he reminisces about endless days of enjoyment aboard his father's boat and his own boat with his five children.

"I have so many memories of fishing, swimming, diving, snorkeling and hiking on Catalina Island," he said. "I must have hiked up Whitley's Peak 50 times."

Beek wants his grandchildren and great-grandchildren to have their own memories of idyllic summers on Catalina. So he became one of the earliest members of the Catalina Island Conservancy after it was formed in 1972 to protect and restore 88% of the Island.

He said he'd witnessed the growth in Avalon and Two Harbors and heard about plans to develop other parts of the Island. He'd also seen the goat trails carved into Catalina's hillsides and the damage to its vegetation caused by the grazing of non-native animals that roamed the Island before the 21st Century.

"It was obvious there were certain things about the Island that were deteriorating," he said.

"There was a general consensus that if someone took care of Catalina, it would be better."

Beek lives on Balboa Island, where he operates the Balboa Island Ferry, a family-owned business his father founded in 1919. But he still travels often to Catalina, and he credits the Conservancy with important improvements in the landscape and protection for the Island's open space.

"The Conservancy does good things, and it takes care of the Island," he said. "Membership in the Conservancy is important for anyone who cares about the Island. It's a worthy cause and a good thing to belong to and support."

Members' dues help save animal and plant species on the verge of extinction and maintain unique habitats for all to enjoy. Members also have access to Conservancy venues, like the Wrigley Memorial & Botanic Garden; discounts on a number of services, like the Wildlands Express and popular Jeep Eco Tours, and information about the Conservancy's popular events and the opportunities it sponsors to explore and experience Catalina and the other Channel Islands.

Beek said he's attended the Annual Conservancy Ball twice and considers it a rare chance to dine and dance in the historic Avalon Casino ballroom. He also participated in several Conservancy events, including a boat trip to Santa Cruz and two of the BZ Jones hikes across Catalina.

"I do a fair amount of hiking," he said. "But on the BZ

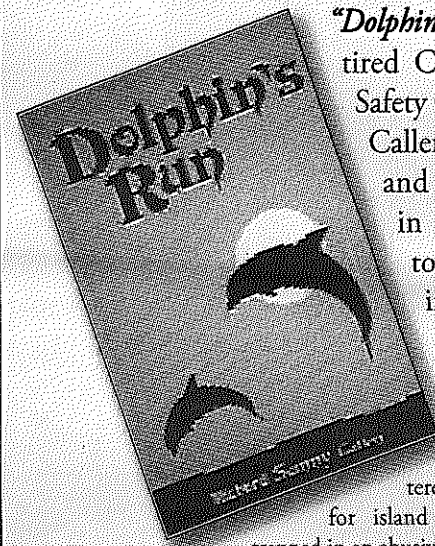
Jones Hike, I saw parts of the Island I had never seen before, and the Conservancy treated us like royalty. It's been a lot of fun to be a member."

Catalina Island Conservancy membership includes discounts for several Catalina Island businesses as well as for Conservancy tours and events. To learn more, please visit: CatalinaConservancy.org. Or please call: 562-437-8555 ext. 1239.

About the Conservancy: Formed in 1972, the Catalina Island Conservancy is one of California's oldest land trusts. Its mission is to be a responsible steward of its lands through a balance of conservation, education and recreation. Through its ongoing efforts, the Conservancy protects the magnificent natural and cultural heritage of Santa Catalina Island, stewarding approximately 42,000 acres of land and more than 60 miles of rugged shoreline. It provides an airport and 50 miles of biking and nearly 150 miles of hiking opportunities within its road and trail system. The Conservancy conducts educational outreach through two nature centers, its Wrigley Memorial & Botanic Garden and guided experiences in the Island's rugged interior. Twenty miles from the mainland, the Island is a treasure trove of historical and archaeological sites. It also contains numerous rare and endangered animals and plants. The Island is home to 60 species – and counting – that are found only on Catalina. For additional information, please visit www.catalinaconservancy.org.

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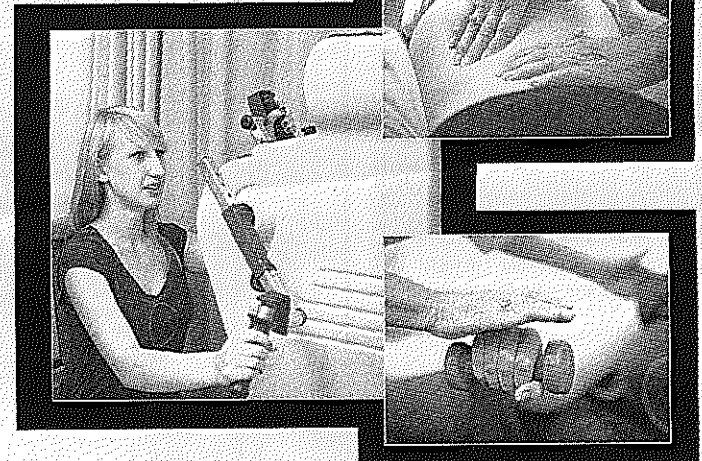
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