

## South's Got Sunshine and No Cloudy Days –

### But WE GOT NYUPS, Larry Cohen, Olga Torrey and Michael Rothschild!

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Coastal southern states have warm blue water, pretty tropical fish, and comparatively easier diving - while we in the northeast have cold, green water with more challenging diving (our waters have their own compelling merits as WE all know...)... *But wait!* In the NY/NJ greater metro area, we also have ...*the New York Underwater Photographic Society*. (NYUPS) – led by the team of Larry Cohen, Olga Torrey and Michael Rothschild – AND all the great folks who participate in NYUPS!



NYUPS is a community of scuba divers in the greater NY/NJ area who love to take underwater photos and video and get together to learn from each other. NYUPS meets monthly, sometimes hosting world-renowned underwater photographers and videographers who make presentations to the attendees (we get a kind of ‘rapture of the deep’ watching their presentations!). At most other meetings, NYUPS founder Larry Cohen offers the NYUPS members a theme, topic or technique in advance of the meeting, and the group then gets

together and watches a slide show review of images submitted by the members which align to the requested theme. The group offers comments about each image, both appreciating the excellent images, and also with thoughts how the particular image might have been photographed differently to achieve different effects.

Some of the themes which Larry provided in the past have included ‘underwater photography in black and white’; dream dive sites and ‘bucket list’ dive locations; favorite wreck images; photos of other divers in the water; making an underwater-themed TV show; one theme was called ‘let there be light’; and ‘your latest dive trip’; underwater photography post-processing workflow; and many other themes. Larry invites ALL members to propose themes for practice assignments, and members do -- promoting collaboration. *Anyone* who has ventured into the world of underwater photography and videography has grappled with these themes repeatedly. There are strategies to recognize/handle most situations and conditions - learning how to handle these means better pictures and lifts photography to the next level. HOW GREAT is it that Larry has identified these themes (*and* solicited from other NYUPS members *additional* photography study objectives for shared team evaluations), bringing us together to work on them and learn from each other, achieving better underwater photography/videography!

Peer commenting and constructive review is a powerful and positive way for members to learn from each other, and from the more experienced photographers in the group. Attending meetings over time will “cook” general rules and camera settings cause/effect into the underwater photographer’s technique/knowledge toolkit, enabling the diver-photographer to recognize and previsualize potentially challenging conditions - and know how to use corrective technical or artistic camera settings at the time the photo is taken. The net result is that all NYUPS members create better underwater images and videos, enhance their skill base, delight themselves and their family and friends, uplift scuba diving as a sport, and create a lasting visual legacy for all to admire and learn from!

NYUPS is a division of the NYC-based NYC Sea Gypsies scuba diving club, which has one of the largest membership rolls of scuba clubs in the northeast (and possibly the country). Sea Gypsies thrives with a vibrant group life, filled with both local and overseas dives, and monthly meetings with world class presenters. Sea Gypsies members and friends also dominate the annual Beneath The Sea presentation roster, providing many speakers on key topics - attesting to the importance and presence of this club in the scuba diving world in this region. The NYC Sea Gypsies club members therefore have the opportunity to meet twice a month – once at the regular NYC Sea Gypsies meeting, and again at the NYUPS monthly meeting. Taken together, we are a lucky bunch of divers getting together to share our sport and hobby, having fun mingling with like-minded folks, learning from each other’s dive and underwater photo experiences, and making new friends in this important part of our lives.

In addition to NYUPS, Larry Cohen and his long-time associate Olga Torrey collaborate on presentations/outreach to scuba diving clubs and the annual Beneath The Sea consumer scuba diving convention; and they attend all the greater NY/NJ metro area major scuba diving events. Their presentations are perennial favorites and are heavily attended. Larry and Olga bring us to spectacular scuba diving locations, many of which we may never have a chance to get to (and if we do make it there, our photos may not capture these sites with the imagination and artistry near their level).



From whence does this expertise and artistry emerge? Larry is a professional photographer and is the underwater photography expert at B&H Photo, one of the country’s largest photography/electronics retailers, which accounts for his amazing, instant-recall of all camera hardware functions, operations and compatibilities. Larry’s photos have appeared in too many publications to list. He is also the NY editor of X-Ray Magazine and a past president of The NYC Sea Gypsies. And Olga is a fine artist and a life member of the Art Students League of New York. This training, combined with her innate sense of composition, form, texture and most importantly lighting, lay the foundation for her triumphant photography! Olga’s underwater photographs have been published in InVetrum, X-Ray, Northeast Dive News, UK Dive and The

Ultimate Depth. Olga is also an athletic trainer and uses her prowess to full advantage in achieving all her photography summits!

*Nobody else in the greater NY/NJ metro area - or anywhere else - is doing what Larry and Olga do – giving frequent presentations to the dive community (and also to non-diving camera clubs, too), generously sharing their technical knowledge, artistic judgment and previsualization techniques, and their computer-based photo editing techniques – combined with their genuine, irrepressibly welcoming friendliness! Their pictures range from topside to under the surface. Their images will arrest your attention and take your breath away. If you go to their websites, just be forewarned to be prepared to stay there for a while, because you will be captivated by their images. Larry’s website is at <https://www.liquidimagesuw.com> and Olga’s at <https://www.fitimage.nyc> Larry and Olga, the community thanks you!*



It is hard to know where to start in any discussion about Michael Rothschild and his many contributions to clubs, friends, patients and different communities in which he is a leader. Michael is a high energy/top-of-the-line individual in every aspect. He has been diving many years, starting in earnest when the rigors of his medical education started to subside just a little. Currently in addition to his responsibilities helping to run NYUPS, Michael is also the Dive Chairman for NYC Sea Gypsies, putting together the yearly busy dive schedule for this Club with so many enthusiastic divers. Michael certainly knows the ways and means of leadership, as a past-President of the NYC Sea Gypsies. He has also given presentations at Beneath The Sea, at the B&H Event Space and other venues, sharing his expertise. And when he is

not enjoying and devoting himself to his own family, or diving or running dive club stuff, Michael is a leading pediatric ear/nose/throat physician, compassionately dedicated to his patients with his personal 24/7 availability. He has an astonishing array of medical professional honors, awards, publications/presentations, and leaderships on medical projects and task forces, all of which attest to his stature in this important field of medicine. Since the dawn of personal computing Michael has leveraged the power of computers - not only for his medical practice and research, but also for his underwater photography. And he has also created mini-documentary videos about his own immigrant family and their early years together making their way forward in the US. It is the story of America! For these reasons and more, Dive Lights “ON” for our friend Dr. Rothschild and his many leadership contributions to our diving community, and other communities favored to be arcs in his circle of connection.

NYUPS is *also* favored to have NYC Sea Gypsies Social chair Beth McCrae on board. Beth energizes club members with a welcome range of NYC social connections which extend and expand member relationships, which are so important to build during the non-diving months. Beth leverages her professional background in technology on behalf of NYUPS by expanding awareness about and celebration of NYUPS through Instagram and Twitter. Beth is also a writer for *Scuba Diver Life* magazine. Beth’s social

media campaign further extends NYUPS's reach, range and mindshare throughout the NY/NJ diving community – especially with younger, tech-savvy divers. It is also a great way to showcase images taken by the extended team, helps members to get to know each other, and also exchanges news across the members as to who's doing what, when and where. All goodness for the sport of scuba diving!

*But wait, there's more!* It is fair to say that Michael and Larry's driving message to divers in the greater NY/NJ metro area is to *dive more locally!* There is no place on Earth with a more concentrated and sustained population and concentration of seaborne commerce than the waters off the Boston to Philadelphia corridor. That means history - and wrecks for scuba divers to explore and learn from. In addition, while environmental challenges remain, the waters of the northeast are recovering after hundreds of years of commercial and industrial abuse. Fish are returning, in particular, menhaden (aka moss bunkers); there is even a widely-suspected white shark and sand tiger shark nursery area off the south shore of Long Island and off the New Jersey coast! The return of the keystone species menhaden is a symptom of and accelerant for marine environmental recovery. There are even whales breaching off Coney Island NY, gulping down hundreds of menhaden with each upward lunge through the corralled fish in the water column. THAT is a sight to behold!



To help get divers get into and under these northeast waters, NYC Sea Gypsies sponsors classes for new divers in the basics of northeast diving at Dutch Springs. This “under-the-wingmanship” by the experienced NYC Sea Gypsy divers is admirable, and a great service to the sport. And to get those new divers underwater *taking pictures*, Larry and co-conspirators Michael and Olga conduct annual underwater photo workshops at nearby Dutch Springs quarry. So, this is not all just photography ‘theory’- this is also hands-on practice, experimentation and seeing cause/effect in context. NYUPS members get an opportunity to use different equipment, and assess for themselves how different camera settings and lighting configurations will render different effects on the image. The benefit of doing this in Dutch Springs of course is that, while it





is technically an 'open water' environment, it is a relatively secure one, complete with artifacts already in place such as aircraft, helicopter, a bus, firetruck, cars and so forth. Most divers in the greater NY/NJ metro area have completed scuba training at Dutch, and are familiar with and feel comfortable in the water at "Dutch". This reduces task-loading, so that underwater photography *learning* can soak in more completely. Fewer background worries facilitates intensive concentration. There is little risk of getting left

behind, because there IS no dive boat to *leave you* behind! (You just need to be sure to time your surface interval correctly to find out *where everyone is meeting after the day's diving* for dinner... and what-not!). Everyone comes away from the workshop with new appreciation for the complexities, challenge, and rewards of underwater photography. To progress beyond underwater snapshots requires excellent buoyancy control first and foremost, and all the right gear (which Larry can work with you on). The gear and skill base include housings, domes, electronic flashes, LED light panels for video, available light settings, adjustment of electronic flash power and angling the flash lights in or out, and adjusting the shutter speed to manipulate the available light. And so on!

The whole diving community in the northeast and NY/NJ metro area is indebted to the team of Larry, Olga and Michael for the photography-related artistic & technical advice, the presentations and workshops, the camera hardware recommendations/advice, the photo editing software workflow, the shared advice and support, the fun and camaraderie, and the opportunity for diver to diver updates on dive locations and experiences. Larry, Olga and Michael should know that we collectively all also appreciate the T I M E they devote to this, not to mention the significant logistical efforts behind all these ventures. The positive impact is not just for photographers, but for all divers - because the images this group of teachers/students/photo mentors/friends collectively return with during their surface intervals advance the sport, raise awareness about threatened marine environments, inspire and spread the adventure of diving to the next team following our bubbles!