

American

LIFEGUARD

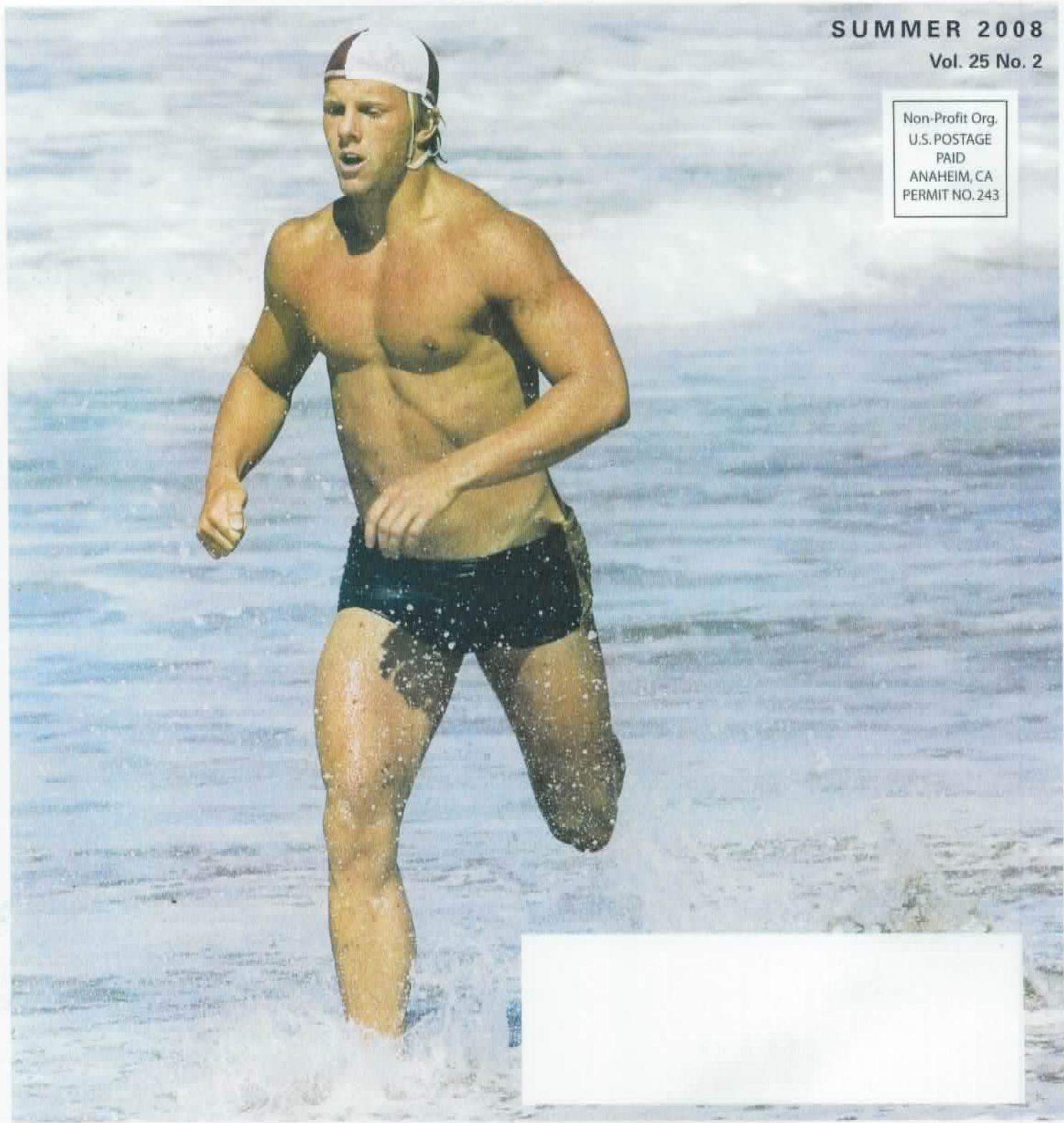
M * A * G * A * Z * I * N * E

A United States Lifesaving Association Publication

SUMMER 2008

Vol. 25 No. 2

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
ANAHEIM, CA
PERMIT NO. 243



LONG BEACH, CA LIFEGUARDS VOLUNTEER AND CREATE A NEW LIFEGUARD SERVICE IN ECUADOR

Paul Dunning, Long Beach, CA

John Pearce and I are seasonal veterans serving the Long Beach Lifeguards for 30 years. We have undertaken a new international lifesaving venture called Project Ecuador in concert with the Long Beach, CA Lifeguard Association. Project Ecuador is about lifeguarding, volunteerism and job creation in Playas Ecuador.

In August 2006, John Pearce and I went on a surfing trip in Ecuador. While staying in Playas, the hotel owners Victor and Esperanza discovered that we were lifeguards and informed us of the numerous drownings that occur each year in this poor beach town. The people of Playas pleaded to us to train their citizens to become lifeguards. We heard them and took immediate action upon our return to the USA.

In late November 2006, we returned to Playas with donated rescue buoys, fins and uniforms. We trained 23 Ecuadorians: 16 young men and 7 men from Ecuador's Black Beret Special Forces. In February 2007, we returned again with more donated rescue buoys, binoculars, radios and uniforms for our first "on the job training" during the Carnival holiday. The beach crowds were estimated at 40,000 and we had over 28 rescues and no life was lost.

After Carnival 2007, we were concerned that more lifeguards would seek out paying jobs. In December 2007, Pearce and I met with Eddie Benton, the Ecuadorean Consulate General in Los Angeles, California. Our goal was to seek full time wages for the Ecuador lifeguards. The Consulate General was satisfied with the merit of our mission

and agreed to forward our letter on to the Governor of the state of Guayas where Playas resides. Shortly thereafter, it was reported that the Ecuadorean lifeguards were receiving money from the Playas Mayors office. The Ecuador State of Guayas is now supporting of our efforts too. The state paid for 20 new lifeguard towers and is funding 10 seasonal lifeguards. This is over and above the 6 lifeguards being paid by the City of Playas.

For Carnival 2008, nine American lifeguards volunteered to help. Over 70,000 Ecuadorians visited this 2.5 mile beach resulting in the most difficult lifeguarding conditions in the world. The surf generated sets up to 6 feet breaking across the entire region and the rip currents were often and severe. Over 60 rescues were documented and 15 rescues were life threatening events. CPR was administered to one victim by a new Ecuadorian guard on his second day of work and the victim was revived. Unfortunately, one victim succumbed to the sea after an hour long line search. We were all saddened by this single event, but this is a very positive step compared to the reported 14 drownings during Carnival 2006.

John and I are proud to report that in just 15 months, our vision of a sustained lifeguard service in Playas Ecuador is now a reality. You can help support the Playas lifeguards with product donations or by volunteering during Carnival 2009 and beyond. If you have any product to donate or questions, please contact me at pauldunning911@msn.com.

