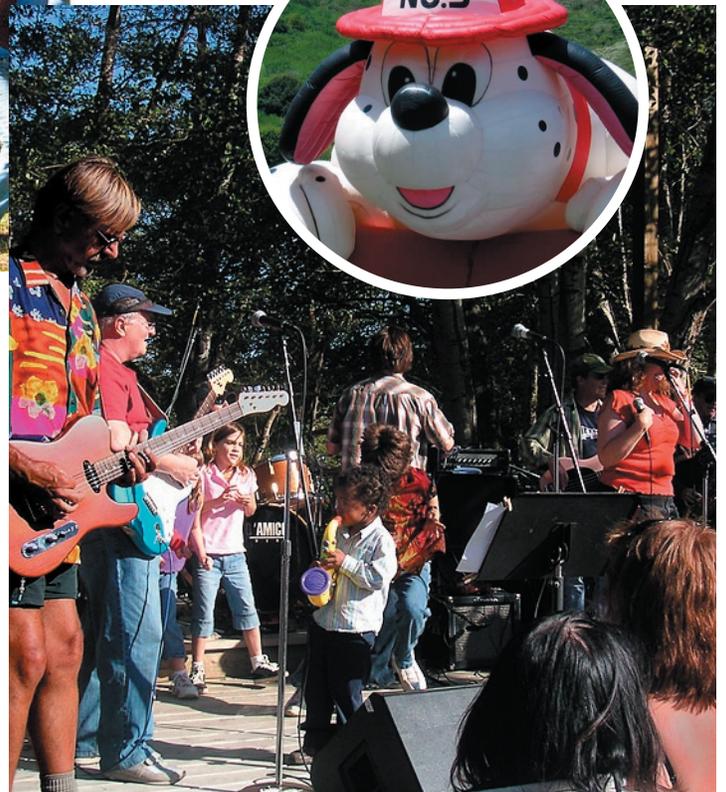


BEACHCOMBER

Muir Beach Neighborhood News

Issue 235 July, 2006

Another BBQ to Remember



NOTES FROM THE EDITORS NEXT SUBMISSIONS DUE: September 1ST

Email: heather@creativei4u.com

Drop: Beachcomber mailbox, South end of Mailbox Row

Mail: Beachcomber, Star Route, Muir Beach, CA 94965

For more information call Nina: 415-388-0380

THIS ISSUE'S STAFF:

New Editors: Nina and Harvey Vincent-Pearlman

Graphic Design: Heather Kobrin

Circulation and Business Affairs: Ann Browning

Thank you Willow for Years of Dedication!

The BEACHCOMBER is a community newsletter published by and for the residents, friends and former residents of Muir Beach. Published since 1946 (on and off). Circulation 200 (more or less). Appears bi-monthly (sooner or later).

SUBSCRIPTIONS

\$25 per year delivered, \$30 mailed

Submission Instructions

- PLEASE EMAIL SUBMISSIONS WHENEVER POSSIBLE
- You can send your writing directly in an email or in a Word Doc. Please spell check.
- Only use returns between paragraphs, do not force line breaks. ***
- Please include photos, drawings to go with your writing whenever possible.
- Image Formats: jpg, PDF, (Must Zip EPS/Tiff files)
- You can also submit drawings or paste-up layouts, scanned or originals
- Please indicate if your submission should be typed or scanned.

Everything printed should be considered solely the opinion of the writer, and is printed in the form and condition as presented. Beachcomber exercises no editorial control over content or distribution, except for readability and general appearance. Anonymous submissions are not accepted. YOU make the news happen and we want everyone else to know about it.

Disclaimer: When no name appears as the author on any story in the Beachcomber, you can safely assume it was written by the editors unless otherwise noted. All articles have been submitted as "proofed." No additional spell checking or proofing was done for individual articles. Misspelling are the sole responsibility of the contributing author....

BEACHCOMBER SUBSCRIPTIONS NEEDED

THE BEACHCOMBER NEEDS YOUR HELP

With the printing of this issue, the BEACHCOMBER bank account will be empty, so we need your financial support to keep us alive. It's been more than two years since we've done a subscription drive, and we hope you will send us what you can.

Basic subscription rate:\$25.
Delivered here at the Beach

Mailers subscription rate:\$30.

We print 225 copies, and depending on the number of pages, each issue costs around \$240 to print and \$20 for postage.

We distribute to every box at the Beach whether you subscribe or not, so those of you who pay are obviously subsidizing those who don't. At last count, there were 153 mailboxes, with some receiving several copies. (If you know someone who is not receiving their copy, please let me know.) We mail to 38 subscribers and only mail to those who have paid.

Please make your check payable to "Beachcomber"

Put it in the enclosed envelope addressed to:

Ann Browning at 20 Cove Lane

(a locked box...for what it's worth these days...)

To those of you who have recently sent money, thank you! There's no need to send more. For everyone else, please give generously and keep our beloved Beachcomber coming.
Ann Browning



Any resident may submit a classified ad for free. Please email it to heather@creativei4u.com and we will put it into the next issue.

Licensed Acupuncturist, Nina Vincent
Traditional Chinese Medicine, Herbs, and Massage Therapy.

*****Summer Special for mom's and children:
***Free consultation or treatment.**

Good through Sept. Now doing home visits in Muir Beach on Fridays.

Call for appt. (415)838-0459

333 Miller Avenue, Suite 7

Books Needed!

The library in Puerto Chicama where son Issac is doing his Peace Corps stuff (see previous Beachcomber articles) has nothing in it but some empty bookshelves.

So we are looking for book, DVD donations to send down there. The "we" is me, Gerry Pearlman, and the library folk from our community center, (who else but Judith and Kathy). The Community Center Library will be donating a bunch of books, so this call is to the rest of the community. The kind of books that will be most useful are childrens' books, especially in spanish, all other spanish language books, reference books, dictionaries, atlases, coffee table stuff, photography books, and perhaps the classics of american literature.

If you would like me to pick up the stuff, or need more information, just call me at 380-5056.

Gerry Pearlman

In Loving Memory of T.C.

May 1, 1993 - June 29, 2006

The kitten Graham found and thought it was a baby mountain lion 13 years ago and became Sandy's pal and our gopher-getting loving cat, died from poison after hunting and eating the gopher.
The Groneman Family



Brown University Cappella Group

Sandra Allen, and her a cappella group on spring break from Brown University gave a sing for the locals at Bistro on March 29th. They all had a great time touring and singing around the Bay Area that week, and didn't let the rain get them down! Their website is www.brown.edu/Students/BrownsTones/

--Debra Allen



Photo by Lonna Richmond

Dear Neighbors, What a Blast!!!

Now that the dust has settled and we've had a chance to catch our collective breath after surviving another BBQ, I thought you'd like to check out the more than hundred BBQ photos that keep trickling in.

And while you're on the www.muirbeachfire.com web site, please consider joining us for the Red Cross "TOGETHER WE PREPARE" Presentation at the Muir Beach Community Center on Wednesday, July 5 at 8PM, following the Muir Beach CSD meeting.

The feedback on www.muirbeachfire.com has been very positive. Let us know what you think, and we'll do everything we can to make this a web site worth visiting regularly.

Thanks again for being such great neighbors,
The Muir Beach Volunteer Firemen's Association



BBQ Thanks!

Neighbors: Thank you to all of you who bought raffle tickets, and congratulations to those who won prizes: out of 95 prizes, 45 of the winners were Muir Beachers (and I noticed that winners were a good mix of those who bought tickets prior to the BBQ and those who turned them in or bought them the day of). And 28 of the prizes were picked up at the BBQ, so thank you for that! (The rest were easy to locate and deliver.) We've already figured out how to make it simpler for prize winners to claim their prizes next year, so stay tuned! And an extra big thank you to the 35 of you that donated gifts and certificates (and airplane tickets) to become prizes! And of course to my helpers, Katheen and Levon, Rob and Thomas and Sandra and Samantha, and my cousin Tom (who came from Florida), and to Joy Perrin for her good announcing voice! And special thanks to Jon Rauh for keeping up a tradition of selling the most amount of raffle tickets! Check the new firemen's website!
Debra Allen



Photos from muirbeachfire.com

Remembering Kaia

Oct. 1, 1948 — April 15, 2006

Our friend Kaia Kirouac died on April 15th, 2006, in Petaluma. When I visited her a couple of weeks earlier, she wanted to dictate a letter to Muir Beachers, and I planned to return shortly when I could spend an entire afternoon with her. But Kaia slipped away before I came back, before her letter was written. Here are a few of my memories, as well as those of other friends.

She was born and raised in San Francisco, and when she was a young child, her family lived in San Francisco State student housing while her father attended college there. I knew about this part of her life because we shared a mutual friend who was, like her father, a W.W.II G.I. loan student; the two families lived close to each other on campus.

She went to Galileo High School and told me she loved it. Galileo was in those days the North Beach neighborhood high school, with North Beach overtones of art, bohemians/beatniks/hippies, and the ferment of the sixties.

Kaia cast a critical eye on life, and did not suffer fools gladly. Although increasingly frail in the last several years of her life, she was self-reliant and fiercely independent. She became a Buddhist, and Buddhism gave her a great deal of serenity at the end of her life.

She told me that her first introduction to Muir Beach was years ago, when she met Steve Hatch, Janet Stump's nephew. This may have been forty years ago! She lived in Pt. Richmond for a long time, and, at the end of her life, in the Pt. Reyes area.

Kaia was our Muir Beach mail carrier for 23 years, and she knew who was who better than any of us did. She truly became part of our community, showing up for social events, and volunteering at community fund-raising events. Even this last December, she insisted on working a double shift at the quilters' Holiday Fair.

It was a mutual alliance, and during one of her illnesses several years ago, many Muir Beachers contributed time, funds, and living space until she recovered.

I think of Kaia as a Muir Beacher, and perhaps, as much as she could think of herself as belonging to a particular place, she did too. She loved nature's beauty, and like so many of us hanging out at Bistro on a Wednesday morning, she always spoke out strongly for the environment and for social justice in difficult times.

A wreath was constructed in her memory on Wednesday, April 26, at the Muir Beach community center. It was placed on the community bulletin board at Highway One and Pacific Way.

There was a simple memorial for Kaia at the Muir Beach Community Center on Sunday, June 11.

We will miss our friend.

Judith Yamamoto



Poem to Kaia

I couldn't make Kaia's Celebration of Life event on June 11th, because I got suddenly scheduled in the Marin Poetry Center's summer traveling poetry show and had to read poetry that afternoon. So I dedicated one of my poems to Kaia.

Increasing Clouds

Increasing clouds, a mother's tired smile,
night opening in long blue blooms. A wolf
limps beyond the last house. On a floor floating through story,
the toys fade away, smaller bodies propped at the edges of memory.
Snow where we forgot the names. Now grief,
and any lone passenger travels through ice,
doomed to rush by. If there is only one journey,
let it be open and long. Ice in its masks
cracks over the river, the sudden shouting, the babies
who sleep on, softly. Let them sleep softly.

Judith Yamamoto

~ Greater Muir Beach Neighbors News ~

The Marin County Transit Agency, set up to implement Measure A, has pretty much finalized its West Marin transit plan.

Greater Muir Beach Neighbors supports public transit, both for community and recreational needs. It is crucial for both the reduction of the number of cars coming out to Muir Beach and the down-sizing of the Big Beach parking lot, and for continuing to provide recreational access to this beautiful coast.

We wrote a letter (8/18/05) to Amy Van Doren, Marin County Transit Manager, requesting expanded Stage service (more stops per day, add weekends) and a Muir Woods shuttle stop at Muir Beach. Muir Beachers also addressed these issues at a CSD meeting with Steve Kinsey a couple of months ago, and at several Board of Supervisors' meetings this Spring.

Steve Kinsey told us that a Muir Woods shuttle stop at the Dairy, the site of the former Greyhound and Golden Gate Transit stops of long ago, is in the works. To comply with Disability Act requirements, the stop needs to be moved farther back from Highway 1. That means moving the mailboxes back, certainly not the impossible dream. It won't happen this summer, but should be operating by next summer.

Steve understands that this stop will not change our "rustic character" — no information kiosks, etc. Just a bus stop.

At one point this spring we almost lost the Stage altogether, when it looked like the lure of more riders along Panoramic was leading planners to change the route from Highway One to Panoramic. We thank Steve Kinsey's strong support for saving our one public transit route. We told Steve that we would encourage Muir Beachers to use the Stage, but for it to be more fully utilized we need to continue to press for expanded service. The Stage still doesn't accommodate commuters during the week or community/recreational use on weekends.

We keep hearing from neighbors who do use it, usually not on a regular schedule, often during emergencies (when the car is getting repaired!).

One big use is for Tam High commuters. The schedule is really timed to get students to school on time, and get them home afterwards. Check this out.

The West Marin Stage schedules and map, effective as of July 1st, have been released. Details are available on www.marintransit.org/stage.html

There have been significant service additions, including most notably a new North Route 68 running six days a week, Monday — Saturday, between Inverness, Pt. Reyes Station, San Anselmo and San Rafael (no coastal stops).

South Route runs between Bolinas, Stinson Beach and Marin City feature three different schedules and routes:

- 61 on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday — via Shoreline Highway / Highway 1
- 61e on Wednesday and Friday — via Shoreline Highway / Highway 1 with extension to Pt. Reyes Station
- 61w on Saturday (year round) and Sunday (March 15th through November 15th)
— via Panoramic Highway / Pantoll Ranger Station.

There will be bigger vehicles on all routes, with a capacity of up to 34 passengers, 2 wheelchairs and 2 — 3 bikes on front racks.

Also, a public hearing has been scheduled for July 11th for the MCTD Board to consider the adoption of a fare increase on the Stage. If approved, the following new fares would go into effect on August 1, 2006:

Full-price fare of \$2.00

Discount fare of \$1.00 for seniors (over 65) , disabled passengers and youth (under 18)

Children under 6 will continue to ride free and must be accompanied by an adult.

For more information on the Marin County Transit District, visit www.marintransit.org

Meanwhile, the Big Lagoon project is swirling around in the inner GGNRA planning process. It was supposed to show up for a public hearing this spring, but summer has arrived and there has been no word on what sort of alternative they've carved out of the four or five possibilities. The web site for information is <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/goga>

Last May, there was a creek walk to talk about the Banducci Site Restoration project. I didn't go on it, so can't report). So far, we haven't gotten involved in the details of this project. If anyone has input, questions, concerns, let me know.

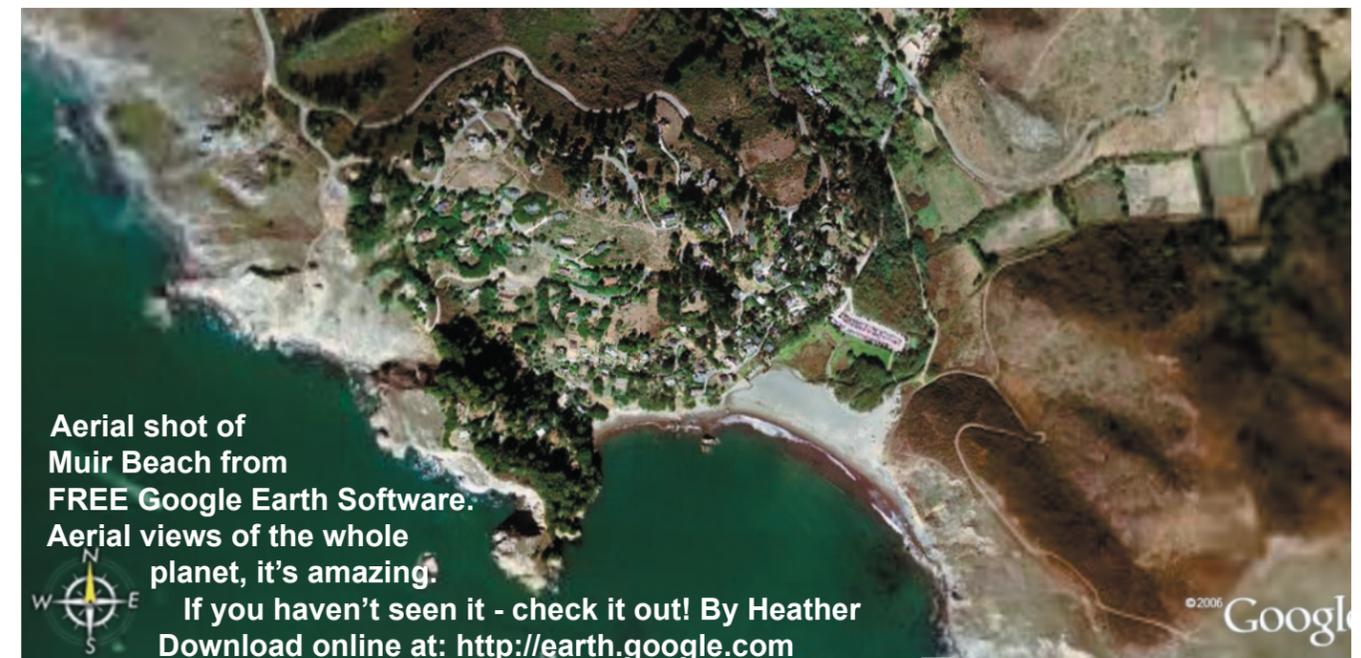
Lastly, the Dias Ridge and Coast View Trails Rehabilitation and Access Improvement Project has been proceeding through an environmental impact analysis. This project will link parts of a larger regional trail, and will provide an alternative for bicycle traffic on Highway 1 as well as "support already existing multi-use trail designations."

The Diaz Ridge trail really needs work!

Of interest is the question of where the two trails will hook up. Steve Kinsey addressed this project at the CSD meeting, and agreed with our request for trail improvement, yes; anything else (GGNRA kiosks, info centers, etc. at the Dairy), no.

Let me know your thoughts on all of this.

Peaceful wishes, Judith Yamamoto



CALL FOR HELP

Perched spectacularly on cliff and creek and accessible by land only via torturous mountain road, Muir Beach might look to outsiders as a community where personal safety has been forfeited for beauty and serenity. The nearest hospital, after all, is a 12 mile, 30 minute drive.

Fast and competent life-saving help, however, is just minutes away. A call to 9-1-1 sets in motion an incredible life-saving apparatus.

Emergency 9-1-1 calls are answered by Marin County Sheriff Department dispatchers at the Civic Center. Highly trained personnel prompt callers for information which is immediately entered into a computerized system. If an individual can dial the emergency number, but cannot speak, specialized Caller-ID-type devices can automatically pinpoint the address. A sheriff's deputy may be sent, fire departments notified or, in the event of a medical emergency, an ambulance or even a helicopter will be dispatched.

For fire and medical emergencies, the county almost always dispatches both the Muir Beach Volunteer Fire Department and the Marin County Fire Department located on Throckmorton Ridge, insuring a speedy and adequate response.

In most Muir Beach emergencies, members of the Muir Beach Volunteer Fire Department will be the first help to arrive. The 17-member department includes six Emergency Medical Technicians who are thoroughly trained and drilled to the same levels and standards as paid professionals.)

The MBVFD practices year round to handle a wide variety of emergencies, structure and wildland fires, cliff and open space rescues, car and bicycle accidents, household emergencies, flood evacuations and virtually any other situation in which someone may be injured. The vast majority of local responses are for non-fire emergencies.

MBVFD personnel are trained to stabilize accident and medical emergency victims until an ambulance and paramedics arrive. For critical situations, a helicopter air ambulance is also available and can land at several designated sites.

Marin is updating the system that handles cellular calls to 9-1-1. In the past, all cellphone calls for help were answered by the California Highway Patrol. A new system being phased in will route local 9-1-1 cellphone calls to city or county dispatchers.

Thanks to trained, and dedicated personnel, both unpaid volunteers and full-time professionals, Muir Beach is well protected.

9-1-1

IN THE CHIPS

Now that the winter storm season is almost over and homeowners are busy cleaning up limbs, branches and tangled underbrush, Muir Beach residents should be aware of a possible change in disposal procedures.

Homeowners will probably no longer be able to take branches and tree trimmings to pile near the volleyball area off Franks Valley Road, according to Fire Chief John Sward.

"It just got completely out of control," Sward said, "and we will have to stop accepting material."

So much debris accumulated in the area that early in March, department volunteers worked more than 12 hours to burn the pile. The final embers weren't doused until 10 p.m. "Way too much material and too easy for it to get out of control," Sward said.

Muir Beach property owners weren't the only ones dumping debris there. "People were coming from all over," according to the chief.

The plan is to chain-off the entrance to the volleyball and well house area to stop vehicle access.

The change in routine doesn't necessarily mean homeowners will have to haul branches to the dump or stuff them into the "green can." MBVFD has a chipper that may be shuttled to homeowners' property on request. Sward is working on details.

"They'll have to take the chips, though," the chief said, "and spread them around on their property." The chipper can chew up fairly large branches, but can't handle brambly material.

Lessons from the Muir Beach BBQ:

#1. Be careful where you put your beer.

This photo was taken a moment after this dog pee'd in Phil's beer. I was laughing too hard the moment it happened to get the shot. But the beer did - true story!

#2. If your beer gets pee'd in, spill it out before you forget and drink it again.

(I did, thank goodness, for Phil's sake)

By Heather Kobrin



The Slug and I

By Linda Gibbs

The other day, while conducting the funeral for the large white goldfish that our 35-year-old red ear slider turtle, Buster, attacked, I notice signs of spring in the garden. Near my office is a majestic magnolia tree that spills over into our yard from our neighbor's. The giant buds are opening and I can see the white petals beginning to emerge.

During the funeral held near the fence on the eastern edge of the garden, David says "ashes to ashes and dust to dust." As I turn over the soil onto the tissue-wrapped body, I say, "I'm sorry you suffered such a violent death. Your friends are upset. When I found you, they were huddled in the corner on the other side of the tank." As I finish covering the grave, I add, "They miss you." And that's the end of the funeral. David and I turn away and walk up the garden path to go inside.

At the front door, where the sun shines in the late afternoon before sinking into the ocean, I see the banana slug that hangs out there, waiting for the cat bowl with bits of left-over cat food and tiny black ants that I bring out everyday from the kitchen. Rather than destroying the ants at the sink or dumping them in the garbage or setting out ant traps, I let them fend for themselves outside, still having the opportunity to eat from the bowl. The slug joins them, too. Every day I think that's the end of the ants coming from the floorboards into the kitchen looking for food. But the next day there are hundreds more to take the place of the ones I removed the day before.

The banana slug sits in the middle of the sidewalk with his head and upper body stretched towards the sun, his lower body anchored to the ground. He points his tentacles toward the sun as if he can't get enough of the warmth. It is an extraordinary sight. I've only seen slugs slithering along the ground or clinging to the northern side of the house eating splattered bird droppings.

This mollusk isn't scared of my looming shadow as I stop and watch him enjoying the few warm rays of the sun that rarely comes out during this spring of record-breaking rain. For the first time in my life I feel a connection with a slug. Together we appreciate the break in the rain, basking in the sun for a few minutes before I go inside and continue my late Sunday afternoon chores in preparation for the week ahead. Later when I take out the garbage, he lies prone again, enjoying the bits of food left in the cat bowl.

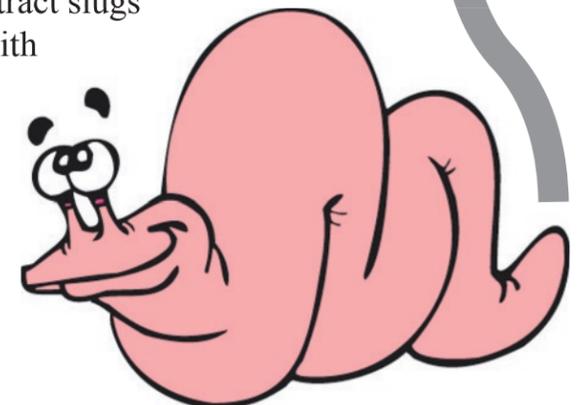
I think of Verlyn Klinkenborg and his great powers of observation on his farm in upstate New York, recorded in his column, *The Rural Life*, on the editorial pages of the NY Times. I feel a kinship with him and am encouraged by my small observation in the garden.

What Klinkenborg says about slugs in his garden sums it up out here: "The profusion of slugs this year reflects the damp, dark weather that has clung since April. Slugs are a kind of animate precipitation, aqueous sloths."

You know Northern California has endured a hard and wet winter when the banana slug takes time out from sliming along searching for food to stretch his tentacles towards the delinquent sun. Even the heavy spring rains are too much for the moisture-loving slug. In fact, slugs can't survive if they get dried out, so they seek shelter under boards, garden debris, and rocks during the heat of the day, waiting for the evening dampness or the fog to roll in. During hot dry periods, they hibernate underground using their silvery mucous to create a cocoon. When the rain comes again, it dissolves the mucous, soaks into their bodies, and wakes them up. But today the slug does not hide; he looks as if he is celebrating his natural enemy.

I am so excited by my connection to this gastropod that I forget for a minute how pesky the slug is and to the lengths humans will go to rid their gardens of this creature that loves to eat new growth, seedlings, and leafy plants. So how can such a creature fill me with joy during a rare sunny moment at the end of March? I don't know. And when I look at my tender lupine seedlings sprouting in the pantry--too fragile yet to transplant to the garden--the thought of a slug eating my winter labor creates conflict between protecting the new plants and my fascination with one of our world's creatures who has a right to be here, too.

I won't be one of those gardeners who sprinkles salt on the slug to dry it out and kill it. Or put down shingles and other sharp objects that will destroy the slug as it slimes over the deadly material. I refuse to pour ashes onto the ground to trap the slug. I'll also resist putting out grapefruit halves to attract slugs to this unique shelter, and then stomp on the grapefruit with the slugs trapped inside. I don't know what I will do if they attack my lupine seedlings, but what I do know is I won't let anything disturb my connection with this creature on this rare sunny spring afternoon.



Two Weeks in Bolivia

By Sydney McCall

I walk through a pig field decorated with plastic bags, empty candy wrappers and beer cups to get to my house. My room has a door and a bed. To eat you work. Its all pretty simple. Everyday its a choice. Do I want to eat?

Alcoholism is pervasive in Bolivia, especially in the campo. I can relate to the people who chose to drink that is why I hardly do. Life is hard and childhood is not a break from work. My host brother is 7 and when he isn't in school he helps around the house. Most of our meals are in silence. I sit uncomfortably trying to feel anything but uncomfortable, struggling because with time I still cannot get used to it.

I love it; an entirely different way to lead life, one with fewer questions. Challenging in every way, most of all knowing how long I will be here. With no shower just a bucket of water and my washcloth in a concrete box of a bathroom, I wash as little as possible.

The crew, there are 31 of us. We are B-42, the 42nd group to live here in Bolivia. I think we are one of the calmest Peace Corps groups yet, especially after having met some of the current volunteers (another story in itself). I think of us as the group of little Buddhas. Partying is not what we are here for, but once and in a while we indulge. I'm impressed with every single individual in my group and I feel lucky to be a part of it all. Classes run all day, they are both stimulating and exhausting. Luckily, I placed into advanced Spanish so I've been assured I will pass the final exam to become a bonafide volunteer.

I do yoga everyday; it helps to have a routine, something I will be able to hold onto when I transition out of this town in the campo near the city of Cochabamba to my location in the "super campo" (most likely six hours from anything).



We worked with the town kids yesterday for the first time. There were five of us volunteers and 20 children. We had them draw a map of the town and circle the things they liked and cross out the things they were not so fond of. The ratio was far better than Mexico which made it feel like a breeze. The commonalities between Mexico and Bolivia are significant in that the girls are much less confident in their abilities, from giving presentations, to drawing, sports, whatever aspect of life they are used to taking the back seat. I deeply hope to have a small positive impact on this. I find their discouraged energy to be the most crushing thing of all. I see I have the potential of being useful here, something I have not always known how to be.

The Clash

By Sydney McCall

They arrived in stilettos, designer spring dresses straight off the runway and cell phones glued to their ears. Carrying the city of New York in their walk, tight faces and tone of voice, I watched as a quiet uncomplicated beach town, overnight, turned into the chicest club in Manhattan.

They followed their guru, a heavy set South African man with a clean white beard and each day a new pair of pleated polo khakis. For having a belly like Santa Clause he had astonishingly disproportional arms, arms that resembled those of young Schwarzenegger, with bicep veins jutting out enough so my doctor friend felt certain enough to say "it is absolutely the result of steroid use".

In the mornings, he would stroll the beach with his pure-bred, flawlessly groomed chewawa, as I sat picking ticks off Pulga (Flea), the hotel mutt who has become one of my most consistent companions.

Once New York landed in Chacala, formal cocktail hour followed their yoga groups 4pm to 6pm meditation. This involved a plethora of drinking, some conversation and a lot of indiscreetly staring one another up and down, all done with a posed smile. I did not change out of my foul running clothes just to suit the occasion.

I was selected as the official babysitter of the week; the local Mexicans were not suitable for such high class children. As one New York mother put it, "What do they expect me to do? Let my child swim in a pool with a Mexican woman who probably can't swim to save her own life? Ya right!"

Thank god, they had me to look after their daughters. A harmless American girl, who could take their food orders, watch them pick at their plates, make fun of the food and toss their untouched meals in the garbage. I was someone who understood when they said they were allergic to peanuts so they needed to sit on the other side of the dining room to avoid any toxic inhalation. I let them assume this of me and at times I felt sick holding it all in.

My practice increasingly became to not judge, to accept others and find similarities rather than differences between us. This was challenging to say the least. After supervising three girls in the morning whose mothers recited a twenty page list of things we were not allowed to do; "No beach, no pool, no sugar, no movies, and NO fighting with one another." I would then head to my after school program for the day where the parents of four year olds felt safe leaving their children in a hectic room with just me, fifty other kids, some defunct tables and rusty nails poking out of the walls. These parents felt at ease simply because their children were in my presence.

It was a radical daily transition from the Manhattan princesses to the scavenger children who would be kicking rocks in the streets if it were not for the school program. Sometimes I do not understand how we share the same world.



Photos from website about Chacala

Isaac Pearlman in Peru #3

Hola familia,

Okay, so I figure this email will hopefully clarify a few questions and impressions people have been giving me about my living situation and what is and isn't available in my community.

For starters, there are times when I am watching TV with my host family, or when my host brothers are playing their favorite music (which includes the Beatles, Guns and Roses, Aerosmith, Nirvana, and others) that I feel like I haven't gone anywhere. Also, hanging out with the other volunteers, often in large groups on the weekends maintains the bubble of America that I have been trying to get away from. Also, the fact that there are three little tiendas that have internet on the street I live on is another thing, although it's definitely a good thing because it allows me to receive all of your wonderful emails.

I think this bubble has prevented me from having major culture shock so far, which I guess is good and bad. However there are plenty of daily reminders of the reality of the place I live in and the people who actually live here instead of staying for a short period of time. They are often simple things, such as the sinks that only have one knob, because no one has warm water and therefore it makes no sense to have a sink with two. Ironically enough, the only place that has a sink with both is the Peace Corps training center, which still has no warm water. Not flushing toilet paper is another, because the pipes here are so small that they get clogged very easily, so all the bathrooms have little trashcans for the used toilet paper.

Washing clothes is a whole 'nother adventure, although easy enough. Simply throw them in a bucket, hand wash them with soap, then keep rinsing them in various buckets until most of the soap is out, then hang them up to dry. The money my host family is getting paid to host me includes my host mom doing my laundry, except for my underwear and socks which I do. I tried to bargain with her so I could do all my clothes, but she's a tough negotiator and wouldn't budge. She has already snuck in my room and done my undies a few times already.

Then there are other things that are much bigger, either in actuality or because they simply drive the point home - seeing kids entertain themselves by kicking a plastic bottle in the street for instance, because they don't have a soccer ball. The neighbor's kid 'Locito' (which means little crazy one) came over today and was playing with a toy that made him exceedingly happy and content - it was a black marker, and he entertained himself by drawing on his hand until we gave him some paper. After I made an origami dog and gave it to him, he drew a dog on my hand with his marker as a trade. Maybe we don't need any more than that as humans, who knows.

Or transport is another huge culture difference. Everyone here takes combis, which are basically like VW Bus size, excepted outfitted with seats on each side. I've counted as many as 18 people in a combi, and there was still breathing space so we could have fit more and would have if more people needed to get out. Also, all the volunteers have universally agreed that it is just better to not watch while we ride in them. Although the roads are only two lanes, somehow it can become four when people on both sides want to pass each other. Also, the combis have very few set stops, they mainly stop wherever you tell them - at the corner, in the middle of the street, wherever. Also, if you want it will stop and the doorman will jump out to a corner fruitstand and buy you fruit if you request it.

The roads, even the paved ones, are small (which always makes passing other cars interesting) like European roads, and often have huge potholes or rocks or random rubble in the middle of them. Those neighborhoods that have paved roads are lucky (mine does), as are those which have electricity and water. This area has both, although a few minutes away is a municipality that doesn't. Well, water is only provided until 6 am, then again after 2 pm. Fortunately at my house they have a tank, so you can shower after 6 am and of course since it is freezing water it is the best alarm clock you could ever ask for.

The people here are quite simply amazing. Despite having a standard of living that would be the next step up from very poor in the US, they have pride in their culture and in their living. One day Esperanza was working with me in the garden and she showed me a plant that stings you if you touch it - like a stinging nettle. She explained to me in her small pueblo in the mountains, it was used to castigate the children. After Pepe, my host brother accidentally killed one of her favorite plants that is just growing haphazardly on the ground; she winked at me and proceeded to chase him around the yard with it until he finally scrambled up the tree trunk they use as a ladder and dashed off. It was hilarious.

There are a million other things, and of course words never do it justice. I know everyone wants pictures, and I'm working on it. I have asked some of the other volunteers to email me their pictures because I didn't bring (okay, in reality I lost) my camera. All they have to do is do it.

That's about it for now, it's hard for me to sit at a computer for more than an hour. More stories to come, including the crazy events of today in which I finally ate some guinea pig for the first time. Colorin, colorado, mi cuenta se ha terminado as they say here. I hope this finds you all exceedingly well and in good health.

Love, Isaac

A Close Encounter

Sierra (golden retriever) and I were walking up the trail that runs between lower Sunset and Ahab streets. He went off the trail about halfway up and all of a sudden I heard his blood curdling yelps. I hadn't seen any other dogs around and Sierra is non-confrontational, so you can imagine how shocked I was to see him struggling on his back, being held down and pushed around by a deer. I charged at them screaming and luckily the deer backed off. Sierra appeared to be unharmed and as we left I noticed a little baby fawn on the ground about 5 ft. away. That wonderful mother continued to follow us, at one point, as we continued up the trail, she appeared at the top of the stairs - looking down at us, blocking our way -- her nostrils flaring and sides heaving. Wow, she was mad and she was scary. We ditched through another yard up to the street, didn't see her, so continued on. All of a sudden I noticed her in a yard on our left, walking parallel to us until we almost reached the corner and then she crossed over and headed back down to her baby.

This was my first encounter of the close kind with a deer - if Sierra could talk he might have a different story.

Lonna Richmond



Critter Report: Soundscaping

By Dave MacKenzie

As Spring turns into Summer, the sights and sound of nature are all around. Fresh green plants and many displaying birds are especially obvious. And when the nights are clear, Muir Beach has great stargazing (anyone else been watching Mars "streaking" - so to speak - into Gemini, chasing the much slower and brighter Saturn?).

Natural sounds, in particular, are at their peak in Spring and Summer. The surf crashing into the winter creek runoff at high tide, the west winds tossing the trees in the afternoon, and the sounds of the hawks and swallows are all around our community. Since Muir Beach sits surrounded by national and state parks (and the protected Mt. Tam watershed) we are spared much of the sound, or noise, that the more urban folks have to put up with. We do get highway and aircraft noise, but relatively infrequently compared with the constant Hwy 101 background and overflights in, say, Sausalito.

So important and rare these true natural sounds have become that the National Park Service has identified the natural "soundscapes" of the park lands as a resource to be legally protected. Yes, natural sound is getting harder to find. Bernie Kraus, natural sound expert (and former member of the folk group the Weavers), estimates that in recent years he needs at least ten or fifteen times more hours of recording to develop one of his natural sound CDs as he did when he first started recording years ago. The natural soundscapes are disappearing.

Right now, for example, teams equipped with high-tech recording systems are studying the sounds of Muir Woods National Monument to determine baseline background soundscapes for future management. Maybe someday those tour company helicopters that almost daily buzz over the Muir Beach Overlook can be part of an overall plan to manage noise and natural sound. I have watched a Northern Spotted Owl at Camp Eastwood look up from its nest (with two new chicks) and give a startled reaction as a chopper buzzed across the forest much too loudly. And in the Grand Canyon, aircraft flights have been managed to assure a more pleasant visitor experience.

Go out and listen. Morning is usually best in Muir Beach, and early on weekdays has less automobile and aircraft noise. Is that the single "kyeer" of the Red-Tailed Hawk, or the repetitive "chew, chew, chew, chew, chew" of the Red-Shouldered Hawk (a common call along Pacific Way!). It is hard to make mnemonics for the calls, so make up your own to make them easier to remember! Have you listened to the "snapping" and 'electrical "arcing" sounds of the White-Tailed Kite, e.g. last year when they nested at the Community Center. Anyone hear the "creaks" and "chirps" of swallows buzzing overhead? Or how about one of my favorites, the "twisting party balloon squeaks" from the Barn Swallows.

To really hear the best natural sounds, you need to be up early, at sunrise. In the Spring and Summer many birds sing beautiful and ancient music as part of their mating and nesting rituals. Every year I have to "relearn" a few songs from species that I know well since they haven't been calling much throughout the rest of the year. It is also likely that birdsong is more complex than we think. Why, for example, do Raven mates often locate each other with a sequence of four "croaks," only to then increase it to five or six, and then drop back to one or two when the mate is located? If you listen a lot, you will hear "dialects" in a given species, even as you travel. It is said that the late Dr. Luis Baptista of the Cal Academy of Sciences could tell the exact neighborhood in San Francisco from which a White-Crowned Sparrow song was recorded. And if you try for owls, at night of course, very late or very early is best.

We are very lucky in Muir Beach because our natural sounds are protected by parkland which cannot be developed, and by a federal monitoring program which could ultimately result in regulations for excessive noise, such as low flying aircraft.

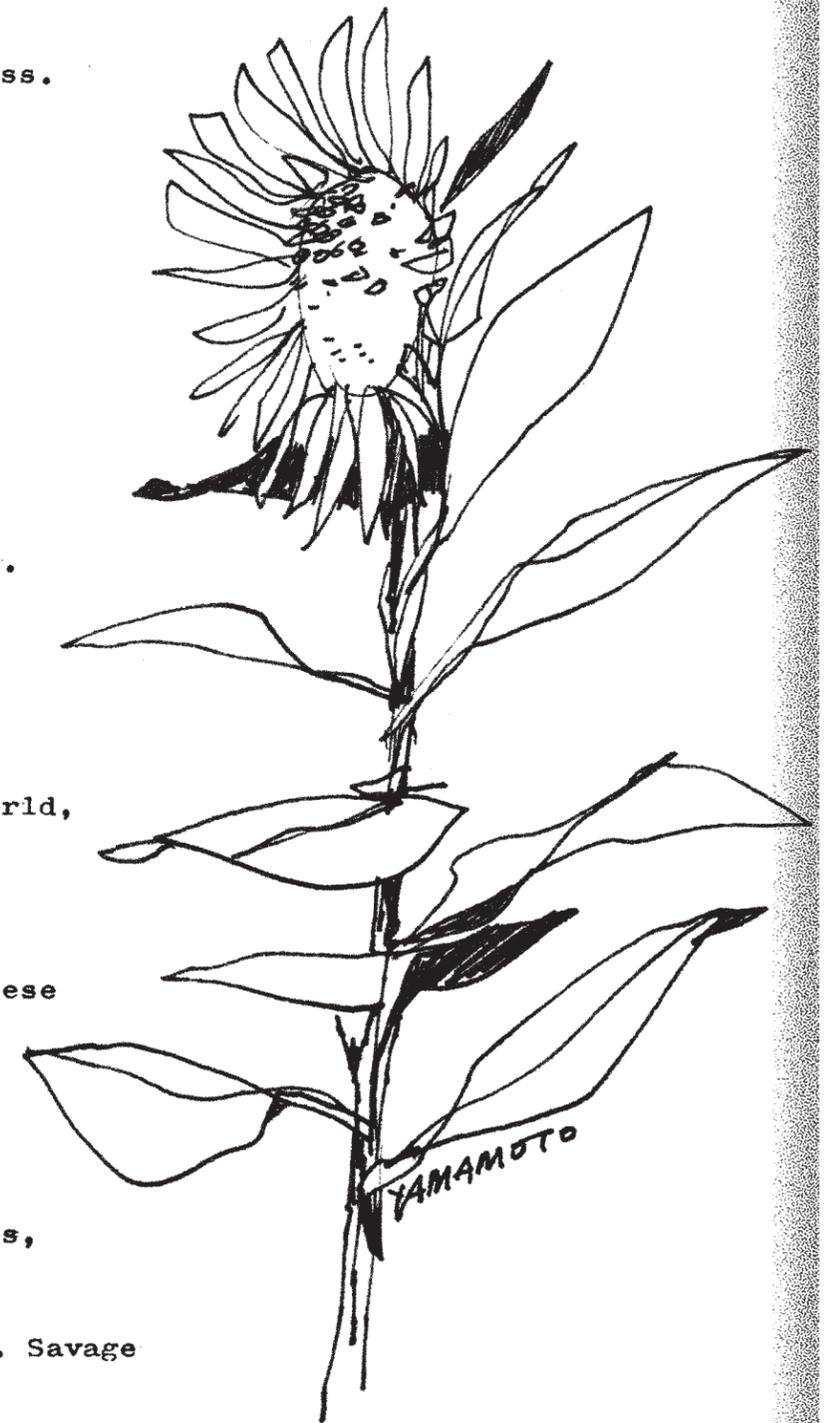
So next time you grab the I-Pod, or hear the 7:45 AM Sunday motorcycle bunch zooming by, remember: our natural sounds are special! Pay some attention to them and they will reward you with a lifetime of music you may have missed.

A Look Back...

Spring In a Mountain Meadow

In this mythical mountain meadow
I am the woodland nymph.
Naked I walk parallel:
with the female deer,
serene, peaceful.
I feel the soft meadow moss.
My bare feet walk
lightly over the snow.
A humming bird flies
within a hare's breath
of my face.
Butterflies dance
above the swollen stream,
determined, swift.
Silently, I stand
in the grass.
Black and white
the flurry
of a sapsucker in flight
to the top
of the long dead
silver giant Jeffrey pine.
I walk on.
On top of one
of the fallen giants.
I feel the softness
of the lifeless wood,
once strong and solid,
now the base
of an intricate insect world,
which, in its turn
allures the bird
to nest and feed.
I watch
the stately walk
of two pairs of Canada geese
to the stream for a bath
after feeding.
I wade
as do they
in the icy water,
spreading my toes
in the soft mud.
And I am connected to this,
this wilderness,
this continuity.
My mind rests.

Sharon S. Savage
May 1986



WEEKLY IN MUIR BEACH



COMMUNITY CENTER DROP-IN USE

Daytime hours if the Center is not scheduled for other activities. Users responsible for cleanup.

MOM'S AND CHILDREN INVITED TO WED.

MORNING PLAY GROUP AT MBCC. Come have scones with the adults around 9:30 and then move to playground with children around 11am. Also wanting to organize and set up the playroom for kids. If you have any interest in being part of creating a space for the Muir Beach children that is clutter free and fun please join us on Wed. to discuss.

MUIR BEACH MONTESSORI CLOSED

Sadly, after only one year, Muir Beach Montessori has closed due to lack of enrollment.

Thank you Lisa!!! for the love and dedication that you put into creating a creative and conscious school for our children.

MONDAY

- Muir Beach Writer's Group - 2nd and 4th Mondays, 2 pm @ MBCC, No fee.
- Tai-chi - 6:30 - 7:30 pm, at \$22.50 per month

TUESDAY

- Yoga - 6:00 pm, Community Center \$5.00

WEDNESDAY

- Tai-chi - 8:00 - 9:00 am
- Bistro - Wednesday mornings, 9:30 - 11:00. Coffee \$1, additional cups 25¢; pastries \$1.25 each. Featuring fantastic home-made scones by Nancy Knox.
- Muir Beach Quilters - 11 am. No fee.
- CSD Town Hall Meetings
Free public meeting of Board of Directors of the Muir Beach Community Services District meets on 4th Wednesday of each month. 7:00 pm

THURSDAY

- Tai-chi - 6:30 - 7:30 pm
- Volleyball - 6:00 pm - late
At the courts on Franks Valley Road, No fee.

SUNDAY

- Zen Center - 8:15 am Meditation Instruction
9:15 am Meditation (zazen)
10:15 am Lecture, 11:15 am Tea
11:45 am Discussion with lecturer
12:45 pm Lunch for Program Attendees (\$8 don.)
Children's Lecture and Program
- Second Sundays 10-11:30 a.m.

