

BEACHCOMBER

Muir Beach Neighborhood News

Issue 239 October 2007



"Green Gulch Retreat - Fall" 2006, 9" x 12" by Rachel von Garnier

TABLE OF CONTENTS

"Green Gulch Retreat - Fall" Painting by Rachel von Garnier	1
Table of Contents	2
From the Editor	2
Announcements	
Birth Announcement	3
Mill Valley Market Supports the Beachcomber with Shop & Give Program	3
Fire Tax Misses November Ballot	3
Explore the Lower Redwood Creek Watershed	3
Jes Sward and Angie Banducci Got Hitched	4
Fall Is in the Air... Monarchs Arrive!	4
Passion for the Lens	5
Mary Daniel Hobson	5
TR Elliott Wines Featured at Fundraiser	6
Laborfair.com—Account of a Muir Beach Startup	8
Major Reconstruction Planned for Dias Ridge Trail	10
In Memoriam: Ellen Mettler 1957-2007	
My Friend Ellen by Allison Pinto	11
August 2, 2007, by Richard Moore	12
Quilter of Souls by Abe Nahum	13
Ellen Mettler Obituary	14
Muir Beach Volunteer Fire Department	
Spotlight: Firefighter Jesse Rudnick	15
MBVFD Incident Log	19
MBVFD Emergency Preparedness Booth at Quilters Fair	19
Muir Beach Quilters	
Big Wheel Keep On Turnin' - Part Two	20
Muir Beach Quilters' Holiday Arts Fair	24
Greater Muir Beach Neighbors	
To Be Or Not To Be? The Stage or the Shuttle?	31
Muir Beach Community Services District	
November Election Results	32
Cell Phone Antenna Tower Update	34
Report on Solar Panels	36
Newest Member of CSD--Shere' Stoddard	37
Muir Beach Community Directory Update	38
Real Estate	
Marin Real Estate Tidbits	39
Ocean Riders	
The Golden Gate Dairy - Then and Now	40
Green Gulch Farm	
Zen and the Art of Bread Baking	44
Nature	
The Critter Report	46
Natural Curiosities	48
The Yellow Jackets and I	49
Art	
Painting Muir Beach	50
Travel	
Birthdays, Elections, and a New Appreciation of Donkeys	52
History	
Barn Raising	55
Fiction	
Zhenya' Story	57
Community Info	
Classified	62
Submission Guidelines	62
Muir Beach Community Center	62
Weekly in Muir Beach	62
Supporting the Beachcomber	
Friends of the Beachcomber	63
Become a Friend of the Beachcomber	63
Give a Gift Subscription to the Beachcomber	63
Beachcomber Beach Towel	63
Back Cover	
Dia de los Muertos	64
Muir Beach Quilters' Holiday Arts Fair	64
In Memoriam: Ellen Mettler 1957 - 2007	64

FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Reader:

I'm pleased to report that the number of *Beachcomber* subscribers more than doubled with our recent subscription drive. Thanks to you all for paying for this issue and for your support of your community newsletter. And a special thanks to our many new Friends of the *Beachcomber*. We had great fun tasting Ted Elliott's TR Elliott Queste Pinot Noir recently and raising money for the *Beachcomber*.

The *Beachcomber* is taking a break for the holidays and will return next year with the March 2008 issue. Best wishes for a wonderful holiday season.

Next issue: March 2008
Submissions Deadline: January 21, 2008
See page 62 for Submission Guidelines.

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Letters to the Editor

The *Beachcomber* welcomes your letters. Address to linda.c.gibbs@gmail.com with Letters to the Editor in subject line.

Support Those Who Support Us

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Dave Semling, Mill Valley Services, printer of the *Beachcomber*



The Canepa family, Mill Valley Market, Shop & Give Program



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 four times a year (sooner or later).

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

BIRTH ANNOUNCEMENT

Lisa, Brad, and Hannah are pleased to announce the birth of Stella Elizabeth Ann Eigsti.

She was born on July 29th @ 1:15 AM. Stella weighed 7lbs, 5 ounces and was 20" in length at birth.

Hannah is a great big sister and having lots of fun!



Fire Tax Misses November Ballot

By Paul Jeschke

A proposed parcel tax to fund the Muir Beach Volunteer Fire Department will not appear on the November ballot because the measure was not delivered to Marin County election officials in time.

"Everyone thought someone else was doing it," said Maury Ostroff, president of the Community Services District.

The measure is now expected to be on the February 5 ballot where it will share space with Democratic and Republican Presidential candidates. "We think the anticipated heavy voter turnout will help it pass," said Michael Kaufman, president of the board of the Muir Beach Volunteer Firemen's Association.

The assessment would add an annual \$200 to property tax bills to increase firefighting capability and fund emergency preparedness and fuel abatement programs.

The proposal originated with the MBVFA and was reviewed and approved by the CSD. It needed to be filed with election officials by August 10 to qualify for next month's ballot, but "it just slipped through the cracks," Ostroff said.

Mill Valley Market Supports the Beachcomber with Shop & Give Program

By Linda Gibbs

Mill Valley Market has accepted the *Beachcomber* into its Shop & Give donation program. The market will donate 3% of your purchases to our community newsletter. Shop at Mill Valley Market, give code # 7094 to the cashier before the end of the transaction, and the *Beachcomber* will receive 3% of your total receipt. Spread the word. The more we shop, the more Mill Valley Market gives. And the market gives 100%; there are no hidden fees or deductions.

The *Beachcomber* thanks the Mill Valley Market (www.millvalleymarket.com), a family-owned business since 1929, for their generosity. The Canepa family has donated more than \$600,000 to charities since 1992. Now with the *Beachcomber* part of their Shop & Give program, we can see our dollars coming back into our Muir Beach community!

Thank you for your support of your community newsletter.



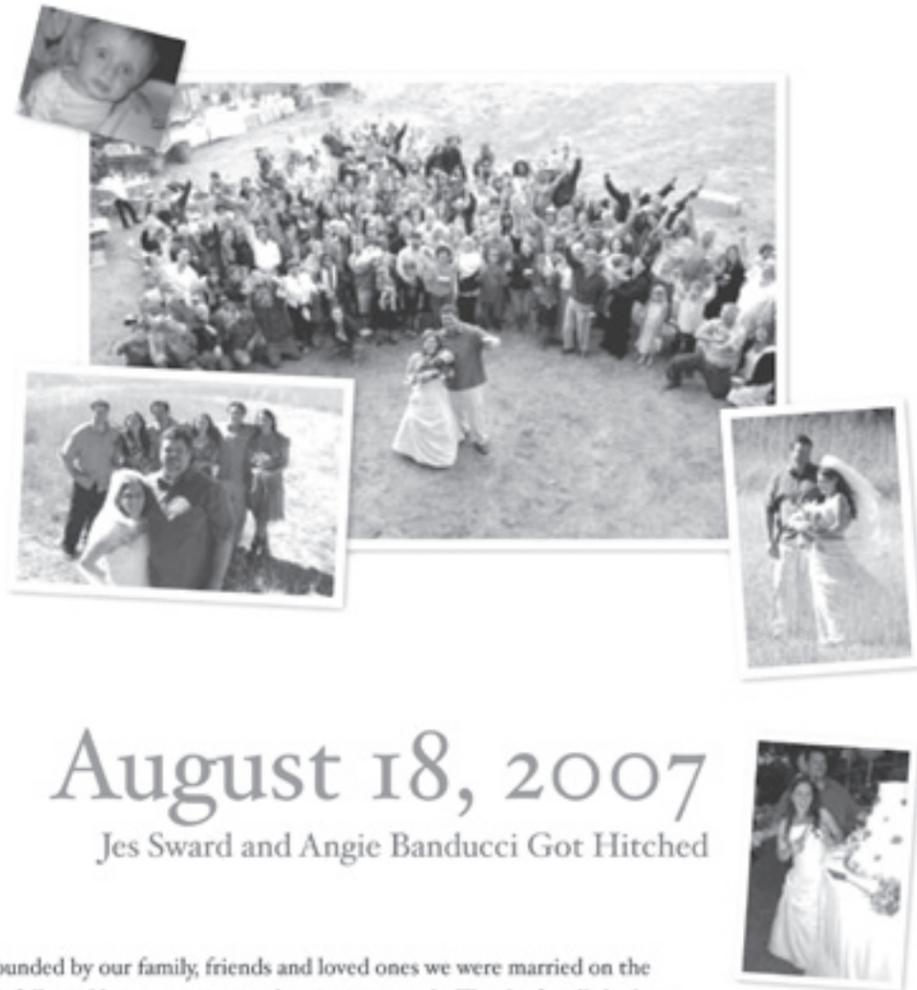
Explore the Lower Redwood Creek Watershed

You've probably hiked through Mt. Tam State Park or strolled through Muir Woods National Monument and the upper Redwood Creek Watershed. Very few people have ever gotten a close look at lower Redwood Creek. Stream restoration projects at the Banducci site give us reason to highlight this natural treasure.

Learn more about stream hydrology on Saturday, November 4, 10:00 am-12:00 noon with KHE, Inc. Meet at Muir Beach parking lot.

For more information: 415-561-4859





August 18, 2007

Jes Sward and Angie Banducci Got Hitched

Surrounded by our family, friends and loved ones we were married on the ranch followed by a reception at the picnic grounds. Thanks for all the love and support! We love all of you!!!

Fall Is in the Air.. Monarchs Arrive!

By Mia Monroe

A flash of orange, a gentle flap of wings: is that a monarch butterfly? One sure sign of the changing seasons along the California Coast is the arrival of monarchs on warm days! Last we saw them was in early spring as they mated here and left for the inner lands of the west to find milkweed and breed. Now, several generations later a new population follows the clues of topography and weather changes to return westward to the milder coast. Muir Beach is one of over 200 spots along the coast of California where the protective land features, available trees and nearby water as well as nectar encourages monarch butterflies to cluster to overwinter safely.

Muir Beach was once a major overwintering shelter for monarch butterflies and local conservationist Elizabeth Terwiller recognized its value, leading a preservation campaign to protect the pine grove necessary for them above Pacific Way. Turns out this was the lower part of a grove of trees, some were also below and above the Community Center, too, that were growing in just the right "ecozone"... from a monarch's point of view (i.e. protected from wind, just the right amount of early and late sun, easy access to water, and lots of other trees in nearby yards to sun on, many

great gardens nearby full of wonderful winter nectar sources). This grove is now fragmented, many trees gone and the ones left in the lower area are too old and sparse to host the monarchs throughout the winter. Yet, the monarchs still return in hopes that the younger trees will have grown up or maybe, like last year, a few branches stick in to that "ecozone" to cluster on through wind and storm. So, there's hope!

Many ask how come there are far fewer than in past decades? Unfortunately, monarch butterfly populations have plummeted in the west. Could be overall lack of milkweed in the breeding areas, could be suburban sprawl, could be escalating use of herbicides. Could be the already changing climate along the Northern CA coast...but, there's hope for monarchs in Muir Beach...make sure we can share our coastal home with them for the winter through thoughtful management of trees to balance monarch needs with hazard protection, provide them a snack by planting a few nectar plants in your yard and pause to watch them this fall & winter!

Ranger Mia Monroe of Muir Woods National Monument will be conducting a public walk and annual monitoring count on December 2...she'll post other times she'll be informally walking and looking for them if you'd like to learn more. 388-2596

Passion for the Lens

By Deb McDonald & Ed Hyman

Devon McDonald-Hyman is a native of Muir Beach. Currently a senior at Tam High, Devon recently won first prize in the Youth Division of the *Pacific Sun* Photography Competition, and three of his photos were selected by Tam High for exhibition this Fall at the Mill Valley Arts Festival, including another scene from Muir Beach. He has long been a fancier of photography, "I connect every feeling or emotion I have ever had with a single snapshot. When I look back in my mind at one of these pictures I am reminded of the same feelings that I felt while that event



Devon McDonald-Hyman

was taking place, and through that image in my brain I am able to relive the events of the past. Some people call this a photographic memory; I call it the way I remember things. I have had a photographic memory ever since I was a child. The way I experience feelings and emotions through pictures has inspired me to take photos my whole life so that I can share and convey these feelings to others."

Devon's fascination with photographs dates back early into his childhood.

"My parents remember me running around with my cameras snapping pictures of people. One Christmas my parents gave me a Polaroid, a little blue rectangular camera about the shape and size of two biscotti's placed on top of each other. I loved playing with that camera; I ran around the house taking pictures. Sneaking into my parents' room while my mother was taking a bath, I snapped a candid photo that within minutes mysteriously wound up stuck to the fridge."

"I am still in love with capturing memories and conveying feelings and emotions. In taking pictures today I have developed my passion for looking through a lens and creating images which express emotionally charged themes."

"All throughout my childhood I was fascinated with lenses. Through my father's telescope, I would peer for hours at the beautiful surroundings of Muir Beach, looking at animals like birds and squirrels so I could analyze their characteristics. I would gaze at the ant-like figures playing and lounging around on the hot beach sand. I would create conversations in my head of what they were talking about, and would pretend the people on the beach were pirates, professional soccer players, or even royalty."



Winning photograph appeared in the *Pacific Sun*, July 27-August 2, 2007. Reprinted by permission.

"Currently I foster my fervor for creating emotions and feelings through the images of photography and film. I attempt to express diverse intriguing and important thoughts and feelings through my passion for photography."

1ST PLACE, YOUTH
"Kerri Lane"
Muir Beach
Devon McDonald-Hyman

Saying this photo carries a sense of place is to state the obvious. But there's something quintessentially California coastline about the encroaching wood fence, collapsed stone wall, coastal ground flora and solitary egret wandering through the frame. A cold, lonely, anachronistic piece.

Mary Daniel Hobson

Local Art Events for Fall 2007



Sanctuary #2, ©2007, archival pigment print, 16.5 x 11"

A Muir Beach resident, Mary Daniel Hobson (aka Danny) is an artist who specializes in mixed media photography. Whether bottling photographs in mineral oil or creating intimate collages and still lives, her work explores layered experience and inner geography. Her work has been widely exhibited and is in collections such as the SFMOMA. She invites the Muir Beach Community to see her work at the following local art events, or online at her web site at www.marydanielhobson.com.

September 7 - December 31, 2007

A group show called "Photographic Narratives" at the Falkirk Cultural Center in San Rafael, CA. www.falkirkculturalcenter.org

November 17-30, 2007

The annual Bolinas Museum Miniatures Exhibition - a fundraiser featuring work that is 6 x 6 x 6" or smaller. There is a reception on November 17 from 3-5 pm.

December 1-2 and December 14-16, 2007

A Holiday Open Studio in San Francisco at 3069 Washington Street (at Baker).

Open Saturdays and Sundays from 1-6 pm plus, a reception on Friday, December 14 from 5-8 pm.

For a complete list of events, please visit www.marydanielhobson.com/exhibitions.html
Email: danny@marydanielhobson.com

ANNOUNCEMENTS



**TR Elliott Wines
Featured at
Fundraiser**

By Paul Jeschke

Linen tablecloths, candles, and sparkling wine glasses transferred the decidedly casual Muir Beach Community Center into an elegant wine tasting venue at a fundraiser for the *Beachcomber*.

The Saturday night event featured the wines of Muir Beach resident Ted Elliott. His TR Elliott Winery produces award-winning Pinot Noirs from the Russian River area of Sonoma County.

Four wine glasses were set before each guest. Elliott and his wife, Peggy, served generous portions of the winery's 2002, 2003, 2004 and 2005 Quest Pinot Noirs and asked wine buffs to taste and rank each vintage, starting with the youngest.

"Think about colors, aromas, taste," Elliott said, helping guests educate their palates.

The three older wines were from Elliott's personal collection since these vintages are sold out. The 2005 Queste Pinot Noir is currently available at finer restaurants and at the winery's website (www.elliottfamilycellars.com). With Elliott's help, it was easy to distinguish their distinctive characteristics.

Elliott's wines are a cuvee, a blend of Pinot Noir from two vineyards. Tasters thought the youngest, a garnet-colored red, had pronounced aromas of raspberry and vanilla and a peppery taste while the 2002 vintage hinted of cinnamon and strawberry.

Prior to the vertical tasting, guests enjoyed Elliott's 2005 "Ramblin' Rose," a light wine made by the saignee method, a process that involves bleeding off a portion of red wine



Peggy Elliott, wife of vintner Ted Elliott, prepares for the tasting.



Ted Elliott, proprietor of TR Elliott Winery, generously offered the evening of wine tasting for the benefit of the *Beachcomber*.

after only a short period of contact of the juice.

Elliott, who once lived in the Muir Beach Navy enlisted barracks, said he had been reading the *Beachcomber* since 1976 and was "blessed to be home." He moved to Sonoma County in 1978 to pursue enology and, although he owns property in Muir Beach, is now a resident of Santa Rosa. "There's no question I'll retire here," he said.

Linda Gibbs, editor of the *Beachcomber*, thanked the Elliotts for their generous contribution and the Muir Beach community for contributing to Friends of the *Beachcomber*. The number of paid subscribers has doubled, Gibbs said.

The editor introduced contributors to the community newspaper. Former editor Judith Yamamoto spoke about *Beachcomber* history. Gibbs also read a letter from past editor Gail Falls.

Gibbs hopes to put the newsletter online and would like to build a Muir Beach History House to house issues of the *Beachcomber* going back to 1946, along with other archival items of Muir Beach.

The *Beachcomber* will have a booth at the Muir Beach Quilters Holiday Arts Fair in early December.

The Mill Valley Market has agreed to donate 3% of shoppers' purchases to the *Beachcomber* with their Shop & Give program. Residents may designate the *Beachcomber* donation (code #7094) by informing the cashier at the checkout counter before the transaction is completed. Gibbs thanked Jim Canepa of the Mill Valley Market "for providing this wonderful source of revenue for the *Beachcomber*."

Displayed on a back table along with back issues of the *Beachcomber* were the newly arrived customized *Beachcomber* beach towels now available for sale.

ANNOUNCEMENTS



Vintner Ted Elliott discusses the characteristics of the wines with Linda Gibbs, *Beachcomber* editor and organizer of the event.



David Leivick and Pam Barlow

Wine grower Ted Elliott takes to the podium to introduce his world-class Queste Pinot Noir from the Russian River Valley.



Barbara Herwitz and Renee Boeche



Danny Hobson and Jon Rauh



Joseph and Nikola Ferraro



Bernard Halliwell



Charlotte Johnston



Kathy and John John Sward



Linda Gibbs and photographer Julie Smith show off the *Beachcomber* beach towel now available for purchase. Photograph by David Leivick.



Larry Yamamoto, Bonnie MacKenzie, Dave MacKenzie, and Judith Yamamoto



Ralph Frey, David Leivick, Candice Piper, Deborah Farkas, and Ann Colman



Anne Jeschke (left), Paul Jeschke, and Elizabeth Benedict



Paul Jeschke, Maury Ostroff, and Janice Kubota

Photographs by Julie Smith unless otherwise noted.

Laborfair.com – Account of a Muir Beach Startup

By Jenna Raby

My partner, Ben Picard, and I moved out West together after years of dreaming about it separately. After college, Ben toured Highway 1 on a 1978 Yamaha 750 motorcycle all the way from Iowa. Five years ago, I came out to visit my brother and his fiancée, ski Tahoe, wine taste Napa, and hike in the Headlands. I was enthralled. Who wouldn't want to live in this glorious place? In September of 2005, after nine years living in the hustle and bustle of America's most frenetic metropolis, we sold everything we could easily part with, donated our televisions, furniture and heavy winter coats to Katrina victims, and set out across the glorious US for Marin. We had an 18-foot trailer and a long-haired dachshund in tow. Like many others before us, we came to the Bay Area to start our own online business. We're more idealistic than most, we wanted ours to deliver social good and pay our rent.

After two weeks of sightseeing and exhausting road travel, we crossed the California state line, celebrated with an In-n-Out burger and began our search for a new home. Both of us grew up on farms, so nine years of New York City wore the yearning for constant excitement, noise, and urban adventure right out of us. We wanted to get back to nature, calm down, and in essence, find a room with a view. My goodness, did we find one! After 17 years of occupancy, Anna and Tom Qualls had recently vacated Ted and Peggy Elliott's beautiful guest cottage at the edge of Charlotte's Way. The fresh paint hadn't even dried on the walls before Ben and I signed on as new tenants. Perched over the ocean with its magnificent views of the Farallones and awe-inspiring sunsets we believed anything was possible. We had crossed the country to drop into heaven. Surely we could be successful entrepreneurs. Luck was on our side. Sure, we'd miss the occasional perfect bagel and Central Park's seasonal charm. We'd learn to love the 108 curves on Highway 1 from Tam Junction to our new home. No problem.

Muir Beach shares a personality trait with entrepreneurs. As the people who live here year-round know, you have to have a pioneering spirit, a love of the uncertain, to live in this wondrous place. We fit right in. Ben and I had very different professional experience. In New York, I brokered natural gas futures and transportation contracts between the Far East and Latin America, only to change direction completely and work for an eccentric philanthropist. I'm idealistic at heart and a risk taker by nature. Ben came to Marin with a more resume friendly professional life. When we left the East Coast, he had already worked for 7 years as a management consultant at Benjamin Moore Paint and was just beginning his two year bi-coastal Executive MBA.



When the Laborfair.com business plan won a prestigious competition and some associated prize money, I quit my day job. Ben kept his to pay the bills. We began Laborfair from the room with a view.

Laborfair.com

The problem: Wherever we looked from New York City to San Francisco, we found people frustrated by the process of finding and hiring good quality help. Whether paying exorbitant fees to placement agencies for childcare or housekeepers, or paying high hourly rates for a small household job, the process needed fixing. The best way to find someone is word of mouth. But what if you're new to the area, Cuco is busy, or you just don't know what to pay? Wherever we looked we saw service providers posting ineffective ads on community job boards, buying expensive



Laborfair.com Founders, Ben Picard and Jenna Raby, Telchac Puerto, Mexico, July 2005 Photograph by Jenna Raby.

local classifieds in community papers, or dependent on word of mouth referrals. We knew hardworking people desperate to work for themselves rather than an agency and no real way to find clients.

The solution: Laborfair.com is an online community that matches people looking to hire with people looking for work in a way that fosters fair prices and fair wages. It's the smart, easy way to find personal help you can trust. Busy, active people often have more money than time. They want and need easy, convenient access to trustworthy and

fairly priced household help. If given the choice, this help would be local and this great resource would be FREE. Enter Laborfair.com.

Do you want your trees trimmed, garden pruned, child picked up after school and taken to soccer practice,



kitchen repainted, and a group of talented DJ's, wait staff and bartenders for your annual Christmas party? You can get it all at laborfair.com. Do you have a "honey-do" list that continues to populate with "must have done in order to stay sane" (for me it's having a clean carpet) and "nice to have done" like fixing the outdoor showerhead? At laborfair.com, you can search, select and contact reliable, affordable, peer-reviewed service providers for all these things and more.

In the spirit of a true marketplace, Laborfair connects supply and demand for temporary help. The service providers pay Laborfair for each personal job lead they accept to pursue. People looking to hire post job requests for FREE. Before listing a provider, Laborfair verifies that each provider has a professional reference. Providers have ratings, reviews, and post with availability and base hourly rates for their service category. Our mission at Laborfair is to build a trusted service marketplace where people connect fairly. We want everyone to enjoy the benefits of disintermediation, leading to higher wages, lower prices, more quality work, and hopefully direct and long-lasting relationships between providers and the people who hire them. Check us out, www.laborfair.com.

Ah, the Life of an Entrepreneur

Do you want to give up your nice day job, your guaranteed salary, any free time with your partner or close friends, and devote any and all waking hours to your novel business idea for an indefinite amount of time? If the answer is an unequivocal "yes" - become an Internet entrepreneur. You'll do fine! While Ben adores the frequent vicissitudes and gyrations of startup life-an experience I equate with a log flume ride at an aquatic park with your mouth open-I hang on with clenched teeth and nails dug hard to the side of the boat. Just last week, I cracked a tooth from clenching my teeth repeatedly in my sleep for the past

year. I'm serious. I haven't had a dream that didn't involve Laborfair.com in over two years. Intellectually, I was ready to be an entrepreneur. Emotionally, phewee! You take a serious beating. As Ben likes to say and says often, "Fear is a great motivator." Without Sunday morning meditation at the Zen Center, weekly yoga classes, and my infrequent walks on Muir Beach with the dogs, I'd be a goner.

Starting a business that delivers on social mission and profitability is not for the faint of heart. You have to make tough choices. You need a combination of blinding innocence and a stalwart, unfailing belief in yourself and your business to pull through. Honestly, the hardest part has been growing the business, not starting it. I'm a human rights advocate by nature, not a businesswoman - so it's a steep learning curve for me. I never had to do everything and learn everything simultaneously. I've learned not to make perfect the enemy of the good.

On Labor Day, 2006, we launched Laborfair.com at 2 a.m. with 50 providers out of a one-room office in South of Market District. One year later, we have almost 400 providers, have sent thousands of job requests, and geographically expanded throughout the entire Bay Area and into 19 categories covering the gamut from housecleaners to home care workers. In October, we expand to Sacramento and down to Monterrey. Next year, God willing, we'll raise more capital for our expansion plans into large metropolitan areas. So far, so good. After a year, it's starting to look a shade of lovely.

We have so many people to thank for this growth including Muir Beach locals, Sigward Moser and Ted Elliott. Thanks for being our early adopters. Of course, we want it to be known, we did invite Cuco on the site as one of our first service providers. Due to all his word of mouth referrals, he politely declined.

I can be reached at: jenna.raby@laborfair.com



The Laborfair Team, San Francisco. From left: Justin Ohanessian, Carolina Oberbeck, Jenna Raby, and Jose Arocha. Photograph by Jose Arocha

Major Reconstruction Planned for Dias Ridge Trail

By Paul Jeschke

Hiking “over the hill” should be considerably safer and much easier for both two and four-footed occupants of Muir Beach once improvements to the Dias Ridge Trail are complete next fall.

The Dias Ridge Trail, which kinks ribbon-like up and over the hill from a Muir Beach trailhead adjacent to the Golden Gate Dairy, is scheduled for an \$800,000 makeover to fix what the environmental assessment report characterizes as an “excessively steep, narrow, overgrown and severely eroded” route. The trail crosses both Mt. Tamalpais State Park and GGNRA property. Work is scheduled to start next summer and when the four-month construction project is complete, hikers, horseback riders and cyclists will share a three-mile, state-of-the-art trail from Muir Beach to the eastern trailhead at Panoramic Highway a quarter-mile north of the Highway 1 intersection.



Hikers only infrequently use the Dias Ridge Trail because of deep mud, steep slopes and heavy erosion. Photo Courtesy Dias Ridge Environmental Assessment Study

Restoration and trail improvement are badly needed for both safety and environmental reasons, according to officials of the National Park Service and the California Department of Parks and Recreation. “The existing trail above the dairy was a steep path that the dairy used to drive cows up the hill to graze,” said Steve Griswold, a landscape architect for the National Park Service and project manager for the Dias Ridge rehabilitation, “It’s very difficult to maneuver in places for both humans and horses.” Some portions are poorly drained and have standing water during the rainy season.

“I’m really supportive of the planned improvements,” said Muir Beach resident Erin Pinto. “It’s long overdue. I’ve been on the trail several times, but I won’t go now. I’ve been ankle deep in mud.”

Because of its poor condition, the trail gets relatively little use. “It’s not really safe for horse or rider,” said Maureen Pinto of Ocean Riders, the group that operates the stables at the former dairy. She said equestrians are thrilled by the prospect of using the new trail but want to make sure there is sufficient monitoring to keep the trail safe for a variety of uses.

The Dias Ridge Trail is currently closed to bicyclists on the lower GGNRA portion of the decent to Muir Beach. That will change when trail restoration is complete and “we’re concerned that there may be an influx of mountain bikers who are not respectful of riders and hikers,” Pinto said. “It’s vital that we keep the trail safe and so we’re asking for speed bumps to slow bikers down and the elimination of blind corners so we can see what’s coming.”



Segments of the Dias Ridge Trail are badly eroded, causing sedimentation at Big Lagoon. Photo Courtesy Dias Ridge Environmental Assessment Study

To minimize bicycle-horse encounters, Griswold has designed a five- to six-foot wide path that uses large portions of the present route but also incorporates new segments and reroutes difficult sections. Hairpin turns will be eliminated to increase visibility and steep grades that currently exceed 25 per cent will be lowered to about 12 per cent. The landscape architect said he’s pleased that he only had to incorporate one “engineered corner” on the trail, a small retaining wall on a portion of the trail behind the dairy.

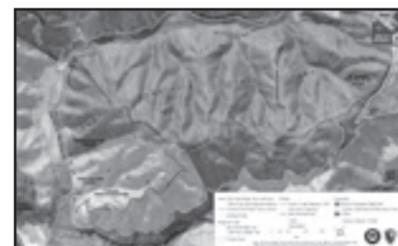
Griswold’s plan eliminates an informal, unauthorized spur that currently radiates northward from the Dias Ridge crest and intercepts Redwood Creek Trail along Frank Valley Road.

Project planners said the improved trail will also provide an alternative for bicycle traffic that currently uses Highway 1 between Three Corners and Muir Beach. “That’s good, but the trail ends at Panoramic and it should go all the way to Mill Valley,” Erin Pinto said.

The trailhead at Muir Beach will be relocated closer to the proposed bus stop near the mailboxes and a trail map installed. A 25-foot wooden bridge will span Frank Valley Creek southeast of the dairy.

Central to the restoration project is control of runoff and sedimentation into Redwood Creek and Green Gulch. Griswold said more than 20,000 yards of material have moved down hill over the years and ended up in the lagoon. Once more gentle contours are created, the area will be replanted with native vegetation,

The project will go out to bid after the first of the year. Work may start in July after bird nesting season and should be completed in about four months.



The Dias Ridge Trail is scheduled for major improvement along a three-mile stretch between Muir Beach and Panoramic Highway. Map Courtesy Dias Ridge Environmental Assessment Study

My Friend Ellen

By Allison Pinto

The first two quilts that I remember Ellen ever making were little—like for babies. One was red, and one was blue. She brought them over to my house in the afternoon one day. She had just finished quilting the last one. Maxx and Benjamin were toddlers. As the boys made motor noises and pushed little cars across the floor, she laid the quilts out and said, “See? Isn’t this *sooo* Maxx?!” and pointing to the blue one, she said, “and this one, isn’t it Fabulous? It is *sooo* Benjamin!” She went on about the boys and their attributes as she had expressed them in the quilts’ colors and squares. We talked on for a while about the kids as we often enjoyed doing. I remember in that moment thinking to myself that what she was telling me about these quilts would be something that I would never forget, and that here was this new person in my life, a cool MB-mom-type-friend who was inspired by *our sons and their friendship* enough to make quilts about it. On that day, I knew that we would always share this matter of fact connection, the quilts proved it. For me, it was like: *she made quilts, therefore we are*. And could Ellen ever quilt!

On another occasion, she called me on a Saturday morning, the Saturday of the Quilter’s Craft Fair. She told me to go up to the community center. She said that in the quilter’s booth, there was something for me in the potholder basket. If I guessed which of the over two- or three-dozen potholders in the basket, she had made for me, she said, then it would become mine. If I did not guess right, then it would go up for sale (I had some cash in my pocket just in case I guessed wrong). I ran up there before the doors opened to the public and before mine got accidentally sold; there were so many beautiful potholders, and so many by her...When I looked on the back of the one that I thought was for me, the price tag sticker said, “For Allison.”

Although that morning, I ended up with a great potholder (one that I *still* cannot bring myself to touch to any hot items because it is so pretty), what I remember most is how looking through the basket of potholders was like being a child again. I was Easter egg hunting in December. It was a delight to have this new gift, but what was more, the whole weekend took on this playful childlike quality; I remembered again what it was like to be filled with wonder for days instead of just for moments. Ellen knew how to give with a twist. From items to ideas, to even criticism, Ellen could deliver, and the recipient was sure to get that added twist at the end. This was her signature.

An ongoing thread in my conversations with Ellen was about the state of affairs in the world. Being mothers of two young boys, we often wondered how the world

would be for them. We wondered what the world would look like if everyone were a little less afraid, and a little more open hearted? What would it look like if everyone were living their life with purpose and on purpose? In the prayer litany that Reverend Pam Tyler offered us at Ellen’s memorial, I recalled these conversations we shared about the world as we spoke in unison—

For this blessed earth and all creation
And the well being of this nation and all nations,
May Ellen’s courage and wise stewardship inspire you.

Ellen was one of the funniest people I ever met. It is embarrassing to admit that I often found myself laughing at her jokes way after she told them. Thankfully, these delayed reactions of mine did not dissuade her from continuing to try to joke with me. As her friend Abe Nahum shared with us in his poem, “Quilter of Souls,” she had her humour, even in her fight against cancer as he quoted her as saying:

**“it was bound to happen eventually—
the breakdown of the motherboard”**

And marbles, a gift she gave her friend Diane after she found out she had cancer, “Here, you’ll be needing these when you lose yours...” The jokes—curt, dry, smart, fast, and plentiful. That was Ellen. After her diagnosis, we spent more time on the phone than we did in person. If I had to give it a number, I would say we spent 50% of our time cracking each other up. We both figured that



Ellen Mettler
1957-2007

she could get in on some comedy act, "Stand up Chemo" I think she called it. Unfortunately for the masses, she did not need a paying audience.

Ellen kept her humour until the very end of her life. I got to spend a lot of time with her talking and joking in July. When she was resting, I answered her phone a lot. I was struck in talking to her friends by how many of us there are. I also noticed how so many of us felt like we shared this certain intimacy with her. How could it be that so very many people felt so seen and held by one person alone? Ellen was a master of inclusion. Wasn't it Ellen that welcomed you first to the neighborhood with some gift and some funny advice or anecdote? Or wasn't it Ellen that called to check on you out of the blue because she heard it from someone who heard it from

someone that you were feeling under the weather? Was it Ellen that introduced you to the person you ended up becoming friends with, or who had a used fridge the day yours broke...Ellen met us right where we were, in the middle of our day, in the middle of our life, right where we live. The details of our lives, which to some people might be a burden, to Ellen, were a cause for curiosity and conversation. This created a connection between us and Ellen that had us winking across the room, getting that knowing nod, that "**- arched eyebrow, wild grin, infectious smile,**" the note in the mail, in the middle of your day, right where you live. Although nothing can take her place, it is as one person who visited her said to me as I was noticing out loud how Ellen knew such neat people, "**We can be Ellen's gift to each other...**"

August 2, 2007
By Richard Moore



"Metes and Bounds" by Ellen Mettler, 2003
Photograph by Sharon Risedorph

Scant hours after a farewell night, past dawn, a breath left the house and moved among the flags, the prayer flags, one by one, until the string, all of them, lifted with a sweet release of breath, the whole bright string of them flying at once as the sun rose and the day's hard lessons began.

And we are graduated from that most difficult school today, released into the rituals of grief and the ceremony of memory, enduring the heaviness of our hands in whatever gesture we choose of love or of memory; that whirlpool of memory, so unlike the flags flying, so unlike the exaltation of breath that set the flags flying that now to the sea wind has gone.

And we are returned to unknowing, to the hand spun wheels of our praying, and the small flags, the lift of them, the farewell prayers in their flying, and to the practice, practice of peace.
Shantih shantih shantih.

"August 2, 2007" was read by Mike's dad, Richard Moore, at Ellen's memorial service.

Quilter of Souls

for Ellen, Mike and Maxx

was it
chance, fate, destiny
that a New Jersey farm girl
fashioned her own Moose Head Ranch
within this small coastal community
nestled high above the rocky cove of Muir Beach

truly a Zen story
endlessly
recounted
in little Sudoku vignettes
and unfinished puzzles
a life navigated with grace
generosity, wit, compassion
capturing even the most hard hearted
with that simple beguiling gesture
- arched eyebrow, wild grin, infectious smile
said open up, look and let go
"sometimes...
all it took
was the turn of a phrase
...you just gotta think outside your body"

love and loyalty
twin sparks
which enlightened an already
independent spirit
that no moonless night could darken
Grand Tetons eclipse
nor Pacific fog cloud
these passions
nurtured deep within
illuminated the heart of an artist
big as the Tallahassee
Plantation sky
wider than the sage brush range of Jackson Hole
anything was possible in MissE's world
from running the Snake River rapids
to pushing the envelope of illness

with a gentle healer's hand, dearest friend, you often morphed
pain into comfort
tears to laughter
laying down lines like
"it was bound to happen eventually-
the breakdown of the motherboard"

a visionary who became a quilter of souls
piecing together friendships
your home a hub of activity
a turnstile of people moving
through your ever open door
where total strangers might collide
then were linked for life

a master weaver
you could patch, quilt and network
the colors of the rainbow
as well as the stars
of the universe



Ellen Mettler at Abe Nahum's house

abe nahum August 19, 2007

Ellen Mettler Obituary

Written by Louise M. Davenport and Allison Pinto for the Marin IJ

Ellen Mettler, 49, passed away peacefully at her home in Muir Beach on Thursday, August 2nd, 2007, after a courageous three-year fight against lung cancer. A Memorial Celebration of Her Life will be held in Muir Beach on the 19th of August at 3:00 p.m.

Ellen grew up in New Jersey and in Tallahassee, Florida, spending summers at the family ranch in Moose, Wyoming. She graduated from the New England School of Acupuncture, and continued her studies in Oriental Medicine, receiving an advanced degree from the California Acupuncture College in Santa Barbara. She settled in Muir Beach, CA, and opened up an acupuncture office in Mill Valley. In addition to her acupuncture office, in the 80s, she had a business called The Kitchen's Inc., a commercial kitchen facility. She continued her yearly visits to Wyoming even until this June despite it being difficult to breathe in the altitude. She did not want to miss a trip, and just like her aunt Helen Mettler, she shared the sentiment, "God Bless Wyoming, and Keep It WILD."

Ellen was a volunteer to her core. At her son's schools in Mill Valley as well as in every part of community life in Muir Beach from the Volunteer Fire Department, to the Muir Beach Quilters, Ellen's participation was inspirational. From making meals for people with sniffles, working her acupuncture magic, humbly and frankly sharing her wisdom with friends and loved ones, to making countless colorful quilts for friends, new babies, and the newly wed, she found satisfaction in simply being present in the lives of so very many people, inspiring those around her into generosity and community service. Ellen was well known for her wit, her honesty and her extraordinary ability to stay positive.

She is survived by her husband, Michael Moore, her eight-year-old son Maxx, as well as two brothers, John W. Mettler of New York City, Peter W. Mettler of Palm Beach, and Louise M. Davenport of Tallahassee as well as numerous nieces and nephews, and friends in California, Wyoming, Florida, and beyond.

ELLEN WANTED EVERYONE TO KNOW THAT SHE DISCOVERED SHE HAD LUNG CANCER AT AGE 47, AND HAD NEVER BEEN A SMOKER. LUNG CANCER OFTEN APPEARS IN NON-SMOKING WOMEN IN THEIR 40s AND THIS FACT IS NOT HIGHLY PUBLICIZED, SO IF YOU HAVE A COUGH THAT WON'T GO AWAY, GET A CHEST X-RAY.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be sent to: THE CENTER FOR ATTITUDINAL HEALING, 33 BUCHANAN DRIVE, SAUSALITO, CA 94965; DRAWBRIDGE, AN ARTS PROGRAM FOR HOMELESS CHILDREN, P.O. BOX 2698, SAN RAFAEL, CA 94912; UC DAVIS REGENTS IN HONOR OF HER DOCTOR, ANGELA DAVIES, UC DAVIS CANCER CENTER, 4501 'X' STREET, SUITE 3016, SACRAMENTO, CA 95817 AND THE METTLER FUND AT MACLAY SCHOOL, 3737 N. MERIDIAN RD., TALLAHASSEE, FL 32312 or go out and volunteer in your own community as she inspired us all to do.

Beachcomber Spotlight: Firefighter Jesse Rudnick

By Linda Gibbs

When I spoke to professional firefighter Jesse Rudnick—fourth in a series of interviews with members of the MBVFD—he had just come off a 48-hour paid shift with Marin County Fire and was now working a 10-hour shift at Stinson Beach Volunteer Fire Department as their duty office that day. On the next day, he planned to work a one-day trade for another County firefighter and then he would have two days off. While at home he would respond to any calls coming in for the Muir Beach Volunteer Fire Department. As Jesse said, "you are always on duty in Muir Beach."

Jesse had planned to pursue a career in exercise Kinesiology, his degree from San Francisco State, but in his senior year of college he knew he would become a professional firefighter. And it was all because of the Muir Beach Volunteer Fire Department that his career took a 180-degree turn toward fire service.

Jesse is the son of CSD Board member Peter Rudnick and Wendy Johnson Rudnick who for twenty years ran the farm and garden at Green Gulch Farm. Jesse was born and raised at Green Gulch. He grew up riding bikes and surfing with his childhood friend, Graham Groneman, another member of the MBVFD. Living in Muir beach is important to Jesse not only because of the fire department but because of his desire to be involved in the community he grew up in and to keep his connection to the ocean. Jesse has been away from Muir Beach only when he attended college. "I couldn't live without Muir Beach so I came back. And now I'm living up on Seacape. And it's been good."

Where did you go to college?

I went to college in Santa Cruz for two years to Cabrillo College and then finished up with a bachelor's degree from SF State. I got that in Kinesiology.

Kinesiology is...

It's the study of human movement. Exercise science was my major. It's interesting stuff. It's all about the body and how it works. I figure I have to live with mine for the rest of my life so I might as well know how to take care of it.

Did you practice Kinesiology after college?

No, luckily for me I started EMT and found out that I wanted to be a firefighter. I never really realized how great the job was until I started and became a volunteer and at that point I was hooked. All my education was for me now. I don't practice Kinesiology.

What year was that?

1999

You were a volunteer firefighter first?

Yes. What happened was Muir Beach put on an emergency



Firefighter Jesse Rudnick

medical technician program and it was something I was interested in so I took the class, and through that I realized that I wanted to be a volunteer. Growing up here my dad was a volunteer and I had several friends...actually Ted Marshall told me that I would be good at it. I think I borrowed some gear and came down and just showed up. It was after EMT so I was just a member. So it started with that as a volunteer. From the first drill we went to I was hooked.

Do you remember what you did at that first drill?

We pulled the hose off the engine, loaded off at Ahab, and I actually remember flowing water and thinking this is pretty cool.

When you say "flowing water," you're holding the hose and the water is flowing?

Yes, you pull the hose. The engines are all connected with hose so we pulled it. It's a drill that we do, we still do, where you pull up like you're going to a front door and you open up the water. It was enough for me.

How does the new-member process work? Does the fire chief decide or do they all decide together? Do you know that you're being considered?

Yes, you have to express interest. The process back when I did it was someone asks you to come and they're like a sponsor. So you're not automatically a volunteer. You have to make a certain amount of drills and get the training that you need. If you do that and go to the training and show promise, then the fire chief will say, "Okay, here's a pager." When you get a pager, then you're a full volunteer. You know the drills are going to be the second and third Wednesday and the last

Sunday of every month. But you can go to the drills and get training and get your gear—your turnout—and then when you receive your pager, that’s when you can start going on calls. And that’s like the official, official. As far as the group, it is a group decision. But really the chief is the one who gives you the final tap.

Did you have a day job during that time?

I was still going to school and I worked as a waiter.

You were at San Francisco State by then?

I was at San Francisco State and I graduated in 2001. So that last year of college was pretty tough because I knew I wanted to work in the fire service, but I had already started my degree and I was so close that I pursued it and finished it. That last year when I realized I wasn’t going to practice Kinesiology, I still took it seriously and did it all, but it was tough.

Because your heart was some place else.

I just knew my passion was going to be for the fire service, but I got the training.

When did your professional life start? Did you go right into the fire service after college?

Yes. I started at Marin County Fire in 2001.

Do you remember the month?

I graduated in May. I actually got the word that I got the job when I was still in school before I graduated. But we started in June. My first job was a seasonal firefighter, which means you augment the staffing on the wildland engines in the summer months from June through October. It was an opportunity for me to work for a professional department and gain a little bit more training and go to some grass fires and run some other calls. I did that for five years before I became full time. Now I’m full time and I work for the County of Marin. But the seasonal was a program that got me started. I started as a paid firefighter in 2001, as a professional.

What happened in October after that first seasonal job?

When it rains they lay off the seasonal firefighters because the wildland threat goes away. And then that year I traveled. It’s a pretty great schedule where you have a few months off to travel.

Marin County Fire knows the seasonal firefighters are interested in becoming professionals?

Yes. It’s a start, it’s a foot in the door for firefighters and obviously not everyone that’s a seasonal loves it. Maybe they don’t love it, whereas for me it was the other way. I thought I wanted to be a firefighter and then as soon as I became a seasonal, I knew I wanted to this professionally.

What is it about firefighters who are willing to put their lives on the line each and every day—that you knew from day one at that first drill?...Is that a tough question?

That’s a tough question. You know I can’t speak for all the firefighters, but for myself it’s a feeling you get when you help someone, a sense of pride and kind of like a rewarding feeling

if you help someone with the medical aid or you put out a fire before it destroys their house. Or if you help them fix a flat tire, you make their day better, their horrible day better. That kind of feeling you get, to me, is worth the risk. And the risk is pretty calculated. I know there are people who want to dwell on the firefighters that have died, but they were careful. Something bad happened, something horrible happened. So



Jesse Rudnick prepares to pull hose from the 676 engine.

like 9/11 is as bad as it gets. There’s never been an airplane into a building like that.

No one wants to get hurt, but you want to make a difference, and we are fortunate to have a job where we can make a difference. 9/11 is an extreme case. More realistic for us is a small structure fire and maybe you run in and get someone out before they breathe the smoke and suffocate. Or at an accident you help them get out before they get pinned. It’s worth it for the reward, it’s worth the risk, and like I said we’re pretty careful. We don’t go into a house by ourselves. There’s always someone there to come get us if we go down, no matter what. We don’t go into a medical aid unless the scene is safe. We are not cowboys.

Some people call firefighters cowboys?

The older ones, the original firefighters, would hold their breath in fires. That’s how they protected themselves from the smoke. Now we have air on our backs and face pieces, and full gear so you’re covered up. You don’t do anything without using your equipment. And the equipment that we have should prevent injuries. There’s always going to be the extreme cases. I think for me that’s why I do it because it feels good to help. And we don’t help that often so maybe one or two good helpings where you feel like you make a difference, it goes for a long time. Just the potential that you can help. And a firefighter has a weird mentality because we don’t wish for these disasters but that’s what we train for, so when they come we want to get right in. So you’ll hear firefighters say that was a good fire and that means it was a big fire. Whereas a good fire for a homeowner is no fire.

So a good fire is big fire. What’s a bad fire?

No fire. No, like I said, we don’t wish for anything but it’s what we train for. I would say a good fire is a big fire that doesn’t cause anyone any damage, doesn’t burn anyone’s home, maybe just burns some grass and is healthy.

In that first year, 2001, you were a seasoned firefighter and then you traveled. How long did you travel and where did you go?

That year I traveled to Portugal, Spain, and Morocco for two months.

When you came back, what happened next?

I actually came back because there was a full time firefighter test for Marin County Fire.

Test?

Yes, every two years they have a test and you have to take a written test, a physical test, and an interview, and that was in February of 2002. I came back for that in hopes of getting a full time job. There were 500 or 600 people who took the test.

For Marin County?

Yes. I’d say 500 or 600 people and I think they hire two. It’s tough to get in. It’s definitely a lot of competition.

This is quite a compliment to you.

Perseverance. I didn’t get it the first year.

Did you try again the next February?

Actually two years later, but I became a seasonal again. Every summer I went back. I was fortunate to become a year-round seasonal.

You didn’t get in as of February 2002. When did they hire you as a year-round seasonal?

That next October when it started to rain they asked if I’d stay for the winter. Full time firefighters work 48 hours straight and the seasonals work 10 hours and then they’re off for the night. So it was like a year-round job that I did for two years.



When Jesse Rudnick went on his first drill with the MBVFD in 1999, flowing water was the drill that hooked him into pursuing a career in the fire service.

How did you switch from a seasonal to a full-time professional?

Another test. It’s tough. I actually got hired at Southern Marin Fire before I got hired at Marin County Fire. So I worked as a full-time firefighter for Southern Marin, which I took the test and got the job in 2005.

Marin County Fire covers the whole county?

The County is more rural so there’s a station on Throckmorton, Tomales, Point Reyes, Woodacre, Hicks Valley, and Marin City. So it’s more the unincorporated areas of Marin, and they protect the wildland for the most part. That’s their primary.

That was your goal?

Yes, I love the wildland. When I went to Southern Marin, it was a great experience and a busier environment. But I missed the potential to go to a wildland fire.

In October 2004, when you took another test, were you testing for Southern Marin Fire or Marin County Fire?

I took both. I tested for a lot of fire departments because I wanted to get in. Southern Marin hired me and then just this last year I got picked up with County. I retested for County and in 2007 I got picked up.

What month was that?

May.

So in 1999 when you went on your first drill and practiced flowing water with the volunteer fire department, it then took you eight years to get where you wanted to be, right?

Right.

Well, congratulations!

Thanks.

That’s determination, perseverance, and you achieved your goal.

Yeah, it’s rewarding. It was great—the experiences I had throughout were fantastic and I wouldn’t trade them for anything. The experience I got as a seasonal and the experience I got at Southern Marin. If I got that job in February 2002 after the first test, and after I came back from my vacation, I don’t think I would have appreciated it as much. Like you said, it took me eight years to get where I *really* want to be and now I’m here.

Does that feel pretty good?

It feels great. I feel like I won the lottery. I felt like I won the lottery when I started as a seasonal and now I feel like I really won the lottery.

During these past eight years, as you have been experiencing different aspects of firefighting as a professional, you have been moving up the ranks in the volunteer fire department, correct?

Yes, absolutely. It’s been good. I’ve constantly been involved in helping with the new fire truck and helping with the new training. If I get some training at Southern Marin or as a seasonal, I’ll bring it back and show the other volunteers what

I've learned. Hey, here's what's going on right now, here's a new way to surge a building, here's a new way to load some hose, and then we train them.

Is what you just described part of your role as an Asst. Fire Chief?

I'm not an Asst. Fire Chief. I'm a firefighter that helps with the training. The Asst. Fire Chiefs are Eric Groneman and Mike Moore. Graham and myself are firefighters that help with the training.

Well, John John called you an Asst. Fire Chief. Did you know that?

It must be a field promotion because I never knew. No, I always took it as helping with training. The chief officers do a lot of the more administrative. I'll help with the ordering, I'll help with equipment maintenance and training. Graham and myself, like I said, we both work for paid departments so we have an idea of what needs to be bought and we'll buy it. John John's been great in allowing us to say hey, we need this and he will let us buy it.

Your helmet doesn't say Asst. Chief on the front?

Firefighter, it says firefighter. And I don't want to change that. I like the position I'm in. It's a position where if there's a call, I can go help. The Chief has the responsibility to oversee that everything's being done as it should and the firefighter is the labor. John John's the chief, Mike's the Asst. Chief and Eric as well. It's a good thing because they make the decisions and we run with them. Graham and myself input a lot of ideas and knowledge and John John allows us to help on calls in that position, but as far as the helmet, they're yellow like the firefighters and the badge says firefighter.

Back to the County job, you work 48 hours straight?

48 hours straight. You go to work at 8 in the morning and you're there until 8 in the morning two days later. Actually this morning, I just came off a two-day shift.

You did? Thank you for doing this interview.

No problem. And I work out here [Stinson Beach] part-time a few times a month and tomorrow I work a trade. You work a lot of extra shifts in the fire department...

You say that you did a 48-hour shift and then you're out here part-time. Why is that? Is that part of County Fire?

No, this is to help Stinson Beach. I'm working for Stinson Beach—they're separate. They're another volunteer department, only they have the luxury of having someone here everyday, someone who's on duty, so if there's a call it's guaranteed that someone will respond. Whereas Muir Beach is all volunteer and unique in that if all volunteers are busy or out doing something, there's a chance that it will take them longer to respond. Stinson is all volunteer, too, but they are fortunate to have a tax base and they can pay a duty officer every day.

The Fire Dept. Parcel Tax ballot initiative has been delayed until the primary election in February 2008. Could you please address the need for the community to pass the tax

of \$200 per household.

It's essential. Muir Beach is behind the times in not having a parcel tax. Every other community in the Bay area has a parcel tax. Muir Beach is 100 percent volunteer. If it's raining for our barbecue, and we don't get many people out, our year is going to be scratched and that's what pays our phone bill, that's what pays for our equipment, that's what pays for our training, that's what pays for our turnouts that we wear, that's what pays for our radios. This is everything that we absolutely need. We want to have the barbecue forever because it's a great opportunity to get the community involved, it's a fun time, and hopefully we'll be able to continue the barbecue, but we don't want to have to rely on it.

I think \$200 per household is pretty minimal. If it allows the fire department to have less stress about having to make the profit at the barbecue and now we can say, hey, we can guarantee that we can get the new pager system, we can guarantee that we can get the new hose for our engine. Well, that's huge, and to know it's going to be there year after year, it's peace of mind. I know John John probably stays up late thinking, I hope we can get this, I hope we can get that. And we rely on grants. We all write grants to try to get money to pay for our equipment. There's a chance we can get turned down for them. And then how are we going to pay for it?

I truly hope that everyone realizes how important the parcel tax is, that we're not just looking for money so we can cush our fire station. Anyone who wants to come down and look, we're not cushioning our fire station, you know what I mean, we're in a barn. We're behind the times, especially for this community, and this will be a step in the right direction. We can get enough that we have a duty officer, so if there is a call there's a guarantee one person will be there right away. It's unfortunate that it's not already in place. Most of the people I've talked to don't have a problem with the parcel tax. We do need it. It helps the community.

Is there one consistent trait among every firefighter you meet--aside from courage, which immediately comes to mind? Or is courage the driving characteristic of every firefighter you've known?

Courage I don't think is the driving force. Like I said, for me it's the pride in knowing that you can help someone. If you talk to firefighters, they all have that sense that they can do good, that they can help. Making someone's bad day better, hopefully. You don't call the fire department when everything's going great. You don't call and say "hey, nothing's on fire, I feel fantastic." You call the fire dept when you have a chest pain or when you're having a seizure or when your significant other is having a medical problem or there's a fire. So we go in when people are panicked and you have a sense that hey, here's the deal, we can help you. We're going to do this for you. I can't speak for everyone but I know that is a huge driving force, that that day you go home and you're gonna say, hey, I helped someone. To be able to do it in the community that I've lived in my whole life is even better.



Photographs by Julie Smith

MBVFD Incident Log

Compiled by Paul Jeschke

May 25, 7:00 pm

Three Corners
Car over edge at Panoramic and Shoreline. No injuries.

June 10, 10:40 pm

Pantoll Road, Mt. Tamalpais State Park
Carry out stroke victim in vicinity of Dipsea Trail/Stinson Beach.

June 10, 6:10 pm

Muir Beach
Transport victim with chest pain to Marin General Hospital.

June 12, 6:15 pm

Panoramic Highway
Motorcycle down. Call cancelled.

June 19, 6:15 am

Muir Beach
Sunset Way resident, apparent seizure.

June 19, 2:00 pm

Slide Ranch vicinity
Motorcycle/dump truck collision.

June 20, 4:20 pm

Muir Beach
Starbuck Drive resident reported difficulty breathing.

June 24, 1:50 pm

Sequoia Valley Road
Vehicle collision; four transported to hospital.

June 25, 5:05 pm

Slide Ranch
Two-vehicle accident; one over edge. Minor injuries.

July 4, 1:30 pm

Muir Beach
Minor accident on Highway 1 across from Pelican Inn. Response cancelled.

July 17, 10:30 am

Muir Beach
Apparent seizure. Victim transported to Marin General Hospital.



July 23, 2:30 pm

Slide Ranch
Secured Muir Beach Overlook for helicopter evacuation. Cancelled.

July 26, 8:30 am

Slide Ranch Area
Vehicle over embankment. Minor injuries to driver.

July 28, 2:00 pm

Muir Woods
Hiker on Hill Trail had difficulty breathing. Helicopter landing zone established at Santos Meadow.

July 31, 4:10 pm

Deer Park and Coastal Trail
Individual had difficulty breathing. Cancelled.

August 8, 7:00 am

Muir Beach
Power line fell into street on Sunset. PG&E repaired.

August 18, 10:00 pm

Steep Ravine
Two cars sideswiped on Highway 1. Two victims transported to Marin General Hospital.

August 27, 2:00 pm

Muir Woods
Visitor fell; ankle injury.

August 29, 7:30 am

Santos Meadow
Hiker reported smoke. Nothing found.

September 10, 8:30 pm

Slide Ranch vicinity
Vehicle over edge of Highway 1.

September 11, 12:25 am

Highway 1
Illegal campfire at Highway 1 and Coastal Trail. Extinguished.

September 12, 3:10 pm

Muir Beach
Pacific Way resident transported to Marin General Hospital.

MBVFD logo by Bryce Browning

Muir Beach Volunteer Fire Department To Sponsor Emergency Preparedness Booth At Quilters Fair

By Brent Smith

There are six basics each household should stock to be prepared for a disaster: water, first aid supplies, food, clothing and bedding, tools, emergency supplies/medications. Because very few families currently have most of the necessary supplies stored safely away, the Muir Beach Volunteer Fire Department is sponsoring an Emergency Preparedness Booth at the Quilters' Fair. It's an opportunity for community members to discover all the emergency supplies needed over an extended emergency and order the items necessary to protect their home and family.

The San Andreas fault lies a half-mile west of Big Beach and it's overdue for a "correction" that could easily be the long anticipated "Big One." FEMA took 10 days after Katrina struck to remember small isolated communities—like Muir Beach—even existed. In essence, the primary responsibility for each Muir Beach family's personal wellbeing in the 10 days following The Big One lies on each family unit...not the MBVFD...and certainly not a next-door neighbor.

BIG WHEEL KEEP ON TURNIN'...

~ Part Two ~

By Pam Barlow



“If we want to identify and mark a place as sacred... we must also see that place as only the beginning, the knot a basket maker ties to start her basket, from which a sacred world rolls out and coils around us in every direction...The sacred is everywhere, in everything, and in us.” - Greg Sarris, tribal chairman of the Federated Coast Miwok.

to go along as though nothing had changed had been the real madness.

Threatened by fear of writer’s sludge, terrorized by the guillotine of the deadline, in firm denial of real-life-altering circumstances, we’d stubbornly clung to the hubris of our plans for Part Two.

We’d tap-tap-tapped the results of our research into this petroleum-based cyber-mind, and for those moments, been blissfully oblivious to our human inability to predict or control the future. It’s as though we’d been lulled by the gods of technology into thinking that, if we hadn’t recorded it, filed it and saved it to disk, then it hadn’t actually happened.

But being hijacked by the psycho-tyke convinced us that some tales must be told.

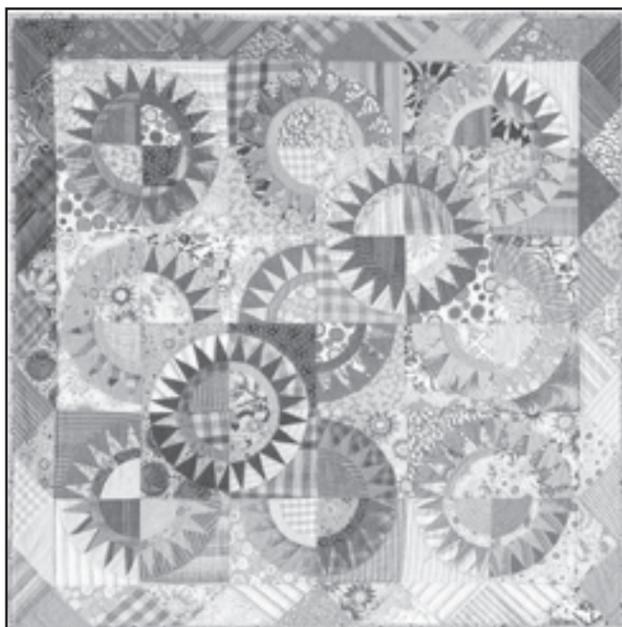
If we believe in a Great Spirit, occasionally we may sense the astral belly laugh at our conviction that the time/space continuum should conform to our human designs; great snot-hurling guffaws that rise in response to our ridiculous plans.

We failed to sense the cosmic sniggering that could’ve warned us we were about to lose our footing like any other clueless beachcomber, flailing in the whitewater of a sneaker wave. We failed to plan for the failure of our plans.

On Thursday, the second of August, we lost our beloved friend and fellow-Quilter, Ellen Mettler Moore. She passed at home, peacefully, surrounded by family and friends, after battling an illness that doctors said would take her in mere months. But she survived - no, she lived, every moment - for another three years.

It’s not as though we hadn’t known that Ellen was seriously ill. Throughout the ordeal of her treatments, she’d sent regular email updates regarding her prognoses, dropped in on the occasional Wednesday at the Community Center and other events, and welcomed us for visits in her home. And she’d continued to sew, creating some of the most beautiful art of her too-short life.

Soothed by her positive outlook and the comfort of our fellow-Quilters’ company, we continued to



“County Fair” by Ellen Mettler, 2003
Photograph by Sharon Risedorph

This Report was well on its way to being another chronicle of Quilters’ events, with the addition of some fascinating facts concerning the similarities between today’s residents of Muir Beach and our ancient counterparts, the Coast Miwok.

But in early August, it abruptly morphed into a protean brat, pitching tantrums about everything, from planning, technology’s theft of our moment, and Madison Avenue’s Machiavellian manipulations of our language, to imperialism, the i-zeitgeist, and our loss of ability to truly enjoy our senses. Boinging from blog-rant to dissertation and points between, it pitched its final fit and threatened to send us all to The Cornfield, like Billy Mummy in that classic episode of The Twilight Zone.

At last we’ve come to recognize that this precocious little beast was not the insanity. Our determination

meet weekly, break bread, focus on our personal art projects, and stumble over the uncharted territory of new Quilters’ goals, especially brainstorming our fledgling concept, The Vision Project.

We never stopped thinking of her, but we worked around her failing health as though it were a dropped stitch; as though the weaving could continue despite this defect. As though the integrity of the whole was not threatened.

Clearly, it was.

There was just a quality to this beautiful, generous and disarmingly direct young woman that seemed indestructible. Many of us were convinced that Ellen would be the one to beat those unbeatable odds. We meditated fiercely for her healing. We willed her recovery; commanded it; stomped our little human feet and pleaded for it. Alas, more hubris; ours, never hers.

Ellen fought with astonishing courage, but she was a realist, and so she made plans, the only kind that make any real sense, because they are based on an eventual certainty.

Of all the Big Wheels that keep on turnin,’ this Wheel of Life, Death and Rebirth is, by far, the most powerful and unrelenting; the one that, like it or not, will eventually catch us all in its spokes. We can only hope to meet it with as much dignity and wisdom as Ellen did.

If you have seen Ellen’s work, you will no doubt be



“Metes and Bounds” by Ellen Mettler, 2003
Photograph by Sharon Risedorph

In 1998 she joined the Muir Beach Quilters, “bought 3 pieces of fabric. Learned to join two fabrics together.” It wasn’t until 2001 that she claimed to have “sewed

[her] first straight line.”

She went on to create eighteen works of textile art, a collection inspired by her muse and by the love she felt for the intended recipients of these quilts. She made baby quilts, wedding quilts, quilts for best friends, old friends, new friends, and children of friends. She even sewed quilts for the children of the doctors who treated her during her illness.

At the Marin Quilts & Needle Arts Show she won two ribbons; Judges Choice and 2nd Place, for “Metes and Bounds,” 2003. That same year, she also took the Judges Choice ribbon for “County Fair,” at the Marin County Fair. Pretty amazing, considering that she didn’t sew “her first straight line” until two years prior to the creation of those beautiful works.

In “Big Wheel...-Part 1,” we expressed our appreciation for individuals who are cogs in multiple community wheels.

With her passion and will, Ellen was not only a cog in multiple wheels, but often the hub. So much revolved around her energy and the momentum it generated. She seemed fearless and determined to eschew the interpersonal nonsense and hierarchical monkey-business that often complicate the endeavors of people gifted with her drive and charisma. Perhaps that was the key to the great success of her life; knowing that love is the grease that loosens even the rustiest wheel.

We also referred to these groups as gears that engage and mesh with others in our community. There is perhaps no better expression of this concept than Ellen’s “County Fair.” It is a perfect illustration of cooperative interaction. There is enormous creative energy in the complexity of its parts and the harmony of the whole. The spokes of some ‘gears’ appear to invert and transform to those of their neighboring counterparts, in a style reminiscent of the work of M.C. Escher: images linked and interchangeable.

It is also a mandala, which Carl Jung described as, “the major symbolic expression for the experience of being an individual.”

When Ellen passed, Kathy Sward realized that the community would need ways in which to cope with our grief together. In a previous Report, we talked

MUIR BEACH QUILTERS

about how the Quilters were all about story, like Penelope of the Odyssey, who, through the worst of times, united her community through the stories depicted in her tapestry. We would need something to unite us in a collective activity that would occupy our hands and free our hearts to share our memories of Ellen.

Kathy's first thought was origami cranes. We knew there were various interpretations for the symbolism of the crane, but weren't concerned with the meaning. Cranes just felt right.

Anna Tom scoured Japan Town for the most beautiful paper she could find, for designs we hoped would do Ellen proud. Considering Ellen's talents, one might think this would not have been an easy quest. But Ellen was never, ever about "perfect."

We aren't sure whether we achieved our goal of exactly one-thousand cranes, though we really tried. As always, the community turned out to contribute what each had to give. And like Scheherazade of the Arabian Nights, we told our thousand tales.



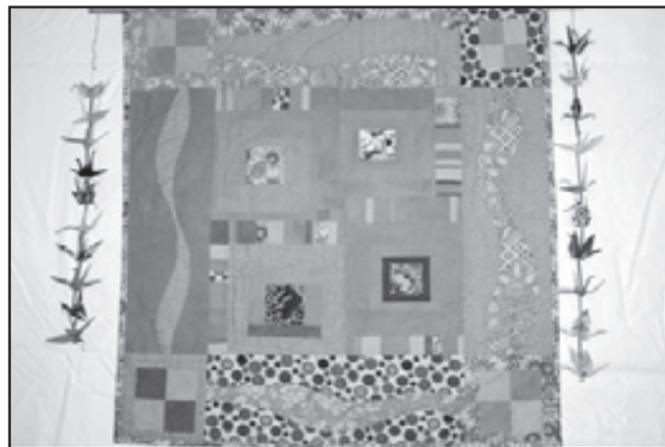
At Ellen's memorial service, strung across the chasm between the white canvas walls of the enormous tent erected for the occasion, those cranes came to life.

As though ensouled by the elixir of the oils in our fingertips, mixed with the salt of our tears, coaxed by incantatory stories of our good times with Ellen, the paper effigies of the sacred bird struggled wildly to slip their tethers. Ellen's quilts, slung from the jibs and mainsails of this landlocked clipper ship, snapped in the wind like the crack of a whip, their radiant colors and patterns flapping like the fiery wings of a rising phoenix.

Since then, we've discovered that in the tradition of Native American shamanic bird-medicine, the crane is a symbol believed to open the higher heavens for those souls who have passed from physical life.

At the entrances, from the dowels that supported Ellen's quilts, and from every other place we could find, we'd suspended totems of a bird believed to throw open the gates of paradise. It is no wonder that tent felt as though it might lift off and take us all with it.

The sounds of babies fussing, papers rustling, people shifting in their seats, sniffing and clearing their



"Diane's Quilt" by Ellen Mettler, 2003, with the dancing origami cranes. Photograph by Bruce Barlow

throats, soon returned us all to our moorings. But the cranes continued to dance.



Choosing the crane as a symbol for Ellen's Celebration of Life could not have been more appropriate, or more perfectly unplanned. Hearts resounded like trumpeting at Jericho; shattered walls drew us all into the mystic.



Only a grinning, Cheshire-cat quarter of '07 remains. Despite our losses, gears have continued to turn and engage; babies were born, lovers were wed, quilts were sewn.

Submissions for the Arts Fair were juried and the occasion was catered by Bruce Barlow, who provided a luncheon of chile verde, Spanish rice, guacamole, and cheese enchiladas smothered in a traditional, homemade sauce.



"Crazy Log Cabin" by Ellen Mettler, 1999, at her Celebration of Life in Santos Meadow on August 19, 2007. Photograph by Bruce Barlow

Judith Yamamoto and Kathy Sward were invited to show their quilts at the Mill Valley Fall Arts Festival. The last day was Judith's birthday, so we surprised her with cake and champagne under the redwoods. Thanks to the strong-men who helped load in and out - Mitch Henderson, Michael Kaufman, John-John and Jes Sward, Larry

MUIR BEACH QUILTERS

Yamamoto and Bruce Barlow - Judith and Kathy were free to enjoy setting up a truly beautiful display. Pam Eichenbaum, Erica Sward and Tyson Underwood, co-director of the Festival, joined in our festivities, and the quilts were all much admired, several purchased. It was another example of good, old-fashioned teamwork, more meshing and engaging of gears.



Celebrating Judith's birthday and showing quilts at the Mill Valley Fall Arts Festival; Kathy Sward, Erica Sward, Pam Eichenbaum, Judith Yamamoto and Pam Barlow. Photograph by Larry Yamamoto



Moral support, heavy lifting and official duties by Tyson Underwood, co-director of the MVFAF, Larry Yamamoto, John-John Sward and Bruce Barlow. Photograph by Judith Yamamoto

The Quilters continue to tell our stories, and those of loved-ones who have gone to the great beyond. Eliza Gilkyson writes about this in her song, "When You Walk On,"

"You may fade out through a doorway
fly away above the throng
those who stay will tell your story
a little glory lingers on."

And for Ellen, more than just a little glory will linger, always.

There are innumerable, anonymous women who, throughout time, have woven fabric. They've sewn clothing, armor, walls for huts, baskets for storing food, blankets to soften hard ground and keep out the cold, infant swaddling, wedding veils and burial shrouds. Penelope of the Odyssey is an early ancestor-of-the-cloth. Ellen has become the first Muir Beach Quilter to follow in the ancient footsteps of Penelope. She has joined our honored ancestors, and we miss her dearly.



Throughout the Quilters' Reports of '07, we have been writing about the new perspectives and goals that have evolved beyond the original mission of our group as defined over three decades ago. We've talked about expanding our giving through the vision of extended community.

In response to these desires, we've officially endowed the Muir Beach Quilters Vision Project.

Contributions will be made in three categories: Aging and Eldercare, Women and Children's Issues, and The Environment.

We are proud to announce that our first donation will be to one of Ellen's cherished causes, "Drawbridge, An Arts Program for Homeless Children." The gift will be made, "In loving memory of our friend and fellow-Quilter, Ellen Mettler Moore." We look forward to telling you all about our other donations in our next Report.



As Greg Sarris wrote, to mark a place as sacred, we must see it as just a beginning, like the first knot tied by a Coast Miwok basket maker. But the metaphor applies as well to the quilter's first knot, "from which a sacred world rolls out and coils in around us in every direction." Muir Beach is our sacred place, marked by many ties within groups, among friends and neighbors. It's "the beginning" from which we want the Vision Project to roll out and increase our contributions to the world around us.

Wherever we look - across the planet and across the centuries - we find reverence for the image of the spiral, and the circularity of life. Thus it seems fitting that we should wrap up our final article of the year by coming full circle from where we started Part One of this report. So, with a nod to John Fogerty, and wishing you all the best for another cycle of holiday rituals, let's celebrate the certainty and the blessing, "Big Wheel keep on turnin'..."





Muir Beach Quilters' Holiday Arts Fair

**Saturday and Sunday
December 1st, 11 – 5 and
December 2nd, 10 – 4**

By Kathy Sward and Judith Yamamoto

The Fair is coming, the Fair is coming!

Soon the community center will be transformed into a brilliant and overflowing bazaar of gifts for everyone on our holiday lists! We'll all get together to visit with our neighbors, eat and drink, mosey through all the artists' booths looking for beautiful treasures, support our wonderful community organizations and activities, and buy, buy, buy!

This year the Fair proceeds are going toward the beginnings of a new storage shed (oh, how nice that will be!) and activities at the community center. Also, in recognition of this shrinking world in which we are

all truly neighbors, we are launching our new Vision Project and expanding our Quilters' mission to the larger community. Our first endowment in the Vision Project, Drawbridge, is dedicated to the memory of our beloved quilter, Ellen Mettler, in whose spirit of giving she, and we, live on.

So, as ever, it's the first weekend in December and it's coming up soon!

Ring the bells, shout and sing, we'll see you there!

-- December 1st, 11 - 5, and December 2nd, 10 - 4, at the Community Center --

FAIR ARTISTS



Crocheted Bead Bracelets by Mona Bourell

Mona Bourell is back with her fantastic crocheted beads. This technique for making jewelry was hugely popular in the Victorian Era, and then again with the flappers who wore long strands of beads during the Roaring Twenties. Mona uses a variety of bead types to create exquisite textures and patterns. They may be crocheted with glass - smooth, faceted, opaque, metallic, or iridescent; semi-precious stones, fresh water pearls, jaspers, agates, wood, shell, or Austrian crystal. The bracelets are extremely comfortable; slightly elastic, they just roll onto the wrist so that there's no fumbling with closures. The necklaces are unique and elegant. Watch Mona as she crochets them while you try to decide which one or three you can't live without. The height of fashion!

The knit-lovers' table will again be brimming with the colorful creations of two Muir Beachers, including **Peggy Chiang**, who is as delightful as her yarn creations. She'll again arrive with hats and fingerless gloves, and this year, scarves. Her knitwear is 100% hand worked from Japanese-dyed wool, silk and mohair yarns. Her pieces are to-die-for, so early shopping is advised. They make great gifts and stocking-stuffers, and, of course, a perfect treat for you.

See an amazing display of jewelry made by returning artist **Catherine Damele**. She's self-taught and always evolving with her offerings of precious and semi-precious stones, sterling silver, 18Kgf and 18K gold. You'll find it difficult to decide which piece to purchase, but you'll know you have to have at least one.



Catherine Damele's Coral and Silver Filagree Necklace

Craig Eichenbaum, a new Muir Beach resident, studied art at the College of San Mateo and, in 1973, transferred to Cal State Hayward where he began taking lithography classes from Kenji Nanao. He graduated in 1980, and bought a litho press from the Griffin Co. of Oakland. The press is an art piece in itself, with its sand-cast Griffin emblem and bronze handles. Chris has been making color lithographs ever since. In

lithography, one of the oldest art forms, the image is drawn on limestone, with each color applied separately. A series of processes and materials allow the ink to be accepted only to the drawn areas. Then the oil base ink is hand-rolled across the wet stone surface. Finally, the paper is aligned to the inked stone with registration marks, insuring that the multiple



Peggy Chiang's Knit Hat on Italian Friend

runs will be in alignment for the completed print, and it is hand-cranked through the press. For Craig, lithography is the means to express his love of drawing images which, after 35 years, has evolved into a life-long commitment.

Watercolorist **Ben Farnham** started a family and began as a Sunday painter when he moved to Sausalito more than fifty years ago. His love of plein aire painting has taken him to Greece, Italy, Provence and aboard an Alaskan fishing boat. Since 1989 he has been honored by acceptance into Marin Scapes, an annual July 4th fundraiser for Buckelew Programs at Escalante Winery, and for the last three years he has been a guest artist with Watercolor California. In 2002 he was invited to join Baywood Artists, a group of artists who raise money for environmental causes. And to top it off, he is a signature member of the California Watercolor Association, the Marin Society of Artists, and a member of the Marin Watercolor Society. Best of all, he is a really likeable guy who turns an easy smile! Be sure to check out his framed and unframed watercolors and his cards and calendars.

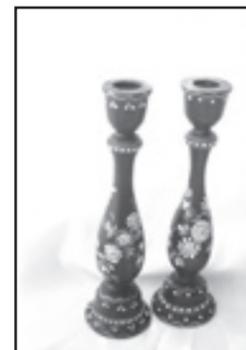


"City Street Scene" by Ben Farnham

Fitting Arts is the work of husband and wife artists **Christopher Fitting** and **Judy Stemen**, who will again be showing at our Fair. He is a sculptor who uses nature to inspire works in wood, stone and bronze. He has exhibited at the Oakland Museum, the California Academy of Sciences, and at Claudia Chapline Gallery in Stinson, as well as other West Coast Galleries. When you see his work, you can hardly believe that they're not going to crawl, creep or fly away! Judy is a contemporary gourd artist and basket weaver. She combines natural materials and a variety of surface techniques to create unique, one-of-a-kind art pieces. She really can turn a garden vegetable into a fantastic work of art!



Carmine Giordano's Ceramic Vase decorated with Wax and Pigment



Hindeloopen Candlesticks by Titia Heyneman

Carmine Giordano's ceramic sculptures and vessels have been strongly influenced by his visits to ancient palaces and temples. Their colors and patterns provide a strong influence for expression in his contemporary body of work. The spiritual approach and evocative quality of his sculpture reflect a marriage of both the ancient and modern; he attributes his style to the minimalist masters Brancusi and Noguchi. His work is an exciting addition to our Fair.

Returning artist, **Pati Hays**, works in various media, from painting to printmaking to ceramics, with each presenting its own challenges and limitations. Mixed media painting is the media she prefers for exploring dream visions and to try to capture that inspiration. She deals more directly with image, color, and the relationship between positive and negative space in her printmaking, where the variety of texture, color and absorbency of paper gives an added dimension to the work. Ceramics allow her the opportunity to delight in the alchemy of firing and glazing clay bodies. Whatever the medium, her ultimate objective is to provide a quiet space, a moment of serenity in which to suspend time. That moment can be found in her wheel-thrown and hand-built ceramics, both functional and decorative/sculptural, and her hand-pulled relief and intaglio prints and cards.

You'll love the Old World feel of **Titia Heyneman's** hand-painted wood and glass pieces, which she does in the traditional Hindeloopen style of art painting. Come to her booth to find such treasures as children's chairs, small tea tables, candlesticks, serving trays and other household items. And she's as lovely as are her delicate flowers and vines!



Craig Eichenbaum's "Frog and the Prince"



Judy Stemen's Gourd Art



"Beetle" by Chris Fitting



"Ceramic Beast" by Pati Hays

MUIR BEACH QUILTERS

New Muir Beach resident and sculptor **Crystal Lockwood**, creates works in a variety of woods, including, among others, Maple Burl, Koa, Redwood, and the rare madrone; she leaves intact specific parts of the wood she has selected, creating a metamorphosis of the human form into the natural material. She strives to reveal the soul of each piece of wood by working with what Mother Nature has already provided. The judges for the 2007 Mill Valley Fall Arts Festival were surely mesmerized by her sculptures (including her bronzes) and awarded her a coveted Award of Excellence. A California native, she has traveled extensively, studying sculpture in the museums of England, France and Italy. Her work is currently on exhibit in galleries in Hawaii, California and Texas.



Crystal Lockwood's wood sculpture, "Persephone"



Jeweler **Suzanne McSweeney** handcrafts necklaces, bracelets and earrings in classic designs with a modern edge, employing asymmetry as an interesting element. She creates bold as well as delicate pieces - something for everyone. Her use of semi-precious gemstones in a variety of colors, shapes, and sizes with sterling silver creates a subtle, not overstated look. She transforms the classic beauty of freshwater pearls into a modern design all her own, which works well for both those who prefer a traditional or a modern look, and is perfect for every day wear.

Bracelet by Suzanne McSweeney

Little Kazoo has left the Beach, but not before his mom, **Heather Kobrin Moore**, created the wonderful Kazoo book, which has now been followed by the Kazoo Activity Book. The books of Kazoo combine quirky and charming qualities, local Muir Beach color, and an irresistible subject! They make wonderful and affordable gifts, not to be missed. In addition to these, Heather will this year be offering her new, subtly mysterious, Message-In-A-Bottle Holiday Greeting, which hints of the sea...an object d' art...another link to the sea around us...

We'll again enjoy the creative pottery of **Lorna Newlin**, who left the corporate world in 2002 to open her own studio, Sausalito Pottery. There she continues her 26-year love -- playing with clay. Her first studio was in a vacated pottery studio on Bridgeway, in Sausalito, where she opened her doors to the public. Behind the open shelves of the gallery, she could be seen making pots on the wheel, creating sculpture, loading kilns, whatever she was doing that day. She moved from there to her present location at the old MLK school, also in Sausalito, and once again her doors are open. Her varied styles include functional dinnerware, whimsical sculptures, unique fish platters, and Japanese-style pottery, wood fired in an Anagama kiln at Pope Valley Pottery. Lorna teaches ceramics to adults and children, and takes many commissions, ranging from personalized wedding and birthday platters to custom designed tiles.



Lorna Newlin in her Studio



Marie Porti's Necklaces and Pendants

Check out the spectacular necklaces, bracelets and earrings made with silver and precious and semi-precious stones, pearls and glass, all creations of returning artist **Marie Porti**. The variety of her jewelry is an absolute delight to see, and since each is a unique work of art, you'll want to shop early so you don't miss the very piece you need.

All the tales you've heard about **Arlene Robertson's** rum cakes are positively true - you can't just have one piece; and you have to buy two cakes, one for the holidays and one to eat on the day you bought it; and you have to get to the fair early or they'll already be gone. They're too good! With something like this,

you don't even think about calories - who cares?



Fifty Rum Cakes by Arlene Robertson

Lesley Segedy loves bees and beeswax and she loves making candles; she's been making these lovely faceted, rolled, sometimes natural and sometimes colorful candles for more than 20 years. They continue to appeal to everyone, whether used for holiday decorating or to add charm to your home with their bright flames and warm fragrance. It's impossible to have too many of her tapers, solid candles, ornaments and gift-wrapped packages; they're lovely, they're reasonably priced.



Smiling Lesley Segedy with her Beeswax Candles

MUIR BEACH QUILTERS

Linda Silva will again make a delightful presence at the aforementioned knit lovers table, which never fails to thrill all who pass by. Her fingerless gloves, often made from colorful mohair yarns, sport ribbed stripes of many colors, or just-so ruffles around the wrist, complement her scarves, which take form in a creative mind that is always working overtime.



Slide Ranch will again be offering their beautiful wool yarns which are carded and spun right up the road. These yarns' subtle, natural colors are prized by knitters. Their hand-crafted production is limited, so come early to find these precious skeins.

Who has ever heard of "fog dried" tomatoes?!!! Anyone who has ever come to the Muir Beach Quilters' Holiday Arts Fair knows all about them. THE BEST!!! **Julie Smith** and her entire family show up to create an area on the community center hearth which says "It's holiday time again." The festive mood is enhanced with her wonderful sampling display for her chutneys, jams and jellies, spreads and homemade holiday breads. (It's hard to be polite and try just one sample!) New this year will be "Bread-in-a-Bottle,"



A Loaf of Bread, Some Jars of Jam - and Bread-in-a-Bottle! by Master Baker Julie Smith



"Muir Beach Splash" by Tom Soltesz

Tom Soltesz grew up in a small coal-mining town of 5,000 people in western Pennsylvania where there was little in the way of cultural influence, yet somehow, at the age of seven, he decided he wanted to be a professional artist. He freelanced his way through the Colorado Institute of Art and upon graduating, moved to Manila in the Philippines to open a graphic design studio. He was especially influenced by the Philippine artist known as Amorsolo. In 1981 he returned to the U.S. and graduated from the Academy of Art College in San Francisco. Tom now teaches plein air landscape painting and is an Artist Member of the California Art Club and the Baywood Group of painters, a socially active environmental group. His oil paintings have won Best of Show at the annual San Luis Obispo Plein Air Festival and honorable mention at the 2005 Carmel Art Festival. He was featured in the April South West Art magazine and the April Artist Magazine 2007, and his work is in collections in the U.S. and abroad.

Marilyn Stiles lives and works in a Eucalyptus grove above Muir Woods. She was trained as an art teacher in New York State and spent two years as a Peace Corps volunteer in Peru, helping to create crafts cooperatives with the native craftspeople. Her sculpture is slab constructed of various clays chosen for their natural colors and fired to 2232 F. Her work combines nature, fantasy and humor, often producing visual puns by finding "critters" in unexpected places. Her fanciful sculptures give us a wonderful insight into her world of animal creatures, most with human characteristics; her trademark turquoise glaze is as distinctive as the works themselves.



"Hog Wild" by Marilyn Stiles



Sharon Virtue's Fanciful Functional Teapots

You'll love her "Swamp Angel" with its Harley-riding lizard, or the "Zen Lizard," Ommm, or "Hog Wild" on a skateboard - they're absolutely outrageous!

We're so happy to again have the fanciful and colorful ceramic creations of **Sharon Virtue**. They are actually functional - cups, teapots, covered containers and bottles - but how could something so fanciful actually hold the tea? Ah, but it does, and that is an integral part of these wild and glorious and woman-grounded art works.



Five Tea Cups by Hideo Yoshida

Hideo Yoshida challenges himself to create shapes both practical and beautiful that people will use to enrich their lives on a daily basis. His gas and wood fired cups, vases and plates are built with the tactile and time-consuming process of adhering one coil onto another to slowly create each

MUIR BEACH QUILTERS

piece, giving him great satisfaction and an intimate connection to the finished work of art. His art education and teaching assignments have taken place locally, but he believes they have been enhanced by journeys to India, Japan, Hong Kong, Mexico, Italy, France, Holland and the United Kingdom. His gallery showings and exhibitions are too numerous to mention: they comprise local, national and international venues. His deserving work has been recognized with fellowships, many awards, and rave reviews!



Thomas Allen
Making Crafts

JUNIOR ARTISANS

Thomas Allen returns for his last year as a Junior Artisan (age 10 through high school) with a wonderful collection of driftwood mobiles, pine cone swags, wreaths, Muir Beach boxes, nautical rope and driftwood key holders - and more! He is well-known for his creative gift items, and is following in his sister Sandra's footsteps as he builds his savings account for college. Good work, guys!

Lainie Johnston, age 11, learned about handcrafts from her Muir Beach Quilter mom, Claire. Lainie will be busy creating her handcrafted specialties in her first year as a Junior Artisan. Maybe some lavender sachets! Lainie loves to zero in on her projects. She's not one to throw something together - she takes pride in taking her time to make a fine piece, whatever it might be!



Lainie Johnston at her
mom's sewing machine

MUIR BEACH QUILTERS



Flights of Fancy by Pam Barlow
Photograph by Bruce Barlow

Pam Barlow has collected feathers, shells and other natural treasures all her life. Recently she began to make them into artifacts: headdresses, necklaces, belts, and her feather creations called "Flights Of Sophia." Each "Flight" includes a variety of natural items, and a bead or other token of sentimental value, which has been gifted to her by a friend or family member. Often there are other animal totems included. They look beautiful hanging from a lamp switch, in a window, or on the edge of a picture frame. They can also be tied on a hat or a bridle, or worn in your hair, or as a necklace. "Flights" belong wherever you would like to attract the many spiritual attributes of the bird. They are made with love and respect for the beliefs of Native American shamanic bird medicine. Feathers are powerful medicine.



Claire Johnston Holding
a Bowl of Lavender from
her Garden

Unfortunately, this year we won't have the incredible hand-bound books that **Coleen Curry** carefully crafts in her Muir Beach studio, and in classes in Sausalito and in Telluride, Colorado, where she studies under some of the best and most recognized people in the field. Each book, and each case into which she fits it, is a work of art; some of the papers are even handmade by her to complement the fabric and leathers she uses. We love seeing her progress on each book and at each juncture of the process. 'Til next year...

Claire Johnston joined the quilters several years ago, making the trip over the hill on as many Wednesdays as she can fit into her crazy schedule with kids and dogs and husband, and is famous

for adopting Cole, a Muir Beach dog who needed a home. She is a great addition to our group, full of energy and totally involved, we all feel so lucky! We are anxious to see her basket filled with her wonderfully wacky, whimsical, colorful potholders that seem to fly out of the booth almost immediately - and, she promises, sachets made out of her own home-grown lavender! Better hurry...

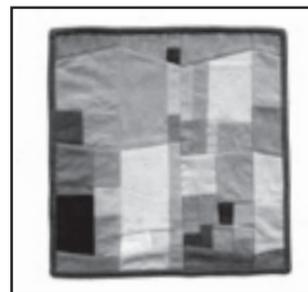
Outi Onorato's Sow's Ear Purses are a play on making something from nothing. She makes purses and tote bags out of 60% -100% recycled, thrifted and reclaimed materials. These include old clothing, scraps from other projects, upholstery samples, old tablecloths and felted knits. Each is one of a kind and she enjoys applying new techniques to make them fun and functional. They are durable, fully lined, multi-pocketed, and many are reversible. In the same spirit, her needle-felted pincushions are made with hand-knitted felted sweaters (the parts the moths didn't get). Since her many bags and pincushions vary in design, color and pattern, with no two alike, you'll have lots to choose from. Each one is a little work of art!



Outi Onorato's felted
purse with vintage
ribbon and needle-felted
embellishment

MUIR BEACH QUILTERS

Nancy Sequeira lives just over the hill, and joined our group a number of years ago at our dear Ellen's urging. She brought her stunning indigo quilt to our last meeting in order to baste it. There's plenty of room to work on the tables, and other quilters are able to help. Too bad for the rest of us, though; this beautiful quilt is being made for her husband. But she'll have lovely baby quilts at the Fair, made with wonderful fabrics and soothing colors, which are great for people



From Klee's 1915 "Quarry
at Ostermunden." A 7"
square miniature quilt by
Kathy Sward

of any age. She also promises a basketful of scented sachets - perfect for putting into someone's Christmas stocking - which lend a wonderful fragrance to the entire room. Nancy may also surprise us with a few other items that she's not yet aware she'll be making. Who knows what's yet to come!

Kathy Sward loves working with fabric - any kind at all - but her real passion is vintage fabrics and old feed sacks. Her mother made her a ruffle-bottomed skirt from a feed sack printed with great big yellow and white daisies. It's a favorite memory. In the late sixties she made her first quilt, sewing together hundreds of tiny squares and eventually finishing it and selling it for \$10 at the first Muir Beach Quilters' Holiday Fair. Since then she's made lots of baby quilts, lap robes and art quilts. For the last fifteen years her work has also included matted, signed and framed to-scale miniature quilts; these are grouped into three series— American Quilts: A Retrospective in Miniature; Paul Klee: Fabric Translations in Miniature; and Denim Blues: Quilts With a Southern Influence. She's received First Place, Best of Class and Judge's Choice ribbons - always a surprise and a thrill! Come see what happens when

Kathy sews together many pieces of fabric - she hopes you'll like what you see!

Anna Tom has moved to Mill Valley, but her roots in Muir Beach life are strong. Besides, we're holding on to one of her feet (that's a joke, folks!). Her fun heart-shaped sachets will jazz up the quilters' booth almost as much as her beautiful smile!

Judith Yamamoto is one of the founding members of Muir Beach Quilters, and has been quilting for at least forty years. She loves combining the fabric of many countries, especially Japan because of the cultural heritage of her family, and experiments with each new quilt to see how these fabrics will go together. She makes both traditional (sort of) quilts, and art quilts in which she stretches all of her creative imagination. Old kimono pieces and antique scraps, mid-western feed sacks, silk and rayon and cotton, sashiko quilting stitches, and she is a happy, crazy quilter! This year's poster and postcard will feature her beautiful "Kimono Abstract With Butterfly," and it will be on display and available for purchase at the Fair.



Judith Yamamoto in her Studio

Pam Eichenbaum, Tayeko Kaufman, and Nancy Knox just want us to wait and see what surprises they come up with for the Quilters' booth. We know we won't be disappointed and neither will you, so check it out!

MUIR BEACH AUTHORS

Every year the quilters round up books written by Muir Beachers and make them available to interested fair goers. They range from as far in the past as Charles Borden's tales of the South Pacific and Reg White's "View from Sunset," a book of Reg's poetry with cover design and drawing by Larry Yamamoto, to Richard Moore's "A Selection for Ruth," and Joe Connor's love poems. And more - if more authors call, we will expand!

BEACHCOMBER

Stop by the *Beachcomber* table and say hello to fantastic new editor, **Linda Gibbs**, who is taking the *Beachcomber* to new heights! She will be selling customized *Beachcomber* beach towels, as well as annual subscriptions (both mailed and delivered), and gift subscriptions for your family and friends; and she will happily accept donations to Friends of the *Beachcomber*. If you've misplaced your 2007 issues, there will be copies for sale for \$5 each. Linda thanks the Quilters for this opportunity to say hello to the community, to thank all of the *Beachcomber's* fine contributors and supportive readership for a great first year, and to wish everyone Happy Holidays!



MUIR BEACH QUILTERS



Fishboy (Jon Rauh) and Brad Eigsti Hawking Shirts

MUIR BEACH VOLUNTEER FIRE ASSOCIATION

The Muir Beach Volunteer Fire Association will again load up their shelves with tons of the famous dog paraphernalia, from tee shirts, hooded sweats, ladies yoga pants and sweatpants, ball caps and berets to kids' tees and sweats and cute little onesies and infant tees, to stadium blankets and fire department patches, and even an organic tee. Come get something for Uncle Joe and Auntie Sue, pop it into the mail, and your holiday shopping will be off to a great start! And besides, you'll be helping to support our stupendous, comforting and always first on the scene fire department! They're absolutely THE BEST GROUP OF PEOPLE around anywhere. A huge "THANK YOU" to all our Muir Beach volunteer fire people!

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

The Muir Beach Volunteer Fire Association will set up a booth to display the basic survival items which should be safely stored in our homes in case of an emergency. The firemen will take orders at the Fair, and arrange for payment and pickup after the first of the year.

MUIR BEACH GARDEN CLUB

The Muir Beach Garden Club will again delight us with all sorts of wonderful gifts from nature. They'll have beautiful rock gardens and just-twined wreaths of all sizes and styles, and swinging swags of fresh greens and dried fruits. You'll have to come quickly if you plan to purchase one of their stunning Japanese-style garden benches! And when you leave, check out the upper yard where these amazing gardeners are busy creating a beautiful landscape. They're now installing a drip irrigation system in the entire area. A big "Thank you mucho" to them all.

HOLIDAY ORNAMENT EXTRAVAGANZA

Children of all ages bring their creations to this vibrant booth, and we hang them on the little "trees" where they are sold by moms and dads and other volunteers. You'll love these very affordable, handmade-with-love-and-verve, holiday ornaments.

CHILDREN'S CALENDAR

Allison Pinto and Linda Silva collect Muir Beach kids' drawings and put them together in a really fun and useful calendar. The money raised goes into CSD coffers, and comes out to be spent on the annual Children's Halloween party at the community center. Call Allison (383-4107) to get your drawing into the '08 calendar.

GINGERBREAD ATTIC

The Quilters' Gingerbread Attic is the place to be while parents are shopping and socializing at the Fair. Upstairs in the Gingerbread Attic, kids can let their imaginations go wild, and build a house or a castle or a cave or an igloo out of graham crackers and icing and gummi bears and gum drops and all sorts of goodies. And it's free!

QUILTERS' CLASS BAR

Enjoy a glass of wine or beer, or better yet, have a cup of hot, spiced apple cider - absolutely yummy - with or without the brandy.

CAFÉ Q

The mezzanine upstairs from the main hall offers a place to sit and enjoy a free cup of coffee or tea, or a plate of food from the gourmet buffet, and visit with friends and neighbors. It's fun to sit on the stools, look over the railing, watch the shoppers, and marvel at the beautiful booths filled with art.

GOURMET BUFFET

Our gourmet food will wake up everyone's taste buds this year, melding fresh California cuisine with a French flair. We're welcoming Catherine Broomhead and her West Marin Green Cuisine. She buys her produce from West Marin farms and ranches, and ooh la la! Grilled cheese sandwiches to die for! The menu is still a surprise, but we've already tasted those grilled cheese sandwiches, as well as her crepes and a seasonal soup and a beautiful salad. Bon appetit to all!

GREATER MUIR BEACH NEIGHBORS

To Be Or Not To Be? The Stage or the Shuttle? Meanwhile, Some Interim Possibilities, And the Coffee Party That Was at the Community Center!

by Judith Yamamoto, co-chair, Greater Muir Beach Neighbors

First, the good news - we held a coffee party! Unfortunately, by the time you read this *Beachcomber*, it will be in the past! Marilyn Laatsch organized a Sunday morning gathering at the community center on Saturday morning, October 20, from 10 am to noon. It featured an organic coffee tasting -- also bagels and cream cheese and apple cake. Suzanne Bourguignon, of Marin Transit, who along with Amy Van Doren hosted a community meeting last August at the Muir Beach community center, was invited to join us as we tried to nail down some workable transit possibilities for Muir Beach.

So far, there are two ideas that show some promise: Dial-A-Ride and a taxi jitney service. Both of these, especially the taxi jitney, are more privatized than public, but they have one good public transit feature: they are affordable at \$2 a ride. Two other options are also up for discussion: a subscription van and carpool/ride sharing, but any implementation of them would be farther down the road.

What we figured out at this party/meeting were the specific transit needs of Muir Beachers. Will report on how it went in the next *Beachcomber*!

These two community center meetings with Marin Transit are the direct result of last February's demise of the West Marin Stage. It operated a coastal route for about three years, funded by a federal grant, and using a small vehicle serving Green Gulch Farm, Muir Beach and Slide Ranch.

But in February the Marin County Transit District permanently rerouted the Stage along Panoramic (it had been temporarily rerouted while Highway One was closed for repair), and thus made up for the loss earlier in the year of the Panoramic weekend bus to Stinson Beach.

Good points for the Stage: it was small (able to go down narrow roads, like Pacific Way), it was cheap, it picked up people at undesignated stops along its route, as well as at the designated ones, it worked for the high school kids coming home in the afternoon (although it could have picked them up earlier), and it carried a bicycle rack.

But there's a big problem with rural routes - not very many people live in the countryside. And that is where the Marin Transit District landed last February - not enough folks standing at the Muir Beach bus stop.

It is the contention of Greater Muir Beach Neighbors that ridership will go up if the number of runs are increased and if service is expanded to include weekends, so that people coming to our parklands can get out of their cars.

That is the ultimate goal: to get people out of their cars!

The shorter-range goal is to have our West Marin Stagecoach service improved upon, and reinstated.

The immediate goal is to work with Marin Transit to try to find at least some answers to our current transit dilemma.

These goals are not the same as those of the National Park Service and the County of Marin. As the Big Lagoon project moves through the EIR/EIS process, NPS planners, working with the County and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, are solving their recreational access needs by having the Muir Woods Shuttle bus stop at Muir Beach on its way to Muir Woods.

The Muir Woods Shuttle, a bigger bus than the West Marin Stage, now runs nonstop during summer weekends to Muir Woods. It is full of Muir Woods visitors.

A first glance, the idea of the Muir Woods Shuttle bus stopping at Muir Beach seems not to be such a bad thing, especially since there is absolutely no way for people to get here by public transit. However, the ramifications are horrendous. Because the Shuttle requires an ADA bus stop, there must also be a pedestrian walkway along Pacific Way and the new Pacific Way causeway. How does wheelchair access make sense if you have to get from the Dairy to the beach in a wheelchair? Not to mention schlepping kids and babies in strollers, old folks, picnic baskets and beach umbrellas down Pacific Way?

And that pedestrian walkway pushes the width of Pacific Way to 36 feet. As one of the County Planning Commissioners remarked, 36 feet is equivalent to three freeway lanes.

Greater Muir Beach Neighbors has been writing letters and meeting with our supervisor, Steve Kinsey, and with Saaid Fakhrazadeh, assistant director of the County Department of Public Works, to keep planning for Pacific Way consistent with Muir Beach's historic, rural character, and to provide meaningful recreational access at the Big Beach parking lot. It is an uphill battle, with the only concessions so far being, unsatisfactorily, the reduction of a few feet from the width of Pacific Way.

We're asking these planners not to put in a Muir Woods Shuttle stop at the Dairy.

Instead, we're requesting that a bus stop be part of the Big Beach parking lot (true beach access!), and that the more appropriately sized West Marin Stage be used for recreational access.

West Marin Stage - yes. Muir Woods Shuttle - no.

We'll keep you posted on all the developments. Hope you made it to the Coffee Party! Peaceful wishes.

November Election Results

By Maury Ostroff

No, I can't predict the future. But it just so happens that all local elections for Muir Beach that would have been on the ballot this November have been settled.

First, due to an unfortunate series of events, the royal "We" missed the deadline for getting the proposed Fire Department Tax Measure on the ballot. However, we have another opportunity next year when they hold the Primary Election. While there are members of the community that are for and those against, the Board felt there was enough merit in the proposal to let the voters themselves decide (as is required by law for any new tax), and barring any other unforeseen mishaps, the proposal to support our Volunteer Fire Department with an annual tax assessment of \$200 will be on the ballot at the next election. I want to stress that to the best of my knowledge, this was an unintentional occurrence; it just simply slipped through the cracks and when we went to file it turned out the deadline had already passed.

In the race for the Board of Directors, both Steve Shaffer and myself filed for re-election as incumbents. There was one other open seat, currently held by Bob Jacobs, who was appointed by the Board to serve the remainder of the term originally held by Deborah Kamradt. As Shere' Stoddard was the only person to file for the seat, the County Board of Elections cancelled the election (per their procedures: 3 seats up for election and 3 candidates, so... seats filled.) Accordingly, both Mr. Shaffer and I will serve 4-year terms, and Ms. Stoddard will serve a 2-year term.

My original intent was to write a candidate statement for the *Beachcomber*, and even though the election has been settled, I will still do so, although with a slightly different perspective.

I think the overarching question that any candidate must answer, both to the public and even more importantly to themselves, is why? What are you doing this for?

Being a board member of the CSD offers no monetary compensation, and I daresay it is hardly a stepping stone to higher office. Somehow I doubt that the road to the White House goes past 19 Seacape Drive. Moreover, there are virtually no "perks" to the job either - except for maybe our own box of cookies at the Director's table during CSD meetings. Like many other volunteer positions, it can seem to be a thankless job.

In my case, I can think of a number of interrelated reasons for why I'm doing this. First is enlightened self-interest. Like many others, I have a sizable real estate investment in the form of the house I live in, and its ability to provide a viable place to live depends on having a reliable water

supply. There are other aspects of the CSD's jurisdiction that impact this investment as well, so I felt that becoming informed and getting involved were important, which is why I started attending CSD meetings soon after I moved in. After observing for several years, one thing led to another and I found myself on the Board itself, about to start a second full term.

The second reason is intellectual curiosity. I enjoy being exposed to new things and finding out how things work. Having spent most of my life in big cities, I was far removed from knowledge of infrastructure such as water systems and storm drainage, (to say nothing of septic systems!). So it's been fun to learn more about the system. I have also found it interesting to learn more about local government as well, as I've had to deal with Marin County on a number of issues.

Third reason is a sense of responsibility. Perhaps this is another form of self-interest, and on the other hand I wouldn't call it purely altruistic, but I do feel that I have some responsibility to fill a role that I am fortunate enough to have some aptitude for. I enjoy Muir Beach immensely, and I feel I've got to do my part to keep it a special place to live.

Fourth reason is personal development. In my "day job" I work in typical large corporations, and dealing with a wide variety of people is a pre-requisite for getting things done. I have found that serving on the Board has helped me hone some project management and other "people" skills in different ways. Perhaps it has helped me develop more patience and a more long-term perspective on things.

Fifth reason is the social aspect. Yes, being on the Board puts one in the middle of things, and that can be rewarding. I get to meet people all over Muir Beach and really get to know my neighbors.

I could go on, but I think you get the idea. One thing I can say is that I don't have any particular agenda or specific issue that is driving me. Somehow it seems appropriate to mention that the great American novel, "Moby Dick," with its metaphor of the hunt for the great White Whale representing many a man's obsessive ambitions, has its namesakes in our own street names of Ahab and Starbuck. I need hardly point out how many occupants of 1600 Pennsylvania Ave. have had their own whales to chase.

One can speculate on what motivates people to run for office, be it ego, the desire to feel important, the need to be the center of attention, or many times none of the above but the simple act of wanting to pitch in and help. I think there is such a thing as Public Service. And maybe a little bit of ego isn't bad, but a healthy and necessary component of self-confidence and general well-being.

I want to turn my attention now to address some issues raised by Gerald Pearlman in a series of articles he wrote in the July 2007 issue of the *Beachcomber*. Gerry raises some good points, but I think that some things require my response. But first I have to disclose that my primary motivation could be revenge for the defeat I suffered at Gerry's hand at the Scrabble board. In fact, I have lost twice at Scrabble, and both times to a Pearlman, first to Gerry and then to Eli. (Note to self: next time get the official Scrabble dictionary and study up on all those oddball words that never get used in normal conversation but are great for the "triple word score.")

In the article titled "Government Inaction and Action," Gerry makes the point that government officials often invoke the mantra of "limited powers" as an excuse for not doing anything. Guilty as charged. I admit making occasional use of this tactic. Of course, I would point out that in a different article that Gerry wrote for the *Beachcomber* titled "Verizon Wireless Franchise" he states that "In any event no hasty decisions are in order regarding this issue." Hmmm. So it seems that in some cases action is warranted, but in others we shouldn't do anything, the determining factor being whether the petitioner in question is in favor or not. In most cases, however, our seeming inaction is really a tactful way of handling ideas or suggestions that are ostensibly reasonable but which are in fact not achievable, or other ideas that are just plain crazy. So rather than antagonize the petitioner and cause confrontation and be mean by telling the person they don't know what they're talking about, it's best to be polite and say that we'll take it under consideration and study the issue or that we just don't have the jurisdiction. And there are times when it really is out of our jurisdiction, even if it is a good idea. Another point on this topic is Gerry's own observation that "... strong rulers have no trouble ignoring these limitations. One need only look as far as our current President to find a prime example for this kind of behavior." Hmmm. Doesn't this undermine his thesis? But bottom line, I think Gerry is correct in his closing observation that taking action is a lot harder to commit to than not taking action. But to use Gerry's own words, there are those who hold the precautionary principle dear, and we who serve on the board who are entrusted by the public are constrained to act with prudence.

In another article Gerry wrote, titled "Nothing is Certain but Death and Taxes," he makes a valid point that we could be more aggressive in pursuing grant money. Again, guilty as charged. While we did successfully get FEMA funds from the big storm of 2005, we do not seem to be going after grants as much as we have in the past. Part of the issue is that the income levels and property values in Muir Beach have risen over the years to the point where we no longer qualify for some programs,

but I think the main reason is that it takes a fair amount of time, energy, and paperwork to apply for grants. I want to remind everyone that serving on the board is an unpaid, volunteer position. I can only speak for myself in stating that I wish I had more time to do this. I hope I can say that when it comes time to replace our current water tanks (which will occur sometime between 3 and 10 years from now) that we will investigate sources of funds from grant money. But the thing about grant money is that while it can be used for one-time projects, it is not good practice to use grants to fund ongoing operations. All I can say is that I will try to learn more about the grant process, and that I want to express my thanks to Gerry and all the others for their role in obtaining grants for the foundation of this community.

Finally, I will leave you with some observations about what occurs at various public meetings, particularly CSD meetings. I have already covered the topic of why people would want to run for public office, and now I want to talk about why people decide to get involved or attend meetings.

For the vast majority of cases, people are simply concerned and want to know what's going on, and are motivated by the same reasons I outlined for myself above. Or, they may have an interest on a specific issue or topic. But unfortunately, there are some people who attend public meetings with a different agenda, and who are interested in either hearing themselves talk, or playing the game of "gotcha," and frequently both. There are times I get the impression that people think it's like the dunking booth at the carnival where you throw the ball and if you hit the lever just right you dunk the candidate in the water, as if I'm up there for their sport. The problem that I've observed is that this kind of disruptive behavior discourages many people from attending public meetings, and that's a shame. I would encourage everyone to attend CSD meetings and ask questions, and not let the distractions bother them.

Another aspect of becoming more involved is that people might have the perception that things are somewhat "cliquish" (just like in High School.) My answer to that is to be patient. Attend several meetings, you'll meet people, and learn the players, and you'll get right into it. If it seems a bit difficult to break right in, I know that in my case I want to make sure of the person's underlying motives. Just like the question I posed to myself earlier: Why? What are you really doing this for? Come to think about it, those are the questions we should be asking ourselves about a lot of things.

Cell Phone Antenna Tower Update

By Maury Ostroff

As has been reported previously, the CSD was approached by an independent contractor working on behalf of Verizon to place a cell phone antenna tower on the upper water tank. For a variety of reasons, I asked them to put the project on hold for a few months, and asked them if they had any more detailed technical information on what was involved so that we would be better informed, as we needed to study the matter further. They didn't reply back. So for now, the project is on hold, certainly for this year.

To reiterate, their interest is to provide better coverage along the entire length of Highway One so that travelers will not experience "dead zones" while driving the highway to Stinson Beach. Our interests were (a) potential revenue for the

district; (b) better cell phone service for our own community; and (c) the potential for an Internet connection over newly installed telephone lines, (which are needed to connect the phone network to the cell phone tower.)

At this point, it might be worthwhile to review the basics of how cell phone networks work. (Note there are many websites which do a more thorough job of explanation than I have the space for here, and I encourage everyone to do their own research.) Essentially, the cell phone antenna towers act as two-way radios between the handheld cell phone and the tower. The tower is then connected to the local phone company, which routes the call through the main trunk lines to either another cell phone or a landline phone, or even your Aunt



The proposed cell phone antenna tower for the upper water tank near Muir Beach Overlook is on hold.
Photograph by Julie Smith

Tillie in Paramus, New Jersey. Since the range of each antenna tower is limited, this enables the cell phone itself to require very little transmitting power, which is why they can be so small and fit in the palm of your hand, (and why the electromagnetic energy generated is low.)

Of course, the question of safety and effects on human health are obvious concerns that people would have. My own research has led me to the conclusion that the technology is safe. There are numerous studies showing no ill effects from the low-level electromagnetic energy generated by a cell phone tower antenna, or from the handheld cell phone itself. I'm afraid that it might come down to proving a negative; as it's very difficult to conclusively prove that there are absolutely no harmful effects whatsoever, and the debate could go on for quite a while. Cell phones and the tower antennas have been around for several years, and if there were immediate and obvious ill effects they would surely be apparent by now. But some would argue that it might take 10 or 20 years for the adverse impact to manifest itself. In any event, the scientific consensus is that if there were harmful effects from the electromagnetic energy, the danger from the cell phone itself would be far greater as one is holding it right next to your ear, whereas the cell phone antenna tower (the other side of the two-way radio connection) is hundreds of feet away. The fact that the energy decreases dramatically as you move away from the source (remember the inverse square law from high school physics?) should reassure those residents whose houses are near the Upper Tank - they are still at least one hundred feet away. Remember, we are talking about low frequency radio waves, and we are literally bombarded by radio waves all the time. If we weren't, then AM and FM radio wouldn't work!

The magic of a cell phone network is that as you are driving, you may be passing through the range of several cell phone antennas. Since the cell phone network detects this, your phone conversation is not interrupted, and does a seamless "hand-off" to the next tower that is closer in range. This is one obvious reason why Verizon and potentially other cell phone companies want to expand their network of coverage; so that their customers experience as few "dead zones" where calls are dropped as possible. Needless to say, the technology underlying a cell phone network

is quite sophisticated, involving not only radio tower equipment but also advanced software to keep track of things.

A suggestion was made in an article in the July 2007 issue of the *Beachcomber* that the community could invest in its own telecommunications system. I'm afraid that unless we raise several billion dollars and are prepared to compete with the likes of Verizon, AT&T, and other telecommunications behemoths, the idea is not feasible. I don't know how many people would sign up for a cell phone that only works within Muir Beach! Because when you got to Mill Valley, you'd have to pay "roaming" charges for using another network. (I hope everyone realizes I'm just kidding, because the idea of us having our own independent phone network is unrealistic.) Essentially, the telephone network is a "closed" system. This is evident by the fact that while you can buy a cell phone itself, it is useless without that little chip called a SIM in the back of the phone that identifies your phone as a paying customer to the cell phone company. This is just as true with a regular landline phone; you can go to any store and buy a basic corded phone for less than \$20, but without a phone number issued by the phone company and physical access to their phone network it's useless.

There are some interesting technologies coming along with Voice over Internet, (an example is Skype) but these require that you connect a handset to a PC (either desktop or laptop) that has the Internet connection. It is not an alternative to a true handheld cell phone that requires no wires.

The conclusion I have reached is that if we want upgraded phone services in Muir Beach, both wireless (cell) and landlines, then we have to deal with the devil, i.e., the phone companies. Personally, I think it would be fine if AT&T upgraded their lines out here and placed enough equipment so that we could at least get DSL. At some point they are going to do this, but it may be years away. If and when another offer for a cell phone tower comes up, the CSD will be sure to inform everyone of what is (or is not) happening.

Report on Solar Panels

By Bob Jacobs

In 2005 the CSD Board approved the installation of solar panels on the roof of the Community Center. Installation took place the end of July 2005. It was expected that the panels would produce 90-100% of community center electricity use. Net cost of the installation to the CSD was only \$3,000.00, due to a grant and a discount provided by the installing company, Sun First.

It seemed to everyone that this was a good pilot and demonstration project which affirmed this community's dedication and sensitivity to addressing ecological concerns. Also, it required a relatively small investment. Aran Collier (Sun First) indicated some reservation about tree shading reducing the efficiency of the installation. Of course, this could be addressed by cutting trees, if desired.



Muir Beach Community Center

Photograph by Julie Smith

I was not on the CSD Board until April 2006. At the time I became a Board member, I suggested a study to determine how well the solar installation was doing. And, I volunteered to do it. The analysis in the table below covers a one year period. It is apparent that actual electricity production by the panels supplies slightly over 1/3 of the electricity used. While this is disappointing, recovery of the cost will still take place, but over a significantly longer period of time than originally projected.

I think the lesson learned here is that if the economics of a solar installation is the only or primary consideration, then one needs to do a metered study of the installation site to determine the likely efficiency. In this case, after the fact, it appears that electricity production is significantly reduced by tree shading and possibly a less than perfect roof angle.

I believe this was the first solar panel installation on a community center in Marin County. Since then, there have been others and one or more are currently contemplated.

Analysis of Solar Panel Electric Production for Community Center for One Year

Month Ending	Solar KWh	PG&E KWh	Total KWh	PG&E Chg.	Computed PG&E Chg. w/o Solar	Solar \$ Saving
6/17/06	282	377	659	49.93	87.28	37.35
7/19/06	271	229	500	58.57	127.88	69.31
8/16/06	230	279	509	53.55	97.70	44.15
9/16/06	154	364	518	74.35	105.81	31.46
10/16/06	186	319	505	60.73	96.14	35.41
11/15/06	166	475	641	83.62	112.84	29.22
12/14/06	104	880	984	126.32	141.25	14.93
1/16/07	89	375	464	59.27	73.34	14.07
2/15/07	120	318	438	50.75	69.90	19.15
3/16/07	183	228	411	38.27	68.99	30.72
5/16/07	504	370	874	40.30	95.20	54.90
1 Yr. Totals	2289	4214	6503	695.66	1076.33	380.67
% breakdown	35	65	100	65	100	35

Note: PG&E made a corrected bill for the 2 month period ending 5/16/07. Therefore, the two months were combined for this analysis. This causes distortion on a monthly basis, but should make little difference for the full year.

Newest Member of CSD - Shere' Stoddard

Her Dream, Our Village, Our Dream

By Shere' Stoddard



Shere' Stoddard with Tofu and Elway
Photograph by Lucy Lemmingwinks

"I have a dream today."
Martin Luther King, Jr.
Born Atlanta, Georgia 1929

"I have dreams, hope, passion."
Shere' Stoddard
Born 1956, North Carolina
Raised 1956, Atlanta, Georgia

We lived a few blocks from Ebenezer Baptist Church and attended often to hear the service. I have faded memories of him, the special person he was and to become is fresh though seen through my eyes at age 6. We lived Martin Luther King Jr.'s dream. Our tiny world was little black kids and little white kids joining together for meals, school, government food, salvation army holiday toys. I was not aware that the rest of the world was not how we were until I was older.

My life is defined by the stories told by southern women of Irish decent. Official documents of her family did not exist, lineage was recorded in family bibles, Babies were born at home, the women experienced survival, death, beauty and were strengthened by each moment. The pain of their hard lives was irrelevant, the dreams of a better life for their families naturally kept them going.

The family history was told by maternal grandmother, her sisters, cousins and aunts. The immigrants bonded by family, extended to all who shared the dream. Sitting a circle shilling peas, churning milk and quilting while keeping our heritage alive by telling the young ones... Cooking atop big black pot belly stoves, wood chopped by maternal mother's father. Wood from his hands was pure love, hope, commitment and represented the dream being fulfilled by giving what we needed. My grandfather was an American Indian of Cherokee blood. He was proud to be an American Indian; if he were alive he would not have preferred "Native American." The struggle and deception along the "trail of tears" he said defined all disenfranchised people of color, economic status, etc.,...often created by people who were driven by power laced with fear.

The past forgiven yet remembered only as a way to keep moving toward the dream. The dream must be kept in the forefront, requiring an unwavering commitment. Freedom, life, liberty for the people of our great country was his dream. He said one step toward the dream by "we the people" everyday is freedom. We the people have the power to achieve true diversity, peace and prosperity.

The dream for our family was our sustenance. The dream was ours everyday, the union of our grandparents was beauty of truth, love of all people, tolerance, respect with the belief the dream would be realized in totality. The Deep South in mid 1920s, one of poverty and ignorance could not keep the Irish Woman who loved and married the American Indian from their dream. Their example of strength and grace amid unfathomable times opened many hearts and eyes to the dream.

I dreamed my life surrounded by the ocean and bountiful natural beauty. My dream included a man of character possessing strength like my enigmatic grandfather. Someone to respect, trust, and share the dream of freedom, life, liberty and a belly chock full. Coca Colas to drink till I had enough bubbles in my belly to float top the ocean below my house of dreams.

Casa de los Suenos (House of Dreams) aptly named in 1994 is our dream. I am honored to live another phase of "the dream" by giving back to the preservation of the dream for our village at Muir Beach.

The dream we share I will protect from harm with a dedication that is based on our collective interest in mind. I am getting involved because I want to help us wade through some of the red tape, poor communication, downright deceptive practices of government agencies we are neighbors with. I dream of a CSD striving to grow communicative collaboration among our village. The dream I bring to the CSD is working to bring our village closer to the detailed facts of subjects that hint of take away of our dream. I will do my part by doing the heavy hitting on the homework, knowing the facts and being aggressive in calling them out. The dream needs us as a village to work on coming together and not allow for special interests from outside to divide and conquer by espousing untruths. We can support the dream by trying to agree more than not. I will do my best at opening up the quantity, along with pertinent facts that are facing our village via the CSD. Planning prior to action of projects has room for a step up campaign when the info is appropriate to share. Often people do not serve in any capacity due to the "shoot the messenger" syndrome that is prevalent in our society. Surely you won't shoot the keeper of the dream for helping to preserve it along with your help. 😊

I dream of seeing your smiling faces at the next board meeting as I am happy to represent all of you. I anticipate a long and fulfilling partnership of our village for the village people, made possible by the village people.

Shere' Stoddard
Casa de los Suenos
Circa 1994

Muir Beach Community Directory Update

By Maury Ostroff

The Muir Beach Community Telephone Directory continues to be as popular as ever, so here is a quick update on what's going on and what will happen going forward.

The print version of the Directory was distributed last May 2007. I've heard everyone loud and clear that the smaller, booklet style directory was handier and easier to keep by the phone, and in general more convenient. If the stars align and the gods are willing, we will try for an updated version of the Directory in booklet form by the end of this year. The main issue is money (isn't it always?) for the printing costs. As I don't have the time (or energy) to go around soliciting advertising to pay for the printing, we might simply charge \$2 per booklet to cover the printing costs. Note that there was a spate of changes since May 2007, so it would be good to have a new print directory coming out soon anyway.

The online version of the Directory is working out great. It is available as a PDF document on the Muir Beach CSD website at www.muirbeachcsd.com on the page marked "Contacts and Links." About halfway down the page is a link to the document, which you can either view online through your browser (of course, you must have an Adobe Acrobat Reader installed, but those are free and ubiquitous anyway) or you can download it. The Directory is password protected, and if you want to know the password, just contact me and I'll send it to you.

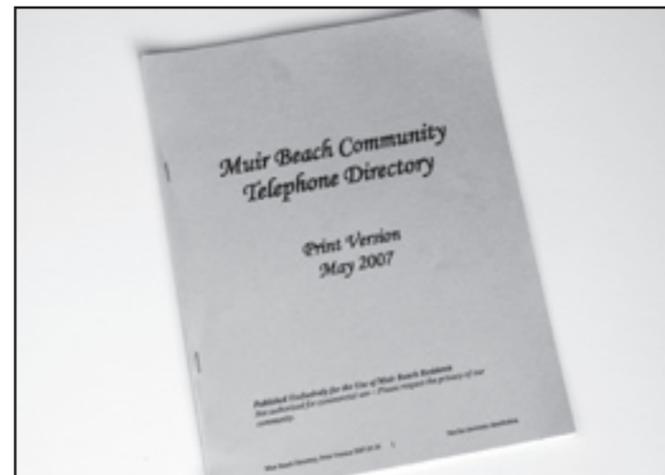
The online version has some advantages. First, it's free—there are no printing costs. If you want to print it, just download the document to your own computer and use your own printer and toner or inkjet or whatever and have fun. Second, it is always up to date. As soon as I get any changes, I make them right away and post the updated PDF file to our website. Third, I personally have found that having the directory on the Internet has been very helpful as there are times when I've been at work or somewhere else and I need to look up a phone number and there it is, while the print version is sitting at home on my desk. Note that because the only document posted on the Internet (via our CSD website) is a password protected PDF, it won't get picked up by the search engines or other automated programs called "bots" or "spiders" that "crawl" the web looking for data.

Of course, the Directory is only as good as the information I get, so please send me your updated information and any corrections or updates. This applies especially to

new neighbors and residents: our policy is that people are only included in the Directory by "positive consent," which means that unless we get explicit approval from someone to be included they won't be. You can tell me that you have a new neighbor who moved in next door, but I need to hear from them directly that they want to be included. Send all updates to maury.ostroff@gmail.com, or call me at 381-9765. Remember, you can choose which information you want to include; you can omit your phone number, email address, even your physical address. Or, you can choose to be omitted altogether.

A quick note on email addresses: there are several email distribution lists floating around. One of these is maintained by the CSD for people who want to be notified of CSD meetings, etc., and another is maintained by the Muir Beach LAN. In both these cases, it is the policy to never give out the distribution list, and when mail is sent, the intended audience is always put in the "BCC" (blind carbon copy) designation so that no one can get hold of the list. However, there is nothing to prevent individual residents from typing in email addresses themselves, and there are a few other lists that have been used by individuals to send out group emails. Oh well. My personal opinion is that while these may be informative or they may be a nuisance, it's not the end of the world. Frankly, I find a phone call from one of those telemarketers to be far more annoying than unwanted email, which I can simply delete with a click of the mouse in the comfort of my desk chair.

I had originally thought of providing a website where people could update their Directory information online, but I think that is overkill and not really worth the trouble to maintain. For the 150 or so households in Muir Beach, it's just easier for me to type it in directly rather than fool with all that technology. Sometimes low-tech just works better.



Marin Real Estate Tidbits

By Debra Allen, Realtor, 9/07



A Carmel door, from Debra Allen's *Doors and Houses* collection. Photograph by Debra Allen

What's going on in the loan industry? Not too much in Marin County, which overall is a prosperous area. I've seen a few foreclosures, and I've heard of a few lenders not honoring their loan commitments in active escrows, but certainly nothing close to what the negative/scary news stories would have us believe. Marin continues to have strong buyers, and for the higher end purchases, they tend to pay with cash anyway. Some buyers in the lower-end purchases (up to one million dollars) tell me that they want to wait and see what will happen next spring, rather than buy now. This "waiting" fuels a "hot" rental market, and landlords are happy once again. But my best advice more than ever is to not be afraid and to work with competent, qualified licensed professionals for your real estate and loan needs. So, I asked a few of my favorite loan brokers for their personal take on the recent changes in the lending industry. Here are excerpts:

Tony Vidal of All California Mortgage said, "While the media are portraying the mortgage industry as a disaster zone, that is hardly the case. Conforming loans (under \$417,000.) have actually improved in pricing." His company is recommending "short term fixed loans until rates stabilize." His company

also wants to remind people to "fix their credit scores, so a borrower can have more loans to pick from." (tvidal@allcalifornia.com)

Sara Zander of First Security Loan Corp. told me, "Over 80 major lenders have shut down all or part of their mortgage divisions since August 3. Most lenders have stopped lending on the low documentation type of loan (stated income and assets) and most now require higher (over 700) FICO credit scores and substantial reserve liquidity for any type of normal loan. Just about every lender is now requiring a form called the 4506T. You give the lender permission to check how your income shown on the application matches the actual tax returns on file with the IRS BEFORE they will fund your loan." Regarding buyers, "Verify that the program and the bank still exists and that the qualification was done AFTER August 10th" or the loan the buyers claim they can get may not be "real in today's market." And she reminds us that banks are most often now requiring 2 appraisals. (ladystitch@aol.com)

Sean Maley of Elite Lending Service added, "The changes in the mortgage industry in the past two months have been long overdue. Underwriting guidelines had been far too lenient, which meant borrowers who could not afford to purchase homes were able to get financing anyway." But, now "many banks are already coming back into the market of making good loans to strong borrowers. Banks that offer decent pricing now require an additional 5% down. It's more important than ever to get pre-approved and to work with a mortgage broker who has the right connections in this market and who works with the best priced banks." (seanandpartners.com)

Most real estate agents are extremely busy right now (typical for the fall market), and we're still having multiple offers on new listings in popular areas. If you're a seller or a buyer, there's really no need to wait! Enjoy the beautiful weather, Debra Allen, Realtor.

www.muirbeach.com
www.deballen.com
www.pacunion.com
 (415) 279-3751

The Golden Gate Dairy - Then and Now

By Maureen Pinto



OCEAN RIDERS

The Golden Gate Dairy Stables was originally known as Ranch 'M'. Consisting of 195 acres, it was an operating dairy ranch probably as early as 1892. Most likely butter was made in the old Creamery which now houses the two fire trucks of the MBVFD. When the road to Sausalito was improved in the 1920s it became possible for fresh milk to travel that distance, allowing for development of a Grade 'A' Dairy. The dairy operation was sold in the early 1960s and the property was rented to Tink and Dick Pervier who converted the complex to horse boarding. Until the mid-'80s cows still roamed the hillsides around Muir Beach, their lowing voices taking us back in time. Many of us still refer to the Coastal Trail as 'Cow Hill' and even now the old pens and broken down loading chute across from the Pelican Inn cling to an almost-forgotten way of life in this valley.

When the Golden Gate National Recreation Area bought the property in 1974, then owner William Caddell took a 25-year reservation of use and occupancy on the land and continued to rent to the Perviers who raised a family and continued to operate the horse facility. Riders were drawn from all over to keep their horses at this quaint "family" stables and ride the beautiful surrounding park trails. Tink also established a close relationship with George Wheelwright who permitted horse grazing on his pastures at Green Gulch. Every day you could count on George strolling up the gravel driveway with his little dog for tea with Tink. At one time over 65 horses made the Golden Gate Dairy stables their home, some grazing the hills surrounding the farm house, others peering out of the stalls on the present two-acre site, and several herds sharing the pastures at Green Gulch with local blue herons and egrets.

Ocean Riders was originally formed as a group of concerned



equestrians who boarded with Tink, supporting her efforts to keep the stables viable. Members would accompany her to meetings when Park Service issues arose, and help raise funds for horse show insurance and upkeep of the Santos Meadow riding arena, which they constructed in the early 1970s with permission from Mount Tam State Parks. They also built a small picnic area near the arena for horse show lunches with the help of a Muir Beach resident who got a water spigot installed. In the early 1990s the Muir Beach Pony Club was formed by Ocean Rider member and Muir Beach resident, Carol Gross. Gangs of young girls galloped scruffy ponies over colorful jumps in the beautiful meadow arena; darted in and out of the woods riding bareback and carefree; held sleepovers in the old weather-worn hay barn, sleepless as the resident barn owl; and combed mud off their wooly ponies in winter. At a stable like the Dairy, they learned quickly that teamwork and responsibility were more important than blue ribbons.

In March of 1999 the 25-year lease expired and years of environmental damage caused by too many horses on the property, and paddocks that drained into a nearby watercourse that fed Redwood Creek targeted the Dairy for total closure. The GGNRA intended to take over the property and the farm house was to be vacated for restoration. Due to water quality studies that raised concerns about endangered species in the Redwood Creek watershed, the NPS decided mitigation efforts needed to begin early and required a 50% horse reduction by March of 1998. All stalls along the riparian corridor were condemned and horses were required to vacate immediately. Herd reduction at Green Gulch was also required since the horses were grazing in a wetlands area. Two horse pastures along the levee trail faded into history with the cows. With so few horses left, it was no longer a viable business for Tink and Dick so they decided to retire early. It appeared to be the end of the Golden Gate Dairy as a stables and a sudden and sad finale to the longtime presence of horses in the valley.

However, in early 1997, concerned about imminent closure, Ocean Riders had begun to reinvent itself. We established a board of directors, by-laws and a new Mission Statement which focused on land stewardship that would maintain the integrity of the land, water, flora and fauna while preserving the historical presence of horses and ranching in Frank Valley. Ocean Riders intended to achieve this mission by modeling and upholding sound principles of ecology; supporting education of watershed issues through outreach programs; and promoting collaborative dialogue concerning the stewardship of the Redwood Creek watershed.

The owners of the remaining horses joined Ocean Riders and



Clearing the condemned shelters, October 1997.

came to an agreement with the Perviers that our organization would sublease the property for the time remaining. Members were required to attend work parties, pay assessments for needed mitigations, and abide by the by-laws and Mission Statement. During the next two years Ocean Riders set to work to try to remedy the environmental impact that had taken place over the previous 30 years. Experts in hydrology and land management were hired. In old fashion barn-raising style 26 members worked together to raze the horse shelters from the condemned zone and reconstructed them in the turnout arena in two labor-intensive weekends. Not only were the horses removed from the designated riparian zone, but Ocean Riders had cleared the area of all debris in preparation for Park Service restoration. Over the next few months, drains and gutters were installed to prevent clean water from becoming contaminated en route to Redwood Creek, manure management was improved, the arena was scraped clean, and a deep sand reservoir constructed to filter contaminated water. Ocean Riders spent over \$25,000 and 5500 volunteer hours in mitigation efforts between October of 1997 and October 1998, but that more than paid off when the occupancy lease expired and the NPS allowed our horses to stay at the Golden Gate Dairy Stables on a month-to-month basis under our management.

Over the next year monthly meetings were held with the NPS in conjunction with the Equestrian Protection Committee, which was formed by the Marin Horse Council with all three GGNRA stables. We also participated in collecting water quality data during the rainy season. Finally, in March of 2000



"We did it!" Shelters raised in new location, October 1997. From left to right: Hilary and Lloyd Gross, Liza Oppenheimer, Rebecca Bramnick, Gail Gallagher, Teresa Bramnick, Maureen and Rod Pinto, Mark Montaine, Wende Ulve, Drew Neeb, and Pilar Montaine.

we received an official Use Permit from the business office of the NPS, making Ocean Riders a Park Partner. We were still on a month-to-month basis, but we had earned a chance to prove ourselves. With help from organizations like the Bay Area Barns and Trails and the Marin Horse Council, we have been able to make numerous improvements in management and mitigations and each year our water quality has improved.

Ocean Riders' relationship with Green Gulch Farm has been vital to our existence. We rent land from them to graze 8 of our horses during the dry season and 4 during the wet season. We improved our stewardship of the pastures by fencing buffer zones to Green Gulch creek, building a shelter for the horses and holding work parties each fall to remove all manure from both the side hill and the flat field. We installed road base on the lane to Green Gulch to reduce sediment loading from the



"Last wall to fall." Razing the horse shelters, October 1997. Gail Gallagher, Lesley Wolff, Drew Neeb, and others.

vehicles used for feeding and manure pick-up. Green Gulch collects our manure several times a month for their organic compost and this valued, symbiotic relationship between horse management and organic farming led to a great educational opportunity. With the help of Wendy Johnson from Green Gulch and Ocean Rider member Susy Stewart, Ocean Riders created a pilot outreach program in collaboration with the San Francisco Police Department that brought inner-city youth to Green Gulch to learn how composting from the horse stables can help grow vegetables. Children met the horses, learned about how we had to change our management to support healthy fish and frogs in Redwood Creek, and were able to follow the composting process from our smelly box of fresh manure at the stables to the different stages of compost piles in the Green Gulch fields, and see the resulting rows of rainbow chard growing in the rich soil. They were allowed to cull the imperfect leaves of chard to take home to their neighborhood soup kitchens. But the highlight of their day was horse rides led by Ocean Riders volunteers and their patient horses in the Santos Meadow arena. A picnic was held in the meadow and children took turns being led on horseback while others explored the creek whose health they had learned about that day. One mother exclaimed at the end, "Thank you for giving my son the happiest day of his life!"

We made a video of our pilot program and showed it to Park Service officials in our meeting shed behind our office and the



"Witches Ride." Muir Beach Pony Cub, 1991. From left to right: Carol and Hilary Gross, Julie Schick, Liza Oppenheimer, Maureen and Jessica Pinto, Theresa Bramnick, Jesse Nash, and Rebecca Bramnick.

result was a standing ovation. Unfortunately, a few months later we were asked to discontinue our program until the Master Equestrian Plan could be completed. At least we proved we could provide a non-impact outreach program in support of our Mission Statement. We have recently been exploring ideas for new program development in partnership with the State Parks and possibly Slide Ranch, so that we can share the special beauty of Muir Beach, Green Gulch, and the little stables that we have worked so hard to preserve.

Ocean Riders has just celebrated its tenth year as a nonprofit organization. We continue working to find ways to improve our stewardship, as well as provide a safe and healthy place for horses to live and our boarders to ride. We have been enjoying a renaissance of new energy and support from younger riders that has been missing since the Pony Club disbanded when closure was threatening the stables. Many of those Pony Clubbers are now young adults who have gone on to work with vets, or go to vet school; major in environmental studies, or work in the field of equine facilitated mental health. These early experiences helped set the stage for their future goals and passions. For those of us that have called this barn "home" for the last several decades, there is delight at the renewed sound of children's laughter and at the possibility of lessons and outreach programs that can inspire future generations.

We value any opportunity we have to be part of the wider



Pumpkin Ride to Green Gulch 1990: Rebecca Bramnick, left, Jessica Pinto, and Katy Burkell. Photograph by Maureen Pinto



Shoeing Day at Golden Gate Stables, September 8, 2007: Lillian Farmer grooms Shanti while Bruce Barlow talks with farrier Joe Elliot. Also in photo, Jess Pinto, Thea Chalmers, and Cindy Elliot. Photograph by Maureen Pinto



Cuco spreads clean sand in turnout arena, November 1997.

Muir Beach community and appreciate our local support. We share the two-acre site with the MBVFD and acknowledge the challenges we have of co-existing in a small space, trying to meet both of our organizations' needs without changing the historic character of the Golden Gate Dairy. Ocean Riders is particularly indebted to Cuco Acala for his reliable dedication to us and our horses over the past ten years. He knows each horse by name and we take comfort knowing that he's watching over them. He is a genius problem solver and gives us hope when something seems unsolvable or unfixable. There has never been a challenge he hasn't been able to meet. Ocean Riders would not be what it is today without Cuco and his team.

The GGNRA planning staff are working on a comprehensive Southern Marin Equestrian Plan which includes Presidio Riding Stables and Miwok Stables. It is expected to be presented to the public sometime in early 2008 and will be open for public comment for a period of time. Between the Equestrian Plan and its possible site use alterations at the Golden Gate Dairy, and the Big Lagoon restoration project, which will reduce horse space at Green Gulch, Ocean Riders still has challenges ahead. But as the last surviving dairy ranch with any visage of the past in the entire former ranching area north of Tennessee Valley, we hope to continue our operation with its associated agricultural use of horse boarding, and enjoy riding in this very special place for generations to come.

Ocean Riders logo by Tom Soltesz

Dreaming Horses

For Tink

By Jessica Pinto

My dreams still echo with hoof beats
 drumming out my childhood
 molding the clay of my memory
 until all that I ever saw, ever
 breathed and
 dreamed and lived
 were horses
 but it was more than just a pony fetish
 a little girl fixation cured
 by a couple hundred prancing toy models
 it was a wish on every star
 a passion that took me over
 took me cantering wherever I went
 switching leads on my own two legs
 it was a first love,
 an undying, irreplaceable love
 like breathing
 like never again being able to gaze across a waving field
 down a sandy beach
 without feeling the rumbling in your soul
 without hearing the thunder
 and feeling more alive than you ever could alone
 but it was more than the horses
 for me
 it was more than the grooming and the ride
 and the un-tacking because it was also
 the grumble of the gravel under the wheels as our car pulled in the driveway
 it was the smell, like oats and sunshine and fuzzy, winter coats
 it was the hay barn with its graying streaks of
 sun and fog and sea air
 its mountain range of alfalfa
 each nook in the straw
 every cranny in the noble wood
 holding little pockets of laughter
 hiding tiny pots of quarrels
 and knowing stories and secrets
 as old as the dust that gathers on everything still
 And it was the back hill
 hikes searching for runaway ponies who dragged
 halters and carrots away with their luck
 mud and curry combs
 rubber boots
 pale, numb fingers
 snapping cold metal clasps on warm, winter blankets
 and the brief embrace between broad chest and round jowls
 pressing down on your back,
 armful of wonderful horse
 and as dusk sneaked in around the stall posts
 gliding over dusty arena
 the creak of the wheelbarrow coaxes nickers
 from stall windows
 and satisfied munches fall over quiet haven
 are carried on breezes over the garden gate
 it was more than just the horses
 because it was also the quaint, ivy-covered house
 as faded and weather-worn as the hay barn
 the light sidelining in through the windows and dancing on a
 table set for tea
 a cat on the counter and another purring at your leg
 each a puzzle piece
 an essential bolt or screw
 dab of paint
 slab of clay
 and it was the horses
 more than just them
 but it was the horses that I breathed for
 and I breathed more deeply
 there
 with them
 so that I could never stay away for long
 and I will always
 dream horses.

This poem was written by Jessica when she was 15-years-old and read to Tink at her farewell party. Jess is now a therapeutic riding instructor working with Equine Facilitated Mental Health programs in Orinda and Gilroy. She hopes to bring outreach programs to Muir Beach.



Zen and the Art of Bread Baking

By Paul Jeschke

Photographs and Captions by Julie Smith

Like Zen Buddhist meditation, Mick Sopko's breads require concentration, discipline, attention to detail and unhurried understanding.

The veteran baker turns out half a dozen varieties of carefully crafted artisan breads from a newly renovated bakery tucked behind the kitchen of the Green Gulch Farm Zen Center. With a spirit of generosity and the blessing of the Marin County Health Department, Muir Beach residents may soon be able to enjoy Sopko's lovingly crafted creations on a regular basis.



The light, airy new bakery provides a peaceful environment for the creativity that takes place within its walls.

"We're still fine tuning the process," Sopko said recently, while he hand-shaped dough into pound and pound-and-a-half rounds. "Like the bread, it takes the right ingredients to make it work."

Until mid-September, Green Gulch bread was baked in the cramped quarters of the communal kitchen. Using kitchen ranges required backbreaking bending and lifting. Thanks to a generous gift from a Zen Center supporter, Sopko now works in a sparkling clean bakery area that features an Italian hearth deck oven, a sophisticated mixer, walk-in cooler, and flour-dusted preparation table. The \$10,000 epoxy-aggregate floor, one of three types approved by the county for commercial food preparation areas, is seamless and impervious to spills.



Mick Sopko's enthusiasm for the art of bread making is evident in his quick smile as he explains the intricacies of the process.

The oven, the sophisticated heart of the baking process, is to the traditional, wood-fired, stone hearth as computer is to typewriter. "Bakers sometimes spray, spritz, even put bowls of water in ovens to create shine and a thin crust," Sopko explained. "Watch what happens when I press this button." With a whoosh like the sound of a geyser, a burst of steam infuses the interior of the oven and dissipates into the kitchen. "Baking is dehydrating," Sopko said, "and if the crust is too dry, it's harder for the bread to rise."

The new oven is heated by hot water piped through a spaghetti-like maze of pipes that circumscribe the interior. The stone surface on each baking deck is also key to great bread baking. Instead of the hot environment of an ordinary oven, the stone hearth provides a hot surface that helps provide an enticingly deep caramelization.

While the physical improvements to the bakery are important, it's Sopko's devotion to and mastery of the baking process that produces breads that are piquant and pungent with crackling crusts and nearly mystical interiors. At present, he's a crew of one, though there's a possibility baking may be added to the Green Gulch practice like the current farm and maintenance assignments.

The baker learned his craft at the Tassajara Bakery where he worked for 12 years before that legendary San Francisco Zen Center enterprise became overwhelmingly large and was sold to Just Desserts. "Baking, distributing, maintaining the trucks, accounting - it all eventually became too much," Sopko said. "We were turning out over one-thousand loaves a day. It was a living hell."

Scale is extremely important from Sopko's point of view. "Small can be beautiful," he said. "I don't have to crank out product like some of the commercial bakeries. I get to decide what I want to do."



After it's been shaped, the bread rises ("proofs" in bakers' terms) in linen-lined baskets. The coiled willow baskets in the background produce the spiral design that makes some artisan loaves so decorative.



Mick winces as the hot oven spews its steam in preparation for baking the bread.

Working with essentially three ingredients - unbleached organic flour, water and salt - Sopko turns out breads brimming with sustainability and sophistication. He mixes, scales, forms, proofs and bakes hand-shaped rounds, loafs, batards and baguettes, noting with enthusiasm that each shape produces a slightly different tasting product. The geometry of each bread produces a distinct crust and "crumb," the baker's term for the loaf's interior.



Mick deftly slips the peel under four perfectly browned loaves at a time to extract them from the oven.

As he works, Sopko keeps notes on every deviation from the standard recipe since even slight changes result in major differences in taste and appearance. His is a world of gluten, fermentation, proofing, and retardation.

Almost continuously sprinkling a light covering of rice flour on the butcher block work table in the center of the room as he weighs and shapes, Sopko explains that bread making, like love, is all in the chemistry. The process, while well understood, is still near magic, an alchemy of dough, water and heat.

The most mysterious ingredient of them all isn't one that's purchased commercially; the natural leavening that ferments the dough is a combination of naturally occurring bacteria and yeast that's "in the air." Mix flour and water and leave it in a warm place for about a week and the moist flour mixture infuses itself with naturally occurring yeast spores that are floating in the air and landing on uncovered food. "You don't have to have starter from the Gold Rush era," Sopko said. "You can make your own with unique, Muir Beach microorganisms." *Lactobacillus muirbeachis*?

Starter needs regular feedings of flour or it loses strength. It produces a different taste sensation depending on its age and lactic/acidic balance. Sopko takes tiny tastes of his dough before



Beautiful fragrant loaves cool on the rack

baking. "It summons forth different acids at the front and back of the mouth," he said, savoring a mixture of white flour, wheat germ, bran and sesame.

Pleased with the taste test, the baker measures out loaves on a balance scale, allows them to rest and sculpts cuts along the top to allow the crust to expand. He maneuvers the loaves into a 450-degree oven with a long wooden paddle called a "peel." Americans consume 80 per cent sandwich bread, Sopko said. Just 20 per cent is hearth bread.

The Green Gulch bakery is currently turning out about 300 loaves a week, most of which is consumed in the dining room. Some Muir Beach residents have been receiving freshly baked bread in the Veggie Box program, a weekly delivery of fresh and organic produce from the Green Gulch farm delivered via subscription during summer and fall. Recent deliveries included Pane Integrale, Pan Au Levain and Roasted Potato Bread.

Noting that the new oven can bake 60 loaves at a time, Sopko is interested in expanding the bakery operation. He plans to reinstitute the sale of fresh bread after the Sunday service and is interested in finding a way to deliver to a central location in Muir Beach on a year-round basis.

"Once you start thinking about putting something on a truck, it starts to get complicated," Sopko said. "Too bad you can't e-mail bread."

The veteran baker is also considering an apprenticeship program and occasional workshops in which visitors can explore the complexities of bread baking and experience the thrill of creating long fermented, sculptured, hearth oven breads. Though commercial bakers work very early in the morning, that's not true at Green Gulch. "I don't want to work real bakers' hours because then I couldn't participate in meditation," he said.

Green Gulch bread, like meditation, can bring bliss.



A quality control check is performed on the baguettes just out of the oven. The diagonal slits in the top must be just the right depth, angle, and distance apart to allow the bread to continue rising in the oven.



The Critter Report

By Dave MacKenzie

Sometime back in the mid 90s, when I took over the Muir Woods section of the Audubon Christmas Bird Count, a young man volunteered to help. "Jack" asked me if he could try to find a Northern Spotted Owl, a notoriously difficult bird to find in the winter. Jack had a notebook with an extremely detailed hand-drawn map of a secret location in a local canyon, but what also impressed me was the superb hand-drawn sketchbook in which he had this map. Jack didn't find the owl that year, but the location has since turned out to be a reliable one for nesting Spotted Owls. Several years later, and after discovering that Jack Laws was a Cal classmate of Bonnie's daughter Dori, Bonnie and I jumped at the chance to join Jack's new field sketching group - to develop our skills in the natural world we both love so much. For a couple of years we trekked with Jack from Pierce Point Ranch (Tomales State Park at Pt. Reyes) to Coyote Point Reserve in the south bay, sketching everything from California Bay Laurels (related to Avocados, Jack pointed out - and their fruit even looks like a small avocado) to Tule Elk and perched hawks or trotting Gray Foxes (which several sketchers could study with quick multiplexed snapshot views through the telescope). While we got OK at pencil and watercolor in the field, we were all amazed at Jack's rapid-fire, and excellent sketching skills. With a quick pencil outline here (multiple views), a splash of watercolor there - a very respectable souvenir and scientific note of an amazing outdoor experience was created.



Dark-bellied Tufted Puffins nest on the Farallon Islands.

So, when I learned recently that Jack (full name and nom de plume John Muir Laws) had just completed his multi-year project *The Laws Field Guide to the Sierra Nevada*, I was more than ready for a copy. And what a result it is! But why should I be pushing a Sierra Nevada nature guide to Muir Beachers? Well, many of us visit the Sierra each year or as often as practical (and if you don't, why not?). The Sierra Nevada has some of the greatest diversity of species on earth, and of course some of the best scenery. Second, many of the plants and animals found in the Sierra are also found in or near Muir Beach. This isn't totally a co-incidence, as Mt. Tam and the coastal ranges once were part of the Sierra, having been separated long ago by the massive Modoc lava flows and central valley rift. It is not a coincidence that both have types of sequoias and manzanitas. Not all of the birds and mammals are common, but many are and migrations of the winged variety (including insects) have led to widespread distribution of many species in California.

So what's so special about this field guide? First, it covers a lot of territory, biologically speaking. From fungi (aka mushrooms) and lichens to trees and shrubs, flowers, insects (including butterflies and dragonflies), spiders, fish, reptiles, birds, mammals, weather, and even the night sky! A tremendous amount of information in a very convenient 8 1/2" by 4 1/2" pocket-sized tough-cover book that is a must have for Sierra hiking and backpacking. If you only get one field guide in the next few years, get this one. And this is not just a bunch of pretty plates (although the drawings are excellent and informative - all painted by Jack himself). This a tome of useful and fascinating information, and all of the contents are easy to use and simply organized.

Some examples of interesting contents: the White Matsutake mushroom (found under pines or manzanita) has gills that smell like cinnamon; a nicely drawn guide to lichens (algae



Dave MacKenzie has been contributing nature articles to the *Beachcomber* for 12 years, which is when he and his wife Bonnie moved to Muir Beach. Dave does engineering consulting from his home office, but also spends a lot of time searching the Redwood Creek Watershed for interesting critters. His unfulfilled desire is to see and photograph a mountain lion in the wild. At this point he has only seen tracks, kills, pets and photos. Help him out with timely reports and primed cell phone cameras!

Photograph by Bonnie MacKenzie

plus a fungus) which points out how they are indicators of air quality; a section on galls and the insects that cause them; an excellent guide to trees based on a simple selection process (many of these trees are found in or near Muir Beach); nice descriptions of horsetails and ferns; a color and number-of-petals guide to a lot of wildflowers (I can do birds, but I have to rely on Bonnie for most flower identifications); a note on how Achilles is said to have been taught the coagulant properties of Yarrow (common in Muir Beach) from the Centaurs; how wild ginger plants are pollinated by fungus flies which are tricked by the ginger's mushroom-like flowers; a guide to (female only) glow worms and glow beetles ("California fireflies"); how to separate the mosquito species (not all can carry West Nile or malaria, but some can); details of aquatic insects such as caddisflies for our local fly fishermen (such as me); how female darner dragonflies may have eye scars due to their rough mating activities; separating the orb weaver spiders; an apology for not including everything in the guide ("I may freely, without shame, leave some obscurities to happier industry or future information." - Samuel Johnson); separating trout and salmon (yes, salmon of two species can get all the way to the Sierra); all of the likely birds of the Sierra (Jack has also written a guide to the birds of the Sierra, but all of the pertinent information and sketches are in this new volume); how to separate Columbian Black-Tailed Deer, California Mule Deer, and Rocky Mountain Mule Deer (by their tails and metatarsal (musk) glands); all the basic bats (including my favorite, the Townsend's Big-eared); mammal tracks; and four seasonal star charts with meteor shower dates in those exceptional Sierra skies. 1700 species in all are covered. WOW!

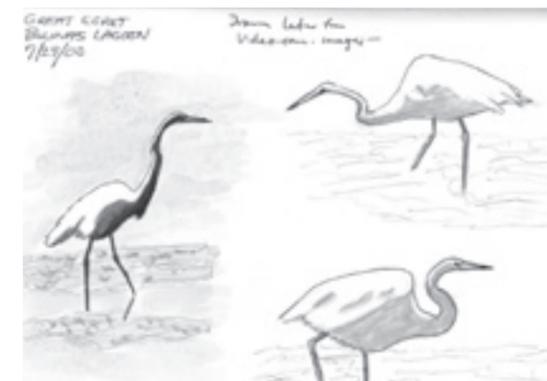


Sketches from Dave MacKenzie's field journals.

So I suggest you all get a copy of Jack's book (available everywhere including Amazon.com), and spend as much time hiking in the Sierra Nevada as you possibly can, and enjoy it all. This year may be the driest on record in the Sierra, so it is best not to wait too long. "The times they are a changin'."

OK, enough book review and more local news. The River Otter that has been seen around Redwood Creek in the last year or so has reproduced. A pregnant female was reported in Muir Woods in the spring, and sure enough a mother and cub (kitten?) have been seen in the park since. So apparently there are various family members that are occasionally seen in Muir Beach. Gracefully soaring Sooty Shearwaters (probably from New Zealand) were seen a couple of days in July and August by the thousands about a mile off the beach. Changes in food supplies might account for the rare sightings by Kate Carolan and Norman Ong of different Horned Puffins off the beach this summer. The Horned Puffin has a white belly, unlike the dark-bellied Tufted Puffins which nest "locally" on the Farallon Islands. The Horned is basically from Alaska, and for some reason about fifty showed up in California this year, which is very rare. Yvonne McGee reports regular sightings lately of a Striped Skunk (I never saw it but did notice the conical holes it digs in the ground and I certainly detected it by its special aroma). Edna Rosenas reported an angry Mule Deer chasing a Bobcat out of the trees near her home! I guess size trumps predator/prey in at least some cases. On Sept 14, I spotted a Humpback Whale from the Muir Beach Overlook (only the second I have seen in Muir Beach), and it was also seen by Brad Eigsti and Lloyd Gross and several tourists. The white throat was visible as it spied off Slide Ranch!

Now it's fall migration for everything from Coho to Monarchs to Cooper's Hawks. Get out and see what you can find!



White-bellied Horned Puffins from Alaska, rarely seen here, were sighted off the beach this summer.

Natural Curiosities

By Dave MacKenzie

Q: Where is the best place locally to view Coho Salmon? (Several Muir Beachers)

A: First, we have to wait for the fall rains to get the salmon into Redwood Creek. The rain usually starts to be significant around Thanksgiving. But after heavy rains you have to wait 2-3 days until the creek clears to see the fish well enough. Sometimes it isn't until the period between Christmas and New Year's that the best viewing starts, and then can continue for about two months. Muir Woods is the prime area, as the creek has flat gravelly beds that the fish prefer for spawning. There is a pool just below the restrooms which can be good. Also the area in the monument around bridge 2 can have good viewing. Ask the rangers or at the ticket window for recent sightings. Another area which has been good for me in the past is a section on Muir Woods road across from the old small quarry, where there is a big pullout creekside; all about 1/4 mile before the Deer Park fire road. Walk up a bit and you can look right down into the creek and may get good viewing. If it is later in the season, a clue is to look for ribbons over pools which show where the fish survey teams have found them. Remember that the fish may not be obvious until they move a bit. If it is a spawning pair, you may actually get quite a show with a lot of motion and action. A good pair of polarized sunglasses also



American Goldfinch

helps. I usually post the first good sightings on the beach bulletin board when I hear about them. Also don't be afraid to try on a lightly rainy day. Visibility in the creek can be excellent. Remember Muir Woods is free before they open at around 8 AM or after they "close" at about 6 PM (this varies with the seasons).

Q: Late each afternoon there is a group of birds in the tall pines near my home which have a beautiful birdsong. I can't get a good look at them, but do you know what they are? (Anonymous)

A: I often get questions on bird identification, but this one is harder than most because we don't even know anything about what the birds look like. There are quite a few species which sing from treetops, but mostly in the spring, and this is a late summer question. What would really help, besides some visual information (at least, how big, do they fly down to the ground, etc.) is some description of the song. Is it a lot of light twittering notes with some high zipper-like phrases? (might be American Goldfinches). Or is it more like a metallic Chirrup, chirrup, alternating high and then lower pitches? (might be American Robins). I assume it is not the loud repetitious Chew, chew, chew, chew whistle-like call of the Red-Shouldered Hawk (which lives in the area of these trees). Birdsong is tough to describe, but give it a try. Also helpful would be a personal attempt at imitating the song, even if it is not the best (better than nothing!). So my best guess is American Goldfinch, since they flock, are small and might be hard to spot in a big tree, have been abundant this year, and have a very melodious series of notes.

If you have a nature question, please e-mail me at davem@microsafe-systems.com or call me at work (415.389.1456) or at home (415.389.1558).

The Yellow Jackets and I

By Linda Gibbs



One beautiful sunny day in July, I'm working in the garden, busy with planting dahlias and lobelias, digging up the old dirt and replacing it with rich planting mix. I'm moving back and forth, crossing to the main aisle and back. Bending, stooping, picking up debris, going to get a tool and hearing a buzzing in my ear. It's not my hummingbird; it's three or four yellow jackets swirling around my head. Usually I try to stay still when a wasp is nearby and then it moves on. Not this time. I feel threatened and can't understand why I'm receiving their wrath. What did I do to provoke them? I bat at them to get them away from my face, something one should never do. I just know I'm going to get stung and I'm annoyed that these pesky critters are interrupting my peaceful planting session.

I move up one tier of the garden and I'm relieved when they don't follow me. I was all set to turn the hose on them, which probably would have been disastrous. Humans don't win in a confrontation with these aggressive carnivores the size of a housefly.

I return to the terraced bed where I was planting and look for the yellow jackets. They're gone. When I need a tool from the main aisle, I notice a few wasps around a hole next to a stepping stone. I stop and watch them as they go to and fro. They live down that hole! Now I understand. With my constant walking back and forth, I'm interrupting the pathway to their front door. That's why they got so angry with me. They wanted me not to interrupt their inbound and outbound flights, and they were trying to tell me in the only way they could.

The sudden clarity of understanding is the highlight of my day, not to mention that I now feel safer in my own garden, able to coexist with the yellow jackets as long as I don't walk by their home, but walk up the steps to the next tier and then through the daisy bushes to the pathway leading up to the house. It seems like a small thing to do to accommodate them and I'm glad to do it. The yellow jackets never bother me again.

That evening, after warning David not to walk down "yellow jacket aisle," I read about this aggressive social wasp (*Vespula* species) that can sting repeatedly, not like the honeybee that loses its stinger after one attack. During the event, the yellow jacket releases a chemical upon stinging that signals to other members that the colony is under siege and to come to their aid. Guards,

whose duty it is to defend the colony entrance, react to any motion near their home. After reading that the wasp can sting without provocation, I'm grateful they gave me a warning and time to figure out what they were trying to tell me.

After such a close call, I try to console myself with the fact that wasps actually are beneficial in the garden. They eat insects, arachnids such as spiders, and fruit nectar. But let's face it, as fascinating a creature as they are, coexisting with yellow jackets is not the same as tolerating the slug or celebrating the hummingbird. Yellow jackets can be dangerous.

I hope that this is a one-season nest and that the queens are packing up and getting ready to move on, to overwinter somewhere off Middle Green Gulch Trail or up on Dias Ridge away from our garden.

And let's hope the ripe and rotting plums on the garden floor in autumn attract their attention as they look for fruit sugar to replace the sugar their larvae provided earlier in the summer. If they are busy with the fruit near the plum trees, maybe they will stay away from us during our warm evening dinners on the deck. We are out there savoring Indian summer before the approaching winter and the end of pattering in the garden for a while. See you in the spring.



Coexisting with the yellow jacket is not the same as tolerating the slug or celebrating the hummingbird.

Painting Muir Beach

By Rachel von Garnier

"The beauty of the earth is the first beauty, and Rilke in one of his Elegies says, "Perhaps we are here only to witness that, and to name the secret presence of nature."

-- *Beauty: The Invisible Embrace* by John O'Donohue

More and more I come to see the highest purpose in my life as the recognition and creation of beauty. This is not to say that I think I am alone in this purpose, though I happen to be a painter. I believe that every person, whether an artist by profession or not, has the ability and urge to find beauty in the world; in him or herself, in nature, and in others.

Upon moving to Muir Beach after college in Southern California, I was awestruck by the natural beauty in which we are nestled here. So many varieties and forms of beauty that are ever-changing with the weather and seasons. My husband Clemens and I are thrilled by what we see as the eternal spring in Marin - there is always something new blooming. As soon as the fireworks of the Acacia trees fade, I am comforted by the surreal blue carpet of the Forget-Me-Nots.

Since my childhood in the high desert of Northern New Mexico, I have been very aware of the effect of the environment upon one's creativity and aesthetic language. My main role model was, not surprisingly, Georgia O'Keefe, and my visits to her former home in Abiquiu had a deep impact on me. I loved to imagine the beautiful existence she carved out for herself, painting Cerro Pedernal and desert artifacts from her simple studio. Later, Taos artist Agnes Martin became an inspiration to me with her focus and clarity. My parents'



"Muir Beach" 2007, 9" x 12"

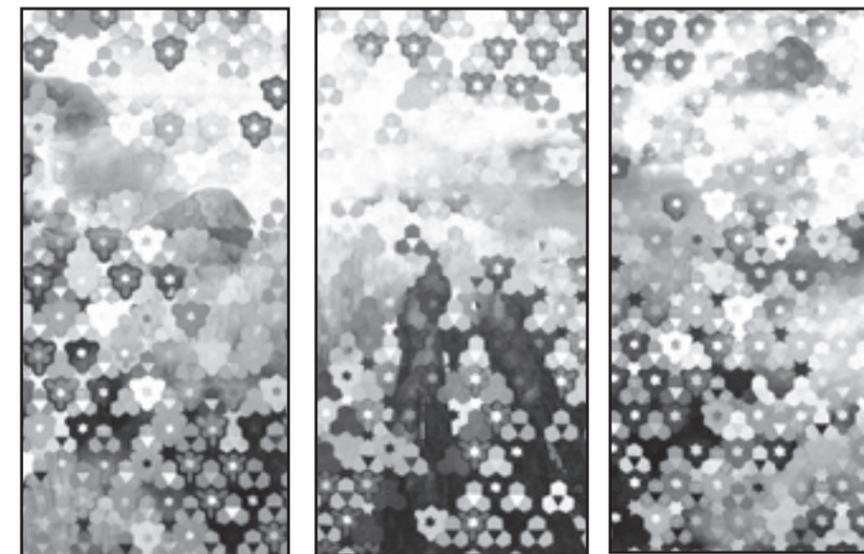


Rachel von Garnier enjoying painting on the Mendocino Coast.
Photograph by Clemens von Garnier

encouragement had undoubtedly the greatest impact upon my interest in art and natural beauty from an early age. My father, a scientist, white-water rafter, and former spelunker, took care to impart his love of nature upon my sister and me during numerous outdoor adventures, sometimes bringing our sketchbooks along to record a beautiful view. My mother, with her exceptional eye for color and composition as a quilter and craftswoman of many mediums, infected me with her love for nature's subtleties and breathtaking color combinations.

While in college, I studied painting with Enrique Martinez Celaya, whose dedication to the artistic practice as a way of exploring, defining, and expressing one's philosophical convictions struck me deeply, and I began dreaming of pursuing the Romantic ideal of melding life and art. This was the point at which I knew I wouldn't ever stop painting. I went on to study art in Florence and Glasgow before graduating and moving to Marin.

I look back at these different experiences in a variety of places, and am grateful for each one of them. And especially I feel very grateful to have the opportunity to live here in Muir Beach, where my work becomes ever more interwoven with nature. In the last year, I have begun to concentrate more on Plein Air painting, as I love the meditative process of capturing light and color more than almost anything (it's up there with yoga, which says a lot!). Caspar David Friedrich believed that when one painted landscape, he painted himself, and I



"Muir Beach Triptych" 2004-2005, 24" x 48"

likewise feel a sense of inner exploration as I sit outside studying nature.

As I continue my landscapes, my abstract work is also becoming more enmeshed with imagery from my surroundings. I see abstraction as a wonderful tool for revealing the mystical aspects of existence. In these works, I weave a pattern that relates to an underlying structure of order and beauty with imagery from nature, dreams, and experiences. Through this process, I develop my own appreciation for the mystical fabric that underlies our lives. I call these works, "Edges and Expansion" - edges referring to the structural interface of natural laws (and the technical limitations of the artistic medium) and expansion being the way nature blooms into so many different forms from these basic patterns.



"Muir Beach Heather Fields" 2006, 8" x 10"



"Muir Beach Wetlands" 2007, 6" x 8"

This year I've had the opportunity to show both abstract work and landscapes locally (abstract works at Cafe del Soul April-June, and landscapes at the Depot Bookstore and Cafe in August), and will be showing another body of work at Yoga of Sausalito. This show, which will be up from October through at least mid-November, is inspired by my practice and study of yoga.

My time here at the beach has greatly deepened my connection to landscape, and as a result, to myself. There are so many scenes I'd still like to capture it will take me a lifetime. As I move forward in my explorations of beauty, I am excited to keep striving towards deeper expressions of the mystical, sublime experience of nature in this lovely little corner of the world.

To see more of my work, please visit my website at www.rachelvongarnier.com

Photographs by Rachel von Garnier unless otherwise noted.

Birthday, Elections, and a New Appreciation of Donkeys

By Isaac Pearlman

April 30, 2006
Puerto Chicama, Peru

Hey everyone,

So more time has passed, more adventures and misadventures, and while time continues to fly by, the question most of the volunteers are asking themselves is how much time we have ahead of us. But more on that in the elections part of the email.

First come birthdays. I had experienced a Peruvian birthday once before during training, but it really didn't prepare me for what would happen on my own birthday last February. I did get to see the birthday of my oldest host brother, Pepe (who coincidentally turned 26 on the same day as my real brother on February 11), which consisted of my host mom and an army of other female relatives cooking furiously all day, then everyone gathering at the house at night to eat and dance. At midnight Jose, Pepe's father, made a toast which ended with Jose crying, then Pepe made a speech that ended with him crying, and everyone kept drinking, dancing and eating until 4 a.m. I remember being glad I wouldn't have to be subject to such a spectacle, as I had decided to try and avoid any birthday celebration of my own.

However, little did I know that larger, unknown forces were conspiring against me -- in the form of several fellow Peace Corps Volunteer friends and my Peruvian coworkers/friends. Come the day before my birthday, and several volunteers inform me they're coming out to visit and hang out at the beach. Okay. After the sun set and they bust out a bottle of rum, I begin to smell an informal birthday celebration. However, I was in no way prepared for midnight, when they conspired to get me to the office, where my coworkers had fireworks, a cake, and a case of beer waiting. They played the Happy Birthday song, which sounds kinda creepy in English with an accent, and then we drank and danced in the office until the early morn. I think my coworkers were mainly more excited with the opportunity to dance with American girls than really celebrating my "santo," but it was fun all around. I did make a lame attempt at making a speech and thanked everyone, but no tears. One of my coworkers made a little speech as well, and actually did look close to tears at one point, but avoided them. So that was my first birthday in another country, and a very humbling one to realize not only what great friends I have back in the states, but also that I have made some friends here as well.

So the next exciting thing that happened down here was the Peruvian national elections that occurred April 9. We had been warned since September when we first arrived that elections were coming and that they would be crazy. Come December and there were over 20 presidential candidates, of which maybe 5 or 6 were actually serious candidates. So up until April 9, there was heavy campaigning for everyone, as well as all the congressional candidates. This consisted of every major presidential candidate visiting every decent-sized town in Perú - not to mention the parade of local and regional candidates. And when there, the candidate proceeds to hand out free stuff (t-shirts, banners, rice) and make many promises (sound familiar?). But it was really amazing to see the onslaught of propaganda over the months. This included seeing congressional candidates dancing on a popular midday tv show, a candidate billboard in Lima showing him with hooks for hands and saying something to the effect of nothing will slip out of MY hands, and doing or saying anything else to make themselves stand out.

An interesting side note, one of the major candidates was a woman named Martha Chavez who was openly running for ex-president Alberto Fujimori, who currently is in jail in Chile after fleeing from Peru with charges of murder and extortion (and millions of dollars) - yet he's still popular! Mainly because, as my host brother explained to me, "Who cares if he stole money? All politicians do. But if you needed a road paved or a school built, he got it done quickly."

But as April 9 drew near, 3 candidates separated themselves from the rest: a woman named Lourdes Flores, who is running for the third time; Alan García, who already was president in the late 1990s after Fujimori left the country and is infamous for the fact that inflation rose over 1,000 percent during his presidency (but he says he learned his lesson and it won't happen again); and Ollanta Humala, an ex-military nationalist who has publicly stated he wants to kick out foreign investment and nationalize a lot of Peru's resources, in addition to killing gays, corrupt politicians, and foreigners.

Needless to say, it all has been interesting to follow. A lot of people are tired of politics and politicians (like most Americans), but unlike us they are required to vote or pay a fine of about \$40. So Ollanta is popular

because in general people want change and want to see action. Lourdes is associated with the wealthy elite, and García comes from the powerful Apra political party, which many (especially on the north coast where the party began and is very popular) vote for out of loyalty rather than which candidate it actually produces.

On April 9, Ollanta had the highest vote percentage at about 30 percent, followed by García and Lourdes, who both earned about 25 percent. It was one of the closest elections in Peruvian history (again, sound familiar to American voters?) and because Peru has a runoff system (the top two vote getters in the first round advance to a second round) the last three weeks everyone has been waiting for all the votes to get counted to see who is in the segunda vuelta against Ollanta.

Rumors are floating around between the Peace Corps Volunteers, PC administration, and the US Embassy families (who are awesome and usually host volunteers that need to come into Lima for official reasons) that if Ollanta wins, either: 1. He may ask the Peace Corps Peru program to leave, which I consider unlikely, but then again you never know what a candidate who has talked about killing people may do. Or 2. Washington may pull the Peace Corps out of Peru as a protest to Ollanta's nationalist leaning, which I consider perhaps more likely, mainly due to my pessimistic view of the stupidity of the politics of our national government. Sort of an analogue to the US and EU withdrawing international aid resources from Palestine after Hamas democratically won power, but also different in a lot of ways.

Anyway, either way it would suck to have to leave after six months of learning language, meeting and integrating into communities, and working on projects. We'll see what happens. Most people say Ollanta has no chance in the second round no matter who he faces, but I'm not so sure.

Nonetheless, life goes on and last week I took my first official vacation and spent four days backpacking in the Andean mountains with my dad [Gerald Pearlman]. It was amazingly beautiful, and amazingly cold but we lucked out with the weather and had four clear days with only a little rain at night (which overnight turned into ice on our tent). We started from a little pueblo called Cashabamba, and spent the next 2.5 days climbing over 2,000 meters past beautiful snowmelt lakes and mountain meadows. We also met a German couple and a Dutch girl with a Peruvian guide doing the same trail that we were, and camped with them every night. There were tons of birds and flowers, but not much wildlife -- just a huge amount of cows

and donkeys. The cows just stand there and eat, but those donkeys were amazing! As we huffed and puffed climbing up and up, donkeys loaded with packs would placidly pass us as we collapsed for a break, lead by Quechuans wearing sandals -- all in all, mocking our heavy hiking books and huge backpacks.

One campsite had quite a few donkeys so I, being the nice guy that I am, pulled up some grass near the rocks that they couldn't reach and they contentedly ate from my hand. Then the wily bastards stole out of my bag my peanut butter sandwiches and ate them when I had my back turned and had gone to talk to the other campers. While we were saying "acclimatize" in four different languages the donkeys, unappreciative of our intelligence and cosmopolitanism, ate my food and tried to eat (i.e., slobbered all over) my sunglasses and eye drops. Needless to say, from that moment on I constantly kept my guard up against those deceptive fiends. I really blame the movie "Shrek" for completely failing to represent the treacherous nature of donkeys.

Eventually we made it to the pass, which stood at 4,750 meters. It was rough, and I worried about my dad, who was out of breath just walking around the campsite; but we made it and to celebrate our achievement we saw a condor floating effortlessly in the sky, cavorting in front of the vista of what had taken us long, hard hours to span and in which he covered in minutes. It was an incredible site.

We spent the next two days climbing down, and the last day was the best as the trail wound through a small Quechua village. As we passed villagers dressed in their traditional clothing, herding their flocks of sheep and goats, it felt like we had stepped back in time a century or so. Men labored in amazing chacras carved out of the steep mountain hillsides, using oxen, donkeys, and horses to till the land while they burned away the vegetation to clear the land and enrich the earth with the ash. In the pueblo the women washed clothes in the river while the teenagers drove the livestock to the pastures outside the town to feed. The younger children took care of their littler siblings, and all of them would run up to us begging for candies, presents, or even pencils with outstretched hands. I tried to joke with them in Spanish and ask where MY present was, and one smartaleck that understood Spanish picked up a rock and handed it to me, saying, "Here's your present, now where's mine?" But overall, it was just amazing to see this simple type of existence, so removed from our own or even that of my site.

From that small village, it was about a three-hour combi ride (think of a car about the size of a VW bus)

in which we crammed about 15 people and several huge bags of potatoes and other products they were taking to town to sell. The trip was extended for about 45 minutes when we reached a rockfall that left a huge rock the size of our car in the middle of the road. After all the men got out and tried to move it and failed, we cleared all the smaller rocks around it and were able to make it up the hill, with everyone pushing the combi to help it up. Everyone then promptly jumped in and we took off, leaving the larger trucks still stuck to their own devices. We finally made it back to the city, and I had a few hours to shower and eat two pizzas before I hopped on my all-night bus to head back out to my site.

And so I have rambled on far too much about things, and will close for now.

Until next time, hope you are all happy, healthy and well.

.....
 August 16, 2006:

My main project with my counterpart Peruvian organization is a wetlands conservation project. The organization is an association of profesionales that has formed a group of artisans who use the plants from the wetlands to make products, a group of aquaculturists who want to raise fish in the ponds, and a group of youth environmentalists who promote environmental education activities in the community. I'm starting to work more with them on promotion of the wetlands since now nobody really goes out there. Puerto Chicama was given a grant by the United Nations to begin and implement the sustainable management of the area....

I finally bought two guinea pigs to start a small business with my host brother. They are named Esperanza ("hope" in Spanish, because she was pregnant when I bought her) and Pollo ("chicken," because he's a guy but is scared all the time and hides behind the female). It took awhile to explain why I was naming them, and especially why I named a guinea pig "chicken." But the idea is to raise them -- so others can eat them. Ha ha, what kind of environmentalist am I?! But the idea actually is to provide an economic and food alternative to fish as well as hopefully incorporate more environmental education -- and maybe if I give people guinea pigs to eat they won't hunt the wild birds of the wetlands.

May 24, 2007:

Last November, due to lack of funding and moreover lack of motivation and interest, the Peruvian association I was working with disbanded. Being that the majority of my projects were involved with that association, it obviously left me with very little to do! To make a long story short, I now am pursuing a project with the local municipality which involves helping them establish an environmental management system within the structure of the municipality -- basically a system to identify and carry out projects to better protect and use their resources.

--Isaac

Postscript:

I have been asked to write a small follow-up about the presidential elections. Alan García faced Ollanta in the second round and easily beat him. Northern Peru, where I live, is a bastion for García's party, and although it probably wasn't necessary, people told me votes were robbed and changed in his favor, although they may just be sore that their candidate didn't win. Supposedly García has done well, at least by the standard economic indicators, which of course don't really mean anything. There's so much systemic corruption and plain incompetence it's hard to accomplish anything, really. But if all this sounds a little crazy, and it is, wait until the next update about the LOCAL elections that happened last December.



In August 2006, Isaac and his Peruvian coworker, Nestor, contemplated the level of water in the wetlands.

*Dear Editor,
 In response to her article "Big Wheel Keep On Turnin'" by Pam Barlow, I would like to contribute some historical information and photographs about the Muir Beach Community Center. In June of 1978, Gerald Pearlman convinced the Pacific Sun (reporter Joanne Williams and myself as photographer) to come to Muir Beach and check out the new Community Center. The resulting article and photographs are reprinted here in an effort to clear away some of the "mists of antiquity."*

*-- Lorna Cunkle
 (mother of Avram and Isaac Pearlman)*

Barn Raising

*By Joanne Williams
 Photographs by Lorna Cunkle*

Muir Beach. the mist hangs low and the ocean is showing its jaws. Tall gray waves bite the beach and a brisk wind is keeping residents close to home. Spirits are high, though, as neighbors gather on the deck of Richard Beckman's house and talk about the weekend. There'll be an old-fashioned barn raising, of sorts, the last of the weekend work parties, and by sundown Sunday, the Muir Beach Community Center will be all but finished.

For a long time, Muir Beach was just a wide place in the road at the foot of Green Gulch Ranch. There were retired persons, and then an invasion of ex-flower people. It had a compliment of dope dealers, but they have been replaced by consciousness raisers who have made it -- people like Esalen's Will Schutz who lives in a grand circular house of redwood, and others who are just getting by. There's been an infusion of talent like architect Beckman, and the community seems stable now, although the exact population is uncertain.

"There are about 135 water connections," Beckman is saying, "and if you estimate four people to a household that would give you . . ."

"What about the family with 12 children?" asks Sharon Pickens, a freckle-faced brunette in Muir Beach mufti -- jeans, Birkenstocks and a loose shirt.

"They're moving," someone volunteers.

The conversation is agreeable, with an undertone of excitement. Plans for a celebration, maybe on July 4, maybe the night before, are in the organizing stage. No one seems sure what band will

play, but a couple of them live at the beach. Will the electricity be turned on?

"It will," says Gerry Pearlman, a sun-tanned political theorist turned carpenter. Pearlman built his own two-story half-circle home at Muir Beach and became the moving force behind the new \$100,000 community building that sits somewhat alone, bare of landscaping, on a hill above Sunset Way.

Pearlman was the grantsman -- filling out the endless forms, writing proposals, making trips to Civic Center to inch each link of the money chain closer together. First there was \$2,222 seed money from the Muir Beach Quilting Bee, a group that made and sold quilts to benefit the building program. Then \$2,800 from the Community Services District (of which Pearlman was once a member), donor of the land. Then there was the first \$10,000 community development grant from HUD (Housing and Urban Development). That was five or six years ago. At the same time, residents were clearing the land, working as volunteers or near volunteers for \$4 an hour. And the labor was *hard*.

The Great Gravel Movement is recollected with humor and reminders of sore muscles, of the many hands it took, the bucketloads to move forty tons of gravel from here to there for the septic system. Three full weekends with forty people a day,



Gerry Pearlman



Muir Beach Community Center in 1978

Pearlman remembers. They were paid a total of \$3,300, said Pickens, who keeps the financial reports for the center. The site made trucking impossible, and anyway there was no road.

The project was stalled at the foundation until last year, when Pearlman, whose energy seems to revive when it's needed most, finally cajoled a second HUD community block grant, and then more. With one grant and another the community finally raised \$100,000, mostly from federal sources. It was far higher than the \$20,000 residents originally estimated, far more than they wanted to spend. But the center meets federal regulations, including a \$16,000 ramp to allow access by the elderly and handicapped.

Inside the barnlike building the structure is mostly new fir. "We wanted used redwood but it became unavailable from our sources," explained Beckman, a bearded graying man in his forties. "Anyway, the government usually specifies new materials."

Beckman was tapped four years ago at a beach picnic, the kind that has become a Muir Beach tribal ethic, when Pearlman (who brought Marin Community Video to the county and now serves on the state Public Broadcasting Commission) said to him, "Why don't you donate your services to design the community center?" And so Beckman did.

"There has been so much help from everyone out here," Pickens adds. Her husband is general manager of the CSD. "When one person was needed to carry the project along someone would appear. When we needed a crowd scene we got that." Pickens said the Zen Center just up the road has been a great support politically, and as a community "we are very close," she said.

The idea for the center germinated about six years ago. One day after the state took over Muir Beach, Pearlman came home to find a beautiful old building the community has used had been razed.

There was no place to meet. He asked the Community Services District to commit the land and the building took shape in their minds. It was to be a conch shell. But the design proved uneconomical and later was scratched for a more practical and roomy barn, with high rafters and many windows.

Back at his house, Pearlman, wearing a handknit sweater the deep-sea blue of his eyes, sits on a floor pillow and looks over the file he's accumulated. "HUD tried to deny our application on the grounds we didn't have enough low and moderate income residents. We proved we did," he said. "Then they couldn't accept the fact that we would be able to accomplish what we stated in our application for the amount of money requested."

The cost did escalate, in fact, what with time and federal regulations, adding details the CSD hadn't originally planned. Thousands of hours of volunteer labor have knit the community together. Hands that didn't hammer brought food, donated the beer -- an essential lubricant in endeavors of this nature, at least from the stories that circulate. The last heavy labor -- and agreement that went with the grants -- goes to work this weekend. Landscaping and the fireplace will have to wait.

Now that it's mostly over, Pearlman is on to other things. He has just received a \$10,000 grant from the Economic Development Administration to make a feasibility study for a windmill to generate back-up electricity for Muir Beach. The 100-foot tower with its 70-foot blades will rise on land owned by the Golden Gate National Recreation Area. It will be the first on the West Coast.

"But that is another story," says Pearlman, who can be counted on to tell it at the right time.



Richard Beckman and Sharon Pickens

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Zhenya's Story

By Judith Yamamoto

The late winter sunlight was on the far side of the pines and Franklin's tango CDs were playing in the house. Sarah sat at the round dining table, her right leg propped on a chair, on two pillows and a folded Mexican rug. Higher than your heart, the surgeon had said. It will heal only if it's higher than your heart.

The music was perfect, smoky and distant. Her ankle had broken and time had changed.

Franklin took care of everything.

Winter closed in and Sarah moved slowly around the house on crutches. She swung first her right leg, heavy in its cast, out in front of her and then her left leg, trying to land lightly on the good foot. No weight on the broken ankle for six weeks, the surgeon had said. December, January, the holidays let go, the storms coming in. Twice around the house on her crutches and her arms ached. She stopped once to look up the stairs, again at the kitchen window to catch her breath.

Rain gusted on the glass, blurring the needles of pine trees, obscuring the swoops of gulls.

Day after day, she watched the rain on the window and the TV news showing U.S. war planes bombing sandy streets, mud houses, high mountain caves. She read five novels in four weeks.

Afghanistan reminded her of Beersheva and riding through the Israeli desert in the back of a truck when she was sixteen. Ancient towns, an olive tree in the middle of a field, a kibbutz in the Valley of Jezreel. Sand where the irrigation pipes ended. Isn't this beautiful? the Israelis were always asking, as though they couldn't believe it was real.

"You want anything from the store?" Franklin asked. He unhooked the umbrella from the pantry doorknob.

Sarah shook her head.

The door opened and closed, Franklin moving out of sight, up the hill to the pickup. She heard the engine turn over, closed her eyes.

She loved being alone in the house.

So easy to slip into the past. What would her grandmother say?

Zhenya had come to America in 1903 from a country now called the Republic of Moldova. Before that it had been the Soviet Socialist Republic of Moldavia. When Zhenya was growing up, it was Russia. From which it had been necessary to flee.

"I was born in what is now Romania, in a big place called Bessarabia," Zhenya had told her. "It was a part of old Russia. My father was a manager. He was in charge of trees."

"You mean, in a forest?" Sarah asked. She would never be clear about the boundaries of these countries, or how many names they had at one time.

"Yes, a forest, but the trees were planted in rows, like wheat in a field. It wasn't far from the city of Kishinev, where we lived." Zhenya leaned forward, her eyes intent and deeply dark. "The Jews couldn't own land, so they weren't my father's trees, but he bought and sold them. He was, how do you say, the in-between person."

Sarah couldn't talk to her grandmother anymore. Zhenya had died some twenty years before, after living almost one hundred years, busy to the end running her apartment house in Hollywood. It wasn't far from the Paramount lot, and aspiring actresses rented several of the apartments. "They all talk to me," Zhenya had told Sarah. "They tell me their troubles."

When she was in her nineties, Zhenya sometimes forgot that Sarah hadn't come from the Old Country and, after speaking in English for a while, switched without knowing it to Yiddish. Sarah didn't interrupt. For one thing, she felt she almost *could* understand. And even more because, in the end, it was Zhenya who told her everything.

Five weeks passed before Sarah managed to climb the stairs, a crutch under one arm and her free hand clutching the handrail. At the top of the stairs, she shifted to a hand-me-down pair of crutches left over from the time Franklin fell out of a tree and broke his leg.

Her desk was in a corner of what had been the girls' bedroom. She sat down and turned on the computer. The screen flickered into light, into pictures of suitcases and small turning worlds.

She was looking for something solid and far in the past.

Two clicks on the Internet browser and she was off in the ether. Go to.... she typed in Kishinev.

Latitude, 47° 00' North. Longitude, 28° 50' East.

That night the TV news howled with the bombing raids.

"How can anything remain standing?" Sarah asked.

Franklin didn't answer.

"I keep hearing that word, Tora Bora." She fidgeted with a bookmark, put down the novel about Egypt her younger daughter had given her.

"That's the mountains between Afghanistan and Pakistan. You're not listening, are you?"

It was true, she barely listened. Years before, her younger daughter had put her hands over her eyes when the public television nature shows were too scary, and then peeked between her fingers. Lionesses leaping on fleeing gazelles. Sarah couldn't look either.

"How's the book?" Franklin looked at the bookmark. "This one is going kind of slowly, it looks like."

"It's beginning to pick up a little. I was getting tired of the women, so stuck in their houses." She swung her foot down from the chair, rested it on the floor. "But now one of the daughters keeps looking out of a crack in the upstairs shutters. She's supposed to be cleaning the bedrooms. She's actually caught the eye of a passing soldier."

"When does it take place?"

"Oh, a long time ago. Between the world wars, I think." She wiggled the toes sticking out of her cast. That girl would cause trouble. Let it be all right; let it have a happy ending.

There were caves all through the Hindu Kush mountains, just as there had been in Europe during the second world war, where the guerrilla fighters hid out. Would we ever learn to stop killing each other? The amazing thing was not only that everything would be destroyed, earth claiming centuries-old earth. Even more astonishing was the fact that people could go on at all. The women walking past piles of rubble, one hand gently balancing the water cans on their shoulders.

Tora Bora. She wouldn't forget that name.

"Sit, sit," Zhenya had said, patting the sofa cushion beside her. "I read all your letters. So now, tell me everything. These people on the kibbutz, these Jewish farmers, they're happy there?"

"Very happy." Sarah sank into the sofa. The same lace doilies, remembered from summer vacations, still covered its back and arms, and the backs and arms of the two big chairs across from the coffee table.

"And you think it will last?"

Sarah had been thinking about this when her father, standing in the doorway, interrupted. "Ma, what kind of a question is that? She's only seventeen!"

Zhenya laughed. "Oh, these Jewish farmers! I know something about them, remember?"

"What?" Sarah asked.

"You've heard about Clarion? The collective farm, the dream of Jews from New York City, the disaster of Utah? Your Uncle Clarence was born in Utah."

"You told me about it a little."

"Of course, it wasn't the same as these Jewish farms. It was an anarchist dream, that was maybe the same. Back to the land, Jews should find their roots. But with us, we were talking roots in the soil, not in Israel.

We were talking about a new way of life, no man should own another..." She picked up Sarah's hand and held it tightly. "So, you want to go live on a kibbutz?"

"No," Sarah said.

"Ah! You're not a Zionist, after all?"

"No. I want to live here. I want to write."

"You can't write in Hebrew?"

"But I love the words, the English ones, the ones I learned on."

"So, what do you want to write? Stories, books?"

Sarah nodded.

"That's good." Zhenya let go of Sarah's hand, stroked her hair back from her forehead. "Such black hair! Like mine, when I was young... You know, when people get their own countries, it maybe isn't that wonderful after all."

Later, when Zhenya was washing the dishes, she asked, "Those Jews on the kibbutz, how are they? Like their parents from Europe? Or different?"

"Different," Sarah said. "More like young Americans than old Jews. Even the Hebrew they speak sounds more American than Yiddish. In an Arabic sort of way."

Zhenya put a well-rinsed glass into the dish drainer, sighed, and let her hands drip over the dish pan. "It's going to be hard," she said. She shook her fingers, water falling into water. "I hope they can remember what it means, to be the ones who suffer..."

Sitting at the computer with a red wool blanket wrapped around her, Sarah read that Moldova was a landlocked country, primarily a hilly plain interspersed with deep river valleys.

It was the second smallest republic of the former USSR, after Armenia.

The average elevation was 482 feet above sea level. The Kodry Hills, in the central portion of the country, rose to a maximum elevation of about 1410 feet.

In the days when Zhenya lived there, the steppes were covered with natural grasses. It sounded like the North Dakota prairies.

"The earth was so rich," she'd told Sarah, "that the soil was black."

The hills in the central part were densely forested, mostly with oak and hornbeam trees.

Linden, maple, beech, and wild fruit trees also grew there.

So many trees.

Zhenya left her home, she'd told Sarah, when her parents wanted her to marry a man she didn't love. "Such an old story," she said.

They had been sitting at Zhenya's tiny kitchen

table, two steaming glasses of tea set on the red-checked tablecloth. "There were three reasons, that was the first one." Zhenya sank a rounded teaspoon of sugar into her tea. "I didn't love this man..."

"What were the other reasons?"

"Ah, the second one, that was also an old story. There was a man I did love, but I couldn't marry him."

"Your parents wouldn't let you?"

Zhenya looked at Sarah, and they both smiled.

"Of course not. So much worse, actually." Zhenya stirred the sugar at the bottom of her glass. "He had syphilis."

"Syphilis!" Sarah had never known anyone who even knew someone who had syphilis. Or had she? And not known? It was a word no one spoke, and her own grandmother was telling her she had loved such a man. Sarah gazed at Zhenya.

"It was all over Europe, a terrible disease. Now they have penicillin, but not in those days," Zhenya said. "You might be all right for a while after you first got it. But then really sick, so thin! Then losing your mind. Then dead."

All over Europe? And no one had ever spoken of it to her before.

Zhenya sipped the hot tea, set the glass on the table. "So, drink already! Don't you want to hear the third reason I left home? Remember, it was a long way from Kishinev to New York City."

Sarah blew gently on the tea. "Yes, tell me, I'm listening."

"We lived down the street from the police station, and it was so close, I could hear the screams of the political prisoners. This was in 1903, before the revolution." She looked at Sarah. "You understand?"

"Before the revolution?"

"The Russian Revolution, in 1917. We couldn't even really imagine it back then, even though, all the time, we talked about it. All the time. In 1903 there was still the czar, the Cossacks, and the Russian peasants, and the Jews in the middle, getting hit by everybody. And under my bed, maydele, my little one, my beloved, the third reason. Under my bed, there were too many boxes of Bolshevik books."

Franklin stood at the stove. Sarah watched him from her chair, how his elbows swung out, the spatula clanking against the pan. The years of loading and unloading cargo, perhaps, had made work a thing of large muscle movements. It was almost as if the kitchen were too small for him.

After dinner, after washing the dishes, he sat down in front of the TV. "I'm tired."

"Women's work is hard?" she teased.

"You mean you do this every day?"

They watched the dry mountains of Afghanistan jump into reality. So much like the baked and ancient

landscape that Israel had been in the fifties. The narrow streets, the houses in Jerusalem that were so old they looked almost like caves, as though they'd been carved out of some desert stone. It had taken her many weeks to really see what she was looking at. Those centuries of bones, civilizations buried in the sand, oldness itself, were so strange, so unrecognizable to the Western eye.

Even more so now, when the overloaded pickups careened onto the screen, men almost falling out of the open tailgates. Their rifles poking out at odd angles.

"These guys are going to build democracy?" Franklin asked.

Nighttime was the worst time. Sarah's ankle ached, she was tired of sitting and exhausted at the idea of walking; and how could she go to bed at eight o'clock? She turned on the computer, clicked on Kishinev again. Found a map of eastern Europe, Moldova almost gleaming in harvest gold. To its left, Romania was light green, and on the other side, Ukraine stretched out in pale blue.

She printed out the map, stared at it for a long time. *Kishinev* was in heavy black letters, with what looked like a broken line, two dashes, over the e. She understood the sound of that. Zhenya had always called it *Kishinyev*.

Common birds, she read, include jays, blackbirds, and larks.

Some species, such as the wild goose, are migratory.

"We were running, yes, from the czar," Zhenya had told her.

Sarah wished now that she'd asked Zhenya about that ocean voyage. Had she traveled alone? Met Moishe, Sarah's grandfather, on the ship, or known him from before? Or was Moishe still in Zhenya's future in New York City, where she would dance with him late in the hot summer nights?

How had she made it through Ellis Island?

Sarah knew only about the day Zhenya landed in America. It was in 1903, in April, in springtime.

April 6th, 1903, was Easter Sunday in Kishinev.

"My first day off the boat," Zhenya told her, "I passed by a newspaper rack, and there was a Yiddish newspaper with such a big headline, it covered almost the whole paper." Again, Zhenya had taken Sarah's hand into both of hers. "And the headline said -- " She squeezed Sarah's hand. "You understand, this was in the time of the czars. Between the czars and the church, the people were taught to hate the Jews, we knew this well, there were already all kinds of laws against us. People were getting hurt. Already we were afraid. Still, no one could really believe such a thing as what happened. . . But then, also, it was Easter -- "

FICTION

“Zhenya, what did the headline say?”

Zhenya had looked out her little kitchen window. In the midday heat, the dahlias she'd planted along the narrow walkway were still.

“Zhenya?”

The dahlias so bright, all shades of red. “All right, maydele, my little one, my dearest. That headline said, *Giant Kishinev Pogrom.*”

“Hey, look at these explosions!” Franklin laid the crossword puzzle on his lap. “Those mountains are really taking a hit.”

“That green color is too spooky, that nighttime thing.”

“Night vision.”

We were pounding the caves, the commentator said. We were winning.

Sarah slowly swung her foot, heavy in its cast, down to the floor. She reached for her crutches.

“Making your escape already?”

“I can't stand listening....”

She could still hear the TV when she sat down at her computer, but more dimly.

Moldova, another country.

More than 3000 rivers and streams went through it. The two biggest rivers, the Diester and the Prut, rose in the Carpathian Mountains in Ukraine, and emptied into the Black Sea.

Other major rivers included the Yalpug, the Byk, and the Reut.

She scrolled down, looking at the pictures of Kishinev. The crest of the city, in which the name, under an eagle with outstretched wings and a crown over the top of it, was *Chisinau*. Different writers could not agree on the nature of the horned animal in the eagle's center. Bison or mythic beast?

The city square, the National Hotel, Soviet era apartments.

Two pictures of Russian Orthodox churches.

She clicked on *Korolenko Describes the Kishinev Pogrom of 1903.*

Korolenko, she read, arrived at Kishinev and immediately was beset by questions that he couldn't answer. He began by asking, *how can I explain the incidents which have resulted in the rapid, almost immediate, disappearance of the ordinary restraints of civilization, so that there unexpectedly burst forth something bordering on elemental bestiality?*

His words reminded her of the philosophical arguments around the dinner table when she was a child, and of long, tragic Russian novels.

She clicked on the computer's search engine to find out who this Korolenko was. A Russian short story

writer and a member of a Populist circle, she read. Arrested in 1879 and exiled to Siberia until 1885.

He had lived, she realized, under the same czars and in the same times as Zhenya.

He reminded her of her younger daughter, who often called her in a kind of despair at the human race. She was working the swing shift at a printing shop; and the phone would ring at ten at night, on her lunch break. “Mom, look what's happening. We're bombing everything!”

“I know,” Sarah said. “I know.”

“And everyone thinks it's okay. How can people walk around thinking it's okay to bomb other people? And you still think people are basically good?”

Zhenya had told Sarah that Moishe believed men could be angels.

Korolenko, she read, wrote many of his lyrical tales, notable for their descriptions of desolate nature, when he was exiled in Siberia. His most famous story was called *Makar's Dream*.

It told about a dying peasant's dream of heaven.

How, Korolenko had wanted to know, *could it be that an average, fairly decent man, with whom conversation under ordinary circumstances is not unpleasant, how can this man suddenly be transformed into a wild beast?*

Forming part of a crowd of other wild beasts?

He sounds so Russian, she thought again. Almost afraid to read on. She could see Korolenko's man, this ordinary man; and she could see him changed in a few words to a crowd of beasts.

And, always, how?

The Israelis were bombing the Palestinians.

The Americans were bombing Kabul.

Rubble everywhere.

“It took weeks to hear,” Zhenya told Sarah. “Finally, the good news. My mother and my father and my brother, Yitschok, all living together in the old house, were alive.”

“Good.” Sarah had almost breathed the word. She knew there would be bad news, too.

Korolenko arrived in Kishinev two months after the massacre when, he wrote, *the moral atmosphere was still full of fiery animosity and hatred. The ordinary life of the town was at a standstill; building operations had stopped, and the Jewish inhabitants were tense with fear and uncertainty about the next day.*

He decided to tell the story of one house, situated in the fourth district of Kishinev, in a small street named Asia Street. The house consisted of seven separate dwellings around a courtyard, in which crowded eight Jewish families. Shop owners, commission agents,

a draper's assistant, an accountant, an unemployed hospital orderly, a glazier.

Forty-five people in all, including children.

The house became famous as House No. 13.

“In the first letter, my mother wrote that every day, my brother, Yitschok, went out to help bury the dead people,” Zhenya said.

The names of these narrow and tortuous little streets, Korolenko wrote, are hardly known to the inhabitants of Kishinev themselves. Even the Jewish cab driver (many Jewish cab drivers were among the killed and wounded) did not understand at first where I wanted to go.

“House No. 13, where they killed!” I finally yelled.

“Ah, I know!” said the driver, nodding his head and whipping up his horse. A horse as dejected, as miserable, as half-starved as himself. I couldn't see the man's face, but I heard him mutter through his beard words that sounded like “accountant” and “glazier.”

We drove for some time, coming to the back streets of old Kishinev, where stones, tiles, bricks and mortar choked the growth of the young trees planted among the flagstones. Where the shadows of the stories of olden days, stories of feudal lords and of Turkish invasions, still seemed to hover.

No. 13 suggested nothing but death.

“In my mother's next letter, too, the same news, every day your brother Yitschok goes out to bury the dead people.”

The courtyard was covered with down and feathers from mattresses, fragments of furniture, bits of broken glass and crockery, and scraps of torn clothing. Not just broken. The furniture was in splinters, the plates stamped underfoot into a thousand pieces.

Here lay a torn sleeve, there a child's pinafore.

The window frames had been torn out, and from the black, gaping openings pieces of the woodwork were swaying in the air.

In one corner of the courtyard there was still a huge crimson patch, easily recognizable as dried blood.

“Grienschpoun was killed on this spot,” said a strange, hollow voice behind me.

Now by my side there stood a girl of ten or twelve. The unchildlike terror which had once contorted her childish face had not disappeared. Her words were jerked out with effort, like the tones of an automaton,

FICTION

and they dropped mechanically from her mouth so as to give the impression of a voice that has been extinguished.

“He ran past just here.” She pointed to the pool of blood. “That's where they began to murder him...”

“Finally, came a letter from my mother.” Zhenya rubbed Sarah's hands between her own. “Yitschok, my little brother, had stopped talking, stopped eating. He heard voices that no one else heard, he turned around and around looking for someone who wasn't there.”

She stood up suddenly and sat down again. “You're getting a little hungry, maybe?” she asked.

Sarah shook her head.

“You understand, he had seen too many terrible things.” Zhenya's black eyes focused again on Sarah's face. She sighed. “He didn't die, no. But, you understand, it was too much. He was never the same again.”

Franklin turned off the TV and the light in the kitchen. He locked the back door. “Man, Americans are a vengeful people,” he said.

“I can't believe it, how we forget ...” Sarah leaned forward in her chair, listening.

Zhenya had looked past Sarah, perhaps to the flowers in their narrow strip of city earth. Or to a far, sinking kitchen where her little brother sat, speechless, by a tiled stove.

The boundaries unsteady. Bombs beating a terrifying pulse.

Higher than your heart, the doctor had said. And how high would that be? The warm currents holding, reaching, moving forward and backward from each small center. The heart itself would have to be, finally, the highest place, forests deep in each day's memory, opening and closing on a baby's cry, a soldier's fear, a mother's long grief.

Sarah stood up slowly, reached for her crutches. The house disappeared, room by room, as Franklin turned off each light.

Centuries. Out of the desert, and the desert still there, the going on. The children!

There was moonlight, then, faint at the window.

“Can you see okay?” Franklin asked.

“I can see as far as the door. No, farther. To the fence. No... all the way out to the trees.”

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Photograph by Julie Smith

MUIR BEACH COMMUNITY CENTER

Community Center Drop-in Use
Daytime hours if the Center is not scheduled for other activities. Users responsible for cleanup.

Community Center Rental Policies
For any rental inquiries, please call Laurie Piel at 415.388.8319.

WEEKLY IN MUIR BEACH

These activities take place at the Community Center unless otherwise noted.

MONDAY

- Tai-chi - 6:30 - 7:30 pm, \$22.50 per month

TUESDAY

- The Bookmobile - 4:30 - 5:30 pm - 1st and 3rd Tuesdays, Mailboxes, Highway One across from Pelican Inn.

WEDNESDAY

- Tai-chi - 8:00 - 9:00 am
- Bistro - Wednesday mornings, 9:30 - 11:30 am
Organic fair trade coffee, \$1.50 per cup; additional cups 25¢ each. Featuring fantastic fresh-baked organic scones by Nancy Knox, \$1.50 each.
- Muir Beach Quilters - 11 am. No fee.
- CSD Board of Directors Meeting
Meetings of the Board of Directors of the Muir Beach Community Services District are open to the public and are generally held on the 4th Wednesday of the month, every other month, at 7:00 pm. Notice of Board Meetings are posted 72 hours in advance, as exact dates may vary.

THURSDAY

- Tai-chi - 6:30 - 7:30 pm
- Volleyball - 6:00 pm - late
At the courts on Muir Woods 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
- 2nd Sundays 10-11:30 am

Become a Friend of the Beachcomber

Help support the community's newsletter by becoming a Friend of the *Beachcomber*.

Yes, I want to support the *Beachcomber*. Enclosed is my donation for:

____ \$35 ____ \$50 ____ \$100 ____ \$200 Other: \$ ____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

You have my permission to list my name in the *Beachcomber* as a Friend of the *Beachcomber*. Please list my name this way:

____ Do not list my name in the *Beachcomber*. Show as anonymous.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Please make your check payable to *Beachcomber* and mail to: Linda Gibbs, 30 Sunset Way, Muir Beach, CA 94965 or drop in 30 Sunset mailbox across from Pelican Inn.

The *Beachcomber* thanks you for your patronage and appreciates your interest and support.

1007

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Perfect Gift for the Holidays

Keep your family and friends up-to-date with what's happening in Muir Beach.

\$30 mailed; \$25 delivered
Published in March, May, July, and October

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Friends of the Beachcomber

Jim, David, and Doug Canepa, Mill Valley Market
Theodore R Elliott, TR Elliott Winery
Dave Semling, Mill Valley Services
Dee Turman, DTurman Illustration

- Anonymous
- Elizabeth Benedict
- Robert Bowyer and Renee Boeche
- Debra Farkas
- Joseph and Nikola Ferraro
- Ralph Frey and Candice Piper
- Stephen Gillespie and Shamini Dhana
- Jack, Aneta, and Shellie Hadley
- Bernard J. Halliwell
- Bob and Dee Hayden
- Danny Hobson and Jon Rauh
- Anne and Paul Jeschke
- Alex and Charlotte Johnston
- Larry and Melissa Lasky
- David Leivick & Linda Gibbs
- Dave and Bonnie MacKenzie
- Maury Ostroff and Janice Kubota
- Laurie and David Piel
- Julie and Brent Smith
- Bill and Susy Stewart
- Shere' Stoddard
- Janet Stump
- Kathy and John John Sward
- Judith and Larry Yamamoto
- Anonymous

Beachcomber Beach Towel

The customized beach towels are in! Made of 100% Turkish terry velour, this luxurious royal blue towel (30" x 60") carries the *Beachcomber* masthead in elegant translucent tone on tone printing. Lovely for your home and a great holiday gift idea, too.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

_____ @ \$30.00 each = \$ _____

If order will be shipped to you, add:

_____ @ \$7.00 per towel S&H = \$ _____

Total enclosed: \$ _____

Make check payable to *Beachcomber*. Drop in 30 Sunset Way mailbox or mail to Linda Gibbs, 30 Sunset Way, Muir Beach, CA 94965



Photograph by Julie Smith

Dia de Los Muertos



BYOB

Fifth Annual
Muir Beach
Day of the Dead
Celebration!



Saturday, November 3rd @ 6:00 p.m.
Pot Luck Dinner at the Community Center

ENTERTAINMENT!
KID'S ACTIVITIES!



LIGHT A CANDLE!
COSTUMES OPTIONAL!

Bring photos & mementos of loved ones to display
For more information call Harvey @ 388-0380

In Memoriam:

Ellen Mettler

1957-2007



"County Fair" by Ellen Mettler, 2003

"Ellen met us right where we live."

See "My Friend Ellen," page 11.

"Those who stay will tell your story..."

See "Big Wheel Keep on Turnin'," page 20.

**MUIR BEACH QUILTERS'
HOLIDAY ARTS FAIR**



HOLIDAY
ARTS FAIR

Saturday and Sunday
December 1st, 11-5 and December 2nd, 10-4

Muir Beach Community Center
19 Seacape Drive, Muir Beach, CA

FREE SHUTTLE FROM MUIR BEACH PARKING LOT
nonprofit