

BEACHCOMBER

Muir Beach Neighborhood News

Issue 243 October 2008



Handwritten signature

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Painting by Larry Yamamoto	
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FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Reader:

Eight issues later—412 pages, 264 stories, and 847 photographs—This community is not at a loss for words!

The *Beachcomber* will be at the Muir Beach Quilters Holiday Arts Fair (see page 27) on December 6-7. Drop by and say hello and bring your story ideas. Consider a *Beachcomber* subscription as a holiday gift for family and friends. And please remember Friends of the *Beachcomber* as you determine your year-end donations. Your support is greatly appreciated.

Warmest holiday greetings from the *Beachcomber*. We wish you a healthy, peaceful, and joyous new year.

Next issue: March 2009
Submissions Deadline: January 19, 2009

See page 54 for Submissions Guidelines.

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Cover Painting by Larry Yamamoto
"Banducci Ranch Runners" watercolor, 22" x 30"
Photograph by Larry Yamamoto

UPFRONT

Jon "Fishboy" Rauh and Danny Hobson
are delighted to announce the arrival of their daughter

ANNA ISABEL RAUH
born on Mother's Day - May 11, 2008
7 pounds, 12 ounces and 19 inches long



Anna Isabel Rauh at four months.
Photograph by Charles Hobson (aka grandpop)



Anna Isabel Rauh around five
weeks.
Photograph by Lisa Mullerauh
(aka Aunt Hut)



Jon Rauh, Danny Hobson, and Anna Isabel
Rauh at her third Giants game.
Photograph by Lisa Mullerauh (aka Aunt Hut)

ASA STEPHEN KAUFMAN

By Tayeko Kaufman

There are events in a person's life that produce profound changes and insights, which touch you so deeply and in places hidden that you are altered to the core of your being. These special events, for me, have a breath that is greater than the present. That's what makes them so profound. They connect you to the past and propel you into the future. Such an event occurred for us in the early morning of June 3, 2008, and is named Asa Stephen Kaufman, our only grandson and first child of Eli and Cheryl Kaufman. We are now proud members of the grandparents club, and as many of you already know, it is like falling in love again for the very first time. Our friend David Gillespie is fond of saying, "...what is it about grandchildren. It's just not the same (as being parents)."

Over the years I have looked on with envy as our friends tried to share their joy and wonderment about their grandchild. I can't remember any of their words but I remember their smiles. And as Shunryu Suzuki Roshi said: "...when words cease to correspond with facts it is time for us to part with words and return to facts..." But 7 pounds, 6 ounces, 19 inches, 10 fingers and 10 toes are facts which are so woefully inadequate to describe our Asa that we offer instead a glimpse of our smile through the following images of him. We hope they make you smile as well.



Quiet after the storm.
June 6, three days old.



Bonding with my dad. 12
weeks old



"Can we negotiate the
number of baths?"
8 weeks old



Survived the fourth trimester
and am ready to go!"
3 months old

Photographs courtesy of
Cheryl and Eli who continue
to do a great job as parents.
Asa is now 24 inches long and
almost 15 pounds.

Mystery Solved: It's a Boy!

By Brent Smith

As Paul Jeschke reported in the July 2008 *Beachcomber*, "A sealed, water-soaked envelope containing a slip of paper announcing the sex of her unborn baby was one of the few items Kris Nelder was lucky enough to get back from the charred embers of her fire ravaged apartment. The baby's gender is still a mystery. Nelder, the daughter of Muir Beach residents Julie and Brent Smith, doesn't want to know the sex until the infant is born later this year."

On August 24th the mystery was resolved... Jake Story Nelder entered the world, weighing in



Three-day-old Jake in a treasured peaceful moment. Photograph by Kris Nelder



Jake has issues... Photograph by Kris Nelder

at 7 lbs. 13 oz. Jake, Mom, Dad and Grandparents are all doing well. The burned-out couple took up temporary residence with Kris' parents on Seacape Drive in May and moved into their new home in Fairfax in mid September... although Grandma Smith had become smitten with Jake and was actively lobbying to keep him—and parents—as permanent house guests.



Jeff, Baby Jake, and Kris pose with the Welcome to the world sign. Photograph by Julie Smith



Proud Grandfather Brent holds Jake, just minutes old. Photograph by Julie Smith



"Photo with baby 50-cents" says it all - Jake must be the most photographed baby in the World! Photograph by Julie Smith

Beachcomber Graphic Designer Weds

By Linda Gibbs



Dee Turman and Jeremy Marshall Photograph by Irene Bailey

Congratulations to Dee Turman, the *Beachcomber's* graphic designer, upon her marriage to Jeremy Marshall, head brewer of Lagunitas Brewing Company. Lagunitas has generously donated the beer for the annual Firemen's BBQ fundraiser for more than ten years.

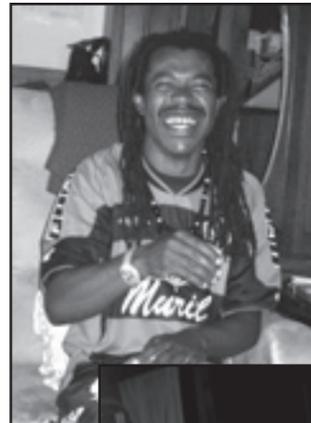
Dee and Jeremy, who are high school sweethearts, were married on September

13, 2008, in Monte Rio, CA, and reside in Rohnert Park.

Best wishes and much happiness to Dee and Jeremy from your friends in Muir Beach.

Farewell to the Pinto-Cardoso de Souza Family

The Vincent-Pearlman clan say farewell to Aya, Lalo, and B as they break new ground in their beloved Bahia, Brazil.



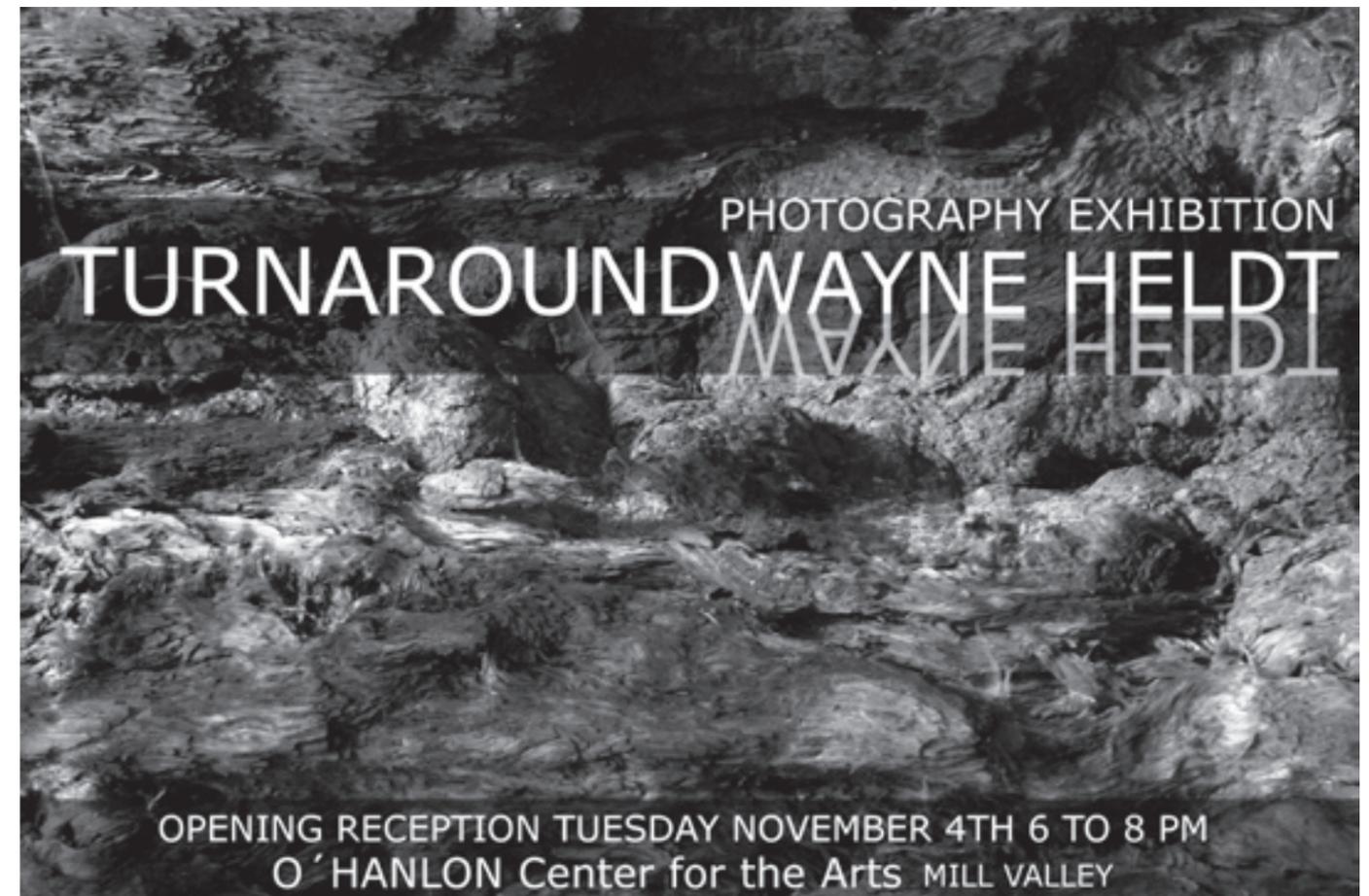
Searching for Muir Beach

By Walt Postle

For a town of only 300 souls, we certainly have a lot going on in cyberspace. I recently spent an idle afternoon looking out at the fog and surfing the Web for the term "Muir Beach." The number of hits you get changes by the second and you rarely get the exact same number two days in a row. Using only Google tools I found about 283,000 specific references to our community on the Web; Google Images yielded 15,000 sites with photographs (mostly snaps but also loads of high quality shots): Blogs 2,900 hits; Groups 1,500 hits; Books 640 hits; Scholar 200 hits; Videos 180 hits (thrilling drives on Highway 1); and Patents 30 hits (medicine and the mechanics of water beds—very Marin). A search of Google News turned up a half dozen stories from around the world mentioning Muir Beach. I also checked the new Google search US Government Search and got almost 1,300 hits. Top billing here goes to a letter from a little girl living on Sunset written in 1998 objecting to the construction of a dam. I also found a document setting aside \$20,000 for a bus stop at the Dairy, \$451,000 for the new bridge on Pacific

Way, and a nice cash donation to our volunteer fire department.

If you have a mild interest in what your neighbors have flying around the Net, type in "name of street" "Muir Beach" and all will be revealed. The same goes for the other places around here, Slide Ranch, Green Gulch, Redwood Creek, etc. Digging down, if you want wonderful photographs of Muir Beach from the ocean, you should look no further than Californiacoastline.org. If you want to see what Muir Beach looked like before you bought your dream home, go to George Lindholdt's site Bellobeach.com. House prices and what your neighbors pay in taxes? You need Zillow.com. Muirbeach.com, run by Debra Allen, has great photographs and valuable information, however, the Wikipedia entry for Muir Beach leaves much to be desired. For a truly comprehensive and interesting profile of the socio-economic-demographic characteristics of our community, go to City-data.com. This site, which is aimed at the business relocation trade, contains a staggering amount of comparative information on every city and place in the United States. A perusal of this site confirms the notion that we are among the blessed.



Letters to the Editor

I have been meaning to ask you if you knew that on our little street three residents have been featured in national media in the past few months. My 15-year-old son Virgil had a photograph published in the *New York Times*. It accompanied an article about our 2006 trip to Tanzania (<http://travel.nytimes.com/2007/12/09/travel/09family.html>). Wendy Johnson was profiled in the *New York Times* (www.nytimes.com/2008/05/08/garden/08zen.html?_r=1&oref=slogin), and Danny Hobson was featured in a story in the Winter 2008 issue of *Western Art and Architecture*. Wendy of course has had a great deal of publicity for her wonderful new book, *Gardening at the Dragon's Gate*. Not bad for a little dirt road in Muir Beach.

— David H. Taylor, MD

New Instructor for Tuesday Yoga

Rachel Clare Teannalach is now teaching yoga on Tuesday nights, 6:15 pm - 7:30 pm, at the Taylor Zendo, 1821 Shoreline Highway. Props are provided. Classes are \$8 drop-in or \$30 for a 6-class card (cards can be used non-consecutively). Anusara-based class for all levels.

Rachel has been studying yoga for nearly ten years, and has been teaching Anusara yoga for three. She takes great joy in seeing students expand beyond their own expectations! All levels are welcome!

Contact Rachel for more information:

415.272.1392 • r.c.teannalach@gmail.com
www.teannalach.com



Tuesday night yoga students perform "Stand of Trees" or supported tree pose (vrkhasana), from left, Lonna Richmond, Erin Pinto, Charlene Modena, and instructor Rachel Clare Teannalach.

Photograph by David H. Taylor, MD

Greetings to all my friends at Muir Beach!

Congratulations to Linda Gibbs and the whole staff for the wonderful new magazine.* I miss you all—when I built my home there I never thought I'd ever leave, but I did live there for 34 years! (Before that, I had had a rule of no more than five years in one place.)

Soon, I hope to be on my way to San Antonio. I like the river and the freedom.

My voicemail yielded a message recently from an unknown (couldn't understand much of it) visitor to Yale, who plaintively asked when I'm coming back to India. Ah, well! My spirit is there so often—(It travels a lot.)

(* I was very happy to see the tribute to Cuco!)

All my best to the blessed!
 Doris Chatham

Vote YES on Prop 2!

By Erin Pinto

Proposition 2 on the California ballot ends the cruel practice of cramming farm animals into cages so small they can't even turn around or extend their limbs. This basic provision of providing larger cage sizes applies to veal calves that are tethered by the neck and can barely move, gestating pigs whose cages put them under such duress they bite the metal bars of their crates, and caged hens that are so cramped they get trapped and even impaled on their wire cages.

We wouldn't allow our pets to live in these conditions and we shouldn't force farm animals to endure such suffering and misery. All animals, even those raised for food, deserve humane treatment.

These cramped conditions also put our health at risk. Confining animals this way spreads disease among the animals and into our water supply and onto other irrigated produce downstream.

Passing this measure will send a clear message that we care about and are increasingly aware of the practices of factory farms to pad their bottom line at the expense of farm animals, our environment, and our health.

This measure is sponsored by the Humane Society of the United States and is endorsed by the CA Veterinary Medical Association and the Center for Food Safety. Naturally, it is opposed by well-funded, large agribusiness interests, including Foster Farms. These mega-farm corporations nearly all have sordid records of animal cruelty, labor violations, and environmental pollution.

For more information go to YesonProp2.com and please help spread the word!

MUIR BEACH BONANZA

FOR OBAMA

By Paul Jeschke



OBAMA '08

Muir Beach supporters of Barack Obama partied hardy and dug deep into their pockets, handing over \$3,135 to their candidate for President of the United States.

Rallying at a Muir Beach for Obama "celebration and fundraiser" at the Community Center September 14, the political partisans toasted the Obama-Biden ticket with donated wine and beer, snacked on scrumptious hors d'oeuvres prepared by local food artisans and enjoyed the music of Pam and Bruce Barlow. And yes, there was a speech or two and plenty of political discussion among the guests.

"What a great night," said Kathy Sward, standing under an arch of colorful crepe paper bunting. "I'm so glad we had this event. The last couple of weeks have been discouraging. I'm excited again."

While Obama's recorded acceptance speech played on the TV in the corner, the candidate's supporters talked up a political storm. The room, filled with American flags, red, white and blue helium balloons, banners, posters and position papers, looked more like



Muir Beach supporters of presidential candidate Barack Obama gather at the community center



Muir Beach for Obama organizers, from left, David Leivick, Linda Gibbs, Paul Jeschke, and Anne Jeschke



Pam and Bruce Barlow performed their original song "Time For A Change" (see lyrics on next page).
 Photograph by Linda Gibbs



The Pelican Inn donated hot hors d'oeuvres and Green Gulch Bakery provided fresh baked bread for the cheeses and dips.

the Democratic Convention than the familiar, famously funky Community Center.

Since everything was donated, including supplies, and the rental charges were covered by event organizers, every penny went straight to "Obama for America," the official fundraising arm of the Obama campaign, explained Linda Gibbs, one of the organizers. Gibbs and husband David Leivick put the event together along with Starbuck Drive residents Anne and Paul Jeschke.

Pam Barlow wrote a musical plea for change especially for the occasion. The Pelican Inn donated hot finger food and Green Gulch Bakery generously provided freshly baked bread that served as a platform for luscious cheese and dips. Volunteers even baked homemade crackers and mixed tasty dips. Wine and bottled water were donated, as was beer provided by Mendocino Brewing Company.

"I'm pleasantly surprised at the final amount we raised," Gibbs said. "It was way more than we anticipated." The total was pushed up by many "very generous" gifts beyond the suggested \$20 per person donation.

"I hope we're celebrating like this November 4th," said Anne Jeschke. "I can't stand the thought of four more years of Republicans running the country."

If Muir Beach Democrats are celebrating on Election Day, it won't be at the Community Center. Since it's an official polling place, the facility won't be available that night for partisan celebrations.



A guest chats with event organizer Anne Jeschke and Outi Onorato who is selling Diana Lerwick's (Outi's daughter-in-law) "Vote" jewelry. Bartender and event organizer David Leivick serves Larry Yamamoto as Lisa Eigsti tends to her one-year-old daughter Stella.

Photographs by Bruce Barlow

TIME FOR A CHANGE

I was born an American
 Taught to believe
 We've got to take a stand
 We're American

Thought our country drew the line
 At tyrants, torture, and spying
 On citizens
 Americans

But it's not true now
 What can we do now

Every kid got left behind
 White House never dropped a dime
 On health care plans
 For Americans

You pioneers of energy
 Create jobs in green industries
 Leave the oil in Alaskan lands
 Americans!

It's me and you now
 So much to lose now

It's time for a change
 To take back the reins
 Time for a reckoning
 After eight years of shame
 It's time for a change

The brave escaped oppression & blame
 Found hope at Ms. Liberty's flame
 In the open arms
 Of America

Melting pot, culture stream
 Religion, tradition, everyone free
 To follow their hearts
 In America

Gotta make our move now - Time for a change

Enron, Gitmo, corporate greed
 FEMA blew in New Orleans
 Fat cats got cuts on tax
 Merged the poor with the middle class
 Decider's Doctrine gave him the right
 To call a preemptive strike
 He can send your children to war
 He won't have to tell you what for
 Bush Cheney Rumsey Rove
 You're gonna fry for the lies you've told
 It's time for a change
 To take back the reins
 Time for a reckoning
 After eight years of shame

It's time for a change
 Oh, to feel proud again
 Take our fate back in hand
 And believe that we can
 Cause we're Americans
 And it's time for a change
 Time for a change

Can't you feel it comin'
 Comin down a holy wind
 And I believe that change
 Change is gonna come

Ooohhh -
 It's on its way
 Martin Luther and JFK
 Barack Obama's here today to say -
 It's time for a change

I was born an American
 Taught to believe we've gotta take a stand...

© 2008 By Pam and Bruce Barlow/Diosa Music/BMI



Janet Stump in the 1940s

Janet Clover Hatch Stump passed away on August 1, 2008 in her sleep at home overlooking Muir Beach with her children by her side. She was 84 years old. Janet was born in Redlands, California on October 10, 1923. She was the third child born to Carl and Ethyl Hatch, and had two older brothers, Chuck and Robert. She grew up on the beach in Santa Monica where she hung out with the budding California surfing crowd in the late 1930s. Family photographs show a radiant young blond hanging out with tanned surfers with tee-shirts wrapped over their heads. As a young girl, she spent her summers on the family's Muleshoe Ranch in Arizona where she discovered the amazing contrast between the desert landscape and her beloved Pacific Ocean.

She attended Pomona College in Claremont, California and participated in many school clubs and organizations, was an accomplished painter, and acted in school plays. One of her fondest memories of her college years was playing the lead role in the Mikado, a comic opera by Gilbert and Sullivan. Yes, she could sing. She graduated with honors from Pomona College in 1945 receiving her Bachelor of Arts Degree with a double major in Psychology and English. In her mid 20's, she had a series of modeling jobs, one with the rapidly expanding airline industry. Family photographs reveal a tall slender blond beauty with a distinct air of sophistication. After World War II, she made her way north and taught school in Monterey. In her free time, she explored the Bay Area, and one her cherished memories was



JANET CLOVER HATCH STUMP

OCTOBER 10, 1923 – AUGUST 1, 2008

BY CHARLEY STUMP

frequenting the jazz clubs in San Francisco.

In the early 1950s, she went back to school and received her Master's Degree in Social Work from the University of California, Berkeley. She soon met Lawrence Martin Stump in San Francisco, who was a young parole officer working for the State of California. Stories of their romance are sketchy, but it was quick and besides being in love, she agreed to marry him because he promised her they could have children and live by the ocean. They immediately explored the Bay Area coastline and found idyllic Muir Beach where they raised three children and she spent the last 53 years of her life. Her fond memories of Muir Beach in the 1950s included the close knit community of very special people, Little Beach on warm summer days, and the potluck parties, particularly those at Mayor Joe Rodriguez's house where all attendees were required to drink Joe's "Portuguese Pink", a unique homemade beverage that the Mayor served with a big smile.

During the 1960s, she worked as a psychiatric social worker for Ross Hospital. In the 1970s she helped establish Children's Gardens, an organization that provided group home living for children experiencing unfortunate circumstances. Children's Gardens was her proudest achievement in her professional work.

In her retirement, she and Larry traveled extensively to Europe, Canada, and all over the United States. They always traveled by ship (Queen Mary), train or car due to her distaste for flying. She was an avid gardener who was very proud of her Pelargoniums, Cymbidiums, and



Janet Stump when she was three



The eighteen-year-old Janet Stump

the wide variety of other flowering plants on the Muir Beach property. She also was an accomplished water colorist and rhythmic drummer. A lifelong lover of books, she was very well read enjoying both fiction and nonfiction. She was eclectic with her choices in music, ranging from the Andrews Sisters to Luciano Pavarotti, to Willie Nelson to the Everly Brothers.

Janet was one of those very special people who cared deeply for others. She was an incredible mother, wife, grandmother, mother-in-law, and friend. Janet was a humble, down-to-earth, wise, poised, creative and a life-loving woman. She will be deeply missed by all who knew and loved her.

She was preceded in death by her husband Lawrence Martin Stump, who died in September 2000. She is survived by her son Larry Stump, daughter Susan Stump Cameron, son Charley Stump and his wife Carol Crawford Stump, her grandchildren Samuel Jackson Stump and Josephine Crawford Stump, and niece Laurie Hatch Kemna (John) and nephew Steve Hatch.

In Memoriam photographs courtesy of Charley Stump

Farewell to an Early Muir Beach Settler

By George Lindholt



Janet Stump in 1956

I finally went over to visit Janet when I was visiting the Beach in July, and began to learn a little of her life and how she became one of the early Muir Beach settlers. She was an old friend of my mother's and part of the first generation of Beach

women, including my mother Alfreda, Paula Norton, Hannah Dixon, Eleanor "Dixie" Borden, Mary Collier, Merriam Smith, and others. They were in many ways the transition between traditional roles and families and today's wide range of options and lifestyles.

would grab a few logs from neighbors' wood supplies as they walked home along the road. In winter the roads and electricity were even less reliable than today. Janet remembers the community feeling particularly isolated in the winter of 1955 when power outages and mudslides cut Muir Beach off for days or weeks at a time. But she also remembered all the celebrations that brought the community together, and the August birthday parties—the beach seemed to attract Leos—with fresh clams and abalone.

Despite the frustrations and difficulties, Janet said she was drawn to the coast, having grown up near the beach in Santa Monica. She had spent time inland, living in Fresno and then teaching elementary school in Salinas during World War II. That did not sound like a pleasant experience, but her devotion to social issues remained. Like so many beachers today, the sense of being separate from the other side of the hill is balanced by a social responsibility. With degrees in English and Psychology from Pomona College, Janet worked many years as a social worker, with the California Youth Authority, and she helped develop the Children's Garden at Ross Hospital. Janet was very much the personification of the Muir Beach spirit, and we will all miss her very much.

Before today's headlines of Hillary and Sarah, they had the energy to mix traditional responsibilities at home with larger social issues. And Muir Beach, although not quite Alaska (no caribou to shoot!), required more self-reliance and ingenuity than life in Mill Valley. Drinking water had to be hauled in from Muir Woods unless you adjusted to the highly mineralized color from the local well. And Janet said the children had to accept going to school with somewhat orangey hair after washing in Muir Beach tap water. Wood was the main heating supply, and she remembered their first winter at the beach when Larry Junior was an infant. They ran low on firewood, and to keep the house a little warm, they

Mother Has Gone

By Sue Stump Cameron

I miss my dear, sweet, caring mother like crazy. We always had so much fun together talking, laughing, or quarreling. Traveling or hanging around the house. Gardening or shopping. Cooking or visiting the dreaded doctor. Enjoying friends and family, or just existing and not saying or doing a thing, but knowing the other was present. I am so fortunate to have spent the last year of her life living with her. As I grew older, I wished I was more like her, simply because she was beautiful.

Everyone that knew Janet realized that she was a very determined lady. She was also very organized. During several conversations she made it quite clear that she did not want to be kept alive artificially. She had me pick up "Final Exit." She spoke to her doctor. She had an advanced directive. During her last stay at MGH she could no longer walk, she could barely breathe, and her other functions were failing. She told me, "Honey, I'm not going to fight anymore, I want to die." She was very grateful when I told her I understood and I would honor her decisions. The hospital staff told her she would not be released until she could walk, or she would go to a "skilled nursing facility" for physical rehab. I rallied my brothers and we demanded a meeting with the staff. She was released the next day under the care of Hospice. We enjoyed her company at home for the next one and half months, exactly as she wanted.

I share this to encourage others to plan ahead and not put it off. My good friend is still traumatized by her own mother's death. Her mom had no advanced directive and expressed that she wanted to be kept

Remembering Janet Stump

By Marilyn Laatsch

My thoughts of Janet go back many years, before the community center was built, and CSD meetings were held in people's homes on a rotating basis. It was a much more personal way to get to know one's neighbors. Janet was the board president and she handled some serious community issues with great skill. Her intelligence, diplomacy, commitment to fairness, and humor eased tensions and made hard decisions more understood and accepted. I loved her clear thinking and so appreciated her warmth in welcoming me in as a new owner.

What we all love about Muir Beach...it's beauty, a sense of independent resilience, helpful neighbors (especially in time of need), community-at-large cooperation,



Janet Stump in 2004

alive vigorously. She lingered for months with weeping surgical wounds, tubes, bloated so badly that her shoulder was dislocated by staff trying to move her about. My friend still attends her grieving class, where she tells me the other ladies wish they had taken their mothers home, as she relates that I did. She continues to have nightmares.

None of us know what it is like to die, but I tend to believe that it is worse for the loved ones. I know that my brothers and I really appreciate all that Janet did to prepare for her death.

Thank you to the community that loved Janet, and that Janet loved for over 50 years. I have really enjoyed hearing the thoughts and condolences from many of you.

Love, Peace, and Happiness
Sue (Stump) Cameron

great parties and more are all values Janet nourished and extended here, before many of us arrived. I am so grateful Janet helped shape our community in these ways.

Blessings to
Janet and
her family,
Marilyn Laatsch



Janet Stump in the '70s



Bear Baiting at the Community Center

By Walt Postle



Whenever the National Park Service (NPS) staff appears at 19 Seacape the proceedings often remind me of the medieval sport of bear baiting with the NPS staff in the role of the bear. The NPS talent remarks that with the skilled help of the NPS, the sun will shine at noon and that all will be well in the Marin Parklands. She is immediately contradicted by one or more players in the audience. And so the game is on for an evening of cut and thrust and light entertainment.

You never know what sort of bear is going to appear—Smokey with agreeable suggestions or a howling mad Grizzly with an agenda. The NPS repeatedly forgets that the locals are not a bunch of yokels who can be kicked around. The typical Muir Beacher is well educated, well fixed, and an ardent environmentalist. The community, if annoyed, can field an array of sophisticated lawyers, PR specialists, experts in many disciplines, squeaky wheels, community activists, and ordinary folks with excellent connections around the State—sufficient talent to give any government agency pause. Get-togethers with the NPS regularly bring out a large crowd of locals interspersed with lots of folk with their own agendas that have nothing to do with Muir Beach. The latter often add even more spice to the proceedings.

Over the years we have become increasingly skeptical about the integrity of any NPS proposal laid before us. The three-year struggle over the Comprehensive Transportation Management Plan taught us all a lesson. This plan cost the taxpayers six million dollars, contained various follies, a parking lot at Santos Meadow among them, and ended up with a weekend shuttle to Muir Woods during the summer months. The money blew out the window because the promoters did not listen and the howling mad Grizzly ran the show. We had a much better experience with the Big Lagoon project which dealt with the restoration of Redwood Creek and is now awaiting the construction go-ahead. This project was managed by Smokey the Bear rules, everyone was heard, and the resulting plan is satisfactory in all respects.

We have mutual interests, joint concerns, and a variety of serious economic and social issues to discuss with NPS. These range from children's education at Slide Ranch to matters of great personal interest and concern. For example, just about every house in Muir Beach is priced around one million dollars or more. Without rights to take water from the Parklands, our housing stock will be worth only what

might be raised by selling the buildings for salvage. I remember when there was no clean water in Muir Beach and it was not fun! The Banducci flower farm ceased operations in 1995 when the water supply was cut off. The folks in Muir Beach have at least \$150 million in real estate on the table as well as an extraordinarily beautiful environment. Well worth a vigorous and active defense. Beware that whenever the terms "Muir Beach," "water rights," and NPS show up in the same sentence on any document, it is advisable to pay close attention.

What the NPS says, what it does, and how faithfully it carries out its mission matters to everyone and our sessions with the NPS at the Community Center are not idle chitchats—we have real business to transact. When NPS asks us for comments on a plan or action, it is always wise to respond because something that appears toothless today may develop into something with a set of real fangs to bite us tomorrow. A case in point is the revision of the Parkland General Management Plan, which was put before us in June 2008 and was salted with unsatisfactory proposals with respect to Muir Woods, the Dairy, the Banducci Ranch, and Slide Ranch. For some reason, Muir Beach Lookout which gets a large number of visitors was not mentioned.

Muir Woods Issues

Muir Woods, a source of local pride and joy and considerable unease, is always on our mind, particularly when we contend with heavy tourist traffic. John Muir speaking of California's mighty forests said:

"God cared for these trees, saved them from drought, disease, avalanches and a thousand tempests and floods. But he cannot save them from fools."

Muir Woods, Marin's equivalent to the Sistine Chapel and the only thing in Marin that we cannot replace, is in the hands of fools. These fools are not the rangers and able professional staff, but its know-nothing political hacks and fantasists lurking in Washington DC. Unfortunately, buffoonery is not

confined to DC. Someone around here thought that it would be a grand idea to dump highway spoils in Muir Beach to build a parking lot. It was built over the breeding grounds of Redwood Creek's unique Coho salmon. A heck of a job by the folks who forgot what the NPS is all about.

The 554 acre "pristine" and "primeval forest" that Mr. Kent bequeathed to our Nation is being trampled underfoot by a never ending horde of visitors: up to a million a year; around 5,000 a day on a "good" day in summer. This is success far beyond anything anyone ever imagined and is a splendid tribute to the "value" of the relentless public and private advertising campaigns touting the Muir Woods experience. Muir Woods is hurting; its once pristine soundscape has disappeared as the air is now filled with the shouts of sightseers and the thunder of feet hammering the wooden walkways. Just about everything that can be armored on the valley floor, from the creek banks to the footpaths, has been armored. The latter resemble cattle runs with fences on either side. It is clear that it is impossible to cram more and more people into this small site and give them the quality experience they deserve. A new approach to visitation is needed; one that will prevent turning the place into a theme park as nice as Fisherman's Wharf. Because we are the closest community to the forest, our interest here is obvious.

We have other issues and complaints about the management of the Monument. Over the years, the number of professional and support staff has been reduced to the disadvantage of the environment and the visitor experience. A skilled and well-staffed cadre of rangers at Muir Woods is in our interest. Because fires in the woods have been suppressed for over a hundred years, the forest is full of fuel, and if it ever goes up in flames, it will burn very hot indeed, maybe with more heat than the trees can stand. A burnt-out forest is in no one's interest. For years, the Monument has been managed like a cash cow cramming in as many paying customers as possible. However, despite the nice take at the gate, the NPS has a tough time finding money to fix the Monument's sewerage system. Something as ordinary as a new pump to move the stuff around is hard to get. A million visitors generate an awful lot of effluent and any management not composed of incompetents would make its prompt safe and efficient disposal a high priority. Since we get our water from Redwood Creek, insuring that NPS has a proper waste disposal system at Muir Woods is also a priority for us.

Outside the Monument, the parking lots and roadsides are overrun by large and small vehicles of every stripe—all powered by internal combustion engines leaking toxic fumes into the air and oil on the ground. Visitors can be required to walk as much as a mile dodging cars before they get to the gate. Illegal parking outside the site is rampant. This is a safety issue for the folks around here since Frank's Valley Road is our escape route from the coast in the event of a

landslide or earthquake cutting off Highway 1.

The solution to the range of difficulties brought on by excessive attendance is simple: Entry to the site should be limited to those visitors who arrive in a bus, large van, on horseback, on foot, or on a two-wheeled vehicle of any kind. No automobiles. The only exception would be a car with a legitimate tag carrying handicapped persons. There is no hard solution since it's impossible to build anything that would solve the grievous problems afflicting the forest. Rearranging the parking lots and/or building more of the same is a waste of time. Soft solutions are required.

Golden Gate Dairy Issues

The Dairy occupies an ideal location for a gas station, restaurant, convenience store, or some other enterprise geared to tapping tourists heading for Muir Woods and Stinson Beach. These values are not lost on the NPS which sees the Dairy as an ideal spot for "visitor orientation"—whatever that is—which might range from a visitor center with a bookstore selling paperbacks and knickknacks from the historic farmhouse, to a sign reading "keep off the grass." Our volunteer fire department sees the site as an ideal location for a well-equipped fire station and the historic farmhouse used for administrative purposes, and claims it has the law and common sense on its side. The Ocean Riders, organized about ten years ago in response to a misguided attempt by NPS to get horses out of the Parklands, want more horses and stables anywhere in Muir Beach. The advocates of public transit want a bus stop at the Dairy and at the Muir Beach parking lot as well as all the accoutrements of a transit hub. It appears that money has already been set aside for the bus stop and the relocation of the mailboxes. There is no consensus on any of these matters but there is a marked leaning in favor of the status quo—ramshackle farm buildings, horses, and obsolete fire trucks and all. Nothing's broke, leave it alone sums up local opinion.

It is clear, however, that anything resembling commercial development at the Dairy will be greeted with a hostile reception as will intrusive transit facilities. Remember that the building of the Pelican Inn was fought tooth and nail for around 20 years with lawsuits, labor strife, and much drama. No one wants a repeat of the Pelican Inn struggle. If NPS wants to build anything new, it should tear down the nondescript, nonhistoric buildings it owns on the north side of Highway 1 and build modestly as required.

Banducci Ranch Issues

The issue here is the NPS policy with respect to private use of the Parklands and execution of the laws and regulations that require tenants to remove themselves when their agreements expire. This policy is reasonable and proper in the abstract

but appears callous when a popular and respected local family is caught in its toils. We have such a situation in the lower Redwood Creek at the Banducci Ranch. The Banducci family living in Muir Beach since the 1920s sold their land to the NPS and stopped farming when water rights were withdrawn. The NPS wants them out but there is no local support for its position with respect to the Banducci Ranch. There is considerable support for the creation of a small educational organic farm to be managed by the Banducci family and for expanded stabling for the Ocean Riders. The riders and their horses add life and interest to the landscape.

Slide Ranch Issues

Since we prize this facility the NPS needs to be clearly informed that any attempt to close or roust Slide Ranch from its present site will be strongly resisted. The ranch hosts 8,000

Greater Muir Beach Neighbors (GMBN) organized a community meeting on June 26, 2008, with the National Park Service (NPS) to review the Golden Gate National Recreation Area (GGNRA) General Management Plan proposals. The NPS encouraged residents to respond during the public comment period. What follows is the sample letter that GMBN drafted after the June meeting and urged residents to sign and send to the NPS.

—Erin Pinto, GMBN

July 29, 2008

To: Golden Gate National Recreation Area
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Re: Golden Gate National Recreation Area
General Management Plan

Dear Brian O’Neill,

The overflow crowd that met at the Muir Beach Community Center on June 26th demonstrated Muir Beach’s strong feelings regarding some of the proposed alternatives in the Golden Gate National Recreation Area General Management Plan. The community also expressed disappointment at the lack of collaboration in developing General Management Plan alternatives and great concern that its input may not be given due consideration.

We seek to maintain a balance between environmental stewardship, recreational enjoyment for generations to come, the nurturing of the social fabric of our community, and protection of cultural and historic resources.

This takes recognition that horses and barns at the Dairy, sheep and gardens at Slide Ranch, flowers on the hillsides, people and old farm buildings at Banducci Ranch, and rows

children a year and as the executive director points out: “The site has a power and a spirit that really resonates with kids. You can see it on their faces when they step off the bus from San Francisco or Oakland. Our setting is critical to providing a transformational educational experience.” We expect Slide Ranch to stay in place for many years to come.

Muir Beach Outlook Issues

The view of the Marin Headlands and San Francisco is impaired by the growth of eucalyptus and other non-native species. NPS found the cash to cut the trees around the Dairy. Why can it not find the funds to improve the views from a site used by thousands of visitors? Just asking.

Walt Postle has lived in Muir Beach since 1973. He is a retired U.S. Government economist.

of vegetables and Zen Buddhist practice at Green Gulch Farm are what make this place beautiful and unique. They are what make this area as attractive to our visitors as it is to us. Its coastal, rural, ranching history must be preserved, protected, and appreciated by all.

We strongly support this vision of the GGNRA General Management Plan:

1. **Golden Gate Dairy:** eliminate options for visitor services of any kind at the Golden Gate Dairy. There is no room! We support both the preservation of the historic presence of horses at the Dairy, under the auspices of Ocean Riders of Marin, and the continued presence of the Muir Beach Volunteer Fire Department, which protects the entire community, from Three Corners and Green Gulch Farm to Muir Woods, Slide Ranch, and beyond.

Ocean Riders of Marin continues a long history of kids and horses at the Dairy and provides riding opportunities for horse-lovers of all ages. In addition, it is committed to fostering outreach programs for under-served youth by offering them a chance to experience the thrill of riding a horse in the wild. Ocean Riders has shown its commitment to environmental stewardship by working tirelessly to minimize its impact in the watershed, and working to preserve the integrity of the land, water, flora and fauna of Redwood Creek. Because the co-existence of horses and fire engines is essential, but not always easy, any additional use at this site such as moving Muir Woods activities to the Dairy, installing an informational kiosk or adding a bus stop for the Muir Woods shuttle is absolutely inappropriate, out of the question, and will be strongly opposed.

2. **Banducci Ranch:** the cultural and historical integrity of Banducci Ranch, which has been in the Banducci family

since the thirties, must be supported. This includes the ownership/partnership role of Amadeo Banducci, who, as the last rancher in this valley, personifies Muir Beach living history. With his vision as a farmer and a steward of the land, he must be allowed to run his ranch and to pass it on to his family.

Ranches are run with farm labor, and develop a farm community of their own that extends beyond the immediate family. We support this long-standing community at Banducci Ranch, and treasure its diversity. These are our friends and neighbors, and must not be removed from their homes.

3. **Slide Ranch:** maintain, nurture and support the Slide Ranch environmental educational center where it is now located, on the site of an old coast dairy ranch. Slide Ranch is a gem for the whole Bay Area. By experiencing a working farm and garden, it offers many children their first opportunity to learn that food does not originate on grocery store shelves. It also allows these children to experience nature both on land and in the tide pools at ocean’s edge. This gives them a sense of the importance of environmental stewardship. This coastal site is intrinsic to the children’s experience. Slide Ranch must remain as it is, and where it is.

4. **Muir Woods National Monument:** Juggling the need for access to this venerable stand of redwoods that was created close to a major population center with the express purpose of being remarkably accessible, and the preservation of those same great trees, is a balancing act that we understand well. Our concern is that the parking lots at Muir Woods not be reduced or eliminated until and unless the number of cars using them has been diminished by the use of shuttle buses and parking facilities at connecting mass transit transfer points.

We are extremely concerned about the impacts of moving Muir Woods facilities to Muir Beach, and encourage discussion of land swaps with the State, where useful and feasible, to accommodate those needs.

In addition, we local Marin County people love to hike in Muir Woods! While we support efforts to restore the natural flood plain and create a sustainable visitor program, it would be a shame to replace access along the valley floor with a limited trail system above the valley floor that is “highly controlled and limited to designated areas and activities.” This

is not consistent with the need for Muir Woods to provide an accessible opportunity for visitors to fully experience the wonders of this great treasure.

5. **Trailhead Development:** We do not support any proposal for intensified development of trailheads with new facilities such as parking lots, restrooms or picnic areas. The wild, undeveloped appearance of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area is what makes it so spectacular.
6. **Interagency Coordination:** We strongly support the efforts at improved coordination with neighboring agencies and organizations to better manage the park for environmental restoration, protection of species diversity, and building resiliency to climate change.
7. **Public Transit:** We support efforts to provide public transit to the Muir Beach parking lot to lessen the impact of private cars. We urge the Park Service to collaborate with the County to provide appropriately-sized public transit for both local residents and Muir Beach visitors.
8. **Miscellaneous:** Lastly, we urge consideration of Shirley Souza Nygren’s request for a name change of Santos Meadows to Souza Meadows, and we urge the Park Service to work cooperatively with Bob Winklemann to resolve trail connections and pedestrian safety issues.

Sincerely,
Erin Pinto
Greater Muir Beach Neighbors

Erin Pinto of Greater Muir Beach Neighbors was the moderator of the June 26th community meeting with the National Park Service. She has lived in Muir Beach since the 1980s. She is an engineer in the field of water supply.



Residents gather at the community center to fervently oppose the National Park Service’s General Management Plan proposals introduced by Nancy Hornor, Chief Planner for the GGNRA. Photograph by Bruce Barlow

“Quimbra”

By Shirley Nygren

In regards to the meeting held with the National Park Service, I was delighted to see the community participation and support, yet was disappointed but not surprised by the “options” and rhetoric of the NPS. Not once was a simple yes or no answer given to a simple question.

My family has lived here at Muir Beach since 1924. It was truly as special a place then as it is now. I’d venture to say it was one of the first “organic” communities in Marin. We had the Rodriguess selling eggs, the Machados had rabbits, the Brazil family had beef, and my grandparents the Souzas had fresh whole milk and potatoes. Then, if your Model A or Model T needed repair, you could call on Eric Groneman’s dad Charlie. What a “Wonderful Life.”

Whenever my grandfather would return home to the beach from a trip he would always say, “La esta meu Quimbra,” which in Portuguese means “There is my Paradise.”



From left, Shirley Nygren’s father Joe Souza, at age two in 1925, and his father Jim Souza at the Souza Dairy, which is now Santos Meadow. A ranch hand is at the wheel of Jim’s new Model A.



Milking time at the Souza Dairy circa 1935. Front row, from left, Shirley’s godfather Manuel Souza, Jr., and Shirley’s dad Joe Souza. Back row from left, Shirley’s great uncle Manuel Souza, Sr., ranch hand, and Shirley’s grandfather Jim Souza

On several occasions in their presentation, the NPS mentioned the phrase “carbon footprint.” What I realized after returning home that evening was that since the 1960s the longest and biggest footprint left at Muir Beach has been left by the National Park Service. My prayer is that they leave the stewardship of Muir Beach to those that live here and cherish it as their own “Quimbra.”

Shirley Nygren
(A proud and concerned resident)



Shirley Nygren’s grandfather Jim Souza upon his arrival to America in 1915 from the island of Sao Jorge in the Azore Islands. After working in the San Joaquin Valley, he and his family came to Muir Beach in 1924.



Muir Beach in 1928. Shirley Nygren’s family sold the family ranch at Santos Meadow in 1937 and moved into the family home at 308 Pacific Way, the house near the path leading to the beach.



Shirley’s first Holy Communion in 1957, in front of Jim White’s house at 170 Pacific Way. From left, Shirley’s grandparents Maria and Jim Souza and Shirley’s parents Betty and Joe Souza.

Photographs courtesy of Shirley Nygren
Digital images provided by George Lindholdt

History and Purpose of Slide Ranch

By Charles Higgins, Slide Ranch Executive Director



In the spring of 2008, the National Park Service issued a preliminary plan for the possible relocation of Slide Ranch from its historic site. We feel that relocation is unwarranted under the language of the Plan itself. Slide’s tide pool exploration and education

In fact Slide Ranch is an “evolved cultural landscape,” to borrow a term from the NPS, and has been in continuous agricultural use for more than one hundred years. It has performed multiple roles and tasks for generations of visitors at its current site. Geological issues certainly exist—indeed, the name comes from the historic “Big Slide” that served as a navigational landmark for nineteenth century ships approaching the Golden Gate—but present opportunities for innovation and creativity. The land beneath Slide’s rustic facilities is a continuously changing landscape that requires and inspires creative design solutions emphasizing flexibility, adaptation, and simplicity.

Slide Ranch is farming on the urban fringe, just 35 minutes north of San Francisco, and sending children back to their

program, habitat restoration days and curriculum are all heavily oriented to the Plan’s goal of “increasing visitor understanding, awareness, and support for coastal resources through participation in stories and programs about human interaction with and dependency on natural resources.” The Slide Ranch site, perched above the crashing waves, inspires a sense of wonder and awe unlikely to be replicated elsewhere.

communities with new ways of thinking about food, soil, nature, and the critical elements of our eco-system. The Slide Ranch program is critical for making a connection to the Earth near to cities where so many people live and are disconnected from farming and nature.

Slide Ranch is an agricultural and environmental educational center located on 134 acres of coastal wild lands above the Pacific Ocean in Western Marin County. For centuries, the Miwok came to this site to gather food from the sea. Portuguese dairy farmers settled at Slide Ranch in the 1870s and established the cultural landscape we still use for the educational farm.

In 1970, the ranch was rescued from commercial development by local attorney Doug Ferguson and conservationist Huey Johnson. Through the newly-formed Nature Conservancy, a rustic farm platform was secured for environmental and experiential education.

The Slide Ranch nonprofit organization was incorporated in 1970 and later became one of the first Park Partners in the Golden Gate National Recreation Area. More than 8,000 people participate in Slide Ranch experiential learning programs each year.

The Slide Ranch program includes:

- 1) A national training internship for Teachers-in-Residence
- 2) Summer Camp for 5- to 12-year olds and Jr. Counselors 14-18 years
- 3) School and Community day and overnight field trips for schools from all over the Bay Area, with special emphasis on inner-city schools
- 4) Family days for inter-generational learning about food, ecology, and organic farming

Slide Ranch teaches visitors to discover the wonder of the natural world through hands-on activities and independent exploration. An engaging program on our historic coastal farm above the Pacific Ocean ignites ongoing learning so students realize the impact our choices have on the environment, food, and health.



A classroom of children from Leonard R. Flynn School in San Francisco got a surprise glimpse at the arrival of new life when one of the goat does gave birth during their visit.

Slide Ranch models innovative and simple food growing methods, inspires critical thinking about challenges and choices, and helps visitors explore new and old ways of thinking and doing things. Children are more empowered than ever to make a difference in the critical issues of our time—global warming,

the environment, hunger, food safety, and energy as well as economic and environmental aspects of food production and transportation.

We invite and include participants of all ages, socioeconomic and ethnic backgrounds, to an outdoor classroom where they experience a deep connection to and respect for the Earth, its soil, water, and the human efforts that preserve the land and bring food to our tables.

Visitors and program participants are not the only beneficiaries of Slide’s magnificent location and excellent programs. Slide Ranch has become an important national training ground for young environmental workers, teachers, and thinkers who come from all over the United States to participate in our Teachers-in-Residence program. After ten months working at Slide Ranch, these young people disperse to organizations nationwide to apply the knowledge and techniques they have learned at the Ranch.

Slide Ranch celebrates a style of farm architecture and working-the-land ethic that dates well back into the earliest days of settlement of West Marin. Our food growing practices, organic soil, re-use of resources, buildings and infrastructure exemplify a light-carbon footprint operation reminiscent of a younger world but which employ the latest tools of organic farming. The Coastal Miwok people harvested and smoked food from the sea at the Slide Ranch site eight hundred years ago. Visitors can examine the tide pools where the Miwok fished and moments later enjoy Slide’s organic vegetable garden, the pride of West Marin.

Slide Ranch honors the Miwok and all people in its contemporary efforts to connect us all to the Earth.

For more information, please visit www.slideranch.org or call 415.381.6155.

Slide Ranch, 2025 Shoreline Highway, Muir Beach, CA 94965



Slide Ranch Teacher-in-Residence Steve Thompson delivered a pair of goat kids while school children watched in awe.

Photographs by Caitlin Grace Finigan, Slide Ranch

To: National Park Service
General Management Planning Team—GGNRA

We have a great opportunity at the **Banducci site** to help manifest the *Redwood Creek Watershed Vision of the Future*. Please refer to this document, which was written by representatives for:

California Fish & Game
California Park & Rec
Marin Municipal Water District
Muir Beach Community Services District
Green Gulch Farm
Marin County
National Park Service

For instance, look at guiding principles (which are included).

Also it would be useful to think in terms of the Agricultural Park model as presented by SAGE (Sustainable Agriculture Education—see their website at www.sage.org, especially the Sunol project). The basic idea is that an agricultural park is a place that integrates sustainable agriculture and local community needs, natural resources, stewardship and public education in a mutually beneficial way by sharing resources.

Our watershed, because of its relatively small scale and its rich diversity, could become a progressive land-use model for how the National Park Service could work and partner with its neighbors and local government.

Components

- 1) Preserve and improve upon the **agrarian heritage** as it has been practiced for the last 70 years by the Banducci family. Work with MALT (Marin Agricultural Land Trust).
- 2) All farming activity would be **certified organic** under the auspices of MOCA (Marin Organic Certification Agency).
- 3) **Greenhouse propagation:** Build two greenhouses, one for native plants for Muir Beach landscaping, as well as for Muir Woods, to be used for species restoration, fire control and water conservation projects, and one for production of nursery crops and starts for field production.
- 4) **Field production:** Develop in scale with fragile ecosystem, analyze and improve soil conditions, create value-added product for sale, use packing shed and cooler. Join Marin Organic for technical and marketing support.
- 5) Plant food crops for **food security** for the greater Muir Beach neighborhood. In case of a natural or other disaster we could feed ourselves, and excess food could be donated to the Marin Food Bank. Work with Muir Beach disaster committee.
- 6) Develop a **composting system** for Muir Beach so we can process our own waste in a beneficial way. Worms could aid the process (with or without horse manure). Work with the Muir Beach Garden Club.
- 7) **Education:** The basis of education would be a working farm utilizing and enhancing natural resources. Work with Slide Ranch to create a connecting trail so their kids can walk over the ridge and farm with the Banducci family. Also, reach out to public schools.
- 8) **Next step:** Have a meeting with representatives from interested parties:
National Park Service
Marin County (County Supervisor Steve Kinsey, MOCA, U.C. Extension)
MALT
Marin Organic
Muir Beach Garden Club
Slide Ranch
Etc.

Sincerely,
Peter Rudnick

Peter Rudnick was one the founders of the Green Gulch Organic Farm more than thirty years ago and currently has an organic farming consulting business, Small Farmer At Large. He is also a board member of the Muir Beach Community Services District.

Beachcomber Spotlight: Firefighter Brad Eigsti

Eighth in a series of interviews with the members of the MBVFD

By Linda Gibbs

Thank you so much for doing this interview. I know you just did a lot of work for the *Beachcomber* and here we are again.

It's my pleasure.

You are a man of many talents so we have a lot to cover today. I would like to start with your artwork. What was the reaction to your BBQ painting on the cover of the July *Beachcomber*?

People loved it. People really liked all the detail of it and how I picked up everybody. I tried to pick up everybody that was involved in some way, such as the nachos stand and the beer booth. I just tried to make it really site specific and so everyone would be happy with it and would be happy with what the barbecue means to this community.

And the smoke curling up from the grill was really great. Yes, I think it was even smokier than what I drew.

Such a symbol of that day.

And the sunshine was such a symbol that day because the day before it had rained. It was such an important thing for the sun to come out.

My husband David thought he was pulling the *New Yorker* out of the mailbox. And then a friend was visiting and he said the same thing. Did you ever think about submitting cover art to *Marin Magazine* or one of the national magazines?

No, I mean I don't consider myself an artist to tell you the truth. I'm a landscape architect and spend a lot of time drawing. The artist work is all for fun. I've never sold anything. I hardly even show it to people to tell you the truth. It's kinda a way for me to remember events and scenes and I just enjoy doing it. So I don't not consider myself an artist, but...

I think that perception is changing with the cover on the July *Beachcomber*.

Yes, and it's a time thing, you know. That's what life is all about, especially now with me. It's a time for work and play and family. It's a challenge for sure.

You have two daughters?

Yes, Stella [age one] and Hannah [age five].

What medium are you working in when you do the barbecue painting?

It's light pencil, and then ink, and then erase the pencil out, and watercolor, and a little bit of colored pencil.

Well, the result is stunning.

Why thank you.

Did you study art in school?

No, I did not study art in school. I messed around with it a lot as a kid. I drew and drew and drew. I drew in church, I drew



Firefighter Brad Eigsti

in class, and any time that I was just daydreaming. I was in my own little world. I drew all the time as a kid.

How young were you?

When I really was drawing a lot, probably age five till fourteen or so. And then I still drew. I did take a little bit of art in high school, but then not in college. But then I got a degree in landscape architecture and that involved a lot of drawing. I took graphics courses and became a teaching assistant for a graphics class. And then I started doing travel journals, I don't know, twenty years ago, probably.

What do you mean, travel journals?

I'd just take a book with a tiny watercolor set and a couple pens and pencils. And whenever I'd go traveling or backpacking or anything like that, I would take time and draw the scene, so it really helped me see things that you would never see. There's so many details on the earth that people just walk past all the time and don't ever give it a second thought. But if you sit down and actually draw it, you pick up all those details, and for me at least, really remember those details. So with paintings I've done, I remember those scenes more than anything else. There are no pictures or photographs that I can remember the scenes as well as when I sit and draw there.

Because you were so intimately involved in what you were seeing.

Yeah, I get in my own little world for sure. It can be freezing



One of Brad Eigsti's 15 travel journals created over the last 20 years.

cold outside. I don't ever think about it until I stand up and I'm like wow, I'm cold, or wow, I'm hungry. Or my legs are killing me from sitting like this for so long. When I did my journals I did the drawing, all the painting, everything in one sitting. They would take anywhere from an hour to two or three hours.

How did you go from painting to landscape architecture? Or was painting never a choice in your mind as you became a young adult and decided what you wanted to study?

I never considered painting as being a career choice. And landscape architecture, I went to college and had no idea what I wanted to do. In my second year I went to a career resources center and plugged in my interests into a computer. It just asked a bunch of questions. I plugged in my interests and my responses, and it came up that I should be a park ranger or a landscape architect.

Amazing. Something to do with the land and the outdoors.

Yes, the land, outdoors, plants I guess. I don't remember what the questionnaire was exactly but that's what popped out. And so I took my first landscape architecture course and just stuck with it and really enjoyed it. It was perfect for me.

Where did you get your degree?

Michigan State in East Lansing, Michigan.

What kind of degree?

It's a bachelor of Landscape Architecture.

You're the owner of Imprints Landscape Architecture. We are meeting at your home office on Starbuck. How long have you had your business?

I've had my business on my own for nine years now. I worked for firms when I first moved here. I moved here about twenty years ago now. And I worked for firms for about six years doing all kinds of different things and then passed the state licensing test. From that point on, I just did consulting for years where I would pick up work. I did all kinds of stuff. I did resorts and golf courses and cityscapes and all kinds of different fun things. I got to travel quite a lot. I got to travel around the world and around the United States doing different resort projects. And then I slowly started picking up residential work and enjoyed

it. And the company I was doing resort work for went through a big shakeup. And by that time I pretty much had full time work on my own if I wanted it. That was about nine years ago--been doing my own thing since that time.

So there was a transition period where you were working for this firm, but then you had private clients in your spare time?

Yes, I was working for multiple firms and they would call me and say we have this project with this deadline. Can you work on it? So I'd maybe work twenty hours a week at a firm and then do twenty hours of work on my own. And eventually it got to be thirty hours of my own and ten hours of that. And eventually I just phased out of the other work because they were making a lot of money off me, and I could make the money myself.

I was on your website, www.imprintsgardens.com, looking at your impressive body of work, ranging from projects in Fairfax, Ross, and Mill Valley, to Tiburon and Belvedere and across the East Bay to Piedmont. How did you get the word out about your business when you were first starting out? Was it in this community where you started doing residential work?

Well it was really just referral based. I got a couple projects. They told their friends. They told their friends. I had some friends that were in mothers' groups, and things like that, and they told their friends. It was really completely referral based in the beginning. And it still pretty much is now, but now I work a lot with architects. Almost everything I do is referral based. I do almost zero advertising. I don't really want to get any bigger, at least right now. I keep it really simple, try to be available at home for the kids. And I'm gone a lot. I'm not here every day by any means. I'm out at meetings. But it's all referral based, and it's all people seeing the gardens, the finished gardens, which is what it's all about for me.

Because that's your calling card.

Yes, it's not the drawing. People do take my drawings and they put them up. Some people have framed them. Some people have done all kinds of things, like they're beautiful drawings and they're really fun, especially when I'll be doing a meeting and the kids will be around the table and the kids can completely understand what the plan is showing. And that's the whole point. It's a communication tool.

What else do they do besides frame the drawings?

Some people show them to their friends. Some people will take my color plans and will laminate them and use them through the process so they can understand the design that is actually being put in the ground. Because once you get through the concept design work, the drawings become more construction, like working drawings, and they aren't nearly as fun. But they're important to get bids and to get the project implemented correctly.

I make little copies, reduce them down so they're really easy to carry around. It's really all about communication for me.

Again, people think it's art. I think it's a communication tool to get a project installed cause again that's what it's all about is finishing gardens in the ground, you know. It's not about pretty pictures.

One of your garden designs in Tiburon was featured in the September 2007 issue of Marin Magazine (www.marinmagazine.com/Marin-Magazine/September-2007/Paradise-Found/) Did the publicity give your business a bump?

Maybe a little bit. Maybe I got a couple projects out of it. People commented. A lot of my clients that I had already done work for called me and mentioned that they had seen it in *Marin Magazine*. But I don't know. I mean I get referrals from so many different sources that I lose track to tell you the truth.

Do you have to turn work away?

I will not take on projects that are a certain dollar amount or they're just really limited in scope. If someone wants to do just planting design, and they have all their patios and all of their hardscape and that work is done, I don't really want to come in and just do plants. But I do do planting design for projects that I have started. I'm a very involved, very hands-on landscape architect, probably more than anyone that I know.

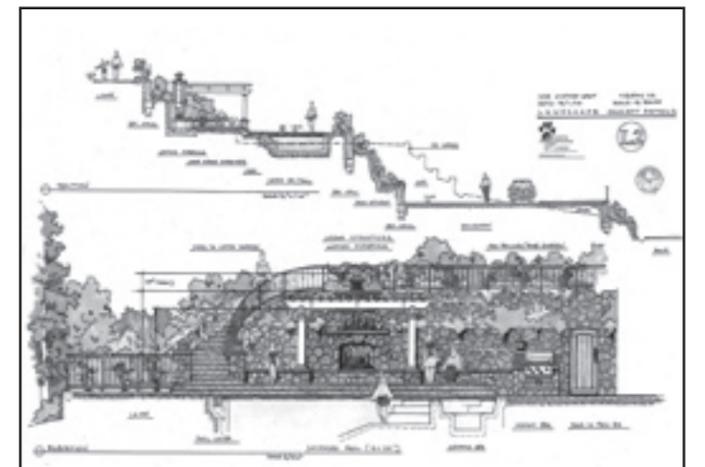
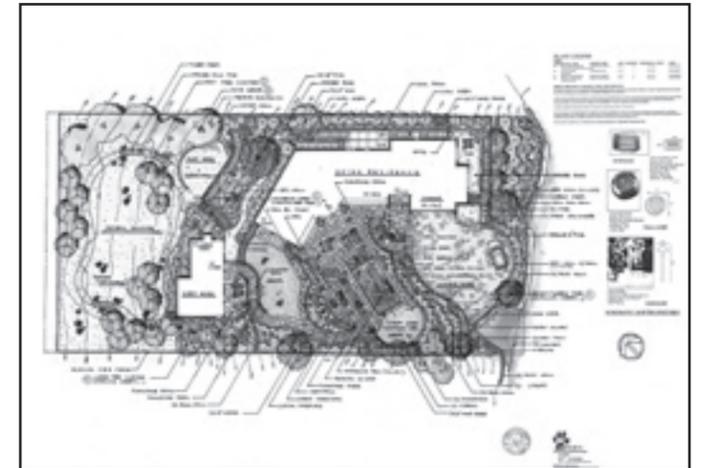
According to your website, you create fences and gates, fountains, planting, fireplaces, pools and spas, arbors and trellis, patios, walkways, and steps, decks, walls and pedestals. Do you ever design a piece of a landscape, say a backyard fireplace or a fence and gate, or are your projects usually a complete overhaul of an environment?

I like it when they're more of an overhaul, more of a master plan from the beginning. Sometimes I'll take areas of the garden that aren't finished. Somebody wants to add a fireplace and tear out a patio or something like that. I'll do that sometimes. It depends on the client and depends on some of the permitting process. It depends on how busy I am. I try not to turn down a lot of work because that's what the whole referral network is based on. The project may seem small, but that person may know ten people that have great projects. So I try to be very courteous and not have a big head about it. But there're also times where I think that people should put the money that they would pay me into their construction project, that they don't necessarily need a landscape architect. That their money would be better spent by putting it into their plants.

And that's how you advise prospective clients?

Yes, I always think it's good if you're doing any kind of hardscape or construction work to have a plan in place. Avoiding mistakes is such a big deal in keeping the process linear, you know, not going back and forth and pulling things out once they're built. There's a lot to be said about being efficient, and I say that so much.

How long does it take on average to turn a pile of dirt into a lush garden paradise?



Landscape concept designs by Brad Eigsti
Photographs by Brad Eigsti

It varies. I have projects where the planning process can take over a year to get through the planning department. Then it can take another three to four months to get a building permit. And then it takes a couple years to build it. So I have projects that can take three years, to projects that can take three months, where it's a simple fireplace addition to a patio or something like that. And I just crank out a drawing and get it permitted if I need to, and get a contractor lined up to build it and you can have a real quick turnaround, too. So it's a big variation there.

So the permitting process and lining up the contractor are services that you, as the landscape architect, provide your clients?

Oh, yeah.

And then you're responsible for the quality of the contractor's work?

Well, most of the contractors that I will recommend know what I expect. So if I'm referring somebody, it's because they have a track record. Sometimes homeowners bring in their own contractors and that's a lot harder for sure because they don't have expectations. And there's a real wide range of quality of work out there. But I'm very hands-on, probably to a fault.

I think it shows in the spectacular results that you get.
Yes, and that's the only way I can figure out how to get them is to be hands-on.

It sounds like it's a formula that's been working. And why fix something that's not broke?

Yes, it's a trick of how to not spend too much time out in the field and spend time developing new projects and to keep that whole cycle going, cause I could be on that job site every day all the time. But I have to rely on the contactor and the owner of the landscape construction company to oversee their people. I'm not going to tell people how to do their jobs. But I'm on job sites and there're always little changes here and there and working out details. It's unbelievable how intricate it gets.



Landscape architect Brad Eigsti, owner of Imprints Architecture Design, working on a concept design at his drafting table in his Muir Beach home office.

I'd like to switch gears now and ask when did you move to Muir Beach?

I moved here about eight years ago now. Lisa and I moved out here together.

How did you end up in Muir Beach?

When I moved to California from New Hampshire—I moved here about 20 years ago—I didn't know anybody. I had one friend and he knew somebody in San Francisco who had a really good friend that lived in Muir Beach. So pretty early on I met somebody who lived in Muir Beach and got introduced to a lot of people in Muir Beach. And I started playing volleyball and coming to the barbecue. So I've known people and hung out in Muir Beach for pretty much ever since I moved here. So it was really just kind of luck.

And you met Lisa here in California?

Yes, Lisa's from Petaluma. And I met her through a friend. I lived in San Raphael with a friend of hers and we met through her.

Fate is something, isn't it?

Yep. A lot of twists and turns.

How long have you been a member of the Muir Beach Volunteer Fire Department?

Pretty much since I moved here, eight years.

How did you get involved in the fire department?

Mike Moore coerced me to join so I did.

Had you known Mike for many years before that from hanging out at Muir Beach?

I had known Mike from the volleyball in the early days. When I first started hanging out in Muir Beach, I met Mike and I met Sutton [Freebairn-Smith] and Aran Moore. Volleyball was where it all really started. As soon as I moved here, Mike was on me.

Did you know when you were moving here that they would ask you to join them?

As soon as word was out that I might move here, yes.

Was it really clear to you that's what you wanted to do or did you have to think about it?

Well, it's a big commitment, for sure. And even back then I don't know that I realized how big of a commitment it was. But I was all for it. I wanted to be part of the community and I had seen those guys go for calls. I knew kind of what the fire department was about a little bit, at least. But I didn't think too much about it to tell you the truth.

What are your duties as a First Responder?

To be on scene, to help out in any way that we can. To be safe and create safe situations for everybody involved. I can do all kinds of things. It's really so scene specific and who gets there first. Every call's a little bit different. Try to stabilize, try to report on conditions. Make people comfortable. Scene safety, they say scene safety when we do all our training, scene safety is probably the biggest single effort that we do. And paint a picture for the people that are coming cause there's always the paid EMTs and firemen that are coming. We're really there to get them to the scene, and to tell them what is happening, and to stabilize and to do anything we can to improve the situation.

I would think that with your great powers of observation you would be very good at setting the scene for those who are coming over the hill.

Yes, it's a lot of training, too. And there's a lot of protocol in how you do it, too. So talking on the radios. Yeah, we try. It's definitely somewhat of an adrenalin rush because we're sitting here doing our thing and the pager goes off and every call's completely different for us.

Do you find that because you work at home you are able to respond to more calls than someone who is working over the hill?

Sometimes. It really varies a lot. A lot of times I'm home with the kids and Lisa's gone. I can't respond then. I'm not home as much as you might think. I'm gone every other day for sure, pretty much all day. And I try to be in the office as much as I can, but I am gone quite a lot. It seems like I used to respond more than I do now just because of my family commitments.

And I think that's true with a couple other people on the department, too, so it's a trick.

Do you have specific areas of responsibility and/or interests at the firehouse or on a call?

I am the guy that is supposed to take down all the information cause I have good handwriting, is what they say. So I usually do all the charts, fill out the forms, that kind of thing, for the people coming in. I guess if there's anything that—I don't know—not better at, but you can read my handwriting pretty well, so I typically will get the form out and start doing that work right away.

Well, that's important because I think sometimes when the pressure is on, people's handwriting just isn't all that good. Yes, it can get sloppy. And that's important because the county guys that do show up use that chart. And they take it from us, too, so it's actually part of the record after the call. So it does need to be clear.

Michael Moore said that summer is the busiest season for the department. Have you found that to be true this year?

It comes in waves. It's interesting. We might not have many calls for weeks or even a month, or even more than that. And then all of a sudden we'll get five or six in a week. So it really varies a ton. I think this last week we've had four or five. There's no rhyme or reason to it to tell you the truth. And the wintertime is when we have power outages and trees down. So I don't know if summer is more...there may be more people here... but I don't know if there's a right or wrong answer to that one.

What was the most interesting call you ever went on?

I don't know if interesting is the right way to put it.

Challenging?

Probably the most interesting, well the Mother's Day fire, that was interesting. We had a car fire once up above Green Gulch that we actually put water on and helped control it before it got out of control. I've been on a couple bicycle/car accidents that have been a little rough. And a couple suicides that have been not the greatest thing.

How did they kill themselves?

Someone jumped off a cliff, that was a couple years ago. That's a little disturbing. But it is what it is, you know. We try not to get too emotionally involved in it all either cause we go to these calls and we do our thing and then we typically will never hear anything about the results.

Do you not want to know the results?

No, it would be nice to know, I guess, more often than not, but I think that's just the way that it is. I mean we don't dwell on it or anything. I don't think, well, what really happened to those people. The call's over, and the call's over. That's how I am with lots of things. I try not to get too personally involved with business people, you know, with my clients. I develop great friendships and everything but I definitely set boundaries to how emotionally involved I can get in things and

it's probably the same with the fire department. I try not to get too emotionally involved with things outside my personal life.

Have you ever responded to more than one call in a night?

I think we have done more than one call in a day and a night. Occasionally we'll get multiple calls. I know I didn't go on the one last weekend because I was out of town. But I know there were two calls in one day for the same thing.

What do you mean, the same thing?

Sometimes we get repeat calls. Usually it's some kind of a heart condition.

People get scared?

Yes, I think they have anxiety attacks. But sometimes it's definitely a real thing where they have a little episode and they go to the hospital and they find out something's not right with them. And I think that sometimes we have saved peoples' lives by getting there quick and talking them in to going to the hospital. Sometimes you've really gotta coerce people because we can't force them to go. We can't force anything on them.

Has this happened with people in Muir Beach where you have encouraged them to go to the hospital and you ended up saving their lives?

Yeah, oh yeah. I don't know if it saved their lives because you don't know exactly what would have happened, but it led to a lot of things that they found out about their health, for sure.

Have you seen any changes in how the department is run since the passing of the fire tax initiative? Or is it too soon to feel the impact of those funds?

I haven't seen any real changes in regards to that. I don't think that we probably have spent that money at all. And I'm not exactly sure. John John's in charge of what we need, and he works with Graham [Groneman] and Jesse [Rudnick]. They figure out what we need. I think right now the department's pretty well set up.

That's good news.

Yes, we've all got brand new turnouts and new air packs, a lot of new stuff. I know that they would like to get a new truck, a new 660 like the little [yellow squad] truck cause the other one, you know, it's getting older, but that's a pretty big expenditure. And they want to redo the firehouse, which I've been working on a little bit with John John, doing little drawings for it, getting it through the park service, getting it through the bureaucratic process. I think that we basically have approval to do it now. They need to hire an actual building architect to take it to the next level, but I think that the conceptual stuff that I did with John John has been approved.

Well, congratulations.

Yeah, it's a big deal.

That's a great contribution to the fire department.

Yeah, so I do do that. Once I did an evacuation plan for the Pelican Inn and basically drew the whole Pelican Inn out,

measured it and drew it. It was pretty interesting.

Was that something that you did as a volunteer?
Yeah, I didn't get paid for it.

That's commendable, too.
Yep, I can draw better than anybody on the department probably.

I heard that you're going to push out the back wall to make it larger so the fire trucks fit all the way into the firehouse. Is that true?

Yes, so the fire trucks can back in straight. Right now one backs in straight and one's at an angle. It's ridiculously tight and tricky to get in and out of the space. It would make a really big difference to do it.

You think about the firefighter up on Throckmorton Ridge who was caught between the wall and the fire truck as his buddy was backing in, and didn't see him.

He got caught between two trucks, the bumper of one truck and the bumper of another truck that was backing in. I mean we have a worse condition than they do for sure.

You have two young daughters and a thriving and demanding landscape architecture business, yet you have made a commitment to volunteer firefighting. That's commendable. How do you do it all? Or more to the point, why do you do it all?

Why do I do it all? Why do I do which part? Why am I on the fire department?

Yes, why do you add that on to an already busy and demanding life. I'm not being critical, I'm just being admiring of the fact that you are taking this on as well.

Well, I made a commitment to it a long time ago before I was so busy for sure. And I feel like I need to keep my commitment up and I enjoy it. I enjoy the camaraderie with all the guys. And this community really needs the fire department. It's very important. Without the fire department there would be no barbecue. Without the barbecue we would lose a real huge sense of the community. And it's important to have a fire department here. To have someone close by when people are hurt or when people are having some kind of a heart attack or anything like that, for a familiar face to show up, I think we really can put people at ease, especially people that we know. And they rely on it so I just think it's such an important part of the community and I'm a pretty community-oriented person. So the community's very important and it's one of the big reasons that I live out here. Most of it is I made the commitment to doing it.

I know right now it's pretty tough. It's a really busy time for me with the two little kids and my wife going a little bit crazy with the two little kids and needing her breaks. And, you know, I feel guilty when I can't make drills or when I can't go on calls. But I do the best I can. That's what everybody does, too.

Everybody does the best that they can and it is a volunteer department and everybody's got their personal lives so it's just the way that it is and it's how that the department works. And hopefully there are always a couple people that show up for a call.

And usually there are two people?
Pretty much all of the time. I know it's gotten tougher lately. I know that the department could use some new people for sure.

Is the department actively recruiting?
Yes, I mean I don't know how actively. It takes a real commitment and someone that's lived here for a little while and knows that the fog is coming and doesn't just move out of Muir Beach. Or knows there's not a grocery store and then just leave because... There's a lot of training commitment. If you're going to do it, you have to do it. You can't go in part way, especially the new volunteers. They need to make that commitment and really decide it's what they want to do. So it's a trick. It takes a certain type of person to do it.

What type of person does it take?
Somebody that can step in and be a can-do type of a person. Some people just can't take the whole pain or blood or any of it. It takes a certain type of person to do it. I don't know, I think people would know within themselves if they're the type of person who could do it or not. 

Eigsti joins Quilters Arts Fair

Brad Eigsti has been accepted into the Muir Beach Quilters Annual Holiday Arts Fair the weekend of Dec. 6th (see page 28). Stop by his booth and say hello to Brad. His original paintings of Muir Beach scenes, prints, and notecards will be available for sale at the Fair.

"This whole Beachcomber thing got me picking up the pencil and painting more again. It kinda jump-started the artwork because I enjoyed painting the BBQ."

-Brad Eigsti

Photographs by Julie Smith



MBVFD Incident Log

Compiled by Paul Jeschke

June 7, 12:50 pm
Muir Woods
Hiker on Ocean View trail required medical assistance.

June 11, 12:50 pm
Franks Valley
31-year-old hiker fell and broke ankle on Ocean View trail below Lost Trail.

June 12, 4:45 pm
Green Gulch Farm
Check on burning stump.

June 15, 1:45 am
Muir Beach
Cove Lane resident had possible heart attack. Transported to Kaiser Hospital, Terra Linda.

June 24, 6:15 pm
Muir Woods
Female hiker possibly broke ankle while hiking Lost Trail.

June 25, 4:00 pm
Muir Beach
Set up helicopter landing zone at Overlook for possible water rescue.

June 29, 9:50 am
Muir Woods Road
Cyclist down near Four Corners

July 9, 10:20 am
Muir Beach
Starbuck Drive resident transported to Marin General Hospital.

July 11, 5:20 pm
Highway One
Car over side. Response cancelled.

July 12, 7:15 pm
Muir Beach
Visitor stepped on broken stem of wine glass. Treated and transported by friends to emergency room.

July 24, 4:15 pm
Green Gulch
Car on side on Highway 1 south of Green Gulch. No injuries.

July 25, 6:00 am
Frank's Valley Road
Car over side of road. Downed telephone pole and wire on road. Whereabouts of driver unknown.

July 26, 7:30 am
Highway 1
Motorcycle down.

July 29, 1:30 pm
Muir Woods
Medical response on trail. Cancelled.

July 30, 1:30 pm
Steep Ravine
Vehicle accident. Cancelled.

August 4, 7:30 pm
Muir Beach
Body of apparent suicide victim recovered from rocks midway between the beach and Pirate's Cove.

August 8, 1:50 pm
Green Gulch
Motorcycle down on Highway 1, one-half mile south of Green Gulch.

August 9, 1:20 pm
Muir Woods
Hiker had fatal heart attack on Dipsea Trail near Deer Park Trail.

August 10, 2:30 pm
Muir Woods
Possible back injury.

August 17, 8:00 pm
Muir Woods
Diabetic checked at scene.

August 22, 11 pm
Muir Beach
Starbuck Drive medical response.

August 23, 4:40 am
Muir Beach
Tree and branches in road.

August 23, 6:45 pm
Vehicle into bank. No injury

August 26, 1:56 pm
Muir Woods
Medical problem. Patient transported self to hospital.

August 30, 11:45 am
Highway 1
Vehicle accident at mile marker 4.

September 4, 2:45 pm
Muir Beach
Seal on roadway between Pelican Inn and Green Gulch.

September 8, 7:45 pm
Muir Beach
Body washed up on Little Beach.



Fire Extinguisher A-B-C's in Muir Beach

By Paul Jeschke

Water can't quench the fire of love and it can turn a small grease fire into a major conflagration. That's why it's a good idea to have a chemical fire extinguisher in the kitchen and others in the garage and sleeping area, according to the technician who serviced Muir Beach extinguishers on the annual "Fire Safety Day."

Residents were able to have their fire extinguishers checked and recharged for the bargain price of \$8 at the fire department barn September 27. At least 80 extinguishers were brought in, half a dozen by David Taylor who has them stashed "all over the place," he said, in case there's a repeat of a small fire that started in his home a couple of years ago.

The extinguishers are rated A-B-C and are suitable for paper, wood and most plastics, flammable or combustible liquids, and electrical fires. In the event of a fire, they can help homeowners douse flames blocking an exit.

Individuals without fire extinguishers, or with models that can no longer be recharged, were able to buy top quality five

and 10 pound dry chemical extinguishers for about half price, thanks to T. J. Wallermann of FireMaster Extinguisher Service.

Wallermann, whose mother, Carol Victorino Wallermann grew up in Muir Beach, said he has a special fondness for our community. Muir Beach residents who missed the one-day event can call him at 259-8622. He'll meet people "anywhere in Southern Marin" and sell them top quality extinguishers at a special "Muir Beach rate."



T. J. Wallermann of FireMaster
Photograph by Bruce Barlow

Illustration by Geoff Thulin

Muir Beach Homeowners Apparently Unconcerned Re: Wildland Fire

By Brent Smith

Endorsed by Muir Beach Volunteer Fire Department

Lynn Osgood of Firesafe Marin gave a two-hour presentation August 13 at the Community Center that was intended to help Muir Beach residents protect their home from wildland fire. Although approximately 18 firefighters from Marin County Fire, Throckmorton and MBVFD showed up to support the effort, only 9 Muir Beach residents attended the presentation. The lack of response was surprising, particularly since Muir Beach is located in the classic urban-wildland interface and, given its isolation, particularly vulnerable to wildfire.

As Ms. Osgood observed, Marin firefighters agree: it's not IF but WHEN fire will burn through any given area. As she noted, it is an unfortunate but inevitable fact: there simply will not be enough fire engines to protect every house. Firefighters will be forced to choose the homes that can be most effectively defended. For that reason homeowners need to give their home a fighting chance to be among the ones firefighters choose to defend. And the single most important feature that will give firefighters a base to battle the flames is A FIRE SAFE LANDSCAPE.

Ms. Osgood's presentation was focused on helping Muir Beach residents develop the kind of defensible space that represents the base around their homes that will give firefighters a fighting chance against fire. The issues involved building a fire safe landscape and included:

1. Planning: Assessing risk. Planning landscape.
2. Spacing: Eliminating "fire ladders." Creating a "landscape mosaic" of fire-resistant, drought tolerant plants. Spacing trees. Developing "fire-stops."
3. Watering: Choosing an effective irrigation system.
4. Maintenance: Keeping the landscape healthy, clean, and clear.

The good news is fire safe landscaping is not a directive to reduce your landscape to dirt and a few isolated rocks. Better yet, you don't need a lot of money to use fire resistant plants that are strategically planted to resist the spread of fire to your home.

The bad news is, to repeat Ms. Osgood's message, it's not IF but WHEN fire will burn through any given area. The Oakland Hills Fire burned 2,843 homes—790 in the first hour—and 437 apartments were destroyed. 25 lives were lost. More bad news: In October 1995 the Mt. Vision Fire burned 12,076 acres and destroyed 48 homes a mere 20 miles north of Muir Beach. But the absolutely worst news is Mount Tam is a tinderbox that represents an even greater wildland fire threat to Marin in general—and Muir Beach in specific—than conditions in southern California. The poor attendance at the Firesafe Marin presentation suggests most Muir Beach residents are naively unconcerned about the risk... and totally unprepared to take any personal responsibility in defending their homes, possessions ...and even lives!

For residents interested in catching up on Fire Safe Landscaping, see www.firesafecouncil.org. For more information on increasing your home's chance of surviving a wildfire, see www.muirbeachfire.com

MUIR BEACH QUILTERS



HOLIDAY ARTS FAIR

Saturday and Sunday

December 6th, 11 am–5 pm and December 7th, 10 am–4 pm

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

FREE SHUTTLE FROM MUIR BEACH PARKING LOT
nonprofit

"Lines: Circles, Spirals, Waves and More" by Kathy Sward
Photograph by Julie Smith



Muir Beach Quilters Holiday Arts Fair

Saturday and Sunday
December 6th, 11 am – 5 pm and December 7th, 10 am – 4 pm

By Kathy Sward and Judith Yamamoto



Wow! How is it possible that we're already planning for Halloween and Day of the Dead, Thanksgiving and, the very next weekend, the Quilters 2008 Holiday Arts Fair?

But, here it is! And the Fair is such a fabulous bazaar of holiday gifts and good cheer that we can hardly wait! We'll fill the community center with spectacular art, eager shoppers, *Beachcomber* and Muir Beach Volunteer Fire Association and Garden Club community booths, the yummiest food and most convivial of bartenders, Café Q on the mezzanine, and the Gingerbread Attic for the kids' creation of gingerbread houses—fun for the kids, and a chance for their parents to cruise and schmooze at the Fair!

Our frenzied holiday shopping will again contribute to our community organizations, and to programs and capital improvement projects at the community center and the Quilters' Vision Project.

Last year's Fair proceeds have gotten the construction of a new community center storage shed off the ground

(maybe even finished, by the time this article appears in the *Beachcomber*), and have funded our Vision Project for its second year. We chose the same three organizations to support as last year: Marin Organic, Senior Access, and Drawbridge, An Arts Program for Homeless Children. All three of these organizations have been overjoyed to receive our \$1,000 grants, and we are overjoyed to play a small but loving part in helping some of the people and causes needing assistance in our crazy world today.

And—at this year's Fair, for a special treat, we'll start selling raffle tickets for our incredible new quilt-in-progress! We designed it ourselves, featuring Yukata fabrics donated by Kristin Shannon, and setting them off with Japanese-inspired indigo fabrics. Tickets go on sale at the fair and we'll raffle the quilt off next year at an April Fool's party!

So, as always, the Fair is the first weekend in December and it's coming up soon! Make out your shopping lists, ring the bells, shout and sing, and come celebrate the talented artists gathered here to amaze you with their offerings!

NEW 2008 FAIR ARTISTS



A Card Produced from One of Charlotte Bertram's Original Sumi Paintings

CHARLOTTE BERTRAM, always a bird lover, grew up on a houseboat in North Carolina, and remembers swimming with her pet duck at age three. Years later she is again living on a small houseboat, this time in Sausalito, where, after having a nightmare in which she saw herself atrophying in front of a television set (which she promptly took to Goodwill), she began taking watercolor classes. Her Sumi ink drawings are made using a centuries-old meditative practice of grinding an ink stick on a stone. Her beautiful bird cards are made from these drawings.

CHRYS CAMPELINO will introduce us to his wire copper jewelry, full of swirls, spirals and weaves; this is his first year at the Fair and he brings earrings, pendants, and brooches that are sure to capture copper's mellow glow and zing!



Copper Fish Pendant by Chrys Campelino

BRAD EIGSTI, a Muir Beach neighbor and landscape architect, will delight us with his playful ink and watercolor paintings of local images, as well as prints and note cards. He is inspired by the unique beauty of Muir Beach to "show the essence of this special place in its present condition, knowing that it will inevitably change over time." Come enjoy his charming renditions of many of our favorite spots!



"Honey and Rascal" Watercolor and Ink Painting by Brad Eigsti

This year, **WAYNE HELDT** is joining us for the first time. His striking cards, ready for framing, showcase his artistic photographic talents, and many of them portray Muir Beach scenes which, as ever, warm our hearts.



"Muir Beach High Tide" Photograph by Wayne Heldt

Bolinas jeweler **DIANA LERWICK** first studied casting techniques at Parsons school of design in New York. She began with sculpture and painting, then discovered the intimacy embodied in the smaller scale of jewelry, and she was hooked! Her studies continued at Washington University in her hometown of St. Louis, Missouri, where she worked in metal fabrication under the renowned hollow form metalsmith, Heiki Seppa. She then went to work forming various metal embellishments to complement the glassware on the fixtures at Lightspann Illumination Design,



"Ocean Swell" Glass and Silver Pendant by Diana Lerwick

manufacturers of exquisite custom lighting fixtures. As a result, she was drawn to working with slumped and molded glass, and began incorporating delicate melted glass forms suspended in silver settings into her jewelry. She uses gemstones on occasion, but excavation practices across the world tend to exploit the people who live in those areas; as a result her emphasis remains on glass. She is also working with found surfaced stones and, most recently, wood. Her original designs and attention to detail, combined with her sense of personal style, show her enjoyment of her work. Her unique, one-of-a-kind jewelry is stunning.

Sonoma plein air artist **MELINDA MOORE** will show an enchanting display of her oils done in a style reminiscent of the turn of the century Arts and Crafts movement. Her impressionistic bird paintings are immediate and absolutely charming. These lyrical abstracts capture the beauty of "quiet moments" frequently missed in our fast-paced and busy lives.



"Muir Beach Trees" Oil Painting by Melinda Moore



Needle-Felted Dolls by Beth Nelson

BETH NELSON trained as a printmaker, and is an illustrator and writer. She lived abroad where her company, Printed Matter London Ltd., produced a range of ecologically sound paper products. Her clients have included the royal Academy of Arts, Fortnum and Mason, Harrods, the Conran Shop, Barneys, Takashimaya, and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. In 1998 her book, *Postcards From the Basque Country*, was published by Stewart, Tabori, and Chang; it documents her life in the Basque Country where her son, Tennessee, was born. Back in America she became involved in the Waldorf Educational movement and began practicing needle felting. Her delightful, beautifully crafted hand-felted dolls, toys and objects of beauty are made from organic wool roving, plant dyes, and sustainable materials. You immediately want to pick one up, at which time you discover the softness and malleability of the dolls. You'll surely want to take one home, so come early to choose the one that speaks to you!

RACHEL CLARE TEANNALACH, originally from northern New Mexico, has been living in Muir Beach and painting beautiful landscapes here and throughout Marin County since 2003. She has studied painting in Florence, Italy, and at the Glasgow School of Art in Scotland, and has an MFA from Scripps College. We'll see her paper works in sepia guache and watercolor, and her oils on canvas or gesso board. Sometimes highly textured, other times more refined, her work reflects her relationship with nature which she loves to share through her work. She manages to draw out the mystical elements of the landscape that enliven our soulful connection with nature.



"Evening at Muir Beach" Oil Painting by Rachel Clare Teannalach

NINA VINCENT is returning again after a two-year hiatus; motherhood doesn't leave one with idle hands! But this year once again we'll have a chance to snatch up one of her crocheted hats of many colors and many different yarns. They're really exciting creations and she makes them for people of all ages!

RETURNING FAIR ARTISTS



Tiana Loves her Momma's Colorful Hats

MONA BOURELL, who is a professional botanist at the SF Botanical Garden at Strybing Arboretum, is back at the Fair with her distinctive crocheted beads. This jewelry was popular in the Victorian Era, and then again with the Flappers during the Roaring Twenties. In the sixties, Mona's aunt taught her the technique using plastic pearls. During a six-month stay in Africa she admired the colorful beadwork of the native people, and expanded her materials to include a variety of beads, from smooth, faceted or iridescent glass to semi-precious stones, jaspers, agates, Austrian crystal—anything small with a hole in it! The bracelets are slightly elastic and roll gently onto the wrist. The necklaces are unique and elegant. Watch Mona as she crochets these lovely works and you will find yourself sharing her love of beads, beads, beads!



Mona Bourell Crochets Before Our Very Eyes

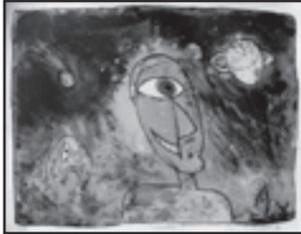
Browse and try on some of the striking pieces in the amazing display of jewelry made by returning artist **CATHERINE DAMELE**. Her creations of precious and semi-precious stones, sterling silver, 18Kgf and 18K gold are beautifully crafted, and she's always willing to talk to you about her designs—and yours!



Faceted Aquamarine Necklace with Keshi Pearls and Sterling Silver by Catherine Damele

CRAIG EICHENBAUM'S wild and irreverent lithographs light up the Fair again this year. Here you will find creatures from the strange world around us, from old fables and dreams, and from diabolical laughter. Here's an artist whose high-quality and distinctive work is just what's needed for today - and tomorrow!

MUIR BEACH QUILTERS



"Chuckie..." Lithograph by Craig Eichenbaum



Gourd Art by Judy Stemen



Carmine Giordano's Many Ceramic Jars

at Artisans Gallery, a Museum Award For Graphics at Washington County Museum of Fine Arts in Hagerstown, MD in 2004, and an Award Of Excellence in 2003 from Manhattan Arts.



Titia Heynneman and her Hindeloopen Hand-Painted Candle Holders



Arlene Robertson's Rum Cake In All its Glory

Watercolorist **BEN FARNHAM** has been in our Fair for many years. This year we were thrilled to see that one of his paintings was chosen as the poster for Marin/Scapes, an annual July 4th art show at Escalle Winery whose proceeds fund Buckelew Programs. Yay, Ben! He belongs to many local and statewide artist groups and his booth always overflows with his stunning watercolors, cards, and calendars.

FITTING ARTS is the work of husband and wife artists **CHRISTOPHER FITTING** and **JUDY STEMEN**. Chris is a sculptor whose work in wood, stone, and bronze is inspired by nature, and his unbelievably realistic pieces have been exhibited at the Oakland Museum and the California Academy of Sciences, as well as many West Coast galleries. This year Judy was the featured artist at the annual luncheon of the San Francisco Botanical Garden Society. Congratulations! Her striking gourds never cease to amaze us!

CARMINE GIORDANO'S ceramic sculptures and vessels reflect his unique melding of the work of ancient cultures and that of modern minimalist masters Brancusi and Noguchi. The spirit of serenity in these beautiful pieces reaches out to all of us, bringing their peacefulness into our everyday lives.

PATI HAYS works in various media, from painting to printmaking to ceramics, with each presenting its own challenges and limitations. Having lived in various corners of the world, international exposure has had an impact on her work. Visually, the interplay between light and dark, line and space, emptiness and massiveness, all captivate her. Dream visions are also an important source of inspiration for her work. She has been exhibited in juried group shows in both the United States and abroad, and has received a Merit Award in 2006

TITIA HEYNNEMAN, born in the Netherlands, has always been interested in Dutch Hindeloopen Art Painting, a style of painting that began in the 17th century in Hindeloopen, a small town in the province of Friesland. Her hand-painted wood and glass household items and collector pieces are real treasures. Come see her children's chairs, small tea tables, candlesticks, serving trays, and many other surprises!

Jeweler **SUZANNE MCSWEENEY** uses mostly sterling silver, but has begun working with gold, and also has added a few leather pieces to her line. She works with semi-precious gemstones and also enjoys the rugged organic look of stones. Rugged elegance describes her pieces made with stones and chain or leather. They are meant to be lived in, and work well for everyday wear with jeans and tees, as well as with the little black dress. She handcrafts necklaces, bracelets, and earrings in classic designs with a modern edge, employing asymmetry as an interesting and noted element. Her bold as well as delicate pieces are a pleasure for all!

MARIE PORTI designs and assembles spectacular necklaces, bracelets, and earrings made with silver and precious and semi-precious stones, pearls and glass; and this year she has added a new line of jewelry called chain maille, which she combines with stones in a distinctive and personalized way. The variety of her jewelry is an absolute delight to see, and each is a unique work of art.

Run, run, run to **ARLENE ROBERTSON'S** rum cake booth! They're all gone first



"Shadows at the Fort" Watercolor by Ben Farnham CWA



Chris Fitting's Carved Limestone Spiral Shell



Pati Hays With Her Stunning Work



Suzanne McSweeney's Freshwater Pearl Earrings



Marie Porti and Her Jewelry Shine at the Fair!

MUIR BEACH QUILTERS

thing each morning, with nothing but the faint smell of rum floating in the air. Those in the know are now so addicted, we can't get through the Fair without visions of rum cakes dancing in our heads....

LESLEY SEGEDY still loves bees, and we're so lucky to again have her faceted and rolled beeswax candles in every color. We know it's the holidays when we see them at the Fair, and remember how good they'll smell at all our holiday celebrations. No dark night is too stormy with a couple of these to shed their warmth and light!



Goodies Galore from Julie Smith

We love **JULIE SMITH'S** fog-dried tomatoes, jams and chutneys, holiday breads, and her bread-in-a-bottle. It all adds up to holidays overflowing with friends and family, food and laughter, and the kitchen warming up our lives. Stock up now with Julie's specialties and surprises!

MARILYN STILES lives and works in a Eucalyptus grove above Muir Woods, where she slab constructs her sculpture out of various clays chosen for their natural colors, and fires them to 2232 F. Her work combines nature, fantasy and humor, and it's loaded with the visual puns created by her unexpected juxtapositions of "critters" and "human" occupations. Her trademark turquoise glaze is as distinctive as the works themselves. Her Arch Fountain would be the highlight of any garden, and you'll love her "Blissed Out" lizard's wonderful - well, bliss! Her "Tractor Lizard" is hard at work - but no Stiles creature is ever anything but happy, even if busy—and, Holy Cow, that tractor!



Sharon Virtue: the Artist in the Art

SHARON VIRTUE returns with her functional and wild and glorious ceramics, making us want to get up and dance! Her strong connections to her own self, and to Africa, where she goes often to work and teach and help out, inform these beautiful woman-grounded art works. From large sculptures to small bowls, it's all here and so is our opportunity to own one! Or three!

HIDEO YOSHIDA has traveled far and wide, and his journeys have brought a feeling of timelessness and history to his work. His cups, vases, and plates are built with the tactile and time-consuming process of adhering one coil onto another to slowly create each piece, giving him great satisfaction and an intimate connection to the finished work of art. Even a single tea cup evokes the spirit of a moment in time, paused for our delight.

JUNIOR ARTISANS

LAINIE JOHNSTON, who some call "MissaLainious," returns to the fair with a variety of beautifully handcrafted items, ranging from quilted sachets made with lavender from her garden, to quilted potholders, ornaments, and cuddly stuffed animals. You never know what she might add at the last minute!

MOMO YAMAMOTO comes to our Fair for the first time as a Junior Artisan. Her papier mâché animals are created with a flair of originality and imagination and just plain fun!

MUIR BEACH QUILTERS

The Quilters are growing! This year three new women have joined us: **PAM MCCOSKER**, **LESLIE RIEHL**, and **JOANNE SALZ**, which means even more Quilters' art at the Fair!

COLEEN CURRY makes incredible hand-bound photo albums, journals and scrapbooks, and her small hand-built boxes of paper and cloth are to die for. Her schedule is so full that she's not promising a lot of items, so come early so you won't lose out.

CLAIRE JOHNSTON will again offer her fun pillows and wacky potholders, many with an animal theme. They're full of dogs and chickens and lobsters—great for gifts for all the animal lovers on your list, because in her work, animals rule!

Since retiring last year, **TAYEKO KAUFMAN** rejoined the Quilters after a 25-year absence. And it seems like only yesterday! Her beautiful hand-crafted notions boxes are decorated with fabric and Japanese Wasji paper, and she is also making lovable,



Lesley Segedy and a Thousand Candles



"Tractor Lizard" by Marilyn Stiles



Hideo Yoshida's Stacked Cups



"Pig" Papier Mâché by Momo Yamamoto

MUIR BEACH QUILTERS

long-armed Golly Dolls. She first made them for her nieces and nephews during the 1970s, and they are perfect for hugs! **FABS!** are lightweight fabric neckpieces which can be adorned with a vintage earring or pin, or worn alone. **PAM MCCOSKER** makes them out of printed, solid and holiday fabrics, and secures them with magnetic clasps to make on-and-off a breeze, and they are elegant!

OUTI ONORATO is composing her wonderful one-of-a-kind "Sow's Ear" patchwork purses and tote bags; the title plays on making something from nothing, as she uses 60% to 100% recycled, thrifted, and reclaimed materials. And she's piecing pillows inspired by this same "green" way of thinking, which is "so happening" and should inspire us all. And, as always, she'll probably have more surprises!

JOANNE SALZ's fiber art contrasts the initial impression of an image with evocative details: the fray of old silk, the loop of a thread. She uses waxed linen, vintage kimono silk, and paper to compose paintings that are both textile and collage. Each fixes a moment, pinned into a frame.

KATHY SWARD and **JUDITH YAMAMOTO** have created new and wonderful quilts to jazz up our booth this year. Kathy sells matted, signed, and framed to-scale miniature quilts in three series: 1. American Quilts: A Retrospective in Miniature; 2. Paul Klee: Fabric Translations in Miniature; and 3. Denim Blues: Quilts with a Southern influence—and, of course, her spectacular Art Quilts, lap quilts, and maybe a pillow or two! Judith will also have her prize-winning, often Asian-inspired Art Quilts, as well as lap quilts, and her Prairie Dolls, each with its own special personality; this will all come together just in time for the Fair!

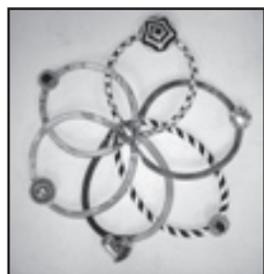
From **PAM BARLOW'S** magical creations, **PAM EICHENBAUM'S** dyed silk items and **NANCY KNOX'S** hand-sewn children's tetrahedron balls, to who-knows-what other fabulous surprises from **LINDA LOTRIET**, **LESLIE RIEHL**, and **ANNA TOM**—you'll be delighted when you see the booth our gifted Quilters share!



Claire Johnston's Lavender From Her Garden For Her Daughter Lainie's Sachets
Joanne Salz's Waxed Linen Textile Collage



Tayeko Kaufman's Golly Dolls



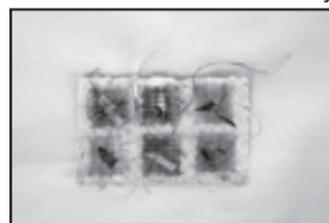
FABS! by Pam McCosker



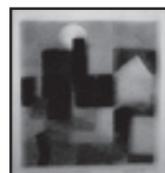
Outi Onorato's One-of-a-Kind Patchwork Bag



"Where Memory Builds Its Houses" Quilt by Judith Yamamoto



"From Klee's 1915 'Moonrise at St. Germain'" 6" x 6 1/2" Framed Miniature by Kathy Sward



MUIR BEACH AUTHORS

Muir Beachers write books! Our stock is going down, so if you're a Muir Beach author, let us know if you'd be interested in selling your book in the Fair (with a donation to the Quilters' fundraiser, of course). Right now they're all poetry books: **REG WHITE'S** "View from Sunset" with cover design and drawings by Larry Yamamoto, **RICHARD MOORE'S** "A Selection for Ruth," and **JOE CONNOR'S** love poems. Better buy one of these treasures while you can!

BEACHCOMBER

Linda Gibbs, esteemed editor of the **BEACHCOMBER**, will join us again at the Fair! She'll sell customized *Beachcomber* beach towels, as well as annual subscriptions (both mailed and delivered), and gift subscriptions for your family and friends. Back issues will also be available for sale; and she will happily accept donations to Friends of the *Beachcomber*.

MUIR BEACH VOLUNTEER FIRE ASSOCIATION

MUIR BEACH FIRE ASSOCIATION and **FIRE DEPARTMENT VOLUNTEERS**, along with yet more volunteers, will again pile their shelves with their wonderful and famous Dog tee shirts, hooded sweats, ladies yoga pants and sweatpants, ball caps and berets. Also, kids' tees and sweats and cute little onesies and infant tees, and stadium blankets and fire department patches. And thermal mugs and the ever-popular fleece vests! Load up here, 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!

MUIR BEACH QUILTERS

MUIR BEACH GARDEN CLUB



Fireman Matt Silva With MBVFD Coffee Mug and All Those MBVFD Shirts

The **MUIR BEACH GARDEN CLUB** will have even more garden delights this year! In addition to evergreen wreaths and herb wreaths by Wendy Johnson, they will be selling wonderful succulent wreaths for year-round enjoyment. Paper Whites, candles, decorated pine cones, Shirley Nygren's whimsical rock gardens and beautiful garden benches designed by Steve Shaffer will fill their shelves, and they promise even more!

Last year, as part of their wonderful mission of planting and caring for the community center landscaping, the Garden Club planted three beautiful maple trees, two additional redbud trees, and many rhododendrons, as well as a dozen flax plants donated by David Schwartz. If you would like to join the Muir Beach Garden Club, please contact Joey Groneman at (415) 383-2898 or Tayeko Kaufman at (415) 388-5018. They meet quarterly to discuss all things green and growing, and to plan their annual Community Center planting project.



Garden Club Beauty—A Wreath of Succulents

HOLIDAY ORNAMENT AND GIFT BAZAAR EXTRAVAGANZA

Children bring their holiday ornaments and trinkets to the **HOLIDAY ORNAMENT AND GIFT BAZAAR EXTRAVAGANZA**, and we hang them on the little "tree" where they are sold by moms and dads and other volunteers. You'll love these holiday delights, which are very affordable, and handmade-with-love-and-verve! Interested kids, start making baubles in your spare time, and call Kathy Sward at 383-6762 to sign up.

CHILDREN'S CALENDAR

You can't really get through a year without the **CHILDREN'S CALENDAR**, which inspires and cheers us every day that goes by! The money raised by their sales goes into CSD coffers, and comes out to be spent on the annual Children's Halloween Party at the community center. Call Linda Silva at 383-7797 for more info and to submit your drawings.



Shirley Nygren's Grandson, Kyle, Is Proud of His Gingerbread House

QUILTERS GINGERBREAD ATTIC

The **QUILTERS' GINGERBREAD ATTIC** is the place to be while parents are shopping and socializing at the Fair. Kids can let their imaginations go wild, and build a house or a castle 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 in 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, melding fresh California cuisine with a French flair. Catherine Broomhead and her Katy's Kitchen return to the Fair for a second great year! She buys her produce from West Marin farms and ranches, and ooh la la! Croques Monsieur to die for!

So here are 45 reasons to mark December 6-7 as the place to be in early December. See you at the Muir Beach Quilters 2008 Holiday Arts Fair!



Larry Yamamoto Waits for Bartender Steve Shaffer to Hand Him That Glass of Wine; Eric Groneman Looks On



Katy's Kitchen Owner/Chef Catherine Broomhead and Peter Asmus Serve Up Delicious French-Flavored Delicacies at the Gourmet Buffet



District Manager's Report – September 2008

“Let Your Conscience Be Your Guide”

By Maury Ostroff

In my last report, I discussed the Redwood Creek Watershed and the groundwater in Frank's Valley that is our water supply. In this article, I'd like to talk about the rest of the Water System and some recent changes we've made.

First, let's talk a bit about Water Treatment. From the well, the water is pumped to the pump house, where a solution of chlorine is injected into the main distribution line. As a regulated Water District, we are required by both state and federal law—primarily the Safe Water Drinking Act—to ensure that water provided is free from contaminants. For a system of our size, simple treatment with a diluted solution of chlorine is the most effective. The goal is to add just enough chlorine to the system for disinfection, and to leave a tiny amount left (called a “residual”) that can be measured. The residual chlorine is available as a protective measure should any minor amount of contamination be introduced to the system. We take chlorine residual measurements at various locations around Muir Beach, and make minor adjustments to the pumping rate so that we meet the required amount of residual chlorine.

We also add dissolved silica (soluble sand) to the water line at the pump house. The silica lays down a very thin layer of glass-like silica wherever it encounters corroding metal (like copper or lead solder used in home plumbing systems), and it also reduces the tendency of the natural iron in the groundwater to precipitate, which means that it prevents the iron molecules from corroding and forming visible particles. Most of us remember the water from a few years ago, before we started adding silica to the water, and the tendency for reddish colored water and ruined laundry. Silica occurs naturally in our water and our additions boost the level to help slow corrosion and to protect the natural iron in the water.

One last point about water treatment: we do not add any fluoride to the water. As the American Dental Association recommends fluoridated water for children, the suggestion is that parents (and grown-

ups, too!) can use any of the commercially available Fluoride Rinse products.

The big change we've made to our water distribution system is that we now pump all of the water from the well to the Lower Tank via a new dedicated line that was installed last year. Previously, we pumped all of the water to the Upper Tank. The problem was that some residents got their water directly off the line while the recently chlorinated water was being pumped to the Upper Tank, so their water had a high concentration of chlorine. We've installed a new pump at the Lower Tank, and we fill the Upper Tank from water in the Lower Tank. Everyone now receives water after the chlorine has had a chance to be diluted in the tanks.

Our water distribution system of water mains and service connections is divided into two zones, the upper and the lower. The upper zone gets its water from the Upper Tank, and serves most of Seacape and Starbuck, while the lower zone gets its water from the Lower Tank, which serves Sunset Way, Pacific Way, and Shoreline Highway. The two zones are connected, so that water from the Upper Tank can flow into the lower zone through various pressure regulating stations.

The Upper Tank has a maximum capacity of 150,000 gallons, and the Lower Tank holds 100,000 gallons. We fill the tanks to about 90% of capacity each night. It is not physically possible to fill the tanks 100% all the way to the top, so the effective capacity is always a little less than the nominal capacity. On average, we use about 27,000 gallons per day on a weekday and about 32,000 gallons per day on a weekend. Note that approximately 66% of the water is used in the lower zone, simply because there are more houses in the lower zone. This means that instead of having to pump all the water to the Upper Tank (a height of about 400 vertical feet from the well), we are now using more efficient pumps that need less electricity to pump the water up 200 vertical feet to the Lower Tank. From the Lower Tank we only need to pump

about 10,000 gallons the next 200 feet to top off the Upper Tank. The goal is to keep both tanks full for Fire Protection.

We keep somewhere between 200,000 and 225,000 gallons of water in our tanks at any point in time. If we use a conservative figure of about 25,000 gallons per day usage, that means we have about nine days worth of water, which we could probably stretch to two weeks with prudent conservation. I mention this in light of the inevitable power outages that occur with a winter storm. We have discussed the possibility of a backup generator for the well site, but concluded that the cost and unreliability of a large backup generator capable of providing three-phase power is prohibitive given the likelihood that we would be without power longer than five or seven days.

Getting back to our water distribution, the water pressure you get at your house is directly related to how far down you are from the tank. Those houses at the very top of Seacape and Starbuck get relatively low pressure and may even need additional plumbing to provide sufficient pressure. Water pressure in our system is strictly a function of gravity, which is why in many towns you see those water towers, which are essentially elevated water tanks. Water is pumped up into the tower so that gravity provides the water pressure to distribute the water to all the service connections. The topography of Muir Beach allows us to have tanks resting on the ground, saving us the expense of installing more costly towers.

The water pipes coming out of the tanks vary depending on your location. In the upper zone, the water distribution line is six inches in diameter and runs down the middle of the street (beneath Seacape, Starbuck, and Ahab.) Along Sunset Way, Shoreline Highway, Charlotte's Way, and parts of Pacific Way, the pipe is four inches in diameter. There are other sizes and configurations at various locations, but the point here is to give an idea of the general layout. Service connections to your home are tapped into the main distribution line, and then go through the water meter which is used to measure how much water is going through the meter for billing purposes.

Along Sunset Way, Charlotte's Way, and portions of Pacific Way, the water pipe runs just beneath the storm drainage ditch on the uphill side of the street. In fact, there are several locations where the water pipe itself is visible. This brings us to a subject of potential concern that we all need to be aware of.

No water distribution system is entirely sealed. There are always small holes, even if pinprick size, especially at the joints. In conditions of normal water pressure, the pressure of the water inside the pipe is more than sufficient to ensure that contaminants from outside the pipe aren't coming back in. But let's assume that a pipe breaks somewhere (it does happen!) and water pressure on the other side of the break drops to zero. In that situation, any water that can get into the main line from the outside will do so.

This brings us to our water's final destination on its journey from groundwater in the valley through the distribution lines to your home: your septic system. I cannot stress strongly enough how important it is to have a functioning septic system. As of this writing, it is late in the dry season, and yet there are locations in Muir Beach where one can see pools of water in a drainage ditch, right on top of the pipes carrying our water supply.

Various explanations and rationalizations are offered. “It's a natural spring” (in September??!!) or “It's just gray water.” Note that dumping unfiltered gray water on the street is also illegal. It has been observed that gray water from a washing machine containing phosphates is great for plants, but just because something is good for plants doesn't mean it's fit for human consumption! In addition to the potential hazard to our water distribution lines, untreated septic will follow the path for normal storm drainage through the various culverts and storm drains, and eventually end up on the beach, either at the end of Cove Lane or near the parking lot. We cannot pollute the beach in this manner.

There has been a kind of unwritten law around Muir Beach in the past to not get the Marin County Department of Environmental Health Services involved. Their reputation is one of heavy-handedness, and of requiring expensive and unnecessary repairs and elaborate installations. Maybe so. While the Muir Beach CSD does not have regulatory authority over septic systems, we are responsible for public safety of many of the roads and easements (including drainage ditches), and obviously we intend to safeguard the safety of our drinking water. I ask each of us to do everything we can to ensure that our own septic system is functioning properly, and that effluent is not dripping out into the street, or otherwise out in the open. I realize it may be costly and inconvenient. But how can one weigh dollars against the possibility, however remote, of contaminating our water supply? Let your conscience be your guide.

Community Center Update

By Laurie Piel

Hard to believe another summer has passed. David and I have been living here over a year now and we just passed one year as the Rental Coordinator Team. It has been a busy year and we have learned a lot about the community of Muir Beach and scheduling the Community Center. In the year since we arrived we have scheduled about 50 renters and brought in approximately \$14,000. We continue to try to organize and streamline the rental process.

Our proposal in front of the CSD board to require "over the hill" renters to hire a Muir Beach on-site facilitator was passed. The facilitators will have to be present for the duration of their event, including setup and cleanup. The facilitator would be there to answer questions and help the renters find whatever they need. There's no heavy lifting; it's really just a matter of being there. The facilitator would be paid \$25 per hour, so a Muir Beacher can pick up a few extra bucks. Many outside events total about 8 to 12 hours so you'd make \$200 to \$300. You won't get rich, but it'll buy some groceries and a good dinner at the Pelican. So we're looking for people who would like to be a facilitator. Since we have our hands full just scheduling the rentals, Linda Hulley has graciously offered to do the scheduling of the facilitators. If you are interested, please give her a call at 383-5525 or drop her a line at linhulley@gmail.com.

Other than the renters, we've had many meetings that have been community focused. The National



Celebrating a wedding at the non-traditional catering offerings of a taco truck
Photograph by Laurie Piel

Park Service was here twice to give lectures on the invasive plant program. And of course the NPS meeting to look at the GGNRA General Management Plan, that was very well attended. Unfortunately, the Get Ready Marin meeting was not as well attended, but Michael Kaufman said he hoped to have another opportunity to gather the community for this very important subject. Green Gulch was here to publicize their vegetable purchase plan. They brought samples of some of the veggies and their fabulous bread. It was hard not to ask for seconds. There have been EMS meetings, Fire Association meetings and, of course, the CSD meetings. We've placed a binder with the CSD Agenda and meeting packets for 2008 upstairs in the Library. And in September the Obama Fundraiser took place, sponsored by Paul and Anne Jeschke and Linda Gibbs and David Leivick.

We are also excited about the start of the work on the storage shed. The shed that is in the works will be very helpful to all of the renters. The main room is chock full of chairs, tables, and miscellaneous big things, i.e., a Ping-Pong table and a huge television set. When renters want to turn the Center into a magical romantic fairyland of a wedding, finding a place to store all of that makes for a bit of a problem. Of course, this is nothing new and has been that way for years, but finally, a storage shed will put this problem to bed. We've had some very inventive wedding planners. They've done some fun things with the Center and I am trying to get copies of some of their pictures to make a portfolio for people to see, and maybe put on the website. We've had everything from a taco truck catering service to bales of hay down in the yard as a seating area.

That's about it for this Update. We're looking forward to seeing what turns up next. Just a reminder that Halloween is upon us and the Day of the Dead party is on Nov. 1st. Immediately following DOTD is Election Day, so don't forget to vote...and as hard as it is to believe, the Quilters Holiday Arts Fair is right around the corner, December 6th & 7th.

Here's to a great holiday season and we'll fill you in with the next edition's update in 2009!

CSD Takes Over Volunteer Fire Department

By Paul Jeschke

A burning controversy about fire department funding has apparently been doused.

Pushed into reorganizing its budget and administrative operations, the previously autonomous Muir Beach Volunteer Fire Department (MBVFD) is being absorbed into the Community Services District (CSD).

Faster than a fire truck speeding to an emergency, the board of the Muir Beach Volunteer Fireman's Association (MBVFA) bowed to CSD pressure and voted at its September meeting to reorganize itself and officially hand off financial responsibility for the department.

The change occurred after the August meeting of the CSD in which Steve Shaffer, board president, insisted the MBVFD's independence must end because "the CSD is the only legal entity that can manage money generated by the passage of the parcel tax." The new tax, which was approved in February, is expected to yield about \$30,000 a year. The revenue is currently being collected by the Marin County assessor's office and will be turned over to the CSD late this year.

Since 1994, the fire department's operation has been funded by the Muir Beach Volunteer Fireman's Association, a nonprofit group that raised the necessary money to run the department's operations by staging the annual Memorial Day Barbecue and by soliciting grants. The association also prepared the budget. Its board was self-selecting and not officially accountable to the CSD.

In the new arrangement, Michael Kaufman, association president, and Bob Hayden, treasurer, will most likely join the fire department as the "administrative arm" and will help Chief John Sward develop and present a spending plan which will need CSD approval.

"If we are the administrative side of the MBVFD and the MBVFD is a department of the CSD, then when it comes to fire, other emergencies and safety, then our priorities are the CSD's priorities," Kaufman said in an e-mail message to the association. "Should make for a productive relationship."

Despite the change, "we're not going to get ourselves into micromanaging the department," Shaffer said. "No way."

The switch was engineered by CSD Manager Maury Ostroff who added Leighton Hills to the CSD staff in the newly created position of Deputy District Manager. One of Hills' first assignments was to manage the transition to the new fire department financial arrangement. The fire department budget currently runs on a calendar year and will have to be reformulated to comply with CSD financial requirements. The CSD and the fire department are undergoing an extensive audit to track down items acquired through grants but never properly accounted for on the books.

The fire chief will present the new department budget to the CSD once a year. Budget categories can be broad enough, Hills said, that "small changes during the year needn't be brought to the CSD for

approval."

MBVFA's Kaufman said the reorganization resulted in a personal "epiphany." At the suggestion of fire association board member Scott Sampson, Kaufman ran a brainstorming session with firefighters to identify their priorities. The result was a list of equipment, services, and training that "would help make our department and community better prepared for fire and other emergencies," Kaufman said. He asked the firefighters to prioritize needs on a list that included a new four-wheel squad vehicle, rebuilding the engine of the current fire truck or purchase of a new Type 3 wildland fire engine, a remodeled fire barn, rescue training, and live fire training. The department will target grants to support specific needs.

The association board will continue as a nonprofit fundraising organization and will continue to manage the barbecue.

In other board business, Ostroff reported that a search of CSD records showed that several unimproved lots in Muir Beach have never been billed the minimum monthly service charge despite having water meters. The board is considering a resolution that would forgive the back payments to property owners who may have been promised an exemption of the \$23 monthly minimum by earlier district managers.

The District Manager, who said he was trying to "straighten and streamline" CSD policies, said Muir Beach property owners who applied to the county for amnesty for illegal second units might be in for an expensive surprise. Because the CSD now knows officially about these second units, they will be "required to have a separate water meter installed" at a charge of \$6500. Second unit scofflaws who have not registered with the county apparently avoid the payment.

Ostroff said he was trying to "run the CSD like McDonalds" with standardized procedures that would be easily understood by his successor.

"I don't want to be district manager forever," Ostroff said. "I need to get back to my old job." He worked for a large financial organization.

At a hastily called meeting September 24, the CSD board approved plans for a new Community Center storage shed. Construction was expected to begin Oct. 1 and should be finished by early December.

The 300 square foot wooden structure, estimated to cost \$48,000, "may be the most expensive storage shed in history," Shaffer said in response to a question. The Quilters contributed \$5,000 toward construction and the CSD authorized \$5,000. The rest comes out of a grant from the Marin Community Foundation, which was funded by an anonymous donor.

The windowless structure will be located off the end of the Community Center deck.

Garden Club FUNraiser

Story and Photographs by Laurie Piel

It was a foggy Saturday morning as the rummage sale stalwarts assembled for the first annual Garden Club FUNraiser. Joey and Eric Groneman, Kathy and John John Sward, Judith Yamamoto, Outi Onorato, David Piel, and I set out the tables located at the juncture of Pacific Way and the entrance to the beach parking lot. As we huddled around the small table of coffee provided by Outi, we could only hope that the heat wave over the hill was going to drive folks to the beaches... and in our direction. Soon additional sellers Allison Pinto and Everaldo Cardoso de Souza contributed to the merriment. They are leaving Muir Beach and moving to Brazil where they first met so, while we aren't happy for the reason they were divesting themselves of material things, we were happy for the contributions, wish them the best of success, and hope they'll come back to visit.



Joey Groneman sets up her booth bright and early.



David Piel, Shirley Nygren, and Judith Yamamoto share a chuckle around the nachos stand.

We realized that we needed signage and so Linda Silva made signs and posted them down by the Pelican. Needless to say, one of the great motivators to spend money is the growling of the stomach. So, John John fired up the propane stove and turned out hot dogs to quell the hunger of the masses that we hoped would come. Soda, water, hot coffee, and hot chocolate rounded out the food options. The parking lot eventually filled up and we had people venture over to our little gathering and walk away with some great deals. As we packed up for the end of the first day, we were optimistic for the next. So much fun was had by all, that Janice Kubota suggested that we name the event a "FUNraiser" and a classic was born.



Waiting for the onslaught, from left, Coleen Curry, Larry Yamamoto with Sierra (Janice Kubota and Maury Ostroff's dog), John John Sward, Judith Yamamoto, Kathy Sward, and Shirley Nygren.

We started early again on Sunday and were pleased to see the weather was a little better. Nina Vincent arrived and added her wares to the inventory... toys, yay! No Rummage Sale is complete without a lemonade stand and sure enough, Hannah Eigsti, with some help from Mama Lisa, showed up to make that happen. Then Shirley Nygren brought her nachos stand and Bronwyn Chovel, chaperoned by her kids Sean and Charlotte, donated homemade organic cookies and crackers to add to the munchies available for sale. After spending two days in the fog the adults needed a little pick me up as well. Fortunately, John John had the way to warm us all up from the inside with some of Peggy Chiang's homemade limoncello, a lemon-flavored liqueur, and a special treat.

By the end of the weekend, the Garden Club had raised approximately \$900 and we hadn't just sold to ourselves... although we bought our share. Many of the buyers were Muir Beachers who came out to show support. Maury Ostroff and Janice Kubota, Harvey Pearlman, and Chas Kingsbury were a few of the locals who showed their colors by spending their hard earned cash. Coleen Curry found a pair of running shoes that just made her day. This year the funds are planned to go towards the new MBCC shed. Everyone was so pleased with the outcome that the decision was made then and there to have one every year.

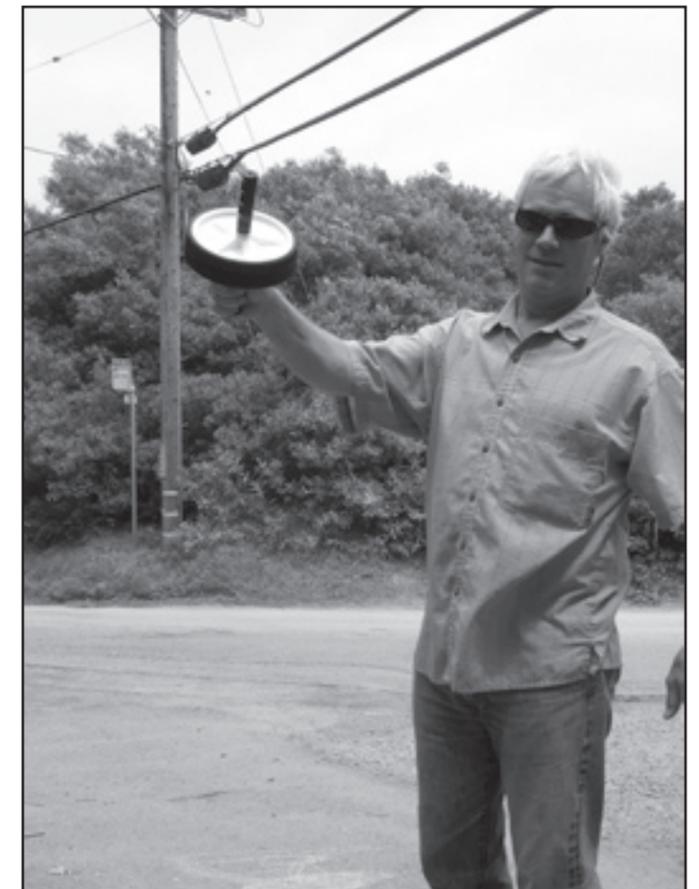


As moms Nina Vincent, Lisa Eigsti, and Bronwyn Chovel stand guard, the kids peddle their wares.

Starting next year there will be a Rummage Sale on the last weekend before Labor Day, so mark your calendars and plan to set up a table and join your neighbors for a fun and charitable weekend. Next year's funds have yet to be earmarked, but you know there's sure to be something here at the beach that could use a little extra help. See you at the beach August 29th & 30th 2009!



One of the busier times



Chas Kingsbury finds a good deal.

Green Gulch Veggie Box Begets Community

By Sarajane Snyder, Green Gulch Farm

With August begins the second month of Green Gulch Farm's "veggie box program" with our neighbors at Muir Beach. Residents sign up with us and pre-pay to receive a box of about \$20 worth of local, organic, picked-that-morning vegetables every week or every other week. Up till now the program has had little to no publicity outside of Muir Beach, mostly because it's only for people who live there. I want to highlight the Muir Beach veggie box program because it, to me, reinforces one of the deepest forms of sustainability: community. And even more specifically: local community.

As part of the Zen Center which is deeply rooted in *sangha*—the Buddhist spiritual community—and also as part of a global organic food movement which relies on its own warm-hand transmission, Green Gulch is supported every single moment by the efforts and energies of community that come from all directions and are ever-present. We recognize this energy, give thanks for it, and send it back out into the world as best we can. Sometimes, though, it is hard to remember this vast and often intangible network of support.

Compared to this, our neighbors in Muir Beach are, mostly, tangible, and it feels good to know them and to be known by them.

Communities: spiritual and tangible

There is a guy who runs on the trails through the farm at least once a week, often accompanied by his two sleek brown dogs. He never fails to greet the farmers with a breathy "Hello! Thanks for the great veggies!" which almost never fails to bolster the



2008 Green Gulch Farm and Garden crews with Amigo Bob Cantisano, organic ag advisor and friend of the farm. Back row from left: Sabine, Stephen, Anne, Paul, Sarajane, Amigo, Jennifer, and Sara. Front row from left: Samuel, Sam, Bianca, Qayyum, and Michaela.

Photograph by Samuel Fernandez Ruiz, farm apprentice

spirits of the farmers he meets. Many of the people who sign up for our boxes have lived in Muir Beach much longer than anyone who works on the farm and they probably have a sense of Green Gulch's past that we will never have.

Sometimes called CSAs (Community Supported Agriculture), farm-to-neighbor food programs vary greatly in their details. Traditionally, a CSA is an arrangement with a farmer and the farm's "shareholders" who literally buy into the land and come together to collectively reap the benefits. Shareholders often participate in decision-making and often physically help out on the farm. The farmer benefits from the pooled money and the extra labor.

Because the farm at Green Gulch already has so many people involved with its well-being and operation, we stick to a simpler vision: provide good food for our neighbors who are interested. Do they support our agriculture? Sure they do. Although in the past few years this support has been simply in the form of buying and eating our food, this year we hope to engage our neighbors in some field-walking, story-telling, and dinner-sharing.

'No small farms, no good food'

This coming-together, aside from promoting happy connections with each other, also bolsters sustainability in that it leads to a direct connection in people's minds (and hopefully in their bodies) that *this* food comes from *that* farm. They can come here and see it growing in the earth. They can meet the people who grow and pick it. And maybe they will suddenly realize, as is the zeitgeist, that all food everywhere comes from a farm. And that farms and farmers are the future. As the bumpersticker says, "No Farms, No Food." And I would amend it to: "No Small Farms, No Good Food." Recent bestsellers by Barbara Kingsolver, Bill McKibben, and Michael Pollen have all brought the small farm into the limelight and championed everyday eaters to cultivate their general food-awareness and support their local economies.

So what can you do if you don't have the fields of Green Gulch in your backyard? There are various farms that run CSAs in West Marin and beyond, probably with visiting rights. Find out where your food comes from, or at least wonder aloud with some friends where it comes from. Shopping at farmers markets is a sure bet when it comes to directly supporting a farmer. CUESA, who run the Ferry Plaza Market where we sell on Saturdays, is in the midst of running a great education and awareness campaign on food in the Bay Area. And even before all that, one simple way to cultivate sustainability is to talk to your neighbors and get to know them. Break bread together.

Sarajane Snyder has lived and worked at Green Gulch for two years. She is now at Tassajara for the fall practice period. You can reach her at sarajanesnyder@gmail.com

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Muir Beach Locavores Express Their Appreciation

Thank You Green Gulch Farm

By Shamini Dhana

What a Blessing, a Gift, ...a moment to ponder about our earth, its abundance of nutrients and how we are so interconnected and yet so fragile. These are the thoughts that come to mind constantly as I pick up the Tuesday Veggie Box and discover the treasures that abound us just around the corner, here in our own backyard.

Our family has been so grateful for the wonderful produce of Green Gulch Farm, the variety, freshness of produce, education of the vegetables and herbs and of course the interaction with the staff via email and in person. Many a recipe have we utilized



Paul and Steve work in the wide field of potatoes. Photograph by Samuel Fernandez Ruiz, farm apprentice

that was shared with us and I can only say, "Oh My Goodness... what a treat to our friends and family!!!" Not only can you taste the difference in freshness but the quality is stunning!

Many a time have my friends who live just over the hill in Mill Valley, Fairfax, Strawberry, and Tiburon have commented on the freshness and program (they have often commented on whether they can partake in the veggie boxes, too).

We make it a point to visit Green Gulch Farm at least twice a month if not more by foot and stroller, exposing our three-year-old daughter, Sasha, to the vegetables and the bounty of nature. She has a keen sense of the various produce and delights in showing off the flowers, fruits, and veggie boxes to her friends who visit and of course greeting the residents over the weekend.

Thank you to the farmers of Green Gulch Farm, to the time, love and organization of this wonderful program and to everyone involved in making this happen. We are so much healthier for your efforts and livelihood.

Paul & I have loved the wonderful variety of greens this year and have been enjoying our own style of Japanese Spinach Goma Ae every week. We use the standard spinach but it is also scrumptious with chard, kale, beet greens and even the turnip greens! Simple to make and many recipe variations can be found. In a nutshell, steam or blanch the greens, in a colander, press the excess liquid from the greens (can save this for soups, etc.), chop the greens, mix with sesame oil, shoyu and mirin. Toast some sesame seeds to mix in and sprinkle on top.

— Coleen Curry

How I looked forward to Tuesdays this summer! I couldn't wait to get up to Dee and Bob's to see what vibrant, colorful veggies awaited me and to see what special treats, be it honey, flowers, garlic, herbs and even fruit, were lovingly tucked into our boxes. Emails this year were a special treat; we could put the exotic names such as hakurei turnips, veronica romanesco cauliflower and purplette onions with the picture-perfect veggie itself. The emailed recipes were also a nice feature for timely ideas on how to make delicious meals from the produce we had such as Moosewood's African Peanut Pineapple Stew (no, GG did not supply the peanuts or the pineapple!). We are lucky to have such a special, local program run by our wonderful neighbors Sara Tashker and Sarajane Snyder and their crew as well as our other wonderful neighbors, Bob and Dee Hayden whose place becomes the veggie box depot every week.

— Erin Pinto

As a devout atheist vegetarian, I must admit that receiving the fruits of your labors in the form of a weekly Veggie box is about as close to a religious experience as I expect to have on this earth. How lucky can a guy get? I thank you from the bottom of my heart.

— David Leivick

Every week I exclaim, "This is the best cauliflower or the best potatoes or the best broccoli or the freshest beet greens I've ever tasted." Everything is still growing when I pick up the weekly Veggie Box. What a memorable locavore experience. Thank you Green Gulch farmers for your dedication and skill in growing delicious organic vegetables and bringing food from field to table the very same day.

— Linda Gibbs



Patty pan or scalloppini squash in abundance! Photograph by Sarajane Snyder



Summer squash and purslane displayed at the farmer's market. Photograph by Sarajane Snyder



The Critter Report: Weasel Words!

By Dave MacKenzie

According to Wikipedia (the *de facto* source for all modern knowledge, it seems) the expression “Weasel Words” refers to undocumented qualifiers put at the beginning of a statement, such as “Some people say that there are weasels in Muir Beach.” This is a common technique with television interviewers, who really don’t have the facts. Well, we don’t have to be weasely about that statement: there ARE weasels in Muir Beach, and many residents have seen them!

The *Mustelidea* is the family name for the weasels, and, in fact, there are several regular species that have been reported in the Muir Beach area: the Long-Tailed Weasel, the River Otter and the Striped Skunk (yes, skunks are weasels!), and the Badger. I once spotted a Mink crossing Hwy 1 at the creek bridge, but it was a fleeting view. And we may also have visits from Short-Tailed Weasels and a Western Spotted Skunk. And, there have been at least two sightings of Sea Otters just off the Muir Beach coastline. That would be eight weasel species!

Well, everyone knows the Striped Skunk, especially from those aromatic road kills. This summer there has been a family of as many as seven Striped Skunks wandering around Muir Beach, with sightings from Pacific Way to Starbuck Drive. I have watched a beautiful adult (what a tail!) very close to me as it picked through our



A Long-Tailed Weasel (left) was observed in Muir Beach this summer. The Short-Tailed Weasel is distinguished from the Long-Tailed Weasel by its lighter belly color and shorter tail.

compost pile. It seemed to particularly like broccoli stems! Watch for their telltale small cone-shaped diggings on the trails.

There have been many sightings of River Otters this year from the front lagoon all the way up the creek to Muir Woods. Apparently a family of Otters now in residence, even though the Coho Salmon population has crashed. I have seen River Otter tracks going in and out of the front lagoon (when the creek is not flowing out to the mouth) at low tide. Chris Gove saw a River Otter at Big Beach on June 15, and on June 25, Lonna Richmond spotted one swimming in the surf and then quickly trotting across the sandbar back to the lagoon. At the beginning of July there was a River Otter with two pups seen in Muir Woods and I had two more reports in early August. Another had been seen in the spring far up on the coastal trail, as previously reported (they travel across land regularly). Watch and listen for splashes in the pools of the creek if you are out hiking. They are fast to dive and disappear!

The other otter which has been seen twice in Muir Beach is the Sea Otter. This animal is much larger than the River Otter and basically never comes on land or into fresh water. It is usually seen floating on its back slowly paddling a hundred yards or so off the beach. Best place to see these guys is in Monterey near the Aquarium.

Badgers are probably familiar to everyone at least from nature shows. They have been well seen in the Rodeo Valley area, and I am assuming they occasionally come near Muir Beach based on many holes dug up on Coyote Ridge. They can dig very fast trying to catch a California Ground Squirrel. The old diggings are sometimes used by Burrowing Owls for nesting sites, which I have also seen on the ridge. Sightings are much more common on outer Pt. Reyes.



Dave MacKenzie has been contributing nature articles to the *Beachcomber* for 13 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

So that brings us to the Short- and Long-Tailed Weasels. These are really very small and narrow animals, and usually seen only briefly. A Long-Tailed Weasel was observed a few times in daylight this summer by Jim White on June 27 and July 7 along the creek area of Pacific Way. These animals breed in late summer, so maybe a family is in the works. Telling the Long-Tailed from the Short-Tailed can be done by tail length, but actually it is the lighter belly color of the Short that is easiest to spot.

The Mink is small like the Short- and Long-Tailed Weasels, but overall warm brown. They are also pretty fast, and might be seen at night crossing the highway. The small Spotted Skunk has many more stripes on the back than the larger Striped Skunk, which is our common skunk.

By the way, the reason we use the term “weasel words,” instead of “dolphin words,” or something else (again, according to Wiki), is that weasels can suck out the interior good stuff from an egg, leaving it hollow but appearing intact. Thus weasel words can suck out the integrity of a statement!

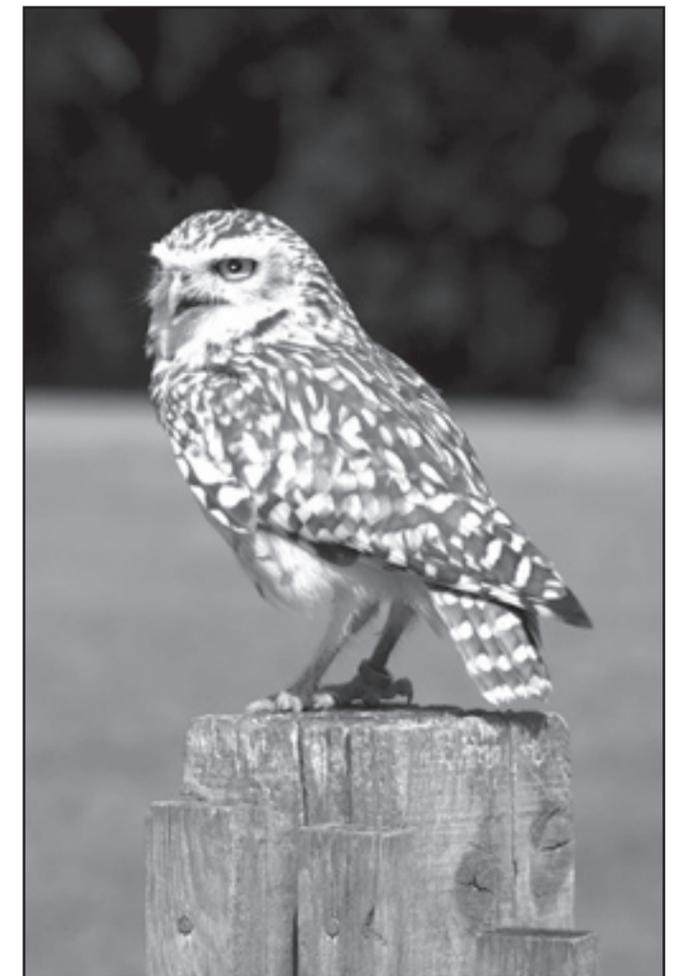
A few more sightings this summer are worth reporting. On June 13 two Spotted Owlets were seen just below Muir Woods. Two baby Barred Owls were also being seen by tourists in Muir Woods further up the creek about the same time. Over the summer there were also many reports of up to four Grey Foxes at a time in various parts of Muir Beach. A white-Breasted Nuthatch (a small bird which hunts for insects by crawling on tree trunks) was seen for the first time in Muir Beach on July 1. And there were several Mountain Lion reports from the Miwok and Coastal trail areas around



Badgers can dig very fast when hunting for a California Ground Squirrel.

Tennessee Valley in early August; none confirmed by photos or sketches, however. Coyotes were here and there as usual.

So keep your eyes open and please call in your reports to me as we go through the fall migrations and into winter, since so many new critters show up in Muir Beach!



A Burrowing Owl sometimes uses a Badger’s old diggings for a nesting site.

Egret sketch by Dave MacKenzie



Gardening at Nature's Edge - Escaped Landscape Plants

By Tanya Baxter

Plant Biologist for GGNRA and Muir Woods

The Muir Beach community is fortunate to be surrounded by an incredibly rich landscape. The surrounding hills are home to one of the most diverse coastal grasslands in the world. How we landscape our community has a huge impact on this open space. Many of the landscape plants in our yards are selected for hardy and rapid establishment in our climate. However, some of these plants are spreading into the surrounding wildlands and are considered invasive species. They crowd out native plants, are typically unpalatable to native wildlife and can severely disrupt natural processes.

French broom and eucalyptus are examples of common invasive species we can see spreading across the landscape. However, the seeds of some invasives are spread by wind, wildlife, and people traveling far from the parent plant. Listed here are three plants residents should be aware of controlling on their properties.

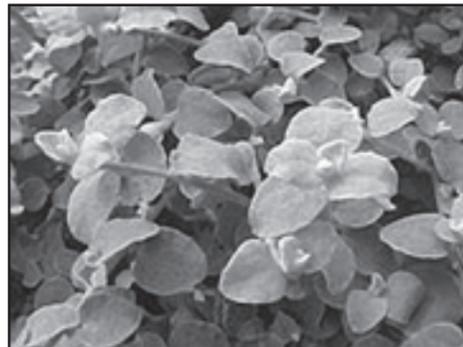
Pampas and jubata grass (*Cortaderia jubata*) plumes produce up to 10,000 seeds that can travel up to a mile from the parent plant. The flowering plumes currently in bloom this fall can be clipped and bagged. The roots are shallow, and when trimmed back can be divided into clumps with an ax and uprooted easily.

Licorice plant (*Helichrysum petiolare*) is an en vogue landscaping shrub with fuzzy round white-green leaves found around many Muir Beach homes.



Native to South America, jubata grass seeds can spread one-half mile to a mile from parent plant along the coast. Photograph courtesy of Golden Gate National Recreation Area

This shrub, as well as jubata grass, has been found as far as Deer Park Fire Road by Muir Woods where the forest edge on the grassy ridge acts as a net for the windborne seeds. The infestation on state park land above Stinson Beach is the largest in all of California. To prevent this from happening at Muir Beach, residents are highly encouraged to remove licorice plant from their yards.



Licorice plant is a wind disperse plant that is common in Muir Beach yards. It can be found spreading on the Heather cutoff trail. Photograph courtesy of Missouri Botanical Garden

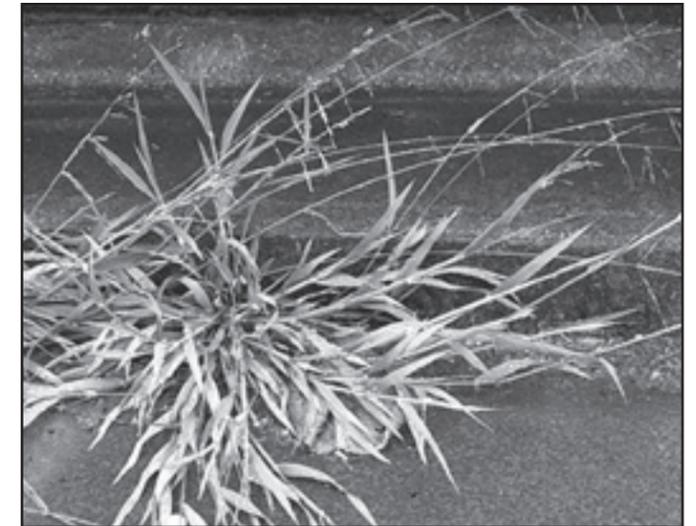
Panic veldt grass (*Ehrharta erecta*) is a perennial grass from South Africa that first appeared in the park one decade ago. This crabgrass-like plant produces tiny seeds up to three to six times a year and is Muir Woods and GGNRA's newest and fastest moving invader. It is moving out from urban areas, and is such an aggressive weed that it out-competes dandelions in sidewalk cracks. The seeds are mainly spread by boots, tires, and landscaping tools. To help prevent the spread of seeds, mud should be cleaned



Licorice plant (white vegetation) spreading above Stinson Beach community in the 90s. This infestation is currently much smaller due to efforts by State parks. Photograph by Maria Alvarez

from boots before hiking, and landscapers should be asked to clean their equipment before working in your yard.

Currently, GGNRA and state park staff are collaborating to control these invasive plant species in the Redwood Creek watershed. Both agencies have spent over \$40,000 controlling jubata grass and licorice plant this summer alone. Muir Woods staff have spent a similar amount of money and hundreds of volunteer hours controlling panic veldt grass over the past two years. Your efforts in controlling these plants on your property helps us manage them in the parks. For more information on invasive plants check out www.cal-ipc.org or to volunteer contact GGNRA Natural Resources staff at 331-0732.



Panic veldt grass's tiny seeds spread by shoes and landscape tools. Photograph by Elizabeth Speith

A Time For Action

By Erin Pinto

Following on the heels of the June Terwilliger Grove Broom Pull, Chris Friedel, neighbor, restoration ecologist, and manager of the Muir Woods Native Plant Nursery and Tanya Baxter, Plant Biologist with the National Park Service gave a presentation on native, exotic, and invasive plants at Muir Beach on July 13th. About 25 neighbors attended this session or the previous one in the Spring.

Key issues for discussion were:

1. What does it mean to have a garden in the middle of a National Park?
2. How do our backyards affect the surrounding landscape?
3. How can we improve wildlife habitat around our homes?

Tanya and Chris showed photos of the spread of invasive plants to surrounding native parklands and emphasized the important role of bordering communities in protecting native species habitats in and around the park. Photos of some invasive plants such as Licorice plant and Mexican Fleabane drew groans from the audience as it turns out we've become attached to some of these plants we should be pulling out.

The most common invasive plants around Muir Beach are likely French Broom, Pampas Grass, Cape Ivy, Panic Veldt Grass, and Kikuyu Grass. These plants can spread beyond our yards quickly, create a monoculture, and

crowd out the native plants that local wildlife relies on for food and shelter. Chris also pointed out that invasive species are commonly spread from yard to yard by tools, such as weed eaters and even on people's clothes and shoes.

Once invasive species spread, they are very difficult and labor intensive to eliminate (and the Park Service doesn't have the needed resources to get an upper hand on controlling these runaway plants on public land). This is truly a case where an ounce of prevention is worth at least a pound of cure.

Fortunately, it wasn't all doom and gloom. There were some spectacular photos of native plants that we can grow here at the beach, including grasses, flowering currants, asters, several beautiful flowering trees, and much more. In addition to clearing out invasives and allowing the natives to naturally repopulate, we can give nature a boost and play Darwin by planting natives of our choosing. Places to look for these seeds or plants include Larner's in Bolinas, North Coast Native Nursery in Petaluma, and Sonoma Horticultural Nursery in Sebastopol. Benefits to growing natives include drought tolerance, deer resistance (once established), and attraction of insects such as butterflies and hummingbirds (free entertainment right outside your window). Thanks, Chris and Tanya, for the enlightening and compelling presentation.



Neighbors Clean Up Terwilliger Butterfly Grove

By Chris Friedel

On the morning of Saturday, June 21st, several Muir Beach neighbors lent a hand towards clearing French broom from the Terwilliger Grove, above the intersection of Lagoon Drive and Pacific Way. Before the event, Erin Pinto sent emails and made flyers. Everaldo Cardosa de Souza was there working before anyone else showed up. Bonnie and Dave MacKenzie, Jim White, Kathy Sward, and yours truly rounded out the team.

Over the course of about three hours of work, we made three large mounds of pulled broom, which Jim White assured us would make great habitat for woodrats, which in turn would feed our neighborhood raptor population. The removal of the broom opened up a nice view down to the creek from the hillside path. As we worked, we uncovered the old path steps to the south of the existing path, as well as numerous small native plants that had been shaded by the broom, including twinberry, pacific coast aster, native blackberry, osoberry, maple, bay laurel, and coast live oak.

The Terwilliger Grove was acquired by Audubon Canyon Ranch (ACR) in 1973, in order to protect overwintering monarch butterflies that often visited its Monterey cypress trees. It was named in honor of Mrs. Elizabeth Terwilliger, the beloved Marin County environmental educator. The population of monarchs using the grove has fluctuated over the years. According to Skip Schwartz of ACR, butterflies in such groves are sensitive to wind patterns—which change when trees in the grove or



Pile of pulled French broom alongside the path through the Terwilliger Grove.
Photograph by Chris Friedel

French broom is one of the most familiar invasive plants in Marin County. Most Marin school children have helped remove it on a class field trip, and many Muir Beachers have been removing it from their own gardens for years. It is common in disturbed areas, like road cuts, but it can also colonize grasslands and open canopy forest. French broom is native to the Mediterranean and was probably introduced to the Bay Area in the mid-1800s as an ornamental. A medium-sized shrub can produce over 8,000 seeds per year, and the explosive popping of a ripe seed pod can fling the seeds up to four meters away. The hard seeds are long-lived, making the seedbank hard to eradicate.

This incredibly successful invader can cause a whole host of problems. It is a strong competitor and often creates dense monocultural stands. Its foliage and seeds are strongly toxic to herbivorous animals, and its growth can degrade wildlife habitat by displacing native forage species. French broom is believed to be responsible for reducing arthropod populations by one-third in the Golden Gate National Recreation Area. It also burns readily and can carry fire to the tree canopy, increasing both the frequency and intensity of fires.

neighboring trees grow or fall—as well as to anything that “molests” the butterflies the season before. In coming years, ACR plans to see the grove restored to native vegetation, with trees that enhance suitability of the site for monarchs.

Many thanks to those who helped remove French broom from the Terwilliger Grove, and to those who tirelessly work to remove it from their own property and other sites in the watershed. Stay tuned for further opportunities to help restore habitat for native plants and animals in the Muir Beach area!

Chris Friedel lives in Muir Beach and works for the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy, managing the Redwood Creek Native Plant Nursery and Habitat Restoration Program. He is always looking for volunteer support, and holds regular drop-in volunteer programs every Wednesday and Saturday, from 10 am to 1 pm. For more information, visit www.parksconservancy.org, or call Chris at (415) 383-4390.

“David Taylor, a psychiatrist living in California decided to forgo a bar mitzvah for his son, Virgil, in 2006, in favor of a three-week trip to Tanzania with Global Citizens Network, a nonprofit volunteer organization based in Minnesota that welcomes families. “Part of my motivation was to expose him to what the world is like and make him think about what he can do to shape it,” said Dr. Taylor, who, along with his son and a team of volunteers, split rocks to help prepare a new school building site in a hill town. “It was daunting,” said Dr. Taylor, remembering the lack of books and teachers at the local school, which led to his son’s running an art class with the supplies they had brought over with them.”

—From “Trips to Help Shape the World” in the *New York Times*:
<http://travel.nytimes.com/2007/12/09/travel/09family.html>

The Return of the Jew of Kilomeni and Other Stories

By David H. Taylor, MD

Back in Kilomeni for a second time. I travel 9,000 miles from home and go right back to the same tiny mountain village. Actually unsurprising given my penchant for routine: same turkey sandwich every single day, same yoga classes, same chickens to feed every morning, same patients. While there isn’t much more to learn about a turkey sandwich, there is a great deal to be gained from returning to a place like Kilomeni. In fact I could return a dozen more times before I had an inkling of what is really going on in that community. Turns out the same is true of Muir Beach and I live here.

If you don’t want to read the rest of this bulletin, then you will be pleased to know that all is well in Tanzania, not much new in the village really. The beautiful new home for the nuns remains unfinished as it was two years ago, the beautiful tree in the church courtyard has come down to make way for a monument to the Virgin. What’s new: more people have cell phones and everyone is an Obama supporter (except the local priest who is a Bush supporter!). Ominously someone remarked that Obama is from the Luo tribe and “everyone knows the Luo are arrogant”...I hope this African swiftboating doesn’t reach here before November.

We were a smaller group this time and, as it turned out, a very congenial and cohesive group. It was strange to be back in Kilomeni without Virgil since all my recollections and images from that time are bound up with memories of him. He had a cool summer anyway working at a printmaking shop in San Francisco. Needless to say it was a bit less wonderful being there without him.

After a day’s delay we headed up into the North Pare Mountains in the trusty parish Land Cruiser accompanied by the elderly Brother Camillus who mercifully isn’t driving any longer. The road up to Kilomeni is always a treat and in particular it was amusing to watch the newcomers jostled and frazzled as we inched up the steep road in first gear. In some ways the road resembles our own Hwy 1 with its endless switchbacks, but only if you can imagine the pavement replaced with a much steeper, rutted, washed out streambed. Climbing up this road is what SUVs were designed to do and our experienced Tanzanian drivers don’t even bother to engage the four wheel drive. I can only imagine what it must be like to drive this road in the rainy season. In any event it takes nearly an hour to go about 10 miles uphill or longer if you include inevitable stops to pick people up, gossip, wait for herds of cattle or goats to cross. The cost of fuel has risen everywhere and this one-way trip cost nearly \$50 worth of diesel. Needless to say no one in the area has that kind of walking around money. There



Masai Boy
Photograph by Virgil Taylor

TRAVEL

are only two functioning vehicles in Kilomeni and so the 5,000 people there don't go for many drives.

June is midwinter in TZ and while the rains had stopped in May the countryside, arid in the valleys, was very green and lush in the hills. Much more verdant than I recalled as we had been there in late summer and all had been much drier. This is why a second look is so intriguing. Despite the pervasive and severe poverty of the people in this region, I realized just how productive and fertile their small terraced farms are. July is the season of harvest festivals and thanksgiving in this region. I have never eaten so many avocados, yams, bananas, and maize as I did during this trip. All locally grown of course. I enjoyed reading Michael Pollan's excellent book *The Omnivore's Dilemma* while I was in Kilomeni. Of course my diet was entirely locally produced. One morning I noticed a rooster in the kitchen pecking at some scraps - chickens wander about Kilomeni all the time - when suddenly Joseph our cook snatched him up and wham, he was lunch (a bit of a tough bird regrettably). So in the mountains people have access to plentiful springs and get enough to eat for the most part. They lack access to education, healthcare, and jobs. With very few exceptions most have no running water or electricity either, though there is fantastic cell reception.

It's quieter in the central district of Kilomeni this time of year as we arrived in the midst of school vacation—it's midwinter in the Southern Hemisphere. The locals were all freezing, bundled up in parkas, though I don't think it got below 50 degrees. I can see now that it's deserted, that the town center where we stay is really a kind of public religious and educational campus with all the dwellings scattered at a distance. The absence of children and the quiet during parts of the day is



Schoolchildren enjoy looking at photos of friends and family from the 2006 GCN visit.
Photograph by David M. Taylor, MD

somewhat depressing but groups of children come and go, either doing volunteer work for the school or for the church. Children as a matter of course do numerous chores in a place like this and some of these jobs seem pretty pointless, like sweeping the large dirt play area with branches to keep it "clean." When small children come around they are full of wonder at visitors and also very shy so that at first they skitter and giggle before quietly sidling up and suddenly surrounding you. They flit like schools of fish when you try to take their picture, and then once they get interested, they come closer and closer so that any series of pictures ends up just a bunch of noses and fingers pressed up close. The instant feedback of digital cameras makes for a thrilling interactive experience.

My gift to the community this visit was a photo exhibition. I brought about 100 photographs taken by Virgil and Sherry Marshall in 2006 and mounted them on posterboard for display. I set up the exhibit on the steps of the parish house and it was mobbed by people of all ages for the week that I kept it up. People were entranced and amazed to see themselves, their friends and family. People don't have access to images very often and most families have no pictures at all. It was pretty amazing therefore that for the most part the pictures weren't stolen. There were a number of thefts but then signs went up in Swahili reminding people to leave the pictures alone. The local priest, Father Deogracias, took a few pictures down before the exhibit opened. These were images of a nun with her family. It turned out her mother had died in 2007 and he wanted her to have the pictures and did not want them displayed. She was deeply moved to receive them as was her widowed father, though naturally they both wanted to keep them so we'll be sending along another set soon.

The life that the residents of Kilomeni lead seems timeless and difficult. The villagers live deep in the craggy and gorgeous hills. There are spectacular views and yet no one really stops to look at the view, they are too busy scratching out an existence to be troubled by a view that is ever present. There are very few roads and most homes are located along footpaths and the feeling is similar to Mill Valley—if the only way to get from house to house was on foot and if the Dipsea Steps were the main thoroughfare (without the steps of course). I twisted my ankles many times in my old work boots and wondered how everyone zipped around in flip flops or barefoot and in the dark without any lights. At least there is no dangerous wildlife about, though the women in the group lived in fear of running into a voracious type of badger they had read about...that most certainly was not out stalking Americans in Kilomeni.

TRAVEL

We purchased \$1,000 worth of construction supplies for our project and were joined in the work by a nice group of parents, mostly men who were skilled in building trades. There were fewer community volunteers for the usual political reasons, i.e., no one had worked with the new village leader to help turn out volunteers. There are overlapping organizational structures in Kilomeni as in any community, and while we are hosted, fed, and transported under the auspices of the Catholic diocese, we work with the public primary school parent-teacher association on our project. In any event our truckload of sand, bags of cement, buckets of paint, etc., did not go to waste at all and we were hard at work once we got the supplies (took four precious days to pull that off). We rehabilitated/renovated one classroom building to "improve the environment for learning" according to the headmaster. This involved stuccoing the exterior, painting the interior, and putting in new windows (without glass of course) and pouring a concrete walkway alongside the building. Kids helped each day doing hard work like hauling freshly made concrete by the bucketload. The school, like every other building in the area is perched on the rocky hillside and is dusty and crumbling with age. Without doing much at all we were able to make the place look like new and while it was a lot of work it wasn't too hard. Compared to the work we did in 2006 (breaking and hauling rocks) it was a cinch. Of course, as in '06 the lack of modern equipment makes every job more of a challenge. Stucco was mixed in buckets and applied to the side of the building using a small, broken handheld sprayer that was hand cranked and held one cup of stucco at a time. Imagine using this equipment to cover 300 square meters of wall space. Ladders are simply fashioned from scrap lumber and branches. I



Parents Association Chair Gaspar looks on as volunteers Julia Hawes and David Taylor apply stucco one cup at a time to the classroom building. Another parent, Joseph (back to the camera), seen carrying buckets of slurry.
Photograph by Allison Earnhardt

learned reasonable stucco technique, though never up to snuff according to my fellow stucco mavens, Leonce and Joseph. It is the kind of work that lets your mind wander and that is really a pleasure for someone like me who earns his living by not letting it wander too much at all.

The leaders of the PTA, Gaspar and Paul—both fathers of large families, both former shopkeepers, and both able to converse in broken English—were always cheering us on and both invited us to their homes for tea. Their warm smiles and enthusiasm and positive energy was a highlight of my experience. Visits were always sweet and fun but it is also intensely moving to meet people in their homes. Both men and their families live very simply and have quite rudimentary dwellings. Both live amongst extended family. They were extremely generous and hospitable plying us with tea, yams, cakes and insistent that we eat large quantities. Their elderly parents, both in their 80s, will almost certainly never leave these houses when they fall ill as it is hard to imagine how they could be carried out down the winding paths, but this is where my cautious American imagination always falls short.

During our first week the girls' secondary boarding school in Kilomeni wrapped up for the term. We were told a bus would come and take the girls back to their homes in town. It didn't quite click for me until two large coaches pulled into Kilomeni to take them down the mountain for vacation. And this is where my limited imagination first became evident. The road to Kilomeni is of course difficult to drive in a Land Cruiser but here was a regular intercity bus that had scaled the mountain and was about to take a busload of high school girls back down for vacation.



The 2008 Global Citizens Network (GCN) Team members, from left: Linda Earnhardt, Allison Earnhardt, Julia Hawes, David Taylor, and Linda Stuart.

Nothing out of the ordinary, no big deal, how else were they going to all get home? It's a simple thing but it completely blew my mind to realize how life is basically ordinary even when to us it seems extreme. Similarly when driving on that very same road a few days later we were passed by the local football team in orange jerseys out for a training run. I hadn't seen anyone exercising in TZ, nor on that road had I seen anything other than people hauling firewood or water, herding goats or doing farmwork. Nor does anyone possess a football. Of course the football team was training, how pathetic of me not to conceive of it. This is the beauty of returning to visit a place like Kilomeni. It was such an intense and extreme experience the first time that it was great to smooth out some of the jagged edges in my recollection and see it for what it is, just a village that kind of resembles my village but lacking in most of the infrastructure and gear that fills our town. But there are still busloads of kids to move, teams to be developed, stuccoing to be done.

The greatest personal challenge for me on this return journey was coping with my own personal Inquisition at the hands of the good Father Deogracias. On my last visit to Kilomeni I had shared with Deo that I am Jewish and this fact seems to have become lodged in his mind permanently. When I stepped out of the Land Cruiser and set foot in Kilomeni after two years, he walks right up and greets me "Shalom," not "Jambo" or "Habari," but "Shalom." It proceeded from this to being introduced to the parishioners in church the following morning as the Israelite Doctor. He would constantly challenge me to explain Jewish intransigence in the face of the truth that is Jesus and asked me questions like "Do you know your genealogy from Abraham?" It is so complex trying to sort out what Father Deo means by all this and my own reactions, atheist that I am. At times it was uncomfortable, and at other times just ridiculous. I spent years in Anglican boarding schools and lived with devout Catholics in college so I am no stranger to these reactions but it's been a while since I exercised this particular muscle. I guess I could have received this kind of treatment within 25 miles of my home (Marin is very homogeneous) but cloistered liberal that I am I had to fly to Africa before someone tried to convert me to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

So things seemed the tiniest tiniest bit more normal and life seemed the tiniest bit better over there. This might be the distortion of my second look at Kilomeni but the fact was that fewer people were begging for things, the children's uniforms seemed just a touch less disheveled, the girls' school has a computer room (though no printer, Internet or even regular electricity), the clinic was fixed up and was staffed by a few healthcare workers. There were signs up about how to get a bednet and most

amazing, on our visit to a Masai boma (mini-village), I even saw a bednet in a Masai hut. Now that's some change. Insecticide-treated bednets are one of the simplest ways to combat malaria and the campaign to distribute them in Africa is clearly getting some traction. We did visit a clinic in another village one day and several elderly women were in bed with malaria. One very elderly woman was clearly very dehydrated and in my capacity as visiting doctor I made the simple suggestion that she be given some fluids. At this point the priest who was escorting us slipped her some money to purchase some soda. Obviously there is a difference in medical practice. Here when I suggest fluids to a patient I don't typically have to think about how they will manage to acquire fluids. And this, really, remains the biggest difference between the two worlds. Here, we worry about whether we use too much bottled water and for many millions in Africa, there isn't any water for miles.

I want to thank Global Citizens for sponsoring me as a leader in training on this trip and my fellow team members for their forbearance of my leadership style. Check out www.globalcitizens.org for interesting travel opportunities.

A version of David Taylor's 2006 essay on his first visit to Kilomeni and several of Virgil Taylor's photographs were published in a book entitled Volunteering Around the Globe: Life Changing Travel Adventures, by Suzanne Stone. For the complete account of the first Kilomeni visit with Virgil, contact David at david@davidhtaylormd.com and he will email the essay to you.



*David Taylor stands next to the completed project as schoolchildren assemble for a farewell celebration on his last day in Kilomeni.
Photograph by Julia Hawes*

Thoughts from New Orleans

By Sandra Allen

We were meandering through the French Quarter, whose lifeblood seemed more like Fisherman's Wharf than France. In honor of the fact that it was legal to walk the streets with liquor in hand, my friend bought a White Russian Daiquiri in a Styrofoam cup. It came with a complimentary shot in a test-tube, called a "blow-job," that looked like a urine sample. He slid the liquid awkwardly back, said, "I drank a blow-job" and threw the plastic tube in the trash. People in white-tennis shoes and couples who probably rarely held hands walked around us, lost and pouring their money into the things they were supposed to pour their money into. They were on vacation.

A yellow-toothed trombone player called Doc had directed us to lunch, where we were to say that Doc sent us. "Doc sent us," we said to the host, and the host nodded and smiled, the way I nod and smile when tourists say bizarre things to me when I'm working in restaurants. We ate all sorts of things that we didn't have points of reference for—jambalaya and gumbo and blackened catfish and alligator sausage—no points of reference so it all tasted good. Our hangovers abated and the bread was like cotton balls and the waitress was new and unapologetic. We were meandering, learning why things do move so slow in this over-talked and under known tropical pimple on America's lower end.

A Frenchman had once stood trying to remember his childhood home, but the sweat in his eyes and the miraculous distance to his mother's grave had made the doors elongate and porches hug the plaster. And then the fronts and flies and air as thick as liquor had moved in between every slat and banister. But the fear and oddity of the wide mother river and the country that everyone now said we lived in had caused the rusted chairs and lowly glimmering lanterns to move from sacrilege to art.

There's this thing though, this problem. On some streets the shadows make crosses where the for sale signs hang in the afternoon shocked stillness. And when we walked and probably looked not-of-this-place I felt these stares of hatred from eyes, some real eyes, from players of brass quartets with their hats in the street and the woman who played the steam pipes on top the Natchez docked on the river, and some other eyes that weren't visible for me to see. These were eyes moved to Texas or North, sleeping in tents under the freeway, buried over-ground.



Sandra Allen at the Café en Vie in New Orleans.

We walked until we sensed that tourists were no longer being catered to. The houses were tall and silent, subtly guarding the potential vomit and plastic beads from the courtyard interiors. We peaked through the iron gates, past mailboxes to the cool edens within.

A contractor noticed us peeking, opened the gate and said, "Want to come on in, take a look around?" and led us off the street into a courtyard. He showed us the apartment he was remodeling, built in 17-something, burned to the ground, rebuilt in 1840. The main room, pocket-sized and low-ceilinged (now the floor was wooden and not simply dirt), had two fireplaces from when it was used as a bakery. The paneling was from Mississippi barges (from the days before steamboats).

He was tipping back a last gulpful of beer when we, embarrassed at our outsider-ness but genuinely glad for the invitation, entered the orange adobe square of leafy solitude. He showed us the doors to the tiny bathroom that were from the funeral home down Saint Charles Street they were gutting into a Borders Books. "Those doors have seen a lot of dead people," he said quietly and laughed a little.

He was paint and spackle speckled, had bleached hair and tanned skin. We left after a bit, and he said it was no bother because anyone who hangs around here is "likely to do half-somethin' and half-tour-guidin'." I wanted to ask him if he was here, if they knew they were stuck, if it's going to happen again soon. He introduced himself as Ken as we turned to leave.

At Café En Vie one of my friends walked to get his first tattoo and the other opened his laptop with a sigh of relief and learned of everything he was missing back in D.C. I opened my notebook and couldn't write anything and a Dylan's song the "Hurricane" played. I looked around but no one in the café looked offended. We ordered two cups of chicory coffee, which tasted like nothing.

And however bad things may have been, there pervades an itch of attraction, a jealousy to belong, to those who feel permitted to have real contentious opinions and grievances - perhaps not quite those who'd held pleading signs to the sky, but those who



Trevor Zimmer looks over the Natchez docked on the Mississippi.

had been and fled and breathed relief. Flies bothered and orchids wilted and outside a man moved an antique side table from the back of a pickup. Moving in or moving out. Holding on or perhaps easily meandering along like a mosquito bringing sea and obese river.

Ken had told us that the Quarter at least had burned down six times or so in its long multinational history (before, the little man himself had siphoned off that marshy slab Louisiana and stood shortly but proudly as his ship eventually was taken under by the pull of eventuality that kings and dictators all seem to meet - suicides and railcars and hovering in desert holes). He also remarked, speaking of dates, that nothing in San Francisco was older than nineteen-hundred-six.

We were staying with my friend Will, who was teaching for the summer at New Orleans. Doing the right thing. He picked us up in his Saab. On the way over to get us, he said, somebody had cut him off and he nearly hadn't reacted in-time, and he'd felt that surge of adrenaline that we've all felt once or twice when we realized cars could kill us at any moment. I

asked him if we could drive to the Ninth Ward.

And what was it that we wanted to see? Did we want to pair the television images with reality? I thought of when I returned to Manhattan for a second time. My first trip there, in April 2001, my family stood atop the South Tower and took a photo for our Christmas card. My mom had made a hundred copies that summer, and threw them away that fall. Returning, I'd sought to confirm an absence.

But in the Ninth Ward, I don't know what I sought to see. The neighborhood looked like I expected it to look, like Richmond or Hunters Point. Small pastel houses, iron grates, dead lawns, spaced like the Bolinas Mesa. Only sometimes a roof would be next to the house rather than on top of it, or a house's fat structure would lean on one of its haunches rather than standing tall. And next to every doorway in red spray paint, effacing the sanctity that we afford things such as homes, red xes, with numbers in each grid, indicating date searched, by whom, pets found, bodies found. Cryptograms. Numbers.

We drove down the main drag, and back again, and then West back to the city, prepared for a night of beignets drowned in powdered sugar and grit fries and collard greens from a grub truck just outside Tipitina's, Professor Longhair's old-stompin' ground, where the band began their first set just after midnight and we danced and didn't care what we looked like as late as we wanted to stay.



Seated on Will Guzzardi's porch are from left, Trevor Zimmer, Will Guzzardi, and Sandra Allen, with Ray Sumser behind them.

Photographs by Ray Sumser

THE PERFECTION OF FALLING

a novel in process, chapter one
© 2008 by Karla Andersdatter

1.

It was the snow she watched, thick and steady—eternally in motion, ever present, like static on an empty screen. No wind; just endless flakes falling, continuing, a seemingly perpetual pouring from the heavens... or perhaps, as if from the One Heaven under God, almost religious in its timeless timeliness. She was in her own time here, and she was coming to the end of her days.

Sitting there she had drifted, like snow, into the mesmerizing moving sky outside her window; silent and still, warming herself on a cold winter's day, until gradually she began to rock in the oversized overstuffed chair. It was a safe place to keep memories. She nodded a bit, with the gentle motion of the rocker, beside the barrel shaped black wood stove.

In the high desert of California, in the most remote corner of that long land of coast and mountain, at 7000 feet there is a silence not found in the flatland, that long plate of land that is ranch and farm and agribusiness; the land that used to be small gatherings of orchards in Spring blossom, but that now are gone, or worse yet, thinned and sparse, leaving the land that stretches the length of the state, scratched and hopeless looking, (looking that way sometimes even in April).

No she was not a flatlander sent north by the poverty of social security, no retiree, forced to sell out and live modestly in a strangely distant area, where homes are cheap and the aging populace is cowboy thin and hungry. She was third generation here in her land of ice and snow, and she lived in the cabin her grandfather built in 1879. The cabin was not far from Warner Mountain Pass in the Great Basin of the land of California. It was her grandchildren that had moved away to become flatlanders. It was mid-February at 7000 feet, mid morning now, a soft day which had begun quiet... like snow.

2.

The snow was thick and wet and heavy, the wind barely able to lift it. It was swirling southward toward the barn. Then unexpectedly the breeze aborted in a westerly direction, toward the shed, where she housed Marisol, the hen, and Magic the rooster.

She heard Magic crow, the hoarse sound of a happy male. As if the wind had also heard the rooster, it turned suddenly in a brief dislocated spin, sweeping up suddenly from the east, disrupting the thick, fast-falling southern flakes,

swirling them closer to the newly installed northerly exposed double-plated window from which Elvira gazed into the fading light. The wind had increased slightly.

It'll melt, she thought, won't last the night. It was nearly March. Maybe she wouldn't last the night either. She was tired, listless, but her mind was uncomplicated today, watching the snow. She didn't have to go anywhere, no husband to fix for either. *Thank God!* she sighed, smiling to herself. Frank would be along soon, and Frank was enough distraction for any old woman of 75.

She shook her head, smiling visibly now, and pulled a knitted shawl around thin shoulders. She noticed feeling grateful, an unexpected, almost glad recognition of her aloneness, her solitude and the snow.

3.

She must have dozed off. When she woke, the snow had stopped. The perfection of the moment crossed her mind like lilacs. "Aaah!" she whispered. Her watch said 12:00 noon. She thought about Frank. He would be down below the orchard checking the bees. He had lost two hives last year. The sudden death she called it, what everyone hopes for, death without the pain. But which of us can speak to the pain of bees...

At that thought, the owl, black eyes glaring, flew from the barn, landed on the giant cottonwood tree trunk outside the window, that same tree, whose massive limb took down her electric line weeks before, bringing Pacific Power Repair to her house in the black of night. A young man, in a vehicle with a truck arm that could raise itself skyward, arrived in the dark to reach the broken giant limb. He chain-sawed the branch, (a branch as big as the trunk of most trees) replaced the line, and left the cottonwood broken and dying—the inside rotten to the roots. A month later the whole tree came down, and now it lay there, covered with the same perfection of collapse that greeted her when she woke: snow and the white owl blinking at her.

Elvira was startled, as she had been startled throughout her entire life—startled by the swift and unusual drama of Nature.

to be continued...

For those of you who enjoyed reading this selection and wish to receive a new chapter each month, please email karla@inbetweenbooks.com, and request placement on our list of email reader/subscribers. You will receive a chapter each month. Cost for the 12-month subscription is \$25. Subscription fee should be mailed to: Karla Andersdatter, In Between Books. P.O. Box 300, Cedarville, CA 96104. Questions? Call Karla @ 530 279-2756



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 email Laurie Piel at BooktheMBCC@aol.com (best way to reach her) or call her at 415.388.8319.

CLASSIFIED

Mature woman and well behaved nine-year-old son looking for cottage at Muir Beach. We have been living on Sunset Way and have excellent references. I am an illustrator and writer and have been working on a book about Muir Beach. Please ring Beth on 497-7387. Gerry, Nina, or Harvey Pearlman for references. Many thanks.

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- Spell check your material.
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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
- **The Bookmobile** - 4:30 - 5:30 pm - 1st and 3rd Mondays, Mailboxes, Highway One across from Pelican Inn.

TUESDAY

- **Anusara Yoga** - 6:15 - 7:30 pm. Taylor's zendo, 1821 Shoreline Hwy. Instructor: Rachel Clare Teannalach 415.272.1392

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.
- **Iyengar Yoga** - 6:30 - 8:00 pm. Taylor's zendo 1821 Shoreline Hwy. Instructor: Susy Stewart 415.388.1549

SUNDAY

- **Green Gulch 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
- 1st Sundays 10 - 11:30 am

letter space between sentences, not two as with a typewriter!
• In your text document, include photo file names(s) with photo caption(s) and photographer credit.

Artwork and Photos

- Image photos: JPG (must zip EPS/Tiff files); do not resize photos.
- Save at the highest JPEG setting (100%)
- Paper images: The *Beachcomber* can scan small original art, paper photos, or other images.

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