

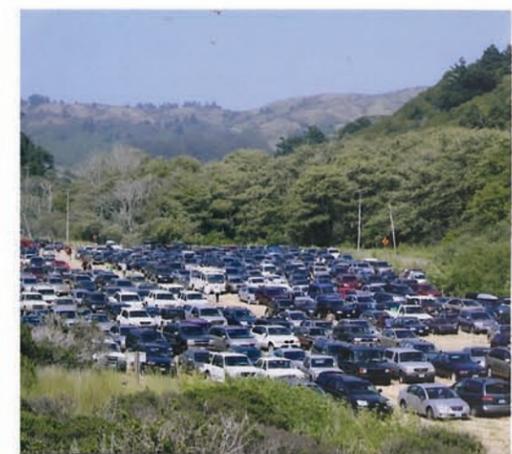


# BEACHCOMBER

Muir Beach Neighborhood News Issue 246 July 2009

**ONCE MORE INTO THE BREACH**  
 DONATION ONE DOLLAR  
 DRAWING MAY 24, 2009  
 MANY MANY PRIZES  
 YOU NEED NOT BE PRESENT TO WIN

SPONSORED BY THE MUIR BEACH VOLUNTEER FIREMAN'S ASSOCIATION



## 2009 MUIR BEACH VOLUNTEER FIREMEN'S BBQ



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### Correction

In “Bistro Buzz” on page 4 of the May 2009 issue, Camila Pares is sitting with Steve Shaffer and Tiana Vincent-Pearlman, not Hannah Eigsti. To see correctly captioned photos of both Camila and Hannah, please turn to page 9 and page 16 respectively.

## FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Reader:

You are holding the Post-BBQ issue which was made possible by a group of people that not only worked on the BBQ to help raise money for the Muir Beach Volunteer Fire Department but also captured the event in a collage, words, and photographs for the *Beachcomber*. Heartfelt thanks go out to:

Volunteer firefighter Brad Eigsti who provided the cover collage, “2009 Muir Beach Volunteer Firemen’s BBQ.” Please go to [www.imprints.imagekind.com](http://www.imprints.imagekind.com) to see Brad’s artwork.

Muir Beach Paparazzi Julie Smith who photographed the three-day weekend—May 23<sup>rd</sup> Work Party, BBQ Day, and BBQ Cleanup—as well as Friday night dessert baking at Green Gulch and the debrief meeting held a week after the fundraiser down at the BBQ grounds.

Anne Jeschke, Laurie Piel, David Leivick, and Bruce Barlow for providing stories and/or photographs on the run-up to the event.

BBQ Chairs Maury Ostroff, Anne Jeschke, Debra Allen, and Kathy Sward for bringing us the “Wrap-Up from the Chairs.” And to Paul Jeschke who tied it all together in his post-BBQ report.

The 37<sup>th</sup> Annual Firemen’s BBQ coverage begins on page 7.

We hope you enjoy reading about this huge community effort directed by the Muir Beach Volunteer Fireman’s Association to provide support to our volunteer firefighters.

## Letters to the Editor

We are very impressed with the caliber of your publication and it’s very fun to see how the *Beachcomber* has evolved over time. We are very happy to have it archived here!

—Laurie Thompson

Head Librarian, Anne T. Kent California Room  
Marin County Library, Civic Center Branch

### Next issue: October 2009 Submissions Deadline: September 14, 2009

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## UPFRONT

# The *Beachcomber* Salutes The Graduates of 2009

## Kara Bischoff Graduates from Harvard Medical School

By Linda Hulley



Kara Bischoff has followed in her stepfather’s footsteps, graduating from Harvard Medical School on June 4<sup>th</sup>, with High Honors in Clinical Medicine. The same week Steve Hulley attended his HMS reunion, resulting in a busy week in Boston with family and friends, with lots of celebrating (in spite of the state of the state and the state of the nation).

Kara begins residency in internal medicine at UCSF in mid June. We are beyond happy to have her back home, living in San Francisco and continuing her education at UCSF.

Kara Bischoff  
2009 Graduation from Harvard Medical School  
Well Done!!!  
Photograph by Linda Hulley

## Rebecca Riehl Graduates from Cambridge University

By Christian Riehl



On June 25, 2009, Rebecca Riehl received her Masters Degree in Chemical Engineering from the University of Cambridge, England.

Rebecca studied at Cambridge four years now, having completed her Bachelors of Arts degree last year. The university system in the United Kingdom is a little different from that in the U.S. in that students focus on their area of study exclusively from the time they arrive, and so the regular timeframe for a Bachelors degree is usually three years. Should they so choose, those students whose academic performance is sufficiently strong can stay on for an additional year to attain their Masters Degree.

Parents Christian and Leslie Riehl attended the graduation events, including graduation ceremonies at the Cambridge University Senate House and dinner with graduates and faculty at Trinity Hall. Founded in 1350, Trinity Hall is the fifth oldest college of the University of Cambridge.

Rebecca plans a few weeks of travel this summer and then will spend a little time at home in Muir Beach.

Rebecca Riehl  
Photograph by Riehl

In the fall, Rebecca returns to Cambridge University to pursue a Ph.D. in Chemical Engineering. Her research will include work on the development of promising computational modeling techniques that show how to reduce the amount of energy involved in producing substances that are in common use and that many people more or less take for granted. For example: the color white. A vast amount of energy is used worldwide to create non-toxic substances that make things white—for example, white paint and white toothpaste. By determining how to produce “white” substances with large-scale chemical reactions at lower temperatures, the world’s consumption of oil, natural gas, and electricity can be reduced significantly.

In addition to continuing her studies, Rebecca is looking forward to retaining her seat playing the baritone for the Cambridge University Brass Band.

Continued on page 4

**The Graduates of 2009**

*Continued from page 3*

**Sandra Allen Graduates from Brown University**

*By Debra Allen*

Sandra Allen graduated from Brown University in Rhode Island on May 24, 2009, with a Bachelor of Arts in Literatures and Cultures in English, with honors. Next, she'll be attending the University of Iowa where she'll be receiving her MFA in non-fiction writing.



*Sandra Allen in front of the Van Wick Gates at Brown University. Photograph by Rob Allen*

**Eli Vincent-Pearlman Graduates from Tamalpais High School**

*By Nina Vincent*



*Eli Vincent-Pearlman Photograph by Nina Vincent*

Eli Vincent-Pearlman graduated on June 11<sup>th</sup> from Tam High. He won an AP honors award, and has made both his parents and his community proud. Eli will be attending UC Santa Barbara in the fall and promises to come and visit us here in Muir Beach often (says his mom hopefully). Eli is looking for summer work here in the community so give him a call for babysitting, hard labor, or Spanish tutoring. He's practicing for the "real world."

**Cameron McDonald-Hyman Graduates from Carleton College**

*By Ed Hyman*



*Cameron McDonald-Hyman Photograph by Dave Pape*

Life-long Muir Beach resident Cameron McDonald-Hyman, son of Ed Hyman and Deborah McDonald and brother of Devon McDonald-Hyman, graduated on June 13<sup>th</sup> from Carleton College, one of the country's leading small liberal arts colleges. Graduating with a biology major and a concentration in biochemistry and Spanish, Cam was also captain of the varsity baseball team. During his four years he completed his pre-med requirements and will soon be applying to MD-PhD programs. Currently,

Cam is taking a year off from school, but has been hired by the Department of Immunology at Stanford Medical Center to follow up on the research he completed as an intern there last summer. The results from last summer's research have earned Cam and his Stanford colleagues an invitation to the Gordon Conference on Genetic Toxicity to present their findings, which have also been submitted as an article to the medical section of the distinguished scientific journal *Nature*.

In addition to his academic and scientific achievements, including induction into the Sigma Xi Research Society and the Carleton Honor Society, Cam contributed mightily to the successes of this year's Carleton Knights baseball team. Carleton needed to win both games of their final regular season double-header against Concordia College in order to make the MIAC [Midwest Intercollegiate Athletic Conference] playoffs. The Knights won the first game in a "come from behind" fashion, but found themselves trailing by one run in the second contest. With two outs in the top of the last inning, Cam came up to bat with runners on 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> and hit a double off the wall to score the winning run which ended up sending them to the playoffs for the first time ever. While the Knights were eliminated in the playoffs by eventual national champion University of St. Thomas, Cam and the other seniors set the bar high for future campaigns.

Cam plans on living at Stanford next year, but spending his weekends at home at the Beach.

**Eric and Joey Groneman are Happy to Announce the Marriage of their daughter Nicole Lynè Groneman to Stephan Conrad Catalan.**



*Nicole Groneman and Stephan Catalan Photograph by Sabine Jordan*

The wind blew for several days, but on Saturday April 4, 2009, we woke up to blue skies and crystal green waves washing up on the beach and NO WIND.

Love was in the air and a perfect day for a wedding. Nicole and Stephan's family gathered to witness a beautiful ceremony preformed by Lee de Barros of Muir Beach.

A reception followed at the Community Center with friends and family from the East Coast to the West Coast. Blue Grass music by The Road Oilers and Indian food were plenty while the children played in the play yard.



*The proud father of the bride, Eric Groneman, walks his daughter Nicole "down the aisle" onto Muir Beach. Photograph by Jane Bentley*

Nicole and Stephan are living in Bolinas until they depart for India in August for a six-month trek and on their return plan on building a home in Mariposa and starting their family and our 1<sup>st</sup> grandchild.

Special thank yous to all our friends & family who helped make this wonderful celebration possible. Thank you all, xo Eric & Joey.



**Wayne & Nancy Heldt**

MARRIED FEBRUARY 26, 2009  
AT 11:00 AM

*in a small ceremony with family and friends on the island of Lanai, Hawaii*



*Photograph by Philo Sowers*

*Dean Ozzy Sward*

Jes Sward(dad), Angie Banducci(mom) and Jackson Sward(aka big brother) are proud to announce the arrival of little Deano. Born December 23, 2008.

8lbs 4 oz and 19.5 inches long.



Photograph by Angie Banducci

our little man at 7 weeks old

## Safety On Our Roads

By Debra Hensch

The NHTSA (National Highway Traffic Safety Administration) defines aggressive driving as “the operation of a motor vehicle in a manner which endangers or is likely to endanger persons or property.” Some of the most common actions considered aggressive include: speeding, following too closely, improper passing, etc.

Recently, on three separate occasions, my husband Dave and I have had the misfortune of being harassed on Highway One by an “aggressive driver” who is a local resident. The first time we were together and on subsequent incidents we were each alone in our own vehicles.

In my case, it was at 10 pm on an extremely foggy night. I knew it was the same driver as soon as he pulled up five feet from my bumper and flashed his

brights repeatedly. This was confirmed after I pulled over and saw him as he also passed the driver in front of me (after giving them no time to turn off) on a blind curve and fog to the ground. It was nerve-racking and frightening not to mention extremely dangerous.

I am writing this to simply remind all of us that since we travel these roads daily and by necessity, it is incumbent on every driver to operate their car or truck in a safe and courteous manner. All of us at some point have probably been annoyed by a hapless tourist going 10 miles an hour and riding their brakes! However, to recklessly endanger locals or tourists’ lives and property so one can get “over the hill” or home 2-5 minutes earlier is unacceptable and disrespectful in the extreme.

Note: California has amended their existing reckless driving laws to include aggressive driving. Source: National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) and State Highway Safety Offices.

The 37<sup>th</sup> Annual Firemen’s BBQ coverage begins right here—22 pages chronicling what it takes to produce this popular event attended by 2,500 revelers. These pages are dedicated to the 200 volunteers who made the 2009 BBQ possible.



Nothing to it but to do it: The BBQ site on May 2, 2009. Photograph by David Leivick

# MAY 2<sup>ND</sup> BBQ WORK PARTY

By Linda Gibbs  
Photographs by David Leivick

I love the first BBQ Work Party because everything's such a mess from the torrential rains and winds of winter, from the fallen tree branches and pine boughs to the overgrown field of spring grasses and the rotting wooden structures that look like they are about to fall down, but give the desired look of Funky Town.

The May 2<sup>nd</sup> work crew is a hardy bunch, especially on this particular Saturday as it's raining at 10 am when folks start gathering at the volleyball parking lot. The first five—Aran Moore, the new Work Party Chair, John

Aran Moore, and John John Sward pull down broken tree limbs, prune low lying branches from the Kitchen and grill area, and cut up logs and branches. David Leivick weeds the T-Shirt booth and hauls meadow debris into a big pile near the Raffle booth. Chris Gove arrives in his truck with the heavy-duty lawn mower in tow. In spite of the wet weather the weed whacking and the cutting continue.

They come to clear out mud, dirt, sand, and leaves from the Kitchen—if you haven't seen Brad Eigsti and



Fire Association Board President Michael Kaufman surveys wild Santos Meadows, site of the fire department fundraiser.



Kathy Sward takes stock of the winter damage to the T-Shirt booth.



Eric Groneman cuts up a log between the Raffle booth and the BBQ pit.

John Sward, Eric Groneman, Kathy Sward, and Mike Moore—debate whether to call it off or not. Then two more arrive and then another and it looks like it's a go.

They come to cut the grass, weed whack the meadow perimeter, and go after the tall grasses in the nooks and crannies of all the structures and between the picnic tables and around the stage. Alan Steinbach is the weed whacker extraordinaire. And Eric Groneman,

Eric Groneman tackle the kitchen floor with shovels and brooms, scraping, shoveling, and sweeping, you haven't seen what real muscle and determination can do. Now the Kitchen is almost ready for power washing.

Not until after lunch of hot soup, cold cuts, cheese, tomato, and avocado sandwiches, chips, fruit, cookies, beer and sodas, served up by new Work Party Food Chair Laura Van Amburgh and Anna Tom, does the BBQ area



Alan Steinbach skillfully wields his weed whacker near the Nachos stand.



Chris Cove unloads the power mower with assistance from Eric Groneman, Michael Kaufman, Eric's daughter Nicole's dog Tilba, and Chris's dog Maia.



Firefighters Brad Eigsti, Chris Gove, and Eric Groneman discuss lowering the height of the well fence with CSD District Manager Maury Ostroff.



Almost time for lunch! Laura Van Amburgh (left) and Anna Tom (right) prepare lunch for the rainy day workers. Kathy Sward lends a hand.



It's chow time! From left: Eric Groneman, Kathy Sward, Linda Gibbs, Brad Eigsti, and Michael Kaufman.



Work Party Chair Aran Moore takes a lunch break.

begin to remotely look like the site we know so well by the time BBQ Day arrives, this time on Sunday, May 24<sup>th</sup>.

They come to successfully negotiate with Maury Ostroff of the CSD to lower the height of the fence that protects the new Muir Beach well and that is smack dab in the middle of the BBQ grounds between the grill and the



Camila Pares and Tessa Pares (daughters of Laura Van Amburgh), and Dylan Tom (son of Anna Tom) enjoy lunch as well as playing in the creek in the best rain boots around.

stage, blocking the workers' view. Chris Gove, seconded by Eric Groneman and Brad Eigsti, proposes cutting off the top portion of the fence, removing the gate and installing a temporary panel for BBQ Day.

They come to remove the endless staples from the T-Shirt booth, left over from last year's butcher paper laydown and stapled in dozens of places to keep the paper from blowing away should there be a blustery wind on the big day. I bite my tongue and resist suggesting to T-Shirt Chair Kathy Sward, "Let's get some yards of plastic cloth to cover the weather worn boards and save all this labor intensive staple-removal activity, and reuse the cloth year after year." But then how will Anne Jeschke and Dee Hayden become friends after spending two Saturdays pulling out staples at a Work Party years ago? But wouldn't it be cute to have a cloth with the logo dog repeated as a pattern, yet another advertisement of what's being sold at this booth? And then I remind myself that this is a fundraiser, so keep on raking, keep on sweeping, and keep on cleaning up the site that in just three short weeks will host the 37<sup>th</sup> Annual Firemen's BBQ.



The May 2<sup>nd</sup> Work Party poses for a group shot between rainfalls.

# MAY 9<sup>TH</sup> BBQ WORK PARTY

*Work Party Cleanup Gains Momentum  
Story and Photographs by Anne Jeschke*

Both the weather and the attendance improved on the second Saturday Barbecue workday. Bright sunshine and warm temperatures made everyone cheerful. The many old-timers were augmented by a surprising number of new faces eager to get to work. In fact, you would have to say that newcomers and children were major contributors at the second Work Party on May 9<sup>th</sup>, where attendance was above 40 hard workers.



*Fleche Phoenix begins the seemingly endless task of mowing.*



*Linda Gibbs and Joey Groneman take a break from the work and discuss Joey's daughter's recent wedding.*

Jobs were varied. General field cleanup continued with Fleche Phoenix running the mower, and both Steve Wynn and Rob Allen wielding their weed cutters. Paul Jeschke chopped at the growth around the picnic tables and benches. Newcomer Matt Klein cleared stumps and debris around the food area. By the end of the day the improvement was unbelievable.

Amadeo Banducci supervised from the sidelines as Chris Gove, Mike Moore, and Eric Groneman took



*Newcomer Matt Klein gets into the Muir Beach spirit by clearing stumps and logs.*



*Even the kids have a job. Having found a few out-dated drink cans, Maxx Moore, Skye Collier, Jackson Moore, Nataya Bassett, Camila Pares, and Sienna Klein set to work emptying them so the cans can be recycled.*

apart and lowered the fencing surrounding the new well. This will allow workers in the shirt booth and the kitchen servers to enjoy the band while they continue their duties. A crowd worked on the new ticket booth, supervised by Work Party Chair Aran Moore. Don Piotter and son Hans supplied wood and building skills in their first ever barbecue project. This father-son duo knows what "teamwork" means! Former Work Party Chair Dave Elliott used his multitude of experience to help put together the new ticket booth.



*Don Piotter, Aran Moore, Chief John Sward, and Mike Moore discuss the best way to build a new ticket booth for the field.*

Al Kile and Arlene Robertson cleaned out the shed, and finding a few cases of outdated soft drinks, they cleverly set the kids to work emptying and crushing cans. It was fun to watch the group work together and do their part. Joey Groneman joined right in, helping the youngest to open their cans, so they could empty the contents on the ground. Before and after the "can work," the younger group built wood structures and sculptures on the volleyball court. Another group had a tent next to the creek and seemed to have set up their own water resort.



*When Laura Van Amburgh serves lunch, all work stops and the crowds converge on the buffet.*

Newcomer Laura Van Amburgh has taken over the lunch duties for the Work Parties, ably assisted by husband Antonio Pares and Denise Lamott. There was quite a spread, and everyone went back to work feeling well-fed. Brad Eigsti discussed signage needs with Chief John John Sward. Linda Gibbs cleaned the shirt booth. Kathy Sward came a bit late, having to handle an emergency situation at the Community Center early in the morning. And I took photos and got information for the *Beachcomber*.



*Al Kile cheerfully works to clean up the stage for the coming performances.*

Individuals came and went—each adding a bit to the work in progress. Community spirit was in the air, aided by good food and good weather. At the end of the day, massive amounts of work had been done, and there was a general sense of satisfaction. Two workdays are left, and there is still plenty to do, but at this rate, it should all be finished on time.



*Eric Groneman, Cuco Alcala, and Chris Gove lower the fencing around the new well to improved views of the stage.*

# MAY 16<sup>TH</sup> BBQ WORK PARTY

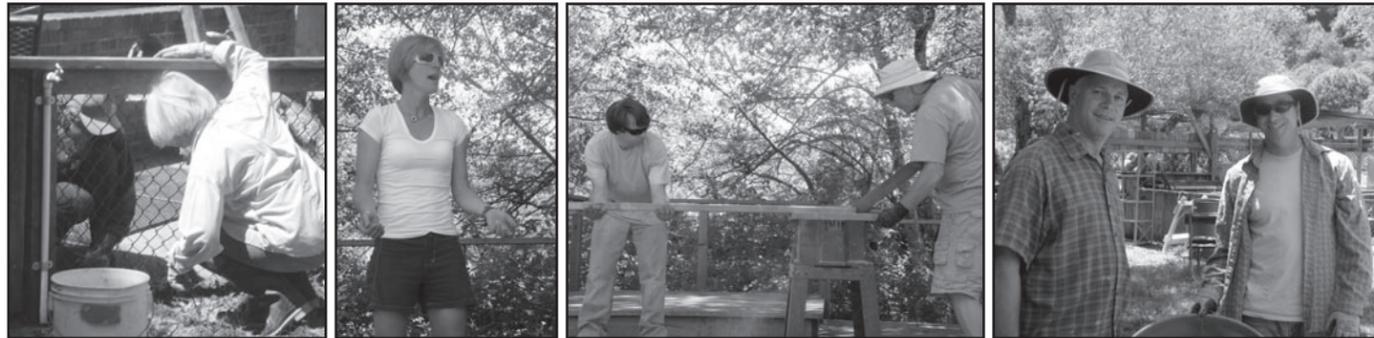
Story and Photographs by Laurie Piel

Saturday dawned bright and clear for the third 2009 Work Party at the BBQ site. The early folks got the worms as a lovely spread of bagels, cream cheese, lox, tomato, and coffee was waiting for us. It sure didn't last very long... not that any one had that much time to sit back, relax and chat for there was work to be done.

There was weed whacking (somehow that never seems to be finished), booth building, kitchen cleaning, and the vegetation that had grown up around the fence

other projects. The Piotters are another new family pitching in before their house is even finished. Thank you all so much.

Over and above all of the other preparatory work Kathy Sward did all day, there was always time for more staple pulling. There is no reason to be discounting clothing when a little bit of preventative work will make sure there are no holes or other problems with the clothing.



Arlene and Joey learn that cleaning the BBQ pit is not as easy as it sounds.

Barbara Piotter: I think I'm missing something.

Don Piotter: I've got it.

Chas Kingsbury and Tony Moore still smiling after all of the hard work.

surrounding the grill needed to be removed. It was all backbreaking labor. Jim White and Aran Collier fixed up the brick bread-warming oven. Dave Elliot, Al Kile and the Piotters—Don, Barbara, and Hans—worked on the construction of the ticket booth for its new position in the center of the field, amongst

All of the hard work and sun eventually started people thinking about lunch and something cold to drink. Like a well-oiled machine, Laura Van Amburgh arrived with a feast. Laura hasn't been here very long either and already she was in charge of provisions for all of the Work Parties. Her family is another instant



All hands on deck at the chipper.

We might have to start calling Chris Gove the Pied Piper.

Cuco Alcala proves it takes a strong man to make a tender chicken.



We're hoping Jim White doesn't replace Hansel in the oven.

Is it any wonder this man is the fire chief?

Kathy Sward tells Anne Jeschke that they went that-away.

Muir Beach regular. You can usually find Laura and her daughter Camila at Bistro on Wednesday mornings. To feed the multitude of workers, she had provided not only a great selection of meats and cheeses but fresh avocado, tomatoes, pickles, peppers, and all sorts of condiments... Subway "fresh" has nothing on us. Nina Vincent helped set it all up, amongst other things, and knew the secret of keeping the meats and cheeses away from the dogs and safe for the hungry workers.

Kaufman pitched in and Fire Association treasurer Bob Hayden did his part. The scene was taken in by Anne and Paul Jeschke, who strong-armed all of the volunteers in the first place. At the end of the day they had to be very proud of their team.

Here's to seeing y'all same time, same place next year!



Lunch is ready.

Rob Allen, Don Piotter, Hans Piotter, and Dave Elliott build the new ticket booth.

Steve Wynn and Steve Gillespie the yin and yang of weed whacking and raking.

After a short break it was back to work. Maury Ostroff and Janice Kubota put their heads together to test the phone lines and set up the cashier's station. Running lead on the chipper this year was Chris Gove. Over the course of the afternoon many people chipped in to help. Between Rob Allen, Mike Moore, and every boy with a desire to work with big machinery, Chris and the chipper had a busy day. All that weed whacking by Aran Moore, Matt Klein, Steve Wynn, and Jake Shenandoah left a lot of raking and gathering to be done. Chas Kingsbury, Mary Thorsen, Aran Collier, Tony Moore, Aran Moore, and Steve Gillespie worked up quite a sweat in the heat clearing the area that was going to be filled with happy BBQ goers in just a week. A whole section by the stage had to be leveled and who but John John Sward or Cuco Alcala would grab the controls and dig in. Tayeko and Michael



Aran Moore, Denise Lamott, and Tony Moore admire the new ticket booth.

**BBQ PREP WEEK:  
T-SHIRT COUNTING AT BANDUCCI RANCH**

Photographs by Laurie Piel, Text by Linda Gibbs



On a cold and foggy morning at Banducci Ranch three days before the BBQ, Lonna Richmond unloads T-shirts from the vendor's SUV.



Edna Rossenas, Linda Gibbs, and Brenda Kohn get to work opening boxes containing fire department merchandise. The goal of the morning is to check each item against the order form to ensure that Kathy Sward received what she ordered.



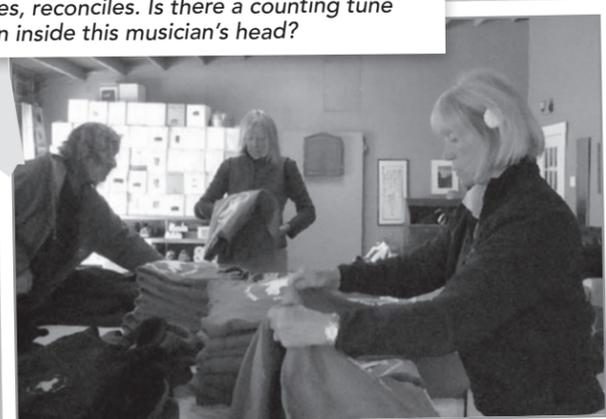
Pam Barlow counts, counts, counts, reconciles, reconciles, reconciles. Is there a counting tune going on inside this musician's head?



T-Shirt Chair Kathy Sward examines the merchandise.



Lonna Richmond and Leslie Riehl yuk it up over hoodies.



Leslie Riehl, Lonna Richmond, and Joey Groneman have the counting system down pat. S, M, L, XL, 2XL. Make sure the colors and sizes match up. Check against the packing slip. Count, recount, double check. Neatly fold the clothing and return it to the boxes for transporting to the BBQ site on BBQ Day for the one-day retail store.



Dean Sward, whose home has been invaded by the shirt people, hangs out with shirt counter Edna Rossenas.

**BBQ PREP WEEK:  
DESSERT BAKING AT THE GREEN GULCH KITCHEN**

Photographs by Julie Smith, Text by Linda Gibbs



It takes big bowls, long wooden spoons, and lots of muscle to bake for the multitudes. From left, Al Kile, Gail Falls, Joey Groneman, and Kent Andrews.



Michael Kaufman butters the cookie sheets. Green Gulch Farm donates the ingredients for the poppy seed cakes, brownies, and chocolate chip cookies, as well as the use of their professional kitchen. Thank you Green Gulch for your generous yearly contribution.



Kent Andrews and Bethany Villere supplied the wine and a platter of delicious sandwiches and fruit for the bakers who worked until almost midnight on the Friday before the BBQ. They worked another long night the next evening to complete the baking. Here Kent Andrews discusses his wine selection with Al Kile.



Gail Falls, under the watchful eye of Dessert Chair Tayeko Kaufman, carefully divides a chocolate chip reject into nine equal tastes. Usually no one can sample the goods during baking. Tayeko loosened the rule when one cookie didn't meet quality control standards!



The 2009 BBQ Dessert team. Back row, from left: Bethany Villere, Kent Andrews, Shirley Nygren, Tayeko Kaufman, Michael Kaufman, and Arlene Robertson. Front row, from left: Al Kile, Gail Falls, Julie Smith, and Joey Groneman.

# MAY 23<sup>RD</sup> BBQ WORK PARTY

Photographs and Text by Julie Smith



Erin Pinto has the early kitchen setup crew, Bruce Barlow and Bob Hayden, organized and ready to go to work.



Brad Eigsti and Hannah, his able assistant, put the finishing touches on their signs.



David Piel, Anne Jeschke, and Laurie Piel count and check raffle tickets.



Laura Van Amburgh, Elena Piotter, and Lisa Eigsti served up a splendid lunch to the hungry work crew.



Eli Vincent-Pearlman looks on in amazement as Harvey struggles with the aluminum foil cutting mechanism. Meanwhile, Bernard Halliwell deftly slices the bread.



Nina Vincent stocks the T-Shirt booth shelves.



Stella Eigsti can make signs, too. She invites everyone to have fun at the BBQ!



The brand new ticket booth is hauled to its place in the meadow.



The T-Shirt booth is open early. Kathy Sward and Brenda Kohn celebrate their first sale.



Manly Men transport Chris Gove's dog, Maia, to her position beside the Recycle cans.



Jes Sward and Jesse Rudnick wrestle the beer booth roof into place while Craig Eichenbaum anchors it down.



And Julie Smith, Beachcomber photographer, captures it all! Photograph by David Leivick



Joey Groneman and Shirley Nygren place the flags to remind us all why, (besides the MBVFD BBQ) we're celebrating Memorial Day Weekend!

# MAY 23<sup>RD</sup> VOLUNTEER DINNER

Photographs by Bruce Barlow  
Text by Linda Gibbs



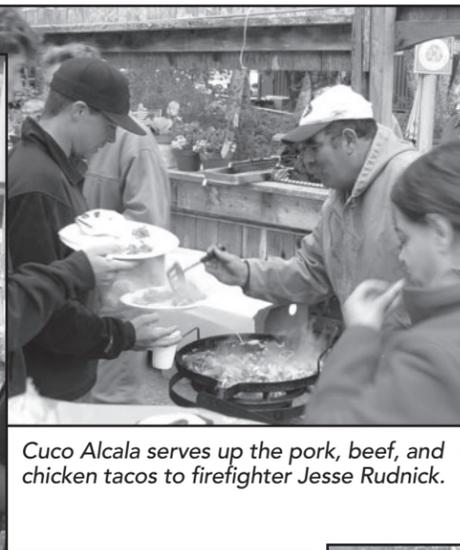
Tucked inside the Kitchen, BBQ volunteers take time out for a party the night before the big event.



A large crowd turns out for the taco dinner, hosted by Cuco and Consuelo Alcala for the last five years.



Cuco and Consuelo Alcala grilling the tacos.



Cuco Alcala serves up the pork, beef, and chicken tacos to firefighter Jesse Rudnick.



Good food and conversation abound during the party that began at 6 pm at the BBQ grounds.



Brad Eigsti waits patiently for a freshly cooked taco right off the portable grill that the Alcalas brought to the Kitchen.



The kids are a whirl of activity as they make their own party on the stage.



Another whirl of activity on the stage.



Happy diners: Nina Vincent with her daughter Tiana Vincent-Pearlman and Austin Moore.



The Moore clan and others volunteered to camp out at the BBQ site the night before the BBQ to stand guard. Austin Moore, with the help of Sutton Freebairn-Smith, sets up a tent while Aran Collier, Michael Moore, and Janet Tumpich supervise.



"Oh, boy, a sleepover," says Trinity Boyd, a friend of the Lamott-Moore family.



The campsite is just about ready for the overnight crew: Aran Moore and his two sons Jackson and Austin and their cousin Maxx Moore; family friends from Sacramento: Anne-Laure Cassou-Boyd and Michael Boyd and their children Lilly-Marie and Trinity; Don and Hans Pioter; and Jessie Kingsbury the dog.



The big kids hang near the BBQ grill.



Linda Lotriet is happy with Peter Lambert's wine selection.



When night comes on and it turns chilly, partygoers draw closer to the grill fire.



Everyone's been fed. Time for the hosts Cuco and Consuelo Alcala to relax and enjoy the party.



Storyteller John John Sward entertains Janice Kubota, Leighton Hills, David Leivick, Linda Gibbs, and Harvey Pearlman.



John John Sward's grill extension workmanship (a 2008 BBQ project) backlit by the fire.



Photograph by David Leivick

**Brought to you by Julie Smith,  
Muir Beach Papparazzi**

Photographs and Text by Julie Smith



The Moore clan, their friends the Cassou-Boyd family, and the Piotters kept the BBQ grounds safe from marauding raccoons and other critters the night before. At 7:30 am the only guards on duty were a turkey posted at the volleyball lot and the dog.



Early in the morning Brad Eigsti placed the last in the series of "Burma Shave" type signs along Muir Woods Road.



100 winning tickets are somewhere in the raffle drum that contains thousands of tickets. David Piel carries the precious cargo carefully to the raffle booth during morning setup. Photograph by Laurie Piel



Open for business!



Aran Collier brought the baked beans back this year. They warmed the tummy on this coolish day.



The servers did a great job of quickly filling plates. With the enlarged BBQ pit, no one had to wait long for dinner.



Shirley Nygren's grandson, Kyle, helped in the Taco stand again this year, selling a record number of nachos.



David Leivick expounds on the wonderfulness of the MBVFD logo gear while Linda Gibbs writes up a big order.



Troy Bassett takes a few minutes off from selling T-shirts to discuss the day's schedule with her daughter, Nataya.

THE 37<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL FIREMEN'S BBQ



Maury Ostroff serves up a vegetarian tamale dinner to Leighton Hills.



The "85s," all graduates of Tam High, kicked off the day's lively entertainment with music from their generation.



Beachcomber photographer Julie Smith searches the crowd for the next great photo-op.  
Photograph by David Leivick



Sutton Freebairn Smith with son Dean on his shoulders, Fleche Phoenix, and Mark Pandapas watch the action from the beer booth.



The 85s' music inspired dancing with joyful abandon.



The new ticket booth enjoyed a steady stream of sales all day.



Sean Onorato pours a beer for a thirsty partygoer.



Amadeo Banducci, Eric Groneman, Chris Friedel, and Hank Almarez turn the chicken racks. All day long.



Cuco Alcala and Chris Friedel keep watch over the cooking chicken.

THE 37<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL FIREMEN'S BBQ



Kathy Sward and Barbara Herwitz keep those T-shirts moving.



Susy Stewart exhibits her "waitressing skills" with a two-chicken-dinner handoff.



Pam and Bruce Barlow opened with "The Muir Beach Song," music by the Standells, lyrics by Pam. Her lyrics allude to the occasional color of Muir Beach water when the fire hydrants are flushed.



Lissa Rankin gets in the groove while Steve Shaffer presides over his bins of barbecued chicken.



Lonna Richmond is clearly having way too much fun!



Kris, Jeff, and Jake Nelder rank the day's Fun Factor an emphatic "YES!"



Steve Shaffer and Tricia Barrett share a good laugh.



Dee Hayden, concentrating more on the music than serving chickens, cheers the band.



Amadeo Banducci and Eric Groneman, Master Chicken Barbecuers at work.



Andre's All Stars once again brought their legendary great music and energy that kept the crowd dancing all afternoon.



Victoria Hamilton-Rivers, Janice Kubota, and Brenda Kohn are all smiles at the end of a successful day at the credit card station in the T-Shirt booth.



Tayeko and Michael Kaufman celebrate another successful Barbecue.



Anna Rauh invites her mom, Danny Hobson, to nibble her fingers. Yum yum, that barbecue sauce sure tastes good!



Kids are so easily entertained. These three discovered the pile of mowed grass beside the stage.



Everyone was rockin' to the beat.



Laurie Piel and Kathleen Call preside over the Raffle prizes.



This is the closest Erin Pinto ever got to escaping the Kitchen.



Dave Elliott heads home with his wine and beans-to-go.



David Piel reads off the raffle winners to the hopeful throngs. This year's prizes, capping off a perfect day, were the best ever!

# MAY 25<sup>TH</sup> POST-BBQ CLEANUP

Photographs and Text by Julie Smith



Suzanne Bender-Van Spyk spent hours washing dishes!



Susie Stewart fills to-go baggies with leftover baked beans.



The tractor, with John John Sward at the controls, hauls the ticket booth full of cheering kids to its off-season resting place.



The kids, supervised by Cuco Alcala, are trying to unload the last of the beer tickets.



Peter Lambert scours the burned bits off a baked bean container. It was a mess—why is he smiling!?



Dee Hayden got those cookie sheets squeaky clean!



Janice Kubota, manning the hose, got the five-gallon barbecue sauce buckets clean.



Laura Van Amburgh set out a great lunch featuring leftovers from the Day Before the BBQ Work Party.



Kathy Sward, Maury Ostroff, Harvey Pearlman, Joey Groneman, and Tayeko Kaufman enjoy the chow.



Maury Ostroff, Veggie Meals  
Photograph by Julie Smith

**Vegetarian Meal Report | By Maury Ostroff**

This year we ordered 42 dozen tamales, and we completely sold out by around 6:00 pm. Last year we ordered 44 dozen and had 7 dozen left over, so we definitely sold more this year. Not sure why demand seems to fluctuate from year to year. I estimate we served about 230 Tamale meals, where each meal comes with two tamales. A nominal amount of "standalone" tamales are eaten by volunteers, as they are suitable for a quick bite for busy people and less messy than sitting down with the barbecued chicken.

The tamales are ordered from Donna's Tamales in San Rafael, and we order two kinds: cheese and red bean with yam. The red bean is Vegan and has no dairy for those who follow that diet. The general preference of the public is for the cheese tamales, but my personal preference is for red bean (they have a little bit more of a flavor kick.)

With over 200 meals served, it reinforces the fact that a vegetarian alternative to chicken is a crucial component for the BBQ's continued success. We probably need to publicize the fact that we have a Vegan alternative, as I heard that some attendees were not aware that there was a choice of tamales.

Being near the "front lines" of food service, and because at times I also serve the customers directly, I get to see first-hand how the process works. I'd like to share some observations of human behavior. First, it is important to note that the vast majority of people who attend the barbecue are great, and it's wonderful to see their eyes light up when they get a full plate of chicken or tamales with the salad and bread and beans and they know they're getting a great deal. But, there are two types of customers I'd like to describe, which any volunteer who has done the job of taking food orders will recognize immediately.

The first type I call the "unable to decide" group. These are the people that you should avoid giving a choice, such as white or dark meat, or cheese or bean tamale. When presented with a choice, they freeze and ponder the question for at least 10 or 15 seconds. That may not seem like a long time, but when the line is backed up and we're trying to keep things moving smoothly along it can seem like an eternity. Some of them start looking around at the signs or into the food prep area, as if searching for the answer. A variation on this type is that some people will stand there quietly thinking and looking around for awhile, and then ask if you have hamburgers, and they are politely informed once again that the choices are chicken or tamales. An even smaller subset will then think for a few more seconds and then ask if we have hot dogs or corn on the cob. (At this point I usually turn around and pretend to mess with the tamale steamer so they don't see me rolling my eyes.)

The second type is what I call "Let's Make a Deal." While the signs all clearly state that chicken or tamale dinners are 7 tickets, there are numerous requests along the lines of "What can I get for X tickets?" where X is less than 7. My favorite this year was three teenage girls who came right up to the counter and asked, "Can we be difficult?" In general, we try to stick to the rules but now and then exceptions are made. The closer it is to the end of the day, the more "deals" are made. A common practice is to give a free piece of bread out to those patrons who appear to have imbibed a little more than their share of beer, under the theory that the bread will soak up some of the excess alcohol.

In the end, everything works out fine and a good time is had by all. Just remind me to never take a real job in food service dealing directly with customers.



Kathy Sward, T-Shirts  
Photograph by Julie Smith

**Doggie Shirts | By Kathy Sward**

Thank you so much to everyone who helped make the shirt booth so much fun and the sales such a huge, fundraising success; never mind the lousy economy—everyone still needed a fresh, new, hot-off-the-press MBVFD doggie shirt. And the sales at our famous little "happening shop" on Bar-B-Q day proved it. We took in almost the same as we did last year, almost \$11,000. The net will be something like almost \$5,500—and all in the space of just about six hours!

With all the wonderful volunteers crowded in under the low lattice roof, willingly showing each person every item they wanted to see from the shelves sagging with too many colorful choices, the money came flying!

Bryce Browning's brilliant, almost thirty-year-old logo lives on; it seems people just can't get enough of that dog, and thankfully so. If you didn't manage to get your shirt that day, give me a call (383.6762) and we'll make it happen. Thanks to all for the support you continue to give.



**Enthusiastic Volunteers Join Barbecue | By Anne Jeschke**

One of the biggest successes of this year's barbecue was the number of new volunteers, both as leaders and as volunteer workers. They brought new spirit and new ideas, and new energy. You can join this happy group by coming to the February pot luck/planning meeting, or by e-mailing me (ajeschke@aol.com) anytime between now and then.

Already we are looking for someone to take a leadership role in cleanup Monday morning after the barbecue. This job involves little more than coming down from 9 am until noon, and directing willing workers to the tasks that are waiting. There is a regular group that shows up, and if you bring along two to four new helpers, it will go even faster. E-mail now and be the first of next year's enthusiastic volunteers!

**Raffle 2009 Recap | By Debra Allen**

Well, after starting my emails and calls again in January, I only had a couple of prizes that didn't arrive until moments before the BBQ (not the best time to get things to me, BTW). Other than that, it was all pretty smooth prior to the event. Since I couldn't attend this year, many thanks go out to Laurie and David Piel and to Kathleen Call and Levon Sagatelyan for being the raffle queens and kings in my absence. They wanted to thank their winning ticket runners (Hans Piotter, Maxx, Austin, and Jackson Moore), as well as their winning ticket puller, Skye Collier.

I heard Laurie did a great job walking the crowd and selling raffle tickets again this year! Almost 6,000 tickets were in the spinner at the end, and approximately 70 winners of the 100 prizes were Muir Beachers. Twenty-five of those Muir Beach winners purchased their tickets on the day of the BBQ (and no, they didn't all buy the winning tickets from Jon Rauh!). You never know which prize you'll win, but thank you for being a good sport if you won a prize that you didn't expect. Hard to believe but an Ocean Rider won the Ocean Rider prize, and Bethany/Kent and Paul/Mary won each other's prizes. For those of you who purchased \$100 and \$200 worth of raffle tickets, and to my local prize donors, "thank you" isn't enough to say, as without your help, I couldn't do this! One lady who won two prizes lives in San Jose and told me that she found the event on the Internet, attended, had a great time and even won prizes; she'll be back!

You can find the final raffle prize list and winner names/ticket numbers on [www.muirbeachfire.com](http://www.muirbeachfire.com).



Anne Jeschke  
Volunteer Coordinator  
Photograph by Laurie Piel



Debra Allen, Raffle  
Photograph by Julie Smith

**Smoke Signals  
Barbecue Success**

By Paul Jeschke  
Photographs by Julie Smith

Committee heads who served up hundreds of chicken, baked beans and green salad dinners Memorial Day weekend celebrated their effort six days later with a chicken, baked beans and green salad dinner.

The sweet smell of financial success mixed with smoke from the picnic ground barbecue pit when Bob Hayden, Muir Beach Volunteer Fireman's Association treasurer, estimated this year's net profit at about \$28,000. Hayden said the net was "amazingly similar to last year." Expenses set a new record, but increased sales helped the bottom line. Bartenders turned over \$120 in tips and Jubilee Jump revenue set a new record. MBVFA President Michael Kaufman called this year's fundraiser "better than ever," citing the good financial outcome despite

a tough economy and concern about cold, foggy weather that preceded the event. "The sunshine came out right on time, the crowd was mellow, the music great and we left the meadow in better shape than ever before," Kaufman told volunteers.

The annual debriefing is an opportunity for barbecue organizers



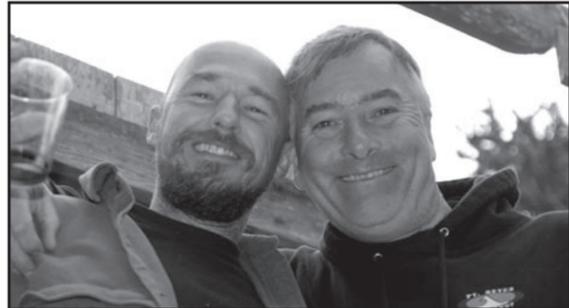
Steve Shaffer and Amadeo Banducci are back at the grill to barbecue chicken one more time, this time for the Chairs who have gathered at the picnic grounds one week later to give their reports on the BBQ and to discuss how to improve this already finely-tuned operation to be even better next year.



Fire Chief John John Sward assesses the Memorial weekend event at the May 30th debrief meeting while Amadeo Banducci and Steve Shaffer conduct a chicken conference. Other attendees are Dee Hayden and Bryce Browning.



Michael Kaufman (who called this year's fundraiser "better than ever"), Anne Jeschke, Paul Jeschke, and Fleche Phoenix listen to John John Sward's recap.



Fleche Phoenix and Michael Moore toast to a job well done.

to assess operations ranging from parking and porta-potties to clothing and raffle and food sales. Steve Shaffer, who ordered over 17-hundred pounds of chicken for the event, said he'd cut back next year. Two boxes of uncooked chicken, along with leftover baked beans and garlic bread, were given to charity.

The baked beans replaced three-bean salad on the menu this year. The change got generally good reviews, although some people disliked the fact that bean juice tended to leak into the green salad. Cleanup crew participants also complained that scrubbing cooked-on beans was a lot of work and "not much fun."

MBVFD will hold a barbecue-planning event at the Community Center next February to refine plans for next year's event.

Kaufman also announced that he had received application information for a federal grant the MBVFA is pursuing to

help remodel and rebuild the fire station. The application window is short and rapidly approaching, Kaufman said. He is putting together a small group of volunteers to complete the process.



"Another BBQ already?" wonders little Dean Sward as he nestles in his dad's arm.

MUIR BEACH VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT



**MBVFD Incident Log**

Compiled by Paul Jeschke

**March 23, 5:00 pm**  
Highway 1  
Cliff rescue at mile marker 9.

**March 28, 9:45 pm**  
Muir Beach  
Medical Emergency Seacape Drive; teenager in distress.

**April 3, 11:30 pm**  
Panoramic and Highway 1  
Vehicle/motorcycle accident.  
Call cancelled.

**April 15, 11:35 am**  
Muir Beach  
79-year-old female fell on trail one mile north of overlook. Transferred to Kaiser, San Francisco.

**April 19, 9:13 pm**  
Highway 1  
Vehicle off road three miles south of Muir Beach. Car 200 feet down embankment.  
No injury.

**April 30, 8:20 am**  
Franks Valley Road  
Cyclist down. Call cancelled.

**May 2, 10:30 am**  
Muir Woods Visitor's Center  
Medical emergency.

**May 8, 5:30 pm**  
Muir Woods  
Female fall victim.

**May 9, 9:55 am**  
Slide Ranch  
Motorcycle/vehicle accident. No transport.

**May 9, 2:45 pm**  
Muir Woods  
False fire alarm

**May 10, 9:45 am**  
Muir Woods  
False fire alarm.

**May 16, 11 am**  
Highway 1  
Bike versus auto accident.

**May 16, 10 pm**  
Highway 1 at Shoreline  
Disoriented person on highway. Cancelled.

**May 21, 8:00 pm**  
Muir Beach  
Fire on beach.

**June 5, 4:00 pm**  
Muir Woods  
Hiker on Ocean View trail injured ankle.

**June 8, 12:30 pm**  
Green Gulch  
Medical emergency.



**District Manager's Report**  
**June 2009: More Questions Than Answers**

By Maury Ostroff

I'm writing this article against the backdrop of the current fiscal crisis facing the State of California. The voters rejected the latest batch of Propositions that would have shuffled some monies around, but in my view would not have addressed the fundamental issues affecting the state, and of how it is governed. The consensus view is that the defeat of the Propositions is a protest vote, in effect saying that the Governor and the Legislature in Sacramento have to do their jobs. There doesn't seem to be any clear answer or solution in sight.

Before I go any further, let me first say that the Muir Beach CSD is in good shape financially. The main reason is that we have very few obligations! Our allocation of property tax dollars, modest as it is, goes towards general administration, roads and easements maintenance, and upkeep at the Community Center. The Water System is self-funded through water billing, and our Water Capital Improvements Fund remains healthy. Remember that only 1% of the property taxes you pay (outside of the specific assessments for Water and Fire) come back to the Muir Beach CSD, the rest goes to Marin County and the State of California. And if Sacramento gets their way, even more of it will go to the State.

The real topic I want to discuss in this article is the role of government, and how things really get done. The debate we are familiar with is that of left-wing versus right-wing politics, or Democrats vs. Republicans. But those labels don't really work, especially with respect to political parties. Many of the positions we associate with Republicans today (e.g., social conservatism) were actually Democrat positions for most of this country's history. It is an odd fact of history that if you look at a state by state map of the election of 1896 (William Jennings Bryan the Democrat running against William McKinley the Republican) and compare it to the map of 2004 when George W. Bush ran against John Kerry they are a virtual mirror image of each other, i.e., every state that voted Republican in 1896 (the Northeast and the West Coast) voted Democratic in 2004, and vice-versa where the Democrats carried the South and the Midwest in 1896. (Remember that William Jennings

Bryan, three time Democratic nominee for President, was a bible-belt populist equally known for his defense of "creationism" in the Scopes trial where a teacher in Tennessee was prosecuted for teaching evolution.)

The distinction between "right-wing" and "left-wing" is more complicated, and perhaps a topic for another day. Rather, it seems to me that all discussions about government, or any other organizational form come down to the question of centralized authority and decision-making versus decentralization.

The question of government has been written about by the greatest minds in history including Plato, Aristotle, John Locke, Thomas Jefferson, and countless others. But the definitive answer still seems to elude us.

In the United States, the issue of centralized vs. decentralized authority has been the defining question of our history. The answer seems to be that a balance is needed. Common sense and experience tells us that total, authoritarian control doesn't work (whether from the "left" or the "right"), and on the other hand neither does complete anarchy or "free markets." The trick is getting the right balance, and in which areas.

So what does this all mean for us in Muir Beach?

There are several issues floating around right now, and for the most part they are not totally within the jurisdiction of the CSD. In fact, in most cases it is not clear who or what agency has the authority or the jurisdiction. In some cases it overlaps, in other cases it is non-existent. All I know is that they are of concern to some, if not all, of the owners and residents of Muir Beach. Some of these issues are a bit controversial, but most are not. Rather they are just good ideas but are too big in scope to find a simple answer. The topics below are not meant to be all-inclusive, but give a pretty good idea of some of the issues either pressing right now or on the horizon.

**Sewer System for Muir Beach.** With all of the federal stimulus package dollars around, there has

been talk about the feasibility of extending the sewer connection at Muir Woods down to Muir Beach. Initial queries to the final sewage treatment plant in Sausalito indicated that they had plenty of capacity for the relatively modest amount of incremental sewage we would generate, so that is not the problem. The problem is that while it sounds like a great idea, this would be a major project for Muir Beach which would cost millions of dollars and take many years. We would probably have to get an initial grant of at least \$100,000 to hire professionals just to begin to do the design and feasibility studies. This is not a trivial task to undertake, as trenching and putting in an underground sewer system is quite disruptive. Would all homeowners have to connect? Would each homeowner have to pay a portion of the cost for their hookup, or can it all be funded through grants? Lots of questions at this point.

**Traffic on Pacific Way going to the beach.** There are a few weekends each summer where the popularity of the beach is more than the parking lot can handle. Visitors park along Pacific Way, turning it into a one-lane road, and gridlock ensues, along with visitor and resident frustration. Can we get NPS to provide traffic management? Can we get the County to enforce no parking and give out tickets? Will the problem get worse or better after the Beach Restoration project? How do we keep visitors from parking on our residential streets when the beach parking lot is full?

**Public Transportation.** This issue has two components: the first is public transportation for visitors, and is related to the traffic problem above. Should the Muir Woods Shuttle also make a stop at Muir Beach? Where would the bus stop be? The second part is public transportation for the residents, which is more important during the week on commuting hours, not weekends. How can we get the West Marin Stagecoach to stop at Muir Beach again?

**Little Beach.** The issue of nudity on Little Beach has been around for years, but lately the situation seems to be getting a bit out of hand. What was a mellow scene where it was generally known that nude sunbathing was okay, has been marred by a few incidents of more aggressive and lewd public behavior. Are these just isolated incidents or is it getting worse? What role do we expect from Marin County Law Enforcement?

**Sunset Way.** The condition of the road, parking, burying the utilities underground, replacing the old 4" water line, all of these things are related and have been talked about for years. In a perfect world, Sunset Way would be completely rebuilt as part of one master project with a proper roadbed, appropriate drainage, clarity around easements for parking, and replacement of the original water lines along with underground burial of the telephone and electrical utilities. The recommended approach would be to form a special assessment area for the residents of Sunset Way, and then look at sources for funding. How do we clarify the boundaries of where the 40 foot wide roadway easement between public and private property begins and ends? Who will take the lead?

Most of these tasks are going to require both community participation and leadership. (The old story about "who will bell the cat" comes to mind.)

But we do have some success stories. The one I'd like to point out is the Muir Beach Community Center, where over the years we have made consistent improvements, from a wide variety of sources and participation, both from grants, donations, and the supply of volunteer labor and of skilled tradesmen within Muir Beach. Most of these have been initiated by groups other than the CSD, such as the Quilters who have shown leadership in fundraising for various projects. Of recent note are the improvements due to an anonymous donation provided via the Marin Community Foundation. We have a new storage shed, stylish stone retaining walls, a new set of stone steps down to the actual entrance, an expanded deck, and an upgraded electrical system.

The CSD plays a crucial role in providing oversight for these projects, but there is more involvement from many others in the community. In short, there is a balance between centralized and decentralized decision making and initiative. How we can make this work for larger projects that are outside of the scope of the CSD's jurisdiction is an open question.

Mostly I have been uncomfortable with being in the position of having more questions than answers. But I'm been realizing that there will always be more questions, and that the process of continuing to ask questions helps produce answers eventually. Keeping the questions in front of us helps us recognize the answer in the form of an opportunity when it arises.



## In the Center of Things

Story and Photographs by Laurie Piel

It's hard to believe that Memorial Day is behind us and another BBQ has ushered in the warm months of summer. My question is, other than that early burst of hot weather, where are those beautiful sunny days? The June gloom has started and it's still May.

The Community Center is ushering in the summer with a brand new look for the main entrance. The work is not yet finished but the stairs to the backyard are spectacular. John John Sward, Jes Sward, Chas Kingsbury, Mitch Henderson, and dogs Jessie and Sammy have been laboring under the May sun to create the beautiful new stairs. The base concrete is poured and set (no autographs please). The stone work should be underway by the time you are reading this. The Center is getting a makeover within as well as without. The electrical upgrade has begun and should be finished by publication time. Our thanks to



And so it begins.

Paul Brunner and his able team of Alan Frawley and Jeff Hu. The shed now has light which makes all of the evening cleanup much easier. That is great news not only for the renters but for occasions like the Day of the Dead and the Quilters Holiday Arts Fair. Expect an update in the fall issue of the 2009 *Beachcomber*.

Excess water was discovered when our watering system was on and it turned out that some of the coupling had been broken at the junction box. The consensus was that an animal had brushed up too strongly against some of the pipes causing the break. Our water mavens, Harvey Pearlman and Michael Kaufman, were promptly to the rescue.

Speaking of additions to the Center, we now have a brand new cart. It can be used upright like a hand truck, or flat for those large loads. We also have a new large toolbox. It has been seeded with the basic tools: hammer, pliers, electric screwdriver, small tape measure, and a matt knife. But as all handymen know, what makes a toolbox great is all the interesting things you accumulate over the years... all those leftover items that you never knew you were going to need again, but there they are waiting for that special occasion. So, if anyone has any extra tools or nails, bolts, washers, or anything else you'd like to donate, bring it to Bistro any Wednesday or give me a call (388-8319) and we'll choose a time to pick up anything you've got. When it comes to new acquisitions, we can't forget about the kids, and there has been a great addition compliments of the Bender-Van Spyk family—Scott, Suzanne, Christian, and Adrianna. In the Library you will find a fabulous box of toys, train makings, erector set pieces, and much more all in a place to call home. There is one more donation to announce. I have been remiss. Quite a while ago Coleen Curry donated a beautiful set of dishes and I have not publicly thanked her... thanks Coleen!

As I said in the last issue, the Center's outside bookings are way down this year. June-December has a lot of empty space on the calendar. However, we are conducting facilitator beta testing on the few rentals we've had. Those experiences will be used to train the new facilitators. The over the hill events



Contemplation of how much more there is.



That's an awfully big first step.



Are you sure that goes there?

using facilitators have gone very smoothly. There have been no complaints from neighbors and the setup and cleanup have yielded no problems as anything that comes up is promptly dealt with.

Plans are afoot again for this year's Garden Club Rummage Sale. It will be held on the last weekend in August (8/29-30) where Pacific Way meets the beach parking lot. Last year, with little fanfare, the Garden Club raised \$900 towards the shed. The beneficiary of this year's bounty has not yet been decided. So save



Stairway to heaven.



John John Sward and Jes Sward make the hard work of framing the stairs look easy.

those things that you don't know what to do with any more... and bring 'em down to the sale. For specific information about the Rummage Sale, and what you can do to be part of it, call Joey Groneman at 383-2898.

And now for my quarterly reminder; if anyone has any pictures from events at the Center, it would be great if you could pass them on. I would love to have the names and phone

numbers of suppliers used as well. I am still planning on creating a picture book or scrapbook of events held at the Center to help people see how the Center has been used in the past. So if you have any information for vendors such as wedding planners, decorators, caterers, photographers, florists or any other folk that you liked, please send them along as well. You can either email them to me at [bookthembcc@aol.com](mailto:bookthembcc@aol.com) or if you have prints you are willing to part with, you can drop them in my box at 9 Starbuck. As I said if you'd like to take the time to go over the pictures with me, I would love to hear all about your experiences... the coffee klatch invitation still stands.

That's the update for now, more news in the next edition!



A first hint of what the finished stairway will look like.



## The Critter Report: How Do You Spell Arawk, rawk, rawk?

By Dave MacKenzie

Our world is full of sound. Sometimes it might be called noise. At Muir Beach, we have it better than most due to our special surroundings of parkland and of course, the sea. We humans use sound as part of our practical lives, but it is not really the way we did many evolutionary years ago. The wildlife around us depends on sounds for survival, mating, feeding, and even navigation. Here's a synthesized day from my life of sounds and how the critters might be part of them. It is a late spring Sunday.

3 AM. I awake in the night. No sound at all. We are lucky in Muir Beach since we don't have any nearby freeways (I could never sleep well in Mill Valley with the constant US 101 noise). We don't even have lights at night. How cool. It is a critter's world at night, unlike in the cities.

5 AM. Great-Horned Owl starts calling from the roof. "Whoose awake, ...me..., toooo!" The mate responds in the distance. They call for at least 30 minutes. I see one fly by the window. Then they are quiet. Must be time to go to sleep.

5:30 AM. A missing sound: no boat motors! Remember a couple of years ago when the salmon boats would motor out early past Muir Beach, especially in the fall? I could always hear/feel the low frequency drumming and always wanted to be there to toss in a line! What did the salmon think of the motors? Or what do the few remaining salmon think now that there aren't any motors?

6 AM. The sharp Tsp!...Tsp! of a California Towhee outside. What is the best way to spell Tsp? This rather plain brown sparrow has one of the most penetrating pulse chip calls of any of our local birds. Sometimes I think it may use the note to scare up prey items, such as the moths I once saw one gorging. But who knows what the sound really means or does. I have actually used ear plugs in bed to stop them waking me up too early. They are a great spunky little bird, one of my personal favorites!

7:50 AM. The roaring groan of passing motorcycles! Like clockwork. It must be Sunday! For all of us who live even fairly close to Hwy 1, the Sunday bike run to Pt. Reyes Station is something we all know. For us it's always 7:50. On the Sundays when they don't run, I almost miss them. Being passed by the Squids (hotshots) on the road to Stinson is always an experience.

8:15 AM. A pair of Ravens flying by croak back and forth. Arawk, rawk, rawk, rawk! One of the smartest of birds and

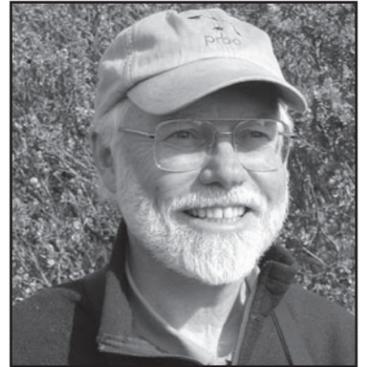
somehow much cooler than Crows; we always have at least one pair nesting on the cliffs at Muir Beach. Have you ever talked to them as they perch on a railing, such as the Overlook Trail, and they simply looked back at you? They are big, and have a booming voice to flaunt their impressive vocabulary which I am sure is appreciated by their kind many miles away.

9 AM. Anna's Hummingbird, a bright red-headed male, makes the humming sound for which it is famous. To me, it sounds much like the light sabers of Star Wars. Whuum, whuum, whuum. That's why I call him Anakin. Have you ever watched a male Anna's rise a hundred feet into the air and then dive bomb the female (who is sitting sedately in a bush)? At the bottom of the dive, and probably at over a hundred miles per hour, there is a sharp pop-gun like tscheew!

10 AM. I'm walking along Redwood Creek, caught up in the sound of the water. Bubbles, splashes, gurgles. Hard to describe, but you all know what I mean. The native Americans said that all streams have a unique voice. I would say they do, and it varies from place to place and season to season. Even though critters, such as deer, use streams as corridors for travel, just try to sneak up on them even with that background sound! For that matter, how do birds successfully nest next to freeways, but they do. At least a few species. Obviously, some do not. Peregrines nest on the Bay and Golden Gate Bridges, but then they think little of a ten-mile run for a snack of migrating shorebirds!

10:15 AM. The rapidly repeating cry of a Red-Shouldered Hawk. Most of you have probably heard this in Muir Beach, since they nest here on Pacific Way or Sunset every year. What a stunning bird to see in binoculars or a scope. Brick-red breast and black and white checkered wings. Powerful beak. Check it out!

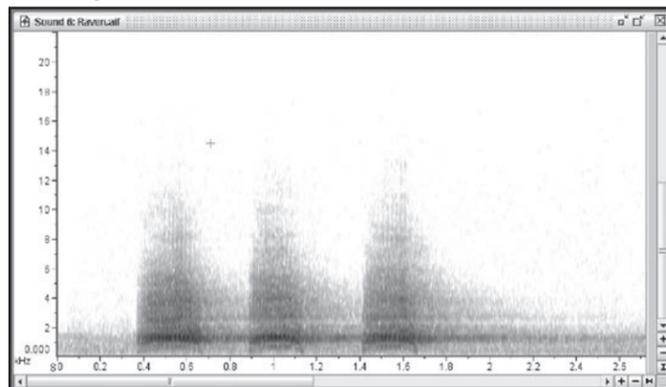
10:25 AM. The single Kyeer! Whistle of a Red-Tailed Hawk



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!

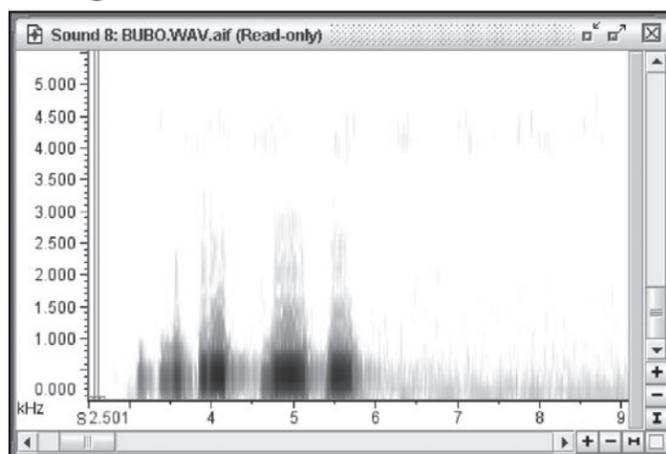
Photograph by Bonnie MacKenzie

Sonogram of Raven Call



"Rawk, rawk, rawk"; sonogram style! Seconds across the bottom, and frequencies vertically. Three "rawks", with sounds to pitches I can no longer hear, but lots of low pitch croaking as well.

Sonogram of Great-Horned Owl Call



"Whooose awake...me tooo!" Note the very low frequencies (the scale here is different).

What is a Sonogram and how do you read it?

A sonogram is a visual way of displaying sound bytes. It is commonly used by biologists and musicians to study the information content of sound. The horizontal axis is time, so in the raven example the sound starts at the left and the bird calls progress to the right for about 2 seconds (three "rawks" worth). The height of the signal (vertical axis) represents the frequencies you hear at each moment of time as the sound progresses. If you tried this with a tuning fork at middle A (which is 440 Hertz, or cycles per second), you would see a strong horizontal line at the vertical level of 440 extending across the sonogram. Of course, a tuning fork (or even better, a violin or some other musical instrument) has harmonics and other sounds which come out even if you just play an A 440. So the sonogram spreads upward, showing this richness. It is the richness that gives musical instruments their unique sound. Birds are masters of richness, and even if a human (like me) imitates them pretty well, the sonogram (and the bird) can tell the difference!

flying overhead. Another one most people probably know. Or is it just miscellaneous background noise to you?

1 PM. N525 Red Helicopter loudly chopping over north Muir Beach and then down the coast. I hate those things, although they are a thrill to fly! No wonder they have been banned from the Grand Canyon. Overflights are something the National Park Service is supposed to make management plans for, but the devil is in the details (the FAA has to agree!). At least the Park Service officially considers Natural Sound a resource; unfortunately, a dwindling one. I once watched a startled (and nesting) Spotted Owl look up (fearfully?) at a chopper flying too low over Camp Eastwood near Muir Woods.

2 PM. I am meditating. It's amazing how one can meditate in a busy airport and tune everything out, unless someone nearby mentions your name. Then you are immediately alert. Ever watch a Bobcat catnap near a vole, and then pounce when the time was right?

3 PM. A Bobcat hunts slowly right next to the traffic on Hwy 1. In this case, it must be using all vision for hunting, as opposed to the rustling sound of the voles as they run through the grass. Would they catch more without the cars? Duhh!

4 PM. The seaplane from Sausalito flies over. At least it has a more gentle and droning sound than the choppers. I don't even have to look up for this identification anymore.

5 PM. From the creek: the Muir Woods Shuttle bus races by on Muir Woods Road with a very loud whooshing engine noise. This is one of the noisiest things in the Redwood Creek watershed especially if you are right near the creek. Can't we get a quieter bus?

7 PM. The last tourist cars are heading down Hwy 1, so the noise is decreasing. Soon it will be time for the mammal critters to start communicating in earnest about the night feeding. Quiet is coming.

8 PM. One of the last A320 Airbuses downshifts at 10,000 feet over Muir Beach on its way into SFO. How do the planes affect the critter world? Just background noise like the surf? I suspect it is more than that. Studies have shown how much humans stress to city noise, so...

9 PM. The foghorn at the Potato Patch starts. Fog is rolling in, as usual, to Muir Beach. Should be a good night for the prowlers. Since California Sea Lions like to sit on the foghorns, I guess they don't mind this fairly peaceful sound. Several times I have thought I heard an owl from up in Muir Woods and it was really the foghorn!

3 AM. No sound at all. At least for me.

(You can download a free copy of the software I used to create these sonograms, Raven Lite, from the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology at <http://www.birds.cornell.edu/brp/raven/RavenOverview.html>. Have fun!)

Sonograms and Egret illustration by Dave MacKenzie



On the Way to Buy a Fish

By Judith Yamamoto

Two soldiers killed... It was on the radio in the pickup. Sam driving, Rachel looking out the window.

The sound of the engine and of the air rushing past them on the freeway made it hard to hear the news. Anbar province... on the road ...

Red lights lit up on the cars in front of them.

"Hell," Sam said, putting his foot on the brake.

"Now what."

They were on their way to the Ranch 99 market in the East Bay, to buy a fish.

"Who needs it?"

Rachel said.

He looked over at her for a second, and back at the collapsing distance of cars.

"The news," she said.

"Wasn't listening," he said.

\*\*\*

For years, Sam had gone fishing. He'd kept a pole in the pickup.

If he worked a ship at Pier 39 on the San Francisco Embarcadero, he fished off the pier on his lunch break.

He fished on weekends if there was no work coming out of the union hiring hall. They'd stuff a sourdough baguette with salami and cheese from the Italian deli on Filbert Street, pile the kids into the back of the VW bus and head down the coast.

Sam stood at the edge of the surf, his line swinging out over the Pacific Ocean, the reel unwinding until he stopped it with his thumb. He could stay there for a long time, his pants legs rolled up, his bare feet sinking into the sand.

Thinking, he said.

Joey and Annie built moats around clumpy sand castles and frantically scooped the walls back up when a wave washed over them. Baby Lana slept in the crook of Rachel's arm.

With one hand, she unpacked the baguette sandwiches, doled out apple slices. "Hold your cup straight up," she'd said, pouring juice from the thermos. "Steady, now."

\*\*\*

"Whew, it's hot over here in the mud flats," Sam said. He rolled his window all the way down, held his arm out. The pickup wasn't moving.

Hot, and she heard all the words now. An IED exploded under a truck south of Baghdad. Terrorists - She clicked the radio off.

"What's going on here, anyway?" Sam moved his arm back out of the sun.

"This is where the cars always jam



up," Rachel said. She looked over at the railing that defined, but could not hold back, the onrush of space.

\*\*\*

All during World War II, when she was growing up, it seemed that everyone was on the move, ghosts and relatives circulating through the house.

Mom's cousins from the Midwest came by; the sailor boys visited before they shipped out to the war

in the Pacific, the two pregnant girls stayed until their babies were born.

Dad's people from the Old Country were lost in Europe, letters not answered.

Cousin Mae floated in and out.

Mae had moved up to San Francisco to work in the shipyards, building the huge Liberty ships that carried cargo and men over the ocean. She rented an apartment in North Beach, where all the artists lived. She wore necklaces of silver and blue, yellow and red jewels, brushed green shadows onto her eyelids.

Rachel loved to look at her.

The walls in Mae's apartment were painted many colors, but not much of them could be seen because they were covered with paintings and photographs. Little statues lined the mantel. The place was alive with art and hope.

When the war ended in 1945, Mae danced with all the happy people on Market Street. There were so many people in the streets, Mae had told her, that the streetcars couldn't move.

Even the people in the streetcars were happy, Mae said.

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Here was the thing. The years had gone by so quickly and so smashed together that Rachel couldn't separate them any more.

And all that time, it seemed now, war was somewhere. Far enough away so you weren't supposed to notice.

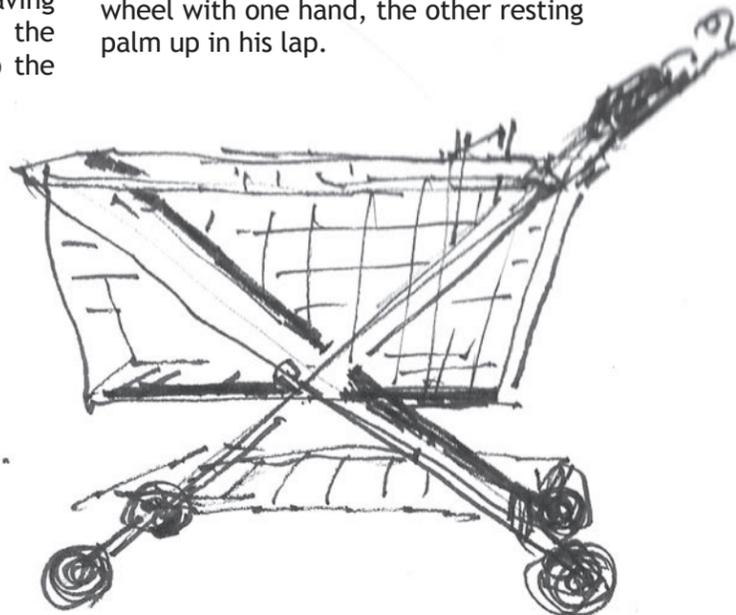
Sometimes just the threat of one hanging over a peaceful morning.

Mornings when Joey was a baby. Sam leaving their odd-shaped rooms, the light still on in the kitchen. Rachel at the window, close enough to the glass to see Coleman's Funeral Home across the alley slowly materializing out of another fractured night.

She could hear Joey in the other room, his mattress rustling in the old Goodwill crib next to their bed.

She stayed at the window, watched Sam walk to the corner, metal lunchbox in his hand, white longshore cap pulled down over his wild black hair.

Joey starting to cry.



\*\*\*

Not long after the end of World War II, when Rachel was eleven, her cousin Mae took her to a little shop just off Fillmore Street, where an old man made copper jewelry. She bought Rachel a hammered bracelet and an oval pin.

Mae wasn't really a cousin, but her parents and Rachel's grandparents had both come from the Old Country, had met and been anarchists in New York City, and had joined in the building of a collective farm in Utah. Finally, when the neighboring Utah farmers complicated and obstructed the flow of water through their pipes, the collective farmers had given up their dream of returning to the soil. Many went back to New York City; Mae's and Rachel's families had moved together to Los Angeles.

Mae leaned in closer to watch the jeweler turning the pin on his little anvil.

Bang, bang, bang, he softly hammered a design into it.

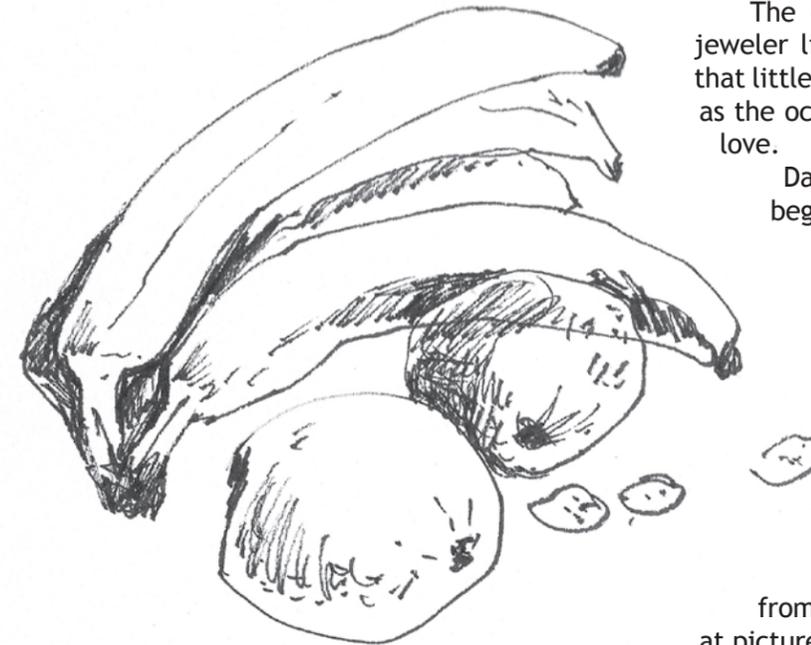
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One lucky thing: the Korean War had ended just before Joey was born. Rachel had breathed in hope. If the baby turned out to be a boy, let him not go to war, not ever.

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The Pacific East Mall sign was higher than any of the houses around it, higher than the freeway.

"Finally," Sam said, turning the wheel with one hand, the other resting palm up in his lap.



They started and stopped and started again, down the off ramp. Rachel watched the huge earthquake-reinforced freeway pillars rising taller around them. The pillars made their own thick city, lived in at night by men covered in old coats and cardboard. Street level was a maze of intersections and lights.

As in any village, the men moved out at daylight.

"Jeez, it's even hotter down here," Sam said.

The heat was everywhere, at the Pacific East Mall, on the road in Anbar Province. It was all background. If a soldier died in some ancient country, was it real? Did dead soldiers have identities beyond their own home towns?

Was anyone paying attention?

\*\*\*

Mae's hair was long and it swung forward over her face, and she pushed the strap of her Rolleiflex higher on her shoulder. Rachel remembered the camera now, remembered Mae looking at everything.

The jeweler was harder to see in his dark shop. Only his hands, moving in the light of the work lamp, showed up in the shadows. The shadows were bigger now, Rachel thought, filling up the little shop, and so many city rooms.

Close by, the enormity of the atomic bombs dropped over Hiroshima and Nagasaki had changed the shape of the sky forever.

Mae's voice was low. She smoked, holding her cigarette a little behind her between puffs.

The copper pin glowed in the light when the jeweler lifted it off the anvil. Rachel could see, in that little shop, that in fact the shadows were as deep as the ocean, and that Mae and the jeweler were in love.

Danger was all around, the Cold War already beginning, and only love could save them.

\*\*\*

"You hungry?" Sam asked.

"Starving." A couple more blocks and they'd be at the parking lot. Row after row of cars, and more cars cruising up and down the aisles, waiting for someone to back out.

They could choose Thai or Korean. Pho from Vietnam, dinuguan from the Philippines. They would look carefully at pictures of food, and point.

The window walls of the little restaurants lined the wide mall corridors around Ranch 99. Menus posted in the languages of past wars.

Between them, more shops, the smell of ancient herbs and exotic teas. The flash of bright silk, high-necked dresses.

After they ate, they would go into the huge Ranch 99 market. At one end of the store vegetables were piled high, some that Rachel had never seen before. Fruits cut open in the shape of stars.

People crowded the aisles with their shopping carts. There was a huge meat section, aisles of preserved plum and ginger candies and dried squid, a deli with hot Chinese dishes. Roast duck revolved in one corner, and nearby was a cold case full of barbecued pork buns and dim sum.

The fish counter stretched for a half block.

"Who needs to fish any more, with all this in the stores?" Sam always asked. "They've got half the ocean in here."

And yet. Back in the pickup, he would ask, "Remember those bony little perch I used to catch?"

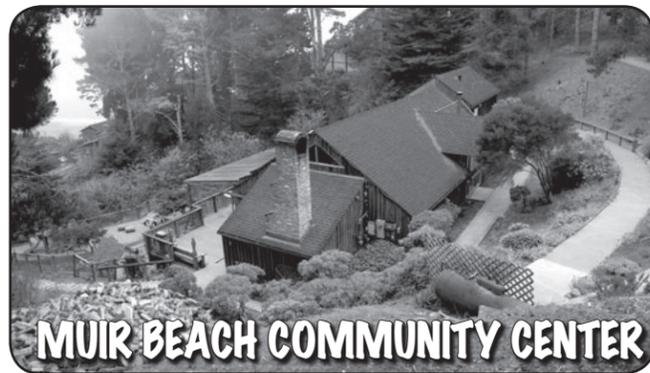
"So good," Rachel would say.

"I should go down to the beach some day, take my pole..."

Rachel looked over at him, at the dreaming, one-hand-on-the-wheel way that he drove.

The tide line high up on the sand.

**COMMUNITY INFO**



Photograph by Julie Smith

**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** - Noon - 1:00 pm - 1st and 3rd Mondays, Mailboxes, Highway One across from Pelican Inn. For more information, 415.499.7544.

**TUESDAY**

- **Yoga** - 6:15 - 7:30 pm. Taylor's zendo. Contact David Taylor for more information: 383.2240

**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 - In summer recess; to resume after Labor Day.

**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 donation)  
Children's Lecture and Program  
- 1st Sundays 10 - 11:30 am

**Community Center Drop-in Use**

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

**Community Center Rental Policies**

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Photograph by Julie Smith



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