

Great Blue Heron Know-How

Photographs and Story by Linda Hulley



One day I looked out and beheld a Great Blue Heron, with a very skinny neck, strolling just outside my window. The Heron looked at me sharply as if to say, "Are you securely locked inside your cage?" Apparently she decided I was because she then ignored me completely and went about her business, as follows...



My husband said, "That poor Heron, what can she possibly find to eat? It must be a very hard life." The Heron then proved him wrong right away. She stabbed her long beak into the ground and pulled up a big, fat gopher!



She proceeded to swallow it whole. See the bulge in her neck? That bulge is the gopher, and I bet it is still rather active. So what does our bird do next?



She immediately catches a second gopher. NOW WHAT?! Her neck is still bulging with the first gopher, there's only so much room in one neck.



She decides it's time to fly home with the groceries. This bird is a great hunter and will have a long and prosperous life. She also has very long legs and a strong resemblance to an ancient pterodactyl. And our yard has two less gophers.

BEACHCOMBER

Muir Beach Neighborhood News

Issue 248 March 2010



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FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Reader:
In this issue we have a wonderful section on the Children’s Halloween Party brought to you by Suzanne Bender-Van Spyk. Not only was Suzanne busy shepherding her two children through the evening’s rituals but she also managed to get photos of 42 trick-or-treaters. I have wanted this kind of coverage of the Muir Beach children at Halloween for three years and Suzanne has delivered! And she’s a poet, too. Thank you, Suzanne. “Halloween Scene, October 31, 2009” begins on page 13.

Many thanks to Nina White Jacobs and Bob Jacobs for their generous donation of *Beachcombers* dating back to the 1970s. We will put them to good use either here in Muir Beach or at the Marin County Library in the California Room Archives of the Civic Center branch.

Circulation Note from Anne Jeschke
All *Beachcomber* mail should go to the mailbox on the far right at Pelican Mailbox Row. While the remittance envelope says 19 Seacape, that is only an official mailing address. Envelopes left at the Community Center box will be delayed by going through several people before being left in the proper box. Envelopes delivered by the postal service (with a stamp) will come directly to the *Beachcomber* box.

Letters to the Editor

[Re: “If it’s Thursday...” October 2009]
Thanks for that great article about the bakery! It was a very generous opportunity for both the people writing their appreciations and for me, as their reader. I’ve made copies and am forwarding them to a number of people in the community, including some administrators, who can get a better street level view of what we’re doing here. Thanks too, as always, for such a careful job in putting your publication together. Many people here love to read it. Please pass on my compliments to Julie, too, for her great photography.

—Mick Sopko, head baker, Green Gulch Bakery

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Front Cover Painting by Tom Soltesz
“Up the Coast,” oil on linen board, 9” x 12”
Photograph by Black Cat Studio

UPFRONT



Your Help Is Needed On Muir Beach

By Bob Flasher, Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy

The Redwood Creek watershed is home to some of the west coast’s most imperiled species, such as coho salmon, steelhead trout, and the red-legged frog. To preserve these species, the entire ecosystem between the old-growth forests of Muir Woods and the national marine sanctuary offshore needs to be protected and restored. That’s where we need your help.

A multi-year restoration plan will return the creek to its former location, expand the tidal lagoon, create frog-breeding habitat, enhance sand dunes, and return ecological integrity to the site. But this will only happen with your help. We have already planted over 4,000 native wetland plants but we have 18,000 left to plant by the end of March. The fourth Saturday of every month, beginning on February 27th, from 9:30 am - 12:30 pm, will be a public drop-in restoration opportunity.



The newly restored floodplain and lagoon at Muir Beach. Photograph by Kirke Wrench

This is your National Park, so we hope many of you will join us. We also still have graham crackers, chocolate, and marshmallows left over from our first two restoration sessions and we need you to help us eat them. Our hope is that the enticement of joining neighbors to save your local endangered and threatened species—and eating s’mores—will be enough to give you a sense of satisfaction, accomplishment, and community.

For more on the Muir Beach restoration, turn to “Good Reasons to Help Out with the Redwood Creek Restoration at Muir Beach” on page 7.

Circle of WOMEN²

By Nina Vincent

Our first circle of WOMEN² met at the MBCC on Sunday, January 24. We were a circle of 10 women each looking for a way to empower and foster change for other women in the world. We focused on individual actions that we could commit to such as: writing amnesty letters, or letters to Congress or to government heads in support of change for women of war, oppression, and abuse on a weekly basis; sponsoring a woman financially either through micro-lending or monthly donations to help further her education, health, and long term success; spreading the word to at least one woman a week about the book *Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide* by Nicholas D. Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn, and about our women’s group and what we are doing.

On a group level, WOMEN² will be sponsoring, promoting, and organizing fundraisers. Each woman will choose a continent/country, an issue related to the women of that place, and an organization that is actively addressing those issues to whom the money raised will go. The group will help each woman in her efforts to raise funds via whatever fundraising method she chooses.

Our first fundraiser inspired by Lonna Richmond occurred on February 13, 2010, at 4 pm at the MBCC. The play “Love



WOMEN², a newly formed Muir Beach group dedicated to empowering and fostering change for other women in the world, holds their first meeting at the community center on January 24th. Photograph by Joy Perrin

Letters,” directed by David Piel, starring Lisa Eigsti and David Piel, was performed. A \$10 donation was suggested. Food plates, wine, and other beverages were sold as well. This fundraiser was in support of the women of the Congo and ending the violence against them. Specific details of the organization to which the money will be sent were provided at the event.

WOMEN² welcomes all women interested in becoming a part of an active community striving to make lasting change for women all over the world one by one. We hope to grow our circle with each new event, and through concentrated and committed efforts, to educate and inspire those we come in contact with on a daily basis.

For information about our next meeting, contact Nina at 388-0380. If you would like to be included in the email updates, please leave your email address and I will add it to the list.

Local Realtor Returns to Frank Howard Allen

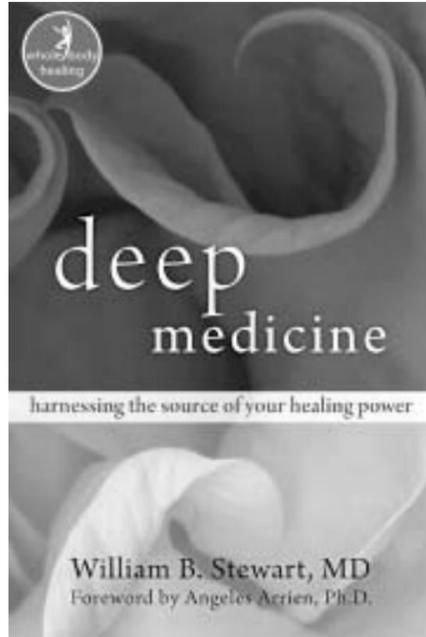
Our local Realtor, Debra Allen, is pleased to announce that she has decided to “return home” to Frank Howard Allen, after 13 years away! You can still follow her websites, www.deballen.com and www.muirbeach.com for interesting links, events, and news. But, please update your records:

Debra Allen, Realtor
Frank Howard Allen Realtors
25 E. Blithedale Ave., Mill Valley, Ca 94941
(415) 279-3751, dallen@fhallen.com
(or deballen@deballen.com still works just fine, too)

Unlucky Driver

By Sue Cameron, 341 Sunset Way

Within the past year I have had three tire punctures from either nails or screws. I obviously have no way of knowing where they came from; there have been many projects all over the Bay Area. I would just like to ask that if you have an improvement project going, please try to clear the road of tire killers. Has anyone else on Sunset had a similar experience? Thanks.



Deep Medicine: Harnessing the Source of Your Healing Power

By Bill Stewart, MD

Deep Medicine: Harnessing the Source of Your Healing Power was recently published by New Harbinger Publications in association with the Institute of

Noetic Sciences as part of their Whole Body Healing Series. I am the Medical Director of the Institute for Health & Healing at California Pacific Medical Center, San Francisco and Marin General Hospital. The Institute is an award winning holistic health and integrative medicine center dedicated to "... healing people, transforming health care.

Deep Medicine is a distillation of my thoughts and feelings about personal well-being, health creation, and healing. Health is balance. Healing is change to restore that balance. Every issue is a health issue. Everything we think, feel, and do is either health creating or health negating. Everything. Whether we are talking about lifestyle choices, relationships, public policy, environmental degradation, violence, or poverty, we are dealing with health related issues.

In seeking personal solutions to our health issues, most of us have been frustrated by exaggerated and unfulfilled claims from various sources which promise to have the necessary new information, nutrition plan, exercise program, stress reducer, product, or secret to solve our health related problems with minimal time commitment or effort on our part. We may be drawn by the latest health fad and the lure of a quick or easy fix, especially when we feel that we are in crisis, but the promise is rarely delivered. *Deep Medicine* is both a companion and antidote to such sources.

With *Deep Medicine*, finding the source of your healing power does not depend on the latest diet

book or exercise fad. Rather, it is found in engaging one's inner realm and mining the wisdom and power within. That is where the insight, will, and energy to attend to 'bad habits' and foster constructive behavior reside. The common pathway toward health and healing in *Deep Medicine* resides in gaining the knowledge and skills to initiate and sustain desired change in one's life. The principles and practices for making the decisions and choices which will allow one to consistently and repeatedly take the action steps and make the changes necessary to achieve desired results and goals are the focus of *Deep Medicine*.

When it comes to our health, our choices are often our destiny. In *Deep Medicine*, Dr. Stewart supports our choices with the skill of a surgeon and the wisdom of a healer.

—Rachel Naomi Remen, MD, bestselling author of *Kitchen Table Wisdom* and *My Grandfather's Blessings*

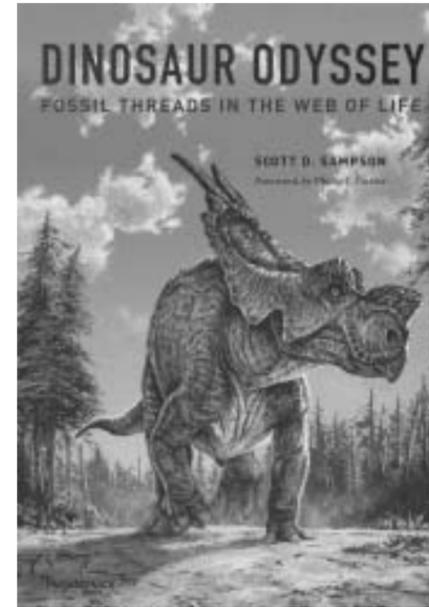
Bill Stewart, MD and his wife, yoga instructor Susy Stewart, have resided in Muir Beach since 1996. Dr. Stewart will be speaking at The Northern California Cancer Center (NCCC) annual symposium on Breast Cancer at the Presidio on Saturday, March 6, and the annual Institute for Health & Healing (IHH) event, "Celebrating Science and Soul," on March 7, 2010. In



Bill Stewart, MD
Photograph by Jane Richey

April, the IHH is sponsoring a free to the public "Mini Medical School." The topic this year is "The Brain Revealed: From Chemistry to Mystery."

For more information about the Institute for Health & Healing, *Deep Medicine*, or your neighbor Bill Stewart, visit www.myhealthandhealing.org.



A Prehistoric Odyssey

By Scott D. Sampson

Together with my wife, Toni, and daughter, Jade, I have lived in Muir Beach for several wonderful years. On November 21, 2009, we hosted an event at the MB Community Center to celebrate the publication of my recent book, *Dinosaur Odyssey: Fossil Threads in the Web of Life*. It was a marvelous evening for me personally as it gave me the opportunity to share with many friends and neighbors both what I do and why I think it's important. When people ask about my profession and learn that I'm a dinosaur paleontologist, I generally receive one of two reactions. The first is one of discomfort, with the individual usually looking for a quick exit ("Oh hey, look at the time; sorry I gotta run."). The second reaction is a big smile and a staccato of questions. ("Wow! Why do you think the dinosaurs went extinct? Did you hear about that discovery in China last week?") I wrote *Dinosaur Odyssey* for the second group.

Dinosaur Odyssey is the first general audience summary of the world of dinosaurs written by a professional paleontologist in almost a generation, a generation that has witnessed the discovery of more "new" varieties of dinosaurs than in all prior history. Rather than focusing solely on dinosaurs, the "charismatic megafauna" of the time, I wanted to explore the workings of Mesozoic ecosystems, from energy-capturing plants to decomposing fungi and bacteria. Viewed from this larger perspective, dinosaurs find their rightful place as the dominant big-bodied plant- and meat-eaters of the time.

Alongside ecological timeslices, I injected into *Dinosaur Odyssey* the vertical dimension of deep time and evolution. Why were there so many different dinosaurs and how did they evolve? Even more basic, how do dinosaurs fit into the "Great Story"—the epic of evolution that began with the Big Bang and continues to the present day? A lot of

media attention is devoted to the extinction of dinosaurs, presumably because this event opened the door for the arrival of big-brained bipedal primates millions of years later. Dinosaurs have even become the exemplars of failure ("dead as a dinosaur"). Yet birds, the direct descendants of these ancient reptiles and arguably dinosaurs themselves, survived the dinosaur extinction bottleneck 65 million years ago and exploded into a wondrous variety of forms. With on the order of 10,000 living species, far outnumbering mammals, I like to think of the dinosaur success story as persisting to the present day. Think of all the wonderful birds that we see around Muir Beach—among them turkey vultures, red-tailed hawks, ravens and Anna's hummingbirds—as the dinosaurs of our time and our place.

I wrote *Dinosaur Odyssey* because I believe that the general public has as much to learn from dinosaurs as paleontologists do. We often talk about dinosaurs as if they lived not only in a distant time, but on a distant planet—as if their lives have no bearing on our own. But it wasn't just the death of the dinosaurs that we have to thank for our presence here. It was their lives as well. Mesozoic dinosaurs co-evolved with plants, animals, and other life forms for 160 million years prior to the collision of a giant asteroid with the Gulf of Mexico. Many kinds of organisms, including flowering plants and a variety of insect groups—first appeared during the dinosaurian heyday. So an understanding of the world of dinosaurs can help us understand ourselves, including how our ecosystems work, how they change over time, and our place in the Great Story. Dinosaurs can even be able guides as we face dire issues such as global warming and mass extinctions, both of which they experienced. Although the notion might at first seem odd, dinosaurs provide a powerful lens through which to observe the entire natural world. Focusing that lens was a central goal of *Dinosaur Odyssey*.

I still retain formal affiliations with the University of Utah and run a large-scale field project in southern Utah that is yielding a stunning array of new dinosaurs. However, one of my goals upon arriving in Muir Beach was to spend less time on research and more time working on science communication for adults and kids. *Dinosaur Odyssey* is one result, intended for a general audience of adults. For the kids, there is now *Dinosaur Train*, a Jim Henson Company television series for preschoolers now airing daily on PBS, for which I serve as the science advisor and host. Toni and I would like to thank the many attendees of the November 21st



Scott D. Sampson, Ph.D.
Photograph by Cori Valentine

event. We couldn't have asked for a better celebration, and I truly appreciate all the kind support and comments. For anyone interested in finding out more, feel free to check out: www.scottsampson.net. Or simply stop me for chat on Sunset Way. Most important, don't forget to enjoy the many flying dinosaurs in our glorious front yard!

Meet Your Neighbors: Laura Van Amburgh and Antonio Pares

By Laurie Piel

Welcome to Meet Your Neighbors, a new feature column of the Beachcomber. The series the Beachcomber carried on the firemen of Muir Beach led me to realize that many of us think we know our neighbors but don't really know what their lives consist of, how we all found Muir Beach, and what brought us here in the first place. I was chatting with one of our newer residents, Laura Van Amburgh, and was surprised to learn that she is an accomplished architect. So we started chatting and the column was born.



Laura and her girls, Tessa & Camila, enjoy a family moment on the beach. Photograph by Antonio Pares

Though Laura was born in Kentucky, she grew up in Fort Worth, Texas, starting in first grade and went to the University of Texas in Austin. Antonio is a native Californian, born in Los Angeles and attended Southern California Institute of Architecture in Santa Monica.

Their professional lives separately brought them to Santa Fe, New Mexico, where they ended up collaborating on the Bell residence together. They ended up spending thirteen years in Santa Fe where their daughters—Tessa, age 9 and Camila, age 5—were born and had their own successful architecture practice together. “We complemented one another,” says Laura. “Antonio brought an interest in the big picture, sustainability, and green design, and I was attracted to working with people’s dreams and aspirations and crafting an intimate relationship between nature and the concept of home.” Together they worked on custom residential and resort projects as well as a series of affordable housing communities that used community gardens and a community resource center as focal points for community building.

From Santa Fe, Washington called because of its family values and Antonio went to work for Mithun, a Seattle based integrated design firm. Once there, Laura started her own architecture practice. During that time, Antonio had been working with Green Gulch Farm on a long-term vision and restoration plan and had made wonderful friends at Green Gulch. So when, after a few years, Mithun asked Antonio to relocate to the Bay Area to start a branch office in the city, those friends made a connection with Martha and Lee de Barros who were willing to share their exquisite little compound on Sunset Way. Laura was a little reluctant to give up her own architecture practice in the Northwest to start over in a new area, but when she saw Muir Beach for the first time she realized this was the place in which she wanted to grow old.

Laura has started her own design practice once again with remodel projects in San Francisco but hopes to be working closer to home in Marin in the future. Antonio and Laura continue to share and complement each other’s work with kitchen table working sessions. “The kitchen has always been the heart of our house,” says Antonio. “It’s the place where the whole family draws and works on projects together. Collaborating is how Laura and I met and what we have always done, that will probably never change. I may go in to the city to work on projects but Laura is always a part of the process. She is both my most trusted support and critical eye at the same time. One plus one is always greater than two in our case.”

It has been a year since the Van Amburgh/Pares family arrived in Muir Beach, bringing with them their love for the outdoors. “Community is our most precious gift,” remarks Laura. “Muir Beach has exceeded our hopes for a caring, compassionate group of neighbors.” With that attitude it is not surprising that you can often find Laura behind the counter on Bistro mornings making the coffee and fresh scones. Camila and Tessa have also made friends here at the beach. Among other things, the contributions they made to the lemonade stand during the Garden Club’s rummage sale were wonderful. They are the kind of neighbors we all would like to have and we hope they continue to find what they are looking for here in beautiful Muir Beach.

So, that’s the first of what we hope will be many more columns. I hope you enjoyed learning a little bit more about our neighbors as much as I did.



The Bell residence, the collaboration that created a lifetime collaboration. Photograph by Laura Van Amburgh



Good Reasons to Help Out with the Redwood Creek Restoration at Muir Beach

By Bob Flasher, Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy

A cry for help. Over the past century, lower Redwood Creek has been altered to the point where it does not function naturally. With the decline in the creek function, the salmon and trout populations have also declined. The National Park Service has started the earth-moving to restore natural function to this beautiful area, but not all the work can be done with heavy equipment.¹ That’s where you can help.



More than 80 volunteers turned out for the “Welcome Back Salmon Restoration Day” on November 14th. Volunteers plant hedge nettle, a plant that thrives in the shade under the alders along riparian corridors.

Thousands of volunteers make a difference, make friends, and build community each year through their personal contributions of time in the Golden Gate National Recreation Area. In return, they receive a lot of personal satisfaction and as many granola bars, fresh



Kevin Dick, Americorps volunteer from Conservation Corps North Bay and intern at the Parks Conservancy, demonstrates how to plant dogwood, a tree that will grow to 15 feet and provide nectar for local butterflies.

fruit, and s’mores as they can eat. We could really use the help of the Muir Beach community during the next four years of restoration work on the tidal lagoon, at the red-legged frog ponds, and along Redwood Creek. Want to pitch in?

Why restore? Habitat destruction and degradation are among our most serious environmental crises, causing species extinctions and threatening many remaining wildlife populations, as it does in the Redwood Creek Watershed. This watershed is considered highly restorable because most of its lands are held by public agencies and remain undeveloped. This means that it has a better chance than many areas to function naturally and maintain habitat connectivity.²

The Golden Gate National Recreation Area, in cooperation with Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy, is providing an opportunity for local citizens to become stewards of our coast and watershed by taking environmentally positive action. Participating in hands-on habitat restoration is one of the ways in which the public can be involved in helping to protect the habitat we live in...or next door to.

What’s in it for me? One of the greatest values of restoration may not only be its ability to transform the landscape, but its ability to transform the human beings who inhabit and shape the land. Every volunteer-based restoration project needs a qualified workforce; luckily, every community already has one—you.² And it only takes a small group of citizens to make a difference. As Margaret Mead said, “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can make a difference; indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.” That small committed group could be us.



Leighton Hills, District Manager of the Muir Beach CSD, carries 25 small-seeded bulrushes in a nursery rack to the floodplain planting area.

Volunteers from the Muir Beach community have already participated in three planting days at the



Volunteers plant wetland rushes, flowers, and bushes in the wettest areas of the floodplain. These low-growing natives will grow to 2-3 feet in height. Their roots will help hold the soil in place on the floodplain and provide hiding spots for baby trout and salmon during floods.

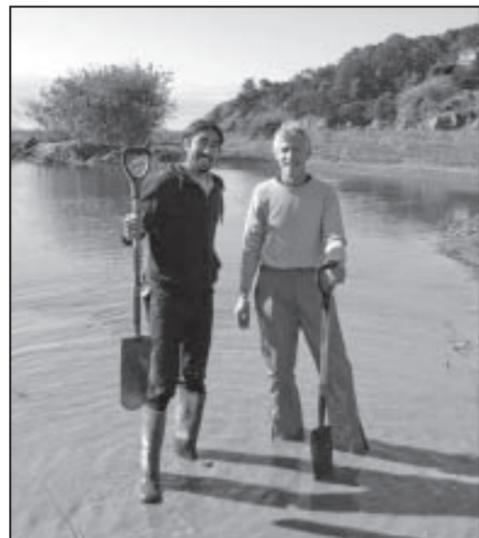
habitat for a half dozen endangered species last year throughout the GGNRA. With your help, we may be able to bump that number up to 23,250 next year. In 2009, we planted over 5,000 native wetland plants around the tidal lagoon. And when I say, “we,” I mean you. In 2010 we have 18,000 more plants to go.

If you want to lend a hand, drop by on our community workdays, which are on the fourth Saturday of the month, beginning on February 27th. You can drop in anytime between 9:30 am and 12:30 pm. We will still be planting natives at that time. Warning: If you drop by just before 12:30 pm, you will be obligated to help us eat the s’mores and granola bars. By the fourth Saturday in March, we will be weeding in between the native plants, to ensure the success of the planting effort. So if you prefer weeding to planting (and it can actually be an easy task), you are also encouraged to participate from March through the summer months.

newly expanded tidal lagoon. Others help on the second Saturday of the month during the morning beach cleanups. This community support is crucial for the success of the restoration of the Redwood Creek Watershed. Over 23,000 volunteers helped restore



This California Bay Laurel seedling will grow to over 100 feet and provide shade to keep the wetland cool. Its nuts were roasted and eaten by the Coast Miwok and its leaves were used medicinally. The hay around the plant helps prevent weeds and keeps moisture in. The hay also designates planted areas so the new seedlings don’t get stepped on during volunteer workdays.



Former Muir Woods intern Che Garcia, left, and Bob Flasher, Marin Community Programs Manager at the Parks Conservancy, take a break from the day’s planting.

Special invitation to Muir Beach residents. Since you live right next to the beach, you can drop by any weekday that you see us working with students. They will be completely impressed that community members have taken time midweek to help restore the earth. Please help impress them. You will breathe life into the words of Martin Luther King, Jr., by doing so: “We may have come over on different ships, but we are all in the same boat now.” This is especially true for us and the endangered species in the creek. It is up to us to restore the damaged habitat we share and speak up for the earth, as the trout and salmon speak only to our hearts.



To supplement the row of 70-foot alder along the creek, alder seedlings were planted to widen the riparian corridor and to slow the flood waters, allowing baby fish to remain in the channel until the time is right for them to become saltwater fish.



Volunteers plant dogwood and blue elderberry. Emma Havstad (pointing), an intern at Parks Conservancy from Americorps, talks with Carolyn Shoulders. As the Redwood Creek Project Manager for GGNRA, Shoulders is the driving force behind the restoration project.

“Behold my brothers, spring has come. The Earth has received the embraces of the sun and we shall soon see the results of that love. Every seed is awakened and so has all animal life. It is through this mysterious power that we too exist. So we respect the right of all our living neighbors to inhabit this land.”

—Tatanka Yotanka, Sioux, 1877

Let’s work together to make the land and creek the natural place it can be. Contact Bob Flasher, the Marin Community Programs Manager at the Parks Conservancy, with any questions, invitations to speak to community groups, or requests to participate in a variety of ways: flash@parkconservancy.org.

¹ Muir Beach, National Park Service

² Digging In: A Guide to Community-Based Habitat Restoration, California Coastal Commission

Photographs by Kirke Wrench



Muirly, News from the NPS

By Mia Monroe, Site Supervisor
Muir Woods National Monument

Spring into your park... it promises to be a great wildflower year and nearby are some awesome trails. Check out the Owl Trail, Coast View, and late this spring we’ll get to see not only the flowers but also the view from the Dias Ridge Trail (re-contouring and rebuilding done on this important connector trail but now needs to rest for long-term stability... what a great way to get to Miwok, Redwood Creek Trails AND it opens up bike commuting—put your bike on the Stage and get off at Four Corners and ride back down to Muir Beach!).

Up at the woods spring also means school time...we welcome thousands of students studying ecology, forests, and conservation. It is also when we welcome back migratory birds and celebrate them at International Migratory Bird Day May 8 (check our website for the program of walks, banding demonstrations, children’s programs).

Warm your hands around a bowl of soup or coffee at the new park concession, the Muir Woods Trading Company... you’ll see Shirley Nygren and Gina Banducci offering friendly service!

Monthly beach clean-ups continue on the 2nd Saturday... meet Ranger Marcus Combs at 9:30 am to help out plus learn the fascinating stories of the

Muir Beach area... can you identify Wobbly Rock? Do you know where all the dairy ranches were? Who was Bello? How about when the Frank Valley Military Reservation was in use? Did John Muir visit Muir Beach? What’s the Miwok word for pelican? What’s the most common trash on the beach? Ask Marcus!

Have you met Flash? He’s forming a stewardship program to give us all a role in restoring the natural habitats and systems in the Muir Beach environs... Rumor has it that he’s also planning a celebration on John Muir’s birthday! But there’re many, many opportunities to plant, weed, and otherwise get involved!

It is not just Doyle Drive that is getting a makeover... much is planned for roads and trails in the Marin Headlands. If you have a day planned down there, check out Projectheadlands.gov first to see what is open/closed.

Much has happened on parklands... one moving memory was elders from FIGR (Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria) welcoming back salmon, another was watching the tidal waters move into the new backwaters and channel... hope to swap stories with you on the trail or at the beach in this new year!

POTS OF LUCK

Story and Photographs by Suzanne Bender-Van Spyk

It is becoming a tradition: feet stomping, teeth chomping, hooves clomping, sprites romping.

The brittle grasses of Santos Meadow are again bent and broken, little pathways crisscrossing the fields like a common scene out of Keane's "Family Circus" comic strip. Down by the creek, many of the pebble communities have been forcibly relocated, skipping



Ryan Judge, Jade Latimore, Tiana Vincent-Pearlman, and Christian and Adrianna Bender explore the nooks and crannies of the BBQ grounds.



Jon and Anna Rauh, Danny Hobson, and Scott Bender discuss the nutritional value of sunglasses.

across the water to settle in unfamiliar, moist digs or soaring through the air to clatter down through branches to the dusty shores.

There is mud. And dust. And prickles. And giant grins, gap-toothed and rimmed with traces of the day's activities.

A young one scoots by, her fingers and clothes a smear of rainbow swirls. She holds a gluey, dripping creation aloft in the air like a runner of the Olympic torch. Moving so quickly, she seems to be no more than a streak of pure delight.

"What's a potluck?" asks a boy.

"Well, everyone brings a pot, and with some luck it all tastes good," answers his father.

We've had some luck. The mishmash of pots, bowls, and platters are all filled with glistening, fragrant, tasty luck. A dad stands by the grill, his hat tipped just off center. Nudging and flipping, he squints at the cacophony erupting in the distance. Smiling quietly, he looks back down at the roasting food.

"Hey! Save some for the rest of us!" A mother catches several boys piling their plates up and up and up. They are perplexed, not remorseful, at the rebuke. They've reached that age where there is just not enough food on the planet, much less these tables, to stave off the hunger.

September 13th. That superstitiously unlucky number caused mischief a couple of weeks ago. Typical September warmth faded back into summer fog and rain for the weekend and plans were changed. But today is the first Sunday in October. It is a sunny and cold luck we've got today. Parents rub their hands together and seek the sunlight.



Harvey Pearlman mans the grill at Santos Meadow.



Three-legged Muir Beach families race to the finish line.

Children jam bike helmets on and wait, nervous and wide-eyed, for their stroll around the meadow on the horses. The animals are at turns jittery and subdued, perhaps sensing the unpredictable nature of their passengers. Later, competitive fathers and somewhat doubtful mothers line up, hitch themselves to their children, and the race is ON! Some cheating happens, but all pretend not to notice, and none truly care.

There are smiles and laughter. There are cuts and bruises. There is homemade food and store-bought beverages. In a crowd of over one hundred neighbors, parents, grandparents, and children, there are intimate conversations, emerging friendships, and widespread companionship. These are the families of Muir Beach and these Fall gatherings are becoming tradition.

Lucky us.

P.S. The community owes a big debt of gratitude to Nina Vincent and Harvey Pearlman, who have spearheaded this event for three years running now. Thank you, Nina and Harvey!



While parents look on, Maury Ostroff fields a new Muir Beach baseball team of Austin Moore, Siena Klein, Ryan Judge, Adrianna and Christian Bender.

Muir Beach Family
POTLUCK
Games! Stories! Music!
Sunday Oct. 4th
Santos Meadow, 10:30
Races & Prizes! Face Painting!
Bring a dish to share and something to put on the Grill
Hang Out with Muir Beach Families!
Horseback Riding!
(Must wear SHOES to ride. No Crocs/sandals. Bring a Helmet)



Muir Beach families zoom by in a piggybacked blur. Only Nataya Bassett, Tiana Vincent-Pearlman, Austin, Maxx, and Aran Moore are recognizable.

Bowyer's Halloween Party

Story and photographs by Laurie Piel

When was the last time you went to a Halloween costume party? For me it had been many, many years... until 2009.

Living at Muir Beach has introduced or reintroduced me to many things. New to me was Day of the Dead, but a Halloween costume party was part of my childhood, not part of my adult life, and I didn't know quite what to expect. I was overwhelmed.

As David and I approached the Bowyer's house, the lights along the driveway hinted at what was within. Our hosts, Bob and Renee, had stripped the house

of most of the furniture and draped the inside in black in order to have a projection surface for the colorful lights that played across rooms. There was a fabulous band on the main floor, and as the guests arrived, the room filled with dancing revelers. Upstairs was a bar and a landing from which we could watch the dancing below.

I quickly discovered that, although there were passed hors d'oeuvres, the kitchen held a bounty of delicious food. It was also a quiet place to have a conversation and sit back and admire everything that had been done. Needless to say, the people-watching was amazing, so I'll stop talking and show you. I hope you enjoy the imaginations represented here as much as I did. I am already planning my next costume, I sure hope there will be another one this year.



John John...it's swine FLU... not swine FLEW!!!



The hosts, Bob Bowyer and Renee Boeche, mix generations with their costumes.



Maury Ostroff and Janice Kubota wander in from the land of OZ.



We always wondered what Dave MacKenzie had in his closet.



I guess, now we know.

Halloween Scene, October 31, 2009

Poem and Photographs by Suzanne Bender-Van Spyk

(Sung to the tune of "The Addams Family" by Vic Mizzy. Go on, you know you want to...)

They're silly and they're eerie,
Bizarre and sometimes weary,
They're all together cheery,
The Muir Beach Families!

Halloween's a celebration,
The town becomes a station,
For spooks from several nations,
Check out the Families!

A steaming witch's cauldron,
And pizza for the children,
The Center seems a squadron,
Of hungry Families!

Sunset Way at five o'clock,
Results in some gridlock,
For treats the kids all flock,
Those eager Families!

One year arrows led the way,
So none wandered astray,
Alas not on this day!
They're baffled Families!

Oh dear, down at young Jade's,
The raccoons have betrayed,
And sampled that arrayed,
For the Families!

But thank you to the neighbors,
For all their lovely labors,
Sweet candy from their chambers,
All for the Families!

So get a spooky hat on,
Or dress like a famed icon,
Next year might see a goblin,
The Muir Beach Halloween!



Kangaroo Daniella Silva hops around the party.



That's quite a horn Hannah Eigst's Unicorn is sporting.



Adrianna Bender's "Angelina Ballerina" strikes a pose.



Christian Bender is an irritated Calvin and Hobbes.



Jade Latimore glows as Princess Jasmine.



Nina Vincent is a panting Puppy.



Tiana Vincent-Pearlman's whiskers twitch as a Bunny Rabbit.

♪ OB-LA-DI, OB-LA-DA , LIFE GOES ON ♪



Sasha Gillespie's Leopard prowls the room for candy.



"Meow!" says Camila Pares' Kitty Cat.



Be careful wizards and witches, Nataya Bassett's Voldemort is out to get you!



Charlotte McAdam is a pretty Vampirish Witch.



Ahhh, the "Children of the '70s" have returned in Angela and Chris Chovel.



We know that Laura Van Amburgh makes a great Goth Witch, but what is Antonio Pares? A Ghost? A Deathly Bride? A Blancmange?



How will Tessa Pares' Baby eat any candy with that pacifier in her mouth?



Anna Rauh's Bunny Rabbit is hopping cute!



Watch out for Matt Silva's Deadly Doctor concoctions...



♪ OB-LA-DI, OB-LA-DA , LIFE GOES ON ♪



Looks like Stella Eigsti's Clown has eaten more than pizza.



The Bear Cub in Jackson Van Til devours dinner.



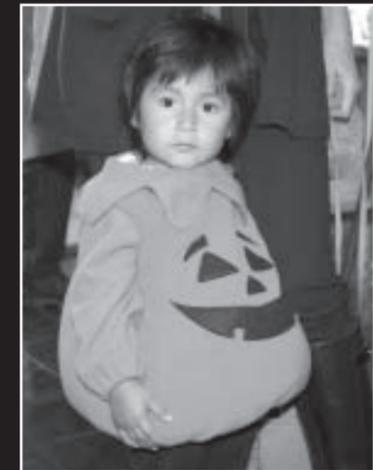
Don't get locked up with Maxx Moore's Incarcerated Zombie!



The Fly has returned in Jeremy Gillespie.



Hold on to your valuables. Jake Schick's Cat Burglar is looking for them.



Hannah Patterson-Weisberger lights the night as a Jack O'Lantern.



Who knew Witches could be as charming as Elizabeth Levie?



How can you resist hugging this little Dragon, Siena Klein?



Jade Schick certainly is a Devilish Fairy!

♪ OB-LA-DI, OB-LA-DA , LIFE GOES ON ♪



Winner of the "Best Pink Boots Ever" prize, Lissa Rankin kicks up her heels as a Showgirl.



Kathy Sward is the sweetest Mini-mini Mouse you ever saw.



Fly, fly away, Swine Flu! Just leave John John Sward intact!



Vanessa Topper's Mother Earth and Denise Lamott's Cat Woman play with a young Leopard named Mikayla Gounard.



Austin Moore's Boba Fett is ready for takeoff.



Ryan Wynn's alter ego "The Hulk" has taken over for the night.



It's a flock of Penguins! Wait, it's the Sward Family – Dean, Jackson, Angie, and Jes.



Lisa and Brad Eigsti bring Cleopatra and King Tut back to life.



Is that a Transformer named Bumblebee or a child named Ryan Judge?



♪ OB-LA-DI, OB-LA-DA , LIFE GOES ON ♪



Watch out evildoers! Aran Moore's Swashbuckler and Denise Lamott's Cat Woman are on your trail.



Everaldo Cardoso de Souza brings Allison Pinto into the festivities via the Internet.



Hairless Beach Apes are loose in Muir Beach. Scott and Suzanne Bender promise that if you read Sherman's Lagoon, it'll make sense.



Our very own Mad Hatter, Mike Moore, charms the kids.



It is a most colorful mayhem indeed.



Nina Vincent introduces the Halloween Parade with Hannah Eigsti's Unicorn, while Tiana Vincent-Pearlman's Bunny Rabbit, Adrianna Bender's Angelina Ballerina, and Camila Pares' Kitty Cat wait for their turn.



Looks like these guys may have missed the pizza dinner...



A Cappella singers?

Day of the Dead 2009

By Laurie Piel

The 7th annual Day of the Dead (Dia De Los Muertos) gathering was another Muir Beach Community success. Once again, Nataya Bassett, Sarah and Emberleigh Brightwood, Lisa Eigsti, Kathy Sward, Marilyn Laatsch, Trish McCall, David and Laurie Piel, Judith Yamamoto, the Pearlman clan, Harvey, Nina, Tiana, and Gerry, and the rest of the merry band of volunteers worked hard all day transforming the Community Center into a flight of imagination in celebration of life and death.



Sarah Brightman and Harvey Pearlman prepare the Community Center for the DOTD celebration.

With a cornucopia of food brought in by the revelers, nobody went hungry. Brenda Kohn oversaw the food table and made sure everyone had what they needed. Harvey emceed the evening which was an eclectic mix of entertainment and information. A.T. Lynne, Sarah Brightwood, Joe Connor, and Nina Vincent shared information, thoughts, and poetry. Once again, traveling all of the way from Sacramento, our favorite Day of the Dead Band, Space Debris, fronted by Peter Asmus rocked the Center into the night. With Dennis McGee leading a second band jamming on the deck, it truly was a night of music.



Chris Gove, Janet Tumpich, Mike Moore, and Elveraldo Cardoso de Souza enjoy each other's company as they chow down on the fabulous food brought by the revelers.

At the end of the evening we gathered together and tossed notes to our loved ones into the fire. It reminded me how lucky we are to be members of a community that shares special times together. The Day of the Dead celebration is relatively new to me and I wondered about the inclusion of children and what they got out of it. I think the picture of Austin Moore says it all. On Sunday a stalwart group of volunteers gathered to restore the Center to its day-to-day look. The worker bees included the Conner family, Joe, Adele and Mirabel, Marilyn Laatsch, Charlene Modena, Harvey Pearlman, Kathy Sward, Judith Yamamoto, and me. Mark your calendars for November 6, 2010, and join your neighbors for the 8th Annual Day of the Dead celebration.



Bruce Barlow and Pam Eichenbaum each bring their own looks to the celebration.



Austin Moore shares the note he's sending to his grandmother before he ceremoniously tosses it into the fire.

Photograph by Denise Lamott



Peter Asmus (the other half of our Quilters Arts Fair caterer extraordinaire KT Broomhead) and Space Debris rock it on out.



Cleaning up on Sunday isn't that bad as it might seem to be since Judith Yamamoto, Marilyn Laatsch, and Kathy Sward clearly seem to be enjoying working together.

Photographs by Laurie Piel unless otherwise noted.

Beloved Opera Comes to Muir Beach

Story and Photographs by Julie Smith

Our community enjoyed a delightful holiday treat December 20th with Contemporary Opera Marin's brilliant performance of Gian-Carlo Menotti's beloved opera, "Amahl and the Night Visitors."

Led by Paul Smith, director of College of Marin's Contemporary Opera Marin, the talented cast's joyous voices filled the packed Community Center with holiday cheer, and for many of us—nostalgia.

Contemporary Opera Marin is dedicated to the English language performance of smaller works by noted composers of our times and overlooked gems from earlier in the twentieth century. This spring they will begin their third year as the resident opera company of the Tiburon Music Festival.

The Story of "Amahl"

Amahl was a crippled shepherd boy who lived in poverty with his widowed mother. All they had has been sold leaving them hungry and cold in their empty house.

Three Wise Men, traveling to Bethlehem, knock on the door, asking for a place to sleep for the night. Amahl and his mother welcome them and, along with the local shepherds, share what little they have. The mother is astounded at the splendor of their robes and the wealth of gifts they are taking to a child they don't even know. She becomes bitter and envious and when the visitors fall asleep, she tries to steal some of their gold. But she's caught red-handed. When she tries to explain her motive, the Wise Men forgive her and with great tenderness they explain to her who this newborn child is and how much he needs the love of every human being to build his coming kingdom. Touched by their words, the poor widow returns the gold and wishes she had a gift to give also. At this, Amahl impulsively hands the Kings his most precious possession, his wooden crutch. In doing so, he's miraculously cured of his lameness.

At dawn, the Kings prepare to leave and Amahl convinces his mother to let him go to Bethlehem with the Kings and give thanks to the Christ Child himself.



The crowd of young and old are full of anticipation for the first opera ever performed at the Center.

Gian-Carlo Menotti was commissioned in 1951 by NBC to write an opera for TV. Produced yearly until 1966, the resulting opera became a holiday tradition for millions. Here's an excerpt from the enchanting story he wrote explaining The Genesis of "Amahl":

"This is an opera for children because it tries to capture my own childhood. You see, when I was a child I lived in Italy, and in Italy we have no Santa Claus. I suppose that Santa Claus is much too busy with American children to be able to handle Italian children as well. Our gifts were brought to us by the Three Kings instead.

I actually never met the Three Kings—it didn't matter how hard my little brother and I tried to keep awake at night to catch a glimpse of the Three Royal Visitors, we would always fall asleep just before they arrived. But I do remember hearing them. I remember the weird cadence of their song in the dark distance; I remember the brittle sound of the camels' hooves crushing the frozen snow; and I remember the mysterious tinkling of their silver bridles.

To these Three Kings I mainly owe the happy Christmas seasons of my childhood, and I should have remained very grateful to them. Instead, I came to America and soon forgot all about them, for here at Christmastime one sees so many Santa Clauses scattered all over town.

But in 1951 I found myself in serious difficulty. I had been commissioned by the National Broadcasting Company to write an opera for television, with Christmas as a deadline, and I simply didn't have one idea in my head. One November afternoon as I was walking rather gloomily through the rooms of the Metropolitan Museum, I chanced to stop in front of the Adoration of the Kings by Hieronymus Bosch, and as I was looking at it, suddenly I heard again, coming from the distant blue hills, the weird song of the Three Kings. I then realized they had come back to me and had brought me a gift."

Contemporary Opera Marin has brought this gift to Muir Beach. Many of us in the audience have fond memories of growing up with NBC's "Amahl." Hopefully the tradition will continue for the children and grownups fortunate enough to have attended this performance of "Amahl and the Night Visitors."



The cast and crew of "Amahl and the Night Visitors" receive well-deserved applause at the end of a fabulous performance.

Quilters Host Lively Community Meeting

By Brenda Kohn

On October 21st, the Muir Beach Quilters hosted a lively community discussion about issues pending in Muir Beach, with the opportunity to meet candidates running to fill the four open directors' seats on the Muir Beach Community Services District Board. The local race for the November 2009 Marin County election was crowded with four incumbents running to fill three open seats for the CSD's four-year full term positions, and two new candidates—Scott Bender and Paul Jeschke—vying for the one two-year short term slot. *

Neighbors at the meeting were especially interested in hearing from the two new candidates, with Paul Jeschke expressing a desire to hire a firm to study the feasibility of installing a community sewer system, and Scott Bender cautioning that such studies could be very expensive. Steve Shaffer pointed out that a sewer system is not under the CSD's current jurisdiction, so it would not be a real issue at this time. Steve further noted that the current Board has obtained, and spent, more FEMA money than any other CSD Board in history.

The meeting then turned to other pressing issues, with the most heated discussion centered around a pending fuel abatement grant application by the Muir Beach Volunteer Fire Association, which would partially fund the removal of some 250 dead or dying trees in the community that have been identified by fire experts as fire threats to residents' property. The Association assured nervous neighbors that the tree removal would occur in total collaboration with the community and individual property owners.

A surprise issue arose when, courtesy of Judith Yamamoto, neighbors saw for the first time plans drafted by the County

Public Works Department for expansion of the Pacific Way causeway leading down to the parking lot at Big Beach. As Judith explained, according to these recently available plans, it appears that the County, as part of the Big Lagoon Restoration Project, now intends to construct a 31-foot-wide bridge with a pedestrian walkway rather than the 17-foot-wide bridge that Muir Beach residents had been led to believe would happen. Though the County currently has no money to start the bridge project, the tone at the meeting in response to this news was that Muir Beach is being caught in a crossfire between the National Park Service, the County, and Cal-Trans, as the Restoration Project proceeds without community input. The overwhelming number of people at the meeting agreed that the proposed 31-foot-wide bridge would ruin the character of the community and should not proceed as shown in the current plans. **

Many thanks to the Quilters for hosting this most enlightening event, and for furnishing the delicious cheeses and wine.

* Muir Beach voters in November re-elected Danny Hobson, Peter Rudnick, and Dan Fitzpatrick to four-year terms on the CSD Board, and Scott Bender to serve as a new Director for two years. Steve Shaffer, President of the Board, was not up for re-election.

** According to Judith Yamamoto recently, a sub-committee of the Greater Muir Beach Neighbors Association is considering how best to proceed in its opposition to the current County plans for expanding the bridge and walkway leading to the parking lot at Big Beach.

Local Coastal Plan (LCP) Review In Progress

By Brenda Kohn

On December 8, 2009, planners from the County Planning Commission hosted an informational meeting at the Community Center to update interested residents on the current status of revisions to the Local Coastal Plan (LCP).

Jack Liebster, principal planner for the project, explained to the very small audience that the current LCP for Unit I, which covers West Marin communities including Muir Beach, is over 30 years old, and that a series of meetings and workshops are taking place over many months to solicit input as to what the revised plan should cover.

As part of this ongoing project, which Leibster noted is taking much longer than originally planned, individual communities are being asked to review their existing Local Community Plans, and advise the County as to what parts of those plans should be incorporated into the County's

LCP. While the County's LCP will provide overriding policy, with which all of the covered communities must comply, individual sections will address issues which individual communities deem important for their areas.

Muir Beach currently has a Community Plan, which was adopted by the County Board of Supervisors in 1979. Liebster suggested that it might be sufficient for the new County plan to simply say that the existing character of Muir Beach should be maintained, or that the community might decide that it wants more specific language in the County plan. Future countywide meetings and workshops are planned, before a final draft LCP is circulated, following which a plan may be submitted to the California Coastal Commission for approval. Information about proposed dates, times, and topics to be discussed at future meetings can be found at www.co.marin.ca.us/MarinLCP.

Starbuck's Disaster Preparedness Group Meets

By Anne Jeschke

A lively group of Starbuck Drive residents met with their Disaster Preparedness Committee Liaisons on January 10, 2010, to discuss ways to improve neighborhood response to emergency situations. Liaisons Melissa Lasky, Susy Stewart, and Anne Jeschke led the discussion. Wine and snacks were served.

Residents were reminded to keep in touch with neighbors and make sure neighbors have a key for access to their house in an emergency. Neighbors should also be told when a family is planning to be away for a few days to a few weeks, and if children and/or animals are left home alone on a regular basis. Each household should check smoke detectors, gas and water turnoffs, emergency supplies, and plans for emergency communication on a regular basis. Household Registry papers should also be updated with Neighborhood Liaisons.

A total of 18 neighbors, plus children, attended the meeting and discussed ways to improve preparedness. Due to a recent missing child scare and an incident where a teen home alone at night faced a possible intruder, a need was felt for more detailed means of communication and emergency procedures.

Neighbors decided to establish a Confidential Starbuck Emergency Directory with a list of emergency procedures, emergency telephone numbers, local trained medical personnel, location of basic emergency supplies, and contact information

for each person living in each household.

Neighbors also expressed concerns about the severe fog that sometimes envelops upper Starbuck. Reflectors will be considered for this area, and the county will be contacted about the feasibility of a centerline on the road. To ease traffic on the curve on Seacape Drive, it was suggested that Starbuck and upper Seacape residents exit to Highway 1 via the Overlook entry. Neighborhood Watch signs will also be installed at the entry to Starbuck, and at the turnaround.

Starbuck residents expressed interest in meeting again in a few months to evaluate the changes made as a result of this meeting.

All forms and emergency lists can be downloaded from www.muirbeachfire.com. The website also includes a list of all Neighborhood Liaisons in Muir Beach.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS REMINDERS

- Test your smoke detector.
- Go through your emergency supplies and replace as necessary.
- Update your household forms with your neighborhood liaison.
- Lists and forms are all available at www.muirbeachfire.com.

Barbecue Planning Begins

By Anne Jeschke

Deb Allen had already amassed more than 20 raffle prizes for the 2010 Muir Beach Memorial Day Barbecue by the February 6th planning meeting.

Allen was one of approximately 35 eager workers gathered at the Community Center to review jobs for this year's Memorial Day Barbecue, held to benefit the Muir Beach Volunteer Fire Department. Big expenses loom for the department. The two existing fire trucks are small and old and must be replaced in the near future.

"Make no mistake about it, the fire department needs our support," said Brent Smith, a member of the MBVFA board, the department's fund-raising arm and the organization that administers the barbecue itself. The Board is also grappling with plans for a firehouse. To repair the current one would cost \$450,000, while a new one in a different location would be at least \$150,000. Both involve endless hours of meetings and paper work by the Muir Beach Volunteer Fire Department Association Board.

Volunteer firefighters donate at least 120 hours annually for training, practice, and actual emergency calls. In addition, they all work on the barbecue. The community adds their support and together we average well over \$25,000 a year from the barbecue for the department.

The barbecue, which this year takes place on May 30, is a momentous undertaking that requires volunteers from all

corners of the community. Dave Elliott jumped in to fill the vacant "Tamales" job. Laura Van Amburgh volunteered to head the Clean Up Committee. Most other positions were filled by last year's hard working leaders. There are still plenty of jobs, big and small, remaining to be filled. Volunteers should contact Anne Jeschke, volunteer coordinator, at 388-2278. If you have a raffle donation, call Deb Allen at 383-1854.

Michael Kaufman, board president, led the meeting, asking those present to search the community for new volunteers for other business aspects of the fire department. Two big programs administered by the fire department board need substantial help. The Fuel Abatement Program has been partially funded by grants. Volunteers are needed to organize "Chipper Days" and keep appointment records. Muir Beach emergency preparedness needs administrative help as well. E-mail Kaufman at michaelekaufman@yahoo.com for a detailed description of the jobs.



Photograph by Julie Smith



Fire Safety Day at the Beach

Story and Photographs by Julie Smith

The Muir Beach Volunteer Fire Department sponsored a Fire Safety Day at the firehouse on October 24th. For more than 30 years, FireMaster has provided fire extinguisher maintenance service to the community.



T.J. Wallermann of FireMaster comes to Muir Beach once a year to check and recharge residents' fire extinguishers.

For residents who missed the fire extinguisher maintenance day, T.J. Wallermann of FireMaster has agreed to honor the special Muir Beach rate. You can contact him at 415.259.8622 or email T.J. (troywallermann@hotmail.com) to set up a time and place to meet him over the hill. He will check and recharge your fire extinguisher while you wait for the bargain price of \$8. You can also purchase fire extinguishers from him.

20,000 are injured. An overwhelming number of fires occur in the home, with nearly 600 lives lost to fires that start in bedrooms. There are time-tested ways to prevent and survive a fire. It's not a question of luck. It's a matter of planning ahead. For more information on fire safety, visit www.muirbeachfire.com and click on "Safety Tips."

Every household should have fire alarms, a fire escape plan, and at least two fire extinguishers in the house. T.J. suggests keeping one extinguisher in the bedroom in case a nighttime fire blocks the escape route.



If you missed Fire Safety Day, T.J. can meet you over the hill to service your fire extinguisher at the special Muir Beach rate.

Illustration by Geoff Thulin

The U.S. Fire Administration says that more than 4,000 Americans die each year in fires and approximately



MBVFD Incident Log

Compiled by Paul Jeschke

September 15, 10:15 am
Muir Woods
Assisted 44-year-old male hiker.

September 16, 3:40 pm
Muir Woods
Visitor fell. Call cancelled.

September 18, 10:30 am
Highway 1 near Slide Ranch
Car rolled over, no injury. Initiated traffic control.

September 20, 4:05 pm
Muir Woods
Call cancelled.

September 22, 9:30 am
Highway 1
Rescue.

October 1, 1:30 pm
Muir Beach, Shoreline Highway
150-foot tree leaning over house.

November 11, 6:12 am
Highway 1 near Slide Ranch
Car fell off trailer and went off road.

November 15, 6:00 pm
Muir Beach
Traffic accident at intersection of Highway 1 and Pacific Way.

November 16, 8:00 am
Slide Ranch
Cardiac arrest.

December 13, 8:45 am
Muir Woods
Oak tree down on Muir Woods Road.

December 23, 3:00 pm
Muir Woods
Assisted injured hiker on Ocean View Trail.

January 3, 3:45 pm
Slide Ranch
Head-on collision on Highway 1 north of Slide Ranch involving a car and a park ranger vehicle.



Once Again, The Muir Beach Quilters Holiday Arts Fair!

By Kathy Sward and Judith Yamamoto

What a year, what a Fair! We amazed ourselves, considering the economy, by grossing close to what we grossed last year - \$35,400 at last count. Even better, we netted \$6,000 after artist sales and expenses! Thank you to everyone who came, who had fun, who bought!

Not included in this surprising chunk of income was \$417 brought in through the sale of \$1 raffle tickets for our stunning quilt-in-progress, *Yukata Memories*. Our amazing bartender, Smilin' Steve, practically dished them out with the drinks! Two books of tickets will go out to every box in time to get lucky at our April Fool's raffle party!

In 2009 one of our aims was to encourage more activities and programs at the Community Center, after many years of funding big capital improvement projects. We had a lot of fun with a needle-felting workshop, a Candidates' Discussion & Dinner Night, our craft table contribution to Harvey's Day of the Dead celebration, and a Marin Opera production of "Amahl and the Night

Visitors," which we jazzed up with a wine and cheese social following the opera.

At the end of the year, in response to a rising tide of need in our county, our Vision Project gave an additional \$1,000 emergency grant to the Marin Community Food Bank, bringing our total number of last year's grants to four. The other three \$1,000 grants went out to three categories: seniors, the environment, and women and children - Senior Access, Marin Organic, and Draw Bridge: An Arts Program for Homeless Children, respectively.

So, we're off to another year! Let us know if an idea for an activity begins to rumble in your heart!

And thanks again to our wonderful artists whose inspiring work brings beauty into our lives, to our faithful volunteers who keep it all running, and to our cheery neighbors who join us in the eternal adventure of building community!



Diana Lerwick displays her handcrafted earrings.



Lauren Usher with her really green bags, all hand made from re-purposed materials.



Laura Calhoun's exquisite silkscreens admired by candlemaker Lesley Segedy.



Lesley Segedy aglow amid her beloved beeswax candles; raffle quilt, *Yukata Memories*, flies high above.

MUIR BEACH QUILTERS



Julie Smith shares tastes of her fabulous offerings.



Welcome back to Linda Lotriet after half a year at home in South Africa.



Shirley Nygren and Janice Kubota satisfied with the Garden Club's almost sold-out booth.



Pati Hays smiling through her beautiful ceramics display.



Lorna Newlin and Janice Kubota buy must-have MBVFD gifts from firepeople Michael Kaufman & Bryce Browning.



Ben Farnham welcomes us to his watercolor world.



KT Broomhead, chef extraordinaire of KT's Kitchen~West Marin Green Cuisine, lovingly dresses fresh greens as partner Peter Asmus looks on. Photograph by Julie Smith

MUIR BEACH QUILTERS



Peggy Chiang in the Quilters' booth, modeling Momo Yamamoto's papier mache beads.



Linda Gibbs, the Beachcomber Queen, & Beachcombers all around. Photograph by Julie Smith



Kathy Sward laughing against a crazy quilt background featuring some of her miniature framed quilts. Photograph by Linda Lotriet



Outi Onorato selling up a storm in the Quilters' booth. Photograph by Linda Lotriet



Craig Eichenbaum with his wonderfully wild, hand-drawn prints.



Judith Yamamoto under a wisp of the raffle quilt, Yukata Memories. Photograph by Linda Lotriet



Troy Bassett takes charge in the Children's Holiday Ornament & Gift Bazaar booth.



Christian and Leslie Riehl wrap up the Fair in the Cashiers' Booth.

Photographs by Claire Johnston unless otherwise noted.

Photograph by Bruce Barlow

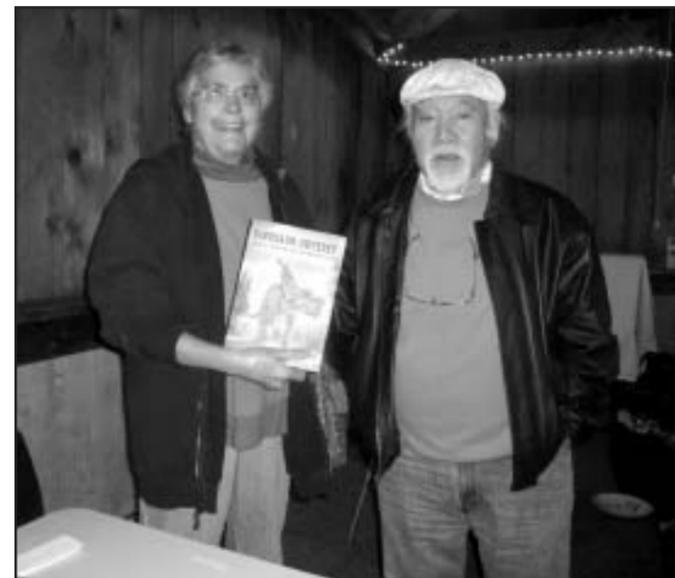


In The Center Of things

By Laurie Piel

It was a great fall and early winter this year, although we weren't that busy with over-the-hill rentals. We had more events by and for the community than ever before and I believe that is what the Center is primarily meant to be, a place for the community to meet and share experiences.

In October we had a Candidates Night. It was structured as a chance to meet your board and the candidates in a social setting. It was very successful in allowing the candidates to meet their constituents and hear what was on their minds as well as an opportunity to voice their own opinions on the issues. The last time we had one was long before I moved here. Halloween was celebrated with a children's party, which is always a wonderful time for the kids.



Judith and Larry Yamamoto are the proud owners of an autographed copy of Scott Sampson's new book, *Dinosaur Odyssey: Fossil Threads in the Web of Life*.

November was a special month. The annual Day of the Dead celebration was as spectacular as always. I am always amazed at how many people pitch in to make the celebration a success. Harvey Pearlman hosted an evening that paid respect to the circle of

life. Our ancestors and friends were acknowledged and our children were given a place to share in that celebration. Next, Toni Simmons and Scott Sampson hosted a book signing to celebrate the publication of Scott's book, *Dinosaur Odyssey: Fossil Threads in the Web of Life*. The evening was child friendly and included a speech and video presentation by the author, not to mention hors d'oeuvres. I am now a lucky owner of an autographed copy of the book and I couldn't be more excited. And if that wasn't enough for one month, we helped Gerry Pearlman celebrate 75 very special years on this earth.... and he has a plaque to prove it.



The author, Scott Sampson, steals a moment for a quick bite between giving autographs and a lecture.

December found the Quilters working hard on another successful Holiday Arts Fair. This was the first time I have missed the fair since moving here, and it sure left a hole in my heart. December also saw the performance of our first opera here in the Center. Gian-Carlo Menotti's "Amahl and the Night Visitors" was presented by the College of Marin under the direction of Paul Smith, music director. The performance appeared under the sponsorship of the Quilters and was a smashing success. There are rumors of other opportunities from COM to bring different musical forms here in the future. I know the Quilters are looking for other program opportunities to sponsor. So if you have a program that you think might do well in the Center, please contact Judith Yamamoto or Kathy Sward with your ideas. Suggestions need not be confined to the arts. Classes such as cooking, children's programs, and anything else you think might work would be grand. Don't forget the Quilters have a beautiful quilt to be raffled in April... find Kathy Sward or Judith Yamamoto to buy your raffle tickets so you don't miss your chance. And to end the year, a quiet

New Year's Eve was celebrated by a small group in front of a roaring fire, telling Muir Beach stories and playing games.

January kicked off the year with the conversion of the downstairs office to the Children's Room. Now the kids will not be on another level and will be in easy reach of their parents should the need arise. This change frees up the upstairs room allowing the Fireman's Association to take over the upstairs room for their storage and use. The upstairs room will still be a multi-use room for events that need the space, kitchen and bathroom available there. In a more serious vein, the women of Muir Beach have created a women's circle to help support women around the world. By the time this goes to print the first meeting will have taken place in January. I'm sure they would love to expand the circle and the work, so if you haven't heard about it and would like to participate, please give Nina Vincent a call at 415.388.0380.

February started off strong with the Barbeque Kick Off Dinner. It's hard to believe that it is time to start thinking about the BBQ already, but let's get this party started. The following weekend Muir Beach's WOMEN² group sponsored a reading of A.R. Gurney's Pulitzer Prize winning play, "Love Letters." Lonna Richmond put the Valentine's Day Weekend event together. It featured Lisa Eigsti and David Piel as the star crossed lovers and was directed by David Piel. Just in case that wasn't enough, the Moore family celebrated the 90th birthday of their patriarch, Richard Moore, in true Muir Beach fashion, and the Muir Beach Garden Club held their annual thank you dinner to round out the month.

There are many things planned for March such as a Tibetan art show and musical gong bath presented by Jim Aplington and Richard Rudis on March 13th. Check the CSD website (www.muirbeachcsd.com) for other upcoming events during the year.



Nothing says the holidays like our own Quilters Holiday Arts Fair... and there's the quilt that is being raffled off in April... get your raffle tickets now. Photograph by Claire Johnston

For those who may not know, the MBCC calendar is on the CSD website and is updated as often as possible. Although only a few months are up at a time, it



What a gorgeous entrance these stairs and landscaping will be for the brides who are lucky enough to hold their weddings at our fabulous Community Center (no bias here).

should help you see what's doing at the Center.

The improvements to the Center continued apace. The electrical system was given the last of its upgrades by Paul Brunner's team. Not only is everything upgraded, including the inside switches, but you can now walk up or down the outside stairs and be able to turn the lights on/off from each end. There is now a switch on the outside of the Center by the ramp door that will override the switch at the top of the stairs at Seacape. John John Sward has virtually finished the stairs with only minor finishing touches to go. The Garden Club has added to the stunning succulent garden along the entrance pathway and planted the area around the new stairs... it all looks beautiful.

During the winter of '08 there was an impromptu "freezer feast" when we had a power failure that lasted into the third day. If it happens again, c'mon down to the Center with all your food and we'll cook it up and have a party! The shared experience of that evening made me fall in love with Muir Beach for the community that it is and not just its beauty.

Hope to see you at the Center this year!



The old office is starting to take on the feel of its new responsibilities as the new Children's Room.

Photographs by Laurie Piel unless otherwise noted.



Report from the CSD - January 2010

By Maury Ostroff

I'm writing this in the midst of the big rainstorm that hit Muir Beach the week of January 20th, 2010. While it's great to get so much rain to replenish the reservoirs and the water table, there was some damage from falling trees. The Muir Beach Fire Association is still working on the grant for tree removal, but it will be primarily geared towards removing trees on public easements and other CSD owned property, with some idea of cost-sharing with private residents. But my advice is that if you have any of those Monterey Pines, you should seriously consider not waiting and just take them out. A Monterey Pine just snapped in half and fell on the storage shed at the community center (damaging the roof), and another tree fell on a house up on Starbuck Drive. Fortunately no one was hurt, but the house was damaged and the front deck demolished. Those Monterey Pines are both a fire hazard and are susceptible to falling over in storms. Use your judgment accordingly.

As the *Beachcomber* comes out several weeks after the articles are written, much of what I will discuss might be old news, but here is a recap of some of the big initiatives going on with the CSD these days.

The newly elected CSD Board had their first meeting on January 27th. Congratulations to Scott Bender on his first term on the Board, and congratulations to Dan Fitzpatrick, Mary Daniel Hobson, and Peter Rudnick on their re-election. Steve Shaffer remains on the board for the rest of his term.

Leighton Hills has been appointed back into the role of District Manager. Leighton has been doing an incredible job on the Water System and the capital improvements projects. I have decided to step away from CSD responsibilities so that I can focus on my new full-time job over the hill. But we can reassure everyone that things are in good hands. We are fortunate to have talented individuals within the community, and it does seem to work better by having people who actually live here and really know the community as opposed to trying to find somebody on the "outside."

All of you should be aware by now of our plan to construct a new concrete water tank at the location near the Muir Beach Overlook. The concrete tank will be seismically

reinforced, and will have a 200,000 gallon capacity, which is enough for at least a week's worth of water without pumping from the well. But the main advantage of having sufficient water in the tank is for fire protection: a fully pumping fire truck can go through up to 1,000 gallons a minute. That's a lot of water! Hopefully by the time you read this we've gotten all the permits and construction is underway.

The special tax for Water Capital Improvements is expiring, and will be on the ballot on the primary election to be held on June 10, 2010, for another four-year renewal. I know that no one wants to vote for more taxes, but this tax of \$300 per living unit is really important for us to have adequate funds for capital improvements to our water system. I can't stress this enough: the water system is the most important service the CSD provides. We all fully expect that every time we turn on the faucet that safe, clean water will come out. While we are always looking for grants and other sources of income, it's best not to be in a situation where we aren't self-sufficient. With the construction of a new Water Tank, we will have depleted our reserves for Water Capital improvements. There are no major projects coming up in the near future that need attention, but sooner or later the Lower Tank will have to be replaced, and there may be other portions of the system that will need to be replaced and/or upgraded. Having the tax in place allows us to build up sufficient funds over the years so that we can keep our water system up to date and in good condition.

Lastly, I hope everyone has had a chance to see the Community Center, which is looking better and better all the time. We have a new set of stone steps and stone walls leading down to the main entrance, a new sink and granite countertop in the kitchen, fixed some electrical issues, and many other improvements. It's hard to thank everyone who contributed to the effort, but we should mention a very generous donation from an anonymous donor (via the Marin Community Foundation), John-John Sward for his skilled masonry work, the Muir Beach Quilters for their ongoing financial support, and the Muir Beach Garden Club for the great job they've done on the planting and landscaping. My apologies if I've left anyone out, because it truly is a community effort.



The Critter Report: 'Shoulders and 'Tails

By Dave MacKenzie

Two birds that almost everyone in Muir Beach has seen are the Red-Tailed Hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*) and the Red-Shouldered Hawk (*Buteo lineatus*). Both types of birds nest in Muir Beach and are present year-round. They are also quite visible perched on poles or wires along Hwy 1 or flying and soaring over the area.

How can we tell them apart?

First, don't be too misled by their common names. Although Red-Tails DO have reddish tails and Red-Shoulders DO have reddish shoulders much of the time, this is not always true and these field marks are not always readily visible. In most cases I rely on other characteristics for easier and more rapid identification.

First consider what the hawk is doing. If it is soaring on broad wings or hanging motionlessly in a breeze while staring down at the ground looking for the motion of small prey animals—it's probably a Red-Tailed Hawk. If the bird is flying on rapid wing-beats in a straight line, it's probably a Red-Shouldered Hawk.

Another clue is the overall coloration. If the bird has a dark head, pale undersides, and a fairly uniform dark back and wings, it is probably a Red-Tail. If it has lots of pale speckles on the back and wings, particularly noticeable in flight, then it is likely a Red-Shouldered.

Another good clue is posture. Both hawks like to sit on power poles and wires such as we see between the Pelican Inn and the Green Gulch entrance road. A Red-Tail has an upright posture (rather regal, you might say). A Red-Shouldered almost always has a "hunched-over" look, as it holds its head more downward while searching for prey. A bit of practice and you can separate the two at driving speeds—but be careful—this could be worse than texting!

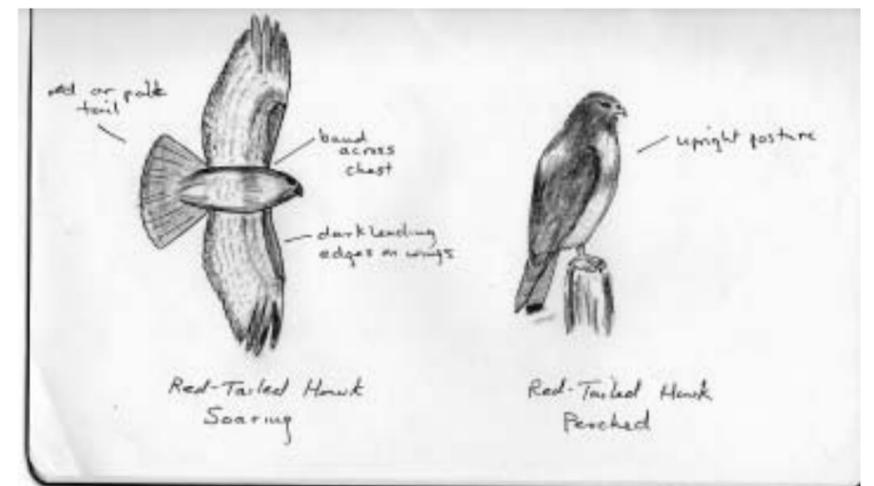
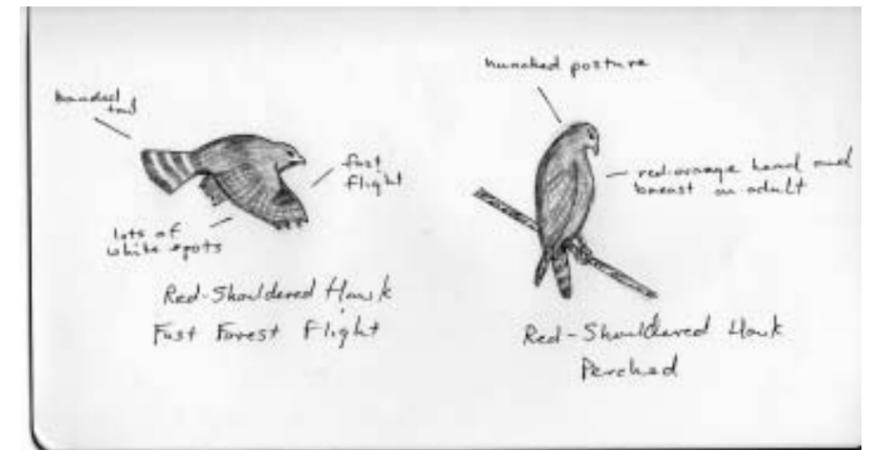
One sure give-away on these hawks is their calls, often given in flight. For a 'Tail this is usually a single drawn-out and down-slurred scream, described well in the Sibley Guide to Birds as "cleeeeeeww." The 'Shoulder, on the other hand, may cry out with a rapid series of whistles described as "keeyuur, keeyuur, keeyuur, keeyuur." I

often hear this around the breeding season in late winter and spring around Pacific Way or the start of Sunset Way where they nest.

Finally, of course, with a good binocular view and a field-guide in hand, you may see the brick-red tail of the adult Red-Tailed Hawk (juveniles have pale tails!) or the orange-red breast and shoulders of the adult Red-Shouldered Hawk. The 'Shoulder also sports a dark gray tail with narrow white bands. A very handsome bird!

Things in Muir Beach can get very exciting and confusing for hawk watchers in the fall, when many other species and large numbers of juvenile 'Shoulders and 'Tails migrate through the area. I have seen as many as a dozen Red-Tails stacked up on the ridges around Muir Beach at one time from my porch on a breezy day. Hawk watching at its best!

So next time you're heading over the hill, and see a hawk on the wire near Green Gulch, take a (quick) look and see if you can tell which hawk it is. Sometimes other species sit on that wire too, so drive carefully!



Illustrations by Dave MacKenzie

The Story of Patience

By Katy Balthazar

It was in June, the summer of 2003, I was 45 years old and had just returned home from an extended trip of three months in the Yucatan. My two children were now young adults, one living with his dad and the other living with her aunt, my younger sister, and her family. I had sold off everything before I left for Mexico. I hit a wall so to speak and decided that the second half of my life was going to be lived differently. I closed an antique shop I owned in San Rafael, sold my condo and all its contents, and got the kids (by then in their early twenties) off to relatives and headed for Mexico.

Now that I was back, I was living with my older sister, Tina, in Novato contemplating options for my next step in my new life. I was unencumbered for the first time in my adult life. Wow! What to do?

It was at this time my friend stepped in and thought that this was the perfect time to experience Burning Man. She convinced me I would be blown away by the creative art installations. So I decided to go. This very persuasive friend also convinced me to be a fire dancer in the fire conclave at Burning Man. I now had a project. I needed to learn how to spin fire poi and make a cool outfit for it by the end of August when Burning Man started. When I saw a sample of chainmaille a friend showed me, I thought, "That's it!" I was going to make an outfit out of chainmaille. I didn't know the first thing about it, but dissected the small sample piece and went from there. I purchased hundreds of feet of electrical wire from Goodman's hardware, stripped off the plastic sheath, coiled the wire around a dowel, snipped the coil and voila! I had my copper links. I wove the copper links together, making up the pattern as I went along, dressed it up with some cobalt blue beads, and finished the outfit in time for Burning Man and the fire conclave.

Well my friend was right, the art installations were incredible and the fire dancing with my first handmade chainmaille outfit was one of the most memorable and fun times I've ever had!

Now again back at my sisters with no project at hand the pressing question was beginning to nag and haunt me...What are you going to do with your life now, Katy? Hummmm? This is such a heavy question in mid-life when you don't have any ideas for the answer. I talked with my mom about my worry that nothing of interest seemed to be surfacing for me. She very wisely advised me not to be overly concerned and to relax and enjoy this uncomplicated time for a bit, because, as she put it, "Life will declare

itself." About a month after this conversation my mom called me to say, "Well honey, I think life has declared itself. I have colon-rectal cancer. Can you come live with me and help me through this?" Thud...my heart and soul dropped. My mom had cancer. As shocked as I was I was also grateful that I had no commitments so that I could be there for her 100 percent and I moved in straight away.



Lani Felix Lazano models Katy Balthazar's Patience, 18 months in the making and constructed with approximately 50,000 links and 1300 Swarovski crystals.
Photograph by James Melard

Needless to say the next year and a half was life changing. There were enough experiences during this time alone to write a whole book. First off, have you ever moved back in (into your old bedroom no less) with your parents or parent as an adult having already raised your own children? That experience in of itself is enough to cause quite a stir in the relationship.

My mom went through chemo, radiation, and a colostomy. Along with my mom's husband, Tom, my three sisters, various grandchildren, and myself, we nursed her through it all. As a family we rallied together to try to save our mom, grandmother, wife, our glue and anchor in the family. However, sadly mom died at home on March 15, 2005, at the age of 76.



Photograph by James Melard

We felt we had been set adrift. Lost. How could this have happened? Up until the cancer mom was playing in tennis tournaments in the B league for God's sake, with the 30-45 year olds! She was still active with the Aids Foundation. And she was a psychotherapist with a private practice in Mill Valley, focusing on gay relationships. She was vibrant and sexy. She said we came from good strong peasant stock! How did it happen? How? None of us could compute or make sense of what just happened. But, it did happen and now what to do?

I was living at mom's with Tom and my daughter Tarrin. I had no pressure to move out. On the contrary, Tom wanted us there. He was so devastated by the loss of his love and I think we needed each other.

I didn't want to do anything. All I could manage to do when I got home from work was to cuddle up on the same couch mom laid in for so many months and watch old movies on Turner Classic Movie channel. My weekends were much the same, on the couch. Well, this seemed acceptable for a few weeks, after all everyone has their own way of grieving and this was mine. However, after a few weeks I felt I should get myself together and get off the couch. It should be time enough, I thought. And, I was beginning to feel guilty, like I shouldn't be such a lazy blob. Was mom watching me?

I needed a project. Slowly, late at night in bed when I couldn't sleep, this chainmaille dress started to come to me in a multitude of creative visions and was calling to be made. No, insisting to be made. After a week or so of this I remember thinking to myself, "Okay, I'll make you." I found an online store to purchase the links (so much easier than making your own). I decided on deep red anodized aluminum links. I knew this project was big and would take forever to make! Perfect. I could continue to sit on my comfort couch watching Turner Classic Movies, doing my chainmaille dress and not feel guilty! I didn't have a pattern, just ideas in my head. Problems were worked out as I went along. There were many times I had to take out whole sections of the dress (hours and days of work) because it didn't fall right. That was especially frustrating, but I continued, taking a deep breath and saying to myself, "It takes as long as it takes. If it takes ten years, then it takes ten years. That's all there is to it. Just

continue, you'll get there someday, whenever, it doesn't even matter when." So I just continued night after night making headway, painstakingly slow, linking each link one at a time. At times I had to rest my hands and wrists for a week or two because of repetitive stress and cramping.

During this period I had all the quiet time I needed, and although an old movie was always keeping me company in the background, I was deep in my meditative chainmaille state. My life with mom, like a movie, was showing in my mind and I had a front row seat. From childhood to adulthood and the time during her illness, all those years and every memory I could remember with mom was being reviewed. This was my process for a year and a half with my dress, my mom, the couch, an old movie, and me.

What I realize now, that I didn't realize then, was that all the time I kept telling myself, "It takes as long as it takes," I thought it was about the dress, but really it was about my grieving process. What a beautiful job I did of setting it all up so that I could grieve for as long as I needed to and in a way that I needed to, without guilt. Brilliant, and all done without my really consciously understanding that this was what I was doing. What I did know is that I needed to trust the fact that I needed to make this dress.

This period of time required a lot of patience. I needed to slow way down and abandon my own ideas of how long this should take and come into alignment with the reality of the pace for making this dress, as it could not be rushed. This slowing down was also more in alignment with the pace of my healing and grieving, another process which cannot be rushed. Things in life just simply take as long as they take.

So the naming of this dress came easily to me. Her name is the same as what she taught me... "Patience."

Since the making of Patience my dear older sister, Tina, was also struck with cancer and died very quickly just two years after mom, in 2007. Our family has gone through a lot to grieve over, but in these past five plus years, we have also added to our family with more and more grandchildren and great grandchildren. God bless these children as they give us all hope and keep us on our toes and demand we stay in the now, here, with them. They give us the reason to keep traditions alive, like Christmas, Thanksgiving, Easter, Saint Patrick's Day (one of my mom's favorites), and all the rest. I feel I have learned to be more patient with myself in whatever process I am going through and however I need to go through it. Because, if there is one more thing I've learned over these years, it's that there is always some kind of process I seem to be in!!



Supporting the Art and Artists of the Himalaya

By Jim Aplington

Swirling steam from the Tibetan butter tea mingled with the freshly picked juniper incense burning in the little brass ashtray positioned between the young artist and myself. My Tibetan friend, Nyanduk, also a fine artist, interpreted for me.

We had driven two days from Lhasa, the capital of Tibet, to a community of 50 people where this 28-year-old, named Tashi, lived and painted in a 10 by 15 foot wood and tin shed. Nyanduk knew that I wanted to support artists with an innovative style who had difficulty selling their art.

Tashi shyly produced four small, very sweet sketches of nomad women, squinting into a plateau-dotted Tibetan sky. I chose three of them. A price was negotiated. I pulled out a four-inch wad of Chinese yuan (Tibetan currency). Then Tashi eased back into his blanket bundle with an ecstatic earsplitting smile.

Nyanduk translated that Tashi really, really needed this money for his family of three. It saved him from having to work for a long five-month winter doing manual work in Beijing, China, which was a week's journey by bus. Within several months, I had the additional joy of watching three different people in my gallery in Kathmandu and in San Diego purchase Tashi's art and profusely, sincerely thank me for providing this art for them.

This is an example of the always-changing honor of representing the sacred art of Nepali and Tibetan artists that has bestowed itself on me. Since October 1998, I have followed my intuition by purchasing and supporting the art of the Himalaya region, which culminated in the opening of the Lotus Gallery in December 2000 in Kathmandu, Nepal. My Nepali partner, Santosh, and his family are now my family half of the year.



"WAKE UP! Flying Dakini" by Jiang Jung. Acrylic, 40" x 50"
Photograph by Tsering Nynaduk



Jim Aplington, owner of Lotus Gallery, Kathmandu, Nepal
Photograph by Jhampa

There are two artists that stand out from all those with whom I have had the privilege to work. One is Tensing Norbu Lama in Dolpa. When in Kathmandu I bring friends over to Norbu's home to observe him painting. As his young children crawl around, Norbu, with his innocent mix of pride, playfulness, and no ego, reveals the subtle technique of his brush as yaks and clouds in his landscape art come to life.

Norbu Lama's art has reached international attention since the film about his life, "Caravan of the Himalayas," was nominated for an Academy Award. He is just one of so many artists whom after I purchase their art, I feel I am a temporary guardian of this art, like caretakers of the Earth in an indigenous people's fashion. I am devoted to finding homes and spaces in which to hang their masterpieces.

Another exceptional artist with whom I've worked—47-year-old Tibetan Ang Sang—also first started painting the traditional Tibetan style of thangka. Then with his own inspiration and his schooling, he branched into his own unique style. The result is a mix of traditional thangka methods and motifs, rich in color and meaning in a contemporary context.

Whether it be four or 400 hours, I hope the creativity, energy, and vision that is devoted to a blank piece of canvas is not diminished by the new owner acting as if they bought a new suit or vehicle. Rather, I hope they celebrate the artists' work like a proud guardian. With bliss, I have observed this many times these last 12 years.

I was the first Westerner to establish a relationship with these Tibetan artists and install their art in an exclusive gallery in Nepal and now Muir Beach. In the last several years the acclaimed Ruben Museum in New York has been collecting a large representation of their work as well.

In August 2009, Lotus Gallery moved to Muir Beach. On Saturday, March 13th, I will give a talk at Muir Beach Community Center, focusing on the Exhibition of 15 contemporary Tibet paintings and Nepal Thangkas. Bring a friend! This will be followed by a Tibetan gong bath, singing bowl concert performed by acclaimed sound healer Richard Rudis. Tickets for concert: \$25; Muir Beach residents: \$20. All proceeds go to Richard Rudis. Call for exact time, please.

Due to the civil unrest in Nepal, Jim Aplington is currently focusing on creating new markets for Nepali-Tibetan artists in the Bay Area. For more information, please call 858.232.6083, or email Jim at jimaplinton@yahoo.com

Top photograph: Dragon mandala painting by Prem Lama. Gouache, 24kt. gold, and mineral pigments; 18" x 24"
Photograph by Anne Lelong

My Time As a Roadmonkey

By Joanie Wynn

In June of last year, Steve and I left our home in Muir Beach for the adventure of a lifetime, traveling to Tanzania to produce a documentary on a trip for Roadmonkey Adventure Philanthropy.

Roadmonkey trips are a unique combination of rugged adventure travel and meaningful volunteer work. First, we would climb Mt. Kilimanjaro, hoping to conquer the 19,340-foot summit to stand on the "rooftop of Africa." Then, we would travel to a small suburb of Dar Es Salaam to complete a hands-on volunteer project for Bibi Jann Children's Care Trust, a local nonprofit and school for children orphaned by East Africa's AIDS epidemic.

Welcome to Tanzania

The launching pad for our seven-day trek was Moshi, a town on the lower slopes of Mt. Kilimanjaro. We left our hotel (and our last opportunity for showers) early Sunday morning, driving several hours through tiny townships and rural villages. Chickens scratched amid the dust, dirt, and roadside trash. Simple mud huts were curiously juxtaposed with small shops displaying the bright blue and white Vodacom (the local cellular provider) signage.

As we moved farther from the city, we passed fields of corn, carrots, and enormous black and yellow sunflowers. Women in brightly colored traditional dress, some with babies strapped to their backs, tended open fires and children of all ages ran barefoot toward the bus to get a look at the "mzungus" (Swahili for white people). Everywhere we saw men, women, and children carrying buckets of water, baskets of wood, and bundles of all manner of things atop their heads, an amazing display of balance and strength that immediately impressed us.

Kilimanjaro and the Lesson of Pole' Pole'

They are many routes leading to Mt. Kilimanjaro's summit. Our tour followed the seven-day Lemosho Route. One of the longest and most remote routes, Lemosho offers time for acclimatization to the altitude with better odds of reaching the summit. It also provides ample time to enjoy the diverse and breath-taking scenery of Kilimanjaro National Park.

When we arrived at the Ranger check-in station, I saw a huge sign listing precautions and recommendations for what we were about to attempt, most notably that those experiencing symptoms of acute altitude sickness (dizziness, nausea, vomiting) must descend immediately

and seek medical attention. This information wasn't new to me. I'd reviewed all of the warnings in the preparation packet sent by our local guide company, Tanzania Journeys. Yet, seeing it there in bold lettering on a fifty by fifty foot sign made it feel all the more menacing.

I knew we were in good hands though. Our mountain guide, Good Luck Charles, had over twenty years of experience on the Mountain. He was a quiet young man with an air of wisdom that belied his thirty-one years. Besides, we all joked, we were glad to have Good Luck on our side as we started this adventure.

Back in our vehicles, we drove toward the trailhead. In many places, heavy rains had washed out the road as we snaked our way through trees and over rocks, hoping our beat up Land Cruiser would deliver on its off-road promise. One particularly deep rut took five attempts to conquer as we all leaned to one side to assist the effort.

Finally, we were ready to start walking. It was a wonderful way to begin, steadily climbing through dense rain forest. At places, the ground seemed to move, teeming with thousands of large fire ants. "Careful, step over," Good Luck advised. We were more than happy to oblige, having all seen those movies where some poor soul is taken over by ants and carried away screaming.



Steve and Joanie Wynn begin their seven-day trek to the 19,340-foot summit of Mt. Kilimanjaro by steadily climbing through dense rain forest, altitude 6,900 feet – 9,000 feet.
Photograph by Christine Burke

We saw black and white colobus monkeys swing in the upper branches of trees and came upon large mounds of fresh elephant dung, though the majestic creatures eluded us. The trees hung with a thick gray moss and the air was dense, warm, and moist. Before long, we were peeling off layers and glistening with sweat. We stopped for a sack lunch and enjoyed the shade of a large tree. The meal was simple: a hard-boiled egg, orange, and corn muffin, and we hungrily ate every bite.

TRAVEL

As we rested, our porters passed by, carrying all of our backpacks and camping gear, forty to fifty pounds worth, oftentimes balancing it on their heads. Where we struggled not to trip over tree roots or slide in the mud, these men seemed to glide effortlessly over the most difficult terrain. And it was here that the first of our Swahili lessons began:

“Mambo Vipi” - “How’s it going?”

“Poa” - “Cool!”

These men earned their title, “Wagumu” (hardcore), and our respect and admiration for them grew with each passing day.

After four hours of hiking, we reached our first campsite. Our tents were nestled in a glen of trees, the canopy so thick that you couldn’t see the sky. When the sun went down, I experienced what is truly meant by the term “pitch black.”

We donned our headlamps and met by the “mess tent,” a mini-version of the army tents I had seen on M.A.S.H. Togolai, our shy waiter, greeted us with fresh warm water for hand washing. We ducked into the tent and sat hunched over on tiny triangular camp chairs to gobble up a meal of warm cucumber soup, bread, and chicken vegetable stew.

These meal times were a wonderful way for us to connect and share our travails of the day. We laughed at each other and at ourselves. We were all outside of our comfort zone and found solace in the bond that was beginning to form. After dinner, we crawled into our tents, both excited and anxious about what the next day would bring.

Our second day took us out of the rainforest and into the Giant Heather “Moorland” Zone, crossing through valleys



Day 2: The 10-member Roadmonkey group hikes through alpine desert in Kilimanjaro National Park, altitude 12,600 feet. Photograph by Steve Wynn

and across streams. We spent the first two hours climbing an incredibly steep hillside and, for the first time, felt the full strength of the African sun. Good Luck explained to us the importance of “pole’, pole’,” meaning slowly. Literally, one step at a time is the only way you can make it on “Kili” and it was critical that each of us learn this lesson early and embrace it fully.

Our efforts were rewarded when we reached a small plateau on the side of the cliff where a lunch table, complete with tablecloth and silverware, had been set up for us. Once again, the porters had carried four times as much and gotten there twice as fast.

At times, day two felt like it would never end as we hiked hour after hour in the hot sun. Though the scenery was spectacular, the trail was uneven and arduous, and it took us over eight hours to reach our campsite. I fell considerably behind the rest of the pack and I was seriously starting to question if I was cut out for this. Simon, a muscular guide with a serious demeanor, kept me going with his strong, reassuring mantra, “Just a bit further, pole’, pole’.” This would not be the last time that Simon would get me through.

The payoff came when we finally reached the campsite late in the afternoon. It was set at the top of Shira Ridge and offered incredible 360-degree views of the surrounding national parkland. In the distance, we could see the spectacular Mt. Meru, an extinct volcano. At night, it was clear and cold and the sky came alive with more stars than I ever thought possible. In the morning, we woke to find a layer of thick clouds at what looked to be thousands of feet below us and extending to the horizon. I felt like Athena on Mt. Olympus, living among the clouds turning crimson, then pink, as the sun came up.

Over the next few days, we continued our exploration and ascent, following a trail through alpine desert, then scaling boulders up the Barranco Wall. We were starting to gain stamina and confidence and got a kick out of conquering each day’s challenge. At times we chatted and laughed, or practiced our Swahili with the guides. When we were struggling, it got quiet and everyone focused, remembering our mantra, “pole’, pole’.”

Each afternoon as we arrived at camp, our porters greeted us with spirited singing and clapping, celebrating our homecoming. “Don’t you wish we got this kind of reception after a hard day’s work at home?” one of the women exclaimed.

The final campsite at Barafu Hut was at about 15,000 feet on an exposed and dangerous ridge. Good Luck was monitoring our health, looking for signs of altitude sickness. He cared

TRAVEL



Day 3: After scaling boulders up the Barranco Wall at 15,000 feet, Steve and Joanie descend to the 13,000-foot Barranco Hut campsite. Mt. Kilimanjaro is in the background. Photograph by Steve Wynn

for us like a watchful father, quietly pulling us aside to inquire about our health and offering solutions.

Finally, Summit Day arrived. We woke at midnight, donned our headlamps, and put on every article of clothing we’d brought to stay warm. The going was tough; extremely steep, rocky, and relentless. If I looked up, I could see hundreds of tiny headlamps still ascending thousands of feet above. This discouraged me immensely so I kept my concentration on the two feet directly in front of me.

With the extreme cold and lack of oxygen, an overwhelming sleepiness came over me. There were moments when I felt like a narcoleptic, dipping into nanoseconds of sleep. Then I’d snap my eyes wide open, shake it off, and say to myself, “wake up!!” all the while walking, walking, walking.

My husband, Steve, knew I was having trouble so he stayed close, helping me stop for water and giving me periodic reports, “only two more hours and the sun will be up.” Simon was with me again and offered to carry my daypack which I gratefully accepted. Another guide, Job, was in front, setting a slow, rhythmic pace and serenading me with a low, soothing song in Swahili.

It’s hard to explain why it was so difficult, but it reminded me of childbirth when you have no choice other than to

push through the pain and keep going. Even though we saw other people retreating down the mountain, I never really considered that an option, though I did at many times question why I had wanted to do this in the first place.

Finally, the sun came up and, as Steve had promised, it really did help. The sky was glowing blood red and I began to take in the astounding beauty around me. When I reached Stella Point just before the summit, I could see the famed glaciers pulsing an iridescent blue.

One by one we reached the summit. We hugged and cried and celebrated our victory. “Congratulations! You have conquered the Mountain!” Good Luck beamed and cheered. But deep down, each of us knew that it was ourselves we had conquered, overcoming our physical and emotional limitations.

Standing on Uhuru Peak, I took a breath and took in the astounding beauty around me—hoping that I might indelibly imprint my time on the rooftop of Africa.



Day 6: Steve and Joanie reach the “rooftop of Africa,” Mt. Kilimanjaro’s 19,340 foot summit called Uhuru Peak. Also pictured are guides Simon and Job. Photograph by Steve Wynn

Climbing Higher

After such an exhilarating and exhausting week on the mountain, we couldn’t imagine an experience to top it, but we refocused ourselves and headed to Dar Es Salaam, where we would begin the volunteer portion of our adventure.

TRAVEL

Dar Es Salaam is the largest city in Tanzania and the de facto capital. Its bustling city center feels like a circus on steroids. Street vendors hawk everything from sugarcane to cell phones. Driving there is total chaos, with cars, trucks, buses, pushcarts, pedestrians, and an occasional goat all vying for the same narrow boulevard.

We traveled in a green and purple bus that our group immediately nicknamed the Mystery Bus, partly because it resembled the bus from Scooby Doo and partly because we were never quite sure what time it would arrive. The bus came with a driver and two additional men. At first we were puzzled at the need for three men but quickly realized that driving through Dar can be dangerous for a group of white tourists. The biggest guy positioned himself in front of the doors as we drove through the crowded streets, continually checking to make sure that no "unintentional" passengers hopped onboard.

We turned off the main drag and traveled ten minutes or so down what felt like a forgotten dirt road to the small village of Mbagala. We passed a group of women and children gathered around a well, pulling up buckets of water. Kids were everywhere, kicking their makeshift soccer balls created out of bundled up newspaper wrapped with twine.



Steve Wynn with kids from Mbagala, a small village outside Dar es Salaam (Tanzania's largest city), the site of the hands-on volunteer portion of the couple's adventure. Photograph by Steve Wynn

At last we arrived in front of a non-descript cement wall. In small lettering, the sign read: Bibi Jann Children's Care Center and School.

The school was started in 1991 by Fatuma Gwao, a retired local teacher who dreamed of starting a school to help the many children orphaned by AIDS in her community. With

the generosity and assistance of her American friend, Jann Mitchell-Sandstrom, (the school's namesake), funds were raised from American and European donors to establish the school.

Since that time, the nonprofit has grown to include the "Bibi-2-Bibi" or "Grandma-2-Grandma" program which helps to support local grandmothers who are caring for their orphaned grandchildren. The bibis are the glue of this community, keeping families together who would otherwise be torn apart.

Passing through the front gate at the school, I was struck at how bleak and colorless it looked. Rusty, worn and what looked to be mostly broken playground equipment filled the dirt courtyard, along with a forlorn stucco giraffe. "Wow," I thought to myself, "This is so sad."

We were quickly ushered in to meet the children who had prepared a welcome for us. We settled in among them, some of the boldest ones climbing onto our laps. One group of older kids, probably second or third graders, stepped up to the front of the classroom. A girl and boy began to sing. Their two voices were so pure and clear that I was surprised to find tears coming to my eyes. It may have been partly that I was desperately missing my own young son, Ryan, many miles away with his own bibi. Or it may have been that, at the exact moment, the purpose of our visit crystallized for me. I fought the tears back (I didn't want to scare them after all) and, before long, all the kids were singing and clapping and stomping. One boy provided intricate rhythms on a small drum as they executed an increasingly complex set of traditional tribal dances.

After the show, the kids rushed out to those rickety play structures and I saw just how wrong my first impression had been. They were having a blast, spinning with abandon on the rotating "whirlybird" and sliding down the wood plank slide. I heard giggles and squeals of delight and realized that there was nothing sad about the Bibi Jann School.

As I stood there watching, a tiny hand grasped mine and I looked down to see a little girl of about 4 or 5 grinning up at me. We considered each other for a moment and then, seeing that I was nice, a group of a dozen or more kids crowded around me. They wanted to hold my hand and touch my skin. They stared at my strange Western clothing and searched my face. I pulled out a small photo I carried of Ryan and even more children crowded around to see, taking turns holding the picture. They looked from the photo to me and back again. We did the Swahili version of high five, going to knuckle to knuckle to exclaim "Nepitano!!" and, just like that, we were friends.

Our small group was eager to get started on the projects

TRAVEL



Students at the Bibi Jann Children's Care Center and School perform their welcome dance for the Roadmonkey volunteers. The school was established for the community's many children orphaned by AIDS. Photograph by Christine Burke

planned for our four days of hands-on volunteer work; install a filtration system for clean drinking water, install a new gas cooking stove, build thirty student desks, and paint and decorate five classrooms. We separated into teams and got busy.

The joy of the Roadmonkey concept is that the volunteer project affords a rare opportunity to work side by side with locals. George, the young kindergarten teacher, was full of fun energy as he directed our work in the classrooms. After two days of prepping, priming, and painting, it was fun to get to the glory work of adding numbers, letters, and fun drawings to decorate the walls. One elderly villager wandered in and gave us his opinion, which George translated for us, "He says the bus is no good - you need to draw it better." I guess it's impossible to escape a critic, even in this remote corner of the world. But it was good-natured and fun and, before long, the old guy joined in and picked up a paintbrush to help.

Meanwhile, another group struggled to install the water filter correctly, running to the local hardware several times for necessary mounting hardware and miscellaneous parts. Victory came two days later when we all toasted one another with the first cups of fresh, clean drinking water.

Several of the women who were building desks finally earned the respect of the local construction guys who had started out stone-faced and doubtful. After working steadily alongside them, they began to thaw, realizing that some of these crazy American women really knew how to swing a hammer.

The days at the school were hot, dusty, and tiring, but the time went by quickly. Each day at lunchtime, Fatuma and the bibis prepared for us a traditional meal of rice, beans, and vegetables that we enjoyed at her home. Sometimes,

they added fish broth or offered us avocado or fresh oranges, always sharing the best of whatever they had. We were honored by this generous act of appreciation and recognized it as a special opportunity that most tourists never have the chance to experience.

On the last day, the children filed in to inspect our work in one of the classrooms. As they sat at some of the desks that we'd made, the headmaster quizzed them on their letters and we beamed with delight as they recognized our hand-painted drawings of fruits, vegetables, and yes, even the bus.

I was proud of our group and impressed with how hard everyone had worked. We left feeling satisfied that we'd left "our school" a tiny bit better. The classrooms were freshly painted, there were brand new desks for the children, a new stove for the bibis, and clean drinking water for everyone.

But whatever small contributions we may have made, we knew that we had received something far greater. The children and bibis at the school had taken us higher than the summit we'd reached just days before at the top of Kili. We had reached across a seeming cultural chasm to join hands with these strangers, now friends, at the Bibi Jann School, an experience we would hold in our hearts forever.

Steve and Joanie Wynn own Bayside Entertainment, a full-service video production company based in Marin. Creative director Steve Wynn is a Bay Area native and Emmy-award winning cameraman who has traveled the world for all of the major broadcast outlets including Discovery Channel, History Channel, and Travel Channel.

Since moving to the Bay Area from Los Angeles in 1996, executive producer Joanie Wynn has used her marketing and production background to produce projects for clients in a variety of business sectors including video games, luxury travel, retail, and nonprofit. She has also produced programming for HBO, C-Net, and Lifetime TV.

Currently, they are producing a documentary entitled, "A Journey of the Heart" on their recent adventures in Tanzania. They're planning a Muir Beach Community Center showing sometime this year, so look for flyers or contact joanie@baysideentertainment.com for more details.

Portions of this story appeared in the December 2009 issue of Marin Magazine as "Pole' Pole': A Journey of the Heart in Tanzania." Reprint rights retained by the author.

Muir Beach Couple Helps Build Houses In Kenya

By Paul Jeschke

The driver of our seven-passenger van swerved abruptly around a foot-deep crevice, honked a warning to a badly overloaded truck careening our direction, and, 50 feet further, braked sharply to avoid a scraggly line of skinny cows ambling across the dusty dirt road.

“Jambo,” chorused a knot of youngsters, smiling and gesturing enthusiastically at the occupants of the van—a group of Habitat for Humanity volunteers en route to a home building project near Kisii in eastern Africa.

“Jambo, jambo,” the volunteers shouted back, waving and pointing cameras out the window to capture the chaos and confusion. Having exhausted their Swahili vocabulary, the Americans reverted to English. “Hello” or “hi” was the best most of us could muster.

We hadn’t yet arrived at our worksite at the village of Nyamatardo and already we were causing a commotion. It’s impossible to avoid attention when, according to our Kenyan hosts, we were the first white people many of the children had ever encountered.



Many Kenyan families live in mud and stick huts with thatched roofs and dirt floors. At night, they share the house with small animals to protect them from predators.



Anne Jeschke in the foundation trench she helped dig during a Habitat for Humanity Global Village project near Kisii, Kenya. Anne also hauled concrete, mortared bricks, and shoveled dirt and sand during the “build.”

Anne and I joined an eleven-member Habitat for Humanity Global Village team over Thanksgiving to help build decent, affordable houses for families who are currently living in crowded, one room, windowless, stick and mud huts. In addition to the two Muir Beach residents, the volunteers consisted of a Philadelphia lawyer, an IBM programmer, a radiology technician, a General Motors executive, a New York management consultant, a new college graduate from Alaska, a self-described “empty nester” from Los Angeles, and a British citizen who has lived for 50 years in Japan. Not a lot of construction expertise here, except for our Habitat leader, Sheila Crowley, and a couple of volunteers who previously participated in Habitat building projects.

Our task was to build the foundation for a brick house that will be the new home of Lydia and Julius Kenyena, a married couple with seven children. After a brief welcome, we got to work trenching for the foundation walls and quickly discovered that the Equatorial sun produces an almost unquenchable thirst.

A Habitat team that preceded us had already made bricks. The rusty red earth is mixed with water, formed into rectangles and baked in fire pits. Part of our group formed a “mlolongo” line, tossing bricks from person to person to get them to the trenches where the second group helped stack and mortar them in place. The bricks, Anne likes to point out, were larger and weighed at least twice as much as their American counterparts. Endless hours of brick tossing was completely exhausting.

When we weren’t moving bricks, we were mixing cement, sand, and aggregate and carrying the finished concrete to the construction site. Lack of equipment complicated the task considerably. Aggregate was produced by pounding rocks until they shattered, the sand had to be moved about a quarter-mile uphill and the cement, sand, and rock mixed by shovel. When each batch was ready, we filled large wok-like metal pans with scoops of concrete and formed another “mlolongo” line, handing off containers that weighed between 25 and 50 pounds for hour after hour. And finally, when the foundation rose about three feet above ground level, we finished pouring the pad and filled in the trenches.

“I didn’t know your tribe could work so hard,” said Kennedy, a Kenyan construction supervisor.

“Oh,” said Sheila, our team leader, wiping dirt and sweat from her face. “You mean white people?”

“Yes,” Kennedy answered. “I didn’t know white people

could work as hard as we do.”

Our “tribe” took a bow and got back to work.

When completed, the three-room house will have a concrete floor, solid brick walls, a sheet metal roof, four windows, and a solid door. The family borrowed \$400 from Habitat for materials to get construction started. They have up to two years to pay back the loan and qualify for a second loan to build the remainder of the house, which will consist of two bedrooms, a sitting room, a bath and veranda.

In addition to funding the micro loan, Habitat provides technical support and supervises the construction. We were joined in the construction effort by members of a local cooperative that guarantees repayment of the loan. Eventually, the cooperative expects to build more than 30 homes in Nyamatardo, no small task in a country where close to half of the population lives on less than a dollar a day.



Youngsters watch construction of a Habitat for Humanity home for an impoverished Kenyan family. At first, the children were afraid to touch their white skinned visitors for fear they were anemic and would bleed to death. Photograph by Deidre Collins

Building brick houses to replace mud huts with dirt floors not only produces a more healthful environment free of bugs and rodents, it also helps children with their schoolwork. “For the first time, children can do their homework at a table next to a real window,” said Simon Nyabwengi, Habitat’s national director for Kenya. “Mud huts have no windows so it’s too dark to read comfortably.”

Our daily activities attracted a large group of curious Kenyans who watched as we worked side-by-side with members of the cooperative who stopped by to help. “It’s good for Kenyans to see the American women doing construction work,” explained Mukanzi, the project supervisor. “Traditionally, women here don’t do that kind of work, but there’s no reason they can’t.”

Children who lived nearby were initially shy and would run away if approached by volunteers. “They’re afraid

of you,” said Teresa Ombaba, a large, joyously spirited woman who is head of the local cooperative. “Your white skin looks so tender. They’re afraid you will bleed to death if they touch you.” The children were eventually won over by the chance to see themselves on the video viewfinders of cameras that were constantly pointed in their direction.

We ate lunch daily at the work site. The homeowner and friends did meal preparations with assistance each day from a Habitat volunteer. Food was generally very bland and almost always included small amounts of meat, a few vegetables, and large amounts of ugale, a tasteless, dumpling-like dish made from boiled corn.



Entire families live in tattered tents at a refugee camp in Maai Mahiu, Kenya. Habitat for Humanity is building clean, well-ventilated stone houses which are given to the refugees without cost.

All but one of our volunteers eventually developed gastrointestinal problems that inevitably led to quick trips to the on-site pit toilet. We were warned in advance to secure all personal belongings since keys, money, iPods, and even passports have disappeared into 30-foot-deep pits, never to be seen again.

While we blamed our stomach problems on vegetables and utensils rinsed in unboiled water from the river, our hosts were certain we were getting sick from the purified, bottled water we brought with us from Nairobi. Fortunately, no one’s distress lasted more than a day.

On our way back to Nairobi, we spent a day building homes at Maai Mahiu, a dry, dusty refugee camp for thousands of families who were forced out of their homes by violence that erupted after the 2007 elections. Most of the refugees live in tattered tents or improvised shelters. Habitat, however, is building simple stone houses without cost to families who have no means to pay anything and can only provide sweat equity. Each well-built house costs about \$2,200.

As much as we benefited from participating in the Habitat for Humanity Global Village Project, it’s probably our first and last “build.” The work is so physically demanding that we’ve decided to limit our support to financial contributions. To that end, we’re happy to report that our enthusiastic band of volunteers came home and quickly raised enough money from friends and families to build at least nine homes.

Photographs by Paul Jeschke unless otherwise noted.

Maasai Culture and Kenyan Wildlife Abound

By Anne Jeschke

Our main purpose in going to Kenya was to build houses for Habitat for Humanity. But being in Kenya and not visiting wildlife preserves would be unforgivable, so we planned a safari for the last few days. Happily, five of our Habitat friends decided to join us.

We wanted the profits from the safari to stay in Kenya, so we booked with a Maasai guide and campground via the Internet. Thus the profits went to the Maasai community and projects they are funding. The biggest of these projects is a new school and residence for young girls wanting to avoid genital mutilation and forced early marriage. It turns out that if you don't get your genitals cut up, no one wants to marry you anyway. So avoiding one saves you from the other.

We piled into a van in Nairobi, this time with a top that raises so you can stand and watch wildlife. The roads from Nairobi to the Maasai Mara reserve were far worse and far longer than those to the Habitat site. We jounced along for hours, over the mountains and across the enormous Rift Valley. We eventually came to our camp, with large permanent tents containing comfy full sized beds. Meals were in a covered but open dining area, provided by a former sushi chef. It was the best food we had in Kenya! Solar showers kept us clean, and flush toilets provided added luxury.

Our guide, Nelson Reiyia, is a local man whose mother and grandmother and multiple other relatives live no more than a mile from the camp. They are Maasai, a polygamous tribe that believes all cattle in the world are theirs. Nelson says it can cause problems when they rescue cattle from someone who isn't Maasai and who thinks they own the cattle.



Elephant family out for a stroll

Nelson is university educated—due to his inattentiveness as a shepherd. When he was 11 years old Nelson's family job was to take the goats to pasture, watch them all day, and bring them home. One day Nelson returned with one goat missing. For punishment his father told him he was going to be sent away to school! That changed Nelson's entire life.

We were invited into Nelson's family home, and served an alcoholic tea. Their homes are made of sticks and cow dung, are about 10 feet by 10 feet, have a fire pit in the center, a dirt floor, and sleep heaven knows how many people.

Johnston, our driver, and Nelson, made quite a pair. Somehow they managed to show us nearly every possible animal and bird in the reserve. These animals



Maasai and geckos share a love of bright colors.



Four cubs enjoy a tasty breakfast.



Peekaboo friend

wander through the 500-square-mile park, while vans of sightseeing tourists travel dirt roads looking for and at them. The animals are quite comfortable with the vans, but we were told never to get out. You are only safe inside the van.

Johnston and Nelson managed to show us amazing sights and at the same time to tell us lots of stories and lots of information about the Maasai. Wrapped in brightly colored red and orange cloths, the Maasai are primarily shepherds to their cattle, goats, and sheep. Maasai babies are raised entirely on animal fat for the first two years. And they thrive! Perhaps they haven't heard of cholesterol. While in Kisii, someone in their fifties was considered old, among the Maasai one commonly sees 80-year-old great grandmothers sitting on the ground in front of the huts.

Our first day on safari we saw four of the so-called Big Five: water buffalo, elephant, rhino, and leopard. The last, the lion, we saw the next day. But we didn't just see lions and lionesses—we saw them in families, in teenage groups, nursing their young, and even mating! For all these we were just feet away, close but safe, in our van.

We watched as zebras rubbed necks with each other, as lionesses licked each other in greeting, and licked each other's cubs as well! Giraffes and elephants traveled with their young, in family groups. Everywhere were families, caring for each other, guarding and leading their young, showing affection. It was stunningly clear that in the wild these animals have strong personal and familial relationships. I began to wonder if these so called 'wild animals' have more respect for families than we humans sometimes have.



Nelson's grandmother and relatives outside the family home

By the third day we were watching crocodiles and hippos in the river, wildebeests grazing on the plain, multicolored geckos crawling among the debris, gorgeous colobus monkeys hanging from the branches, crowned cranes gracefully walking across the plain. We would think there couldn't possibly be anything we hadn't seen, and a new species would appear. Even the elusive black rhino and the cheetah made a special appearance for us.

On our last evening Nelson hosted a bush barbecue in the hills above our camp. We sat around the huge campfire drinking our Tusker beer and watching the sun set over the reserve. We chatted one last time with our Maasai friends and our Habitat friends. How could this trip have been any better?!

For more information, go to www.olderpoimaracamp.com



Maasai men prove virility by high jumping - and Paul makes the effort.

Photographs by Anne and Paul Jeschke

COMMUNITY INFO

WEEKLY IN MUIR BEACH

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

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tao Flow Yoga 6:30 - 8:00 pm Taylor's zendo, 1821 Shoreline Hwy. Instructor: Laura Calhoun - lauracalhounart@gmail.com 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tai-chi - 8:00 - 9:00 am Bistro - 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	SUNDAY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 10:00 - 11:30 am



Photograph by Julie Smith

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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