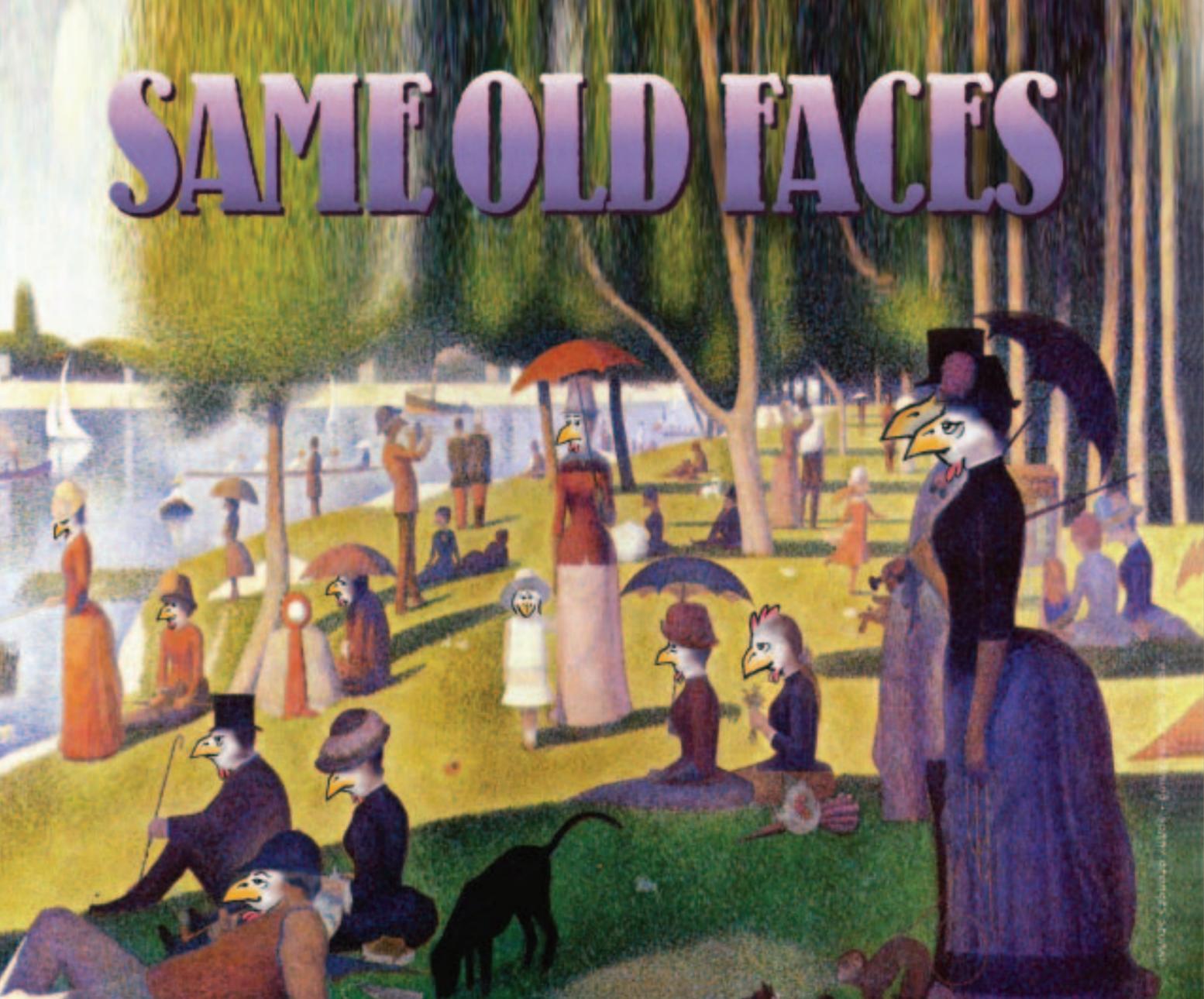


SAME OLD FACES



WELCOME BACK TO THE

MUIR BEACH VOLUNTEER FIREMEN'S BBQ

MEMORIAL DAY WEEKEND **SUNDAY MAY 30, 2010** FROM NOON UNTIL FIVE
AT THE MUIR BEACH PICNIC GROUNDS ON MUIR WOODS ROAD • PARKING IS LIMITED, SO PLEASE CARPOOL

YOUR MINIMUM DONATION OF **\$20 PER CAR** GETS YOU A PLACE TO PARK...
... PLUS \$10 WORTH OF COUPONS TO SPEND ON
A GREAT BARBECUED CHICKEN DINNER, A DRINK, A T-SHIRT, OR WHATEVER

PARK SERVICE REGS PERMIT ALCOHOL PURCHASED ON-SITE ONLY... NO B.Y.O.B

THIS IS A FUNDRAISER. ALL PROCEEDS BENEFIT THE MUIR BEACH VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPT. • SPONSORED BY THE MUIR BEACH VOLUNTEER FIREMAN'S ASSM.

BEACHCOMBER

Muir Beach Neighborhood News
Issue 249 May 2010



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FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Reader:
I am pleased to report that the *Beachcomber* has been presented the Impression Silver Award in printing by the San Francisco Club of Litho and Printing House Craftsmen for “superb craftsmanship in the production of the October 2009 *Beachcomber*.” The awards ceremony took place on April 8th and details will follow in the July issue.

Congratulations to the artists, writers, and photographers who make the Muir Beach magazine possible. A special thanks to Dave Semling of Mill Valley Services who does a great job of printing the *Beachcomber* and generously provides complimentary color covers. Congratulations, Dave, on this printing award of excellence. And this award belongs to Dee Turman in such a major way for her beautiful graphic design work.

Letters to the Editor

[Re: March 2010 issue]
Thanks so much for the great magazine. I really loved the many ways the community is coming together. Everything from Circle of Women to the Quilter’s meeting, CSD update and stories about Kenya and Tanzania were great reading. I like all the photos from Halloween and the Quilters Holiday Arts Fair, as they help community members get to know each other and appreciate each other’s creativity. Your magazine is helping create a healthy community.

—Bob Flasher, Marin Community Program Manager,
Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy

Next issue: July 2010 Submissions Deadline: June 14, 2010

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Front Cover Painting by Bernard Halliwell
 “Green Gulch Apples” Plein-air oil, 8” x 10”
Back Cover Poster by Bryce Browning
 “Same Old Faces” 8.5” x 11”

UPFRONT



**Alena and Will Koza
are pleased to welcome**

Phoebe Alexandria Koza

Born on January 17, 2010 at 11:35 pm
Weighing 6 pounds, 11 ounces and 20 inches long

Phoebe Alexandria Koza
Photograph by Will Koza



Upcoming Exhibitions at Robert Allen Fine Art

6 APRIL – 27 MAY 2010

Works on Paper: Group Show: Gallery Artists Including:

Susan Adame, Sharron Bliss, Larry Gray, Henry Isaacs,
John Maxon, Victoria Ryan, Connie Smith Siegel, Sylvia
Verange, Kazuko Watanabe, and others.

ROBERT ALLEN FINE ART
301 Caledonia Street
Sausalito, CA 94965
415-331-2800
robertallenfineart.com

Monday – Friday, 10 am – 5 pm
Open to the public. No fee.

“White Building, 2008” painting by Victoria Ryan. Pastel on Paper, 23” x 31”
Photograph by Victoria Ryan



Wanted: Weekday Weed Whompers and Weekend Weed Warriors

By Bob Flasher, Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy

Are you short on weeds in your own yard? Are you looking for opportunities to pull weeds in other yards, but are afraid of asking your neighbors? One possible solution to this common dilemma is to volunteer time pulling weeds one day a week (or month) for the next four months around the Muir Beach tidal lagoon.

We need all the help we can get to remove invasive exotics so they don’t overrun the 22,000 young native plants that were planted this winter. This could function similarly to the Quilters, who work together while chatting. A small group of weed-weary neighbors could join each other to chat while kicking some butt on exotic plants in the National Park. If you are interested in becoming part of this illustrious team, first contact neighbors to form a group with whom you want to spend time, and then email Flash at flash@parksconservancy.org. I will supply you with gloves, tools, praise, and encouragement.

Summer Work Wanted

By Eli Pearlman

I will be home from college and looking for summer work as of June 15th. I am available to take care of your kid(s) Monday through Friday. I have my Red Cross certification, a driver’s license, and plenty of experience taking care of Tiana my little sister (who will be in camp this summer), and other kids from the ages of four to eleven or twelve years old. I know the local resources, i.e., library programs, discovery museum, miniature golf course, local swimming pools, as well as of course Muir Beach, and Stinson Beach. I am willing to commit to caring for your child on a day-to-day, week-to-week basis, or for the entire summer (I will be going away for one week in July most likely.). I have local and ‘over the hill’ references. I am responsible, love sports, love to run around as well as read stories, build forts, or any other creative stuff your kids may like to do. If you are interested in signing up for a week, a month, or an entire summer, email me at eliprophet17@yahoo.com or call me at 415-259-8977.

“Love Letters,” by A. R. Gurney A Fundraiser for Women and Girls of the DRC

By Lonna Richmond

On February 13, 2010, at 4 p.m. at the Community Center, we held a benefit for the women and girls of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). I was told that this was the first benefit for women ever held in Muir Beach, so it was heartwarming to see 50+ people turn out to support such an important cause—violence against women and girls in the DRC. *New York Times* journalist Nicholas D. Kristof calls the DRC (specifically eastern Congo) “the world capital of murder, rape, and mutilation.” John Holmes, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs of the United Nations, says, “The sexual violence in Congo is the worst in the world...The sheer numbers, the wholesale brutality, the culture of impunity—it’s appalling.”

After attending a lecture last year on the crisis in the DRC, my idea was to do some kind of fundraiser. I began speaking with people in the community and found that Lisa Eigsti’s New Year’s resolution was to act again (she had done so in college) and David Piel had a lot of experience. He was on Broadway. Yes, New York City’s Broadway! And so we decided to put on a play. This beautiful play, “Love Letters,” is an



David Piel and Lisa Eigsti perform the play “Love Letters” as a fundraiser to benefit the women and girls of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).
Photograph by Linda Gibbs

exchange of letters between two lifelong friends, Melissa (played by Lisa) and Andy (played by David). Lisa and David did such an outstanding job of acting that at the end of their performance there were many teary-eyed people in the audience. I heard from many of those in attendance how moved they were. So if you missed this, well, you missed a wonderful afternoon of theatre.

Several women in Muir Beach had recently come together to talk about doing fundraisers for causes we believe in, and since I already had “Love Letters” in the works, we treated it like our first group effort. These generous women (Janice Kubuta, Charlene Modena, Laura Van Amburgh, Vilija Karalius, and Joy Perrin) graciously volunteered to bring food, which was beautifully presented and heartily enjoyed. The fine wine was donated by Lisa’s neighbors, Nikola Tede and Joseph Ferraro, from their family vineyard. Our total proceeds came to \$1,222.00 and V-Day’s City of Joy was the recipient.

In the words of Eve Ensler, founder of V-Day: “The City of Joy is a literal place, a pastoral community in Bukavu, DRC, where women survivors of gender



A group of Muir Beach women lovingly prepared and presented plates of food.
Photograph by Joy Perrin



The audience is captivated by a wonderful afternoon of theater at the Community Center.
Photograph by Joy Perrin



Lisa Eigsti, beaming, after a job well done, with flowers from her husband, Brad.
Photograph by Linda Gibbs

violence will be supported, healed, and trained to be the next leaders of the DRC, but it is also a concept, a decision, a movement to end violence against women and girls. We are launching the City of Joy in the DRC as a call to end violence against women and girls everywhere. Building the City of Joy means modeling a process of change that is directed by the women on the ground, conceived by the women on the ground, and fulfilled by the women on the ground. An ideology which knows that grassroots women are the major sources of change and inspiration and must direct the

future of their countries from Congo to New Orleans to Haiti. Building the City of Joy means everyone working together, providing resources, energy, and support for grassroots women so they can fulfill their destinies.”

All of us could really make a difference by taking the time to write an email or make a phone call, to support women worldwide and to demand conflict free electronics. Here are some important sites:

www.whitehouse.gov/contact

U.S. based legislation you should know about:

- IVAWA (Int’l Violence Against Women Act), S.2982, HR.4594
- *Congo Conflict Minerals Act of 2009, S.891, HR.4128
- Democratic Republic of the Congo Relief, Security and Democracy Promotion Act of 2006, S.2125 (S.Res. 713), HR.1227

www.vday.org

www.womenthrive.org

www.raisehopeforcongo.org

www.enoughproject.org

* Conflict minerals are a crucial part of the war in Congo. The DRC is the third largest country in Africa and is among the six most resource-rich countries worldwide. A UN panel of experts said in 2001, “The conflict in the DRC has become mainly about access, control, and trade of five key mineral resources: coltan, diamonds, copper, cobalt, and gold.” The Congo is home to one third of the world’s cassiterite (a derivative of tin ore used in circuitry) and 64%-80% of the world’s coltan (an ore rich in tantalum, a rare and extremely valuable metal used in cell phones, DVD players, computers, digital cameras, video games, etc.) Militias earn an estimated \$144 million each year by trading conflict minerals and with the money they buy handguns, hand grenades, machine guns, etc. The tool of choice used to gain access to control of these mines is sexual violence—to scare and intimidate the local population, to bring a community to its knees. Women are the center of their communities so using rape and humiliation is a very effective means of gaining control. Thus the term conflict minerals. It’s all about money, power, and control.

Meet Your Neighbors: Bob Bowyer and Renee Boeche

By Laurie Piel

In the last issue of the *Beachcomber* we started a new column called "Meet Your Neighbors." This edition features Bob Bowyer and Renee Boeche. If you have any question of who this couple is, they are the caveman and girl band singer couple that held the incredible Halloween Party highlighted in the last *Beachcomber*.

Renee and Bob met as cadaver partners in medical school in Chicago. You think reading that statement feels strange... try writing it. Their love of work in the emergency room wove its magic and they fell in love with each other. Bob said it succinctly, "We both like the challenge of diagnosing and treating acutely ill patients. As emergency room doctors we have tremendous power and responsibility to order tests and quickly start treatment for the entire cross section of our community." A short list of their work took my breath away and includes: delivering babies, diagnosing and initiating treatment of heart attacks, strokes, infections, and organ failures; casting broken bones, suturing cuts, draining abscesses, and diagnosing the mentally ill. The cross section of people in the emergency room represents the scope of humanity. As Bob says, "They have taken care of a drug addict and his overdose in one room, while caring for a politician in another, and suturing a child's first chin laceration all at the same time." Amazing!



On a Mexican beach, the Boeche/Bowyers show us Bret's version of the classic Coppertone ad. From left, Bryce, Renee, Bret, Bob, and Ian.
Photograph by Bob Bowyer

Bob spent his residency in Jacksonville, Florida and Renee spent hers in El Paso, Texas. After years of 12-hour shifts, 22 out of every 30 days, and then moonlighting to pay the bills, they took a well-deserved year off to travel the world. In 1991 following their residencies, they married and moved to Muir Beach. They have three boys, Bryce, age 16, and



Geared up for zip-line in Thailand, from left, Ian, Renee, Bob, Bret, and Bryce.

Bret and Ian, both 13-years-old. They are approaching their twentieth year in Muir Beach. Their home on Seacape was their first... I don't blame them. I would never leave that home either. What a great place to raise kids as they say "in a great community that really cares."



Rafting near the Burma border, from left, Bryce, Renee, Ian, Bret, and Bob.

When asked about their Halloween Party Bob said, "Our passion for giving parties started with my parents who would periodically give large parties similar to ours. Renee and I feel it is a great tradition and gift to our friends and neighbors to continue it in our household. This year our party was especially rewarding in that all our new neighbors not only had a chance to dance, eat, and laugh together, but also to interact with our local resident characters." He continued, "At this point I cannot imagine putting on another party, but I know this sentiment sounds a lot like every new mother shortly after giving birth. I'm sure more parties will somehow occur in the future."

I know I vote for more!

What About Barack Obama?

By Gerry Pearlman

What about Barack Obama, our new President, after one year as head of the most powerful nation on earth?

Well for one thing it is clear that he is quite different from his immediate predecessor, George W. Bush, in one respect. Bush came into office, especially after being reelected, feeling he had a mandate to expend his "political capital." By this phrase he meant whatever political support had propelled him into a second term, entitled him to go full speed ahead with whatever ideas, programs, perspectives he felt were the right ones to determine the future course of events for the country. Not only did he have popular support but he also had a friendly Supreme Court, Senate, and House of Representatives.

How then is Obama different? He had even more popular support and an even friendlier Congress. He may not have been able to depend on the Supreme Court as much as Bush, but with the right massaging of the swing vote factor, they probably wouldn't have been too much of an obstacle to any program he chose.

The problem, it seems, was that he did not have any strongly felt programs despite talking a good game during the campaign. Or, even if he did, that he was not the type to exercise power in a strong fashion like his immediate predecessor. Both of them had what is commonly referred to these days as "political capital," but whereas one seized the opportunity to spend it to excess, maybe even squander it, the other chose not to spend it at all.

Instead Obama chose "bipartisanship" which is to say compromising every inch of the way with those opposed to what he envisioned accomplishing. It was totally opposite from the Bush attitude of "if you are not with us, you are against us."

So how does the attitude or choice of non-confrontation inform and elucidate the present miasma of political discourse after one year in office? Well for one thing it raises some interesting questions about the significance of racial and class identity with regard to politics and everything else.

Everyone was impressed, as well they should have been, that America had finally validated its cherished notion of equality by electing an African American to its highest office. Not quite as pure a triumph as one could imagine, since Obama was after all half white, but nonetheless a significant achievement in the face of a rather poor historical record to that point. Many were lulled into the belief that overcoming the racial barrier would be enough to carry forward every other progressive hope for greater

economic and social justice.

But while Bush proved himself to be very strong in championing a disastrous ideology that would almost bankrupt the country, Obama proved himself too weak to change the course he inherited and come up with a new direction.

Why, one has to ask when the opportunity was there, the need was there, and the country was practically begging for a change, was it not seized upon? If character is destiny, as some have claimed, I believe the answer lies in the character of our last two presidents. Bush, Jr. came from a class background of wealth and privilege. He did not have to overcome many obstacles to get what he wanted. In fact I would venture that he felt entitled to any success that befell him. Not coming from an environment where a feeling of scarcity prevails gives one an entirely different perspective on how opportunity is regarded. Life has not been that difficult to begin with so what's the big deal? Taking a chance is a lot easier when you have nowhere to fall but up.

So it becomes the content of the character that determines, not necessarily the outcome, but a willingness to undertake a course of action. Roosevelt for example, coming from the same privileged background, could much more easily adapt a program of radical change known as the "New Deal."

Whereas Obama coming from a background where scarcity and uncertainty are the prevalent modalities might be much less likely to take a strong stance. The unfamiliarity with the privileged position is more likely to incline him to compromise and to try to win over the opposition by watering down anything likely to cause a disturbance. It is like he is saying, "Look I'm not so different from you after all, so I'm sure we can work this out somehow."

Of course just as coming from a different class background may have informed their ability to act differently in the case of Obama and Bush, it does not follow that it is an ironclad law that it be so. Many of our most notable dictators have risen from the most humble of origins. But I have to say that the privileged class background of someone like Bush made it much easier for him to spend his political capital in ways he saw fit, and more difficult for someone with Obama's background who has a lot more to prove about who he is. Caution is more likely to be the governing principle—with risk taking, if not entirely eliminated, then reduced to a minimum.

Then again there is the common fallacy that the choice of any individual is somehow going to produce the changes necessary to restore the health of the body politic. No one individual can succeed in changing the course of events in the face of a system flawed in so many ways. But the

electorate never loses hope in a savior despite endless disappointments. But here again the force of character comes into play where the strength born of privilege will be more willing to confront obstacles head on, and a more cautious disposition more likely to avoid conflict and confrontation.

In the end it is clear that those individuals coming from the position of wealth and privilege are more likely to spend their political capital in any matter that suits them, while those coming from a scarcity position are more likely to save their political capital for a rainy day.

Africa's World War, Congo, the Rwandan Genocide, and the Making of a Continental Catastrophe, By Gérard Prunier

Reviewed by Gerry Pearlman

A friend and former colleague of mine has written an impressive tome on the trials and tribulations of the Congo region—in particular the conflagration that took place when ten African countries dispatched troops there in 1998, hence the sobriquet “world war.”

Of course the troubles started long before the invasion with the major thrust stemming from the pursuit of the refugees fleeing from the Rwandan genocide who had taken up residence in the neighboring Congo.

And of course one can go further back, and further back again, to a chain of events, which while not being strictly causal in nature, certainly may be said to have set the stage for the unfolding of what transpired later.

So why not go all the way back to the beginning of the twentieth century and vying imperial ambitions of western nations and their need for raw materials and expanding markets? Did anything else leave so significant a determinant for what would eventually happen in Africa?

Perhaps one other thing, which while a separate phenomenon, is still very much a part of colonial empire developments, and that is the Cold War ideology that characterized the latter half of the twentieth century.

Prunier's analysis concentrates on what happened as a result of the Rwandan genocide's catalytic influence on future events. He is at pains to distinguish between a direct causal relationship and a catalyst—a somewhat academic distinction whereby a “cause” is something in and of itself while a “catalyst” merely ignites an already smoldering ash heap into a full-scale conflagration.

I'm not sure if such fine distinctions make much of a difference when it comes down to understanding what happened as a result of the event's historical effect. It may be firmer ground to stand on than speculating on what might have happened had things gone in a different direction driven by other decisions and outcomes. While Prunier is quite clear about the role Cold War ideology played in determining African history after independence from colonial hegemony and while its significance is not downplayed, I'm not convinced its counterproductive

influence is fully appreciated.

Not only Africa suffered the results of the protracted Cold War conflict informing every aspect of existence in the last half of the twentieth century, but the rest of the globe as well. The fact that U.S. and Soviet leaders believed themselves to represent superior ways of organizing human existence played itself out all over the world with disastrous consequences for all concerned. Indeed the “cold war” was far from cold in places like Africa, South America, and South East Asia. Cold for the two main protagonists perhaps, but quite hot everywhere else.

Melvyn P. Leffler's excellent chronicle of the Cold War, *For the Soul of Mankind: The United States, the Soviet Union, and the Cold War*, states:

The men in the Kremlin sincerely believed they were reconfiguring human society and eradicating human exploitation. By eliminating private property and a market place economy, they thought they could supplant human greed as the driving force behind human progress. Planning would replace the anarchy of the market place. Workers would no longer be at the mercy of their employers and oppressed people would no longer be subject to imperial domination. The trajectory of history envisioned the end of capitalism, universal justice, and the emancipation of mankind.

The men in the White House had a different version of how history would unfold. Their aim was to fashion a world order along the lines of democratic capitalism. They wanted people to be free and markets to be open. Political parties should compete for power in governments that represented their citizenry. Individual rights and private property were the keys to human advancement and personal opportunity.

By now in Africa as well as in many other places the failure of both these ideologies to deliver on their promises should be obvious. While the failures of central planning are more obvious due to the transparencies of Stalin's

brutality and what was clearly a lower standard of living in the Soviet Union, the failure of the free market approach is more disguised. In the expense of spirit generated by unbridled capitalism—somehow the brutality of all the petty tyrants in the modern world escapes association with free market capitalism, as well as the unprecedented levels of stress that are undeniably part and parcel of the free market open society approach.

What happened in Africa is well known through the efforts of scholars like Prunier, but what might have happened with a more enlightened approach? What if the colonial powers from the very beginning entered the territory under their influence in a spirit of cooperation instead of exploitation? What if they made genuine efforts to bring their colonies up to the same level of development as themselves, and given them the tools to forge a citizenry that did not need to emigrate to the mother country to seek the opportunity denied them in their own? Would independence even have been necessary then?

What would have been the fate of the Congo had Patrice Lumumba not been murdered by Belgian government forces and probably a complicit CIA?

In the end the tragedies of Africa so laboriously chronicled by Prunier are no different than tragedies elsewhere in the world at different times. Genocide took place before Rwanda, continues to take place today with only variations of degree, and most probably will continue to occur as long as the mass of humanity continues to lead lives of quiet desperation.

The triumph of the “free market” approach does not warrant any celebration. The inadequacies of both Cold War ideologies are what must be acknowledged rather than crowing about the victory of one over the other. Neither the centralized planning efforts of the Soviets or the free market posturing of the Americans represent the best direction for the future of mankind. What is necessary now is to forge an alliance of these ideologies that features the best elements of both systems.

There is a delicate balance between the need for government regulation and the need for freedom that allows for the preservation of the space needed to expand opportunity and at the same time recognize that freedom is the recognition of necessity.

Work Party On!

By Linda Gibbs



Thanks to the generosity of contractor and neighbor Jon Rauh, the Muir Beach Volleyball Court has 50 yards of new sand, smoothed down and ready for Thursday night volleyball.

On an overcast Sunday afternoon in March, Chris Gove, Brad Eigsti, Aran Moore, and Aran Collier held a work party at the volleyball court on Muir Woods Road. Their goal was to refinish the court with the new sand, do some weeding and weed wacking around the site, eat some burgers grilled by Collier, and play a couple games of volleyball on the new court.

Volleyball participants play year-round in all kinds of weather, often running the games until midnight at the lighted court across the creek from the BBQ grounds. The games are open to everyone. Families and kids are welcome.

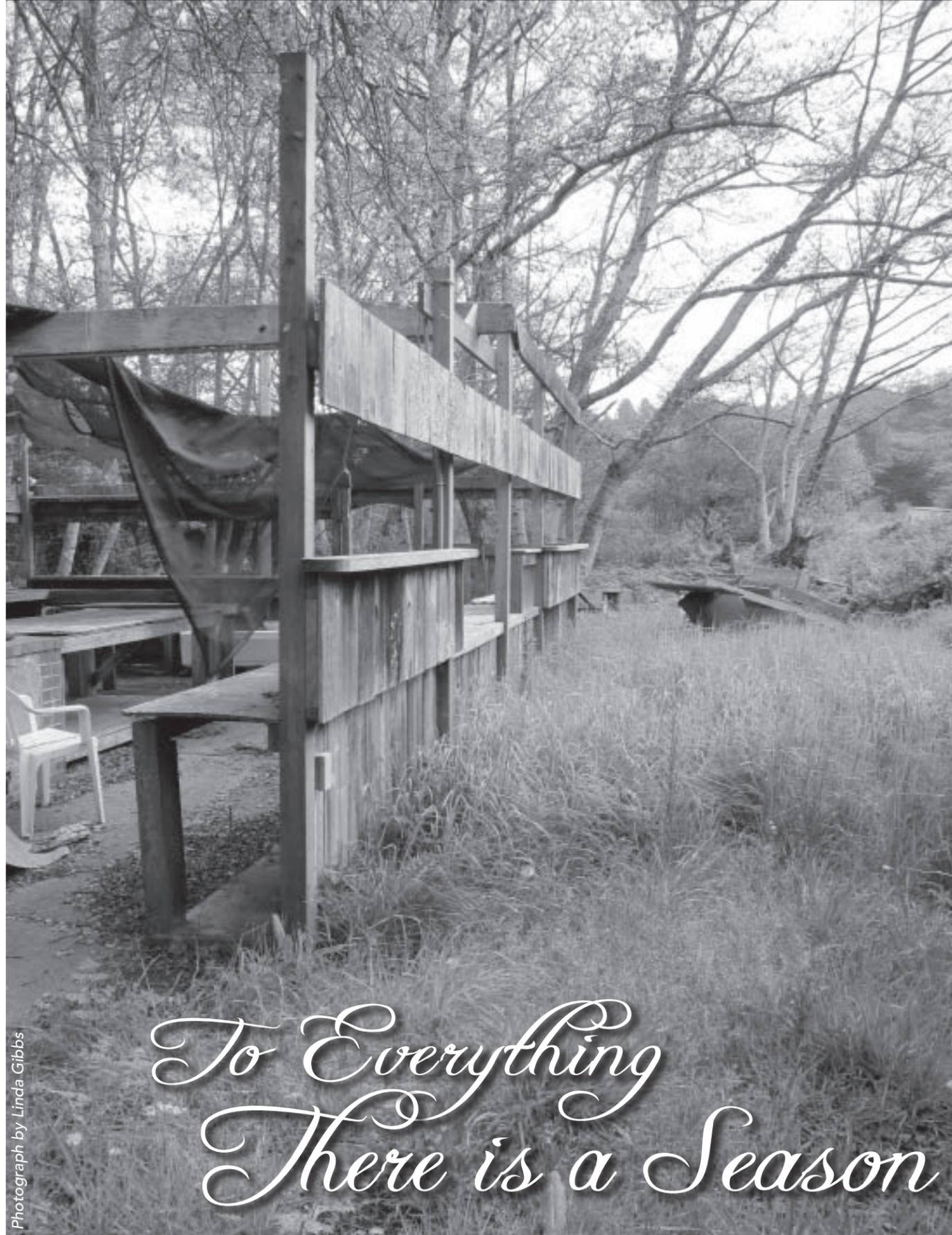
“Skill level doesn't matter,” Chris Gove said. “Beginners are welcome. We will teach anyone how to play.”

For more information, contact Chris Gove at cgove@yahoo.com.



Using the CSD's tracked loader, Chris Gove smooths out the freshly sanded volleyball court.

Photographs by Linda Gibbs



Photograph by Linda Gibbs

*To Everything
There is a Season*

Barbecue Time is Volunteer Time!

By Anne Jeschke

Frenzied Muir Beach volunteers are already working on behalf of the annual Memorial Day Barbecue benefiting our volunteer fire department. If you aren't one of the volunteers, you are missing a lot of fun!

First off are the Saturday preparations throughout the month of May. You'll receive a note in your mailbox with exact times and needs for volunteers. There is cleanup work, grass and weed cutting, repair to aging structures, and sometimes even new structures to be built.

Lunch is served for anyone who shows up, and a wonderful spirit of cooperation develops as everyone works together. If you have only an hour, or if you have all day, bring your clippers, hammer, weed eater, gloves, and enthusiasm. These Saturdays are the major preparation for the barbecue, and we need you!

Before May 30th, the actual day of the barbecue, each person chairing a committee looks for volunteers to fill the necessary time slots. If you like to work at the food booth, don't wait for Erin Pinto to call you. Surprise her

and e-mail her, asking if she needs you for the early or the later period of the day.

Al Kile runs the entry gate, and heads one of the best-organized groups at the barbecue. He'd be thrilled if you called and offered to help. The Ticket Sales booths are overseen by Greg Ketchum. We have expanded the booths to keep lines short. E-mail Greg and ask to take an early or late shift.

Laura Van Amburgh has assumed responsibility for the cleanup early Monday morning. If you want to enjoy the day of the barbecue relaxing with friends, call Laura to volunteer to help with cleanup on Monday. Come from 9 am until noon, work fast, and move on to the rest of your holiday activities.

Other committees are in need as well. There are shifts for parking, beer and wine, shirts and hats, desserts and drinks, nachos, trash cleanup throughout the day, and more. If in doubt, call or e-mail Anne Jeschke, volunteer coordinator—388-2278 or ajeschke@aol.com. I'll be glad to send you where you will be most needed.

Don't miss the best part of the barbecue—volunteering with your friends and neighbors!

Get Your Dog Stuff at the Barbecue

By Kathy Sward

That dog just keeps on kickin' around, and we all want more of him; seems we just can't get enough. So start thinking about what you need for all your best friends and for yourself, and come see what we've got to offer on Barbecue Day. Don't yet know what surprises we'll have, but there'll surely be one or two. And remember, all the proceeds are one of the major ways we fund the Fire Department's many ongoing expenses.



Linda Gibbs, sporting the classic beret with the Muir Beach dog running around its band, is thrilled with the mocha-colored shirt she picked for her husband, David Leivick. "But come on you two, get the shirts up on those empty shelves—customers will soon be storming the booth for goods."



Kathy Sward and Barbara Herwitz, in the kids' section, are ready to show off the many items available for newborn babies all the way to hoods and ball caps for big kids.



Outi Onorato modeling our famous beret—better buy several as they make wonderful gifts.

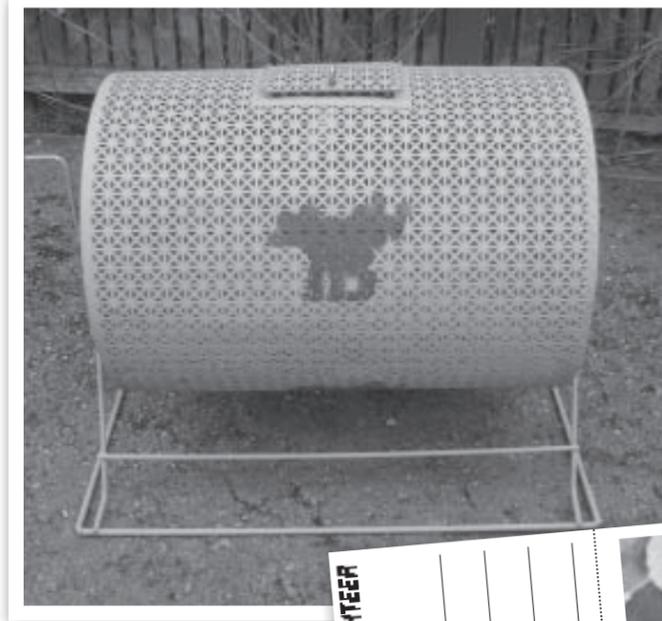
Photographs by Julie Smith

Everyone's A Winner

By Debra Allen

Shortly, your raffle books of 25 tickets will be in your boxes. You'll have 100 opportunities to win some great prizes, so please consider buying the tickets (still only \$1.00 each), and even calling me in order to purchase more! Also, if you're able to donate a new item or gift certificate to become a prize, that would be fantastic, but I'll just need to know before the BBQ. Here is the preliminary prize list, and may you win something wonderful!

—Debra Allen (415) 279-3751 dallen@fhallen.com



Help fill the BBQ Raffle drum by purchasing raffle tickets at \$1.00 each. Support your local volunteer fire department! Photograph by Thomas Allen



Raffle ticket by Bryce Browning

Muir Beach Volunteer Fire Department 2010 Raffle Prizes (as of 4/1/10)

PLACES TO STAY

1. Two nights at the Pelican Inn, Muir Beach!
2. One night's stay at The Lodge at Cavallo Point, Sausalito, \$336.
3. A night at The Sandpiper, Stinson Beach
4. A stay at the Guest House at Green Gulch Farm, Zen Center, Muir Beach

THINGS TO DO

5. Giants Baseball Tickets for two from Jon Rauh
6. Movie Passes for ten to Cinemark Theaters
7. A 2-hr. Art Tour of di Rosa for 4, Napa, \$60.
8. Lift Ticket Vouchers for two to Sugar Bowl, Tahoe
9. Tickets to a Play at the Berkeley Rep, \$102.
10. Free game passes for ten at Presidio Bowl, SF, \$70.
11. Private & Group Dance Lessons at Dance Arts Studios, San Rafael, \$275.

12. Admission vouchers for four to SF Conservatory of Flowers
13. Tickets to Big City Improv for four, San Francisco
14. Tickets for 4 to see *The Middle Ages* by Ross Valley Players, Ross, \$100.
15. The folks at The Fillmore Jazz Festival are putting together a "cool package" for you while at their festival!
16. VIP passes for two & a DVD (*Battle Cam*) at Paintball Jungle, Amer. Canyon
17. Entry to a show at La Pena, for two, Berkeley, 30.
18. More free game passes for ten at Presidio Bowl, San Francisco, \$70.
19. Cabaret tickets to a Beach Blanket Babylon performance for two, SF
20. Concert tickets to the Marin Symphony for two, San Rafael, \$140.
21. Rounds of Mini Golf for four at Malibu Grand Prix, Redwood City, \$32.
22. Tickets to a play for two at Marin Shakespeare Co., San Rafael

23. A Family pass to The Harvest Festival at Slide Ranch, Muir Beach
24. Entry Passes for four to the Cal Academy of Sciences, SF
25. More Giants Baseball Tickets for two from Jon Rauh
26. DVDs and Salsa Lessons from Salsa Crazy, SF
27. Racing at Go Kart Racer, two gift cards, Burlingame, \$150.

BOOKS TO READ

28. *Dinosaur Odyssey* from author Scott Sampson
29. A Photo Book of Carmel, from the Stewarts
30. *Stillness* books and a Craniosacral Session by author Charles Ridley
31. *Home Work (hand built shelter)*, from Shelter Publishing
32. *Hiking Marin*, from Marin Trails Publishing
33. *The Recipe Club* book from Polhemus and Harper Collins Publishers, \$25.
34. A Book or two by author Norman Fisher
35. *Whistles, Smoke & Steam* book from author Pat Arrigoni
36. *Stretching*, from Shelter Publications
37. Travel Books (3) from Carousel Press, \$50.
38. A Wellness Prize Basket from Dr. Bill and Susy Stewart (incl. his book *Deep Medicine* and her Yoga classes)
39. *The Gardeners and Poultry Keepers Guide...* (reprint from an old London catalogue) and *The Septic System Owner's Manual*, from Shelter Pub., \$45.
40. *Drifters* from author Pam Longobardi
41. *The Trees of San Francisco* book from Pomegranate Press
42. *Builders of the Pacific Coast*, from Shelter Publishing
43. *Pelican Inn* book from author Charles Felix

ITEMS TO ENJOY

44. Graffiti Double Decker Duffle by Athalon from Debra Hendsch, \$140.
45. A Cowl and Fingerless Gloves knitted by Peggy Chiang
46. Stainless Bottles & sports tops from Earthlust & Marin Mountain Bike Maps from Bike Map Dude
47. Caribbean square Candle from Seaglow Candles
48. Wildflower Seeds from Created by Nature
49. Store Certificate to Two Neat (cards), Mill Valley, \$25.
50. Fire Extinguisher from Firemaster, \$50.
51. A Beach Towel and Magnet from the *Beachcomber* magazine of Muir Beach

52. Autographed Football from the SF 49ers (Mike Singletary), \$50.
53. Double Dog Bowl & Bone Place Mat from Toss Designs
54. Framed Water Color, *Nicasio*, by Ben Farnham, Sausalito, \$300.
55. Catalog Gift Card to Seaside Inspired, \$50.
56. More Stainless Bottles & sports tops from Earthlust & Marin Mountain Bike Maps from Bike Map Dude
57. Something Fantastic from Proof Lab (skate & surf store), Tam Valley
58. Apple Body Products Kit from Juice Beauty
59. Wooden Wall Art with Words from Sugarboo Designs, \$80.
60. Three Linen Pillows w/Nautical Flag Themes, from Coastal Cushions, \$135.
61. Hemp Hats for toddlers in a Hemp Bag from Earthlust
62. Greeting Cards made by Joy Perrin
63. A Poster from Robert Allen Fine Art and Sausalito Picture Framing, \$250.
64. A ceramic piece by Lea Wood

FOOD/DRINK TO PARTAKE

65. Brunch at the Parkside Café, Stinson, from David Leivick & Linda Gibbs, \$50.
66. Certificate for *Lynn's Trio* (Blue Cheeses) from Pt. Reyes Farmstead Cheese
67. Certificate for food at Champagne French Bakery, \$50.
68. Ginger Peach Tea & Jam Gift Set from The Republic of Tea
69. A Basket of Assorted Breadsticks & Goodies from Judy's Breadsticks, \$50.
70. A three-pack of Cabernet Sauvignon by B Wise Vineyard in Sonoma, from Bethany Villere and Kent Andrews!
71. Lunch at Saylor's, Sausalito for \$25.
72. Something wonderful from Mighty Leaf Tea Company
73. Basket of Muir Beach Jellies & Goodies, by Julie Smith
74. Dinner at Servinos, Tiburon for \$75.
75. Another Certificate to Champagne French Bakery, \$50.
76. World Renown Rum Cakes made locally
77. Gift card to Soul Food, San Rafael, \$50.
78. Another Ginger Peach Tea & Jam Gift Set from The Republic of Tea
79. A Basket of Chocolate from Ghirardelli, \$\$!
80. Magnum of 2007 TR Elliott Russian River Valley Pinot Noir, Single Barrel Cuvee, from Ted Elliott

MUIR BEACH VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT



MBVFD Incident Log
Compiled by Paul Jeschke

January 18, 1:15 pm
Muir Woods
Medical assistance at café to teenager complaining of hypothermia.

January 20, 7:35 am
Muir Beach
Electric wires on Highway 1 due to fallen trees. PG&E notified.

January 31, 4:00 pm
Muir Beach
Report of person in water south of Muir Beach. Coast Guard alerted.

February 3, 8:55 pm
Muir Beach
Report of wires down at intersection of Seacape and Highway 1. Cancelled.

February 13, 2:00 pm
Green Gulch
Car over side on Highway 1¼ mile uphill from Green Gulch driveway. Car and driver plunged 80 feet down to a soft landing in poison oak and coastal scrub. No injuries.

February 15, 1:15 pm
Steep Ravine Trail
Eighty-one-year-old woman injured while hiking.

February 16, 7:30 pm
Muir Beach
Smoke reported near intersection of Sunset and Ahab. Cancelled.

February 17, 9:00 pm
Slide Ranch
Car over edge on Highway 1.

February 28, 2:45 pm
Muir Beach
Twenty-four-inch diameter pine fell across road on Pacific Way.

March 7, 2:30 pm
Muir Beach
Report of swimmer in distress. Returned to beach safely.

March 14, 3:40 pm
Muir Beach
Bicyclist felt chest pain and fell. Transported to Marin General Hospital.

March 22, 2:30 pm
Muir Woods
Assisted hiker with dislocated shoulder on Deer Park-Ben Johnson trail.

MUIR BEACH COMMUNITY SERVICES DISTRICT

New Upper Beach Water Tank Gets Green Light

Story by Brenda Kohn
Photographs and Captions by Julie Smith

On March 11, Steve Shaffer and Leighton Hills appeared at a public hearing before the Marin County Deputy Zoning Administrator (DZA) in support of the Muir Beach Community Services District's (CSD's) request for a Coastal Permit for the proposed new 200,000-gallon water tank, to be constructed adjacent to the existing tank near the Muir Beach Overlook. The proposed new seismically secure concrete and steel tank, which was approved by the CSD to replace the aging and rotting 45-year-old redwood tank in upper Muir Beach, will be approximately 22.2 feet in height and 45 feet in diameter. The tank will serve both upper and lower Muir Beach, and will be located approximately 10 feet from the existing tank, which will remain as a back-up reserve tank until it is no longer repairable or is destroyed by an earthquake.



The existing 45-year-old redwood water tank before work started. Berms surrounding the tank lessen its impact on the landscape.

MUIR BEACH COMMUNITY SERVICES DISTRICT



Huge backhoes removed tons of soil and boulders from the berm bordering the Overlook and piled it temporarily on top of the existing berm along Seacape. Here, the new tank's foundation is being roughed out.



This photo was taken from approximately the same place as the "Before picture." The gravel bed has been placed, leveled and compacted, ready for the tank to be built beginning in early April. The earthmovers will return in June to re-configure the area surrounding the tanks. When finished, the new tank will be partially buried and concealed by a new berm and landscaping.

Money to pay for the new construction will come from the existing reserve fund resulting from the \$300 per parcel special tax that Muir Beach property owners have been paying since the 1990s. An East Coast firm with experience in seismic issues has been approved to construct the new tank.

At the DZA hearing, much of the discussion concerned the fate of the existing tank, which the Sierra Club and the National Park Service hope will remain as an enhanced off-stream water supply source for the Muir Beach community during water dry periods, in order to protect endangered species in Redwood Creek. The CSD assured the DZA that it wants to retain the old tank for storage as long as the tank is structurally secure.

In the end, the DZA approved the permit application, subject to conditions addressing erosion control and the replacement of vegetation after completion of the project, which Steve Shaffer says have already been anticipated and addressed. Since there has been no public opposition to the project as of mid-March, it is anticipated that a Coastal Permit will be granted, and according to Steve Shaffer, the contractor will begin pouring concrete for the new tank on April 5th, with construction of the new state-of-the-art water tank completed within 60 days.

Water Capital Improvements Tax on June Ballot

By Brenda Kohn

At its regular March 3rd meeting, the Muir Beach Community Services District (CSD) held a noticed public hearing on Ordinance 2010-1, calling for renewal of the \$300 per parcel Water Capital Improvements Tax for another four years. This special tax, which goes into a separate fund from the monthly water consumption operational costs for running the water system, was established several years ago to fund needed upgrades and replacements to equipment and infrastructure that go beyond routine maintenance, such as new water tanks or replacing entire sections of service lines. By law, the measure must go on the County General Election Ballot every four years, and

requires a two-thirds majority vote by Muir Beach voters for approval.

At the public hearing, Steve Shaffer explained the measure and noted that the proposed—and much needed—new tank at Upper Muir Beach will deplete \$650,000 from the existing account. With no opposition to the measure from attendees at the public hearing, the CSD unanimously adopted the Ordinance, thereby placing it on the June 8th County General Election Ballot for residents to vote for or against.



In the Center of Things

By Laurie Piel

I'd like to start this column by correcting some misinformation about the "job" of Rental Coordinator. The correct "title" is Volunteer Rental Coordinator. In the past weeks, a number of people have said to me that they believed that I either was paid or received a percentage of what I invoice in rentals. Nothing could be further from the truth. I am not paid and all revenue goes directly to the CSD.

And now, on to the update.

The Fireman's Association has started the refurbishment of the old Children's Room into the new Office and the new Children's Room is also in the throes of its makeover.

In general it has been a quiet year for rentals (mostly due to the recession) and continues to look that way for the summer as well. My interest is piqued in regard to some inquiries I have received. One is for a painting workshop in September or October and one is for a workshop titled Sacred Practice. It focuses on individual and relationship growth practices and will include conscious games, deep connected movement, sound healing, breath work, and yoga.

April 10th brought the Quilters' Raffle and Cocktail Party... an event that was not to be missed. Food, wine, Steve Shaffer with his band Freddie & the Freeloaders providing the music and the stunning "Yukata Memories" quilt was up for grabs to a lucky raffle winner. Don't forget that the money they raise goes for good causes. Their Vision Project helps many and the capital improvements they have helped to fund over the years for the Community Center are well known.

As of now there are no outside events scheduled for May, despite the fact that May heralds the start of the wedding season. As of now, we have very few of them on the books this year. That darn recession again.

The documentary about Tanzania and climbing Kilimanjaro by Steve and Joanie Wynn, originally scheduled for March, has been postponed and is tentatively scheduled for May 15th. I read all about the expedition in the last edition of the *Beachcomber* and am looking forward to seeing the video.

July and August are as empty as May, so if you are planning an event, now is the time to put in your request.

The weekend of August 28th & 29th brings the 3rd Annual Garden Club Rummage Sale. Situated at the junction of the Muir Beach parking lot and Pacific Way, the Rummage Sale is the place to be to help the Garden Club fund their next improvements to the Community Center. So, save your white elephants and extraneous objects, be they d'art or otherwise, and bring them down to be sold. For more information please call Joey Groneman at 383-2898.

For those who may not know, the MBCC calendar is on the CSD website (www.muirbeachcsd.com) and is updated as often as possible. Although only a few months are up at a time, it should help you see what's going on at the Center.

Hope to see you at the Center this year!

Photograph by Julie Smith

NATURE

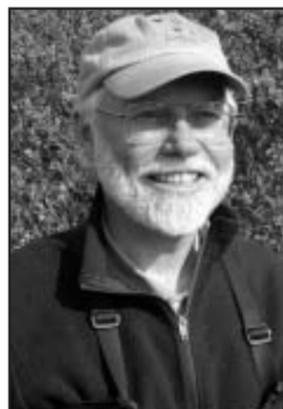


The Critter Report: What Is the Watershed?

By Dave MacKenzie

It is winter, and the solar heating in the North Pacific evaporates large quantities of moisture into the jetstream. In a few days, this humid air will condense into rain as it hits the slopes of Mt. Tamalpais. In the summer, thermals in the Central Valley of California rise and pull in moisture in the form of thick fog across the foothills of the coastal slopes at Muir Beach. At the high tides, the fog can flow in through the Golden Gate in a couple of hours.

In both winter and summer, the net result is that water is added to the valley system in which Muir Beach lies. Biologists and geologists refer to our valley as the Redwood Creek Watershed, since the main drainage for water back to the ocean is our own Redwood Creek, and its tributary Green Gulch Creek. The Redwood Creek Watershed drops from the top of Mt. Tamalpais (2571 feet above sea level) in the north, and from the ridges traversed by the northern leg of the Coast View Trail to



Dave MacKenzie
Photograph by
Bonnie MacKenzie



From Mt. Tamalpais to the coast at Muir Beach, the Redwood Creek Watershed area is about 10 square miles.

the north and west, from Panoramic Highway to the east, and from the Coyote Ridge Trail to the south. The western boundary is a bit more subjective, but from a biological point of view I like to consider it as going as far to sea as where marine life can still be observed from land. The water entering the ocean at Muir Beach has a major effect on local and migrating sea creatures (birds, fish, whales, etc.), so we need to include some ocean area. From the mountain to the coast, the entire watershed area is only about 10 square miles.

On its way down Mt. Tamalpais, the water deposited by the winter storms and summer fogs moves through various habitats known as life-zones as it drops to the sea. At the top of the mountain are mixed evergreen, oak, and chaparral. As our water flows downhill, it may encounter grasslands and coastal scrub (coyote bush, coastal sage) on the ridges and Redwood and Douglas Fir forests in the canyons. In the valleys, the water flows through a coastal riparian zone (Red Alder, several species of willows), eventually flowing into the freshwater marsh near the beach. A sandy beach zone, and finally the inshore ocean or pelagic zone, complete the journey. The water goes full cycle.

Our Redwood Creek Watershed is an excellent example of a biologically significant unit. It is in such a system that the interactions of plants, animals, and geology may best be studied. Unlike many urban areas of the world, the Redwood Creek Watershed has relatively few permanent human inhabitants, most of whom live in Muir Beach. The visitors to the Watershed find beautiful parklands, but those of us who live here also find home.

Thus, we are part of a fairly well defined, small, beautiful, and very fragile mini-ecosystem. As any species in the system, we and our visitors must live in balance to keep the system growing naturally. Humans are relative newcomers. The Redwood Creek Valley may have been formed 100 million years ago. Spotted Owls, Redwood forest, coyote bush-covered hills, alder lined streams, and beach areas have evolved from ancient times except for the last few

hundred years when the impact of humans was felt. The effects of logging, grazing, and agriculture are still affecting the land and its water today, even after those activities have stopped.

With all this in mind, here are some of the unique (non-human) species activities I have been aware of in our watershed recently:

Winter in Muir Beach did not have the large numbers of "eruption" species which we sometimes see. These include birds such as Varied Thrush, Red Crossbill, Short-Eared Owl, and Red-Breasted Nuthatches. All of these birds forage for food in our area if the northern winters are fierce and the food is scarce. Not true this year. Another sign of climate change?

River Otters are almost an everyday sighting now. At least one (rather large) otter has taken up residence in the front lagoon and forested area near the beach, and has been seen by lots of us; and this includes wandering up Pacific Way! Since otters often travel large distances over land (and sea), it isn't obvious where the young ones from the last few years have gone, but they may still be around.

Since we have an El Nino year in 2010, the sea life has also been a bit slow due to less krill and thus fewer small fish to eat. Probably correlated with this is the abysmally low number of Coho Salmon returning to Redwood Creek. At least there are still a few, and continuing restoration efforts may yet pay off.

Foxes remain common in Muir Beach, and are always fun to see. I have been experimenting with a wildlife camera in my backyard, and am seeing Gray Foxes and Striped Skunks almost every night. What else might show up is yet to be seen. Coyotes call almost every night, so I hope to photograph one soon. Bobcats seem to be relatively rare lately, but this may have to do with recent home construction. When I get some good shots I will share them!

When you read this, the Gray Whale migration will almost be over. Did you see any? If not, did you know that almost any day you can see two or more Harbor Porpoises from a high spot in Muir Beach? Scan the water (especially near edges of foam or a color change) for a few minutes and you will likely seem them on their fast rolls. They are fairly small, but live here all year around and always travel and feed in pairs. A flock of gulls circling the water may also tip you off to their location.

Every year and every season in our Redwood Creek Watershed is different. Enjoy and help preserve our special place.

The watershed portion of this story originally appeared in the May-August 1999 issue of the Beachcomber.

Illustration and photograph by Dave MacKenzie

When I Was Young, My Grandmother Told Me Stories

By Beth Nelson

When I was young, my grandmother told me stories. She had learnt this from her father, and he, from his father before him. She taught me these things, as a way of dreaming.

My grandmother said, "Write a letter a day, to make room for new imaginings." I observed my grandmother doing this, and soon I did this, too.

My grandmother was a traveller, and though she started late in life, she managed to see about half the world. I began to have letters from far off foreign places, new musings and imaginings.

I too became a traveler. Mail became a way, to mimic the landscape around me. I drew and painted on envelopes and letters, and in this way, they became like sending a part of me.

Sharing a landscape or town, even briefly, creates a link of intimacy, without our really knowing why. Letters with their capacity for history and love; "Wish you were here" calls out to us, a little postal love song, linking longing and landscape. I think the writing of letters gave form to my movement. Homeless and travelling, letters became evidence of my existence.

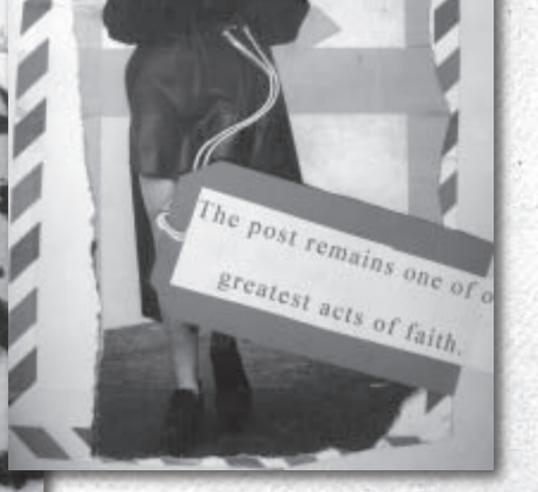
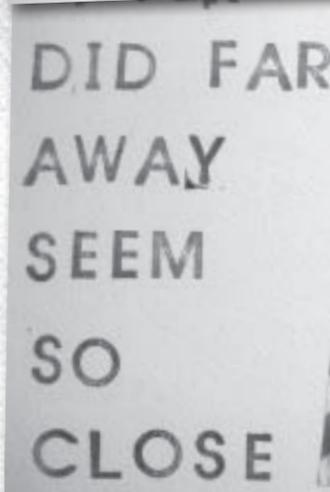
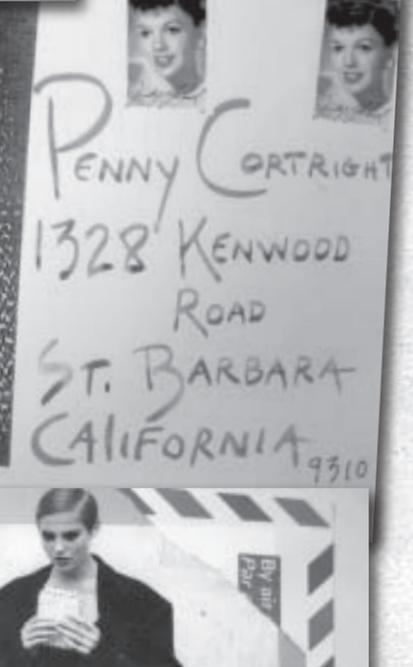
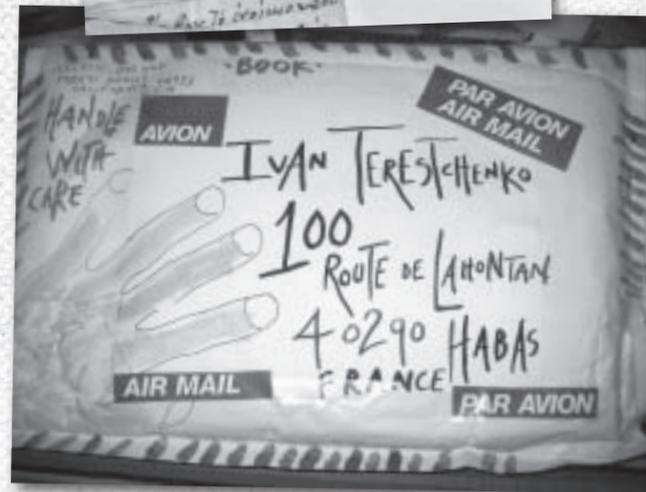
In 2006, I was approached about writing a book on decorative letters. Naively, I wrote to a handful of friends, asking if they might have envelopes and letters I had sent to them over the years. Incredibly, over five hundred letters were returned to me! My peripatetic ways were there in front of me, memories of far off places and people, longings and landscapes.

I think the writing of a letter is one of the last great acts of faith. We consign any number of intimate and precious things to a mailbox. In an age of instant communication, I think there is still no substitute for the sweet anticipation of opening a letter.

Salutation and endings,
Dear so and so,
With love,
See you soon.

"Write a letter a day," said my grandmother. And so I did, and continue to do, from my little weekend perch at Muir Beach.

For a look at more of my mail art and travel inspired work, please go to bethnelsontravelling.com or chroniclebooks.com



Photographs by Beth Nelson

Our India and Nepal Honeymoon

By Nicole Groneman and Stephan Catalan

Here are a few of our emails (4th August 2009-1st January 2010) that we sent to our family and friends while traveling. We started by flying into Leh, Ladakh after a two-day layover in Delhi. Then we traveled overland by jeep, bus, and train down into Northern India, Nepal, and South India. Please check out the rest of our pictures online at <http://picasaweb.google.com/NicoleStephanC> Enjoy...

This email was written 18th August in Leh, Ladakh. Stephan and I have been in Ladakh since the 9th of August! Right now we are in Leh. Leh is not a town/village, but a big bustling city, dish TV on every rooftop mixed with solar water heaters and drying cow dung for winter heat (dish TV, not what we were expecting). But we love the guesthouse that we have been staying at. The Oriental Guest House is a bit out and above the city and quiet with nice gardens and family here. We have been very busy. Traveling all over Ladakh, we first did a short three-day Sham Valley trek (west of Leh, two-hour drive). Then on our way back to Leh stopped at Alchi for the night and so far it's been our favorite monastery here in Ladakh (Google Alchi to find out why...)



Crossing over the Taglang La (5328 m) in Ladakh India, on our way to Tso Moriri Lake. Photograph by Gitti Boesch

We then drove a long bumpy (I'm actually being nice) six-hour drive to the lakes Tso Kar and Tso Moriri for two nights with our new friends Paul and Gitti from Austria. Tso Moriri was beautiful with some of Ladakh's highest mountains surrounding it. We then with our new friends from Austria went on a four-day trek to climb (attempt) Stok Kangri (6153 m). We were going to climb to the top, but very cold and snowy weather turned Stephan and I back. Gitti and Paul pressed on to the summit. So the highest we both can say we have been was about 5600 m.

Then from Stok Kangri base camp we left our friends and continued on to the Markha Valley trek for the next six days all by ourselves. We made more solo backpacking friends along the way and only had one freezing cold night at Nimaling (a high valley above Markha Valley used for grazing sheep/goats/cows/yaks, etc., by the local people). And wow did we see and get surrounded by herds (millions in every direction it felt like) of sheep and goats on their way home that evening, so cute! Then up and over Gomgmaru La (5260 m) and were lucky to find a taxi for five back to Leh that evening. One thing I love about Leh is all the wonderful food here (especially the veg. Momos) really anything we would wish for is all right here! Even delicious baked chocolate cakes and cookies. But my favorite has been walking around upper Leh where we are staying and seeing all the gardens and barley fields. All the homes grow their own food and have beautiful gardens with flowers mixed in with the veggies too! Apple and apricot trees all over ripe with fruit.

The weather seems to be cooling off since we arrived and it's been raining for the past two days here, really nice to see in a place that only gets four inches per year! So we are thinking of moving south on the 2nd for Manali in Himachal Pradesh and on to more hikes and trekking there!

My English has become very basic and simple from talking to people who English is not their first language, I've noticed so sorry... Tomorrow is the start of the Ladakh Festival for the next 15 days and we will stay for the first day to see the start. Then long bus ride south...



Nicole during the Markha Valley portion of the Ladakh trek, crossing one of the many high passes (Ganda La) to get into the valley, with views of the Zaskar Range north of us.

Photograph by Stephan Catalan

11th September from McLeod Ganj, in Himachal Pradesh
We are in Dharamsala right now, actually staying way up the hill at a guesthouse called Eagle Crest way out of town right at the start of the trail we plan on trekking in the next few days. More rain... not as much as over in Manali right now, but the late monsoon is finally happening and everywhere we want to go is rain. It's nicer over on this side, just on and off light rain. We took a deluxe nine-seat bus from Manali over to Dharamsala, actually to the town above and is called McLeod Ganj where the Dali Lama lives, and we are actually way above there, 1-2 hour walk from town! But so beautiful, waterfalls, more hiking trails in all directions, and lush green! We first stayed in town and looked for a nice place to stay and a nice guy from England told us of the place! So we have been here for a few days so far and plan on starting our trek tomorrow or the next day for two-three nights, then make our way back to Manali (hopefully not heavy rain), and then trek from there over to Spiti Valley!!! Walked to town today to get supplies for our camping trip. Will write when we get back!! All is well with us.
Miss everyone, Nicole & Stephan, Give Miss Tilba big hugs from her parents!!!

2nd October. Written in Rishikesh, Uttaranchal
We are in Rishikesh right now and have been nonstop traveling through Northern India. Have had amazing treks in Ladakh; Sham Valley, Markha Valley, did on

our own. Took the "local" bus (bumpy, dusty, cold, ouchy, and smelly) 15+ hours from Leh to Keylong... Rain and snow closed the pass, so a taxi (jeep) rest of way to Manali. It's been apple season so yummy delicious apples all over northern India!!! Yes we are eating our way through India, I'm very happy with all our wonderful meals!!! Lots more late monsoon rain and snow in the mountains, our trek passes closed, so we took a mini trip to Darsamala, and found a very nice area to stay way above town in Galu temple area. From there did a mini two-night trek up to Triund. Then night bus (not our favorite way so far to travel) back to Manali hopefully for more trekking, but still too much snow on passes, so road trip (bus) through Spiti Valley. Amazing and beautiful land and people! First Kaza, had to get inner line permit to travel so close to Tibet. Side trip to Ki Monastery, Dhankar, next Tabo (my favorite), then Nako with lake and

cute old village. Then culture shock... real India... Shimla, with its crazy monkey temple, yes we let the monkeys eat out of our hand... then to Rishikesh!!! Hot and humid weather (any one who knows any good tips for heat and humidity rash let me know!). Hiked to waterfall above river in Rishikesh two hours... that took more like five hours! Ask me if you want to know what I saw at the waterfalls... Next taxi jeep back to mountains up to Gangotri. Permits not easy to get so our plan for trek to Tapovan only got one-night permit in park, so only up to Gomukh, Gangotri Glacier we went! Oh yeah, more rain and snow... all day on hike but then at sunset clear views of Glaciers and Bhagirathi 3 (6454 m) and Bhagirathi 1 (6856 m) that look like one big glass face! Stayed at our first ashram with great food and a cozy cave-like room... Change of plans (all good) and off to Delhi tomorrow (thank you Lisa & see you tomorrow!!!), then train to Nepal for more trekking!!!

8th October. This email was sent to a new friend, Sujay, whom we met on a long jeep ride up to Gangotri.

Thank you for the email, and yes our trip is going good. We could only get a two-day permit for Gomukh, that was a bit disappointing. It rained on our hike up, but then beautiful sunset on the mountains! We then went over to Nepal for a month for a Khumbu trek. Nepal is amazing! We are back in India, Khajuraho till tomorrow, then Darjeeling and Sikkim plan to visit next before



Stephan in the Markha Valley on the Ladakh trail, standing next to one of the long Mani walls before we entered a village. Photograph by Nicole Groneman

heading to South India. If you have Facebook you can check out some of the pictures we have been taking.

24th November. This email was sent to Nicole's friend, Erica, from Khajuraho, Madhya Pradesh, a hard-to-get-to place in the middle of India.

We are in a town Khajuaho (south of Varanasi, middle of India), to see the temples here. I've never seen anything like this before wow, wow, wow!!! Diane would love this place, too. We could have a drawing class and sit all day drawing. The town is very nice, too, but with too many guys asking to sell you something when walking down the street, and it gets hard to say no all the time. We did walk through the back streets this morning, very quiet and nice.

We were in Varanasi for a few days. Tomorrow we are off to Darjeeling (north of Calcutta) for the last travels in the mountains before it gets too cold and we then plan on heading to South India... Been missing home a bit... would just really love to cook my own food once in a while. Stephan and I think we will be back January and at the very latest early February. (School just got out across the street

and all the kids are out in their uniforms on bikes that are way too big for them! but very cute!)

Tell everyone at the store hi for me. Have not found any indigo yet... but have discovered so many new kinds of treats and street food yummy! The newest discovery, some kind of boiled water nut, size of a small potato. You can eat it raw, but I like them cooked and with chili, mint, cilantro, salt, and lime dip. Very yummy! And the Indian sweet shops are amazing, sugar high big time!!! We have been eating very well; our favorite is Thali at the local veg shops.

December 2009. Part One of the last two months
We are in Darjeeling (north east India), tomorrow we are off traveling again to South India by train! We have been up in Darjeeling for the past week, planning what and where to do next, and relaxing. I have not sent off an email since we were in Rishikesh (back in October, two months ago- WOW), so this is where and what we have been up to.

We left Rishikesh and spent one week in Delhi (so wonderful to have such a nice home to stay in, thank you Lisa!!!). We were actually on our way to Nepal, but because it was Diwali all the trains were full! Did have a fun time checking out the city, the Delhi Metro is amazing. I even got Stephan to come with me to Akshardham Temple for the day.

So we finally got on a train to Gorakhpur... the train was so packed full of families, luggage, Diwali gifts, etc... but we were ok in our upper sleeper berths for the slow overnight journey. This was Stephan's introduction to India trains! Whenever we would fall asleep someone would try to share our bed, sit on our feet, etc. I did meet a very nice girl from Lucknow who was traveling home for the holiday and we got to talk a bit about India. We arrived the next morning and still had a three-hour jeep ride to the Nepal border, then walk across... (border towns are not my thing, awful, dirty and pricey!!!). We decided to stay the night in a town just a bit over the border in Nepal called Bhairawa, this was one of the first nights of Diwali, so filled with fireworks, candle lights, and food offerings out in front of businesses and homes.

October 19th, longer than told and more people than could fit van ride to Kathmandu! I am wondering where all the people are. Nepal is so much quieter than India. We stayed our first few nights in Hotel Vajra, and got to watch and hear the fireworks of Diwali from a rooftop!

Next we are off to the Khumbu for a REAL trek (no roads, just trails filled with other trekkers, yaks, and

locals) in the highest mountains in the world!!! We were among the few without porters or guides. I got sick the day before our flight, and Stephan had to go out and do all our pre-trek errands in Kathmandu! I did feel better the next morning, so lucky.

October 23rd, the early morning delayed flight to Lukla... what an airport to fly into, short runway with a cliff one end and huge rock wall on the other!!! After breakfast in Lukla we hiked a bit down to Phakding (2840 m) for our first night. Already sneak peak views of snowy mountains! Woke up super early by upstairs guests and their boots above our bed. Stop in Jorsale for lunch with a couple from California that we met on the flight. Then across a huge bridge and then up, up, up, and up to Namche. Got our first view of Everest peaking out that day, looking so far away. Arrived in Namche (3450 m) that afternoon, wow what a town, bakeries, bars, and shops galore! Really anything you could want/need. We got a very nice sunny room in Namche Guest House, with views of Thamskerku at sunset!

We day-hiked up to Khumjung the next day, and I got to see Ama Dablam for the first time! Enjoyed a picnic lunch and hiked through junipers and Rhododendron forests... checked out the fancy Everest View Hotel on the hike back to Namche, watching Yaks grazing.



A day hike past Ki Monastery in Spiti Valley, India. Photograph by Nicole Groneman

October 26th, hike up to Tengboche (3860 m). What an up, down, up trail, we had to cross the Imja Khola river which is the main river of the Khumbu and cooked tea and lunch on the rocks by the river. This river has the melted snow off Everest flowing in it, how cool is that! Another 1 1/2 hour tough hike up to Tengboche, that is famous for its (not so lucky) Monastery, that burned down and was rebuilt with the help of Hillary...

October 27th, we hike up to Pangboche through thick cold Rhododendron forest for the next 2 nights. When we arrived we got a treat and got to watch climbers coming down off the summit of Ama Dablam. October 28th we had a rest day and hiked up to Ama Dablam Base camp (4600 m)! Met climbers from USA and Spain! Oh yeah, the weather has been amazing and nice to us the whole trip!!! I got bit by some creepy crawly creature in our home stay guest house in Pangboche...The most awful itchy things I have ever had and I can still see the spots today! Lots more... To be continued...

Part2...

Back to Everest area trekking...

Our hike up to Ama Dablam Base Camp was beautiful (one of our favorite days on the trek). Again we got to watch some of the climbers coming down from the summit. Along the hike up to base camp we met a guy from Scotland, whose 16-year-old son had just climbed Ama Dablam, the youngest person ever!

October 29th we hiked up to Dingboche and stayed at the Snow Lion Guest House. We picked this GH because of the sunny bakery attached! I even had a hot shower for Rs 300 (the room was only Rs 100)!

Oct. 30th hike up to Chukjung for the next 2 nights. Day hiked up to Island Peak with a glacial lake that was amazing! They think the lake will break through and flood the khumbu all the way down to India, its really big! We made tea and lunch overlooking the lake with walls of ice on all sides of us...



Day hike in the Khumbu, Nepal; up to Chukung Ri around 5500 m. Ama Dablam is in the background.

The next day (Tilba's birthday!!!) we hiked up to Chukung Ri for amazing views in all directions. Then off up to Everest Base camp for a few nights. Wow, what an amazing ice fall view, you really feel tiny with such huge mountains.

After trekking in the Everest area we spent some nice relaxing days in Pokhara, by the lake. I really liked Pokhara and for sure would love to go back and spend more time there. It was a good thing we got to rest a bit before our long journey back to India. After crossing the dusty crazy border town again, getting our visa and passports checked, we were back in India, off to Varanasi.

After a long overnight train trip to Varanasi, we arrived at the wonderful early morning time of 04:50 AM. Still dark out, we hung out at the train station till light, then caught an auto rickshaw ride to the river ghats for a nice sunrise walk along the ghats to our guesthouse. Varanasi was packed full of tourists, in boats people watching. I had the best time just sitting on the ghats and watching people and the river life.

Next I took Stephan on a long (train) trip to Khajuraho. Almost in the middle of nowhere India! This really could be such an amazing town to stay awhile, if not for the constant harassing of touts on the street! Really the worst we have come across in

all of India! ("Just come and look..." "Only one second..." "Buy buy something from my shop..." etc., non stop!!!) We finally figured out that if we walked in the middle of the road we were left alone! But I would go back to see the amazing temples again!

From Khajuraho we then traveled back up north to Darjeeling for a rest week. We chilled out... really it was quite cold up there in the mountains/hills! Even took a steam toy train ride (the one in Santa Cruz is way better). Next we are off to South India!!!

We are now in a nice beach town, Mamallapuram, just a two-hour bus ride south of Chennai. There are amazing stone carved temples all over and it's nice to be back at

the beach. So far South India is like being in another country compared to the north! The people are so nice and friendly here. Life seems slower paced down here and we like it! It's warm, very humid, and filled with biting bugs... I even caught a monkey trying to break into our room today! He was very cute.

So we just got our flight tickets back to San Francisco... I'm a bit sad, but happy at the same time. Don't want to leave India, but at the same time miss and ready to be back home. So we fly from Chennai on the 1st of January! That gives us three more weeks to explore South India!!! Lots more yummy veg food, fruit, and coconuts to come...

21st December sent to Nicole's parents from Kudle Beach, just a short hike south of the town Gokarna, Karnataka South India.

What are your plans for Christmas? Where will you be? We booked a room in Hampi for the 24th- 28th, then off to Chennai. We have been slowly traveling up the west coast. It's amazing here, little fishing villages, perfect sandy beaches, peaceful and quiet, etc... Right now we are staying at a beach just south of Gokarna, a few hours south of Goa. It's a bit more touristy and not as mellow as the south but easy to stay at. It's very nice here and way less busy than Goa beaches we hear. So we plan on being here for

the next few days till we go to Hampi. The area is not as conservative as the rest of India so women can actually swim in a bathing suit!!! It's a perfect, relaxing way to end our travels! Today we are just relaxing (it's hot hot hot in the sun!), but tomorrow morning I hope to go over to the next cove (beach called Om Beach because it's shaped as an Om) to find a kayak or boat to rent for the day to check out the coast areas. I will try to upload some pictures today.

This is the rest of our trip...

13th December, South East India has a different monsoon then the rest of the country and it started the night we left Chennai on an overnight train to Ooty. Ooty is an old British hill station surrounded by old tea, banana, coffee, and coconut plantations. The tea plantations are so perfectly trimmed they look so out of place in India. Wow, south India is such a different world from the other parts we have visited. Where did all the trash piles go? It's so clean here.

Dec 15th we left Ooty and got on the SLOW bus to Wayanad, in the Western Ghats of South India. We visited the Edakkal Caves and the Muthanga Wildlife Sanctuary to hopefully see some wild elephants! The Wayanad area is beautiful, lush green, and nice homes. We ended our drive that day in the park, looking for about two hours before sunset for elephants at the water holes. Nothing... Then after we exited the park I saw signs on the main highway saying "Wild Elephant Crossing" and off in the distance there they were, just for a second, must of just missed them crossing the highway!

After Wayanad we headed west to the coast. First night on the sea was in a Rs220 Government Guest House room in Kalpetta that overlooked the ocean with a sunset view, just like at home! We could only get one night here, so off the next day for another local bus up the coast stopping in Mangalore and Kundapur for the night on our way to Gokarna, a few hours south of Goa. The bus followed the coast north most of the way passing picture perfect sandy beaches lined with coconut trees! We both fell in love with one secret small fishing village beach!

Since South India is packed this time of year, with its perfect beach weather, we actually booked a room on the beach ahead and got picked up after our bus ride. We were planning on heading as far away from town to Om beach, but got a free ride to Kudle beach instead. Thinking we stay here a night, then walk to the further away beaches... Well, the guesthouse was full (yes, after coming to pick us

up and with a room booked...this really is India!), so we found a perfect little bamboo hut to stay in instead. The next morning, since we arrived in the dark, we finally got a look at where we were, a beautiful isolated (no roads, only rocky trails) beach. We stayed here the next five nights relaxing! This area is not as conservative as other places in India, Nicole could wear a tank top and swimsuit and go swimming in the ocean, which we did not have in our packs, but easily bought in Gokarna.

December 25, we decided to start heading back to Chennai for our flight home on the 1st of January. Nicole really wanted to visit Hampi, so before dawn we are up, packed, and getting on another slow local all day bus to Hampi. Good thing we arrived a 1/2 hour early, because we found a bus just leaving that was direct instead of two days, oh India. We arrived in Hampi early evening, oh well to the travel rule arriving before dark in India, and stayed in town in a local guesthouse room for the night. Hampi just might be one of the worst mosquito places I've been, but the amazing unique landscape was worth every bite. Stephan calls Hampi "Tropical Joshua Tree," and really it's the same rocks and climbers all over, but just with palms, bananas, rice fields, islands, and covered with ancient ruins. We stayed across the river in a very relaxing guesthouse run by a guy from Nepal. More yummy food...

29th of December after our short visit in Hampi we were forced to leave so we can make it back to Chennai for our flight home. One could easily lose a few months in Hampi riding bikes, climbing, and just exploring the area; something new is hidden around every corner. We planned on having two days in Chennai for shopping, but instead we spent the whole time on the huge beach there. This is no normal beach; it's big, really big, and covered with carnival like events. We ate every street food we could get our hands on! Nicole's favorite being samosa chat! We both will be craving Chennai street food till we get back to India! If anyone is flying to India the Chennai International Airport is the one to fly in and out of, easy and small! We spent New Year's in the airport, then flew back to San Francisco via Brussels and New York, still arriving New Year's Day in San Francisco where Nicole's parents and dog Tilba picked us up!

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

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