

# BEACHCOMBER

SINCE 1946



# Halloween Spooktacular 2022!

*The miniature ghosts & goblins of Muir Beach had a spooktacular time celebrating Halloween at the community center and trick-or-treating on Sunset Way!*

Under the glow of our new mascot Mr. Jellyfish, an array of pirates, zombie brides, fire trucks, skunks, bats, squirrels and a baby pumpkin had the sweetest time parading down sunset visiting with neighbors and collecting treats! Special gratitude to the community and our Sunset Way neighbors for your incredible displays and ongoing support of this Halloween tradition!

– Brett Sibley Groneman



## ON THE COVER

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*John John*  
Beach art  
Lisa Eigsti

I started creating my beach art right around the start of the pandemic when my nephew Brooks died. I mostly write names of the departed but have also made one for Mothers Day, Birthdays and one for my wedding anniversary.

I love making these art pieces mostly to be spending contemplative time at the beach. I get mesmerized and in the zone when I'm looking for just the right stone shape, seaweed or piece of driftwood.

In the one I made for Kathy, I found a discarded champagne cork and placed it up top. It made me think of John John & Kathy's wedding anniversary which is New Years Eve.



*Lisa Eigsti*

When I made John Johns, the house construction crew that was working on the red house above the beach was keeping an eye on what I was doing. At completion, I heard one guy say, "It says John John!"

### ***About Lisa Eigsti:***

Lisa has lived in Muir Beach for 22 yrs. Married to MB volunteer firefighter, Brad Eigsti. They have two daughters, Hannah(19) at school in NYC and daughter Stella(15) a sophomore at Tam.

She enjoys putting on the Muir Beach Day of the Dead, being on the VFA board, and doing all the merch for the Muir Beach wear/gear.

She enjoys teaching young children on a substitute basis, art, cultural & live music events and being at the beach with her puppy, Oso.



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The ***Beachcomber***, our neighborhood news, is published quarterly by and for residents, friends, family and former residents of Muir Beach. Published since 1946 (on and off), circulation 170 (more or less).

Contribute your essays, poems, stories, photographs, artwork, announcements, reviews – anything that celebrates Muir Beach and our community. Everything printed should be considered solely the opinion of the writer and printed in the form and condition as submitted. Beachcomber exercises no editorial control over content except for readability and general appearance.

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gift subscriptions too!***

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MUIR BEACH

# Holiday Arts Fair

DECEMBER 3 - 4, 2022

## TWO GREAT SHOPPING DAYS:

**SATURDAY, DEC 3 10AM - 5PM**

**SUNDAY, DEC 4 10AM - 4PM**

*WE'RE BAAAACK!!!! And all weekend!!*

So many Muir Beachers have come out of their pandemic shells to show their work at this year's holiday fair that we have an abundance of riches. We have all generations represented and everything from candles, candies, cutting boards and clothing to oils and ornaments for the body and the tree. Take a moment to go to our website [www.muirbeachartsfair.com](http://www.muirbeachartsfair.com) to see our fabulous artists and a hint of what they're creating. I'm also excited to say that we will have live music again... it is such a fabulous additional dimension.

We will be doing an all donation kitchen again this year. But this year all of the sweet and savory donations will be on SignUp Genius to make the process easier and transparent in terms of what is needed and when. Shortly, the link to SignUp Genius for the kitchen, set up and tear down will go live. I assure you, I will make sure everyone knows where I will need help and how they can volunteer... LOL! Volunteering is almost as much fun as buying great gifts for friends (and yourself).

So, come on down meet and support your neighbors, find great gifts for the holidays and maybe volunteer for a bit. Any questions give me a call at 415.595.7411 or drop me a line at [muirbeachartsfair@gmail.com](mailto:muirbeachartsfair@gmail.com).


See you all at the Fair!

– Laurie Piel

Join us: **Muir Beach Community Center**  
19 Seacape Drive

Follow us: [muirbeachartsfair.com](http://muirbeachartsfair.com)

 @muirbeachartsfair

 @muirbeachholidayartsfair

*How we spend our days is of course how we spend our lives. What we do with this hour and that one is what we are doing. Annie Dillard*

With the season's first rain I experienced something new and beautiful while walking: the fine sediments in a redwood forest were being soaked up in puddles and as raindrops hit the surface huge bubbles formed and were all throughout the Woods! Always something new and fresh, but of course it starts with getting out! Check [www.nps.gov/muwo](http://www.nps.gov/muwo) for trail conditions and trip planning tips.

We are in a walker's paradise and quite great for cyclists and equestrians, too! Birdwatchers are thrilled by the winged wonders in the watershed and the awe of the old-growth forest is possible every visit, each season thx to how well the Muir Woods reservation system works! All right here!

And, it has become so much better!

Plan a walk up the completely made over Redwood Creek Trail to see a system laid out with the stream in mind, crossings and designs that work well for horses. Know that when it rains, not all the water will flow out to the ocean since the design also encourages retention in the water table for availability more of the year.

The new chicane at the lower end of the Dias Ridge Trail not only slows down cyclists but has "let's gather" features!

My favorite is the work going on right now on the Bootjack Trail, all done to preserve the historic features through use of log and rock!

State parks are busy on the Steep Ravine Trail, working closely with Friends of Tam to fund a critical bridge (hint hint) and they report work "done" on the Deer Park Fire Road.

The region's most popular trail, the Dipsea Trail (hikers only!), was just featured in SFChron and we have several opportunities to catch it from the crossing at Muir Woods, or top of Cardiac (if you take CoastView). It is also the first leg of the ritualistic Tam Circumambulation.

<https://www.sfchronicle.com/bayarea/article/best-hiking-trail-dipsea-17547438.php>

We each walk the trail, can stay on the trail, practice LNT and say to those we share it with "Go Slow, Say Hello".

***"I only went out for a walk, and finally concluded to stay out till sundown, for going out, I found, was really going in."** John Muir*

Mia Monroe  
Marin Community Liaison  
Outdoor Recreation Planner  
Planning and Environmental Division  
Golden Gate National Recreation Area  
National Park Service

## Denise Lamott

*By Lisa Eigsti*

I'd like to give a big community shout out to Denise Lamott!

Next time you see her friendly face out in the neighbor, stop and thank her. Not only has she stepped up as president of the VFA (volunteer firemens association), which she beautifully puts on our big fundraiser, the BBQ, she's also a disaster liaison. Denise does so much to help keep our community safe and for that everyone should thank her. I personally want to thank her for helping me tackle some MBVFD merch tasks. We will be doing a pop-up sale of our iconic logoed gear at Proof Lab in Dec.

Denise has lived in Muir Beach or nearby areas for over 30yrs. She is married to Aran Moore who grew up here in Muir Beach. She has had her own PR firm for 20+yrs, which had her in tight with Rev Cecil Williams of Glide Memorial Church in S.F., as their lead PR person. She also provides her services, free of charge, for the Muir Beach Crafts Faire publicity as well as the BBQ.

Besides all the serious stuff she does.....she's a devoted mother & wife, big live music fan, sports enthusiast, nature & dog lover and a ton of fun to hang out with! I'm proud to call her one of my besties of 25yrs.

*Denise fun fact:* She worked at the original SweetWater in the late 80s & 90s!



**BEACHCOMBER  
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Your donation covers the cost of printing, Web fees, mailings, and keeps the quarterly neighborhood news in your mailbox.

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# Coastal California Community Microgrids Could Help Address Climate Change, While Reducing Electricity Costs

By Steven J. Moss <sup>1</sup>

Northern California coastal communities like Muir Beach are at the far reaches of utility distribution systems, with feeder lines that expensively extend through low density, often heavily vegetated, areas, subject to Public Safety Power Shutoffs, wildfire risks and outages. Residents, frequently on fixed incomes, can find it challenging to afford expensive electricity bills that easily exceed \$2,000 a year, in addition to the cost of propane for cooking and heating water. State and local efforts to “decarbonize” will steadily, then rapidly, increase reliance on electricity and may ultimately result in the phase-out of propane.

A community-friendly, economical, environmental-sound solution could be a series of coastal microgrids. Adoption of a network of small renewable generation, battery and other storage and demand management devices would contribute to regional grid stability and resiliency, reducing the need for costly utility infrastructure investments, distribution undergrounding and other wildfire management tactics, with resulting customer savings.

Muir Beach could demonstrate the value of microgrids in coastal communities. An initiative here could be used to craft a stepwise approach to enable other, more hard-pressed, communities to create the necessary capacity and collaborations to develop their preferred localized energy systems,

and to democratically and cogently determine how best to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Microgrid development requires ambitious collaborations and enabling institutions. A Muir Beach microgrid could be potentially powered by a combination of mostly rooftop photovoltaics, micro wind turbines, micro and pumped storage hydropower, and batteries. Generation and storage elements would need to be sized to deliver sufficient power to match peak load, with preprogrammed protocols to sync demand with generation.

The system could be owned by a variety of entities, including a homeowner’s association, the Muir Beach Community Services District (CSD), a newly created energy cooperative, Marin Clean Energy (MCE), Pacific Gas and Electric Company, or a third-party. A CSD or cooperative approach would provide community members with more input into the system’s future

direction; a MCE or third-party approach would benefit from greater expertise and financial capacity.

The microgrid could be grid connected or islanded. The latter approach would enable some long-distance feeder lines to be deenergized, thereby reducing distribution-related wildfire and outage risks. A California Farm Bureau Federation analysis found this approach to be cost effective compared to undergrounding lines.

If successful more expansive microgrids could be implemented in similar, larger, jurisdictions, such as nearby Bolinas, population less than 1,300, that has significantly more robust commercial activities than Muir Beach.

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<sup>1</sup> Steven Moss, *Sunset Way*, is looking for other Muir Beachers interested in joining a working group to explore a possible microgrid; [steven@moss.net](mailto:steven@moss.net), 415.643.9578.



## ***Happy Thanksgiving and Happy Holidays 2022!***

Thank you for all of your contributions to the *Beachcomber*. Our neighborhood news is published four times a year, February, May, August, and November with deadlines for submissions a few weeks before printing. If you missed an issue try the archives online: [www.muirbeachcomber.com/archives](http://www.muirbeachcomber.com/archives)

Contact: [editor@muirbeachcomber.com](mailto:editor@muirbeachcomber.com)

*Beachcomber*, 19 Seacape Drive, Muir Beach CA 94965

– Janet Tumpich

# Firewise MuirBeach

in cooperation with



By Klaus Poppensieker and  
Joani Marinoff

On September 22nd, the Muir Beach Firewise team conducted a **Wildfire Info Night & Fundraiser** at the Muir Beach Community Center. We had a great event. It turned out to be a special informational evening with an attentive atmosphere. 54 Muir Beach neighbors gathered (great turnout!), enjoyed the community, the great deserts and drinks our team had provided, and they listened to our local professional firefighter's extensive knowledge and advice.

The Muir Beach Firewise team would very much like to thank **Graham Groneman** (Fire Battalion Chief) and **Jesse Rudnick** (Senior Fire Captain) from the Marin Fire Department for their presentations and for their passionate and thorough approach to this difficult topic. We benefitted directly from their decades of experience and their detailed knowledge of specific Muir Beach wildfire risks in a changing climate and landscape. Supported by images and statistics we all learned about persistent myths and typical denial patterns. We listened to facts about the growing scale of fires, the acres of land and numbers of homes they destroy, and about the lives they take. Graham and Jesse spent most of their presentation on fire prevention



and what we all can do, and should do, to be prepared. We learned more about how to behave in case of fire, what firefighters prioritize, what their immediate goals are, and how we can help them to get access to our houses. We discussed how to create defensible space and how to reduce the amount of fuel on our properties in case of ember storms. Other issues involved home-hardening, sensible

ways of building and renovating and some topics around gardening and hardscaping.

In all, it was a lively event, the large group of community members was grateful and many neighbors engaged in an interesting, educational and constructive Q & A session.

*Continued on next page*



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The Muir Beach Firewise team would also like to thank all community members who have donated for the **Fundraising** purpose. So far, MBVFD chief Chris Gove had used some of their funds for Firewise costs. We'd like to cover these costs ourselves and, as we're all volunteer and offer our time to the community – we really appreciate your support. Our fundraising goal is to generate around \$500 per year to cover printing/shipping and miscellaneous expenses.

In addition to Graham and Jesse's input we also got very good news from fire chief Chris Gove. He reported that the MBVFD confirmed \$220,000 of funding for an evacuation route fuel reduction project. There is approval to clear the first hundred feet of excess fuel around the east side of Highway 1 from Banducci's driveway towards the overlook. Clearing could start soon.

Lastly, our Muir Beach Firewise member Joani Marinoff presented her research on available grants around Defensible Space creation and Home Hardening to the audience. Here is the summary in regards to those available grants:

There are two grants available to assist with the expense of preparing your home to survive in the event of a fire in Muir Beach. These grants are funded for this fiscal year ending June 30, 2023. At this time, we do not have information about another round of grants for fiscal year 2023-2024. Taking a first step now is helpful – no need to do everything all at once. And remember that the more of us who prepare our individual homes the safer our whole community is.

#### MWPA DEFENSIBLE SPACE GRANT PROGRAM

\$1000 per parcel per fiscal year. There is no match requirement. This means that MWPA will fund 100% of your eligible expenses.

#### MWPA HOME HARDENING GRANT PROGRAM

\$5000 per fiscal year per land parcel.

Some home hardening work will fund 100% of your expenses. Other home hardening work MWPA will only reimburse you for 50% of your expenses.

Anyone can apply without restriction, but the property needs to have received a free Defensible Space and Home Hardening Evaluation from the county fire agency. Only the already completed eligible work identified in the Evaluation can be reimbursed. Eligible work must be completed and paid for on or after July 1st, 2020. Remember the grant cycle for this year ends on June 30, 2023.

Here are some examples of qualified grant good and services,

- Removal and replacement of single paned windows
- Removal of shake roof and replacement with metal, composite, tile, or another type of fire-resistant roofing material
- Removal of combustible siding and replacement with cement board or stucco
- Removal of wood decking against structure and replacement with concrete, crushed granite rock, etc.
- Removal of home wire vents 1/4" or larger and replacement with 1/8th or 1/16" wire
- Removal of tree limbs or dead vegetation
- Removal of Italian Cypress, Bamboo, or another type of combustible vegetation
- not an exhaustive list

For all the details see [www.firesafe.org](http://www.firesafe.org) click on the Resources tab, then Grant Opportunities from the pull-down menu.

Email: [grants@marinwildfire.org](mailto:grants@marinwildfire.org)

Please reach out to Joani or to any of us if you have questions or need additional information.

I would like to finish this little report here. Again – Graham and Jesse, we really appreciate your work and your engagement for the community! Klaus, for the MB Firewise team: Don Piotter, Robin Terra, Joani Marinoff, Chris Gove, Ron Rosano, Rick Bernard and Klaus Poppensieker.

# COMMUNITY AND RITUAL...

## FINDING OUR RHYTHM POST COVID

Sometimes while submitting these articles to the *Beachcomber*, I stop and realize we are recording our community history for the generations that will come after us; a wonderful thought. From the first little mimeographed copy of this children's magazine in the 1940's, The *Beachcomber* is really a testament to our living, and in particular, to our living in community with each other.

When we first arrived to Muir Beach and lived on the Pearlman / de Barros communal property, I remember listening to stories about what it was like in the late sixties and early seventies, when just driving over the hill was pretty much an act of defiance and courage. To live here meant you negotiated that mountain every day. Martha once told me she thought of the drive like a meditation. I feel that way too. Harvey once said, "Without internet, you committed to being cut off from the world over here, and relied on your community for everything."

There is an old blurry 8 mm film of building the Community Center, that every Muir Beacher should see. Women, many of whom have left us, many of whom are entering their 80th year, are seen in bikini tops and bell bottoms, carrying buckets of dirt up and down the hill, with Gerry Pearlman moderating. Children have little sand buckets too, scrambling and crying out in joy as they made the first foundation to build what would become our beloved Community Center. An act of faith, that began as a little seed

of inspiration; to have a place to call our own here at the beach for coming together in community.

I'm writing this still in the afterglow of our 19th or 20th (no one is quite certain ) Day of the Dead celebration last night [Nov. 5th]. The first indoor one in three years since Covid took that privilege away. Besides singing with my son, (something I cherish), I saw a little scene towards the end of the night that just signified everything I feel about community. A dad was dancing with his young daughter, then his wife joined them, and after, her grandmother joined as well. Three generations of family all dancing in harmony to the crazy rock n' roll of the Unauthorized Rolling Stones band.

Towards the end of the summer, a little set of rituals begins for us in Muir Beach. The "End of Summer Barbecue" that Chief Chris Gove has established over the years. The Sunset Way trick or treating parade, the 19th or 20th Day of the Dead, followed quickly by the Holiday Arts Fair, (what once we called the Quilters Fair). And for the first time since Covid cast us out of the arms of these Community gatherings, we are back together again.

Years ago when I lived in Spain, I realized that rituals were what held us all together. One celebration or Saint Day following another like clockwork. Days on the streets with your village blessing the fisherman, or honoring the anchovy season, or the start of Fiesta, or Semana Santa. Days of rhythm and days of relaxing in community.

Here at Muir Beach, we have the good fortune to be not only in community and the rhythm of ritual, but in a certain sort of love relationship with each other. We have our firemen, whom are nearby when falls happen and hips break, we have our bookclubs and our quilters, our garden club and our fresh bread delivery, our Ocean Riders, our Board meetings, and our upcoming 49th Muir Beach Fireman's Barbecue.

*Continued on next page*



*"Off to the end of summer bbq."*

*Continued from previous page*



*Happy Birthday to Chris and David.*



*Day of the Dead 2022.*



*Cold foggy end of summer party.*

*Photos: Beth Nelson*

We have our friendships, many of them decades old. We have our growing older, and our watching the “youngers” step up. We have our dead, whom we deeply honor, and our newcomers, whom we hope will join in and understand our sometimes eccentric but sincere love of this place we call home.

Post Covid, I felt a sense of pure joy last night [Nov. 5th] at our Day of the Dead. I don't believe I've ever seen such an exuberant, exhilarated community gathering, so happy were we to be back in each others arms again. “Warts and all”, as my friend used to say, we are community above all else.

We tell each other's stories, as evidence of our living.

*– Beth Nelson*

# Remembering CHIEF JOHN JOHN SWARD

## Rock History

The best rock and roll story that John John would tell was that he was the first person to set foot on the site of the infamous concert at Altamont Speedway, headlining was the Rolling Stones with the Hells Angels in charge of security. The concert ended in chaos, with a large brawl and one person being stabbed. (See the movie *Gimme Shelter*.)

The December 6, 1969 concert was originally to be held at Sears Point, but at the last minute the landowner said no and there was a frantic search for an alternative site. Somehow, another rancher offered his site and John John would recount that he was with the rancher when he unlocked the gate and let them in, thus being the first person to set foot on the land.

After helping set up the stage, John John looked up and saw people coming in from every direction. It was at that point he would say “I got a really bad feeling and started moving away from the stage.”

His last memory of that night was being up in one of the rear light towers looking down at the chaotic scene. He left early.

—Michael Moore

*John John (right) taking a break from building rock walls at my house. Photo: Michael Moore*



*Kathy and John John at the Day of the Dead.  
Photo: Beth Nelson*



John was my friend, my mentor and my fire chief. He was a bear of a man, yet intelligent and kind. He was central to Muir Beach community activities for decades, but served us with quiet humility. There was only one John John and he will be missed. This photo is from the Fireman’s BBQ, May 1996.

— Robert Allen



**Chief John John Sward**  
*MBVFD 1971 to 1991 and 2001 to 2012*

A third generation stone-mason, John-John was the rock, heart and soul for the 44 years that Trish and I have been here.

A couple of years after we built our house, one day he suddenly arrived at our house. I was quite puzzled by this until he pointed out that a fire had started from an ember from our barbecue that I hadn't noticed. He quickly put it out but the enduring memory I have was his gentleness and non condemnation of my foolish mistake.

Of course like most of the rest of us, even after he was no longer official, he was always called the Chief, sometimes even accompanied by a salute. He wore his mantle with humility, warmth and understatement. And when it came time for us to recognize that the muddy path to our house was dangerous to its aging owners, we unquestionably turned to him to provide us with an aesthetically beautiful, safe brick stairway which stands as one of the many monuments to John John that will still be around long after we're gone.

Hopefully his legacy will live on through his art, our memories and his master tutelage of Jes who has inherited his father's talent, aesthetic and integrity.

– Gary and Trish

## In memory of Chief John “John John” Sward

It was with great sadness that we learned of John John's passing at the end of August.

He served as our first Chief after recognizing a need for a local fire department.

Gathering and leading a group of civic minded neighbors, he created what would become our fire department. He served on and off as Chief for decades until finally retiring in 2012.

Along with his wife Kathy and countless other neighbors they created through a life of service the community that attracted so many of us including me.

Over the past couple of days other members of our department have shared stories about how remarkable it was to serve with him and to enjoy him as a neighbor. What really shines through in all our reminiscences is his humor, modesty and commitment to Muir Beach. He offered an example of selflessness and dignity to all of us who lived and worked with him.

John John and his wife Kathy were intelligent, sweet and modest people who helped shape this community and in so doing left us all in awe of their dedication and vision. We truly stand on the shoulders of such giants.

I know that I speak for a grateful department when we extend our condolences to his son Jes, daughter Erica (Mitch Henderson) and grandsons Jackson and Dean.

Thank you for allowing us to continue to carry the torch that he held so high.

– Chris Gove, Chief MBVFD



*2022 Day of the Dead. Photo: Beth Nelson*

## The Fountain

John-John built my fireplace. He built a lot of fireplaces in Muir Beach in the sixty-or-so years he lived here. He was more than an expert stonemason— he was an artist who worked in stone and brick.

I once asked him if he ever thought of ideas outside his expertise. He thought for a minute, then described the following:

He explained it as an experience. You enter a room and see a plastic bucket mysteriously floating up near the ceiling. It's tipped to allow a small, steady trickle of water to fall straight down to another bucket standing on the floor.

He described how it would be constructed: The weight of the overhead bucket is actually supported by a small-diameter, shiny steel tube secured to the inside of the lower bucket, where an aquarium pump is submerged. Water is pumped up the inside the tube, overflowing the higher bucket, which sends a continuous trickle down the outside of the tube, spilling into the lower bucket. It's an illusion— the water appears actual, the tube doesn't.

I then asked him what deep and artistically poignant message he intended to convey... perhaps something about infinite replenishment—the buckets are never empty and never overflow... or the glass half-full/half-empty thing.

His reply was, and I quote, “A fountain would sound nice in the room.”

I now understand that his fountain was never intended to exist, but only to seem feasible enough to live in my imagination. A gift.

He lives there now.

— *Bryce Browning*



*Swine Flu - John John at the Bowyers' Halloween party in 2009.  
Above photos: Laurie Piel*



*The Begault's fireplace, just one of many art pieces with John John's name on it.  
[For more of John John's creations, see Beachcomber Issue 282, February 2021,  
[www.muirbeachcomber.com/archives](http://www.muirbeachcomber.com/archives)]*



*Day of the Dead. Photo: Beth Nelson*



*John John installing the fountain at the MBCC. Photo: Laurie Piel*

John John. His name echoes through the alps of my heart. John John, a neighbor and friend, a decent, kind, generous, hardworking man who gave his love and so very much of his time and energy to our Community, to our beloved Muir Beach. John John's accomplishments, gifts, escapades, and hardships amount to so much more than a few paragraphs printed on paper could do justice.

John John no longer lives a few doors down from me. I am still adjusting to that. He lives in my heart and in forty-two years of remembering. He still walks to the mail, putters in his yard, drives by in his dirty white truck filled with dust, brick, wood, and stone, stands before his community in full firefighter regalia letting us know he cares about us and our homes. He still waves from his patio with sparkling eyes and warmth as I return from a cold ocean swim. He still dances beside me with wild abandon at any and all community events. We still share a deep love for this place and her people. John John celebrated our Muir Beach in everything he did. He is the brick and mortar of this community. He is there, in the fireplaces, the stonewalls, the homes and the land all around us.

Honor him by caring for one another. Celebrate him by dancing with everything you've got at each and every blessed community event in the Center he helped create and loved so well. Remember him by holding sacred the opportunity we have to love one another, to show up for one another, to value friendship, joy, and laughter more than the monetary value of our homes or our different political views. Accept help and give help as freely and generously as he did his entire life. Stretch beyond what's yours and what's mine and embrace Community as fully and as wholeheartedly as John John has. You will be a better person for it and our community, his community, will continue to thrive the way he hoped it would.

Farewell dear friend. I love you.

– *Nina Vincent*

# Mayor Joe and the Black Eel

On a typical foggy, damp day, Aran [Collier] and I walked along Big Beach carrying our burlap sacks with the morning's catch of perch and rock cod. We welcomed a familiar sight in the portly, bow-legged Portuguese man, stogie stub in mouth and wooden cane in hand: Mayor Joe. He took a special interest in us kids – observing, advising, laughing. On this morning he asked us, upon inspecting our bounty, whether we had ever been poke poling for Black Eel. We answered with fascination – for we knew we were in for a treat – that we had not. An excited Mayor Joe offered to show us how to make a poke pole and to teach us how to fish with it. He instructed us where to find – on Charles Borden's property – a straight piece of bamboo of about eight feet in length. He described how to fasten at the end of the stalk a six inch piece of metal coat hanger, carefully crafted with a metal loop; here we would hang a short length of fishing line with a hook attached. A poke pole.

The next day on Big Beach at low tide, we met a beaming Mayor Joe who – upon examination of our newly made poke poles – was visibly impressed with our handiwork. “Let's go find some bait.” Aran and I pried mussels from a large rock along the shore, cracked them open with a small rock and stripped out their orange meat to place on our fishing hooks. We also found a few prized pile worms among the mussels – pile worms made for superb bait but we had to be careful, they could bite us with their pincers. Hovering over the tide pools, Joe showed us how to lower the tip of the pole into the water between the crevices of the rocks. After a series of pokes, I got a strike and struggled to get the tip of my pole out from the rocks. When I finally did, there was an eighteen-inch Pacific Black Eel dangling from the hook. Joe was hooting and hollering.

I felt as though I would bust with pride as we walked along Big Beach. Joe suggested that my mother may not know what to do with the eel; he offered to show Aran and I how to skin and clean it. The path above the lagoon was lined with wild grasses, thistles and anise plants. From there we crossed Pacific Way to the squeaky gate that opened onto a steep concrete walkway up to Joe's house. The basement smelled like mildew and something sweet. (Later I would learn that Mayor Joe brewed something called “Portuguese Pink” – a concoction of homemade red wine and other unknown ingredients that in combination produced a potent beverage. I suspect the sweet aroma I smelled that day was a batch of the Pink fermenting somewhere in the basement.)

From the low ceiling, Joe hung the eel by putting a single nail through its head into a beam. With his sharp, wood-handled pocket knife he cut the skin around its neck, careful to cut just the skin, not the flesh. He then sliced the skin lengthwise from head to tip of tail four times. With a pair of needle-nose pliers, he stripped the skin off in four equally sized pieces. His pocket knife was used to remove the body from the nailed head; he then slit the eel up the gut. The insides were removed and discarded and the eel was rinsed clean in a small wash tub. Joe handed it to me and told me to have my mother sauté it in butter, garlic and white wine. I don't know who was prouder, Joe or me.

The next time Aran and I used our poke poles along the rocky shore down the coast from Big Beach, we again made sure to bring the black eel we'd caught to Mayor Joe's place, but this time as a gift to him.

– Charley Stump

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*Charley Stump lived at Muir Beach from the day he was born in 1958, until he went away to college in 1976. He and his siblings painfully sold the Stump property at the end of Sunset Way in 2012, but the unique experiences he had growing up at Muir Beach left such fond memories that he will forever regard Muir Beach as his “home.”*

*Recently, he captured – with great assistance from wife Carol – these memories in a collection of vignettes entitled “**Sunrise on Sunset: Recollections of Growing up at Muir Beach in the 1960's/70's.**”*



# Borden's Heart Attack

It was one of those rare, smoldering summer days. The fog hung back instead of creeping in to engulf the shore; it shied away and slowly burned off, kind of rising, thinning, and eventually disappearing. By midmorning, the beach was pulsing with beachgoers who stripped their clothes off to bask in the sun and play in the surf. Dogs barked, people laughed, and someone softly thumped a drum to the rhythm of the waves. On Little Beach, naked guys with shoulder-length hair swam out to sit on the rocks at the base of the cliff below my house and the Spindrift Point property of our neighbor, Charles Borden.

Borden was an accomplished sailor and writer. Even though he left formal schooling at the age of twelve to be a cabin boy on a schooner, he would go on to publish four books about his travels around the South Sea Islands.<sup>1</sup> By the age of twenty he had sailed twice around the globe.<sup>2</sup> In 1941, while sailing his seventeen-foot teak and camphor wood sloop from Tahiti to Honolulu, a flight of airplanes flew overhead – he was witnessing the Japanese on their way to bomb Pearl Harbor.<sup>3</sup> Although an explorer and adventurer who appreciated other cultures, Borden never acclimated to the 1960s California hippie scene, or warmed to the idea of nudists occupying the beach. He would get upset when they swam out to sit on the rocks below his place. I remember him – adorned in his usual watch cap and turtleneck shirt – yelling often at them to get off his property and getting angry when they ignored him. The typical response of the hippie to his verbal warning was to lift a middle finger and point it up in his direction. No words, just the finger.

On that beautiful warm day, Borden was especially angry. At the Stump house, we were brought out to our deck above the ocean by loud yelling. Borden, perched in a cypress tree, was yelling at some guy on the rocks below. The guy was yelling something back and it really had Borden going. All of a sudden, Borden raised a shot gun and warned the guy to get off the rocks. My dad shouted at Borden to drop the gun; Borden informed him that it was full of rock salt. The gun went off and a hail of rock salt hurled down at the guy. Borden dropped to the ground and was silent. My dad called to him, but there was no answer.

It took us a few minutes to make our way up to the gate, around the tall fence and down the path to where Borden lay. We found him flat on his back, his face flushed purple. His blue eyes were open and kind of milky – staring off somewhere. By then my Mom and Borden's wife, Dixie, had arrived and there was much grief. Dad couldn't find a heartbeat and Borden was not breathing. He was dead. Dixie was overcome. Mom tried to settle her as they went to call an ambulance.

Dad enlisted my brother and me to help carry the body up the steep slope to where the ambulance would arrive. I guess it was okay in those days to move a dead body before the ambulance came. My job, as a ten-year-old, was to hold a small, square, purple pillow under his head as he was carried off. Borden's eyes were still wide open.

– *Charley Stump*

# Muir Beach Real Estate update 2022

From Debra Allen, Realtor

2 homes in Muir Beach have sold so far in the \$4mil range (they both had expansive ocean views, were remodeled, landscaped and professionally staged). Before these 2 sales in 2022, the other higher-end sale prices have been: 2 homes that sold in the \$3mil range (in 2018-2019) and 11 homes that sold in the \$2mil range (2008-2020). There is still only one home (newer construction with a pool) that sold higher than all of these prices (2021). Each Muir Beach home is unique, and valuation websites or licensed appraisers may not know what a home is really worth. A real estate agent suggests a list price, and the buyer sets real value by offering a price that a seller accepts.

Muir Beach continues to attract buyers who want access to nature and views, most are full-timers, due to the Mill Valley schools and proximity to SF. There aren't enough homes for those who want to own in Muir Beach, but the people who do buy here are excited to be "Muir Beachers" Welcome!

Best advice for future Muir Beach buyers is to buy whatever home you can, rather than waiting for the perfect one. And best advice for sellers is to keep your homes in good shape, let your real estate agent help get all necessary pre-sale inspections, make suggestions to get the home "photo ready", allow the home to be shown at any time and fully occupied by the buyers at their timing of close of escrow.

Rising interest rates don't seem to be affecting buyers in areas like Muir Beach, and there is no "best time of year to sell." I've been tracking Muir Beach sales since the early 1990s and noticed that Muir Beach homes can sell all year, but most Muir Beach sales occur in the fall and winter months. So, have a seat on that amazing view bench below, and enjoy Muir Beach now, during the holidays and beyond!



## You can give a man a fish or you can teach him to fish...

Jon Fishboy decided I needed to learn how to fish our local cliffs, so when I suggested that it looked calm out there he was all in. We headed down to the "Muir Beach Yacht Club" at Little Beach with poles and life jackets in hand.

After dragging the kayaks down to the water's edge, we loaded up and paddled out through the small waves with little incidence.

Paddling a kayak is fairly straight forward. Fishing off of a kayak is a bit challenging but can be easily learned. On the other hand, trying to land a big fish without tipping over, or losing your paddle and pole, and then dealing with a flopping fish on board is a different matter.

It's very difficult when you only have two arms and two eyes and everything seems to be happening fast and all at once. There is a balancing act of watching for refracting waves off the cliffs and incoming waves slapping over your kayak while the wind and current push you around. You also must focus on the fighting fish and netting it without losing your paddle or flipping. It's an awkward dance to say the least.

Once your fish is onboard your next step is to trap it between your feet long enough to strike it on the head, without hitting your foot. When that is achieved, you must remove the fish from the net, safely remove hook from the fish and secure everything on board.

Kayak fishing is very exciting if you don't mind the challenges. I guess you could say that I am hooked (pun intended!). The results can be rewarding, and delicious. Ocean kayak fishing can also be devastating. A flipped kayak, a lost pole, tackle or paddle can become merely, a long cold frustrating day on the water.

– Jeff Swarts, photo by Jon

# Long, Long Ago

*By Gail Falls and Anne Jeschke*

Around 1970 a young couple living in San Francisco was invited to a friend's home in Muir Beach. Gail Falls and her then husband, Mel, a doctor, were immediately enchanted with the small village and the dramatic coastal views. With great enthusiasm, they decided to design and build a house where they could settle down and raise their two young daughters.

With house plans in hand, Gail started going from bank to bank in Marin in search of mortgage money to start the building process. Mel's income from his medical practice was more than sufficient to qualify them for the mortgage. But there was a major complication. Bank after bank turned Gail and Mel down, refusing to lend them the money.

"No, we can't lend you money for a house out there," steely eyed mortgage managers told them. "If you ever wanted to sell, there would be no one who would want to buy there." Gail, however, persevered and went to

the (at that point in time) far northern area of Marin and found a bank in Novato willing to lend them the money.

Happily, Gail has never wanted to sell the house on Ahab. But if you check with Deb Allen, it seems clear she would have no trouble selling, and at a price that back in the 70's would have been unbelievable. Banks are not always right!

Brenda and Richard Kohn bought their home on Ahab about 15 years later. Although they were able to get a mortgage without major problems, they were required to put 20% down, and charged a whopping 13% on that mortgage. It almost makes buying a house in Muir Beach today look like a real bargain, and certainly a great investment. Our current prices and mortgage rates will probably be regarded with envy by those that follow us. Muir Beach will always be a great deal in so many ways!



*Mailbox row, 1967.  
Photo: Charley Stump*

# LONG AGO AND FAR AWAY

By Gerald Pearlman

Long ago and far away the Marin County Free Library used to send its Bookmobile to Muir Beach twice a month as it still does to 27 other locations in the County (including the ranch areas.) If you don't know anything about Bookmobiles they are big bus like vehicles which actually brings library services to your location instead of you jumping in your car and driving over to them -not only helping you avoid paying expensive gas prices but also contributing to the fight for a more sustainable planet. Resuming Bookmobile service to Muir Beach would be particularly beneficial to the senior population of the Beach who can no longer drive, or who are rapidly approaching that status.

The Bookmobile has all the services that a normal library offers but fitted into the smaller space of the bus. You can still browse the shelves holding a good sampling of the latest fiction and non-fiction, mysteries, and children's books, CD/ DVDs. Most amazing is that you can call them up beforehand and order or reserve the books of your choice, and they will bring them to you next time they come out!

Hard to believe such a service even existed let alone came out to Muir Beach twice a month. So what happened?

Well, if memory serves me right the Central Library bought a slightly bigger bus; and one of the regular drivers said it was unsafe to negotiate our curvy Hwy 1 road. His opinion without any elaboration didn't make much sense then, and it doesn't make much sense now given the size of the tour buses, Golden Gate shuttle buses, and even cement trucks that seem to have no trouble negotiating this stretch of the road on a daily basis both then, and now. The CHP has jurisdiction over Hwy 1 and states that buses over 35 ft. in length are prohibited from using Hwy 1. The new Bookmobile is 33 ft. in length so clearly eligible under current guidelines.

And then came the Pandemic curtailing most library services- the Bookmobiles in particular. With the pandemic somewhat considered under control, nearly 6 months ago I contacted the new head of library services in Marin County, Lana Adlawan, asking for the resumption of Bookmobile service to Muir Beach. I enlisted the help of our District Supervisor, Dennis Rodoni as well, who assigned a member of his staff to help resolve the issue.

So at this time we are still resolving the issue with nothing much to show for six months worth of efforts. Establishing CHP jurisdiction and

the mandatory bus lengths was my contribution but evidently not enough to convince the head of library services So where do we go from here?

My suggestion at this point is for Adlawan **to authorize a test drive** for the current Bookmobile over the same route they would be using to get to Muir Beach. Since they currently stop in the Tam Junction area they could move right on to a test drive without too much difficulty. But in addition to authorization for the test drive to Muir Beach, we would also need the participation of the Marin Transport Authority or the California Hwy. Patrol to supply the appropriate personnel to make the judgment call on the safety issue in question. In this manner the safety issue could be quickly resolved one way or the other; and hopefully Bookmobile service could be restored for Muir Beach as it has been for the 27 Districts currently being served throughout Marin County.

*Incidentally as if to add insult to injury, all during the suspension of services to Muir Beach residents, we were still required to pay taxes in support of library services even though we were not receiving any services (CO Library Spec Tax; Library Zone 2).*



*Little Beach [back in the day]. Photo: Charley Stump*

# The Critter Report: Keeping Our Mountain Healthy

By Dave MacKenzie

It's the source of our water. It's a dominant force of our coastal weather. It was a powerful and mysterious place to the Coast Miwok. It's home to wildlife and to plants found nowhere else. It's a place of recreation of all kinds. It's Mt. Tamalpais. Or, more affectionately, Mt. Tam.

Muir Beach is intimately connected with Mt. Tam in many ways. Thus the health of the mountain is tied to Muir Beach's health. So in this era of "permacrises" of fire, sudden oak death, and drought, how is Mt. Tam doing?

In 2016 a detailed report on the health of Mt. Tam was prepared by a coalition group of biologists and land managers under the umbrella of One Tam. This organization was designed to organize all stakeholders concerned with the well-being of the mountain. The result was a detailed 358-page report creating a benchmark against which to monitor Mt. Tam's health over the years to come. This may have been the first time a comprehensive analysis of an entire mountain area (56 sq. miles) has been done! If you are a nerdy type like me, you may wish to study that report at:

[www.onetam.org/media/pdfs/peak-health-white-paper-2016.pdf](http://www.onetam.org/media/pdfs/peak-health-white-paper-2016.pdf)

The method was to select and then measure 30 key indicator species for the analysis. This included several defined habitats (e.g., Coast Redwood Forest, Open Canopy Oak Woodland, and especially for Muir Beach, Coastal Scrub and Maritime Chaparral) and plants such as *Ceanothus* sp., *Manzanita* sp.,

Sargent Cypress, and critters such as American Badgers, California Scrub Jays, and Northern River Otters. Bottom line in 2016: health of the mountain was considered FAIR.

So this year I attended the "Sneak Peek into Peak Health" summit at the Junction Beer Garden (cool venue!), at Tam Junction, with roughly 100 other attendees or presenters for a preview look at the next big report, due out very soon. So how is the mountain doing in 2022? We know humans have been through a lot lately, so maybe Mt. Tam has been stressed also!

Overall, the rating for Mt. Tam health was again FAIR, but this time there were several areas of improvement. Key presentations focused on indicators such as Forest Health, Serpentine Barren Endemics, Bees, Anadromous Fish (e.g., Coho Salmon; in "life-support" in Redwood Creek), Western Pond Turtle (re-introduced to the creek and doing well), Northern Spotted Owl, also doing well. (By the way,

the first Muir Beach sighting of this spectacular owl was by MB'r John Paul on 9/30/22 at the Muir Beach Overlook; see accompanying photo), and Bats. Even Bats? It turns out that 25% of the world's species of mammals are bats – thus the most successful mammal group! Marin has 13 native species (and more migrants) known at this time. Although not yet, part of the study, I learned from a side-bar discussion that there are probably 5 Black Bears now in Marin! This is likely about the same as the number of Mountain Lions in Marin.

Another important update to the status report is the Marin County-wide Fine-Scale Vegetation Map, which has now been completed:

<https://parksconservancy.maps.arcgis.com/home/item.html?id=14b57b6d94cc4516841a6f753326848d>

We used this as part of the Marin County Breeding Bird Atlas this year to locate likely habitats for various bird species.

*Continued on next page*



*Muir Beach Bobcat, who probably ranges up onto Mt. Tam.  
Photo: Dave MacKenzie*

## *Critter Report cont'd*

The map includes Muir Beach, and so is also useful for fire and restoration planning here.

Inspiring comments were also given by Mia Monroe (Marin Community Liaison, National Park Service), and Allen Fish (Director, Golden Gate Raptor Observatory). Allen had my favorite one-liner of the day: Why do so many of us study the biology of Mt. Tam? Because it is FUN!

So check out the new report when available, but mostly HAVE FUN on Mt. Tam!



*Northern Spotted Owl at Muir Beach Overlook. Photo credit: John Paul*



*Fetid Adder's Tongue, a Redwood Forest specialist which blooms in January. Photo credit: Dave MacKenzie*



## *Day of the Dead 2022*

Many thanks to Lisa Eigsti, organizer and emcee for the Day of the Dead on Nov. 5th at the MBCC. Once again, she united the community and raised the dead during this annual celebration. Good food and drink, great company, remembrances, poetry by Nina, music by Beth and Tennessee and John John's favorite Rolling Stones music by the Unauthorized Rolling Stones.

*– Janet Tumpich*



*Beth and Tennessee. Photo submitted by Beth Nelson*



*Lisa with "Mick" of the Unauthorized Rolling Stones. Photo: Denise Lamott*

## The Book You've All Been Waiting For!



*Xpedition* - A Sailing and Cycling Shocker is coming soon - chronicling the most infamous real estate debacle in “Bello Beach’s” history! Find out what really happened...and prepare to be blown away!

### FOLLOW YOUR HEART, BUT WATCH YOUR BACK!

Have you ever wanted to get away? Away from it all? To live simply in nature – away from the things of man.

Well, local author pen-named Danny Fitz sure did. Dreaming of a better life “out there”, he and his girlfriend, Sam, set out upon a sailing and cycling expedition in the autumn of 2003 that would inspire millions of young adventurers to “stop and smell the roses while they are most fragrant.”

But Danny suddenly finds himself in uncharted waters when their witty romp to paradise gets rudely interrupted by some shocking news. From the jungle coves of Mexico aboard a tiny sloop to the top of the Swiss Alps on a tandem bicycle, this tawdry tale of treachery comes with a complimentary happy ending.

Published by Cruising Life, Inc., “Xpedition – A Sailing And Cycling Shocker” will be available in hard cover, paperback, eBook and audiobook from every bookseller in the world.

For more information please visit [Xpeditionbook.com](http://Xpeditionbook.com).

– Dan Fitzpatrick



## Welcome Westley

With a heart full of joy and gratitude we welcome the birth of Westley Ross Knapp, newborn son of Alisa and Howard Knapp. Westley was born on September 7, 2022, his parents’ 3rd wedding anniversary(!) The baby is well and thriving and already enjoying Muir Beach and Green Gulch Farm where his grandparents, Wendy and Peter Rudnick, raised mama Alisa and Uncle Jesse. We all look forward to growing up together in this beloved community!

*Written by Wendy Johnson Rudnick  
(and submitted by Brett)*

## New Muir Beach Baby

My husband Sefton Murray and I welcomed a second son, Cailen Lyndon Murray, into the world on November 6th. He decided to make his grand debut one week early and was born in the middle of the night weighing in at 6 pounds and 12 ounces.



– Christine Murray

## Please save the date for our Annual Winter Solstice Party on Saturday, December 17th @ 6PM

Join us on the shortest day of the year as we welcome back the Sun. We have an incredible 8 piece funk band from Oakland called The Grease Traps. Mark your busy calendars!!

Thank you,  
Alexis Chase

## MBVFA @ Muir Beach Holiday Arts Fair



Come support the **Muir Beach Volunteer Fire Department (MBVFD)** while you holiday shop for friends and family at the **Muir Beach Holiday Arts Fair on December 3 and 4!** We are freshly stocked up on cozy winterwear featuring the iconic dog logo. We will have PJs, sweatshirts and pants, denim jackets, beanies, long-sleeve Ts, ball caps, trucker hats, stainless wear and so much more!

The MBVFA will also be hosting a pop-up holiday MBVFD merch sale at **Proof Lab** (Mill Valley’s favorite surf and outdoor shop) on Friday afternoon, **December 9** at 244 Shoreline Highway in Tam Valley. Pick up the perfect holiday gift for everyone on your list... and something for yourself while you are at it!

– Denise Lamott & Lisa Eigsti