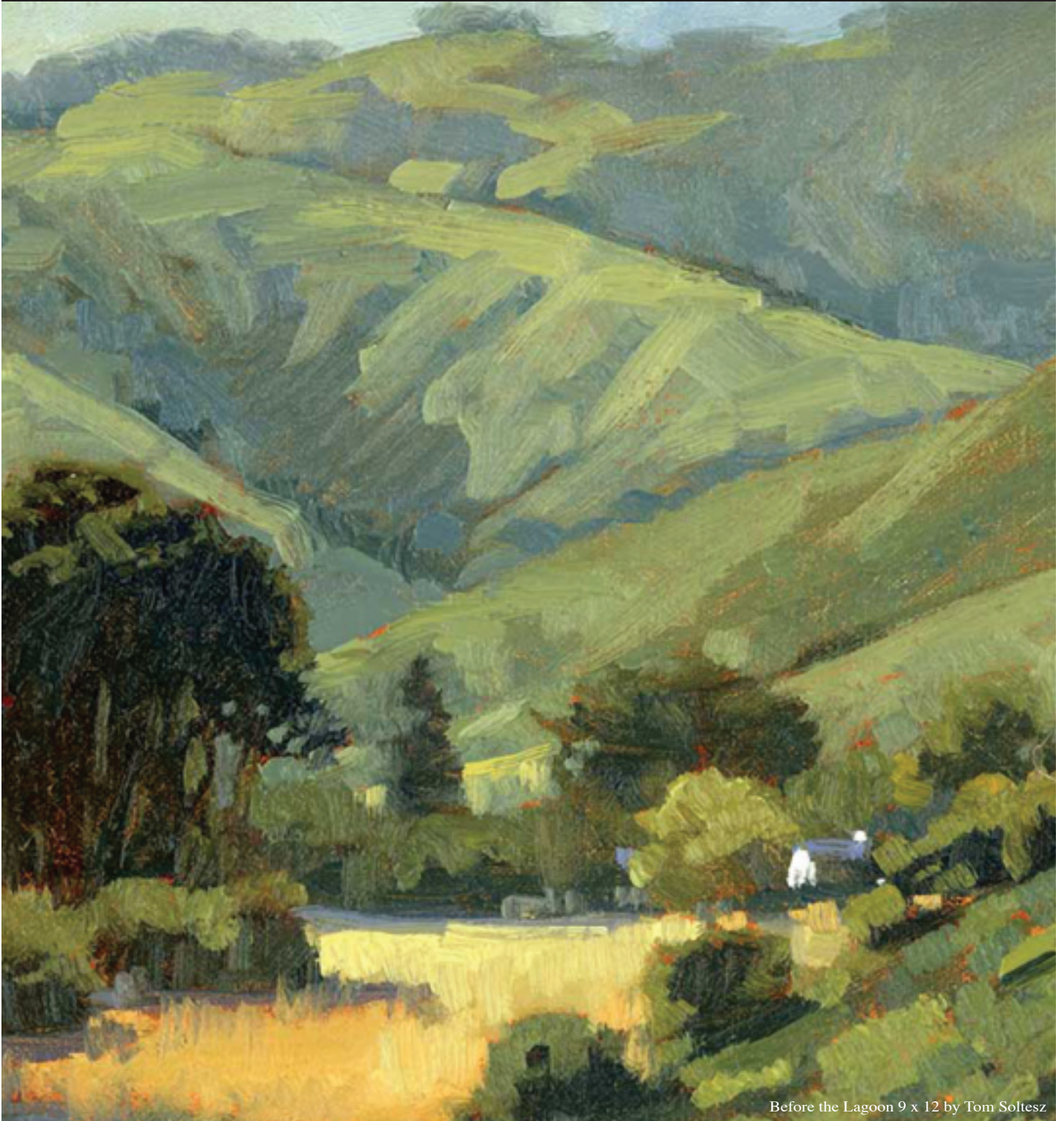


BEACHCOMBER

Muir Beach Neighborhood News

Issue 238 July 2007



Before the Lagoon 9 x 12 by Tom Soltesz

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FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Reader:

Some of you are reading your third free issue of the year. Beginning with the October issue, the *Beachcomber* will no longer distribute free copies to those households that don't carry current subscriptions. We don't have the funds to subsidize unpaid subscribers. Please subscribe by returning your remit envelope and keep up with the Muir Beach news. Questions? Call Ann Browning 383-2359.

Next issue: October 2007

Submissions Deadline: Sept. 17, 2007

See page 54 for Submissions Guidelines.

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Letters to the Editor

The *Beachcomber* welcomes your letters.

Address to linda.c.gibbs@gmail.com with Letters to the Editor in subject line.

Support Those Who Support Us

Many thanks to Dee Turman, Graphic Designer, for once again designing the *Beachcomber* without charge. This issue, as with the May newsletter, represents many hours of professional graphic design work. Your generosity is stunning, Dee.

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Hats off to printer Dave Semling, owner of Mill Valley Services, for contributing 4-color covers for a second time. Providing color covers is a historical first for the *Beachcomber* and we appreciate your contribution, Dave.

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ANNOUNCEMENTS



The *Beachcomber* Invites You to

an Evening of Wine Tasting

with

Theodore R Elliott

Proprietor of TR ELLIOTT

Featuring 2005 "Queste" Russian River Valley Pinot Noir

(available at restaurants, stores, and on the website)

and "Queste" Russian River Valley Pinot Noir

2002, 2003, and 2004

(only available from Ted's personal wine cellar)

Saturday, September 15, 2007

5:00 pm – 7:00 pm

Muir Beach Community Center

\$35 per person; reservations required; seating limited.



Photograph by Peggy Elliott

To reserve space, please make your check payable to *Beachcomber*. Drop in 30 Sunset mailbox or mail to: Linda Gibbs, 30 Sunset Way, Muir Beach, CA 94965. As this is a fundraiser for the *Beachcomber*, you will be listed as a Friend of the *Beachcomber* in the newsletter. Please include a note indicating how you would like your name listed or tell us if you would prefer being listed as Anonymous or not at all. If you do not give instructions, we will assume you would like your name listed.

TR Elliott is dedicated to producing small lots of Pinot Noir from the Russian River Valley. Located in the heart of Sonoma County, California, this grape-growing region combines ideal soils and climate to create Pinot Noir of world-class quality.

Ted samples the 2006 vintage from barrel. Photograph by Peggy Elliott

Ted Elliott is a resident of both Santa Rosa and Muir Beach. He has maintained close ties with the community since 1976 when he moved into the old Navy Barracks at 185 Sunset Way. He currently spends as much time as possible at the beach, or at the stables or working on endless projects at his Charlotte's Way home.

Ted inspects grapes from the 2006 harvest. Photograph by Peggy Elliott

His search for the perfect bottle of wine began while still a resident at Muir Beach. He commuted to Sonoma County with the harvest of 1978, and for the next quarter-century he worked with the finest wine growers and vintners in the region. In 2002 he founded TR Elliott with his wife and two children, opening a new chapter in his pursuit of excellence. To learn more about TR Elliott, visit www.TRElliott.com

The *Beachcomber* thanks Ted Elliott for his generosity in offering an evening of wine tasting for the benefit of the newsletter, which he has been reading since 1976. He is truly a Friend of the *Beachcomber*.

We hope to see you on September 15th. All proceeds benefit the *Beachcomber*.

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mary Collier Turns 88

By Malcolm Collier

On May 2, 2007, the community of Muir Beach came out to celebrate the 88th birthday of a local legend, Mary Collier. The potluck began right after bistro. Malcolm and Aaron Collier were present and Malcolm brought a number of photographs that Mary had taken to give us a visual history of her life. Many "old timers" who do not often make it to bistro showed up. Just before the cake was cut, neighbors shared stories of their first encounter with Mary or their favorite Mary story. It was a wonderful way to recognize the spirit of one of the oldest and most beloved residents of the beach. Following is a biography of Mary written by Malcolm. --Tayeko Kaufman

Mary Elizabeth Trumbull Collier was born May 4, 1919, in Albany, New York, and raised in Schenectady in a family with many strong personalities and a long history in the region. According to her sisters, Mary was considered more than unique from an early age. The family combined a strong focus on education with a love of the outdoors, aspects of Mary's character certainly familiar to her Muir Beach neighbors. Mary's father passed away in her early teens leaving her mother—a teacher, librarian, a founder of the Friends Meeting in Schenectady, and a character in her own right—to raise the five children. Mary's accomplishments in high school earned her a full scholarship to Vassar College. Along the way she also played the cello for the Albany Symphony and acquired professional photographic skills. After graduation from Vassar College she was employed as the manager of the Greenbelt, MD, Consumer Cooperative, hired in part because of her photographic abilities.



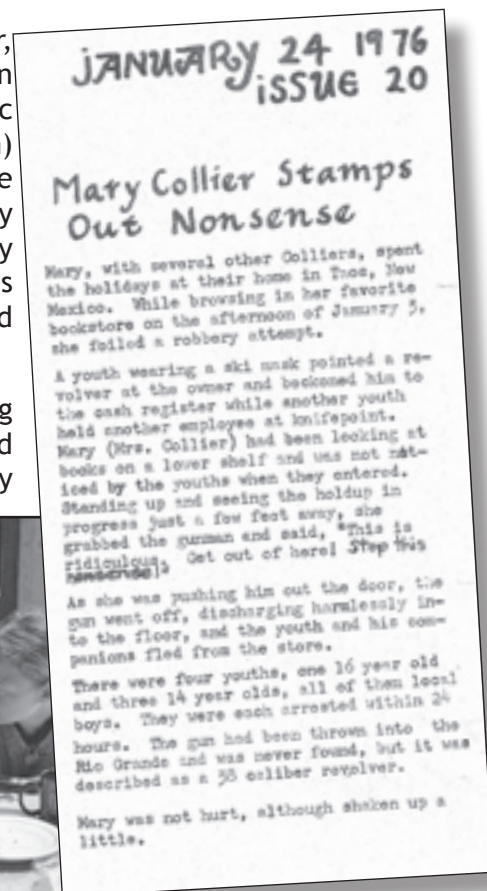
Mary Collier at her 88th birthday party.
Photograph by Malcolm Collier

During her employment in Greenbelt she met and married John Collier, Jr., a photographer for the Farm Security Administration who had been raised in New Mexico and Mill Valley, California. Their later photographic work took them and a growing family (Malcolm, Robin, Vian, and Aran) to South America, Canada, and many parts of the United States. The family home was in Talpa, New Mexico, which is still an important family base. The family arrived in Muir Beach very early in 1959, living briefly in Joe Rodriguez's house before settling in what is now Eric Groneman's house, later moving to a home owned by Larry and Janet Stump, and finally to the present Collier house in 1965.

The Muir Beach of those days, with its mix of Portuguese ranching families, carpenters, longshore and warehouse workers, artists, and other independent types, was a good place for the Colliers and Mary in particular. She became active in social and political activities while also working with John on a wide variety of photographic projects, several books, exhibits, and numerous articles. She later obtained an MA in anthropology from San Francisco State College, carried out research in ethnobotany, taught a community college course in anthropology, and was co-editor of a major publication (*Interviews with Tom Smith and Maria Copa*) on the ethnographic work of Elizabeth Kelly in Marin and southern Sonoma counties.



Gerry Pearlman and Allison Pinto celebrate with Mary at the Community Center. Photograph by Malcolm Collier



Reprinted from the Beachcomber, January 24, 1976, Issue 20; Editor: Gail Litwiller

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Muir Beach Marriage

By Jessica and Brian Steel



(Left to right): Jessica Steel, Virginia Steel (Brian's mother), Brian Steel

Photograph by Eric Macklin (Brian's brother-in-law)

In March 2006, Brian Steel and Jessica Stoner fell in love with Muir Beach and purchased 300 Sunset Way from Bev Biondi. As residents of the Rockridge area of Oakland, Brian and Jessica spend as many weekends as possible in Muir Beach and look forward to a time when they're able to make Sunset Way a more permanent home.

On Memorial Day weekend this year, while the rest of the Muir Beach community was busy hosting the annual BBQ event for the MBVFD, Jessica and Brian were busy getting married. It was a small ceremony with just 50 guests, comprising immediate family and a few longtime friends in Sudbury, Massachusetts near Brian's childhood home. The service, which was officiated by Brian's mother, Virginia, took place in the Martha-Mary Chapel at Longfellow's Wayside Inn, which has been in continuous operation since 1716. In keeping with Jessica's musical background, a string trio played the prelude music and Jessica's father and her best friend sang in beautiful harmony with the string section during the ceremony.

After exchanging the vows they had written, the bride and groom left the chapel in a horse-drawn carriage and rejoined their guests for dinner and dancing at the historic Lyman Estate, also known as "The Vale," chosen because it emanates a feeling of old-fashioned romance. The elaborate architectural detail of the home and the backdrop of jazz standards contributed to create an atmosphere of elegance and fun. The couple's first dance was appropriately titled "The First Dance," a jazz-swing tune that Jessica wrote and recorded for Brian for his birthday a few years earlier. Their dance lessons seemed to pay off as their choreographed foxtrot went without a hitch, i.e., Brian did not step on Jessica's toes...and they're hoping that's a good sign for the rest of their life together.

Kate Brandt Graduates from Brown

By Laurie Brandt

Kate Brandt, a Muir Beach resident from birth, graduated with honors from Brown University on May 27, 2007. She will be a Gates Scholar at University of Cambridge in the fall studying for an M.Phil. in international relations.

At Brown she majored in international relations at the University's Watson Institute for International Affairs where she wrote her honors thesis on the role of history and memory in Sino-Japanese security relations. She was awarded the William Gaston Prize for academic excellence in the field of international relations and was selected as a Watson Associate. She also won the DAR award for best undergraduate history paper for her original research on media coverage of the Nanjing Massacre of 1937.

Active in University affairs, she was the president and founder of the Roosevelt Institution at Brown, America's first progressive student think tank. She served as the undergraduate representative to the Brown Board of Trustees, member of the peer judiciary board, class representative to the student government (UCS), member of the University policy advisory committee chaired by the University president, and student representative to the Environmental Task Force where she developed the policy initiative that Brown is using to become carbon neutral.

Beyond Brown, she commuted to Boston for two years as an intern at the Clinton Foundation HIV/AIDS Initiative. In the summer of 2005 she served as the Acting Deputy Executive Secretary to the United States Trade Representative in Washington D.C. working to pass the CAFTA legislation in Congress. She is proficient in three languages. Fluent in Spanish, she has studied Italian in Florence and Mandarin in Beijing. At Cambridge she plans to research Chinese political, military, and trade involvement with Latin America.

Kate's immediate plans: to spend July at home in Muir Beach where she plans to cook, chill and visit neighbors and friends.



Kate Brandt
Photograph by Laurie Brant

ANNOUNCEMENTS

A Journey with the Pelican Inn

By Will Koza

Working at the Pelican Inn, a 16th century style Tudor House with seven bedrooms, three fireplaces, and English Gardens, seems completely natural to me. I grew up in a large Victorian house dating from 1822, in a small town outside of Boston, Massachusetts. There was an attached carriage house, and a barn dating to the mid 1700s on the property, with a secret tunnel under the garden stretching to the main house. This tunnel was used for hiding escaped slaves in what is known today as the Underground Railroad. Secret passages between the walls and under the floors of our house allowed a curious boy, and his equally intrigued twin brother, to find more than enough ways of getting into trouble with our parents as well as our four older sisters.

My college years were spent studying Communications at LaSalle University in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. I then flew to San Francisco, attended the Academy of Art College and earned my Bachelors of Fine Arts degree in Motion Pictures and Television. Always in the mood for another adventure, I loaded up a pickup truck, and together with my friend and poetry professor Patrick, drove across the country stopping along the way in Chicago, New York, Boston and finally Peace Dale, Rhode Island.

On a dare from my brother-in-law I moved back to the West Coast and took a position at a French Restaurant for a large hotel in Santa Monica, California. After a few years, I worked my way over to the Concierge Desk.

From ex-vice presidents, governors, actors, agents, famous ex-cops, and penny pinching billionaires' wives all surrounding me, I was somehow able to find my wonderful wife Alena. She walked by in slow motion and I knew I had to ask her to dinner. When I got the courage to ask her to a five star Zagat rated Italian restaurant, on our second visit, she said "yes." Luckily we found a good bottle of Chianti and a common desire to live in the Bay Area together.

I convinced her to leave the City of Angels behind shortly after the honeymoon, and we drove north to San Francisco. Being a former stomping ground of mine we toured the city by the bay and decided to settle in a quiet place in Sausalito. I read an ad for a job at the Pelican Inn in Muir Beach, so I wound my way down Route One to see this amazing place. I sat in the pub with Alena, had some nice casual conversation with the bartender and drank a couple of pints. Alena turned to



Will Koza in the pub at the Pelican Inn
Photograph by Bruce Barlow

me, and I smiled back because we both new the Pelican Inn was going to be the perfect place for me.

We paid our bill and wished the bartender good luck with her college courses. We stopped by the fireplace in the dining room before leaving, to warm our hands and feet, and read the quote engraved in the mantle face: "Fear knocked at the door, faith answered and no one was there." There can definitely be rewards for those that dare to walk forward into the unknown.

After my first six months as the General Manager of the Pelican Inn, the challenge has been put forth to me, by the owners and guests alike, to envision a place beyond the now. The Pelican Inn is a living memory of a familiar place where couples that were engaged in the Snug room 25 years ago return every year to celebrate the anniversary of their wedding. There is a pub where royal pints bring back memories of when Mr. Felix planted a favorite tree by the entry, or where the birds are nesting in the honeysuckle that blows a sweet fragrance through the open window. The Pelican Inn is a very special place and will remain so well into the future. I look forward to continuing the traditions, and celebrating in all of its future accomplishments.



The Pelican 9 x 12 by Tom Soltesz
Photograph by Tom Soltesz

THE 35TH ANNUAL FIREMEN'S BBQ

May 5th Barbecue Work Party

Story and Photographs by Julie Smith

After months of planning, the picnic area Work Parties for the 2007 Firemen's Barbecue got underway May 5th. Manly Men armed with weed whackers and chain saws attacked the weeds and overgrown willows with a vengeance while Maxx Moore, on the power washer, vaporized the year's accumulation of grime. They were all clearly having way too much fun! Others raked the weeds as Janice Kubota yanked them, while Sierra—Janice & Maury Ostroff's dog—explored the creek, visited the Park Service work crew on the switchbacks, and collected ticks. Kathy Sward & Anna Tom planned the Tee shirt booth and presided over lunch, featuring sandwiches and giant chocolate-dipped strawberries. The only one who couldn't possibly be having fun was Arleen Robertson, who spent the day in the barbecue pit and oven shoveling out the soggy aftermath of last year's Barbecue... but even she said she was glad to have a job. The carpentry projects work party next week should be extra fun!



Not a speck of dirt gets past Maxx Moore and his mighty power washer!



Those weeds are no match for Master Weed Whacker, Eric Groneman.



Kathy Sward, Al Kile, Dave Elliott, John John Sward, Mike Moore, Aran Collier, Eric Groneman & Fleche Phoenix take a much-needed break.



Fleche Phoenix liberates the stage from the willows that have invaded it since last year.



Arlene Robertson gets down and dirty in last year's barbecue ashes, which have been pureed into a fine, heavy goo by the winter rains.



Aran Collier carts weeds off to the compost pile.

Work Party Lunch Menu

Make your own sandwich bar:

Breads: Cheese/jalapeno bread, sourdough rolls, buttermilk bread

Luncheon meats: Roast beef, ham, turkey, salami, pastrami

Cheese: Swiss, Chipotle cheddar, provolone

Condiments: Avocado, tomato, lettuce, pickles, jalapeno peppers, pepperoncini

Chips: Regular & Doritos cheesie munch mix

Drinks: Bottled water, Hansen's sodas, a variety of specialty beers, other sodas

Dessert: Gigantic cookies, chocolate-dipped strawberries with milk chocolate and white chocolate

May 12th Barbecue Work Party

Story and Photographs by Julie Smith

At the end of a foggy week, the Sun Gods smiled on the second Barbecue Work Party. The Men of Muir Beach armed with hammers, power saws and drills descended on the picnic grounds, prepared to demolish, patch and rebuild. This time Maury Ostroff led the charge, deftly organizing the crew into whackers, rakers, cleaners and repairers. Though it was billed as Carpentry Projects Day, the weed whackers and rakes seemed to be getting more action than the hammers and saws, probably to the disappointment of the guys itching to engage in more manly work than "gardening." The day was well documented in photos by Virgil Taylor, while Maia, Chris Gove's aging retriever, cheerily presided over the activities. The kitchen counters received a thorough scrubbing by



Nina Vincent & Rina Nieman, having scrubbed the counters clean, prepare a great lunch for the hungry workers.



Try imaging clean shelves lined with crisp white paper, piled high with colorful tees, tanks and sweats...



Ted Marshall on the Rake manages a smile for the camera.

Nina Vincent and Rina Nieman who did the lunch honors, serving up delicious turkey & cheese subs with all the trimmings, accompanied by bright red apples set out on a clean white "tablecloth."



Michael Kaufman models the Official Head Gear of the day.



Whackers, rakers & gatherers Michael Kaufman, Rob Allen, Ted Marshall & Jim White purge the field of foxtails, tall grasses & weeds.

May 19th Barbecue Work Party

Story and Photographs by Brad Eigsti

The sunshine and pleasant temperature made for another productive day preparing for the "BIG EVENT."

Al Kile whirled the weed whacker while Lonna Richmond, Linda Lotriet, and Peter Lambert busted out the power sanders. Kathy Sward and Arlene Robertson cleaned the T-shirt booth in preparation for big sales. Michael Kaufman and Bob Hayden built a Nacho stand, among many other things. Chris Gove and his dog Maya, with Michael Kaufman in tow, cleared the field of grass with their antique farm equipment. Eric Groneman, John John Sward, and Dave Elliott made big plans and did lots of arm waving. Maury Ostroff, using his fine carpentry skills, fixed up the ticket booth. Jes Sward and family prepared for the beer sales, while Brad Eigsti and family created new signs. Cuco Alcala showed up and did something important, I'm just not sure what.

If I am missing anyone who helped out ... many thanks!

Lots of laughs, a great lunch by Trish McCall, and plenty of sunshine made for a wonderful day.



Hannah Eigsti helps out her dad Brad with sign-making.



Michael Kaufman sits atop the antique farm equipment while Chris Gove drives the truck and Chris's dog Maya supervises.



Lonna Richmond power sands the bench.



Jes Sward, Jackson Sward, and Angie Banducci take a break from working on the beer booth.

Barbecue Prep Week

Story by Linda Gibbs

Photographs by Julie Smith

Barbecue preparations not only were taking place at the picnic grounds but all over Muir Beach the week leading up to the annual event on Sunday, May 27th.

For more than ten years the dessert committee has been baking brownies and cakes at the Green Gulch Farm kitchen, with ingredients donated by the Green Gulch folks. This year was no exception. Headed by Ann Browning, the bakers met on Friday night to prepare the cookie dough and bake a few batches of cookies, and make the brownies. On Saturday afternoon a few bakers finished baking cookies and were joined in the evening by the full committee to make poppy seed cakes. The next morning the cakes were iced at Ann's house.

On Thursday the T-Shirt group, chaired by Kathy Sward, met at the Banducci ranch to unpack the T-shirts, count them, check them against the inventory list, and then repack them for transport to the barbecue site on Sunday morning. Members of the Muir Beach Garden Club led by Joey Groneman made the centerpieces for the picnic tables and the booth decorations. All of Muir Beach was a hustle and a bustle as BBQ Day drew near.



T-Shirt committee members take a break from counting T-shirts at Banducci ranch to show off the merchandise, from left to right: Lonna Richmond, Pam Barlow, Joey Groneman, Kathy Sward, Pam Eichenbaum, and Joey's dog, Sandy.



Lonna Richmond and Joey Groneman checking inventory for the T-Shirt booth.



The beautiful centerpieces as well as the decorations for the booths were created by Janice Kubota, Shirley Nygren, and Joey Groneman of the Muir Beach Garden Club.



Bryce Browning positions the super-duper brownie cutter with multiple wheels.



Bryce Browning enjoys the industrial strength facilities at Green Gulch, necessary to turn 39 lbs. of flour, 48 lbs. of sugar, and 12 lbs. of chocolate chips into scrumptious desserts.



Dessert committee bakers prepare the batter in the Green Gulch Farm kitchen, from left to right: Shirley Nygren, Danny Hobson, Arlene Robertson, Al Kile, and Gail Falls.

May 26th Barbecue Work Party & Volunteer Dinner

Story and Photographs by Julie Smith

The Day Before! Harvey was nailing "No Parking" signs along Muir Woods Road at the crack of dawn. The picnic grounds crawled with workers setting up the kitchen, stocking the Tee Shirt Booth and putting the finishing touches on the structures. The bridge received an intruder-proof barricade. Brad and Lisa put the finishing touches on the seemingly hundreds of signs and hung them in their proper places. The stage was decorated with the traditional patriotic bunting. Pounds and pounds of onions were chopped and added to Ted's Bean Salad. The field was given a final "haircut," the entry gate sign was put in place. Dave's "To-Do" list, propped against his truck all day, was finally almost all checked off.

It was time for one of those famous Muir Beach potluck parties. Cuco & Consuelo Alcala made their fabulous tacos with all the trimmings. The local fishermen provided succulent crabs. Peter Lambert treated with a case of very very fine wine. To top it all, the Groneman Gang brought the results of their abalone dives up the coast, which were enthusiastically pounded, sautéed and devoured by the appreciative masses. It was well after dark before the party was put to bed. Tomorrow is the big day!



Bob Hayden, designer and master carpenter of the new Nachos stand, proudly stands by his work.



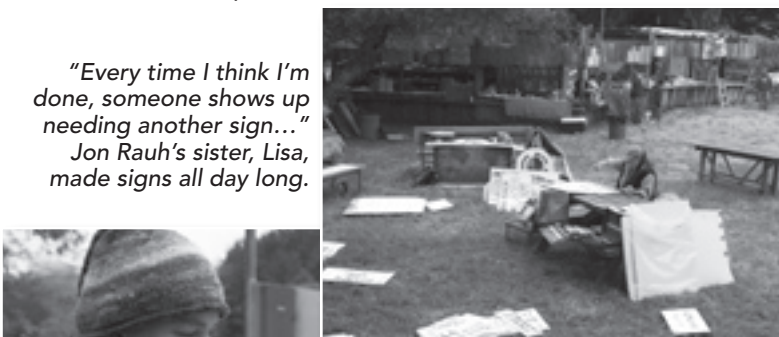
"Big Girls, don't cry yi yi, they don't cry..." - Marilyn Laatsch and Chloe Scott got to peel the onions.



Beans, beans and more beans - enough to feed an army!



"You want to buy HOW many sweatshirts?" - Kathy Sward & Seela Lewis stock the Tee Shirt store.



"Every time I think I'm done, someone shows up needing another sign..."
Jon Rauh's sister, Lisa, made signs all day long.



Laurie Piel admires Linda Lotriet's rubber gloves. Who says fashion isn't everything?



At the Volunteer Dinner on Saturday night hosted by Cuco and Consuelo Alcala, hungry diners await succulent abalone caught off the Gualala coast by members of the fire dept. Clockwise from left: Dee Hayden, Janice Kubota, Chris Freidel, Erin Pinto, Brent Smith, John John Sward, and Amadeo Banducci, taking his turn pounding the abalone.

THE 35TH ANNUAL FIREMEN'S BBQ



Photographs by Julie Smith

THE 35TH ANNUAL FIREMEN'S BBQ

BBQ Day

Photographs by Julie Smith
Captions by Linda Gibbs



Dave Elliott's Work Party to-do list is almost complete early Sunday morning.



The calm before the storm.



Ticket takers Al Kile (in left baseball cap) and Bob Hayden (in right baseball cap), along with Gail Falls, welcome arrivals at the gate.



The crowds come despite the cool foggy weather.



Amadeo Banducci, Gerry Pearlman (before he got a haircut!), and Steve Shaffer flippin' chickens on the grill.



The hungry crowd stands in line for lunch.



Cooks and servers from left to right: Eric Groneman, Steve Shaffer, Michael Llewellyn-Williams, and Peter Lambert. Allison Pinto waits for the plates and that's Bruce Barlow in the cowboy hat next to her.



Maury Ostroff loads the tamale steamer while Linda Lotriet prepares a vegetarian plate.



In the Kitchen from left to right: Susy Stewart, Bryce Browning, Bruce Barlow, Ted Marshall, Arlene Robertson, Gerry Pearlman, and Steve Gillespie taking a lunch ticket.

BBQ Day, continued



CSD Board member Danny Hobson offers up dessert.



The Kitchen crew toasts Jessica Stoner and Brian Steel who were back east getting married that day (see page 5). Brian explains, "It was the same scotch whisky that we served at our wedding reception—Macallan 18 Years Old Single Highland Scotch Whisky—and Ted Marshall (center) was kind enough to toast us with it at 1 pm (4 pm Eastern), which is exactly when Jessica began her walk down the aisle." Toasting with Ted are Erin Pinto and Cuco Alcala.



The Raffle family, Debra, Thomas, and Rob Allen, entice a ticket buyer with the 100 prizes stacked up behind them.



Seela Lewis (left) and Lonna Richmond sell T-shirts while Maxx Moore and Joey Levin hang out.



Shirley Nygren sold 131 nachos with a machine and ingredients contributed by her employer, ARAMARK, Muir Woods concessionaire.



The headlining band, Andre's All Stars: Chris Goddard, Andre Pessis, Allyson Paige, Eric Martin, and Lorelee Christiansen.



John John Sward (right) and Andre Pessis put on the first barbecue 35 years ago with 50 people in attendance where the volleyball court is today.



Nina Vincent and Ailish Schutz take time out to rock on.



Nancy Knox helping out in the Kitchen.



Maxx Moore offers up a platter of barbecue.

May 28th Post-Barbecue Cleanup Party

Story and Photographs by Julie Smith

In spite of less than stellar weather, the Barbecue was a huge success. But now comes the cleanup. Michael Kaufman has already sold cases of salad greens to The Pelican and made a stop at St. Vincent's with other leftovers. The kids' play area has been carted off, the signs taken down. Barbecue-sauce-covered grills, pots, pans, and serving ware must be cleaned and put away. A rough inventory of left over supplies is taken before they're packed away in airtight tubs. Picnic tables are loaded onto the trailer for return. Loud chatter about the day before, the fun, the success of the event abounds. Plans and ideas for next year are already being formed. Even the cleanup has an element of camaraderie and a good time.



Jes Sward washes a well-used beer pitcher in the beer booth.



Fleche Phoenix & Peter Wood clown for the camera.



Lea Wood & Anne Jeschke do dishes on the lawn. Later that morning, Anne & Paul Jeschke embarked on a month-long camping trip ... this was good practice.



Laurie & David Piel, having bought their house two days before the Barbecue, got right into the community spirit – welcome to Muir Beach!



Allison Pinto, the consummate environmentalist, refused to waste one more paper cup and drinks her coffee from a bowl. She got quite a buzz!



It took a lot of macho men to hoist those picnic tables onto the trailer.

The 35th Annual BBQ Committee Chairs

Photographs by Julie Smith



MUIR BEACH PAPARAZZI

Julie Smith,
Beachcomber Photographer

Sales

Firemen's Raffle Update

By Debra Allen, Raffle Chair

I had the usual, very-assorted 100 prizes. Many thanks to the 1/3 of the prize donors who were Muir Beach neighbors (and to Rob Allen who got the Sharks and some other fancy companies to donate prizes). Congratulations to those of you who won over 1/2 of them (and for being good-natured when you won something that was a funny match, like Pam Eichenbaum and Skye Collier!). Thanks also to my helpers, including the brand-new Muir Beachers, David & Laurie Piel; Erica Sward for pulling the winners; and to my runners! And a really big thank you to those of you who bought extra tickets, who sold loads of them, and who sent in donation checks! You can find a list of the winners on the firemen's site www.muirbeachfire.com



A hopeful raffle ticket buyer kisses her ticket for good luck. Photograph by Debra Allen

Debra Allen, Raffle Chair

I enjoy seeing your rituals: Those who believe in purchasing their tickets at the very end. (Over 1/2 of the MB winners purchased their tickets and had the tickets in before the BBQ; but I also heard that the first prize went to the girl who bought her ticket last!). Some revisit the raffle booth throughout the day and buy a couple tickets at a time. Some curl the ends. And here's a photo of a hopeful raffle ticket buyer, kissing her ticket for good luck.

Tee Time High

By Kathy Sward, T-Shirt Chair

I was feeling pretty positive that the weather people would be wrong, as they very often are—but it didn't happen that way. It was cold and not exactly the kind of day one wants when throwing a big barbecue fundraiser, especially when it provides the main income for our all-volunteer fire department each year.

But it's kind of funny how things go; we threw it and the people came anyway. And since it wasn't a hot, sunny day, they came anxiously to our shirt booth to see what we had; they happily laid down their money and walked away wearing their warm, wonderful, brand new duds.

And everyone selling the incredible array of merchandise had a great time seeing so many familiar people and listening to the best live music around for many a mile.

And, thanks to all the enthusiastic volunteer sellers, we managed to take almost \$15,000 from the happy crowd in exchange for a bit of that oh-so-famous Muir Beach mufti. Wow! It was so worth all the work that went into the production, from inventorying, perusing catalogues, working up orders and re-working them when items were discontinued or out of stock, and checking box after box

upon arrival, figuring out pricing and signage and finally setting up our funky little one-day shop. Gosh, I think I'm ready to do it again next year.

And, in the meantime, there's plenty left if you didn't make it over to our booth that day. Come by the community center during any Wednesday Bistro (9:30-11:30, 383-9969) or call me, Kathy Sward, at home, 383-6762 and we'll find a time to go check it out.



Kathy Sward, T-Shirt Chair

Also, anybody who made it home with a barbecue apron belonging to the fire association can get it to me, or let me know when I should pick it up. You could also put it into a bag and leave it inside our fence if I'm not home.

Thanks, everybody, for supporting our much appreciated and well-loved, all-volunteer fire department.

grounds

Dave Elliott, Work Parties Chair



Dave Elliott, Work Parties

Many thanks go out to all of the volunteers, some new to the work parties, many from the history books of 34 past BBQs. A special thank you for the fantastic meals (the chocolate-dipped strawberries were the best), the wood chippers, the grass cutters and weed-eaters brigade, the new bench bunch, the sanding team and de-stapling crew, the rakers, the assorted carpenters and helpers, the guest work party leaders, and for those that showed up just for lunch. We couldn't have done it without all of you!!

Baking at Green Gulch Farm

By Ann Browning, Dessert Chair

This is a note of thanks to all the wonderful, hard-working people who have made the dessert baking such a pleasure over the last 10 years. For the two nights prior to the BBQ, 8-10 of us gather at the Green Gulch kitchen to make, entirely by hand, 192 brownies, 144 servings of poppy seed cake, and 720 chocolate chip cookies. Our friends at Green Gulch have been extremely generous over the years, donating all the supplies we need, not to mention the beautiful space and the four giant ovens that make this all possible.



Ann Browning, Desserts

This year Julie Smith and Gail Falls joined our regular crew of Arlene and Al, Michael and Tayeko, Joey, Shirley, Danny, Bryce and me. Lanie Case, another regular, was unable to make it this year, but her daughter Kim did a wonderful job of helping at the BBQ itself, joined by long-time helper Brenda Kohn and some of the bakers who kept a steady stream of customers supplied with goodies and hot coffee. I could only watch with amazement and gratitude at how hard everyone worked.

Special thanks to Danny, Bethany, and others whose home-made treats were big sellers, as always. But no note of thanks would be complete without mentioning the invaluable help of Ellen Mettler who not only started the tradition of making desserts in these large quantities and set up the initial procedures manual but donated the baskets, linens, sheet pans, rolling rack, and other essentials to the effort. Without her moral and physical support I never could have done this job.

Fun Fact:

We sold out all 42 dozen tamales at the BBQ, which is about 250 Tamale meals.



Maury Ostroff, Veggie Meals

THE 35TH ANNUAL FIREMEN'S BBQ

Drinks



Jes Sward,
Beer & Wine



Arlene Robertson,
Non-Alcoholic Beverages

Entertainment



John John Sward, Music

Finance



Sharon Mullin, Cashier

Food



Amadeo Banducci,
Chicken Barbecue



Ted Marshall,
Bean Salad



Erin Pinto,
Food Prep



Erin Pinto,
Food Servers



Steve Shaffer,
Chicken Order
and Pickup



John John Sward,
Barbecue Sauce



Nina Vincent,
Work Party Food

Grounds



Chris Gove,
Parking



Joey Groneman,
Decorations



Al Kile,
Entry ID Booth



Fleche Phoenix,
Trash



Jon Rauh,
Toliets

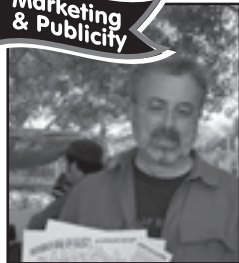


Jon Rauh,
Field Work



Peter Wood,
Post-BBQ Cleanup

Marketing & Publicity



Bryce Browning,
Printed Materials



Bryce Browning,
Website



Brad Eigsti,
Sign Production



Harvey Pearlman,
Road Sign Placement

Medical



Ted Marshall,
First Aid

Organization



Anne Jeschke,
Volunteer Coordinator



Michael Kaufman,
Permits/Security

Sales



Trish McCall,
Ticket Sales

Supplies



Rob Allen,
Supplies



Paul Jeschke, Ice



Ted Marshall,
Charcoal

MUIR BEACH VOLUNTEER FIREMEN'S ASSOCIATION

Community Fired Up
Over Fire Tax

By Paul Jeschke

Muir Beach residents will decide in November whether to significantly increase the Volunteer Fire Department's budget with a \$200 per year parcel tax.

In a meeting June 27, the Muir Beach Community Services District Board voted 4-0 to put the proposal on the November 6 ballot. The tax, which would generate approximately \$30,000 a year and run for four years, must be approved by two-thirds of those voting in order to pass.

"It's a small amount for each parcel, but it makes a big difference to the Fire Department," said Michael Kaufman, board president of the Muir Beach Volunteer Firemen's Association. The department presently runs on a budget of about \$70,000 a year with much of the funding coming from the annual Memorial Day Barbeque, sales of clothing with the department logo and grants. If the parcel tax is approved, the department would operate on a budget of about \$104,000, Kaufman said.

The MBVFD board said the tax was necessary to "put a foundation into place" behind the fire department in case barbeque revenue declined and to support increased efforts to promote emergency preparedness and fuel abatement programs. "This is the only community in West Marin that does not have tax support for its fire department," said MBVFD board member Brent Smith.

During a public comment period, Chief John Sward said two expensive projects confront the department, replacing the quick attack mini-pumper truck and building a new fire station. The department also needs to spend about \$20,000 for new pagers to alert firefighters to emergencies.

"Fifty-four cents a day is the minimum this community should do to say 'thank you' to the fire department that takes care of us," said Muir Beach resident Tayeko Kaufman. That view was shared by Kathy Sward who said "it's not like it's something outrageous."

Kaufman was questioned closely by Gerald Pearlman who was concerned that the \$11,000 for fuel abatement was an unnecessary expense that should be the responsibility of individual property owners. "Easements and community right of ways have to be cleared," the MBVFD board president countered.

The proposed tax also came under fire from Walter Postle who, in a letter to the CSD Board, asked if the \$200 tax was a "number pulled out of a hat and is nothing but a wild guess, something that was doable politically and would not cause a fuss?"

"We already have state, local and federal taxes that are supposed to pay for this protection," Postle said.

A similar theme was sounded by Karla Andersdatter who argued via email that many fire department calls "are for tourists and accidents on the highway." She said the Marin County Fire Department, not the Muir Beach Volunteer Fire Department "should be the ones to attend to tourists."

Ellen Mettler said she and Mike Moore were in favor of the tax because they were "well aware of the unpaid man hours it takes and devotion of the members who besides getting some clothing or an occasional meal, are completely uncompensated for their countless hours."

While admitting that the department currently has \$90,000 in its reserve fund, the MBVFD argued that the money should be used to buy a new squad truck, which is "already failing and long overdue for replacement."

A lengthy explanation of its rationale for the proposed tax is contained on the department's web site, www.muirbeachfire.com. "Should the \$200/year Assessment be rejected by our community, the Emergency Preparedness and Fuel Abatement programs will be abandoned and our MBVFD will be forced to work with equipment that is both prone to failure and fails to provide adequate protection for our neighbors who volunteer to protect our family, friends and property," the site declares. "In the short term both our community and our Volunteers will be placed at risk. In the long term it is within the realm of possibility the MBVFD could be disbanded and firefighting responsibilities would be reassigned to the county's Throckmorton Ridge Fire Station, which may be too far away to save the life of someone we really care about."

CSD Board President Maury Ostroff said that if the tax measure passes, the CSD would take a "much more active role" in developing a fire department budget since the CSD would be legally responsible for administering the money. Since it currently receives no tax money, the fire department's board is financially accountable to itself although it operates officially under the CSD aegis.

The proposed tax contains a provision to exempt property owners who meet low-income standards,

In a heavy election year there are about 270 voters in Muir Beach, so at least 180 "yes" votes might be necessary to pass the measure with the required two-third approval and 90 negative votes could be enough to defeat it. "We're optimistic, but we're not taking anything for granted," Kaufman said. His wife, Tayeko, said she "doesn't think it's a slam dunk. I'm very concerned."

(Editor's Note: The writer of this story is a member of the board of the Muir Beach Volunteer Fire Department.)

Beachcomber Spotlight: Asst. Fire Chief Eric Groneman

By Linda Gibbs

This is the third in a series of interviews with the members of the Muir Beach Volunteer Fire Department. 16 First Responders and Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs) give of their time and energy without benefit of compensation to protect us, our homes, and our community. Today we speak with one of the four Assistant Fire Chiefs.

Eric Groneman moved to Muir Beach in 1951 when he was in the third grade and when Muir Beach was a small, sleepy village of primarily Portuguese dairy farmers. He has fond memories of the wonderful community of gracious “salt of the earth” neighbors who provided fresh eggs, milk, vegetables, and rabbits. He remembers getting off the school bus with his sister and stopping by Mary Rodriguez’s house every day for cookies and cakes. Her proceeds from egg sales went back into baking after school treats for the children.

Eric is an avid sailor, fisherman, and diver. He was conceived on a boat and married on a classic 78-foot yacht in a surprise wedding he arranged for his bride in a Belvedere cove. “We can be on the boat asleep,” says his wife Joey, “or down below, and somebody else is steering the boat. Eric knows when the boat is not on course; he can just sense it. He’s been around boats all his life.”

As the owner of Edgewater Yachts Sales in Sausalito, Eric has spent 42 years selling and brokering boats as well as developing and managing property. He and Joey, who is the bookkeeper for their business, moved to Muir Beach in 1978 and have lived in their home ever since. They have two grown children, Nicole, and Graham who is also a member of the fire department.

When did you join the fire department?

Graham, from the get go—before he was legally able to join—wanted to be in the fire department. As soon as he turned 17, he joined and he was involved. A couple years later, he said, “Hey, Dad, you know, you ought to join the fire department. We could have a good time.”

I was doing pretty much what I’m doing right now and I thought to myself, “he’s right.” There was an EMT course offered to the community members and the fire department, primarily it was the fire department that needed to take the EMT course. He and I were students; he had already taken the course. I passed it; of course, he aced it. He told me he was going to ace it without studying. For the first time you are back where you have to study. There’s no foolin’ around. The EMT is a very serious course. So right after the completion of that, I became an EMT.



Asst. Fire Chief Eric Groneman. Photograph by Julie Smith

What year are we in now?

April 2000. The bottom line is I passed. I had interacted with the fire department members and they invited me to become a member, which by the way is a privilege. There’s a document that tells every new guy who comes in to it, it’s not just a place to have fun and party with your buddies and play games. It’s a serious business. And it’s not a mild commitment. It’s a serious commitment.

The EMT training involves a lot of hours.

120 hours. And we have to renew the license every couple years through CE [Continuing Education].

How many hours of classes do you take to renew the license?

There’s a review with the head of the medical department from the county.

A verbal review?

No, a hands-on, proctored review. They want to see you perform patient assessment for medical, for trauma, splints, CPR, actually using the defibrillator, which we now have on the 660 truck, all kinds of stuff.

And that’s a two-day test?

Yes, the last testing of the current EMTs with the fire department was out in Bolinas. It was a concerted effort between Stinson Beach, Bolinas, Muir Beach, and maybe Inverness, a pretty good-sized crew. And basically Chris Dwyer was doing the whole course. Mike Moore, Alex Naar, and myself were the EMTs that were there from Muir Beach. We ended up being proctors for these other people who were doing patient assessment and so on. We actually were there to learn with them. But because of the timeframe and the number of people, Chris Dwyer—who is an excellent instructor—realized that we knew what we were doing, so he put us in charge of groups of patient assessment of this and that.

That’s quite a compliment.

We go through a lot of training. We interact with Throckmorton County Fire who are there for the Wednesday night drills and a good portion of the once-a-month Sunday morning drills from 9 am until 1 or 2 pm. Throckmorton comes down to make sure we are able to perform the tasks. We’re first on scene with Muir Beach; that’s our primary concern even though we’ve got a big area that we respond to on the road. Most of our calls are medical in nature. The county wants to make sure if we ever have a fire—which we’ve had a few—and we respond and we go in, that we don’t become part of the problem and die, or whatever, because then we are putting the county professionals at risk if they’ve got to come in and drag us out of the fire. So we have come up. I’ve heard from the chief, Ken Massucco, and the other battalion chiefs, who watch us go through these tasks on Wednesday nights and Sundays, that we have risen to almost the standard of the professionals in our ability to go into fires with simulated smoke.

I recently learned from Michael Kaufman, President of the Firemen’s Association, that in 2001 a law was passed stating volunteer fire departments had to meet the same training requirements as county departments, and that departments had until 2004 to meet these new requirements. This meant a lot of work for the MBVFD to properly train yourselves. Could you talk about that process? What did this new law mean to the fire department?

It’s what I previously just told you. The county is there to make sure that we are trained properly because they don’t want us to become part of the problem and compound the problem for them because they’re usually second in—even in Muir Woods. We would probably get there first and they want to make sure that we are trained properly and that’s been done.

Yes, I understand. I just wanted to hear how your

department changed once that law went into effect. What were you doing before that you started doing differently in order to come up to the same level as the professionals?

I would say that we were self-disciplined. We did do a lot of things. We always met for training on Wednesdays and Sundays. We had charts; we had records, we had all kinds of stuff that shows each and every one of the individuals: Can start the engine? Can drive the engine? Can perform medical tasks? We were self-disciplined at the time. That’s



Asst. Fire Chief Eric Groneman in his structural turnouts with the new Interspiro Air Pack and mask that will be put into service soon. Photograph by Julie Smith

what we did before, but we are so much better now than we were before. It’s the difference between day and night.

So it was a matter of discipline or more training with the county?

Just understanding what the county expected from us, getting a clear picture from them that they didn’t want us becoming involved if we weren’t properly trained.

They helped you to become better trained by attending the meetings?

Yes, they have their personnel come down when they’re on duty up there at Throckmorton. They show up with their engine and it’s their service area so we’re all sitting there. If a call came in, of course, at that point, we’re better covered than if they’re coming from Throckmorton.

They come with the engine because if they get a call, they have to answer that call?

Yes, like they did two drills ago when we were training with Dave Carr, Senior Fire Captain at Throckmorton. He was training us with the new Interspiro Air Packs. In other words, it’s a facemask, a new bottle, very trick stuff with computers and so on. We had to get up to speed on that. We still haven’t put it in service yet because we need to do one more drill with them before we even mount these new units that we have in the engines and get rid of the older ones. So it’s a real upgrade from what we’ve had.

MUIR BEACH VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT

Will everyone have these air packs?

Yes. Everybody has a mask that's fitted to your face. And it's a test that the County performs that takes about twenty minutes. They have to do all kinds of stuff and they hook up a machine to it to make sure that if you're in a fire and you have this facemask on—you've seen the firefighters go in with the bottle on their back and the facemask, it's standard issue; we're no different from anybody else—if you go into a fire, you're not getting poisonous gas that's sneaking in some place. So if you have facial hair that's a problem, you don't go into a fire until you cut it off. You can't have something that's going to allow stuff to leak around this tight-fitting mask.

When did you become an Assistant Fire Chief?

A couple years ago, in 2005.

The Fire Association has introduced a parcel tax to support fire department services, a tax that is now being debated in the community, and will be on the ballot in November. As one of the Assistant Fire Chiefs, could you please discuss the importance of passing this ordinance.

It will provide funds to replace the grant money that probably will dry up from various grants the fire department has been receiving.

Why are grants drying up?

There's a lot more competition. For the last two or three years we have been trying to get a grant to buy a new squad to replace the 660.

The 660 is the small truck?

Yes, the yellow one that can carry three people, and we are jammed in there. We need something that is dual-cabed, so we can respond with four people in it and adequately handle a head-on collision, a rollover, or whatever we're responding to. We can even respond to a fire with the 660 because we have water on board, we have a pump, we have hoses, and we have these air packs.

Michael Kaufman said in a recent CSD meeting that it would cost \$150,000 to replace the 660, How old is the truck?

It's an old gas engine, probably twenty years old.

So basically you need a larger truck that will carry more firefighters because it's inefficient and unsafe to have firefighters following the truck in their own vehicles?

It's better to have more people on the scene; they will eventually get there because we've got two units. The 676 only carries two people, and three in the 660. If you get five people that respond to any incident at any one time, that's a pretty good turnout. But when there's a real problem, we need more people. And more people will page Muir Beach. If it's a mass casualty, bus over the side, they'll find us even if I'm here in Sausalito. I'll get a phone call and I'll drive to Muir Beach to get busy and get going

on whatever needs to be done.

If you are here in Sausalito at work, you will try to respond?

No, I don't have any way to monitor. I could; I've got a Mira radio that costs \$4,000 each. We have 6 or 7 of them. As an Asst. Chief I have a Mira radio and that's the new countywide system.

Is that the frequency 5 radio?

No, it's frequency 4.

I've heard that the county is moving to frequency 5. Unless the fire department steps up to the tune of \$12,000, you will not be able to receive calls on the new frequency. This change takes place on June 15th. Are you going to have new pagers in place by then? If so, how are you going to pay for them?

We'd better have them, or we won't be able to respond. What we could do is monitor our Miras—and that would be the Chief and the Assistant Chiefs and Alex Naar. But who's going to do that? You don't want to listen to all the traffic that's going on every day all day long. I like the pager because I have my Mira radio off—once in a while I'll monitor it. When I'm out there I always have my pager with me.

So the new pagers...

We're going to have them one way or the other.

In the meantime, if you don't have them by June 15th when they switch to the higher frequency, then you'll use the Mira radios as you were saying that the Chiefs have?

It's possible, something like that. Somehow or other the county will make sure we are on board. I don't even want to even think about that because we're going to have to have them. I don't know that the parcel tax will even be passed by then or available to us.

It seems like you're caught between a rock and a hard place. If they're upgrading their equipment, then you need to have the funds in order to follow along.

I'm not actually involved in all of that. I have my work set out for me big time. Each of the fire department members brings something to the table. We split all these duties up amongst various people and so I was selected as the head of the medical team. That means I'm responsible to make sure the defibrillator (AED) is properly functioning—I have people that help me—that the 5-minute bags are properly stocked...

What's a 5-minute bag?

It's a medical bag, which we have to have every time we respond to a medical call. It's terminology for a big first aid kit. It has oxygen, c [cervical] collars, bandages, blood pressure monitors, a whole long list of things.

MUIR BEACH VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT

I arrange for the training that we must do periodically on the defibrillator, and CEs for the EMTs. EMTs can now administer—with proper authority from the hospital medical director—EpiPens. We carry epinephrine in the 5-minute bag, that's when you go into anaphylactic shock and your airway start closing down. You stab the thigh with these auto-injectors and the life will be saved; otherwise they will die. If we're out in the field someplace up in the hills, we'd better be prepared for that and know what we're doing. I just make sure that everybody is medically savvy.

That's a lot of responsibility.

In addition to that and outside the fire department, I know the elderly folks in the community that have special needs. I go visit them every once in a while. And I talk to them about in the house, where they live, where they sleep. If we get a call at 3 o'clock in the morning, we are going to be rolling through that house with our 5-minute bags, I want to know where to go and what kind of special needs, what kind of meds, what kind of problems, and that's of course privileged information. In a tight community, and that's mainly my interest in being in the fire department, I want to help put something back in the community which I've taken for 50 years, that's why I do it. I respond to motorcycles off the edge, people ploughing into one another and so on, because I'm expected to do it. But my real interest is taking care of the folks and the residents of Muir Beach. That's where I'm at.

Something I would like you to include for the readers: If they have a medical condition or if they're in such a situation that they do not want to be resuscitated—it's called a DNR (Do Not Resuscitate)—they've got to make us aware of it. They should post it on their refrigerator or someplace, and it has to be signed by a doctor, that we



Asst. Chief Groneman checks the oxygen supply in a 5-minute bag. Photograph by Julie Smith

know when we go in there, that we have a piece of paper that says this person doesn't want to be prolonged. If he's in cardiac arrest, let him go. Don't do anything. I invite any community member to contact me with any medical concerns they might have or any questions about the DNR. This will be kept in strictest confidence as required by law (HIPA).

On a lighter note, I was wondering how many years you've been attending the barbecue? Have you been going ever since you moved here in 1978?

Practically. I really got involved once I became a member and I always seem to be flipping chicken.

It's been pointed out to me that if the BBQ ever got rained out the fire department would lose one half of its operating revenue. Have you ever been rained out?

No, I don't think so.

Because many of the firefighters work at the barbecue, what happens if a call comes in, do you all go or do some of you go? How do you handle that day?

This year we had a designated driver for the 676, our red fire truck, and we had primary team folks that wouldn't drink—can't drink and go to a call—who were ready to jump. They had their pagers ready to go wherever they were if there was a call. Alex Naar was the designated driver of the 676 and there was a primary and there was a secondary, so there were two different groups that had to stay straight and couldn't be drinking beer and having a good time, enjoying the barbecue like the rest of the people.

And the rest of you had the day off?

No, we never have the day off; that pager is 24/7.

Was there a call during the barbecue?

Not this year. There have been calls throughout the years and they were handled successfully.

Before the fire association took over the barbecue in 1994, the firefighters were on call that day as well as trying to put on the barbecue. So that must have been quite a challenge. You were doing all of it at that time. Well, we still are. That part hasn't changed. It's a joint effort, has been a joint effort for 34 years now with the community. The community turns to, not all, but a good portion of the community turns to and puts in their time, helps out, and donates at the barbecue.

As far as the parcel tax, I think it's a slam dunk. I don't see it not passing. Everybody I've ever talked to about that, that's the one thing they want to see continue. They want to see the fire department continue, especially if they're paying attention to what we're doing, and the training and so on and so forth, that we're proficient. Anybody out there can drop. If you drop right now, I might be able to save your life. So that's kind of important for every resident that's out there.



MBVFD Incident Log

Compiled by Paul Jeschke

April 26

Green Gulch

Adult fell outside Zendo and dislocated elbow. Transported to Marin General Hospital.

April 27, 7:30 am

Highway 1 and Miwok Trail

Car over edge. Driver transported to hospital.

April 30, 2:30 pm

Muir Woods

Propane Leak

May 16, 11:45 pm

Panoramic Highway

Car accident. Response cancelled.

May 20, 10:30 pm

Muir Woods

Fire alarm at Visitor's Center.

May 22, 11:45 pm

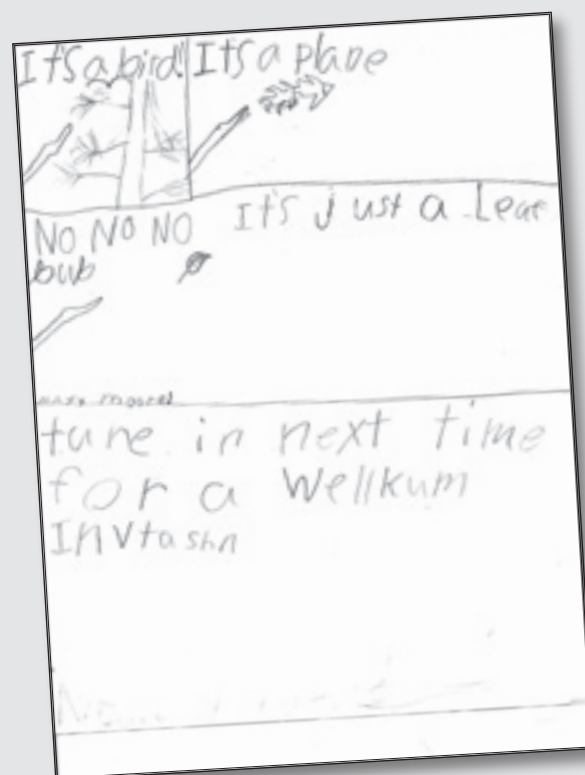
Three Corners

Car over edge at Panoramic and Shoreline. No injuries.



MBVFD Logo by Bryce Browning.

CARTOON



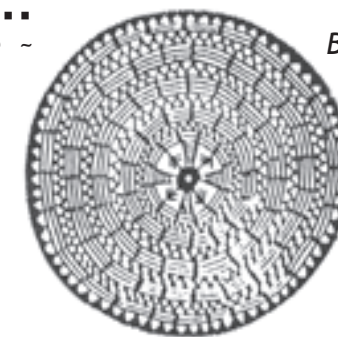
Cartoon by Maxx Moore

BIG WHEEL KEEP ON TURNIN'...

~ Part One ~



By Pam Barlow



"Everything sacred moves in a circle" - Black Elk

"It is not that things are illusory
but that their separateness in
the fabric of Reality
is illusory." - Anon.

On a cool and misty Memorial Day, the community rolled out another rousing Volunteer Firemen's Barbeque fundraiser in Santos Meadow, the thirty-fifth such late spring ritual that reminds us that, once again, the summer solstice is fast approaching.

Over the last several months, various Quilters have been busy designing, ordering, receiving and inventorying the Volunteer Firemen's clothing line, with Kathy Sward, Anna Tom and Coleen Curry contributing the lionesses' share of work on these projects. Other Quilters have been occupied writing articles and doing work for various local endeavors, and we have again taken our first collective steps on the long and winding road that, every year, leads to the Holiday Arts Fair. Discussions continue about our recent experiments with internal restructuring, and more research and detailing are on-going with regard to our Vision Project. And somehow, in near-miraculous feats of multi-tasking, quilts are being sewn and new squares for the Raffle Quilt are added weekly.

All of this intense and energetic activity brings into focus the surprising number, variety and complexity of cooperating systems here in our coastal village. All of these groups work like gears in a mechanical device; they may turn independently at times, yet on far more occasions they engage, the teeth of one gear meshing with one or more of the others so that everything turns with greater ease, efficiency and joy.

Or, if one were to picture each group as a wheel - some in business, others that provide services, and many that assemble because of their passion for shared interests - it's rather amazing how many individuals are cogs in several or all of these wheels. Through this circular symbiosis, within the community and in cooperation with individuals and businesses in greater

Marin, the creative turn-out is remarkable; all who participate are links in a chain of events that mark the seasons of the year and the cycles of our lives.

Musings on the phenomenon of how all things circular have captured human imagination and driven some of history's most dynamic discoveries, (astronomy, geometry, music, philosophy, alchemy/proto-chemistry/physics, architecture, etc.), prompted a stroll down the lane of recent memory. One doesn't have to look much further than a Quilters meeting for evidence of how the circular holds sway. Consider the wheel on Aunt Viney's sewing machine, the bobbin, the spools of thread, the eye of the needle. Even the gesture of hand-sewing circumscribes an invisible spiral, leaving a trail of linear stitches as the sole evidence of that graceful, silent reel. Some of the quilts conceived at 19 Seacape feature the aspects of the circular as their principle design elements: "Crossing the Water" by Judith Yamamoto and "Textile Piece with Reds: Playing with Rectangles, Shapes and Textures" by Kathy Sward come readily to mind. And more often than not, our debates and discussions involve repeated circumambulations around an issue, a dance that usually becomes increasingly concentric until we arrive at a common center, at the heart of the matter.

Some of us remember, (although perhaps somewhat hazily), the Summer of Love forty years ago. For those not yet born, the media has saturated print, airwaves and cyberspace with images of those times. The ubiquitous and defining image of the Flower Children was the peace symbol, which, as it turns out, was an ancient symbol with many meanings. But to us, then, it just meant one thing: peace. It was everywhere, on clothing, jewelry, painted on our cars and on our faces. Almost as ubiquitous was the ancient Chinese



emblem for, among other things, the conjoined feminine and masculine powers of yin and yang.



Many of the popular songs of the day drew on the cyclical, musically and lyrically: “Turn, Turn, Turn” by the Byrds, Joni Mitchell’s, “The Circle Game,” “Spinning Wheel” by Blood, Sweat and Tears, Credence’s and Tina Turner’s “Proud Mary,” and covers of the traditional “Will the Circle Be Unbroken.” A personal favorite: “Round, like a circle in a spiral/ Like a wheel within a wheel...Like the circles that you find in The Windmills of Your Mind.” The lyric intertwined dozens of references to circular patterns, with a revolving melodic theme that was sung to almost hypnotic effect by the satin-and-sandpaper purr of Dusty Springfield.

The mandala, from the Sanskrit word for circle, has been found in Paleolithic rock carvings in Africa, on monuments in ancient Sumeria, and on Bronze Age carvings and coins from Scandinavia to Crete. It appears in the intricate religious art of Tibet, on the Aztec calendar stone in Mexico, and in the sand paintings of the Navajo people of the American Southwest. Ancient civilizations as varied and vast as those that thrived in Italy, India, China, Africa and Egypt have designed their most cultured cities in the shape of a circle.

Perhaps there was nowhere more circle-centric than ancient Ireland, where, for the Celts, the mandala represented unity, wholeness and the cosmic order. It was a cosmological blueprint, a map of the universe that was so central to their traditions that ancient Ireland was constructed around a “sacred center, bounded by the encircling ocean.” At the hub of their lands was the gathering place that housed a stone pit for the sacred flame.

Hmmm...now this was beginning to sound eerily familiar...

There have certainly been some impressive blazes roaring up the chimney of the big, stone hearth at the Community Center, fires that have drawn us near for warmth as well as ritual. Many travelers who visit Muir Beach say they come because the stony coves remind them so much of their native Ireland. But ancient, historical Erin, bordered by the sea and built in a circle around a community flame, still seemed to lie at an insurmountable distance, too far away in time and space to explain these feelings of familiarity.

Too far away, that is, until a casual leafing through our new Telephone Directory revealed the Community Map, newly viewed through the lens of the many source materials used for this article. All that was needed to close the distance was to draw a small circle around the tiny graphic of the Community Center, and to use that as the center point from which to draw a larger circle around the circumference of the whole neighborhood.



Et voila, there it was: our Community Center standing at the central point of the larger mandala that is Muir Beach; a village seemingly built according to the mystic traditions of the ancient Celts. What’s more, the labyrinthine roads twist in the same sorts of patterns seen in mandalas from widely differing historical periods and locales such as the Han dynasty of China, New Ireland in Papua, New Guinea, and manuscripts from early-eighteenth-century Italy. The lines/roads radiate and divide like the computerized representations of cascading fractals in Chaos Theory, “Like a circle in a spiral, like a wheel within a wheel...”

But what could account for these archetypal symmetries? A kozmic accident? Pure coincidence? Psychic synchronicity? Did a Druid priestess somehow design Muir Beach?!

The most reliable anecdotal information available concerning the evolution of the neighborhood is that at some point in the sixties, a real-estate developer by the name of Les Smith, (the fellow who would later build the Seacape Development), donated a strip of land referred to by some as the Green Belt. These lots, from Sunset Way extending up the hill to Starbuck Drive, were intended for the community’s use. Pressed for details surrounding these events, Judith Yamamoto remembers that the decisions to

build a Community Center and where exactly to build it were complex and stimulated some fierce debates. She believes that the finer points of these discussions are now most likely “lost in the mists of antiquity.”

Like the mists of Avalon turned the roads to their city center slick and black; like our midsummer mist that slides off the sea to blanket lowlands and slip elegant lady fingers through grass alleys; like the heavy mists that fly up in lacy sheets from Bello bayou to mingle with the silvery clouds billowing from the Community Center’s Hestian fires. Perhaps the mists have indeed swallowed some of the memories and history of our neo-ancient civilization, “bounded by the encircling ocean.”

But much has also been preserved and more remains to be discovered. There are cultures that thrived on

this land beneath our feet for five thousand years in cooperation with nature and at peace with each other. Part Two of this report will seek to explore our commonalities with our indigenous neighbors, the original locals of Muir Beach; the Coast Miwok.

In the meantime, we hope you have enjoyed the beauty of our late spring, the bounty of its harvests, and the magic of the summer solstice. You have a standing invitation to join us on Wednesday afternoons, to sew a square for the raffle quilt, enjoy your individual projects, or simply grace us with your company and conversation. The door’s always open, the welcome mat is out, and the flame that burns at the center of community, though the hearth may be cold, perpetually warms our collective heart.

Peace to all.



Clockwise from upper left, Linda Lotriet, Judith Yamamoto, Kathy Sward & Pam Barlow; rededicated fashionistas inspired by a field trip to Vivienne Westwood’s exhibition at the de Young Museum. Photograph by Bruce Barlow

Notes from Greater Muir Beach Neighbors: Back to Basics, Again

By Judith Yamamoto

Nostalgia of Mud, Vivienne Westwood

As usual, contradictions abound. Every time I put on my Greater Muir Beach Neighbors reporter's hat, the first thing I notice is: contradictions.

So when a small band of Quilters field-tripped to the de Young Museum on June 6th, it was both relaxing and inspiring to sink into Nostalgia of Mud, a line of clothing developed in 1982 by designer Vivienne Westwood. She based this collection on, among other sources, National Geographic articles on primitive peoples in Peru. It was striking and modern, multi-layered and ingeniously cut and draped, and stunning in its earth tone palette of grays and browns.

Relaxing because it opened a window on the earliest connections with nature. How it felt to play in a puddle on a rainy day, to stare up into a tree for a long time and see if you can spot any birds' nests, or to dig up sand crabs at the tide line of a beach and pile them into a huge sand crab cake which turns into a volcano (as my granddaughter, Momo, did the other day).

Inspiring because here at Muir Beach we're surrounded by our own Nostalgia of Mud.

One might say that Greater Muir Beach Neighbors has its genesis in it, and from this nostalgia comes, what else, a set of contradictions. It wouldn't be Muir Beach without contradictions. As Janet Stump said many years ago, Muir Beach is a microcosm of the whole country, and that can't be easy!

So how to preserve, now and for generations to come, the nature that we live within every day? And at the same time, how to ensure that all people can visit these parklands and experience the joys of nature, that wonderful nostalgia of mud?

Greater Muir Beach Neighbors is still at about where we've been for several months. On the County level, we've lost the stagecoach, apparently because of low ridership. We're pushing for a Marin Stagecoach transportation plan that runs stagecoaches down Highway One to Stinson Beach, with a stop at the Muir Beach parking lot, on a schedule that works for commuters and school kids and, by expanding to weekends, parklands visitors.

A small contingent of Greater Muir Beach Neighbors will be meeting with Marin County Department of Public Works planners and Supervisor Kinsey to discuss the Pacific Way and Highway One widening, bridge-building, pedestrian



River Otter discovers Muir Beachers on Redwood Creek Walkabout. Photograph by Bruce Barlow

walkway, and flood control plans, before they get drawn up. The County is still searching for funding for these plans-to-be, so this preliminary stage will concentrate on the usual parameters: historic compatibility, nature preservation, and small-is-beautiful.

On the federal level, we're requesting a bus stop (Marin Stagecoach) in the Big Beach parking lot.

We don't see any progress yet, although Steve Kinsey was generally agreeable to these objectives at a meeting at the community center in May. Generally, but not specifically.

Meanwhile, Shere' Stoddard organized two walkabouts with Carolyn Shoulders, Golden Gate National Recreation Area Natural Resource Specialist. Carolyn has been working on the Big Lagoon project for several years now, and her passion is the ecology of Redwood Creek, as it passes through Frank Valley, opens out into the Muir Beach floodplain, and empties into the ocean at Big Beach. The first walkathon, on Saturday, May 3rd, began in the Big Beach parking lot and proceeded up Pacific Way. Lots of Muir Beachers turned out to listen to Carolyn and ask questions about how the Big Lagoon Project would impact the rural, historic, and natural (as in ancient, nature, lay of the land, nostalgia of mud) character of Muir Beach. Especially regarding the Big Beach parking lot and a widened Pacific Way. The second walkabout, on Saturday, June 9th, was at the Banducci site of the Big Lagoon project. Not as many neighbors



Carolyn Shoulders looking happy—she must be talking about nature! Photograph by Bruce Barlow

showed up for this one, but those who did had a special treat - the sighting of a River Otter in Redwood Creek! Another reminder of the nostalgia of mud...

A few of us, sometimes only Kathy Sward and I, keep showing up at County hearings. Recently these have been planning commission meetings, where the County master plan is being finalized and also where there will be hearings on the Pacific Way plans. We'll keep everyone posted so that we can get a big turnout when push comes to shove.

Through that nostalgia of mud, I keep remembering those days in the seventies when Muir Beach kids lay down in front of State Parks bulldozers which, after mowing down the cabins on Big Beach, were heading for the sand dunes....

And good things are happening, like Bonnie MacKenzie single-handedly cutting down on our carbon emissions by hiking over the hill to the closest Stagecoach stop, at Three Corners. I think Bonnie counts for ten commuters. If you see her walking with her bright green flag, give her a ride!



Carolyn Shoulders, GGNRA Natural Resource Specialist, showing, explaining, answering questions. Left to right: John Sward holding his grandson, Jackson, Charlotte Mitchell Johnston, Shere' Stoddard, Fletch Phoenix, Angie Banducci, Jes Sward, Carolyn Shoulders, Harvey Pearlman, and Amadeo Banducci. Photograph by Bruce Barlow

MUIR BEACH WALKABOUTS

Ollie: Where Are You on the Species List?

By Shere' Stoddard

"When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the universe." -- John Muir

Muir Beach Neighbors, I wanted to update y'all on the walkabouts led by Carolyn Shoulders of the National Park Service (NPS). Carolyn led us on tours of the Big Lagoon/Banducci project sites.

We participated in the walkabouts and try as hard as Carolyn could to share with us the reasons the plans are right, I, for one, remain skeptical. The NPS goals are based on studies, scientific theories, and hypothesis on probable future occurrences. The data I have reviewed contains quite a bit of "noise." In techno terms that means there is a lot of room for conjecture and winging it.

There appears to have been multiple compromises between bureaucracies involved in the Big Lagoon/Banducci Site, which may or may not yield the "bed load" of habitat restoration that will be sustainable. The end result, after all that is done to improve the Big Lagoon/Banducci Sites' ecosystem for three endangered species, may be unattainable. The theories from multiple experts seem to be just that, theories. One of the project's bureaucratic compromises seems to be the creation of a habitat for the California Red Legged Frog (CRLF). Thousands of acres have been approved and deemed perfect sites for the CRLF. Many other areas around us in Marin, as well as in some of the other coastal areas protected by the NPS, have already begun habitat restoration for the CRLF. The locals that have lived here for many years don't recall the CRLF being part of the natural ecosystem at Muir Beach.

What government entity decides what animal or plant life is native to Muir Beach? Who determined—and when was it determined—that the Monterey Cypress is nonnative to Muir Beach, yet is native to Monterey (The Lone Cypress?). The Muir Beach Cypress trees may soon become famous as they are taken out to build a NPS Man Made Logs, designed by a logjam engineer to create meandering of the mid channel of Redwood Creek. Aren't there a few beavers looking for shelter and food? There is data to support the original meandering pools necessary for the Salmonids that occurred in Muir Woods; they are gone to trail and parking lots for the "visitor experience."

MUIR BEACH WALKABOUTS



Kathy Sward (left), Shere' Stoddard, who organized the walkabout of the Banducci site of the Big Lagoon project, and Carolyn Shoulders of GGNRA tramp along Redwood Creek. Photograph by Bruce Barlow

Per the NPS, the Monterey Cypress trees are nonnative to this area. They have been living a beautiful life for sixty years as tall columns with a majestic, strong, protective aura at the southwest end of the BBQ site on the Banducci farm. Twenty-four Monterey Cypress trees will be sacrificed. These trees were planted in the 1950s by the rightful owners of the Banducci farm. Why is the Monterey Cypress native to Monterey and not to Muir Beach? Is the native status of any living species based on a birth certificate? Or are the Muir Beach Monterey Cypress trees illegal immigrants at Muir Beach? Where do the geographical boundaries of native species of all kinds begin and end? Are the humans with the power of native species status the same group that decided to plant Eucalyptus trees on the opposite end of the Banducci farm? That decision now seems to have been a mistake on behalf of the NPS. I have read that the Eucalyptus trees are detrimental to the habitat of the watershed; they will be taken down by the NPS as soon as there are funds. Seems to be a pattern of build and destroy.

*One of the scientific studies states the existence of the Big Lagoon over millennial time scales is a reflection of the balance between tectonic controls on relative base level, eustatic base level (SEA LEVEL RISE), and climate controls on sediment production. The temporal nature of these controls raises the prospect that the lagoon may be an ephemeral rather than a persistent feature. Given the watershed's proximity to the highly active San Andreas Fault zone, one prospect is that the lagoon's periodic feature existence is a product of episodic subsidence followed by slow filling until tectonic subsidence again is established at a lower base level.

Are you asking what does all this mean? It may mean that no one really knows what is best for the ecosystem and what the definition of natural habitat is. The fact is we own a miniscule amount of the Redwood Creek

Watershed as the Community of Muir Beach. The decision makers who hold the lion's share of ownership are the same public entities who are poised to implement the Big Lagoon/Banducci Site Restoration projects. Many of the issues of today go back to mistakes of the last two decades. They were poorly planned by over zealous egos, who cut bait and ran as soon as the next eco ego restoration was hatched.

Noted in the same scientific study quoted above is the effect our water usage has on the Redwood Creek Watershed. Are we confident that we are going to have full rights to water for all of our future generations? I by no means purport to be an expert on any of these subjects. I am not saying that any one entity is wrong or right in their intentions or actions. I ask only that we continue to be partners in our Community and work together to help make this monolithic project one that will be good for all.

WHO IS OLLIE?

Ollie is a River Otter who stopped by Saturday, June 9, 2007, at the very same time we were touring the Banducci Site with the NPS representative. He appeared magically right after Jes Sward asked this question: "Will the otters down here eat the newly established fish after the project is complete?"

What happened next was magic. Ollie stood up downstream, then proceeded to swim, dive, and walk on the bank of the Redwood Creek past us all. The priceless moment and the astonished look of our NPS rep was one to behold. Will Ollie be allowed to exist in the Redwood Creek now that he has been outed? Will he disappear? River Otters are on the endangered species list in California. So now what, NPS? I think Ollie may have a preference for caviar and red frog legs. Where there is one Ollie, hopefully there are more. You did not have to be there because the magical moment was caught on film thanks to Bruce Barlow. By the way, Ollie wants medical benefits for helping us out as his health may be in danger. Leighton: Can we add him to the roster of covered employees?

Shere' Stoddard
Muir Beach circa 1994

*Quotes above are from the document, "Sediment Budget for Redwood Creek Watershed, Marin County, California." Prepared for the GGNRA by Stillwater Sciences, Berkeley, CA. February 2004.



Ollie the River Otter shows up for the walkabout. Photograph by Bruce Barlow

MUIR BEACH COMMUNITY SERVICES DISTRICT

Supervisor Steve Kinsey Visits Muir Beach

By Maury Ostroff

On Saturday, May 12th at 5:30pm, Supervisor Steve Kinsey met with Muir Beach residents for an informal talk and gathering at the Community Center. Approximately 25 people were on hand to hear Steve talk about a variety of topics, including the much-debated Pacific Way Bridge and the issue of public transportation to Muir Beach.

The event was part of Supervisor Kinsey's multi-leg hiking trek across his District 4, which is unique amongst the other districts in Marin County in that it encompasses not only all of West Marin from Muir Beach to Marshall and Dillon Beach to the north, but a geographically separated area of San Rafael (including the Canal district) and Corte Madera as well, (see map). Unofficially dubbed the "May Meander," Steve is hiking and backpacking across his entire district in an odyssey that will take over a week. Just prior to the event at the Community Center, Steve had been at the dedication of the new Throckmorton Ridge Fire Station, and then hiked down to the Homestead Valley Community Center to meet with residents there and finally over the Diaz Ridge trail to Muir Beach. His sizable backpack was visible in the corner, which contained a tent for those nights he will be sleeping outside. On May 12th, he was able to spend the night in our very own Community Center, so he probably didn't use the tent. While we were proud to be able to offer him our hospitality of the Community Center with flush toilets, one cannot speculate on where he showered.

Steve has always been an avid hiker and backpacker, and admitted that a dual purpose of his trek (in addition to meeting with the voters!) was to get ready for the upcoming Dipsea Race. The night before he had climbed to the top of Mt. Tamalpais, and spent the night at the fire lookout on the top of East Peak, and awoke to a spectacular sunrise. After Muir Beach, he will hike the coastal trail up to Stinson and Bolinas, and then the long trek from Bolinas to Olema, and on up into the agricultural areas of West Marin. Of course, by the time this article appears in print the trek will have been completed.

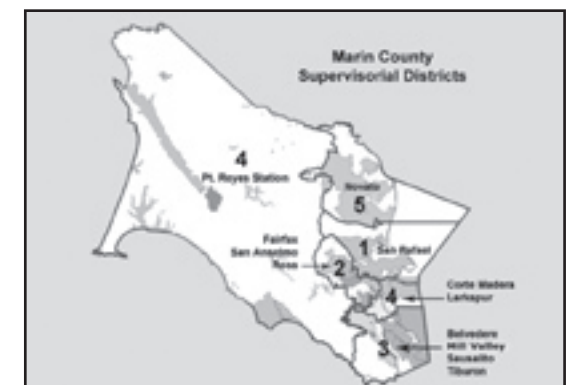
Steve currently lives in San Geronimo valley, and is dedicated to maintaining the rural character of Marin County, along with an esthetic in keeping with that character. He has been a county supervisor representing the 4th district for 11 years (he is



Marin Supervisor Steve Kinsey on his "May Meander" throughout his district. Photograph by Julie Smith

currently in his third term) and as of this time he plans to run again in 2008. Prior to his election as supervisor, he was a designer and architect, and was always active in the community.

Steve believes that local community spirit is like a capital asset, and one of the most rewarding aspects of his job is helping to promote local communities throughout his district. He cites "the specialness of each of its different parts." It is apparent that Muir Beach falls into this category, as Steve has been very supportive over the years over a wide number of projects, from providing funding for the front steps of the Community Center to most recently funding and arranging for the new high-flows bypass channel across from the Pelican Inn—something that had a huge impact this season to relieve flooding (and weeks of stranded residents) on Pacific Way.



Supervisor Steve Kinsey's 4th District is unusual in that it contains all of West Marin as well as some non-contiguous areas in San Rafael and Corte Madera.

The event began with an informal wine and cheese reception, during which Steve chatted with various residents, and residents chatted with each other, of

MUIR BEACH COMMUNITY SERVICES DISTRICT



CSD District Manager Leighton Hills (left), Former CSD Board member Deborah Kamradt, and current CSD Board member Steve Shaffer attend the CSD-sponsored event. Photograph by Julie Smith

course, typically gathered around the table where the snacks were. After a while, we all sat down and Steve gave a presentation and there was a question and answer session.

But before we get to the meat of the session, this might be a good time to go over some basics of Marin County government, (expanding on the previous article covering the Muir Beach CSD.) For those who haven't seen it, Marin County has a good web site that contains a wealth of information at www.co.marin.ca.us, which is worth a visit. And if you really want an eye-opener, (or eye-closer if you're sleepy) there are 414 pages of the 2006-2007 budget available at:

www.co.marin.ca.us/depts/AC/Main/BudgetBook/0607WebFinal.pdf

It is not really necessary to read all 414 pages, but the first few pages have some good pie charts which show where the money comes from and where it is being spent. I have discovered that the county's finances are much more complicated than I originally suspected, and was surprised to discover that a good portion of the budget (37%) comes from other government sources, (mainly state and federal appropriations.) In fact, only 39% of the County's revenue comes from taxes (primarily property tax.) Most of the sales tax you pay in Marin County goes to the city in which you paid it (i.e., Mill Valley, San Rafael, Larkspur, etc.) The relationships between Marin County, the various incorporated cities in Marin, the special districts, ERAF, the State of California, etc., are a citizen's nightmare and a bureaucrat's dream.

The total Marin County budget for fiscal year 2006-2007 is \$334 million, spent as follows:

Public Protection	29%
Health & Sanitation	22%
General Administration	21%
Public Assistance	15%
Public Ways & Facilities	4%
Education	3%
Recreation	2%
Capital Improvements	2%
Reserves	2%

One can certainly speculate whether here in Muir Beach we are getting our money's worth from the county, but one could just as easily speculate on whether we're getting our money's worth from the State of California (\$145 billion annual budget) or even from the Federal government, (\$2.8 trillion



Suzanne Miller (left) and Linda Gibbs introduce themselves at the informal wine and cheese reception. Photograph by Julie Smith

annual budget of which 13% goes just for interest!)

There is another pie chart that shows a high-level view of where your property tax money goes: www.co.marin.ca.us/depts/AC/Main/Taxinfo/taxinfo.cfm, but it is important to note that this pie chart is an aggregate, and does not necessarily reflect how our specific property taxes are allocated because we are part of unincorporated Marin and not in a city. But at a high level, it can be said that about 42% of your property taxes goes to schools, and the rest goes to the County, ERAF, and a small portion comes back to the Muir Beach Community Services District.

ERAF stands for Education Revenue Augmentation Fund, which is a state controlled mechanism used to shift local tax revenues from cities, counties, and special districts to fund state obligations to school districts. ERAF was enacted in 1992 by the California State Legislature in response to the recession of 1991-92. The ostensible cause was Proposition 13, which reduced the property tax revenues that counties, cities, and special districts had to provide services. ERAF allows the legislature to reallocate the

MUIR BEACH COMMUNITY SERVICES DISTRICT

property tax among local governments. It should be noted that Muir Beach Community Services District typically receives an annual refund from ERAF, but it is doubtful whether we get as much money back as we put in.

In doing some research on this topic, I am struck by what an amazing political accomplishment Proposition 13 was. Whether one agrees with it or not, it was quite an achievement for a grassroots political movement to set the cap on property taxes in California back in 1978. I bring this up because the question has arisen many times as to how Muir Beach residents can challenge and change the proportion of our property taxes that comes back to Muir Beach. Let's just say that it would take considerable effort, and could not be done in isolation—any change the County makes for Muir Beach CSD would have to be done within the rules and framework that set allocations for all special services districts and unincorporated areas of Marin County, and that would be a daunting political task.

Proposition 13 can be called the "third rail" of California politics. Recently, our locally elected state Assemblyman, Jared Huffman, introduced a bill known as ACA 8, which would have reduced the majority needed to raise taxes from the present two-thirds to a simple majority of more than 50%. The two-thirds majority required from voters to raise any taxes at any local level is legislated by Proposition 13. Ironically, had this bill not died a quick death on the floor of the Assembly, it would have taken a two-thirds majority of the voters to pass it! (Note: this is the same two-thirds majority rule that applies to us in the Muir Beach Community Services District when we vote on any additional taxes such as the Water System Capital Improvements Plan.)

There is one more aspect of Marin County government that is worth mentioning, and that is the fact that there is no County Executive or single Supervisor (although there is a County Administrator). This means that the Board of Supervisors is more "hands-on" in Marin than in a typical county with a single Executive, where the Board serves in more of a policy-setting and oversight function. In most counties in the United States, the County Executive is an elected official (similar to a mayor), which is also supplemented by elected County Council members. Marin County has a County Administrator which is appointed by the Board of Supervisors; it is the Supervisors who are elected, and the Administrator position is more of a

civil service job. Bottom line—the political power in Marin County is in the Board of Supervisors.

This brings us back to Steve Kinsey, the Supervisor of the 4th district in Marin County and the district within which lies Muir Beach. As I was saying, after an initial social gathering we all sat down and talked business. There were two topics that dominated the session,



From left: Nina White, Brent Smith, Erin Pinto, CSD Board member Bob Jacobs, CSD President Maury Ostroff, Supervisor Kinsey, Jon Rauh, and Misti Norton socialize before Kinsey speaks to the group. Photograph by Julie Smith

and we will deal with them in order, although they are both related to transportation issues.

Public Transportation to Muir Beach: Steve reiterated his commitment to finding a permanent solution for providing public transportation to Muir Beach. He acknowledged the disappointment many felt when the StageCoach was rerouted along Panoramic Highway, bypassing Muir Beach, and explained his vote to change the route as based on limited funds and ridership. Steve mentioned that the county is currently in negotiations with Golden Gate Transit on the contract for local transportation, and that the county is still working on the overall county-wide Transportation Plan.

Steve feels that we should provide public transportation for visitors to Muir Beach, and that he would be in favor of extending the Muir Woods Shuttle to stop at Muir Beach. Because CalTrans will not allow a crosswalk across Highway One (anywhere!) he suggests that we have an ADA (American Disability Act) compliant bus stop near the Pelican Inn with a turnaround, (and thereby not change the mailboxes.) Furthermore, Steve does not recommend that any Muir Beach shuttle go down to the Beach parking lot itself due to traffic and congestion on Pacific Way.

Of course, the needs of Muir Beach residents for

public transportation are different from those of tourists and visitors to Muir Beach—residents typically want to travel on weekdays, and during commute times and not in the middle of the afternoon. These different needs will have to be addressed by the county transportation plan.

The essential problem with Public Transportation is money; made even more challenging because it is an ongoing cost to operate and not a one-time expense that can be paid for out of a grant. Steve mentioned that the existing Muir Woods Shuttle costs about \$400,000 a year to run, but that the \$2 fare only covers about 15% of that. The remaining funds are coming from a Federal Public Lands Highway Account, meaning that essentially Marin County is using funds intended for one-time highway constructions and improvements to subsidize ongoing operating costs. Moreover, these funds will run out next year and the county will have to reapply. (Note: Steve would rather use the funds from the Public Lands Highway Account to pay for the Pacific Way Bridge, which is a more appropriate use of one-time grant money.)

This is the constant theme of public transportation everywhere—it seems to be very difficult to make public transportation affordable AND economically self-sufficient without subsidies from other sources. What’s going to happen next? It’s not clear, other than Steve Kinsey’s commitment to public transportation, and the assurance that we’re not done with the Transportation Plan, so the game is not over yet. Steve did mention that some funds for the StageCoach may be available from the county Transportation Bond Plan.

The next topic is the proposed Pacific Way Bridge. Steve indicated that the 36-foot width was set as an outer limit, but that he personally favored an 18-to-20-foot width. Once again, it is not crystal clear to me how this will all unfold, save for more public hearings. It is clear that the County is responsible for fixing transportation problems with Pacific Way flooding, and that NPS is separately pursuing its Big Lagoon project.

There seems to be a fundamental tension between Marin County and the National Park Service (NPS.) NPS seems to be primarily concerned with preservation of the environment, and does not want to spend any of its money on roads or transportation. Since the county has responsibility for the roads (except for Highway One which is CalTrans), and even though the traffic congestion at Tam Junction on a weekend

afternoon is exacerbated by visitors to Muir Woods, it appears that the solutions to these problems have to be provided by the County, or at least the County has to take the lead.

At the end of the session, Steve Kinsey made one last remark of note, stating that “Marin County has the largest ecological footprint in the world.” I think he meant to say that was on a per capita basis, referring to the relatively large houses and number of cars people have, as Marin is relatively affluent; consistently ranked in the top ten counties in the United States by various measures of household income, wealth, etc. (I was reminded of a website I saw where someone took pictures of the parking lot at the Marin Civic Center when Al Gore spoke there recently, and of course the lot was full of SUVs, BMWs, etc.) Steve was hinting at the age-old tension between the forces of Conservation and No Growth on the one hand and the forces of economics on the other. And the fact that it is not a one-sided debate, either. For instance, how does one reconcile a no-growth zoning policy with the need for affordable housing?

Steve Kinsey is a politician, and a good one, and I mean that as a compliment. Steve says that one of his strengths is being able to listen and bring disparate groups together in common purpose. It was apparent to many of us that Steve’s commitment to the local communities in his district is genuine, and that overall he is doing a remarkable job given all the bureaucratic constraints he has to deal with. I would refer people back to the District Map of Marin County, and I think that many people would agree with the assessment that given Muir Beach’s relative size (400 souls?) we are definitely getting our money’s worth.



After spending the night at the Muir Beach Community Center, Supervisor Steve Kinsey and his partner of more than twenty years, Jean Kinsey, hit the coastal trail. Next stop: Stinson Beach. Photograph by Julie Smith

“Nothing is Certain but Death and Taxes”

By Gerald Pearlman

My name is Gerald Pearlman and I live at 15 Sunset Way. I have been a resident of Muir Beach for half of my life, i.e., over 35 years. I have also served on the CSD Board on two different occasions and briefly as District Manager once upon a time.

Limited funding like limited power often makes for a dull and listless government. Director Maury Ostroff’s exposition in the last *Beachcomber* of where our District money comes from, and where it goes, fails to take into account some significant infusions of outside funding that have made a considerable impact on the community. I am referring to a state grant to put in the lower water tank, and a federal grant which was a mainstay in the construction of our Community Center. FEMA money has also found its way here. So we have never been limited to existing sources of revenue generated from within the community. But pursuing outside grants from federal or state agencies has been out of fashion for over a decade of Muir Beach CSD Boards.

Increased tax levies (and where is that power to be found in the Board’s limited powers) are the current choice of recent boards to augment revenue for projected needs. This method first surfaced as a means of addressing the need for capital improvements for our water system. Rather than spend the time and energy seeking outside sources of funding, i.e., the various state bond issues in support of clean water (one of which was even the source of funding for the above mentioned lower water tank), it became easier and more secure to simply raise taxes. Now we are about to be asked once more to vote for another tax levy in support of the volunteer fire department and emergency services.

Before 9/11 there was not so much concern regarding emergency responses or emergency services. The spirit then was more about celebration. We were not so much concerned with impending disasters. We were more concerned with making our community a better place to live and enjoy.

Since I don’t want to live my life based on fear, I am opposed to a parcel tax whose purpose is for the support of “emergency service.” And if I were not opposed, I would still want to know how \$120,000 over the next 4 years would be spent. I am not opposed to additional taxes, only to the purpose of this particular tax. Not so much for the part that goes toward funding our Volunteer Fire Department. They have put in a lot of time and effort to become our competent first responders—a service of considerable value to the community. Much as I hate to see them lose control over the disbursement of their own funding and depart from the hitherto volunteer fundraising that has been such a heroic achievement for the past 36 years, if that’s the way they want to go, they have certainly earned the right.

However, more money derived from parcel taxes to support unspecified and undesignated emergency services is not a good idea. I would imagine such services to be the provenance of our Fire Department anyway. There are more and better ideas to which additional tax revenues could be directed and which improve our community in more rewarding directions. Personally I would like to see any additional tax revenues go toward some capital improvements in the community or programmatic activity in the community center. I am sure there are many more ways this money could be spent than focusing on how to cope with threats whose chances of occurring are minimal.

Swimming pools, tennis courts, serious consideration to a residential center for our seniors or a community garden all seem like more worthwhile endeavors. What is more important—the preference to stay at the beach rather than some senior complex over the hill, or preparing for some imaginary future disaster? Any number of life affirming possibilities exists which seem to me more worthwhile than reacting only to the possibilities of disaster. I think the rather dismal performance of the newly minted federal Department of Homeland Security would give anyone pause to consider that type of mandate. If you do want to secure resources to pursue the need for emergency services, why not apply to them for funds. Isn’t that what they are there for!

Government Inaction and Action

By Gerald Pearlman

CSD Director Maury Ostroff gave us a lucid exposition of the role and inherent powers of a Community Services District Board (CSD) in the last *Beachcomber*. While a CSD may be the bottom of the barrel as a government power compared to the county, state, or federal forms of government, it is by virtue of proximity clearly the

one closest to our hearts and minds. It is also the one we have most control over and ability to affect, if we so choose. Maybe this is what a former New Deal congressman from Massachusetts, Tip O’Neill, meant when he said “all politics is local.”

Maury goes out of his way to characterize CSD powers as very limited in scope. Indeed they are as currently listed and hardly defined in any great detail. But of course Board powers can be enlarged at any time by

invoking the proper legal procedures, if the current Board and community chose to do so.

When the mantra of “limited powers” is invoked there is often an undercurrent at play. I have observed it at times in our current Board as well as in many other decision-making bodies. Invoking “limited powers” is really just an excuse to support not doing anything—INACTION. When governing bodies do not want to do something, they will often hide behind the fiction of “limited powers.” It is much safer than directly stating that they simply don’t want to take a particular action.

More often than not Boards may actually be sincere in their belief that their inability to act is dictated by the limited power available to them. Adopted rules and written laws do attempt to circumscribe the legally allowed range of their action. On the other hand many examples exist, both past and present, showing strong executives who are quite willing and able to ignore any limitations placed upon them by laws. Written constitutions are the traditional instruments defining legal powers and which bodies are to exercise them. But no matter what is written down and prescribed by law,

strong rulers have no trouble ignoring these limitations. One need only look as far as our current president to find a prime example for this kind of behavior.

Maury makes his case for Directors to toe the line as far as CSD powers are concerned, but it is important to recognize that it is really only his particular way of looking at things. There can be a great deal more latitude, if the will to take it is there. Often it is the fear of a legal challenge that prevents action being taken. If a decision is challenged, it only means another branch of government, the courts, get to decide. Governing bodies usually have the benefit of free legal counsel in house while any challenger is subject to an uphill legal battle whose costs they have the burden of bearing. The invocation of limited power then bears close scrutiny to determine whether there is a valid basis in law or it is just a smoke screen to disguise government inaction.

Whether the need for action is a glaring one or only a matter of minor concern, action is what is required. Obviously taking action is a lot harder to commit to than not taking action.

producer to a private party when it is not beyond imagination that the community itself could own and operate its own system. Such a system could host a range of services beyond mere wireless capability, such as home security, satellite connection, and many more goodies of the digital age.

More significant is the endless stream of revenue it would produce which could be plowed back into the community. The initial investment while not beyond the realm of possibility may seem high to some but is definitely doable in one form of public financing or another. Once up and running it would be much less difficult to operate and maintain than our present water system. The present privately operated Muir Beach LAN which pays no franchise fee does not appear to be very complicated or expensive to operate and maintain.

In any event no hasty decisions are in order regarding this issue. The County has a request for proposals out for someone to come in and make all of Marin a wireless hotspot. But then again the County has just finished spending 25 million dollars on county wide emergency radio services that apparently fail to include much of West Marin.

I would like to see the Board at least study the possibility of making such services available—the end result being a comprehensive telecommunications policy for Muir Beach that not only serves our present and future needs but also pays for itself!

Verizon Wireless Franchise

By Gerald Pearlman

Granting a franchise (and where is that power derived from) to Verizon to install and maintain a tower capable of wireless transmission in Muir Beach seems to me an ill considered proposal. Many people are concerned about potential health hazards from electromagnetic fields and their arguments certainly must have some merit. However the scientific debate about the harmful effects of electromagnetic fields is far from settled. For those who hold the precautionary principle dear, there is no ground for debate.

However, I am coming from a different place that has only to do with aesthetics. In all the time I have lived here, Muir Beach has been impervious to commercial development. I believe we are a unique community in this respect. We should strive to maintain this uniqueness. It is a special quality that exists nowhere else. It should not be disposed of without serious discussion of what we are getting and what we are giving up.

The Pelican Inn went up with a lot of misgivings from many in the community and some hard fought legal opposition. One of the hallmarks of the struggle was the understanding that Pelican represented the last and only commercial intrusion. The door is being opened again, who knows what other commercial intrusions are in the offing based on a Verizon precedent.

Of course the idea of additional revenue is always welcome, but why give away a potential revenue



Overgrown door in Careyes, MX, from Debra Allen’s Doors and Houses collection. Photograph by Debra Allen

*This is just a snapshot of closed escrows/sales entered in MLS by listing agents for these few months only. Many homes are being sold off market, so their stats will not be in these numbers. Also, unless you know the condition, the view, the good and bad of each home, you can’t determine from this list why the homes sold for their prices. And when a very special, high-end home sells or the exact opposite, the stats will change dramatically in any area. This list also just represents home sales, not lot sales.

Muir Beach recently had several lots sell, so we could see a jump in local home prices if any of these lots produce newly-built homes that end up selling. Note that so far this year, Mill Valley homes are selling the quickest. On a personal note, most of my “Mill Valley buyers” now want to go even more north “to get away from the cold” and to pay the cheaper prices in areas like Greenbrae and San Anselmo. However, Sausalito remains a very popular town for buyers who want water views, parking and easy access to SF.

Most homes for sale in Mill Valley, Sausalito and Tiburon will come on the market fully staged and well-prepared to attract the most agents in the first week. Our houses don’t need to be staged, but it certainly helps. I recently listed three Muir Beach homes that were staged and sold quickly. And if you want top dollar, the home will need to be remodeled, especially the kitchen and baths, in addition to being staged. But no matter what the condition, the seller needs to find the best listing agent who can market the home to agents who have buyers ready to compete for the home, if possible. And, the added special value of

City	Sales	Bedrooms	Selling Price	Square Feet	Days on Market
Sausalito	27	3	\$1,537.593	1,994	116
Mill Valley	140	3	\$1,461.405	2,137	60
Tiburon	53	4	\$2,643.419	3,187	112
Stinson Beach	7	3	\$2,241.000	1,755	132
Muir Beach	5	2	\$1,147.000	1,760	127

Real Estate Tidbits & Misc.

By Debra Allen, Realtor

Muir Beach RE news: Home sales have been brisk all over Marin this year. Muir Beach inventory is way down from last year (fewer homes for sale is good news for sellers). Commonly, Muir Beach buyers are also willing to look in Sausalito, Mill Valley, Tiburon and sometimes Stinson. According to the Multiple Listing Service (MLS), from Jan. 1 to May 31, 2007, here are some interesting statistics relating to homes-sold averages:*

a Muir Beach house is of course the view, location, access to nature, Community... priceless!

Neat Lower Muir Beach things I’ve noticed: The carved face in the hedge and the bowling ball garden.

Out of the area real estate news: In case you want to buy a condo/apartment in Rio, let me know. I’ll put you in touch with a couple of guys from Minnesota who have been renovating them and selling them for the last few years (yes, Brazil).

Just miscellaneous stuff: Tired of paying for 411 calls? Try 1 800 Free 411.

Finally, please correct my email entry in your new Muir Beach phone book: dallen@pacunion.com or use deballen@deballen.com OR JUST LEAVE ME A MESSAGE ANYTIME!

Debra Allen, Realtor, Pacific Union Real Estate
37 Miller Ave., Mill Valley, CA 94941
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Muir Beach Garden Club

By Tayeko Kaufman

On Saturday, June 16, our Muir Beach Garden Club members and friends had their third major planting at the Community Center. We are a lively, eclectic group of women who share a passion for gardens and gardening. Our Club was established in 1997 as the Muir Beach Garden Militia, with the intent of controlling or eliminating the deer and gopher pests that eat everything we plant. The battle still continues but our focus has shifted to a more civilized and mellow goal of beautifying the grounds around the Community Center. Our major fundraiser is the Christmas Fair, where we sell wreaths which we weave from grape vines, with an incredible array of donated materials from our friend and neighbor, Amadeo Banducci. In 2004, when we realized we were not raising sufficient funds for an annual planting at the Community Center, we decided to have a little fun and produced the infamous Muir Beach Garden Club Calendar for 2005. All funds are used to pay for the plantings at the Center.

Thanks to the generous donation of David Schwartz, who donated the New Zealand Flax, and Michael Kaufman, who installed the drip irrigation system, we were able to extend our planting this year to several new sections. A fall planting to complete another section may be in the works.

If you would like to join the Garden Club, just contact any member, and we will include you on our email list. We meet on an informal needs basis at different members' homes. The snacks are delicious, the wine flows freely, and the conversation is always stimulating. Current garden club members are: Ann Browning, Lainie Case, Joey Groneman, Charlotte Johnston, Kathy Johnston, Tayeko Kaufman, Janice Kubota, Melissa Lasky, Shirley Nygren, Arlene Robertson, and Cori Valentine.

Special thanks to these generous, hard working souls who assisted us on June 16th: Gail Browning, Cuco Alcala, Chris Gove, Alex Johnston, Michael Kaufman, Al Kile, Maury Ostroff, Gerry Pearlman, and Laura Wright. We could not have accomplished what we did without your help.



Alex Johnston, Arlene Robertson, Joey Groneman, Al Kile and Gerry Pearlman planting one of the seventeen, five gallon containers of New Zealand Flax
Photograph by Kathy Johnston



The Garden Club planted this section in the fall of 2006. It was the first section to be hooked up to the drip irrigation system on Saturday. Photograph by Kathy Johnston



Gerry Pearlman digging his fifth hole with the power shovel.
Photograph by Kathy Johnston



Michael Kaufman installing one of the five valves for the drip system.
Photograph by Kathy Johnston



Alex Johnston attacks the clay with a pitchfork. While others elected to use the power shovel, Alex simply used his muscle power. Photograph by Kathy Johnston



"We did it. We're done. Let's go eat." Jubilant and hungry crew from left to right: Arlene Robertson, Chris Gove, Kathy Johnston, Tayeko Kaufman, Harvey Pearlman, Gerry Pearlman, Maury Ostroff, Janice Kubota, Michael Kaufman, Charlotte Johnston, Ann Browning, Laura Wright, Al Kile, Joey Groneman and Alex Johnston. Photograph by Gail Browning

This fall the Muir Beach Garden Club will be working with the Muir Beach Fire Board and the Muir Beach Volunteer Fire Department and some arborists to address the issue of the pitch canker disease that has infected our Monterey Pines. As the Monterey pine trees die we are left with an incredible amount of fuel that adds to the fire danger at the beach. The current recommendation of arborists is to remove any badly diseased pines. At Asilomar alone, as a result of pitch canker disease, more than half of the pine trees there have been removed. The following is a brief description of the visible symptoms of pitch canker disease:

"Early symptoms of pitch canker are dead branch tips with wilted reddish needles. As the disease advances, resinous cankers appear on the main stem and larger

branches of the tree. Tree owners with infected trees are advised to consistently remove discolored needles and the decaying bark and branches, and to remove the debris from the site. Although this will not cure the disease, it could mitigate the spread of the disease throughout the entire tree, and help prevent the pathogen from spreading to neighboring trees. Pruning tools should be sterilized after use."

For more information go to: www.ranchandcountry.com/article_info.php?articles_id=30, or contact the University of California Cooperative Extension. Look for an information and discussion meeting on this topic sponsored by the Muir Beach Fire Board and the Garden Club to be held at the Community Center this fall.

Hey, I've been thinking...

By Bonnie MacKenzie

...about GLOBAL WARMING! I watched Al Gore's "An Inconvenient Truth" the other day and I found it pretty darned distressing. Then I read a quote in the June 4th issue of Time Magazine from a report in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences. "Worldwide carbon dioxide emissions are growing at a much faster rate than scientists had projected. In 2005 nearly 8 billion tons of carbon were pumped into the atmosphere compared with 6.4 billion tons in 1995. CO2 emissions from automobiles, power plants and factories grew at an annual rate of 1.1% during the 1990s. From 2000 to 2004, the annual growth rate for CO2 emissions was 3%, nearly triple the rate of the '90s. Developing nations, including China and India, accounted for 73% of emissions growth but only 41% of actual emissions. The study found no region had reduced the percentage of its energy supply coming from fossil carbon." Now I feel like I'm on the hot seat. A little voice in my head says "Change your ways or fry."

After some serious soul searching, I've decided to try to cut back on the use of my car. I already walk a lot for exercise and nature viewing. Now I'll try to combine my recreational walking trips with my purposeful errand trips and voila, I'll walk to my errands! Living in Muir Beach presents something of a problem however. It's 6.7 miles to Tam Junction from my house at 28 Starbuck. I've walked all the way several times now and I'm pretty tired by the time I get to town. More often however, a sympathetic neighbor picks me up before I reach the Green Gulch turn off. You'll see me on the road a lot now trucking along with my backpack. I've made a chartreuse flag with a logo on it. I display the flag when I'm looking for a ride, so please pick me up if it's safe to stop and you're not in too much of a hurry. I really appreciate it.

Getting home has proved difficult. I often ride the stage to Diaz Ridge and then walk down Hwy 1 or take the Diaz Ridge trail to the stables. If my errands take me to Mill Valley I just walk once I get there. But if I'm going to San Francisco or Berkeley, I have to deal with public transportation. What an education that's been! ("Transport accounts for more than 30% of U.S. carbon dioxide emissions, one of the best ways to reduce them is by riding ...a bus. Public transit saves an estimated 1.4 billion gallons of gas annually, which translates into about 1.5 million tons of CO2 according to the American Public Transportation Association." Time Magazine, vol. 169, No 15/ 2007*) I've gotten lost, stranded and marooned more than once. Thank god for Dave, he has always been there to rescue me so far. But I am getting savvy. I'm now armed with bus schedules from ATC, Golden Gate Transit and SF Muni plus a book of discount Bart tickets (for seniors—I can get almost anywhere for less than \$2.00).

I know this must sound totally impractical and implausible as a way of life. I have to admit it takes planning and time but I've found that there are some real benefits to making these changes. First of all, I've met so many nice people and I want to thank all the generous souls who have picked me up. Then, there is the satisfaction of burning body fat instead of fossil fuel. I've lost 30 lbs. so far. And finally, I'm dealing, however infinitesimally, with my anxiety over the prospect of my contributing to global warming. Every time I take my car, a 2004 Prius, over the hill to Tam Junction and back, I figure I pump 5 lbs. of hydrocarbons into the atmosphere. (Calculated from the Terrapass web site www.terrapass.com/road/carboncalc.php.) If I go three times a week, that's 15 lbs. That's over 780 lbs. in a year. As I walk Hwy 1, I notice I'm not the only one who goes over with just one person in the car. Thirty-eight percent of Americans drive alone. Just how much hydrocarbon from cars do the residents of our little community contribute to global warming? I ask myself could we, would we, cut down on our carbon emissions by 10% in say, the next six months?

I've designed a survey to find out how big our carbon load is. I'll call you in the next few weeks to ask about your cars and trips over the hill. The information I gather will be completely confidential and anonymous of course and if you would rather fill out a form in the privacy of your own home and turn it in to me... or not, that would be OK too. I'll put the survey in the mailboxes and on the Internet. Once we have some feedback on our behavior, we can organize a carpool system and see if we can actually reduce our impact on the environment. I need some help in figuring out how to work the communication for the carpool. Should we use the Internet and our cell phones or should we have some kind of telephone system? I would really appreciate your feedback!

*This April 2007 issue of Time has 51 suggestions of things you can do to slow global warming. I have the issue if you want to take a look at the article. I add #52, walk.



Bonnie MacKenzie

Photograph by Dave MacKenzie

The Critter Report

By Dave MacKenzie

Muir Beach had a lot of spring activity in the critter world this year.

To start, the Gray Whale migration was pretty much on schedule around the last week in April. Unfortunately, with the Muir Beach Overlook Trail under reconstruction, the viewing was from a bit more inland. I looked mainly from the Doris Clark Family bench on the Seacape Ridge trail, where whales can be spotted as far away as the Pt. Bonita Lighthouse. I saw about nine whales over several hours of "effort." The most interesting view I had was of a youngster nosing around in the foam off Spindrif Point, with the huge mother nearby, as if to ask "which way is Alaska, ma?"

At least one River Otter seems to have taken up residence in Redwood Creek again this year. It was seen by Jim White at the Middle Green Gulch Pond in mid-May and about the same date by Dave Taylor at the gate to his house on Redwood Creek near the Highway 1 bridge. Numerous visitors to Muir Woods reported a River Otter near Bridge 4 in the monument, and it was possibly a pregnant female. So maybe there are two. Anyway, as River Otters have big appetites for small fish, their presence suggests even more pressure on the threatened Coho Salmon and Northern Steelhead in the creek.

Spring, of course, also brings the next generation in the critter world. Brad and Lisa Eigsti reported a Gray Fox mother with 4-5 "kits" frolicking near their house on Starbuck Drive. It's good to see the foxes rebounding after several years of canine distemper here that nearly wiped them out. A Pileated Woodpecker nest in Muir Woods just up the boardwalk from the Visitor Center also attracted attention.

Also, the Barn Owls at the Golden Gate Stables barn have at least two new arrivals. The youngsters could be seen peeking out of the nest box in early June. Thea Chalmers reports hearing a lot of screeching in the area just after dark, as the young owls beg for those tasty fresh-caught mice! However, they may have a lot of competition from the young Red-Tailed Hawks which nested in the tall Cypress just behind the stables, as Tom Soltesz pointed out.

Birds were also in the local news with the Muir Woods/PRBO Conservation Migratory Bird Day celebration on May 6. For the past five years bird walks have been conducted from the Muir



River Otter, Redwood Creek. Photograph by Dave MacKenzie

Beach parking lot, with bird-banding demonstrations at lower Redwood Creek (lower Banducci farm). This year the main exhibits were set up at the Muir Woods Visitor Center instead of at the beach parking lot due to the reduced-sized picnic space. Shuttles were provided from Muir Woods to the beach and banding sites. Everyone seemed to enjoy the shade-grown coffee and chocolate and the various children's activities at the woods. Thanks to Simone Whitecloud, the Ong family and other volunteers.

Two new bird species have been discovered in the Redwood Creek Watershed, although they were just quick visitors. I was amazed to see a Common (Bronzed) Grackle at my feeder near the Seacape Ridge Trail on June 1 and 2. This large blackbird has an iridescent blue-black head with bright yellow eyes, bronzed body feathers, and a long tail. It was only the fourth record in Marin County. This grackle is normally found only east of the Rocky Mountains.

Amazingly, two days later Jim White discovered a beautiful male Chestnut-sided Warbler (stunning with an almost luminescent yellow cap over a black, white, and chestnut body). Although this species has been seen several times before in our watershed, its discovery attracted some other expert birders who found a first-record Scarlet Tanager at the same location on Muir Woods Road! This specimen was a gorgeous male in scarlet-red with black wings. And to top it all off, PRBO interns banded a female Rose-Breasted Grosbeak (streaked black and white) the same morning at the banding site on lower Redwood Creek. This was only about our fifth record of this species in the watershed.

One final critter not welcome in the watershed—the Bullfrog—may have been heard in the "Big Lagoon" area in May. If you hear the deep bass "va-room" call at night, let me know or contact Darren Fong at Darren_Fong@nps.gov. Bullfrogs could be very damaging to our threatened fish and also the Red-Legged Frog, which is hanging on by a thread in our area!



Dave MacKenzie has been contributing nature articles to the Beachcomber for 12 years, which is when he and his wife Bonnie moved to Muir Beach. Dave does engineering consulting from his home office, but also spends a lot of time searching the Redwood Creek Watershed for interesting critters. Photograph by Bonnie MacKenzie



Friendly Gray Whale, San Ignacio Lagoon. Photograph by Dave MacKenzie

So watch and listen for those critters and let me know what you find!

Natural Curiosities

By Dave MacKenzie

Q: *What kinds of woodpeckers are found in Muir Beach?* (from Nikola Ferraro)

When you hear a rhythmic drumming sound around Muir Beach, it is probably one of our resident woodpeckers. One of the most common is the black and white Hairy Woodpecker, or perhaps it's smaller relative the Downy Woodpecker. Both prefer the riparian habitat by the creek. Another common woodpecker is the brownish Northern Flicker. Instead of prying the bark and wood of standing trees, this woodpecker specializes in eating termites from downed logs and branches. As with most woodpeckers, the male Northern Flicker sports a bright red ornamental patch on the head (in this case a slash down the side of the neck). Other local woodpeckers are the erratic tapping Red-Breasted Sapsucker, the comical-looking Acorn Woodpecker, and the zebra-striped Nuttall's woodpecker. Occasionally the crow-sized Pileated Woodpecker (similar to the re-discovered Ivory-Billed Woodpecker of Arkansas) visits Muir Beach. Adding the one record of a Yellow-Bellied Sapsucker at the Tourist Club, we have a total of 8 woodpecker species seen in the Redwood Creek watershed.



Downy Woodpecker

Q: *How do you chose a good pair of binoculars?* (from several questioners)

The first thing to realize is that good optics aren't cheap! That \$50 bargain pair at Qwik-E-Sport will probably have several problems. First, the field-of-view (how big the picture is) will probably be small, making it hard to get on that whale or fox before it is gone. Second, the focus or eye-separation mechanics may be a bit flimsy. Third, when you try to find that spectacular dragonfly for a close look, you find that the binocs don't focus closer than about 30 feet. So the binoculars stay in their case and don't get used. A big trend in the last few years has been "compacts." Personally, I feel that unless you are super-restricted by weight or size (e.g., for backpacking or running), compacts aren't that great. If you want to see the critters well, go bigger. The choice is Porro prism versus roof prism. Porros (the objective lenses are more widely spaced than the eyepieces) are cheaper, and can be quite good. But the roof prisms are the best; they are more rugged, and basically have no external moving parts and give the best pictures. Now chose the power. 7X50 is seven power, 10x40 is ten power. The second number is the size of the objective lens (generally the bigger the better, and the more expensive, just like camera lenses). If you don't have lots of experience using binoculars, I suggest 8X or 7X. If you want the best view, and you have steady hands, go 10X. Finally, don't just buy by brand. Cheap Nikons are just not as good as expensive Nikons. Bottom line; you will probably pay \$250-\$500 for a good pair of binoculars; \$500 to \$1500 for the best. Final suggestion: go to EagleOptics.com for some good selection guides or you can get help by telephone. It may be a big purchase, but you usually get a lifetime guarantee, and the good companies will repair and clean your binocs for free or for a minimal cost. Remember, there is ten times as much world to see with binoculars than without!

If you have a nature question, please e-mail me at davem@microsafe-systems.com or call me at work (415.389.1456) or at home (415.389.1558).

The Hummingbird and I

By Linda Gibbs

All morning I stewed about the little sunflower seedlings in the garden that were getting damaged because of the spray from the sprinkler, not the automatic kind that's on a timer, but a sprinkler placed on the ground that shoots out a fine mist from one end of the garden to the other. Even a mist is too much for these fragile plants. I realized I had to hand water the rest of the garden with a hose and keep the spray away from the seedlings at the bottom of the garden, where the ground levels out and the seedling beds thrive.

I was irritated at this diversion. I was eager to plant the lupine seedlings now that the soil had been prepared and the beds were ready for planting. And with the deer fence in place, I wasn't so nervous about what would happen to the little plants out there in the world on their own, away from the comfort of the seedling shelves in the sunny corner of the pantry.

I wanted to leave the hose on the ground and let the water run in the beds, but the hose had a mind of its own, flopping around and sliding out of the bed onto the path. I could only be effective if I held the hose with my thumb over the nozzle—the sprayer attachment was broken—and watered each bed, giving the plants a much-needed drink.

Suddenly a hummingbird came into focus, darting into the water spray, not afraid of some of the big drops, but coming closer to the intense part of the spray near the nozzle. She flew in place, stretching her wings, turning around, clearly enjoying a rain bath in June. She stayed for a minute at least, which is a long time to observe a hummingbird. Usually I catch a flicker out of the corner of my eye and then the tiny bird is gone. But not this time. She had a purpose, and the steadier I held the hose, the longer she bathed. She turned and I could see color on her tail, orange color, and iridescent green on her back. I hadn't realized that hummingbirds were multi-hued. I had only seen a flash of brown whizzing past me, which is understandable because hummers have been known to fly up to speeds of 60 miles an hour with a heartbeat of 1260 beats per minute. They flap their wings 15 to 80 times per second but can stop in mid-air.

She flew up into the plum tree and resumed her usual faster than lightening darting about. But then she

came back; she couldn't get enough of the water. She bathed again, hovering for at least 30 seconds, rising, falling, flying vertically and backwards as she caught the water. It was extraordinary. She didn't mind me at all. Then she was gone again. And then she came back. This happened four or five times and the garden was getting drenched from so much watering. But the plants needed it, and I needed some watering myself. That little bird lifted my spirits. And from now on I'll look forward to hand-watering the garden. Maybe she'll bring a friend next time.

Wishful thinking. In researching the habits of the hummingbird—she might be an Anna's or an Allen's according to Dave Mackenzie—I learned it's unlikely she'll bring a friend because hummers are solitary and territorial. And they need to consume more than their body weight each day. At any given moment they are only hours away from starving. So instead of wishing she would bring a friend, I'll think of Flo Hess, the former owner who lived here for thirty years and didn't rid her garden of the invasive nasturtiums that the hummers love. The only plants I accidentally brought to the party are the calibrachoa and the salvia. Since hummers are partial to red, pink, and orange tubular-shaped flowers that produce plenty of nectar, I'll grow those plants and celebrate this exquisite creature of fairylike grace who comes to bathe in my garden.



Anna's Hummingbird

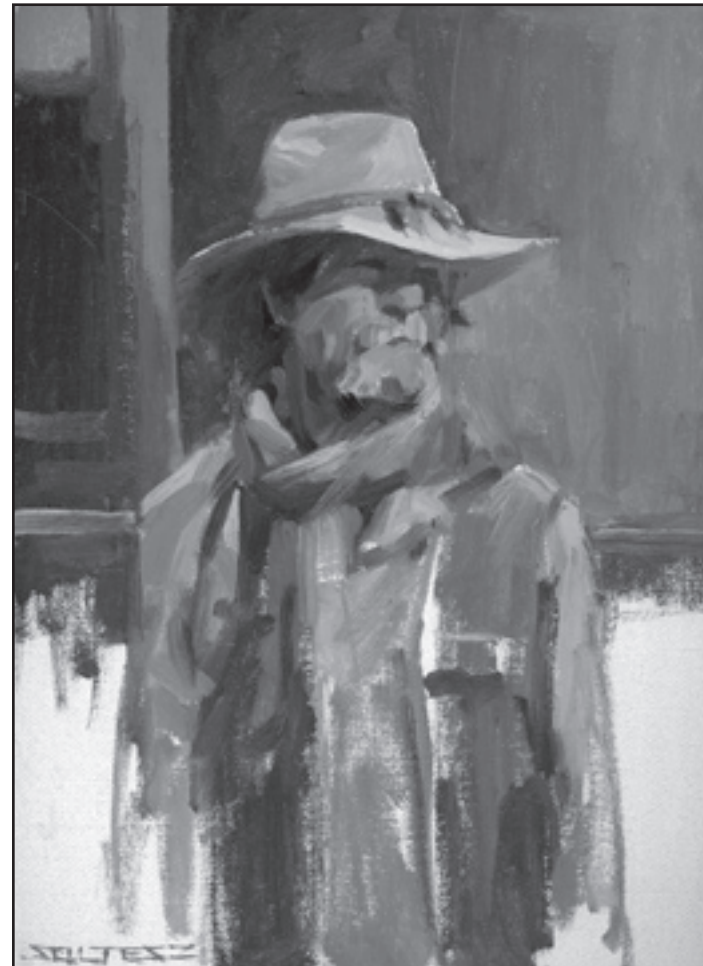
Life is a Beach

By Tom Soltesz

I first came to the Bay area in 1976 on my way to the South Pacific after graduating from the Colorado Institute of Art in Denver. I was on my way to Manila to start a graphic design company with a classmate from the Philippines. What impressed me most about the Bay Area was the open space, architecture, and international feel.

I grew up in a small western Pennsylvania coal-mining town of less than 5,000 and moved to Florida directly out of high school into a job painting billboards for Florida Outdoor Advertising.

Passing through the Bay Area was my second trip to California; the first was in 1968 with three friends in a Volkswagen beetle, one of many adventures I had before finishing high school.



Bruce 9 x 12



Valley Ranch 9 x 12

I spent three years in Manila establishing a graphic design firm along with my three partners, which became one of the most successful and innovative design firms in the country. I was offered a position in Hong Kong at the age of 23, but left the firm after two months and freelanced for the next two years between Australia, Papua New Guinea, Manila, and Hong Kong.

I returned to the states in 1983, and settled in what I considered to be the most beautiful city in the world, San Francisco, eventually moving to Marin County.

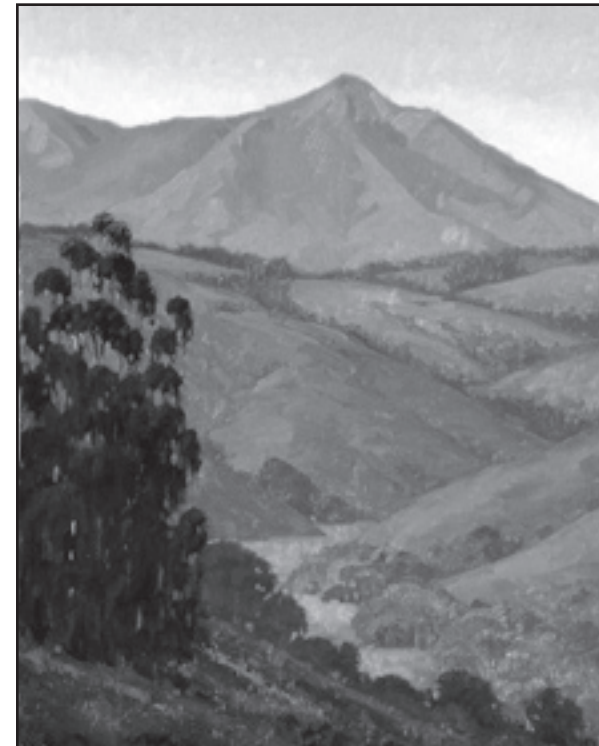
I continued to freelance as a designer and began spending more time painting. I returned to school, enrolling in The Academy of Art College, and graduated with top honors. I began illustrating greeting cards, posters, packaging, and publications, all the while continuing to paint and developing my skills as a fine artist. I learned about the early California landscape painters—Edgar Payne, William Wendt, John Gamble, Percy Grey—and the style of painting called Plein Air, or out of doors, on location painting.

These early California painters opened my eyes to the beauty of the location painting. I began taking workshops, reading books, and painting everyday. In 1996, I quit commercial work and concentrated all of my time and efforts on fine art painting. At that same time I inherited a one-year-old Arabian stallion named Bijou.

My neighbor in Mill Valley had her horse at Muir Beach and suggested I try to find a place for Bijou there. At that time, ten years ago, the big transition was happening: Ocean Riders was being formed and the Park Service was trying to get all private residences off of government lands. Five years ago I was lucky to



Back Side of Tam 9 x 12



Below the Heather 9 x 12



Tom Soltesz

find a rental property within walking distance of the barn, and I got involved in helping to keep horses a part of Muir Beach.

I compete in Plein Air competitions around California and exhibit in five galleries throughout the state. My web site is www.solteszArt.com.

Photographs by Tom Soltesz

2007 Shows and Exhibits

April

South West Art Magazine article, Painting on location in the Philippines

The Artist's Magazine article, "Everything I learned about painting, I learned in Kindergarten"

Biannual Napa Museum Northern California Plein Air exhibit

May

Marin Agricultural Land Trust (MALT) benefit show, Nicasio

June

Point Reyes Plein Air festival, Point Reyes Station

July 1, 2, 3, 4

2007 Marinscapes benefit at Escalle winery, Larkspur
"Featured Artist"

September 14-15

Sonoma Plein Air competition
On the Square in Sonoma

September 15

Bolinas Museum auction in Bolinas

October 7

San Luis Obispo Plein Air festival
San Luis Obispo Art Center

October 26-27

BayWood Artist's benefit show
Bay Model, Sausalito

December 2007

Bolinas Museum annual miniature show

December 1-2

Muir Beach Quilters' 2007 Holiday Arts Fair

My Interview with Andre

By Pam Barlow



~ You may not have heard of Andre Pessis, but if you've ever listened to the music of Huey Lewis and the News, Journey, Bonnie Raitt, Tim McGraw, The Dead, Waylon Jennings or Ben E. King, you've probably heard one or more of Andre's songs. And if you've been at any one of the thirty-five Volunteer Firemen's Barbecues, you will recognize him as the ring-leader of the headlining band, known by many names over the years, from "Andre's All-Stars" to "Larry the Bag."

I met up with Andre at his recording studio, appropriately named, "The Platinum Mines." It's a roomy and conveniently located space (about five steps from his front door), filled with computers, monitors, electronic instruments, his beloved 1965 Fender Telecaster guitar, (purchased in 1969 and maintained in original condition), and stacks of gear that testify to the fact that this songwriter and producer, though his roots are deep in the music of the sixties, keeps up with the technocracy of today's industry.

The walls are covered with memorabilia; singles, albums, gold and platinum records and photographs with superstars, all attesting to Andre's many achievements in nearly forty years in the music business. One particularly interesting picture shows him standing head to head with Bonnie Raitt. She is draping her long, red curls over Andre's forehead, giving him the look of a handsome, early-sixties mop-top pop star.

I am looking forward to our conversation, as I want to know more about this one-time Muir Beach resident who no-doubt knows where the bodies are buried, as they say. Although he is a treasure-trove of stories from "back in the day," I can tell he's far too gracious a fellow to name names of people involved in the hilarious misadventures that have taken place over the years. But, as I am about to discover, he is not in the least bit reticent about confessing some of his own snafus. ~

When did you first start playing music, and who were some of your early influences?

I started in 1967. I didn't play an instrument until then, but then I picked up the guitar. In those days I listened to Bob Dylan, the Who, Moby Grape, Steve Miller...I really liked Eric Clapton and Albert Lee. Stevie Winwood was one of my idols. We all loved the Beatles back then, but we didn't play like the Beatles because when we started playing, that whole sound was passé. But we loved them, you know, and the Stones...

Where were you living when you first started playing?

I was living in Muir Beach. This guy Jim Brown who lived at Muir Beach - there were nine cabins in the parking lot, and I lived in cabin Nine, and this guy Jim Brown

lived in cabin One, and he would play all day with me and teach me things, and he was way advanced and I was a beginner. But I learned by just playing all day long for days and days. When I moved to Muir Beach I had a wife and a straight job in the city.

I was a social worker. I used to work with emotionally disturbed kids. I'd graduated from college and I was actually six credits shy of a master's degree...I only did the master's to stay out of the Vietnam War, and I finally psyched out and moved to San Francisco.

The very first day I was in San Francisco, I went into a gas station and this guy was filling the tank and I said, "If you could live anywhere around here, where would you live?" and he said, "Muir Beach." So I went out to Muir Beach and there were these nine cabins and I wanted to rent one and I asked how do I rent one, and there was a waiting list. So I put my name down and I left and meanwhile I went and found a place to live in the city and I got a job and about, I don't know how long, six, seven months later, I went back to the beach and asked where my name was on the waiting list and the woman who ran it was so glad to see someone in a sports jacket with a straight job and a wife that she put me to the top of the list and gave me a cabin. And then I quit my job, my wife and I split up, and I joined a rock n' roll band, basically her worst nightmare, but I did pay the rent. It was \$60 a month.

When did you start writing songs?

Well, I joined a band pretty quickly. There was this band that lived down the street called Flying Circus, in those days they were called Circus, and their lead singer wasn't very good, and I got to know everybody. There were two bands out there, one was Circus and one was Clover, a few years before Huey. It was a four-piece band with Alex Call, Mitch Howie, John Ciambotti and John McFee. Clover and Circus always played gigs together because our drummer's bass drum got stolen and so we had to play at the same gig as Clover always so we could share a bass drum.

Well when I joined the band - in those days, everybody was original bands - I started writing right away. The very first song I ever wrote, some of the members of Clover still remember exactly how it goes and they don't hesitate to push my face in it, it was so stupid.

It started out with the theme from Beethoven's Fifth, (da-da-da daaaaah), and the song was called, "You Hide In The Caverns Of Your Mind Much Too Often." A terrible song, but it was my first shot, you know, and everybody made fun of me forever. And then I learned pretty quick because we played in clubs everywhere.

We played the Avalon, and the Fillmore and the Family Dog and all the little clubs...River City, The Sleeping Lady...We played a lot of gay clubs, and we used to throw dances in the Muir Beach Tavern and they were really good dances. Clover and us would always throw them, and we had the Electric Flag come out, and we had the Paul Butterfield Blues Band, and Janis Joplin used to come out all the time, but not with her band. She'd come out to get drunk and dance and go get laid on the beach, that was her thing. And we had a lot of famous people come through there, it was a big scene, and it was totally pleasurable, we'd charge a dollar at the door...

I wrote songs for our band. We'd write them and rehearse them all week and then perform them on weekends. We gigged every weekend, and I'd get to tell instantly from the audience which songs worked and which didn't. They'd tell you by dancing, by their expressions, by everything. And so we'd throw some out and get new ones and keep honing them and keeping the good ones and eventually we had a lot of original songs. Flying Circus played Uncle Charlie's, The Old Mill Tavern, The Sweetwater, the Lion's Share, we got really popular at the schools, high-schools, junior high-schools, elementary schools, private schools, we worked all the time. I wouldn't say we got rich, but we eventually paid all our bills. In those days, it was great.

We started out being managed by a couple of drug dealers, and they bought us equipment and they gave us money for rent, and everybody in the band but me was satisfied with that. I hated it. I can't stand taking money or being supported, it drives me nuts, and so they allowed me to fire those guys and take over. And then I did, and so the money stopped and then I instantly got on the phone, and after six months I was able to get enough gigs so that we were self-sufficient. And then I ended up managing Clover as well.

Huey [Lewis] and I and Sean Hopper joined Clover on the exact same day. They joined as musicians and I joined as manager. I never played in Clover. We always played together and jammed together and stuff, but they went out as Clover and our band went out as Flying Circus. Clover was a far superior band to ours in every

way. In fact, I learned a lot of my songwriting from Alex Call, because he'd be writing and I'd be writing, and the weekend would come and we'd each present our new song in front of an audience and I'd get to watch them and listen and learn, you know, that's how you learn. And he was a great teacher. He never taught me anything, but I learned from him. And then you had that monster, genius John McFee playing guitar, and you just stood on that part of the stage the whole night just to listen to this amazingness come out of him.

I lived for a while in Mill Valley with Clover when they moved over there...for a winter. The cabins were gone at that time and then my band moved down the street. There was an old house down there, the Circus house. It got flooded five times, but it didn't wash away, it was burned down for a fire drill. When the State took it over, in exchange for an easement or something, our house went, and they gave us a couple of grand each to get out so they could burn it down.

But it was a fabulous house, I mean our whole band lived there, at one point we were ten people in that house. It had five bedrooms and an acre and a half. One of the bedrooms was an old porch that I built into a bedroom so I'd have a place to sleep, and then I had a little cabin next door. But we had serious flooding there, and I don't miss that part. I still don't sleep very well when it rains hard. The flooding is worse now. In those days, at least Wheelright, who owned the Zen Center, used to come and dredge out the creek every few years. That helped, but still when those big storms came in, and for a couple of days in a row, we flooded. The Onoratos flooded, and the Balfours down the road flooded. [The Pelican] never used to flood so much as they do now.



Our property started down where there used to be a bridge over the creek, and then it went down like a peninsula and ended at a point right by the levee road. It was a great house in a lot of ways. We had a huge garden, which had great alluvial soil because of the flooding, plus we caught a lot of our own fish, and I raised chickens. I mean, we lived off the land a lot, you know, we were really poor in those days.

Every once in a while we'd go down to the parking lot at the beach, there was a little toll booth there and the people didn't come till about one o'clock for tolls. So we'd go there at about ten o'clock and collect a dollar

from every car, until we had enough money to buy a can of ham, a loaf of bread, a case of beer, and maybe a couple packs of smokes. In those days we were all smokers. That's how it was, you eat and you get by in all sorts of inventive ways.

John-John was one of the few people who were at the beach when I moved in. When I came, there was only one house on Seacape. The whole upper road there was blank hills, and this famous band that had a really big hit with "Born To Be Wild," [Steppenwolf] they had just left that one house that was there and then it got developed by my ex's father.

So all of this was going on during the infamous Summer of Love?

Well, a lot of the Summer of Love spilled out into Muir Beach. Kesey and a lot of those guys came out to the beach, it was a big scene, and Blue Cheer used to come and rehearse in the Tavern, which tortured the whole neighborhood because they were the loudest band you ever heard. And the Electric Flag would come out with Mike Bloomfield and Buddy Miles and they would rehearse. The door was open and you could wander in and out and the kids used to listen, nobody made a big deal of things in those days. And Buddy Miles came out a lot, and he was amazing, he was the lead singer for that group.

I remember one night we had Paul Butterfield and they came down to our house afterwards and we jammed till all hours of the morning, and I'm thinking, god, these guys are playing with us, they're nuts. But it was so much fun, you know, nobody cared how good you were, you just joined in, that was the spirit of the thing. The old days were really musical. It's hard to believe any of it ever happened.

The first time Bruce [Barlow] came here to San Francisco with Commander Cody, we played the very first gig that they played out on the Great Highway at the Family Dog. It was us [Circus] and Clover and Commander Cody, and that started a love affair amongst all of us, because we loved their band and we did a lot of gigs with them. We did Brown's Hall gigs, and we all made money except for Commander Cody. They went broke every night because Billy C. smashed the microphones, and so those guys ended up giving all the money back to us to buy new microphones. He'd break the stands and the microphones, and then Joe Kerr [Commander Cody's original manager] actually managed Clover for a little while. Asleep at the Wheel, we used to play with them all the time, they were friends of the Cody boys, and we all sort of hung out together and played gigs together...I

remember that, god, Bruce was in that wonderful band, they were just fabulous. They had a hit!

And then a North Beach club took over the Tavern and ran gigs there. Credence used to play with us all the time there too, both the Fogertys, Tom was still alive in those days. John Fogerty was brilliant...I always thought he was a nice guy, and he could sing...In fact, we're trying to get Credence a Lifetime Achievement award in NARAS. [National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences]

How are you involved with NARAS?

I'm the president of the local chapter, the San Francisco Chapter. I've been in office about a year...I've turned them Green, and I'm working on turning the entire Academy, including the telecast, carbon neutral. We started with San Francisco, we're totally Green now, we do it with carbon offsets, and changed the way we print paper, and by heavy recycling, changing all the light bulbs, even soy ink, buying organic whenever possible... I mean we've gotten to the depths of it. And we're constantly learning.



Then I wrote a manual on how to do it, step by step. We had a president's conference in Hawaii in May and I went there and I made a CD Rom, which I gave everybody, called Grammy Goes Green, on how to do it. I gave it to all the eleven other chapters and I'm trying to get the telecast to be a carbon neutral telecast and to have Green events around it, like the after-dinner, and the dinner at the event, to get everything Green, and that's proving to be a challenge. I've even lined up a partner in a venture capitalist company, the biggest venture capitalist in the world, who said, "What do you need?" He's going to give me any amount of money I want to help fund it.

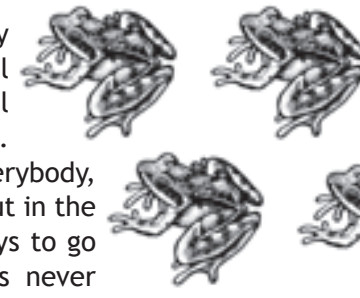
And now I've found a guy who specializes in Greening events, he knows how to run all the events Green. I'm trying to put all that together and in the meantime, the NRDC [Natural Resources Defense Council] has stepped in too and all these people coming out of the woodwork are just movers and shakers in the Green Movement. One of them heard me speak and now they're coming to me. I just had lunch with somebody the other day who works with Green developers, she's in the middle of a three-hundred-million dollar project right now.

People like that, you know, real heavy money people who are throwing all their weight into Green, they're all capitalists, which is the beauty of it. Now that Green is making money for everybody, we've got a chance of it happening. But in the meantime, I'm trying to get these guys to go carbon negative on the telecast. It's never been done before, no one's ever heard the term before, it's all mine. Even if they remove one ton of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere that we didn't have before that telecast, it's the psychological impact, because our audience is a hundred million people.

Do you have support within the organization?

Actually, I ran on that [Green] platform when I ran for president. Thanks to Al Gore, he's changed the climate, no pun intended. So I do have a lot of support. People know it's the right thing, but it's painful. Like, I've had guys come over to me with questions like, "Do they make a hybrid Escalade?" which I understand. I mean, the Academy is made up of very wealthy people.

They sent all of us a binder to the Hawaii trustee meeting, two hundred and eighty-one pages, printed single-side. So I figured it all out, and, conservatively,



they wasted fifteen thousand sheets of paper, fifteen hundred pounds of paper that they had to ship... They could have just printed on both sides and cut everything in half.

So that's the kind of thing I'm facing, it's just old thinking, and people aren't really totally ready to admit that we're in the middle of the biggest crisis we've ever faced since the Black Plague. So I'm having a hard time, and I don't want to come on like too much of a campaigner.

What happened after your winter with Clover in Mill Valley?

I moved back [to Muir Beach] to a new cabin, which was the cabin at the Circus house. Right around this time was beginning of the Volunteer Firemen. It all started because one day this cabin up on Sunset Way caught fire, and these Portuguese guys and another older guy at the beach had actually gotten a fire truck, a 1949 Studebaker. But they never trained on it, they were too old, they were like the heart-attack squad. And so when this cabin went up, John-John and I were up there with a couple of other people with hoses and hand tools, trying to put this thing out, and the county took forever to come out there, and by the time they came the



Andre Pessis, President of the San Francisco Chapter of NARAS, and advocate for all things Green, including the endless frogs...
Photograph by Julie Smith

place was pretty well gutted. I remember this guy from the county turned on his high-pressure hose and shot through the window in the front, and it came out the window in the back and knocked me flat on my ass.

So John-John and I, Bill Hybert, John-John's brother, and a couple of other guys, we got together and we said, you know, we're really vulnerable out here, so we decided to start a Fire Department. The first thing we did is we managed to get that fire truck away from the older guys, and it was a bit of a battle, and we decided to become a completely non-political, non-taxing Fire Department so that we didn't have to answer to anybody. And then we had to figure out how to raise some money, and so we started the Barbecue.

It started out acoustic, on the other side of the creek where the volleyball court is now, and maybe the first year there were fifty people or so. It was us [Flying Circus] and Clover, and we all had acoustic guitars and Johnny [Ciambotti] had a guitaron, which is a Mexican bass. We just played acoustically for a couple of hours and cooked some chicken, and had a little barbecue and it was a lot of fun. And then the next year we had double or triple the amount of people, it was just so much damn fun. And then eventually, we had to build a little stage and start pulling our amps out, and then it just grew and grew and every year it got bigger and better.

One year I had Huey [Lewis] come out and play with us and then the next year we had an enormous crowd looking for Huey, and the Sons of Champlin, who were going to play too, and we had too many people, and too big of a traffic jam, and then we decided enough with the stars. We were just going to do it funky, us, and not pack it with stars. We all knew stars, you know, so we decided that wasn't the way to go because we don't need all those people, and we'd never advertised.

Then we started selling raffle tickets, I remember I used to go around the community, I went to almost every house, I was the raffle-ticket-selling champ for years. I'd sell hundreds of the things, you know, and we'd raise money. And in those days we managed to raise barely enough to keep going, and then we started going more and more upscale, and we got a grant and bought a fire truck from Florida. Two of us had to fly there and drive it back, a yellow truck.

We elected John-John the first Fire Chief. He was the obvious choice, because he was the only one who was organized enough and had enough respect from everybody. I mean, everybody respected John, so he

was a natural choice and he just fell right into it. He got things done, and we grew, and we paid for training, and we learned EMT, and how to save lives and how to spray water on fires.

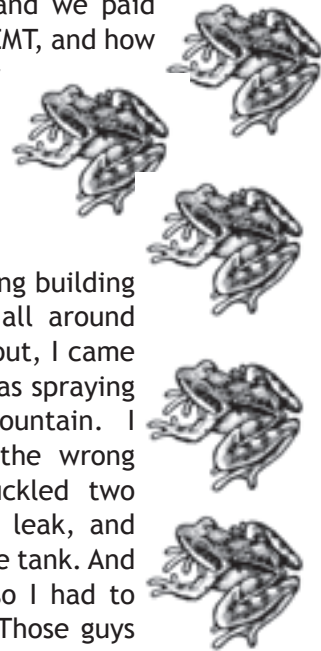
We had a few fires, we had some whoppers and I remember I kind of screwed up one day. I ran into a burning building and started spraying water all around and then, after the fire was out, I came up to the fire truck, and it was spraying water all around like a big fountain. I had attached the hose to the wrong place and so I actually buckled two inches of steel and made it leak, and that was the end of that whole tank. And everyone knew it was me, so I had to take the brunt of that one. Those guys rode me forever after that. And then there was the time another guy got nervous on a fire response and he held down the button on the radio and blacked out the entire county for about half an hour. So we made our mistakes, but then we got better and better at it and more professional.

It was really a different place back then. When our bridge collapsed, everybody from the neighborhood came by one day with chains and cars, and Peter Smith dragged logs off the beach and we fixed our bridge. Then John-John had a downstairs he was trying to build and we all showed up down there and built that, and then we all built the Community Center.

Larry Yamamoto gave us a Volkswagen bus, just gave it to us, [Flying Circus] and that kept us going for quite a while...I love the Yamamotos, they're a fabulous family, I knew them all...There are some real characters at the Beach, people who have a lot of depth to their souls. It was a fabulous community, I was so sorry to leave it.

Your Barbecue bands are always so great and so much fun to dance to. How do you decide the line-up from one year to the next?

Well, [guitar player, Chris] Goddard has been with me for maybe decades. I knew Goddard from Music Camp... Originally, it was our band and Clover and then we'd invite a third band...There were always three bands, and we did that for years and years, and then eventually, Clover broke up, we broke up...everybody broke up. So I'm left with this Barbecue, and so I started putting together all these people that I'd met from Music Camp...and playing.

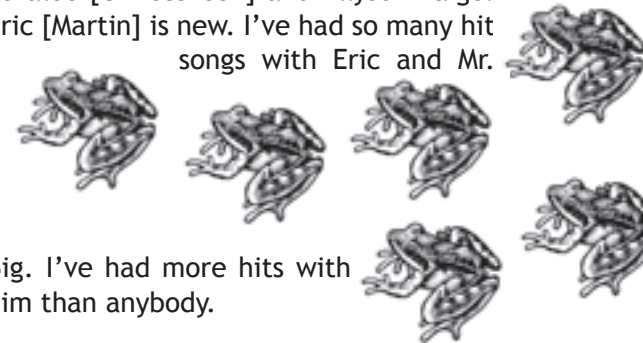


Andre's All Stars: Chris Goddard, Andre Pessis, Tal Morris, and Allyson Paige. Photograph by Julie Smith

Then as years went on, I kept some and lost some and some didn't work out...The gig doesn't pay a lot of money, and you want to have a great time, and it's, "Are you into it?" When they're not into it, I let them go and I find someone, there are so many good players. I think actually the best band I've ever had there was this year.

Tal Morris [on guitar] was a monster...[he] played with Huey Lewis and the News, and now he plays with Credence. The drummer was Adam Berkowitz, who I thought was great. I'd never played with Adam before and I'd never played with Tal...and Audie [de Lone, on keys] I thought was better this year than he's maybe ever been...And that bass player's really good, Michael White. Audie's been with us a long time now, he's a fixture. I always hire Audie and I always hire the singers, Lorelee [Christensen] and Allyson Paige.

Eric [Martin] is new. I've had so many hit songs with Eric and Mr.



Big. I've had more hits with him than anybody.

I seem to remember Mr. Big from L.A. back in the eighties, right?

Yes, but after L.A. in the eighties, they became the biggest act in Japan...Half my records on the wall have him on it. He's a huge star in Japan and in Asia. Mr. Big played New George's and drew fifty people. They went

to Bangkok and drew thirty-nine thousand, including ten thousand who couldn't get in and stood in the hills and listened to the music. I've had about five number-one records with him in Asia and Japan...

I had one song that was a top-ten hit in nine countries, and I have a bunch of platinum records with Eric.

~ Andre does indeed have quite a few platinum and gold records. His songs have sold over twenty million records, and he's had seven number one albums. His biggest hit single was "Walking on a Thin Line," with Kevin Wells, on Huey Lewis and The News' album "Sports." He has two ASCAP awards for most-played songs.

And would you believe it all started with the frogs of Muir Beach?!

When he was living at the Circus House, at the start of what has become a long, successful, songwriting career, he was looking for a name for his fledgling publishing company.

One day he went in and found a frog on the cover of his reel-to-reel machine. Animal lover that he is, he kindly scooped it up and deposited it near the creek down by the Pelican Inn. The next time he went in to record, there were two frogs. It seemed there was a bit of an amphibian theme developing, so Andre started thinking of calling his company, "Twenty-Five Frogs Music." But the frogs continued to arrive, now in multiples, perching in pairs on the reel-to-reel, loitering in tiny green gangs under cassette machines and behind the furniture. The day he relocated his twenty-sixth frog, he decided to call his publishing company "Endless Frogs Music." He swears that this was the last he ever saw of the frogs. Apparently, he'd finally gotten their message. The rest, as they say, is history.

My interview with Andre was everything I'd hoped for, except that we didn't actually have dinner, which would have allowed me to legitimately use "My Dinner With Andre" as the title. Despite, (or perhaps because of), all his success, he is friendly, self-deprecating and humble. Not to mention, he has a really great sense of humor that kept me laughing for most of the two hours he generously donated to the Beachcomber.

At one point in the interview, I asked him how long he would continue to play the Barbecues, and his answer was, "As long as they keep having them."

We intend to hold you to that, Andre.

Many thanks for all the great music, from your loyal fans in Muir Beach. ~

Buenos Aires, Tourism, and Immigration

By Gerald Pearlman

So now the journey continues from a near freezing Antarctica back to a sweltering Buenos Aires. It seems a lot easier to accommodate oneself to the cold than it is to the heat. In the cold all that is necessary is to put on layer after layer of clothing until the necessary equilibrium is reached between outside and in. But when the temperature soars and the sun burns down relentlessly, you may go in the opposite direction stripping down to the skin and still obtain little relief.

There is also some art to living with air conditioning and ubiquitous ceiling fans that takes a bit of getting used to. For me it always seems like I am about to catch a cold when subject to continuous drafts of cold air aimed in my direction. And then there is the air itself of the city. Buenos Aires or “good air” may have been true when the city was first relocated from one of its original sites adjacent to slaughterhouses and rendering plants, but it is certainly a misnomer today. Most of the buses run on diesel, hurtling down canyon-like narrow streets and spewing out fumes in their wake, the sounds of their motors echoing mightily off the buildings on either side. Not so different from any other great capital city.

But I will not find a dentist in Antarctica, see a finely wrought Tango show, or find a teacher to instruct me in doing the tango myself, save in a great city. To get to know a city is not without its challenges and rewards. But it does take considerably more time because there is so much more to know, as opposed to the stark beauty and contrasting simplicity of a place like Antarctica. One must learn how everything works in a strange environment with the additional burden of a foreign tongue to cope with. Taxis, subways, buses must be mastered, if you want to get anywhere more than your feet will take you. Differing money values necessitate translating most transactions from one currency to another to establish some semblance of value.

Finding out anything is problematic wherever you may be, but is more so in a strange city. There is a misplaced faith that if you ask a native a question, you will automatically be receiving a correct answer—after all, they are not strangers like yourself. But chances are they will know as little as you do about what matters to you at the moment, but nonetheless not hesitate to venture an opinion anyway. Generally I make it a practice to ask the same question to two or three different people before deciding on the best response. With perseverance you will inevitably become more comfortable with where everything is and how it all works. And it is all quite marvelous, considering the general range of human folly, that

these metropolises function so well for their millions of inhabitants, that water and power reach all these homes and apartments, that trash gets collected, and that peace reigns in general (outside of the occasional coup d’etat).

Speaking of trash, the removal of which is one of the most essential functions of any large or small city, it is a little incredible at how it is being done in this place and other cities I have seen. Persons living here place their trash in various size plastic bags, perhaps tie them at the top, and bring them to the sidewalk in front of their dwelling place, where they are left for the trash collection trucks. These vehicles arrive sometime in the evening and hurry as fast as possible down the street with two people on either side in the back of the truck leaping off to collect as many of the plastic bags as they can before the truck moves out of range. These collectors must be in the best physical shape of anyone since they are constantly on the run as the truck moves up the street. Needless to say, in their haste, a lot of the trash gets spilled or left behind. It does not seem like a very efficient way to go about this business when all that would be necessary is a larger trash can in place of the plastic bags, making life easier on everyone, including the city streets.

My suggestion that this would surely be an improvement over the present system was summarily dismissed as a foolish notion since obviously I didn’t realize any trash cans set on the street would immediately be stolen. Probably there are no individual property owner or business fees established for trash collection as we commonly experience up north, so the municipality with a limited tax base to draw on naturally seeks the least expensive route to resolve the issue. There is in addition an entirely secondary recycling operation going on related to and dependent on the primary waste management service of the municipality. Before pickup time well organized individuals and groups will sort through the plastic bags removing glass and plastic and whatever else has recycling value. Needless to say, they are also in a hurry and not very efficient in putting back what they take out when retrieving the recyclables.

It occurs to me that most municipalities including our own are less in the habit these days of giving their inhabitants the primary attention they deserve in the form of public works, public service, or public anything. True to form in recent history “public” receives short shrift as opposed to “private,” the unmerited panacea for all forms of social action and well being. Most attention as a result is focused on making life easier

and better for the tourists coming to the city to spend their money rather than the inhabitants who live there. Whatever will attract more tourists and serve them while they are present is what will spark government action and funding. I sometimes envision a world half of which is on tour; and the other half serving that half in a burgeoning number of hotels, restaurants, and “tourist” attractions. Too bad, for the tourist industry does little for the majority of inhabitants where it takes place. The jobs are generally low paying and the general purpose of extracting as much money as possible from visitors is without honor or pride.

In many respects the quality of the art in a place where tourists are drawn to suffers as a result. For one thing most local people cannot afford the prices to attend the shows put on for tourists. But more important the increasing numbers of festivals staged to attract the tourists commodify what was once natural celebrations of various actual events that had specific meaning for a community. And for the most part the talent required for the occasion was drawn from the local community rather than the importing professionals. Celebrations may have been less frequent, but probably more enjoyable for precisely that reason.

And what seems to affect tourism most of all is the peculiarity, if not the mystery, of what is known as the “exchange rate” of the currency of the tourist and that of the country being toured. Most of the world is in the position, through no apparent fault of their own, of having an “unfavorable exchange rate” with the leading developed countries. As a result anyone coming from one these more developed countries suddenly finds himself able to do considerably more with the currency of his native land in the foreign land he happens to be in. No one seems able to explain in any simple way why, in a country like Argentina or any other, one US dollar is the equivalent in worth of a little more than three Argentine pesos. Economists might explain it as something to do with “cash reserves” or “balance of trade deficits,” but it still does not explain why some one digging a hole in the United States, or teaching in school, should be paid three times as much as someone performing the same tasks in the less developed country.

What would happen if all currencies were pegged to a universal standard creating automatically somewhat of the universal equality deemed so desirable. Well strangely enough precisely such an act occurred in Argentina in the early ‘90s when the peso was pegged to parity with the US dollar. It led to the eventual collapse of the government ten years later because Argentine exports were too expensive to compete in the world market. The subsequent devaluation of the peso resulted in much suffering for those whose holdings in pesos were diminished by two thirds. And an

even worse fate awaited those with loans outstanding who now had to pay three times as much to service them (often losing their homes when they could not).

If the peso were pegged to equity with the dollar, the tourist industry would dry up because all the bargains created by the discrepancies in the exchange rate would disappear. No more meals in fancy restaurants at a third of what they would cost at home, or building homes for that matter at a third or fourth of what they would cost in your own country—to say nothing of the comparative freedom from oppressive building codes and expensive permit processes.

Another potential side effect of universal equality of currency value is the relief from the necessity of emigration to find work. All other things being equal as well, given the same degree of opportunity to work in one’s native land that presents itself in the far distant wealthier countries, why would anyone want to pull up roots, leave family and friends to embark on the hazardous journey to a foreign place where little is familiar and a new language has to be learned? No matter what the risk however, it’s all worth it. Because the dollar you will be paid with, (if all goes well and you succeed in the increasingly impossible task of legal and illegal immigration), is worth three times as much as what you could earn in your own country, if you were fortunate to get one of the few jobs available there.


So while immigration continues, as it has in the past, to contribute more and more significantly to the wealth of the host country by driving down the cost of labor and creating an ever increasing market for goods and services for the recently arrived, emigration continues to impoverish the countries left behind. It is quite probable that those who choose emigration are among the most talented to be found in the native country. They would have to be to confront the enormous challenge the prospect of immigration holds in store. Often just paying off the debt incurred from their illegal immigration requires years of labor (one source placed the cost of smuggling in an illegal Chinese immigrant at \$70,000).

It is sometimes referred to as the “brain drain,” which magnetically draws the best spirits from the impoverished countries to golden lands of opportunity, thereby enriching these lands even more. But there is little question that if the same opportunities were to present themselves in their native lands, they would never be in such a hurry to leave. Like so many other policy issues being debated in our nation’s capital, hypocrisy, ignorance and a characteristic lack of vision prevail. As Robert Frost aptly put it, “something there is that doesn’t like a wall.”


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- Place one space between sentences.
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- You may also submit drawings or paste-up layouts, scanned or originals.



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WEEKLY IN MUIR BEACH

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

- MONDAY**
- Tai-chi - 6:30 - 7:30 pm, \$22.50 per month
- TUESDAY**
- The Bookmobile - 4:30 - 5:30 pm - 1st and 3rd Tuesdays, Mailboxes, Highway One across from Pelican Inn.
- WEDNESDAY**
- Tai-chi - 8:00 - 9:00 am
 - Bistro - Wednesday mornings, 9:30 - 11:30 am Organic fair trade coffee, \$1.50 per cup; additional cups 25¢ each. Featuring fantastic fresh-baked organic scones by Nancy Knox, \$1.50 each.

- Muir Beach Quilters - 11 am. No fee.
- CSD Board of Directors Meeting Meetings of the Board of Directors of the Muir Beach Community Services District are open to the public and are generally held on the 4th Wednesday of the month, every other month, at 7:00 pm. Notice of Board Meetings are posted 72 hours in advance, as exact dates may vary.

- THURSDAY**
- Tai-chi - 6:30 - 7:30 pm
 - Volleyball - 6:00 pm - late At the courts on Muir Woods Road. No fee.

- SUNDAY**
- Zen Center - 8:15 am Meditation Instruction 9:15 am Meditation (zazen) 10:15 am Lecture, 11:15 am Tea 11:45 am Discussion with lecturer 12:45 pm Lunch for Program Attendees (\$8 don.) Children's Lecture and Program - 2nd Sundays 10–11:30 am

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Deadline: October 1, 2007, to receive first of four issues starting with October issue.

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Joey Groneman, dessert baker



Serving...
Michael Llewellyn-Williams, Peter Lambert,
and Susy Stewart



Picnicking...
Judith and Larry Yamamoto



Selling...
Kathy Sward



Dancing...
Kathy Johnston



Playing...
Andre Pessis of Andre's
All-Stars (See interview,
page 46.)



Having fun...
Harvey Pearlman and Tiana Vincent-Pearlman



And on alert...
Firefighter Alex Naar,
designated driver of the
676 if a call comes in.

Photographs by Julie Smith

BBQ STORIES BEGIN ON PAGE 7



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