

BEACHCOMBER

Muir Beach Neighborhood News

Issue 242 July 2008



MBVFD
BBQ 2008

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FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Reader:

Last year Julie Smith did the lion's share of BBQ coverage with some help from a few Chairs and myself. This year I'm happy to report that Julie (still providing the lion's share!) and I had much-appreciated help from Paul Jeschke, Laurie Piel, Gail Falls, Bruce Barlow, Debra Allen, Tayeko Kaufman, Kathy Sward, Maury Ostroff, Hannah Eigsti, Linda Lotriet, and Erin Pinto. Many thanks to you all for enriching this annual ritual with multiple perspectives in the pages to follow. BBQ stories begin on page 8.

And a special thanks to Brad Eigsti for painting this stunning and delightful rendition of BBQ Day for the front and back covers.

Next issue: October 2008

Submissions Deadline: September 15, 2008

See page 46 for Submission Guidelines.

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MBVFD BBQ 2008, 17" x 12"

UPFRONT

The Beachcomber Salutes

The Graduates of 2008



Fletcher Riehl is graduating from UCLA with a double major in History and Economics. After taking a few weeks off for a bit of fun, Fletcher's going to jump right in and go to work for CIM Group, an investment company that partners with local governments, development agencies, public employee pension funds, and other investors on projects to revitalize urban neighborhoods. —Christian Riehl

Photograph by Leslie Riehl



Kaitlin Maureen Ketchum graduated May 10, from Loyola University, New Orleans with a Bachelors Degree of Arts degree in Humanities, Honors in English (ok bragging here a little bit). She is making her home in New Orleans for the time being and is thinking she will apply to graduate school in the next year or two. We are pretty proud of her! —Kathy Ketchum

Greg Ketchum, Kaitlin Ketchum, and Kathy Taylor Ketchum

Photograph by Kara Grace Ketchum



Sandy, Rob, and Debra are proud to announce that Thomas C. Allen graduated from Tam High with honors on June 12. Member of AIM (2-year documentary film program), and on to UCSC (film/media tech. dept.) —Debra Allen

Thomas C. Allen

Photograph by Debra Allen



Devon McDonald-Hyman to Study Photo & Film at USC

The McDonald-Hyman family wishes to announce the graduation of Devon from Tamalpais High School... Football wide receiver and kicker in the fall, and baseball second baseman in the spring, while maintaining an A average in honors and AP classes can prove demanding for any high school student. But it is particularly hard if you're also an award-winning photographer. Devon's talent for photography was striking throughout his high school years. His accolades include 1st Place in the Pacific Sun newspaper Photography Contest, selected works chosen for the prestigious Mill Valley Arts Festival, exhibited in the Rising Stars Artisans Gallery showing, and winning "Best in School" for the Physics Photo Contest at Tam High. In his spare time, Devon's a photographer and writer for the West Marin Citizen newspaper as well as the Muir Beach Beachcomber magazine. His passion for photography and film led to Devon's admission to the University of Southern California (USC), where Devon will study photography and film on a Roski School of Fine Arts Talent Scholarship.

Devon on location at Yosemite

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3

Letters to the Editor

(Re: *Can I Mention Something?* March 2008 issue)

Yes, the layout of the article was great, and I thank you very much. Even better, the article caught the attention of a former Muir Beacher who subsequently arranged for her daughter's Girl Scout Troop to engage SaveABunny as a volunteer project for the Troop. That is a great demonstration of how powerful and important local publications are to supporting the needs of the community. I can't thank you enough for the time and effort you put into the *Beachcomber*, but because of your work, lots of people—and bunnies—are benefiting. Christian Riehl

This year I decided to change the reference to my functional description to "Team Lead" rather than "Chair." After letting everything sit for a year, I think it is more descriptive to use the term as it truly is a team effort to get the BBQ moving each year. This is especially true with the type of effort involved in each of the respective areas. I think it also seems to fit better with the personalities and lifestyle of the Muir Beachers.

It's no big deal, but someone might wish to share this information/suggestion with the others at some point. Especially if they resort to documenting what is done for their area. Al Kile

I want to tell you how much I enjoy the *Beachcomber* since you took over. I especially appreciate the attention the individual firemen get with the interviews. I started thinking at the BBQ work party yesterday about how many remarkable community members we have (they're actually all remarkable in their own ways), and how one gets to learn new things about your neighbor when you get a chance to spend some time with them. If the day comes that you have interviewed all of the Fire Dept, (and the Association, and the CSD) wouldn't it be great to have interviews with just the regular folk that make up our community. After all, it wouldn't be a community without them.

Anyway, I was just thinking...

Dave Elliott

Thank you for your many long hours of hard work to prepare the *Beachcomber*. If you feel it relevant to the community, and for the sake of any children who might be endangered by bobcats and coyotes that roam readily within our community, you might want to refer their parents to an article, "Scientists probe recent coyote attacks in California," by Alicia Chang, AP (www.signonsandiego.com/news/state/20080511-1042-ca-coyoteattacks.html) about children being bitten and dragged away from a swing in the suburbs in So. Calif. And rescued by the Nanny. The child had been bitten on the bottom by the dysfunctional wild coyote who had been displaced by humans in the suburbs.

Kindly also refer them to the website below for other events with bobcats in our own community. Tell them to go to CHICKEN NEWS #4 or #5, which can be found on inbetweenbooks.com. They should scroll to the bottom and click on "chicken news"... written in 2004. Karla Andersdatter



Redwood Log

Musings from Mia Monroe

Summer days and summer crowds are here! Lots of ladybugs are visiting, too...warm days and sunny spots are full of them plus many butterflies as well. Local tip: visit early or late to have the woods more to yourself! And, ask your friends to take the shuttle on weekends and holidays.

Wildlife is abundant this year, too! Regular reports of coyote on the trails, otter frolic in the creek, barred owlets learning to fly and feed overhead, and of course, lots of deer! Remember: they're wild animals and don't feed, approach or otherwise distract them from their wild life!

Special dates in Muir Woods, please join us:

- **September 19-20-21** at 1 pm: a special dance performance: BIG TREES small dance
- **September 20:** Coast Cleanup 9 am at Muir Beach

Shopping at Mill Valley Market

Can Mean Dollars for Muir Beach Fire Department and *Beachcomber*

By Bob Hayden

Do you ever buy groceries at Mill Valley Market? If you do, some of your shopping dollars can come right back to our community as a donation by the Market. Since last fall, the *Beachcomber* has been a beneficiary of the store's "shop and give" donation program, and now our Volunteer Fire Department is on the donor list, too. There's no added cost for the shopper—the donation comes entirely from the family-owned Mill Valley Market. At the beginning of your checkout, simply tell the cashier you'd like your purchase to be part of the donation program. Let them know whether the store's donation should go to the *Beachcomber* (code #7094) or to Muir Beach Fire Department (#7097). Decisions, decisions! Maybe flip a coin, or alternate between shopping trips. Either way, be sure to thank our friends at Mill Valley Market, and spend lots! Three per cent of your purchase will go to a very worthy cause.



In loving memory

of a great family member, Gus Allen, who passed away on June 2.

**Gus Allen
1996 - 2008**

Subscribe to Green Gulch Bread Deliveries!

By Emila Heller and Mick Sopko



Emila Heller and Mick Sopko of the Green Gulch Bread Bakery

The Green Gulch Bread Bakery has been operating now for about 9 months and we're producing up to 350 loaves each week, consuming almost half of them within the community itself, for guest and resident meals. We've been offering the rest for sale to our Muir Beach subscribers and to Sunday visitors after the public lecture at our mini-market behind the meditation hall. (Fresh farm vegetables and

garden items are also seasonably available at this time and place). This market usually "opens" around 11 AM and finishes up within a half an hour or so. Through the week, visitors and guests can also purchase bread.

We're happy to have established a great relationship with about 25 Muir Beach families who have subscribed for weekly bread deliveries. These loaves are baked every Thursday and are dropped off at the delivery box at Bob and Dee Hayden's in the late afternoon. Emila



Breads on the Green Gulch Farm lunch table



Breads cooling in the bakery

has designed a weekly email "menu" so people can order their choice of bread from the ones being offered.

We're also delighted with the connection we've made with Will Koza of the Pelican Inn. We're currently supplying the Inn with about half its bread needs, mostly in the form of "miches," which are large, round, 2 kilo loaves of different varieties. Will is interested, as are we, in supporting and encouraging local food activity, and serves the bread mainly over the weekends - for the table, for sandwiches, and for breakfasts.

Some of our more popular breads are Pain Rustique, Walnut Levain, Corn Rye, Pain Provençal (with olives and fresh rosemary) and, of course, Muir Beach Sourdough! Mick has recently introduced a sweet and sour Raisin Rye and is experimenting with a number of other breads, including Focaccia, Ciabatta, Sesame Durum, Unyeasted Bread, and Pure Rye.

If you'd like to subscribe to our bread delivery or if you'd like to make a special order for a party or event, please contact Emila at emila.heller@sfzc.org.

Photographs by Mick Sopko

O'Hanlon Center for the Arts
presents
a new photography exhibition
from
WAYNE HELDT
November 4th through 26th
Tuesday to Saturday 10am - 2pm
616 Throckmorton Avenue Mill Valley, CA 94941
415 388-4331
<http://www.ohanloncenter.org>

Hospital Vigil Organized for Green Gulch Accident Victim

By Paul Jeschke

Friends of Grace Dammann prayed, chanted and made offerings at an altar erected in a hospital waiting room after the beloved physician and Green Gulch stalwart was critically injured in a horrific smashup on the Golden Gate Bridge. Family photos, artifacts, a guest book, prayer flags, and a kata scarf blessed by His Holiness the Dalai Lama were carefully arranged on the altar.

The round-the-clock vigil was a spontaneous outpouring of support for Dammann, 61, who was airlifted to John Muir Medical Center in Walnut Creek May 21 with life threatening injuries. Because of the seriousness of the situation, the hospital “broke the rules, allowed us to stay all night and even allowed us to bring food in,” said Martha de Barros, Muir Beach resident and long-time friend.

With Dammann isolated in a sterile, intensive care room, intubated and sedated, her friends and fellow Zen Buddhists established a 24-hour watch in an adjacent family waiting room. “It was an incredible outpouring of love and affection,” de Barros said. Eventually the hospital, overwhelmed by some 25 people

at a time crowding the area, asked that the vigil be restricted to normal visiting hours.

“Please continue to hold Grace in your hearts,” said Fu Schroeder, Dammann’s partner, noting that she underwent numerous abdominal and orthopedic surgeries. A large team of pulmonaryspecialists, orthopedic surgeons, respiratory experts and neurologists is caring for her.

Dammann’s brothers, Peter and Frankie, hung a photo of Grace and His Holiness the Dalai Lama on the medical machinery above her head. “She, and all the medical staff who attend her, are graced by that gentle smile,” said an entry on the



Grace Dammann, right, partner Fu Schroeder and their daughter, Sabrina, are long-time residents of Green Gulch.

Photograph courtesy of caringbridge.org. Printed by permission of Martha de Barros

CaringBridge.org website, an online journal devoted to keeping friends informed about her condition.

Dammann was presented an “Unsung Heroes of Compassion” award three years ago by the Dalai Lama for her work with AIDS patients in San Francisco and Marin. “He’s so great, and he has such a sense of humor,” Dammann said later. “He told us, ‘I have studied compassion my whole life, but you all are doing it. I’m here to learn.’”

Dammann, a physician, studied social work and attended divinity school before becoming a medical doctor. She engendered

“huge love and respect” while working with AIDS patients at San Francisco’s Laguna Honda Hospital, according to Wendy Johnson, Muir Beach resident, lay Dharma teacher and long-time Dammann friend. Dammann was instrumental in founding the Tom Steel Clinic in Mill Valley, which provides medical care in an emotionally supportive environment to more than half of the individuals living with AIDS in Marin County.

In 1993, Dammann and Schroeder, a Buddhist priest and activist, adopted their daughter, Sabrina. Now a teenager, Sabrina was a passenger in the car at the time of the collision. She received moderate injuries and after one day at Marin General Hospital, returned home to Green Gulch to get ready for eighth grade graduation.

Dammann was driving Sabrina home from school at the time of the collision. She had just passed the north tower of the bridge when a southbound vehicle suddenly swerved into the northbound lanes. Dammann’s car “collapsed, it got pushed in,” said Southern Marin Deputy Fire Chief Jeff Powers. “There were some difficulties in cutting open that car without doing any more damage to any of the patients.”

Schroeder, director of Green Gulch, stepped down so she could spend time at Dammon’s bedside and devote more time to caring for the couple’s daughter. “Green Gulch is taking excellent care of the family,” Johnson said.

A fund to help pay for Dammann’s care has been established. Checks can be made out to the Grace Dammann fund and sent to Pauline H. Tesler, Tesler, Sandmann & Fishman, 163 Miller Avenue, Suite 4, Mill Valley, California 94941.

de Barros said the most current news about Dammann’s condition can be obtained on the web at <http://www.caringbridge.org>. In the “enter website name” window, type “gracedamman” (without quotes, capitals or spaces). The site contains a daily updates and a guestbook where visitors can post comments.



Dammann was driving northbound on the Golden Gate Bridge when a southbound vehicle swerved into her lane. Both she and her daughter, Sabrina, were wearing seat belts. Photograph by Jeff Vendel, Marin Independent Journal

Little Left After Disastrous Apartment Inferno

By Paul Jeschke

A sealed, water-soaked envelope containing a slip of paper announcing the sex of her unborn baby was one of the few items Kris Nelder was lucky enough to get back from the charred embers of her fire ravaged apartment.

The baby’s gender is still a mystery. Nelder, the daughter of Muir Beach residents Julie and Brent Smith, doesn’t want to know the sex until the infant is born later this year.

“Because the paper was wet, you could see right through the envelope,” Julie Smith said. “Kris closed her eyes and handed it to me and I put it away quickly without looking. The sex of the baby will still be a surprise when the child is born.”

Not much else survived an intense, four-alarm fire that swept through an historic Victorian in San Rafael May 15, destroying a four-story structure that was on the National Register of Historic Places.

Nelder and her husband, Jeff, weren’t home when the early evening fire, apparently touched off by neighbors grilling on a balcony, swept through the stately structure which had been divided into seven apartments. “It’s just a miracle they weren’t at home,” Smith said. “Their fire escape went right down to the porch that was totally engulfed in flames.”

The burned out couple took up temporary residence with Kris’ parents on Seacape Drive. It’s the house where Kris grew up.

Kris’ brother, Brett, is a firefighter in Vallejo and when he showed up at the scene of the fire in his turnouts, the San Rafael fire chief allowed him access to the still-smoldering embers. “He found a few things and every time an ash-covered box came out, there were cheers,” Julie Smith said.

Brett wasn’t the only family member to sift through the rubble. His father, Brent, a board member of the Muir Beach Volunteer Fire Department, was able to recover important photographs, negatives and slides that belonged to Kris, a professional photographer. Family members spent days cleaning and restoring the images.

“We still don’t know if we can recover the photographic information from the computer hard drive,” Julie Smith said.

The family was thrilled that Brent, after hours of digging

through the ashes, retrieved a cameo that Julie’s grandmother gave her when she turned 16 and that she, in turn, handed over to Kris on her 16th birthday. Jeff’s old wooden Buddha was “mostly charcoal.” A set of four theater chairs from the Orpheum Theater was the only piece of furniture to survive.

The burned out couple moved in with the Smiths until they can figure out how to regroup. “They had insurance, but it isn’t enough,” Julie Smith said.

Friends have established two gift registries to help the couple replace items destroyed in the fire and to prepare for the soon-to-arrive baby. They can be accessed at www.babiesrus.com and www.macys.com.



Jeff and Kris Nelder try to forget their fire woes by partying at the Muir Beach Memorial Day Weekend Barbeque.



Brent Smith surveys the damage in the fire-ravaged living room of his daughter's San Rafael apartment.

Photographs by Julie Smith

May 3rd Barbecue Work Party

By Laurie Piel

Photographs by Bruce Barlow

Chris Gove was in charge of the work parties this year, and as I walked over the field to the BBQ site, I was greeted by the avant-garde choreography of Michael Moore, Chris Gove and Eric Groneman as three sets of arms, legs and weed whackers made a ballet out of the creation of the lawn that welcomes the legions of BBQ goers on May 25th.

The crowds have been getting to critical mass around the food booth, so it was time for the grill to be enlarged again. Prior to the May 3rd work party, John John Sward, Jes & Jackson Sward, Mike & Maxx Moore, Chris Gove, and John Koene poured and laid the slab that would support the addition to the grill. Now when the hungry hordes line up on Sunday, there will be plenty of chickens all grilled and ready to go.

Many hands make light work and there were many on Saturday. General clean up had its own set of hands. Maury Ostroff is sure to have calloused hands from clearing all that brush and rusted metal rebar while Janice Kubota, helped by her dog, Sierra, cleaned, swept and made the place welcome. Harvey Pearlman chipped in while Nina Vincent and Trish McCall set out a lunch for all to enjoy. Brad Eigsti was smart enough to bring along his dad.... I'm not sure what Brad can do to top this for a Father's Day outing. Arlene Robertson pitched in with a shovel and added as

much sweat equity as anyone could ask for. Our illustrious editor, Linda Gibbs, was right behind her stirring up her share of dirt and dust to be corralled into the trash. Pam Barlow worked her magic around the site making herself helpful everywhere she turned.

The booth that houses all of the goodies had its champions as well. Al Kile, Kathy Sward and Laura Pandapas were all laboring behind the counter, making it ready for all of the goodies it will hold... from MBVFD branded shirts, pants, caps and blankets to the wondrous offerings of Deb Allen's raffle booth to the bar around the corner. My hubby, David, dropped in to add his encouragement to the goings on, even though he would be leaving the country two days later and would not be returning until after the BBQ was over. And, of course, the whole day's work was digitally captured by Bruce Barlow.



After Brad Eigsti and Arlene Robertson spent the morning shoveling dirt, mud, and sand from the Kitchen, Brad gets ready to sweep the concrete floor clean. Brad's dad, Dave, lends a hand.

Photograph by Laurie Piel



Mason and Fire Chief John John Sward lays brick to extend the BBQ pit.



"Is it time to eat yet?" Trish McCall and Nina Vincent prepare lunch for the hungry crew.



Three parts cement, one part water, and one part Chris Gove, Work Parties Chair.



What do you think, lap pool or BBQ pit? Eric Groneman, John John Sward, and Michael Moore



Weed whacker Maxx Moore takes a break.

May 10th Barbecue Work Party

Story and Photographs by Gail Falls

This was my first time helping out with these Saturday work parties and I had a great time. Chris Cove had things well organized, all the right equipment and materials were there and those who weren't working on the new construction (or watching) seemed to remember from past years what needed to be done and just got down to work. Most of the same people are involved year after year—just look at photos of past work parties. If you aren't one of these, I recommend that you try it out next year. These long-timers shouldn't have all the fun!

So, what happened here today? Holes were dug, posts embedded, new fencing built which extended and defined the barbecue area. Obstacles were removed and weeds were whacked allowing visitors to move around more easily. The tee-shirt booth got new shelving, the drinks booth and the food area got a head start on cleaning, the nachos stand got repaired and a fantastic lunch, organized by Nina Vincent, appeared and disappeared as did the drinks. We chatted, we laughed. It seemed, in retrospect, like a slow-moving day which saw a lot accomplished.



Aran Collier, John John Sward, Chris Cove and Amadeo Banducci watch as Maury Ostroff and Eric Groneman dig up old pipes from abandoned wells, removing any protruding stubs that could be a hazard.



Kathy Sward explains, Bob Hayden carefully listens.



Tayeko Kaufman and Joey Groneman watch as lunch arrives.

The fence posts are in. Eric Groneman, Gerry Pearlman, Chris Cove, and Amadeo Banducci take a break.



Chris Cove fixes Shirley Nygren's Nachos booth while Tayeko Kaufman supervises.



Lunch almost finished, Allison Pinto and Erin Pinto have a sisterly chat.

May 17th Barbecue Work Party

Story and Photographs by Laurie Piel

It was another beautiful Saturday at the BBQ site as folks showed up to make it ready for the upcoming big event. Once again, we had a great turn out for Chris Gove to manage.

The weed whacker brigade was out in force again: Chris Gove, Paul Jeschke, Brent Smith, and Gerry Pearlman. The chipper/mower was driven by Isaac Pearlman as he manicured the job started by the brigade. It's amazing how dirty the back of a truck can be, once you've moved a port-a-potty. Just ask Chris Gove.

Now that the grill has been enlarged, it was time to add a well-needed counter. The job was done by John John Sward, Gerry Pearlman, and Amadeo Banducci... and what a job it was. It was many hours in the making. It wasn't only the grill area that needed work. The whole enclosure needed a good reinforcement. That job fell to the capable hands of Eric Groneman and Dave Elliott.

Just as everyone was getting hungry, David Taylor and Virgil Taylor showed up with a feast. Delicious meats and cheeses did their best to entice the dogs as well as the hungry workers. But Nina Vincent, after setting it all out beautifully with David, never let that happen. She found a better placement and added a cover, which saved the day, although I doubt the dogs would agree.

Nina wasn't the only woman adding her energies to the day. Gail Falls scrubbed the soda cooler (alias bath tub) down to the porcelain. Tayeko Kaufman had her hands deep in water, cleaning the food preparation area. Shirley Nygren and Joey

Groneman helped in the Kitchen and loaded up the truck with the plastic boxes that herald the delicious outcome of the Friday and Saturday night baking at Green Gulch.

Kathy Sward and Gail Falls started stripping the counter of all of the rusted staples that might hurt the merchandise. They were not quite done when another pressing need arrived. Leaving the remainder of the job to the willing hands of Dee Hayden, Janice Kubota, and Laura Pandapas, they headed to the Community Center to start assembling the mounds of T-shirts and other paraphernalia to bring over to the site the next Saturday. David Callander joined the excursion to the Community Center and brought back one of the racks to hold the shirts.

Not only did we have the hands-on group, we had the brain trust. Michael Kaufman, Anne Jeschke, Bob Hayden and Maury Ostroff put their heads together to make everything go smoothly on Sunday, BBQ Day. It wouldn't be a Muir Beach affair without the kids. Virgil Taylor did double duty, taking pictures of Tiana Vincent-Pearlman and helping with the dogs. Eli Pearlman did his part to chip in as well. Meanwhile, on the other side of the creek, inventory was being handled by Rob Allen.

It takes a lot of people to get this together every year and I know I was amazed at the work involved, and the joy that was evident in the faces of all of these hard-working people. It's hard to believe that the BBQ is next weekend, but easy to see that the preparations are almost finished.



Amadeo Banducci, Gerry Pearlman, Eric Groneman, and John John Sward build the fence in the Kitchen.



Kathy Sward and Janice Kubota are trying to figure out how to use some little triangular stacking shelves that Dave Elliot salvaged from a job. He ended up using them decoratively here and there around the complex and everyone loved them.



Brent Smith, left, Michael Kaufman, and Maury Ostroff discuss logistics.



Lots of elbow grease from Gail Falls to ready the bathtub for the drinks and ice.

May 24th Work Party

Photographs and Captions by Julie Smith



Go figger – the driest spring in more than a hundred years produced a steady drizzle the day before the Barbecue. First order of business: Bob Hayden and Mike Moore wrestle a gigantic tarp over the kitchen in an attempt to keep the paper plates, napkins, and workers dry.



Master sign maker, Brad Eigsti is having way too much fun with crayons while Lonna Richmond marvels at the ample girth of a long sleeved tee.



Lisa Eigsti (helped by baby Stella) and Angie Banducci (with Jackson's able assistance) put on a great lunch with all the makings for sandwiches, drinks, chips, and cookies galore.



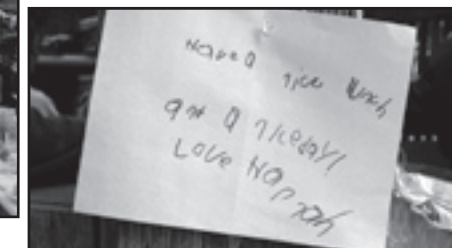
Joey Groneman and Shirley Nygren of the Garden Club decorate the picnic grounds with the traditional red, white & blue.



Erin Pinto has the kitchen setup crew all organized. Now that the kitchen table is dry, she hands off a jug of salad dressing while Dee Hayden rolls the plastic forks and knives into napkins.



There was always "just one more sign" for Lisa Mullerauh to make. Meanwhile, Kathy Sward encourages Bethany Villere to try on one of the new fleece jackets.



Sign making runs in the family - Hannah Eigsti's sign invites the workers to have a nice lunch and a nice day.



Jes Sward, Peter from Mill Valley, and Laura Pandapas stock the wine & beer booth. Lagunitas Brewing donated the beer!



Manly Men Al Kile, Michael Kaufman, Brent Smith, Peter from Mill Valley, Eric Groneman, and Gerry Pearlman lug a heavy picnic table while Chris Gove organizes in the background. The old guys all hurt the next day...

How many cans does it take to make bean salad for a mob? Peter Wood, Peter Lambert, and Nina Vincent open cans till their hands wear out.



There's something for everyone to do. Daniella Silva, Bejamin Pinto Souza, Skye Collier, and Maxx Moore shovel truckloads of chips to cover the soggy ground. Meanwhile, Arlene Robertson and Joey Groneman place the Garden Club's flower arrangements.

A Lot of Work - A Real Good Time

By Kathy Sward

May 24—time to ready our fire department's Logo Shop to open for business on May 25—and it was pouring down rain! But luckily, Chris Gove's work party was in full gear, including the attachment of a visquene cover on the roof of our store, for which huge thanks go to John John, Dave Elliot, Dave Callander and Gail Falls for accomplishing this not-so-small feat in an incredibly timely manner. Meanwhile, the shirt crew continued removing thousands of rusty staples from the shelves and counters, then papering the surfaces, again with staples, and finally unloading box after box after box of merchandise, with occasional comments like "It's really raining!"

Actually my plan for this article was to post lots of photos, with captions, which would clearly show the enormity of what goes into the creation of this shop that magically appears once a year for just six hours. But truly they show only a fraction of what's involved.

Like counting and noting every item left in stock after selling at the firemen's booth at the Quilters' Holiday Art Fair, then noting what needs replacing by barbecue time. Like searching through catalogues for anything new, different and interesting. Like working up an order, a real ordeal, as some items end up not available in some sizes or colors, or are simply too expensive, or have been discontinued, so it's back to the books again. And like getting different fleece items from another source, and getting berets made by Chas Kingsbury's (formerly

Orca) seamstress, Van, then rushing these to the printer for embroidering. And like getting a price estimate on the total order, and feeling faint, then going back over the order to make major, last minute adjustments while still beating the printing deadline.

And then it's time to round up a crew of people to meet at Banducci's packing shed where Amadeo allows the merchandise to be dropped off a few days before the big day. Six of us went through so many boxes, checking each of seven hundred twenty-six pieces for flaws and to be sure the items matched the order, which it never does. This of course means the invoice has to be corrected and cleared with our printer to reflect what actually arrived.

Then some of us drove up to the community center where all the merchandise is shelved in cabinets for year-round sales. A couple thousand pieces which had previously been boxed and bagged by us, were carried up the hill, including a shelving unit, and unloaded back at Amadeo's so it would be ready for delivery to the picnic grounds for set up on Saturday.

And that brings us right back to the rainy day, which, —as perhaps you can imagine—couldn't possibly have stopped us from carrying on without concern, as though we knew the rain was just a big joke. We had all worked so hard leading up to this day that nothing could have changed our mood—Open and they will come!



On May 3rd at the first Work Party, Kathy Sward and Laurie Piel have a giggle while removing old staples from the T-Shirt booth. Photograph by Bruce Barlow

At Banducci's Ranch, Joey Groneman, right, inspects a new 1/4 zip fleece jacket, one of 726 new items to be inventoried, as Linda Gibbs and Kathy Sward plan the next move; meanwhile, three others are checking more inventory items at the other end of Amadeo's old packing shed. Photograph by Gail Falls

Time to box up 2,000 pieces for transport from the community center to the one-day store at the BBQ site. Kathy Sward, T-Shirt Chair. Photograph by Laurie Piel

How I Do the Raffle

By Debra Allen

Starting in January or so of each year, I start my email, letter and phone campaign to ask for raffle prize donations. Besides asking locals, I look in magazines, on the Internet, in the phone book and take notes as I'm driving around as to who might have something neat to donate. I try to get some variety. Hotels are the hardest, as they reach their donation capacity early in the year. Most are very willing to help out, especially publishers.

I gather the prizes and about a week before the BBQ, I spread them all out and see if any can be combined so that I end up with 100 prizes total. Just a number that I like, no other reason. I put the prizes in plastic and add a "dog" logo that I've cut out and added a number to. Up until this time, I've been making lists of who's donated which prize, who's promised which prize, who flakes out and doesn't come through... and I give it to the folks who might be helping sell tickets to their friends ahead of the BBQ, and post it around town.

Bryce has the tickets made, and somebody (invisible, magic people, I'm convinced) count them into groups of 25 and staple them. Bryce makes a special flyer, John John writes a letter, I stuff envelopes for each homeowner with all of that, and the boxes get stuffed a few weeks before the big day.

The checks and raffle stubs that come back get counted and noted, and the money goes over to the person in charge of that; I just keep a list of who's sent in money and I make sure each ticket is filled out (or I fill out extras for folks if the check is too high, which sometimes it is).

I usually have the raffle prizes sent to my office, and my associates get so excited to see what's come in; it's funny.

The day of the BBQ, we put tape over the FD mail box (Ellen taught me that), collect any tickets the Pelican has sold, put the pre-sales in the large raffle bin, carry over the prizes and start displaying them in order of their numbers.

Rob makes a huge board to apply the winners on, so they can check quickly at the end. During the day we sell the tickets at our booth and usually someone volunteers to walk-the-crowd to sell more. The firemen

drop by with their large packets of sold tickets, and we count them and add them to the bin.

After the music is done, I grab two fast-running kids and my announcer and someone extra to pull the winners, and we all go up to the stage to call out the prizes and announce the winners. The runners run three tickets at a time back to the raffle booth where someone's standing by to give out the prizes (and check ID, if necessary). This part's always interesting, since people are leaving, no one can usually hear us and that type of stuff. But it's tradition and it's kind of fun.

I bring the unclaimed prizes back home, I count all of the tickets in the big bin (to give the total number to the FD for them to verify that the money received was the same), and I separate out the MB prize winners. The next day, I deliver the MB prizes and call the out-of-area ones to coordinate prize delivery. Sometimes a far-away person wins something big/heavy, but usually I can just mail it to them.

I want to thank my helpers: Rob Allen, Olivia Lasky, Levon Sagatelyan, Maxx Moore and his cousins Jackson and Austin Moore, and Laurie Piel. A huge thank you goes out to all of you who donated prizes and bought tickets. This year over one half of the winners were from Muir Beach (up from the usual one third), and contrary to the rumor, you don't have to turn your tickets in the day of, or have them touched by Jon Rauh to win (although that second one does help, according to Dave Elliott), as only 11 of the 63 Muir Beach winners turned in their tickets the day of the event! That's it, you can read the prize list with winner names on www.muirbeach.com, and see you next year!



The 65 unclaimed prizes (out of 100 prizes) that came back home after the BBQ, awaiting distribution, and the big prize-winner board. Photograph by Debra Allen

It Takes a Village

By Tayeko Kaufman

Sequestered on the western slopes of Mt. Tam where Redwood Creek flows into the beautiful Pacific is a small village known as Muir Beach. You could not ask for a more divergent group of thinkers or eclectic lifestyles in a community as small as ours. However diverse we are, we come together once a year to volunteer our services to raise money for the Muir Beach Volunteer Fire Department, "our guys." This "tribal" ritual, and I do not use that word lightly, has been going on for 36 consecutive years.



Moving clockwise: Al, Tayeko, Joey, Bethany, Shirley and Michael creaming the butter and sugar

Over the years changes had to be made as the BBQ picnic took on a life of its own. In the beginning, neighbors baked goods, baked beans, brought garlic bread or cleaned the greens for the salads as the fire department prepared the chicken. Sometime in the early nineties it became clear that the volunteered goods could not keep up with the demand, and that the fire department was being taxed by the enormity of organizing the annual event. And so began the Fire Association, the fund raising arm for the fire department and the annual bake-a-thon under the expertise of Ellen Mettler and Alex Sagues who had a company know as The Kitchen's Inc. The recipes they developed, which are still used, were handed down to Ann Browning who chaired the baking committee until last year, and under her expert guidance tweaked the recipes to their present yummy form.

But how do you bake 26 dozen, large (4 ounce) chocolate chip cookies, 10 dozen brownies, and 12 dozen poppy seed cake servings? You have, as neighbors, our wonderful friends at Green Gulch who have for the past

decade donated not only their facilities but all the ingredients, and this is not a small donation: 34.5 pounds of butter and 16 dozen eggs just for starters and the list goes on. When I met Bert Dyer, who oversees the kitchens at Green Gulch, this spring, he could not have been more helpful. We just can't thank Green Gulch enough for their hospitality and generosity.

As for the bakers: Arlene Robertson, Al Kile, Bethany Villere, Kent Andrews, Shirley Nygren, Joey Groneman, Julie Smith, Gail Falls and Michael Kaufman, never has it been truer to say that the baking could not have happened without their participation, hard work, sense of humor, perseverance and fortitude. There were several poignant moments when we felt the presence of Ann Browning as the bakers took up their positions and the baking process began. Through some mishaps with the recipe and temperamental ovens (we lost oven four on Saturday night and oven three was baking hot and cold all weekend) we baked late into the night, some say wee hours of the morning and through it all, no one left, no cookies or brownies were consumed, and no one complained. This is the true spirit of the volunteers at Muir Beach and we are sure that this sweet spirit gets baked into the goodies each year.

If you would like to join this merry group of baking villagers, please let me know. The waiting list is not that long (does this sound like Tom Sawyer getting the fence whitewashed?) and we do have fun. Special thanks this year to: Joey and Arlene who were able to piece together the frosting recipe for the poppy seed cake, Michael, Kent and Al for lending a hand in creaming the butter and sugar, Julie for her gentle support and encouragement, Gail for picking up all and every unwanted task, Bethany for bringing her New Orleans fox trot beat for blending the poppy seed batter, Shirley who supervised Al's Mars Rover drop technique for the chocolate chip cookies, and Mike Moore who allowed us to use Ellen's van to transport the baked goods... a fitting end to a tradition that began years ago.



Joey and Shirleywondering what's wrong with Costco cookies?



Joey selling the baked goods. We sold out of brownies, poppy seed cakes and cookies. A great return on our efforts.

Photographs by Julie Smith

May 24th Volunteer Dinner

Photographs and Captions by Julie Smith



Cuco and Consuelo Alcala once again made their delicious soft tacos for the Volunteer Dinner the night before the barbecue. The tacos were enthusiastically devoured by the hungry crowd!



Maury Ostroff, Sutton Freebairn-Smith, John John Sward, and Steve Shaffer thoughtfully contemplated the fire in the new barbecue pit extension, hopeful that having more chickens on the grill will alleviate the long dinner line.



After being wet and chilled all day, everyone came dressed in their heaviest fleece and sweaters to ward off the damp chill that still lingered in the air.



Danny Hobson & Jon Rauh introduced Muir Beach's newest resident, Anna Isabel Rauh, born on Mother's Day, May 11th.



Conversation was lively, the food was delicious, and a tiny patch of blue opened in the clouds.



The table decorations were placed up on the counters, away from mischievous raccoons.



Jes Sward and Angie Banducci reminded Jackson not to play "Jack Be Nimble, Jack Be Quick..." over the wine bottle on the counter.



The kids played "Peek-a-Boo" behind the barbecue pit.



Jackson Sward practiced his marching and two-handed flag waving.

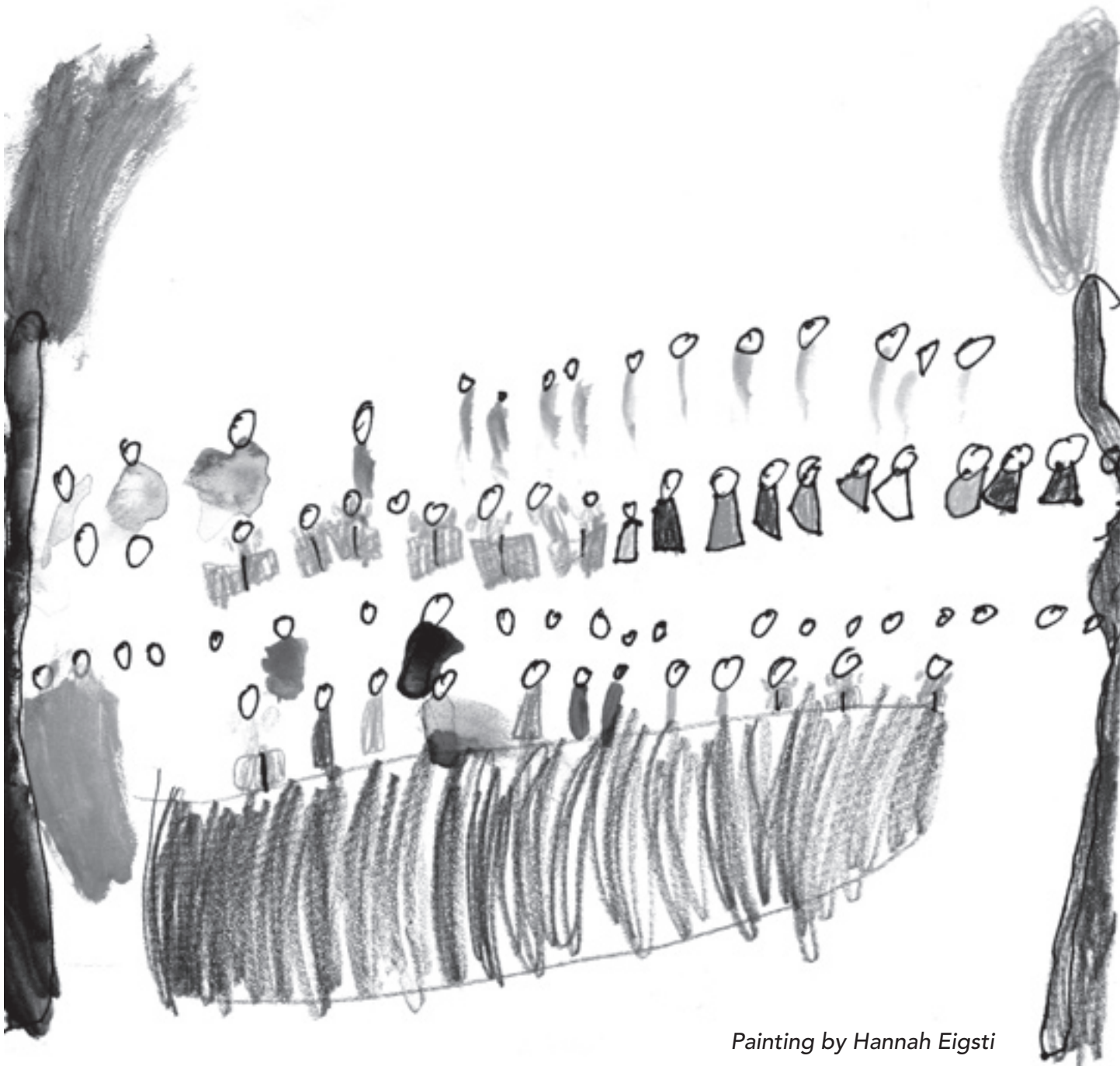
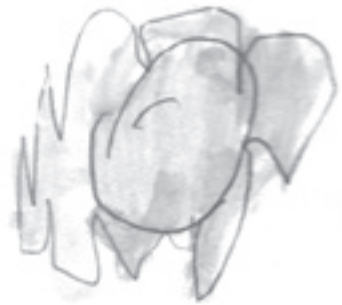


After a full day of work setting up for the next day, everyone was in a party mood.



Tiana Vincent-Pearlman & Hannah Eigsti paraded around the stage holding flags high.

Welcome to the
36th Annual Firemen's BBQ



Painting by Hannah Eigsti



Photographs and Captions
by Julie Smith



Graham Groneman celebrates his birthday by collecting \$20 from each car, emphasizing the "No BYOB Rule" and handing out food and drink tickets.



The sun is out, Engine 676 is in place, Eric Groneman's apron is spotless - let the fun begin!



Al Kile attaches "I'm over 21 and intend to have some beer" bracelets on a couple of ladies who look like they're ready for a good time.



These kids, who came all the way from Clear Lake with their baby goats, are the hands-down winners in the Cute Category!



It's true - some folks really do look like their dog!



The opening Tam High alumni band, The 86s, got the day off to "a rockin' good start."



The really young set gives the Jubilee Jumps slides a good workout while the older more adventurous kids hone their rock climbing skills.



Anne Jeschke sells tickets while Bob Hayden "supervises."



Gerry Pearlman (Expert Chicken Slinger) said, "We have come a long way since the opening days when it was just Larry Yamamoto, me, and about 50 chickens to the present highly professional crew led by Eric Groneman and Amadeo Banducci and the thousand chickens we did Sunday."



Master chefs Cuco Alcala, Steve Shaffer, and Eric Groneman inspect a couple of racks of chickens for doneness.



Eric Groneman and Hank Almarez turn a rack of 16 chickens. The new extension on the barbecue pit solves the perpetual problem of long dinner lines!



Ted Marshall turns the loaves of garlic bread in the oven.



Cuco, Gerry, Amadeo, and Eric come up for air in the barbecue pit.



Peter Lambert, Janet Taylor, Susy Stewart, Linda Lotriet, and Judith Yamamoto form an efficient production line from salad to beans to garlic bread.



Last link in the production line, Steve Shaffer tops off Peter Lambert's loaded plate with the succulent BBQ chicken.



Accompanied by Linda Silva and Consuelo Alcala, Chef Amadeo Banducci takes time off from the BBQ pit to dish up a plate.



Lonna Richmond holds the plate while Maury Ostroff dishes up his ever-popular tamales.



Chris Friedel and Linda Lotriet man the condiment table, making sure there's plenty of salsa for the tamales and napkins to wipe the chins of exuberant chicken eaters.



The Dessert Ladies - Joey Groneman, Lainie Case, and Tayeko Kaufman can hardly keep up with the demand for their famous poppy seed cake, rich brownies, and giant chocolate chip cookies.



Marilyn Laatsch & her niece, Malrie Champion, pony up a ticket for dessert.



The Trash Man (AKA Alan Steinbach) with his big black bag keeps busy all afternoon picking up after sloppy partygoers.



Larry Lasky and Linda Gibbs are determined not to let a potential customer go home empty handed.



Gail Quentz risks whiplash in the popular Tee Shirt booth.



A return customer comes in for a refill at the Lagunitas Brewing booth, while Brad Eigsti & Jon Rauh pour cold ones down the line.



Andre's All Stars outdid themselves again this year, guaranteeing a great time for everyone! From left, Jack O'Hara, Andre Pessis, Lorelee Christiansen, Allyson Paige, Eric Martin, and Austin de Lone.



They played all our favorite music, keeping the "dance floor" busy all afternoon! From left, Andre Pessis, Lorelee Christiansen, Eric Martin, and Allyson Paige.



Sitting still is not an option – this music screams, "Get out there and dance!" David and Laurie Brandt rock on.



Harvey Pearlman and Nina Vincent get in the groove, while Tiana licks the chicken off her fingers.



Courier Brent Smith, Chef Steve Shaffer, and Tom Streb revel in a successful Firemen's Barbecue.



Outi Onorato and Janice Kubota hawk tee shirts while Brenda Kohn, Olivia Lasky, and Deb Allen sell raffle tickets.



Late in the afternoon, Ted Marshall and Sharry Mullin finally hit the dance floor.



Last item of the day: Nancy Dionne's stepson, Jules Moore (visiting for just the BBQ), spins the drum while Levon Sagatelyan calls out lucky raffle winners and Deb Allen keeps track.

May 26th Post-Barbecue Cleanup Party

Photographs and Captions by Julie Smith



"Could there be any more dishes?"



Janice Kubota & Susy Stewart washed more dishes in the "supplemental sink."



Erin Pinto & Everaldo Cardoso de Souza sorted & packed leftover eating utensils, etc., for storage till next year's Barbecue.



Mr. Recycle (AKA Fleche Phoenix) was serious about his work.



Maury Ostroff sported a stylish new hat.



The crew worked up an appetite after all that work. Then someone opened up the red cooler to discover the leftovers from Saturday's lunch. What a feast!



Over lunch, congratulations all around for yesterday's success. Ideas for next year's Barbecue were tossed about...



Julie Smith
MBFVD Website

Muir Beach Paparazzi | By Julie Smith, Beachcomber Photographer

Once again the Muir Beach Paparazzi was here, there and everywhere sticking the camera in the face of anyone who would put up with her. Thanks for your patience and tolerance! This year's BBQ presented many wonderful photo ops, and though I took a lot of pictures, photos from other people's perspective are always fun and much appreciated. If you have photos of this year's BBQ to share, please send them to Julie@polarisinteractive.com and I'll include them on the MuirBeachFire.com website.

Wrap-Up From the Chairs



Maury Ostroff
Veggie Meals

Vegetarian Meal Report | By Maury Ostroff

This year we served about 220 Tamale meals, where each meal comes with two tamales. Last year we ordered 42 dozen tamales (enough for 252 meals) and ran out by 5:30 pm, so this year we ordered 44 dozen just in case, but for unknown reasons we didn't serve as many this year as last year. Maybe because the chicken line was so efficient due to the bigger barbecue pit that people didn't become impatient and get a tamale instead of waiting for chicken?

The tamales are ordered from Donna's Tamales in San Rafael, and we order two kinds: cheese and red bean with yam. The red bean is Vegan and has no dairy for those who follow that diet. The general preference of the public is for the cheese tamales, and coupled with the fact that we tend to serve cheese if no preference is requested, and that my personal preference is for red bean (they have a little bit more of a flavor kick), we ended up with a few dozen extra red bean tamales when the BBQ was over which were distributed to volunteers to take home. Next year, if there are any leftover tamales, we will save them and serve them for lunch to the cleanup crew that shows up on the Monday after.

With over 200 meals served, it reinforces the fact that a vegetarian alternative to chicken is a crucial component for the BBQ's continued success.

A Great Day for Volunteers | By Kathy Sward

We had a great time and a beautiful day on Sunday, May 25, 2008! And we did really well selling tons of stuff, in just six hours, which profited over \$5,000 toward our fire department's acquisition of equipment and training. So even though at the end of the day, everything had to be loaded into bags and boxes and piled roof-high in John John's truck for delivery back to the community center, it was worth every minute.

Huge thanks to Pam and Bruce Barlow, Laurie and David Brandt, David Callander, Gail Falls, Linda Gibbs, Joey Groneman, Victoria Hamilton-Rivers, Anne Jeschke, Olivia and Larry Lasky, David Leivick, Lisa Mullerauh, Outi Onorato, Laura Lovitt Pandapas, Laurie Piel, Gail Quentz, Lonna Richmond, Edna Rossenas, Eric Scalera, and Jes Sward for counting, schlepping, shelving, sign-making, booth decorating, selling, packing, unpacking and delivering, and everything else that went into making this day so successful. We couldn't have done it without all of us! Truly, volunteering is what it's all about.



Kathy Sward
T-Shirts



Erin Pinto
Food Prep/Servers

Food Service Report | By Erin Pinto

This year's barbecue was a smashing success in the food serving area - the best ever! Everything went so smoothly, but why? So many variables—an expanded barbecue pit allowed us to cook more chicken and the cooks did really well, the great serving volunteers worked really well together, possibly there were fewer people due to the weather, the price? While the number of people buying dinners was slightly down, the barbecue expansion (and great volunteers of course) made the lines move smoothly and allowed us to have great customer service this year. Many thanks and a huge debt of gratitude to Chris Gove, John John Sward and the other Saturday volunteers for our great bigger and better barbecue. But how did they get the new part of the barbecue to look older than the old part? Now that's craftsmanship.

Many thanks to budding bakers Maxx Moore and Benjamin Pinto Souza who made vegan chocolate chip cookies for the BBQ. They were delicious, people were delighted they were available, and they sold out.



Debra Allen
Raffle

Turn to page 13
for Debra Allen's
wrap-up in
"How I Do the
Raffle."

Read Tayeko
Kaufman's wrap-
up in "It Takes a
Village" on page 14.



Tayeko Kaufman
Desserts

Photographs by Julie Smith

Sunny Skies Help MBVFD Barbecue to Financial Success

By Paul Jeschke

The Memorial Day barbecue was a resounding success and although the final figures aren't in yet, it's likely that the annual fire department fundraiser produced a record profit.

It could have been a disaster. Just 24 hours before the barbecue, the picnic grounds were smothered in cold, dense fog and by late morning, rain showers dampened the area. Sunday, however, dawned sunny and warm.



Feasting on leftovers at the debrief meeting one week after the barbecue.

Bob Hayden, treasurer of the Muir Beach Volunteer Fire Department board, reported that gross revenue was close to \$49,000. When all expenses are factored, profit should be considerably more than the \$20,000 level achieved in previous years.

"The crowd was mellow, the food was fantastic and the music out of this world," MBVFA board president Michael Kaufman told volunteer team leaders who showed up for the evaluation dinner and debriefing



Finger lickin' good! Jackson Sward with his granddad, John Sward.

at the picnic grounds one week after the event. Team leaders feasted on leftover, but freshly barbecued chicken, and carefully combed-over salad greens.

Volunteers reported that the crowd, estimated at about 2,500 people, arrived throughout the afternoon and never overwhelmed parking controllers. The expanded and improved barbecue pit also functioned smoothly and helped eliminate long lines in the food serving area.

There were almost no complaints about increased prices this year, volunteers said, and very few objections to the "no coolers" in the picnic grounds and the state park's insistence that no alcohol could be consumed in the parking area. They noted that there seemed to be more families in attendance which resulted in increased patronage of the Jubilee Jumps kids' play area and a rare profit for that venue.

Barbecue income, Kaufman said, along with the recently approved property tax bond measure, will be used to support the department's firefighting and emergency response capabilities as well as emergency preparedness programs and brush removal. The department also has plans to remodel the fire station.



Erin Pinto, taking notes for the group, and Bruce Barlow.

Photographs by Linda Lotriet

Beachcomber Spotlight: Firefighter Cuco Alcala

Seventh in a series of interviews with the members of the MBVFD

By Linda Gibbs

When he was seventeen years old, Jose Refugio (Cuco) Alcala left his village of Tepatitian in the mountains of Jalisco, Mexico, and came to Muir Beach to work at the Banducci Flower Ranch. That was twenty-seven years ago. Except for a year or two in the 1980s when Cuco (nickname for Refugio) returned home to his village and married his sweetheart, Consuelo, Cuco has lived in Muir Beach. He and Consuelo have four children—Liliana, Jose Luis, Isabel, and Marcos—who range in age from sixteen to twenty-two.

In 1996 Cuco lost his job at the ranch when the park service cut off the water to the flower operation. Around that time Cuco was invited by John John Sward to cook chicken at the annual Firemen's BBQ. A picture of him flippin' chicken appeared in the Beachcomber with a caption that mentioned that Cuco was looking for work. After the photo was published, Cuco said he began getting calls for jobs from residents. He now has a crew of three and is busy around the community every day.

I appreciate you doing this.

You're welcome.

It's really quite heroic of all of you to take the time...

No problem.

...to let other people in the community know you. But I have a feeling a lot of people already know you.

Thank you, yes, a lot of people know me.

I see you around Muir Beach with your truck and crew. What do you do for a living?

I do all different kinds of stuff: Landscaping, carpenter, electrical, plumbing, all kind of handyman stuff.

So anything to do with the home?

Or the garden. And I do tree work, too. I do cars, too.

Well, that's good to know. So if anyone needs any work done, they know who to call.

Yes

Do you work for the CSD?

Yes

Were you part of the team that performed storm repair work in Muir Beach with FEMA funds, and that Maury Ostroff described in his District Manager's Report in the May 2008 issue?

I didn't do too much this year because I'm so busy. But sometimes when they need me, I do that, too.

You have so many clients, that when this work came up, you just didn't have time?

Well, when it's an emergency, I do. When they get a water leak or any emergency. Sometimes they get a broken pipe or any other emergency. Same thing with the fire department. When my beeper is coming on, I forget about the work.

You drop everything and you go?



Firefighter Cuco Alcala

Yes.

You must go on a lot of calls as a result of working in Muir Beach.

Every year we run around 70 calls and I go on 60 calls. And I'm the first person to go on the calls because I work here in Muir Beach.

Do you ever go on a call by yourself?

Yes

Many times?

No, a couple times.

Do you remember what those calls were?

Somebody report a gas smell at the end of Sunset. I went to the firehouse, nobody shows up. I get in the truck and come to check it out. Behind me is 85 and we check it out. It is nothing. We close the tank. The house is empty.

What is the 85?

The 85 is the big truck that came from Throckmorton, the 1585.

The house was empty...

Yes

...and there was a gas leak?

It was a low tank. When the tank is pretty low, the smell of gas.

Did a neighbor smell the gas and call you?

Yes, and they called 911.

We're lucky that you are here during the day.

I like to work here in Muir Beach. That's why I go to the fire department.

When did you join the fire department?

Six years ago. When I joined the fire department, Mike Moore was the Chief. And I tell Mike, I don't speak too much English and I don't know how to read it and write it. But Mike said, "Oh, you can do it." Then I tried going through the training and this and that. And I don't remember how long. Later [when Sward was Chief], I go to the Chief, and I talk to John John. He said, "You know, this is a small community. In the big event we are alone. We have to do for the family, for the community." And I'm enjoying it, and it's like six years now, and I'm happy.

That's wonderful. How long have you lived in Muir Beach?

27 years.

And you became a member of the fire dept. in 2001 or 2002?

Something like that. For so many years I don't know too many people in Muir Beach because I work on the farm full time.

That was the Banducci Flower Farm?

Yes. I think about '96, '95 the park service take the water. I didn't have work. Then I started working for John John a little bit. And I started working for Harvey. Other people started calling me. And I got my own work.

So word got around that you were available since you were no longer part of the flower farm?

Yes.

Some years after the GGNRA was formed, they shut down the flower farm and cut off your water supply?

Yes

That was a huge change for everyone involved in that operation.

Yes, especially for me because I think of what I did. I worked on the farm all my life. I don't know too many other things, you know.



Cuco Alcala standing in front of the truck used for his business, Cuco's Landscaping.

You were a young man when you started working for Amadeo?

Yes, I started working for Amadeo when I was seventeen years old.

How did you find out about that job?

My older brother used to work there. He came in the seventies and he was working there, too.

You live on the ranch?

Yes, I'm still living there.

What made you want to join the fire department?

Because like I said before, I'm working here in Muir Beach. We helped Edna Rossenas to move from Sunset to the low part, Shoreline. Before she moved, I talk to her and I say, "How can I say thank you to everybody in Muir Beach, because I work for them, they call me to work." And so she tell me, "Oh, you can go to the fire dept." Say what? That's a great idea. And I go to the fire dept. and I say well, I'm here, you know. I want to say thank you to the community. And John John invited me to cook a couple times, and since then I cook every year.

The chicken at the BBQ?

The chickens, yes.

Do you like doing that?

Oh, yeah, I like it.

What did you think of the new extended grill that John John built this year?

It's perfect. We had a better time this year. The cooking could go a little more smooth, because it take a little more time on the grill. We don't have to get the fire going too fast, you know. I think it's a lot better this year.

So you're one of the famous chicken flippers.

Well, I'm not famous, but I'm there for years, ten years, I think.

As a First Responder, what are your duties as a member of the Fire Dept?

On calls, when there's a person sick or whatever, we can go and get all the pulse and the blood pressure, apply the oxygen mask, and things like that, simple you know, to stabilize the people.

Do you take the First Responder training and testing in English or Spanish?

English. I got Amadeo, who speaks Spanish pretty good. He help me with a lot of things, you know. When there's something I don't understand, I ask Amadeo, he translate for me.

Well, that's wonderful teamwork.

Yes. We're working all the time as a team.

That's quite an accomplishment to learn something in English and test in English.

Well, it's like I say, you know, when we get a test, I work with Amadeo together all the time. He read aloud a question and I answer.

Would he ask you the questions in English?

In English, yes.

And you would answer in English?

Sometimes in English, sometimes in Spanish, you know. A mix.

And then you took the test in English and passed the test.

Yes

Well, congratulations.

Thank you.

What was the hardest call you've ever run--a call that stays with you for years afterwards? Or do they all stay with you?

They pretty much all stay with me. One that I'll never forget is

MUIR BEACH VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT

the first call, this person go over the edge by Green Gulch. He was burning on one side. It was bad. That’s my first call and I think I’ll never forget that one.

Did he survive?
Yes, It was right at Thanksgiving night.

Were there others with you on that call?
Yes, Mike Moore and somebody else.

Did you have to go down the hillside to get to him?
No, actually we go for the bottom part, the Green Gulch driveway, we open the trail all the way to the top.

In the truck?
No, by hand. We get the chain saw and cut all the branches and open the trail to be able to get the person down.

You were on foot?
Yes.

Going in with the chain saw?
The chain saw, yes.

To get to the vehicle?
Yes. Somebody else is already with the vehicle, coming from the top down. When we were there, they say, well, let’s bring him down because it’s easy. And Mike and I, we’re driving down and getting the chain saw and start cutting all the branches to get a clear path to the people coming down.

That was a big call for your first call.
Yes. And it was exciting for me because it was my first call.

Have you ever arrived at the scene to find there were fatalities?
Yes.

Very often?
Oh, a couple times, I think.

That must stay with you, too.
Yes.

Was it a car accident?
No, actually a heart attack.

You went to their home?
Yes. I never get any car accidents where people die.

They don’t usually die in the car accidents?
I never get any calls.

Did you ever see anyone die on scene?
I don’t think so, no.

Over the years there have been changes in how the fire dept. functions. What has been the biggest change in your view?
I don’t see any big changes in the last 5 or 6 years.

You must have been pleased with the recent vote of approval by the community to pay the annual Fire Tax to support the volunteer operation.
Yes, absolutely.

Maureen Pinto spoke glowingly about you in her Ocean Riders

story in the October 2007 *Beachcomber*, that you and your team have been a great help in maintaining the stables. She included a photo of you working in the turnout area in 1997 and said you know each horse by name. Are you a rider yourself?
Not any more. I used to ride on donkeys in Mexico.

As a way of transportation?
Yes. I grew up on the farm. We don’t have car, we use the donkeys for transportation.

What kind of farm did you have?
Cows, dairy. Not so big, you know.

This was your family’s operation?
Yes, my father.

Do you work with Maureen’s group on an ongoing basis?
Yes, we work with the horses every day.

Every day?
Every day we feed the horses and clean the stalls.

You and your crew?
Yes.

What are their names?
Enrique, my son-in-law who is married to Liliana. A guy from Guatemala, his name is Wilfred. And Consuelo’s nephew, Ramiro.

So every morning the first thing you do is what?
We go to the barn and feed the horses and clean the stalls.

And how many horses are there?
Depends. In the summertime they’ve got 20, 21. In the wintertime they have only about 17.

How long does it take to feed the horses and clean the stalls?
When I do it by myself it probably takes me about two-and-a-half hours to three hours.

Are you usually by yourself?
In the morning, no. I have someone to help me.

How long does it usually take then?
About an hour.

What time do you begin?
We start at 8 o’clock or 8:15.

Do you go back to the stables again during the day?
In the evening I go right before dark, six, seven, depends on the time of the year, go feed them in the night, too.

Do you put them in for the night?
Yes.

Well, this is a long day for you. And you must know horses and know how to be around horses.



On BBQ Day, you will find Cuco Alcala at the grill cooking chickens as he has done for the past ten years.

MUIR BEACH VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT



Cuco and Consuelo Alcala host the taco dinner for the volunteers down at the BBQ grounds the night before the BBQ.


Yes
And they must just know you.
Pretty much, yes. When they hear the truck, they start running around because they know that I’m there.

How long have you been working there?
I don’t remember. I start working since Tink was there. I started working there since probably 14, 15 years ago.

Before we move on, I would like to quote what Maureen Pinto said about you last year in the *Beachcomber*:
“Ocean Riders is particularly indebted to Cuco Alcala for his reliable dedication to us and our horses over the past ten years. He knows each horse by name, and we take comfort knowing that he’s watching over them. He is a genius problem solver and gives us hope when something seems unsolvable or unfixable. There has never been a challenge he hasn’t been able to meet. Ocean Riders would not be what it is today without Cuco and his team.” —Maureen Pinto

You and your wife Consuelo host the Volunteer Dinner the night before the BBQ. How long have you been making taco dinners for the volunteers?
Four or five years.

And how did you get the idea to contribute to the community in this generous way?
One year I told somebody, “Next year I’ll bring the tacos.” And then at the February meeting, someone tell me, “Do you still want to do the tacos?” And I said, “yes.” And then I started doing the tacos. I do one year and the next year they call me. And I say, yeah, why not, so I keep on doing it.

<div><div>MBVFD Incident Log <i>Compiled by Paul Jeschke</i></div></div>	
April 2, 2:25 pm Muir Beach Overlook Report of boat on fire off Muir Beach coast. Determined to be flares used by Coast Guard during training.	
April 15, 10:35 am Muir Woods Victim of fall transported to hospital.	
May 8, 12:10 am Muir Beach Sunset Way resident fell and cut nose.	May 18, 8:00 am Slide Ranch Solo motorcycle accident. Cyclist suffered lower left leg injury.
May 15, 11:45 am Highway One Car over side at mile marker 9.	May 23, 1:30 pm Muir Woods 86-year-old fell on Muir Woods Trail and suffered head injury.
	May 30, 8:00 am Muir Beach Sunset Way resident had breathing difficulty.

Those tortillas are the freshest tortillas I’ve ever tasted. They must have been made that afternoon, right?
Yes.

They melt in your mouth.
Yeah, it’s pretty good. A pretty good tortilla and the meat is fresh meat.

What is the meat?
It’s a mix. I normally get pork, beef and chicken all mixed in.

You bring the BBQ grill and you make them right there on site.
Yes.


It’s a wonderful contribution to the community.
I like it.

I didn’t hear any sirens on BBQ Day. Does that mean there were no calls during the BBQ this year?
No, I don’t think we got any calls this year.

And if you would get a call, would all the cooks who are firefighters go?
No, depends on the call, you know, how big is the call. Normally we’ve got Jesse [Rudnick] and Graham [Groneman], they normally stay around and check it out and go if there’s a call, because they are the two persons.

So Jesse and Graham were on call?
Yes. In case something big, I don’t know, we never get any...

Did you ever in the last six years you’ve been a member of the fire dept. have to leave the BBQ to run a call?
No

I’ve asked the following question in a variety of ways to other firefighters and I ask it of you as well. And you’ve answered some of this, but I just want to say again, what motivates you to work full-time and then donate your personal time to protecting the community as a volunteer firefighter?
I don’t know. I like the work. You learn something different every day. I like to work and I used to work 12-14 hours a day. I don’t do it any more. In the meantime, I like to help the community. I feel now a part of the community. Because in the old days I stayed isolated, a little out, but now I feel part of the community. I’m working here, I’m living here. I want to do something for the community. 

Photographs by Julie Smith



VISION PROJECT UPDATE

By Pam Barlow



In late May, The Vision Project was invited to a meeting of Senior Access friends, benefactors and beneficiaries, to be held at a 2007 Designer Showcase Home in the Dominican area of San Rafael. Cris Chater, who so graciously pitched in for a shift at the food booth at last year's Quilters' Arts Fair, requested that, during the fund-raising portion of the program, a Vision Project representative be on hand to step up first and make our gift, and possibly make others feel more comfortable following suit. How could we say no?! And as it turned out, listening to the stories of people who've benefited from this organization's work, further strengthened our belief in the value and importance of continuing to support Senior Access. The following is a press release to be issued about the evening's event.

SENIOR ACCESS GATHERING GARNERS GRACIOUS GIFTS FROM COMMUNITY

On May 29, 2008, Senior Access, which has provided Adult Day Programs for older adults since 1973, hosted a gathering of over 100 people in San Rafael. Held at the beautifully appointed 2007 Designer Showcase home, guests were treated to hors d'oeuvres from the Drake Terrace gourmet kitchen and wine generously donated and poured by Artesa Vineyards and Winery.

The highlight of the gathering came during the short program, which sought to thank supporters and inform new friends about the critical mission and services provided by Senior Access. Joe O'Hehir, President of the Senior Access Board, welcomed the crowd and thanked everyone for their support. He introduced Marion Blau, who spoke eloquently about her family's journey with Alzheimer's disease and the significance of Senior Access's programs.

"Marion was so articulate in telling her family's story," said Cris Chater, Executive Director of Senior Access. "It's important to be reminded that memory loss affects the whole family, for

a long time. And that it is a journey, but you don't have to travel alone. There is love and support in our community."

As Erik Flatt, a board member of Senior Access thanked Marion, a sea of gratitude for the work of the organization spontaneously surfaced and individuals and representatives of community groups, including the Muir Beach Quilters' Vision Project, stepped forward to make donations.

"It was so powerful," commented Chater, "as Joe (O'Hehir) is famous for saying, we could 'feel the love!'"

Chater then went on to publicly announce the opening of two new Senior Access day programs in September - one in Pt. Reyes Station at The Dance Palace and the other in San Rafael at Skyview Terrace.

"Day programs reduce the isolation and loneliness that many older adults—especially people with memory loss and/or dementia—may experience. It is a way to keep people healthier, happier, and living at home for as long as possible," said Chater. "We are so grateful to our community for their support."

Senior Access was founded in 1973, and is the only nonprofit licensed adult day program providing services for older adults and their caregivers, specializing in Alzheimer's care. The organization's professionally trained staff provides activities, nurturing care and support services that enhance the quality of life and independence of older adults suffering from chronic health conditions, Alzheimer's disease or dementia. Adult day programs reduce isolation and help to maintain physical, cognitive and emotional health of the participants. Senior Access' services provide much-needed respite for caregivers. The Senior Access Adult Day Programs are located in Novato and in Kentfield at WindChime of Marin. Senior Access leads outings every Tuesday and Thursday for persons with early stage Alzheimer's disease.

For more information, please call 415-492-2500 or email info@senioraccess.org.



Site of the gathering, 2007 Designer Showcase Home



Vision Project representative, Pam Barlow, with our generous hostess, Anne-Marie Parker



Making our Vision Project donation to Senior Access board member, Eric Flatt



Cris Chater with Joe O'Hehir, President of the Senior Access Board of Directors



As many enjoyed touring the luxurious home, others gathered on the patio for wine-tasting and lively discussion.

Photographs by Bruce Barlow

Moth Spray Unwelcome and Unlikely at Muir Beach

By Paul Jeschke

Muir Beach has apparently dodged the threat of aerial bombardment by chemical spray to combat the light brown apple moth.

Unlike weekend tourists who make a beeline to the beach, the light brown apple moth is avoiding our coastal enclave. Only a few of the voracious insects have shown up in the white, tent-like triangular traps placed along Highway One and the greater Muir Beach area. "Just a couple of males in Green Gulch and one in a trap near the entrance to Muir Beach," said Sarah Tashker, lead gardener at Green Gulch Organic Farm.

That's just fine with local residents like Lonna Richmond who, concerned about possible adverse health effects, spearheaded a drive to get the Community Services District to pass a resolution opposing aerial spraying. The CSD, at a meeting on April 23, unanimously approved a resolution requesting "a moratorium on all proposed aerial spray programs until complete, independent study of the potential health effects of all substances, both active and inert..."

District Manager Maury Ostroff prepared the resolution at the request of board president Steve Shaffer. It noted that chemicals proposed for the spraying program "have not been tested for toxic health effects when used in areas of concentrated population."

"Toxicological studies are underway on Checkmate (the brand name for the aerial spray under consideration) to verify that it is not a health risk," Fred Crowder, Deputy Agricultural Commissioner for Marin County told the *Beachcomber*. "The state is going the extra mile to make certain it's safe."

Critics of the spraying program are fearful that the pheromone-based spray could adversely affect human respiratory and endocrine systems. The formulation includes a synthetic pheromone intended to confuse the male moth by mimicking the mating scent. It's encased in plastic microcapsules for time release.

"There's a lot of suspicion about what's in the spray," Tashker said.

"We want to understand what the ingredients are and we know that some are dangerous," said Wendy Johnson, Muir Beach resident and celebrated gardener. Johnson, author of the highly acclaimed "Gardening at the Dragon's Gate," is an advocate of integrated pest management. "There must be plenty of natural predators," she said. "We need to take our time and not be in such a rush to spray."

The Zen practitioner, who helped pioneer the concept of organic gardening in the United States, has eight apple trees on her Muir Beach property and has yet to see any sign of light brown apple moth damage. She concedes, however, that the moth, a native to Australia, is a "definite problem."

In the caterpillar stage, the light brown apple moth has two large teeth that it uses to scrape leaves. Entomologists say it feeds on so many plants it could be called the "everything moth." The pest feeds on 250 commercial species including citrus, peach, blackberry, grape, broccoli, radish and fava bean. It munches on native plants like coyote bush, redwood sorrel and even Scotch broom.

Large commercial growers face crop loss and shipping quarantines. Billions of dollars is at stake. Mexico and Canada have already restricted imports of crops and plants from areas infested with light brown apple moth. China may follow with similar restrictions. The California Department of Food and Agriculture and the U.S. Department of Agriculture have budgeted \$74.5 million this year for eradication, research, monitoring and regulation. Spraying is scheduled to resume after August 17 in Santa Cruz, Monterey, San Mateo, Alameda, Contra Costa, San Francisco and the eastern portion of Marin counties. Spraying would be repeated every 30 days over three to five years. Meanwhile, eight-inch, pheromone-laced twist-ties are being distributed in infested areas in an attempt to control the moth. If no insects are found for three moth-generations (about one year), an area can be released from quarantine, Crowder said.

Jared Huffman, D-San Rafael, is critical of widespread spraying, maintaining that the moth only moves a few hundred feet during its brief lifetime.

As long as the insect stays away from Muir Beach.



Light Brown Apple Moth



District Manager's Report - June 2008

By Maury Ostroff

As of this writing, the Governor of California has just declared a statewide drought. The measured snowpack in the Sierra Nevada mountains is less than 70% of average. The East Bay Municipal Utility District has declared a drought emergency and imposed water rationing. MMWD (Marin Municipal Water District) has announced that this past few months has been the driest Spring season since recordkeeping started in 1879. After a wet and stormy January and February, there was less than one inch of recorded rainfall in March and April in the Mount Tamalpais Watershed, compared with a historical average of 11.3 inches.

I don't have the scientific expertise to state definitively if this lack of rainfall is part of a long-term trend related to global climate change, or just a dry spell in between years of El Nino. I'm not sure that anyone does. What is known is that water supply issues in California are incredibly complex and interconnected. I am certain that we will see a continuation of the debate over diverting water from the northern to the southern part of the state, and how this will affect the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta that empties into San Francisco Bay. One of the main reasons that the Governor declared a statewide emergency was to raise political awareness at the highest levels, because given the continued growth in population and demand for water across the state, it will take comprehensive planning and negotiation to solve.

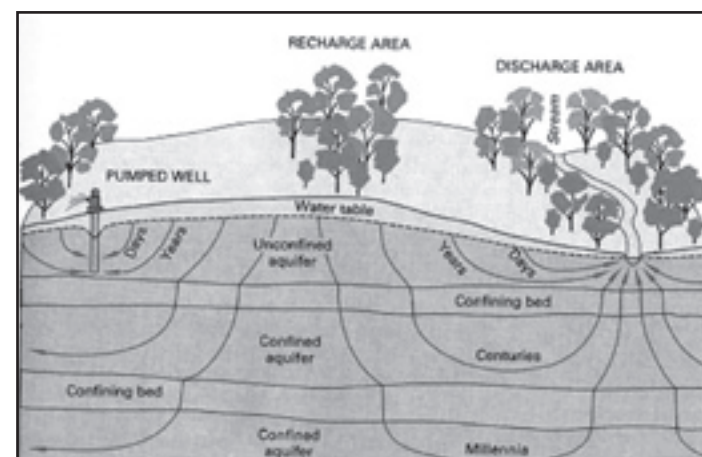
MMWD gets about 75% of its water from local watersheds, primarily on the north slopes of Mt. Tamalpais. 25% of its water comes from Sonoma County. As you may know, MMWD is looking at building a desalination plant on the Bay, a project which I personally support. While there are many technical and environmental challenges associated with desalination, the fact is that about 98% of the world's water is in the oceans. Solving the desalination problem will be imperative in the decades to come with increased population and the possibility of global climate change and associated drought.

MMWD does not want to be dependent on Sonoma water for its supply, as there are other water districts and population centers also interested in water from the Russian River, hence their interest in a local desalination plant.

Muir Beach is somewhat fortunate because our water supply is relatively isolated from the rest of the state; in fact it is relatively independent from the rest of Marin county.



View of Mt. Tamalpais and Santos Meadow. Muir Beach Well Site is located behind the clump of trees at the bottom portion of the meadow in the middle of the picture.
Photograph by Maury Ostroff



The deeper the aquifer, the more time it takes to recharge and flow underground. Muir Beach uses relatively shallow water in an unconfined aquifer. Other parts of the country are depleting ancient aquifers faster than they are being replenished (recharged) with fresh water.

Diagram courtesy of USGS - U.S. Geological Survey

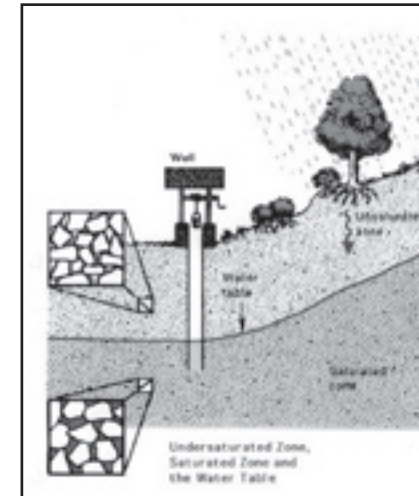
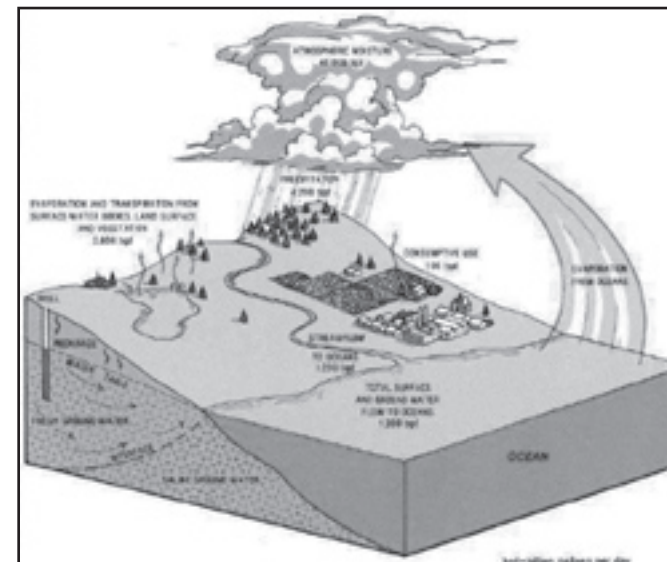


Diagram courtesy of USGS - U.S. Geological Survey



The Hydrologic Cycle. Water Evaporates from the oceans, and then returns to the land as rain. Water returns to the oceans as surface runoff or groundwater flow.

Diagram courtesy of USGS - U.S. Geological Survey

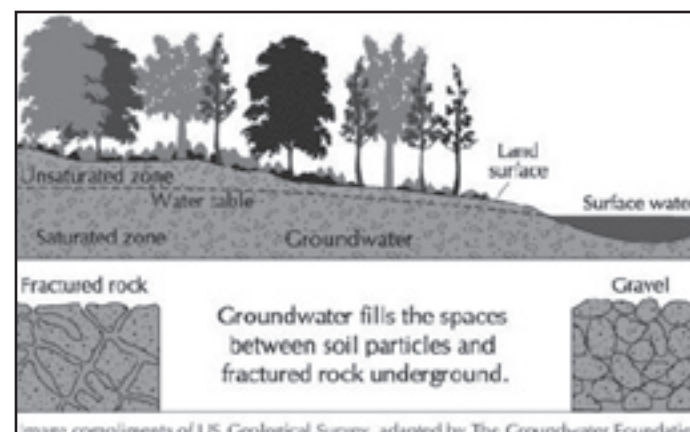


Image compliments of US Geological Survey, adapted by The Groundwater Foundation.

The photo of Mt. Tamalpais shows Franks Valley, Santos Meadow, and our well site right in the middle, partially obscured by a clump of trees. (Yes, this is the same valley that on the day of the BBQ was filled with people, cars, spilled drinks, peeing in the bushes, and excess barbecue sauce all seeping into the ground.) When it rains, a significant portion of the water seeps into the ground and eventually makes it many feet below the surface where it will hit solid rock and adds to what is called an aquifer, (a process called recharge.) As it rains the ground becomes increasingly saturated and the water becomes what is called runoff that flows on the surface and into various streams that flow into Redwood Creek and then empties out into the ocean at Muir Beach. One of the challenges of increased urbanization of the world with more roads and concrete and asphalt is that more rain ends up as runoff going straight to the ocean via storm drains instead of adding to the underground aquifers.

Its easier to visualize the water table when thinking about digging a hole in the sand at the beach. At some point, you reach water (typically used to make a moat for a sand castle!) The level at which you hit water by digging underground is called the water table. As you go inland, the water table is many feet down. If you keep digging, (or drilling when you get deeper than 10 feet or so) eventually you hit a layer of solid rock that is impermeable to water. The layers above solid rock are usually composed of gravel, sand, silt, clay, and permeable rocks which are porous enough to contain water. The exact shape of these relatively porous layers of gravel which can hold water varies just as much as the hills and mountains above ground, except that we can't see it. While the water table itself tends to be somewhat level in a given area (because water seeks its own level) the depth can vary. An aquifer is an underground layer of permeable materials (gravel, sand, silt, etc.) containing water—think of it more as an underground sponge than a pool or river.

The process by which water flows underground takes days, months, and even years. The good news is that soil is an excellent natural filter, so by the time water seeps down to become groundwater all of the beer and barbecue sauce has been naturally cleansed, (similar to the process in a leach field.)

When you look out over Franks Valley to the north and see Mt. Tamalpais, imagine all those hills seeping water down into the ground, where it collects in the valley floor. Essentially you are looking at the Redwood Creek Watershed. Muir Beach water is pumped from a well located off Muir Woods Road about a mile east of Muir Beach, adjacent to Santos Meadow but on a small area of land owned by the MBCSD. Note that our well is located far enough away from the ocean so that it is not affected

by infusions of saltwater. The well is pumping groundwater from an underground aquifer that starts from about 10 to 30 feet below the ground, depending on the time of year. This groundwater is entirely dependent on local rainfall in the Redwood Creek watershed for replenishment. However, because of the time it takes for water to seep through the ground and rocks and gravel and whatever else is below the surface, we might not see the impact of an extended drought for years.

Measuring the amount of water in an underground aquifer is a complex undertaking, usually accomplished by hydrogeologists. The water is not in some large underground pool or cistern, rather it is mixed in with pervious materials like gravel, sand, limestone, etc. Drilling a well and encasing the hole with a pipe allows water from the ground to seep into the well hole where it can be pumped to the surface. The point is that it is not straightforward to give a simple answer to the question of how much water we have and are we running out?

We pump about 25,000 gallons per day on a weekday, and 35,000 gallons per day on a weekend. These amounts are within the guidelines agreed to with NPS as a condition of our being granted water rights from the California Department of Water Resources (DWR). A further condition of our water rights is that we monitor the level of water flowing in Redwood Creek, and in the event that the flow decreases to the point where there are isolated pools, we are required to go on noticed Water Conservation. It is scientifically possible that the water table could decline to the point that the water table is significantly below the level of the creek, and because water seeks its own level, water from the creek would be discharged into the underground water table, and potentially impact conditions in the creek necessary for fish. However, it is not proven that the relatively small amount of water that we pump has a significant impact on the water table (given the size of the valley and the probable size of the underground aquifer.) Muir Beach has 150 houses and about 450 people, and we don't consume millions and millions of gallons of water like the city of Los Angeles.

There are two piezometer (measuring) wells also located at our well site drilled solely for the purpose of measuring the water table. On a regular basis, the water level in these pipes is checked, and they indicate that the water table is still relatively high as of this writing. Moreover, we have been able to pump from our current well at 45 gallons per minute and see no evidence that the well is decreasing in capacity.

Is it possible to overpump from an underground water supply? Absolutely. When you hear about sinkholes in Florida or other locations, they are usually the result of

depleting the aquifer, and as the water table goes way down, the layer of gravel and soil that was once saturated with water becomes dry, and shrinks and collapses. In our case, given the relatively small amounts of water that we pump, that is highly unlikely, but nonetheless monitoring the level of the water table at our well site is important.

There are three time frames to consider in our water supply: The first is long-term, consisting of decades. This is the scale that climate change operates on. Frankly, I'm not sure what we can do about the very long term if our water table dries up. While I think it highly unlikely that our water supply will completely disappear, we may see the need for increased conservation and use of gray water, rain water catch basins, and other measures already in use in arid areas of the world. The second time frame is what I call intermediate, consisting in years, and I would cautiously reassure everyone that there is no evidence of dramatically decreased levels in the groundwater supply in the valley. Strategically, I think we are in a very good position with respect to water supply.

But the third time frame is short-term and relatively immediate. The issue is that wells do dry up, as the area below ground is not necessarily one large underground water table, rather it has some areas blocked off by rock or clay or other impervious material. We actually had a case a few years ago where we drilled a well and it came up dry, but a second well a few feet away yielded water. It all depends on the composition of materials 40 to 60 feet down, which is obviously not easy to see without drilling, and drilling is costly and requires permits and planning.

In conclusion, I would not take water for granted, and would advise all of us to be as conservation minded as possible. Native plants and drought-tolerant landscaping are prudent choices.

For those of you who are intellectually curious, the website below has a good overview of how groundwater and groundwater wells of the type we are using work.

www.partnershipsforchange.cc/plannededuc0019.asp

Or, just do a web search on "water table, groundwater, aquifers, wells" in your favorite search engine. Apologies for the lengthy Hydrogeology 101 lesson, but given the crucial importance of water to our ability to continue as a community, it's a topic worth knowing about. Take a look to the northeast at Mt. Tam and see the hills and the valley and the creek meandering along and it all really comes home.

Community Center Update

By Laurie Piel

It's hard to believe that another three months have disappeared, and it has been a busy three months as well.

Although the Center did not have that many rentals in May, June is the month of the bride. The weekends have all been spoken for and the visits by the brides, their parents, the florists, and especially the caterers have kept us jumping. They all want a "perfect" wedding and, of course, the Center is not a "perfect" place. It always feels so wonderful and funky to be in it, but as they attempt to use it for a "traditional" wedding it is easier said than done.

Reservations for September and October are also arriving daily. It's already quite full, so anyone who is thinking of the fall for something fun... now is the time to get your request in.

We also have developed quite a reputation with the nonprofit organizations in San Francisco and San Rafael. We have many retreats, seminars, and meetings mostly during the week. The peacefulness of the Center is perfect for those introspective gatherings.

As we have noted, the tables and chairs at the Center currently leave quite a bit to be desired. So far we have successfully managed to get a donation of 20 chairs and a chair dolly. Hopefully, more will be coming our way.

The Quilters tell me that the plans for the new storage shed are moving along. They have met with Mike & Tony Moore and the plans are in place... I can't wait to see it come to fruition.

The two proposals we had in front of the CSD board have been passed. The first removes a three-tiered rental fee structure for over-the-hill rentals and replaces it with one hourly amount. It is now \$100/hour with a four-hour minimum to rent the Community Center for over-the-hill private rentals. The nonprofit rate of \$10/hour has not been affected by this change. The second proposal requires over-the-hill renters to hire a Muir Beach on-site facilitator for the duration of their event, including setup and cleanup. The facilitator would be there to answer questions, help the renters find whatever they need, make sure the rules are followed, and verify that the cleanup has been completed to conform with the Cleanup Checklist posted by the kitchen. The facilitator would be paid \$25/hr. Most outside events total about 8 to 12 hours. Any one who signs up for this will get

a full training session which will include all of the quirks of the Center... as far as we know them. There is always something new to discover. If you are interested please give us a call at 388-8319 or drop us a line at Bookthembcc@aol.com. Also, you will be receiving a flyer in your mailbox in the next few weeks informing you of the opportunities and there will be a sign-up sheet in the Community Center.

As you heard from Linda Gibbs, the Civic Center branch of the Marin Library is acquiring as many Beachcombers as they can for repository at the library. I would like to have a set here at the Community Center as well. I believe that the Center is the heart of the community and I would like to make sure that we also hold our history in our heart for anyone interested to explore. I know when I arrived I wanted to know as much about Muir Beach as I could. The library has consented to wait a little longer for their acquisitions and allow me the time to either separate out duplicates for the Center, if there are multiple copies, or make a duplicate of what will be stored at the library. So, if anyone has copies of the Beachcomber from any year, I would appreciate it if you could let me have them for a while. If you would like them back I will return them, but if not I will copy them for us and then donate them to the library. The hope is to eventually create a database from the collection. So, if anyone is interested in being part of this process, please let me know. If you have time to donate or computer skills that you are willing to share, any and all help would be greatly appreciated.

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

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



The Critter Report

By Dave MacKenzie

Well, I guess it's the usual story: which do you want first, the good news or the bad news? My theory is to give the bad news, but not dwell on it, except for the part where we can actually do something..., and then give the good news, so we all feel better at the end. So...

Climate change is already here, and in much greater levels than the New York Times will ever admit (of course they helped propagate the myth about WMD in Iraq, too, right?). Recently I attended a workshop put on by Marin Municipal Water District (MMWD) about the status of the Mt. Tamalpais watershed. Bottom line: things are changing, and often in ways we have not seen before. Not news to us birders; we have seen fewer migrant birds from Central America for several decades now, and spring is about two weeks earlier and fall is about two weeks later according to the critters. Less rainfall, more SOD (Sudden Oak Death), and a stress on local species are to be expected due to higher temperatures and lower rainfall in the future. The good news is that there are many organizations trying to get really good data on what is happening, and how we might work in a positive fashion with changes in plant distributions which are expected to occur. If you like Southern California, you may like the future Marin County. Nevertheless, here on the actual coast, the level of the future summer fog is hard to predict.

Other speakers discussed the increased likelihood of massive Marin fires in the next few years. One of the excellent handouts at the meeting was a video disc narrated by our Marin local Peter Coyote on keeping a fire safe Marin. I will send it around. It is excellent but sobering. We all need to be reducing our risk from excessive brush and tree growth, which I know everyone has heard before.

OK, now we need the glass half full approach!

The critters are actually doing well on many fronts. Gray Whales numbers were pretty good this year, I read, although I personally did not see any. A mother and calf visited the day of the spring event at Slide Ranch, and were seen by many of the visitors. Endangered Northern Spotted Owls nested in numerous localities in Marin, including near Muir Woods, which is good news since they did not nest there last year. My own information suggests that there were good numbers of many migrant birds from Central America (and further south) such as Wilson's Warblers, Barn Swallows, and many others. So some of these critters seem to be doing well, but we need statistical scientific studies to be sure.

Some of the interesting local observations include a River Otter seen by Lonna Richmond on the first of February on the Levee Trail, and another high up on the Coastal Trail, seen by

Trish McCall in late April. River Otters, a pair of which had two offspring along Redwood Creek last year, are known to travel great distances across land to get to the next watershed. They have also become established in Rodeo Lagoon, not too far away from Muir Beach as the Otter jogs. Sea Otters, by the way, are much larger, and (virtually) never come onto land. (I know of only two Sea Otter sightings in Muir Beach, and in each case the animal was floating offshore.) Various sightings of Bobcat and Coyote were also reported. I watched a Great Blue Heron jump up onto a large dirt pile in the construction area above Seacape Drive, and then immediately a Gray Fox trotted along close by in the middle of an afternoon. The heron probably judged the fox was not really a threat, since the fox is much smaller than the heron, but it was taking no chances. I think the fox felt outgunned too: those herons are tough!

As I write this, Bonnie and I are actually in Italy, in a bustling industrial city near Rome where I have a client. A couple of days ago we visited Ostia Antica, the ancient port of the Roman Empire and impressive ruins to say the least. On the old and crumbling walls was a pair of Hoopoes, bizarre, crested, and long-billed birds which sports snazzy black and white patterned wings when flying (check them out on Google). Truly stunning creatures! It was interesting to think how the ancient Romans were probably quite familiar with this amazing bird, and so it links us with the present and the past. Of course, in Muir Beach, our River Otters, Bobcats, Great Blue Herons, and Red-Tailed Hawks were all familiar creatures to the Miwok and other native peoples. This is our link to the present and the past, and if we work for these critters, with the future.

Now Bonnie and I have to buy another TerraPass to compensate for the flight to Europe!



This Great Blue Heron—probably the same heron who avoided the Gray Fox on Starbuck—foregoes his usual fish or gopher diet for a tasty snake treat. Photograph by Brad Eigsti



Interview With A “Busy, Busy, Busy” Man (And a Little “Cat’s Cradle” for Fun)

By Pam Barlow

All of these abilities have never come together to such brilliant effect as they do on his new CD, “austin de Lone - soulblues.”

From the first time I heard it, I was hooked on the songs, the horn arrangements, Audie’s unique but undeniably Cropper-esque guitar work, and maybe especially the neo-traditional vocals and arrangements that remind me of classic Memphis Blues, a bit of the Beatles, Steve Miller, and the Peter Green/Bob Welch/Christine McVie blues-fueled Fleetwood Mac. Track one, “Ain’t Love A Funny Thing” is a stone hit.

So I had to know the six W’s of this CD’s inception and release. Friend of the beach that he’s always been, (Audie’s band had everybody rocking into the new millennium up at the Community Center), he was gracious enough to take time out of his chaotic, international touring and recording schedule to drive out our winding road, sit down, and tell the tale for all us Beachcombers to enjoy. And since the closing of The Sweetwater, where many may know him as host of the Monday Night Open Mic and performer with his own band, it just made sense to start the conversation there. ~

I hear the Sweetwater is reopening on Miller, where Greenwood used to be.

Yeah, just driving by, just looking inside it looks great, it’s gonna be very exciting having that place open again.

So what’s it like to have Monday nights off?
Dandy!!

How long did you do that gig?

I did it for six years I guess...I started within the first year that Tom and Becky took over, sometime in 2000, or 2001.

So now do you just kick back and take the night off?

I usually don’t work Monday nights, and I’m happy to have them off, but I’ll be glad to get back and dig in and do some more.

So you’ll be going back?

Yeah, probably...

What are your feelings about the closing of the old place? I mean did you have any sentimental pangs about that last night, or those last few nights?

Yes and no, I mean I had the feeling that they were gonna

~ I can’t say for certain when I first met Austin de Lone. That information’s stored on the musty shelves of the curio-shop that was Marin County music in the seventies. I have one washed-out photo of us in a line-up of other post-hippie degenerates, leaning against a ubiquitous-for-the-times VW Bus. Some faces remain familiar. There’s guitar maestro, Chris Goddard, who, along with Austin, has performed for decades with Andre’s All Stars. And Russ Gauthier, master of all stringed things, and one of many New Riders of the Purple Sage. But the rest are too buried in the residue of time for me to recognize.

Despite the fact that my husband Bruce and I later migrated to more southerly centers of music-industry opportunities, through the years, we’ve been able to see Audie play, as he’s toured the state with various bands. (Busy, busy, busy. Cognoscenti of the late Kurt Vonnegut Jr.’s “Cat’s Cradle,” may see this as evidence of a shared Bokononist karass. But more on Bokononism later...). And since our homecoming to Marin eight years ago, we’ve been able to hear him more often. Recently, we saw him perform on grand piano at The 142 Throckmorton Theatre, as a featured player with Bill Kirchen And The Hammer of The Honky-Tonk Gods.

In a show-stopper of a break in the novelty/medley arrangement of the ‘70s Commander Cody and His Lost Planet Airmen hit, “Hot Rod Lincoln,” Austin segued smooth as honey poured from a jar through the songs of some of the all-time great keyboard stylists: Ray Charles, Jerry Lee Lewis, Little Richard, Count Basie, Bent Fabric, Errol Garner and Fats Domino, among others, while digging his own deep groove in each one. Amazingly, this guy just keeps getting better.

It’s been a pleasure enjoying Audie’s music as it’s ripened and matured. And not just on keys and organ, but on guitar, vocals, songwriting, arrangement and production.

come and open it again. And to me, a lot of what was just great about the Sweetwater was really in Jeanie Patterson's era. She made that thing happen, she was fantastic. Tom and Becky are great and they've done a great job to continue it, but for my era musicians and all that stuff, it was really Jeanie that did that whole thing that was just awesome.

So a part of that, when she left, there was a sadness there, and that was a sense of loss. It was irrespective of who came in. It didn't matter who came in, so it's no reflection on Tom and Becky at all, because they've done a great job and worked hard and sacrificed a lot to keep the place open, and that's fantastic. And that whole thing just continued and it's great, just great....

So for me to see the end of them and that building, especially since they've been able to keep it in Mill Valley, I don't feel the pangs of loss, I feel it's great that they won't have the same difficulties they had with their landlords for so many years. Now they can just sort of start anew...

So tell me about this great new CD of yours, "austin de Lone - soulblues."

I think there are a lot of people doing this kind of thing. There's always an up and down thing about the resurgence of soul music and R&B music, and of course Americana roots music, and all that stuff is now blending more and more.

You've got people like [Bill] Kirchen, [originally from

Commander Cody And His Lost Planet Airmen, current lionized master of the telecaster], that are on the more country side of the Americana...I guess Americana is sort of more country...And then you've got young people comin' up nowadays and pullin' it off. Joss Stone sort of came from that real sort of thing and now she's bigger time, and Amy Winehouse has some of that stuff and that's come into big commercial stuff. So the viability of great soul, that sort of soul music thing, I mean it's kind of hard to top Otis Redding, it's kind of hard to top Aretha Franklin, but there are still a lot of people who are doing it and putting their own little angle and stamp on it.

I think the first thing I was raving to you about was how much I love the guitar work on the CD. I'll bet that everybody, at least around these parts, thinks of Austin de Lone, first and foremost, as the killer keyboards, am I right?

Yes.

Maybe they get that you're a great singer too, but most of the time you're not singing, most of the time you're backing up a singer. But what comes across on the CD is that you're great on keys, great on guitar and a great singer, obviously things you can't necessarily do all at the same time...

No, I can actually do all three, and then there's the tap-dancing...

Yeah, that's really all that's been missing...

But I haven't really developed that particular act...

Darn it all. Best of luck keeping that dream alive...But enough about your dancing aspirations. Over what period of time did you record the songs on this CD?

They were recorded between - I think the first session with Doug Kilmer and Tony Johnson, I believe was 1999, and just my all-time favorite rhythm section for that kind of music, especially for soul/r&b stuff. Doug on the most on-the-money bass, and Tony with that great, lovely slop high-hat and fantastic snare drum, and then the way they played together is just great.

Well that's actually why I started doing the record, I just wanted to record with that rhythm section, that's why I started doing the record in the first place in '99. So we did that in '99, and then various sessions,



Ripping through a solo at the MBVF Barbecue

I can't even remember when the last session was, 2003, 2004 maybe, I think...

What about the tracks with Elvis Costello and Nick Lowe? Did you record those overseas?

No, they were recorded over here. All the recording was done, with very minor exceptions, sort of over-dub exceptions, at The Site up in Lucas Valley, fantastic, fantastic studio. Brilliant studio.

Digital recording?

No, all done on two-inch tape. They have two Neve boards sewn together, so 48 tracks of Neve. And of course they have all the digital stuff now. I did mix digital.

The sounds are just great.

It's really well recorded. Part of the great sounds are because it's in a fantastic studio with really the best equipment and a bunch of great rooms, and also a great engineer, Kevin Scott, who, unfortunately, died a few years ago, and he was a fantastic engineer.

And when did the great Doug Kilmer pass away?

It's going on four years now I think...One of my all-time favorite bass players, just totally right on the money, he and Tony Johnson just the coolest sort of Memphis Soul rhythm section that I've ever worked with, and I've of course worked with Booker T and many other great people over the years. And Tony Johnson worked with Junior Walker & The All Stars...

What were the logistics of getting together with Elvis Costello and Nick Lowe for this project?

Well I've known Nick of course for many, many years, and I recorded with Nick on an album in L.A. with Jim Keltner on drums, the great session player, who'd worked with Costello but also with Ry Cooder forever, and is on a million hit records. And he did a tour and I did a tour with Elvis Costello, with James Burton on guitar and Jerry Sheff on the bass, and Nick Lowe was on the tour as well, and I played keys. So that was when I first met Keltner. And then later, I did the record with Nick and Ry and Dave Edmunds and all those characters, an album called "Party of One." I think it was on Warner Brothers...Great record...

So having done the Tony Johnson/Doug Kilmer rhythm section, and also done the rhythm section of Eric McCann and Ernest "Boom" Carter, the original drummer of the E Street Band - the guy who plays on "Born to Run," my usual rhythm section when I play under my own moniker - I wanted to do something with Nick Lowe and Keltner as a rhythm section, 'cause I think they play great together, and I love that "Little Village" stuff that they did...

So I arranged to get Nick and Jim to come up and do a



Busy busy busy on soul vocals

couple of sessions with me. Nick came over from England, and Jim came up from L.A., and they stayed for a few days and we did some recording, and it just so happened at that time that Elvis was out doing a party for "Ask Jeeves," the dot-com thing. It was a big party and they'd just booked him solo.

So he called me up and said, "Do you want to play some piano? We'll maybe put together a little skiffle band or something like that..." and I said "yeah, I actually happen to have a pretty good rhythm section with me in the studio, maybe you want to use them." And Bill Kirchen was out here at the same time doing that section, so we did the show with Elvis, Kirchen, Keltner, Nick and myself. And at that time, I just said, "Elvis would you come up and do some playing on this?" So he came up and played guitar on one of the instrumentals, "Moving Day."

Did you record a lot more material than you released?

Oh yeah, there's probably another seven or eight songs, so, you know, I think it was probably four different sessions, the Tony Johnson thing, the session with Ernest and Eric...

Most of the sessions I did were just basically three-piece. I'd just play rhythm and sing, and then overdub the stuff and add the horns later. And then the session with Jim and Nick, and then another session I did, but none of those songs made it on the CD, like "Blow Up The Moon." I wrote that with my friend David Brown, a bass player that used to play with Boz Scaggs for eleven years. And a song I wrote about my little son, called, "Do Angels Like To Be Kissed?," that I wrote with my wife, the first song we ever wrote together.

Speaking of your wife Lesley, I noticed that the background vox on most of the tracks are handled by the players. So in that respect, the song that really stands out is "Let's Rock," which features Lesley and your daughter Caroline on harmonies.

Lesley has a lovely voice, and in fact did some training as an opera singer, and Caroline has an absolutely brilliant voice.

There is this wonderful, brief instrumental on the CD I just called “Sad Piano Break,” because I couldn’t find the title, but see it’s called “Pianolude” on the back of the CD. How did you decide to include this beautiful instrumental break between two rockers? I mean, at first it seems an unusual choice, but actually, it flows just perfectly, and every time I find myself looking forward to it.

I originally had the idea of putting a bunch of little piano pieces in between, but when there were too many of them, it just didn’t make any sense. I just happened to like that one, particular one.

Were you improvising?

I did some recording on piano one afternoon, bits and pieces, so it’s not written as a whole song.

So you have other tasty bits and pieces that we can look forward to hearing on other releases?

Oh, yeah...

Speaking of keyboard interludes, how did you decide to have John Allair play on “Satisfied Mind?” As you may know, our mutual friend, Jim Purcell, taught John to play piano, way back before time began...Pomade, duck tails, blue suede shoes...

No kidding?! I didn’t know that, that’s fantastic! I’ve been a fan of Allair’s since I first heard him. I think the first time I heard him, I was playing with the Moonlighters and he was playing in an organ/drums duo, “Allair and Mitchell,” and I loved that stuff he was doing back then. And I just saw him over the years since then, in various forms, and then also, he used to come and tune my piano.

[For the record, as some may recall, The Moonlighters were an offshoot of Commander Cody & His Lost Planet Airmen. They’d become a blazing-hot roadhouse band with a large and loyal following when Austin joined them in the early ‘80s. (My trio of harmony singers, Sweetooth, frequently backed up The Moonlighters, as we had done, live and on records, for Huey Lewis. Busy, busy, busy...) Anyway, Audie sent their demo to ‘new-wave’ producer, Nick Lowe, and received a reply with the salutation, “Dear Hero of Mine.”]

And I wanted to do this song completely live, everything live. So the horns are live, Keltner and Nick are live, everything’s live except for the background vocals, because that’s just too much leakage to deal with. So I wanted to get someone to play organ, and it was either John Allair or Sean Hopper, but Sean of course lives in Aspen. And Allair

also happened to tune their piano at The Site, so it was an easy connection. So I just said, “Hey John, would you come down and play some organ?,” and he did the song.

Ah yes, John Allair, piano tuner to the stars. Mr. Maniac, awesome in the extreme. Here he is, Van Morrison’s keyboard player for like thirty years, and he came out here to party at the beach, just to jam, played with Terry Haggerty and a bunch of us, strictly from love.

Hello! He’s one of my favorite piano players, John Allair and Charlie Hickocks. Do you know Charlie Hickocks? Oh he’s this funky character. He plays a lot, but he has another life as well. He’s quite a character, a great singer-songwriter, local guy...

[I try desperately to get Audie to divulge the “other life” of the mysterious Mr. Hickocks, but this info’s “in the vault.” Fans of Seinfeld will appreciate the reference... Anyway, the conversation turns to Austin’s early years.]

Not too many people know that you started out as an English major at Harvard. Were you playing music at the time?

I’d just started playing music, and decided to come out to California to see some friends of mine. I was doing very well at Harvard, but it just wasn’t going where I wanted to go. It wasn’t that interesting pursuing it. I had no interest in getting a degree, I was much more interested in working with slightly alternative paths. And I wanted to play music, so...But I went back several years ago for my twenty-fifth reunion at Harvard, and it was fantastic.

So, you came out to California to visit friends, and..?

So I came out to Berkeley, visited some friends, met my pal Jack O’Hara. We both sort of independently went back to New York in ’69, back to the Village, and that’s where we met our pal Brian Hopkins and started the “Eggs Over Easy” band, which led to going to England, recording with Chas Chandler, starting pub rock...



Old buddies, Jack O’Hara, of the pioneering pub-rock band, “Eggs Over Easy,” joined ex-band-mate Audie at the barbecue and cranked out some truly stellar guitar jams

Chas Chandler from the Animals?

Yes, he was the bass player for the Animals, and more importantly, the producer for Jimi Hendrix. So we went over there to do a record with Chas producing.

Had you left school by this time?

Yeah, after I dropped out of school, things started happening...

I’m trying to envision an argyled Audie, and can’t manage. Were you thinking maybe you would be an English teacher, or what..?

A poet.

Oh, a poet! Now that makes perfect sense.

Yeah. I figured I was headed down that disastrous creative trail...

You’re right, either way, you were doomed...But back to the CD, I noticed it’s released on Broken Toe Records. What’s the story?

Well, actually, where that came from is, a few years before I put this out as a whole CD, I was playing a festival in Germany, and wanted to have something to sell. So I made a CD of maybe three or four of the songs and called it “Short CD,” so that I could sell something at the gigs, and I needed something for the record company, and my daughter had just broken her toe, so it’s named for my daughter.

Aaaawwww, sweeeeet! Have you played a lot of music festivals overseas?

Winter 2006, some Italian promoters wanted me to come over and do a band and also to back up a singer, so we put together a band with four horns, regular cats from around here like guitar player Mike Schermer, to back up a singer from Memphis named Toni Green, and she had two back-up singers. So we went over to Italy from about the middle of December through early January, and played the Umbria Jazz Festival, what they call the Winter Edition in Orvieto, beautiful town, and played a few other gigs around.

We played the Teatro Reggio, the second most important opera house in Italy, fantastically beautiful place, and we played a two-thousand year old church in Narni...And Lesley said, “If you’re going to desert me at Christmastime, then you’d better have your album finished and sell a few.” So that’s why I finished it. I get a lot of inspiration from my wife, my daughter, my son, from the rhythm sections...

Your Muses...Where else have they led you over the years?

I played in Italy, at a festival called the Porretta Soul Festival, for a promoter by the name of Graziano Ulliani.

And I think it was in 2003, for the first time, with Howard Tate, for whom I had the good fortune of putting a band together. And we worked with Howard for about four years. Fantastic. One of my idols from when I was younger, loved the whole Howard Tate, Jerry Raggavoy music that they put out. Just a couple of albums, but legendary songs, great performances.

And so after I stopped working with Howard, I had made some pretty good friends over there, with a couple of promoters, one who did this thing called the Porretta Soul Festival, and another guy, Andrea Nanni who runs festivals up and down Italy and actually all throughout Europe. He had the great misfortune of - [Audie laughs at the memory, but hesitates to complete his thought...] I shouldn’t say it...

Go on! Go on, say it!

[Apparently this info’s not in the vault...]...of booking Sly Stone last year.

[Now that’s funny...In a former lifetime, I worked briefly for a record label Sly was signed to, and he and his entourage tumbled through our offices on a regular basis, although there was nothing ‘regular’ about those occasions. They would show up, fully fringed in every sense of that word, raise a major ruckus, then seem to disappear. Kind of a sick, stoned-hide-and-seek. Eventually, some lowly wage-drone, (like myself), would go for some typing paper, and eight people would burst out of the supply closet in an avalanche of smoke and powder, to be “escorted” upstairs by the fat cats. Oh, how my heart goes out to Seniore Nanni...Remember him? The European festival promoter...?]

Anyway, so you’re with Howard Tate at the Porretta Soul Festival...

Yeah, the first year that we did with Howard, there was a whole mess with the booking and the management, and so we ended up staying in this town, Porretta, after the festival, for nine days. Nine days off in the middle of a five-week stretch was a disaster for poor Howard.

[I’m reminded of the Bokononist expression, “Peculiar travel suggestions are dancing lessons from God.”]

But we ended up making some lovely friends and having just a great, great time over there. So we’re going over there again this July to play and sort of be the house band for this, and Lesley and [daughter] Caroline get to come.

Last year we went and we played and we backed up a few people. Booker T and the MG’s played, they were fantastic. It’s just a lovely, great little festival. It’ll be my band, the Austin de Lone Band, an eight-piece band, four horns, and

we'll be backing up a few different people. Sugar Pie De Santo's gonna come over and do it, and a bunch of other people, so, as the house band, we'll back up about four or five different acts over four days.

[And so it turns out, (or, as a good Bokononist would say, "as it was meant to turn out"), peculiar as it had been, the "dancing lesson" of the nine-day lay-up back in '03, lead to some pretty sweet rewards.]

So you're establishing a great international following... Absolutement...[In perfect Parisian.]

Just like Jimi did, you could hook your biggest fans across the pond...You know, you and Jimi have always reminded me so much of each other...

Yeah, pretty much, you know, Jimi, Chaz, Eggs and Audie...

[As he mentioned earlier, much of Austin's inspiration derives from his family. His eleven-year-old son, Richard, suffers from Prader-Willi Syndrome, or PWS, a complex genetic disorder that causes a range of symptoms from low muscle tone, cognitive disabilities, behavioral problems, and chronic hunger that can lead to life-threatening obesity.]

On November 8, 2007, Elvis Costello and the members of Clover did two, sold-out performances to benefit "The Richard de Lone Special Housing Project."



Elvis Costello, Richard, and Austin, in the de Lone's Mill Valley home.

How did that event come about?

Well, Elvis has been a friend for a long time, since I did that tour with him back in '87 I think, with him and Keltner and all that, Sheff and James Burton, and I've done stuff on and off through the years with him, and Lesley had the inspiration a few years ago to try and do something more for our son, Richard, who has this terrible disability,

Prader-Willi Syndrome.

And we realized that, of course, when we're gone, he'll still be around, and we wanted to try and do something to try to make his life and the lives of others like him better, so we decided the best thing we could do was to try to help find a way to build a home or a facility for people with that specific condition, because it's got so many specific things that it needs to try to take care of them properly.

And I'd had an idea that since I had some friends who are fairly well known in the music business, I thought a great way to kick it off, to raise some money and also to get a lot of publicity, would be to get somebody to do a concert. I'd been talking to Elvis for a while, and he was into the idea of doing something, but we didn't really know what. We wanted to do something different. Of course it would have been great to have it be a stop on his tour, but even more fun would be something a little out of the ordinary.

So I had a few different ideas, and one of them was to get the guys from Clover, who worked on his first album, back in 1977, "My Aim Is True," to come up and perform the album live, to play with him, because they'd never performed live with him. It was all just studio sessions. And he loved that idea. It took us a while to actually put together time to do it when everybody was available, but so that's what happened. And everybody was just so kind, they donated all their time, absolutely free. Elvis even paid for his own travel and his own hotels, and he does stay at some nice hotels...

And the crew was great, Don Holliday from the American Music Hall and Bonnie Simmons, and everybody who worked on it was fantastic. In fact, the staff at the Great American quit charging for their time at midnight so they saved us probably \$3000 in expenses. Fantastic, so kind...

And so we decided to do this thing with Clover, and it turned out to be brilliant, couldn't have been any better... We did two shows in one night, and basically within twenty-four hours it was sold out completely. It was a spectacular event, and Elvis and the whole band, everybody was just great, a brilliant show.

So we started a nonprofit called the Richard de Lone Special Housing Project, the goal of which is to build a facility for Prader-Willi people of all ages, hopefully in Marin County or the greater Bay Area. There's nothing like it here, and there's nothing like what we have in mind anywhere, which is a state-of-the-art facility that will be mostly residential but hopefully, perhaps we could have a school that some day people could come to.

[One reason that this facility has special requirements,



The sold-out crowd line up for Elvis Costello & the Benefit for Richard de Lone.

is that people with Prader-Willi Syndrome can't control their desire to eat and must be watched at all times. For example, many families have to lock the kitchen or the cabinets and refrigerator. As adults, most affected individuals can control their weight best in a group home designed specifically for people with PWS.]

And that's the goal, so this is just a great first step, and of course we'll have to raise a lot more money, but it was a fantastic thing. Elvis donated a guitar, it is a prototype guitar that Fender is releasing, and Fender has donated a guitar...He played a Gibson acoustic, and Gibson donated a special guitar that we put on an eBay auction. There were a lot of posters which were sent by Elvis' first manager, Jake Riviera, from subway posters like those huge posters they put in the subways in England back in 1977, six-foot tall things, just fantastic.

[Audie has told me since that they also sold out of the T-shirts printed for the benefit, which featured a photograph of Elvis with Richie, and read, "Richard de Lone Special Housing Project: Our Aim Is True."]

So it was really lovely, and we raised a bunch of money, so we've started this Richard de Lone Special Housing Project. So you can go to rdshp.org and see the website that we've got started...

At the moment it's a really fledgling organization, so Lesley and I are the director and co-directors, and we're in the process of assembling the board of directors, which will of course be a fluid, changing process. We're getting all our

organizational bits and pieces together, but we're also working on putting on another concert for next year.

~ "Busy, busy, busy," I'm thinking, which also happens to be what Bokononists whisper when considering the complexity and unpredictability of life's machinery.

From the hallowed halls of Harvard University, to pioneering pub-rock in England, to working with many of the all-time great players in the industry, (if you're not a fan of liner notes, just google any of the names in this article. It read like a regular "Who's Who"), Austin continues to be at the forefront of Marin's finest music, and a band-leader/featured performer at a series of international music festivals. Somehow, he even manages to join Andre's All Stars for every MBVF Barbecue, and foresees resuming his gig as host for the Monday Night Open Mics at the new Sweetwater Saloon. Latest up, he and Lesley

are spearheading a nonprofit to fund a housing facility to benefit people who are born with Prader-Willi Syndrome, while at the same time, raising awareness about this rare, genetic disorder that afflicts one in 15,000 people, of all genders and races.

So if you're jonesing for some truly good-time, neo-old-school, authentic, original, feel-good music, then run don't walk to get your copy of "austin de Lone - soulblues," available at Mill Valley Music and Two Neat, and on-line at globerecords.com, as well as at iTunes. It's guaranteed to go straight into your favorites file, whatever tech-styles you use. But be warned: you'll never get "Ain't Love A Funny Thing" out of your head. That's just the way great songs are.

Busy, busy, busy, indeed. Lucky us. ~

[You can follow developments with Lesley and Audie's nonprofit, the Richard de Lone Special Housing Project, at www.rdshp.org]

[For information on Prader-Willi Syndrome, call 1-800-926-4797, or go to www.pwsausa.org.]

~P.S. For the definition of karass and other Bokononist minutiae, not to mention a thoroughly exciting read, treat yourself to "Cat's Cradle," by Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.~

*CD cover photograph by Wendy Elkin
All other photographs by Bruce Barlow*



Trouble Ahead, Trouble Behind

By Judith Yamamoto

“Look at this,” Sarah said. “North Dakota’s in the news.”

“What?” Franklin held his spoon above his cup, gently shaking off the coffee drops.

“Minot, actually. There was a train wreck. Look here, it says Souris River Valley. I think Mom called it the Mouse River.”

A long way from San Francisco.

The memories were slipping farther and farther back, like a farmhouse tilting on the prairie. Sarah stood up and piled the breakfast plates on top of each other.

The sickly uncle, who’d died years before in the Minot hospital.

She carried the plates to the sink.

The horse standing in the last pasture.

When she sat back down at the table, Franklin reached for the paper.

“Just a sec.” She held on a little longer.

It often seemed as if Mom were still around. And Uncle C.B., how Mom had worried about him, until the stories had no endings.

The sun very slow to rise on this winter day.

When Franklin read about it, he shook his head. The freight train had derailed a few miles west of Minot, where the tracks ran alongside the Souris River and a small Minot suburb, Tierracita Vallejo. A long train, one hundred and fifteen cars.

“In the middle of the night,” he said, looking up at Sarah with his finger stopped on the page. “Cold as hell. Those poor guys.”

Sarah stood by the oven, still warm and smelling of toast. It was just the two of them now, her and Franklin. The kids grown up and out of the house, and how many years since Mom died?

“How’d you find this, buried way back here?” Franklin asked. “I can hardly get through all the bad news in the front section. This damn president is nothing but trouble.”

It was true, Sarah’s eyes stopped at every Minot or Fargo AP byline. She held her hands over the oven door, rubbed them together.

In the next few days, the date and time of the train wreck were repeated in every news story she found, smaller

and smaller and farther and farther back. She stood in front of the racks outside the Starbucks on Irving looking over the headlines on newspapers that she almost never read, finally plunking quarters into the *New York Times*’ change box.

January 18th, 2002.

One-forty in the morning.

Six below.

Snow everywhere, blurring every photo, until the Road Closed sign floated in white sky, white ground.

Pretty much exactly where the farm had been.

One of the news stories was about the North Dakota radio stations on voice-tracking technology, piping in satellite feeds. Programs coming from four states away. Songs going around and around on a never-ending loop.

“They’re saying maybe no one was in the Minot station that night,” she told Franklin.

Over and over, the same unbelievable facts. Thirty-one cars went off the tracks.

Fifteen were tanker cars carrying anhydrous ammonia.

Each tanker car held 30,000 gallons.

It had all been farm country, once you got outside of Minot and its sprawl, and Sarah had never forgotten the stories her mother told her when she was growing up. How, in winter, the blizzards had swept over their little house and kept everyone indoors and close to the wood stove. “You might get lost, just between the house and the barn, when that snow began to fly,” she’d told Sarah. “My father put up a rope so he and my brothers could get out for the chores.”

Her mother looked at Sarah across the kitchen table, considering, her face serious and keeping her love protected. It was as though she’d walked out of the room, gone to a place that no child should hear about.

Her mother’s silence kept Sarah from asking what happened next. Were the cows and horses all right? Did the rope stay tied at both ends, was the snow up to the tops of the boys’ boots, did everyone get back safely to the house?

Did the littlest brother, the youngest child, C.B., stay inside by the fire?

It was C.B., in another of her mother’s stories, who

got out of bed one morning and fell down on the floor. “He was six at the time, and he never got to his full growth after that, never grew as tall as his brothers,” Mom told Sarah.

“For a while, he couldn’t walk right.”

“What did the doctor say it was?”

“Mother and Father took turns holding him on their laps, rubbing his legs,” Mom said. “I remember that, them rubbing his legs.”

“But what was wrong with him?”

Sarah’s mother had looked past her, her hands still working, shelling peas, and the thrum of peas hitting the inside of the pan filled all the space there was in that kitchen.

Two of the twelve children born to her grandmother had died of sickness, Sarah knew. Cooley was still a baby; Caroline had been thirteen years old when she came down with rheumatic fever.

“Lucky enough to live through it, C.B. was,” Mom said. She carried the pan of peas to the sink and washed them under the cold water tap, the rush of water breaking apart over and over.

It was sorrow, Sarah had finally decided, that made her mother stop talking. There was nothing else it could be.

Six below zero, 1:34 am. The train was going forty-one miles an hour through a light snow cloud when it rolled over a rough spot in the track.

The conductor told the engineer to hit the brakes. Sparks began flying out from under the wheels.

There was a huge explosion.

Seven tanker cars crumpled and burst, and three others cracked.

“OSHA will be all over this one,” Franklin said, turning on the radio. “I bet someone wasn’t taking care of those tracks.”

“Canadian Pacific, for starters.” Minot had been one of the biggest railroad boom towns, Mom told her. It grew so fast they’d nicknamed it Magic City.

On the radio, the president was talking, his voice filled with confidence. We were winning the War on Terror. In Afghanistan, Kandahar had surrendered and the Taliban had collapsed. At home, it had been a year since Alan Greenspan backed his tax cuts.

Tax relief, over and over.

Sarah groaned.

“It’ll come back to Canadian Pacific.” Franklin watched her stand up and walk to the sink, then to the pantry. “What’re you doing?”

“I’m going to sew for a while,” she said, turning back to the sink. “I can’t stand listening to that man.”

“How will you know what’s going on in the country?”

“I already know. I don’t need to hear it a million times.”

She held a glass under the faucet, watched the water

filling up. Mom used to say the country was going to hell in a handbasket.

“Funny how everyone in this country thinks he’s rich, thinks he’s the same as the president or the local banker.” Franklin switched the radio station to Sunday jazz.

“Or will be any day now.” Sarah carried her glass to the old dining room table they’d moved to the front of the flat. Outside the window the sky was gray between the angles of buildings.

The quilt she was making was piled in bright-colored shards beside her sewing machine.

She set the glass carefully on a Heineken beer coaster, and sat down.

Franklin talked louder over the radio. “They didn’t take care of those tracks. Watch them blame it on the cold. Hell, that’s their job, it’s been getting cold up there for centuries.”

Sarah looked at the pile of squares she’d already sewn. She could barely hear him.

She threaded the machine’s sharp needle.

When Mom took her back to North Dakota the summer she was nine, they rode the train. San Francisco to North Dakota, five days.

Sarah threw up every morning.

Aunt Viney had met them at the station. She and Mom hugged each other, and then Aunt Viney hugged Sarah, and then Aunt Viney hugged Mom again and Mom’s hat with the long curling feather got pushed sideways over her hair.

Aunt Viney drove them from the train station to her four-room house in Burlington, not far from where the farm had been. She gave them her bedroom to sleep in, a front porch, she told Sarah, until she’d closed it in. Windows went all around where the open spaces had been.

Sarah thought it was the best bedroom she’d every slept in. So much sky, so many stars! Every night she saw them streak by, falling and falling.

The forty-acre homestead wasn’t there any more, Aunt Viney said. The wheat fields and farm house and the little vegetable garden their mother had tended, all gone. Sold to a big farmer. Nothing there now but fields of sunflowers.

It was hot in that long ago month of July. Sarah had played in the crab-apple tree in the yard and in the wagon that was under the crab-apple tree. Aunt Viney’s husband, Charlie, had driven it out on his mail route.

Charlie had been dead for so long that Sarah had only seen him in photographs.

Uncle C.B. wasn’t there either.

He’d headed south in June, working the crops. Maybe down in Texas, Aunt Viney said.

He was never much around any more, she said, pulling Sarah into her soft, flour-dusted apron and hugging her hard.

FICTION

More than 250,000 gallons of anhydrous ammonia spilled onto the ground in the Souris River valley. Onto the snow.

Within minutes, the chemical turned into a vapor cloud in the still night air.

The train crew frantically unhitched the two locomotives and headed toward Minot.

When they got there, they called 911.

In Tierrecita Vallejo, one 33,630-gallon tanker car flew a thousand feet through the air and ripped through a bedroom.

Sarah laid a soft green piece of cotton on top of a dark blue piece. Old Amish quilt colors, they could be grass and sky in any farm country.

Diamond in a Square was the name of this design. Her finger lightly guiding the fabric.

Right sides together. As simple as all true things.

She'd made *Delectable Mountains* for her son when he was twelve, *Star of Hope* for her daughter when she left home.

Franklin took the puzzles out of the paper, turned on the TV.

Every day, Sarah heard the same commercials and newscasts at noon, at four in the afternoon, at six, at ten, at eleven at night.

It didn't matter which channel he turned to, the news stories were all the same.

If no one was in the studio, who would know?

A silvery haze drifted through the Souris River valley, a slow-moving and mysterious cloud. It rose 350 feet into the night sky, and settled over an area five miles long and two and a half miles wide.

C.B., moving southward, would have seen lights moving over the ceiling. Sleepless nights, the wall of a hotel room lit and unlit by passing cars, a dog barking on and off at the corner.

The satiny bedspread sliding farther and farther over the end of the bed.

Too much coffee, shouldn't have drunk that last cup. Hard to get up in the morning after one of these nights, when darkness and daylight got lost in each other, all mixed up.

On the road, no endings to the stories.



Back when she'd been nine years old, she'd found out that nobody had seemed to know just where C.B. was. No news is good news, Mom liked to say, but

Sarah knew she didn't mean it.

They were back in San Francisco when the phone call came from Aunt Viney. C.B. was in Minot, in Trinity Hospital.

"They say it's Hodgkin's Disease," Aunt Viney said.

"I'll look it up in the encyclopedia," Mom said.

"Sarah, bring me the Hs."

"No meat on his bones at all," Viney said.

Mom took the heavy book from Sarah, set it on the table. That far look was in her face.

A worker finished his shift at the Minot Post Office at two in the morning. He scraped the windshield, warmed up his car, and headed west. "I saw that haze ahead, thought there was a fire," he told a reporter from the Minot Daily News. "It looked like a giant gray pillow, then a slithering silver snake." He drove right into the poisonous cloud.

"It hit my eyes like two ice picks."

Railroad towns, and the thin men lopsided at the hotel door. A prairie dog standing on a boulder. Those notions we forgot we had, blowing and lost on the high plain.

There were no reasons Sarah could give for the silence in these rooms. Exhaustion, maybe, the way time had lost its sure edges when the babies were little.

How the hallway slowly lightened into dawn, after long hours walking up and down, carrying her first-born son. He'd burrowed his head into her shoulder, slept only when she was moving. She'd been angry to see night fade, her last chance for sleep gone.

"It's just the baby blues," Franklin had said.

Sadness came in strange places. Most of all, she guessed, when a life was at stake.

"My lungs just filled up, filled up with that cloud," the postal worker said.

Anhydrous ammonia, Sarah read, is a clear, colorless and highly corrosive chemical used mainly in farm fertilizers, refrigeration, and household detergents. It's attracted to moisture, to eyes, nose, throat, lungs. The human body draws it in like a magnet.

At twenty five below zero, Fahrenheit, it boils.

"You hear that? He's still talking about that old trickle down theory," Franklin said.

Sarah carefully ironed quilt seams to one side.

"How about some wine?" Franklin asked, peaceful in the afternoon, getting up to pour two glasses.

Sarah unplugged the iron.

"Doesn't any one remember that it didn't work the first time around?" She took the glass from him.

She walked toward the hall, then turned and came

FICTION

back to the kitchen.

"Where are you going?"

"I don't know," Sarah said. What about the men standing on the medians on Van Ness Avenue holding signs begging for money? Please, out of work, war veteran, please, God bless you?

Any one of whom was someone's son or daughter, crazy and lost and barely making it on SSI.

"I'm scared," she said.

People living close to the tracks said it sounded like a thunder storm, so fierce that it shook the houses. Except it was the wrong time of year for thunder storms.

Then there was a second boom.

One man said it sounded like 'Nam. Maybe they'd been attacked by terrorists.

"Trees crunching and you could hear the metal."

"What are you scared of?" Franklin asked.

"We've lost the truth. The whole country is wandering around in a fog."

The power went out.

People sat in their houses in the darkness with wet towels over their faces. Turned on the radio for help. Should they shelter in place, or make a run for it?

"They were telling us the time and the weather," one woman said. "Nothing but program stuff. We were like, please, please, something."

The 911 calls began coming in.

"There's a man down in his driveway."

A Ward County deputy speeding to the call saw a cloud of fog stretched across the road. He drove straight into it.

"I'm down by the bypass, not really sure where," he said over the police radio at 1:53 a.m. "Don't come in."

"Well, get out of there," another deputy said.

"I'm stuck in the ditch someplace," he said. "Can't see. My throat and lungs're on fire."

At 2:15 a.m. the first trauma victim arrived at Trinity Hospital in downtown Minot.

The hospital went on Code Green.

Disaster.

C.B. died in Trinity Hospital in 1949, thirty eight years old.

"He's awful tired," Aunt Viney told Mom the day before.

Sarah wanted to know more, but Mom put on her hat and walked down the hallway. "Going out," she said.

Franklin looked up at the sound of weeping coming out of the TV.

"What's this?" Sarah asked, the screen full of desert and dim rows of tents and, in the foreground, a woman sitting on a blanket with a child lying across her lap.

"It's a camp in Afghanistan. She's a refugee."

"And the little girl?"

Franklin didn't answer.

Before the day ended on January 18th, 2002, almost half the population of Minot, 1500 people, got terribly sick.

It was the largest release of anhydrous ammonia in the world.

One man died.

The floor at an odd slant. Unreal, for an instant, as if after a long illness.

Sarah sat down at the table, next to Franklin, holding her wine glass. "Did you know no one was there?"

"What?" he asked.

"When the police called the Minot radio station to get an emergency broadcast out, no one answered."

"Where were they?"

"Home, sleeping. It took them an hour and a half to get a couple of guys out of bed and down to the station."

Mom had turned around at the door and looked at Sarah. Her face tilted back a little, as if distracted by shadows moving in the long hallway. High angles of light could catch your eye, suggest other rooms and passages. C.B. traveling south, through small towns and fields of wheat, through every childhood memory.

Mom smiled, her shifting, lonely smile. She had a way of leaving that reminded Sarah of setting out on some precious journey.

"When will you be back?" Sarah called, as if from a great distance.

"In a while. You get dinner started if I'm not home by six..."

When Mom opened the door, Sarah knew that all was lost. Mom would surely hear, now, all the train whistles that floated over the city, over the prairie, over the great, long sky.

There would be nothing to stop her from walking away forever.



Illustrations by Larry Yamamoto

COMMUNITY INFO



Photograph by Julie Smith

WEEKLY IN MUIR BEACH

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

MONDAY

- **Tai-chi** - 6:30 - 7:30 pm, \$22.50 per month
- **The Bookmobile** - 4:30 - 5:30 pm - 1st and 3rd Mondays, Mailboxes, Highway One across from Pelican Inn.

TUESDAY

- **Anusara Yoga** - 6:15 - 7:30 pm. Taylor's zendo, 1821 Shoreline Hwy. Instructor: Judy Turkalj 415.384.0386

WEDNESDAY

- **Tai-chi** - 8:00 - 9:00 am
- **Bistro** - Wednesday mornings, 9:30 - 11:30 am Organic fair trade coffee, \$1.50 per cup; additional cups 25¢ each. Featuring fantastic fresh-baked organic scones by Nancy Knox, \$1.50 each.
- **Muir Beach Quilters** - 11 am. No fee.
- **CSD Board of Directors Meeting**
Meetings of the Board of Directors of the Muir Beach Community Services District are open to the public and are generally held on the 4th Wednesday of the month, every other month, at 7:00 pm. Notice of Board Meetings are posted 72 hours in advance, as exact dates may vary.

THURSDAY

- **Tai-chi** - 6:30 - 7:30 pm
- **Volleyball** - 6:00 pm - late
At the courts on Muir Woods Road. No fee.
- **Iyengar Yoga** - 6:30 - 8:00 pm. Taylor's zendo 1821 Shoreline Hwy. Instructor: Susy Stewart 415.388.1549

SUNDAY

- **Green Gulch Zen Center**
8:15 am Meditation Instruction
9:15 am Meditation (zazen)
10:15 am Lecture, 11:15 am Tea
11:45 am Discussion with lecturer
12:45 pm Lunch for Program Attendees (\$8 don.)
Children's Lecture and Program
- 1st Sundays 10 - 11:30 am

letter space between sentences, not two as with a typewriter!

- In your text document, include photo file names(s) with photo caption(s) and photographer credit.

Artwork and Photos

- Image photos: JPG (must zip EPS/Tiff files); do not resize photos.
- Save at the highest JPEG setting (100%)
- Paper images: The *Beachcomber* can scan small original art, paper photos, or other images.

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Text

- Email submissions to editor: linda.c.gibbs@gmail.com
- Send text in an attached Word document or place short pieces directly into email.
- Do not design or format your pages; the *Beachcomber* will take care of the design.
- Spell check your material.
- Single line space within paragraphs (no hard returns); double line space between paragraphs; single