

BEACHCOMBER

Muir Beach Neighborhood News
Issue 244 March 2009



JERRIN 07

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FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Reader:

We are raising the out-of-town subscription rate from \$30 to \$35 to cover postage fees. This is the first rate increase in nearly 20 years. We thank our 50 national and international subscribers for their understanding and for their interest and support of the *Beachcomber*. The local subscription rate of \$25 remains unchanged.

Next issue: MAY 2009

Submissions Deadline: March 23, 2009

See page 42 for Submissions Guidelines.

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Letters to the Editor

We received our copy of the *Beachcomber* today and want to thank you for formatting a great tribute to my mother. She loved Muir Beach and its special spirit, and was fortunate to have helped the community evolve over the past 50 years. She loved the “new” *Beachcomber* and raved about each issue every time I visited. We used to talk about the old *Beachcomber* and marvel about what it’s become. It’s now a great one-of-a-kind community magazine. It reflects the special people and the special spirit that resides in a very special place. Thanks to all for the tribute and I look forward to future issues.

— Charley Stump

Support Those Who Support Us

Doug and David Canepa,
Mill Valley Market, Shop & Give Program.
Shop at Mill Valley Market, give code #7094 to the cashier before the end of the transaction, and 2% of your total receipt will come back into our community to the *Beachcomber*.



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Cover Painting by Joy Perrin
 “Muir Beach Cliffs,” watercolor, 11” x 17”
 Photograph by Joy Perrin

UPFRONT

Debra Farkas Weds

By Debra Hendsch

Dave Hendsch of Larkspur, CA and I were married in Sarasota, FL (home of Deb’s Mom, Louraine Salvaggio) on January 3rd, 2009. In attendance were: Diane & Paul Hessinger of Hilton Head Island, SC (sister and brother-in-law), DeAnn & Pat Judge of Durham, NC (high school girlfriend & husband), Dorothy Dorocke, Jane and Elizabeth Darst (friends of the family). Dave and I had a great honeymoon in St. John USVI and are now back at the beach happily reunited with our cat Basque, the newest addition to the Hendsch family. Dave is thrilled to be living at the beach after spending nearly 30 years in the Ross Valley.




Deb & Dave at Roessler’s Restaurant, Sarasota, FL
Photograph by Pat Judge

Fox In Search of Dessert

Story by Brent Smith

Photographs by Julie Smith

The evening of December 30 a handsome California Grey Fox dropped by Julie & Brent Smith’s deck for dessert. Brent and son Brett had just finished pressing six bushels of home-grown apples in their home-made apple press and placed the leftovers in a garbage can three feet outside the door. While they were cleaning up the sunroom, Mr. Fox dropped by for dessert. Foxie was totally unintimidated by the humans on the other side of the windows and obligingly posed for photo-ops for 20 minutes while polishing off his version of apple pan dowdy.



Growing Younger

By Suzanne Bender-Van Spyk

Keys, check. Wallet, check. Sunglasses, check. Time, 8:05. Crud, you're late. Back the car out quickly, zip up the street. Wait a minute, slow down, what's all this? A flock of quail swarming across the neighbor's lawn at the crest of hill? No... not quail. Not rabbits. Not foxes or hummingbirds or bobcats either. Not neighbors strolling with dogs or tractors churning up the soil on that house under construction. You're used to seeing all of those things on your morning drive. But this, this is different. This is louder and more chaotic and almost feels a little out of place in our quiet and seemingly remote piece of paradise.

These are children... literally a flock of children scampering across the lawn, being chased down by their parents and cajoled into the two idling vehicles parked by the side of the road. Little bodies, in some cases smaller and quite likely lighter than the backpacks that thud against their backs, wander around in random patterns and hide in the bushes or dart up an adjacent dirt pile. A half dozen? More! Cheeks flushed pink with morning chill appear and disappear among the game of tag, the scooters, and the bikes. Car seats, jackets, and lunches are passed around and stowed. Negotiations, tears, and tickling eventually guide the wiggling beans into the cars where more cajoling accompanies the decision on who gets to ride shotgun and the snap of



Maxx Moore and Christian Bender grab some playtime before the carpool leaves.

Photograph by Suzanne Bender-Van Spyk

seatbelts. An audio book-on-CD is blaring from one of the cars' radio; hip hop music bumps out of the moon roof on the other. One, two, three, four doors slam shut and two minivan sliders click closed as the vehicles ease out into the street and head down Seacape Drive. How do the drivers see out their rear view mirrors with the tangle of arms and hands and stuffed animals and action figures raised high in the air?



Starbuck carpoolers negotiate loading into the waiting cars. Mike, Aran, Jackson, and Austin Moore, Denise Lamott, and Christian and Adrianna Bender pictured.

Photograph by Suzanne Bender-Van Spyk



Maxx and Jackson Moore, Christian and Adrianna Bender, Ryan Wynn, and Brad Eigsti load up the minivan.

Photograph by Suzanne Bender-Van Spyk

You follow the cars down the street only to slow once more as you pass the community center, flummoxed by the size and number of those clamoring into yet another car. These aren't children. These are *kids*. Decidedly more slouchy and undisturbed, there's no running around or shrieking in this group. An occasional elbow to the ribs and a sideways, slow smile mark the interactions. They have other things on their minds.



Hans Piotter loads his bike into the Middle School carpool while Ian Bowyer and Camiee Sockell look on.

Photograph by Suzanne Bender-Van Spyk

The caravan departs, splitting in Tam Junction to head off to Strawberry Point Elementary School and Mill Valley Middle School. You manage to leave before 7:30 the next day and discover there's an even earlier carpool headed over to Tam High School. Apparently Dial-A-Ride can be a bit cramped at this time in the morning. You start to pay more attention to the other cars headed east and notice the smaller-than-adult passengers headed off to other schools in San Francisco, Sausalito, Mill Valley.

When did this happen?

Half a decade ago you didn't seem to feel the presence of children in Muir Beach as much, the gravel at the community center playground silent and composed for weeks on end. Occasionally you'd see a couple hiking up a trail, small feet kicking and pushing out of the pack strapped on one of their backs. But did they actually live here in Muir Beach or at our neighboring Green Gulch, seven miles of twisted and cracked highway away from forgotten diapers and empty milk cartons and pizza delivery? Just as, if not more, likely they were one of the many tourists offering their child a passing contact with cold ocean breezes or the crunchy taste of Muir Beach's dark chocolate sand.

Over the last several years, however, the number and age of children in our neighborhood appears to be blossoming. Families have sought out our safe and quiet streets by snatching up houses offered during the market run-up and

So, it looks like the landscape of Muir Beach is changing a little bit. Not a seismic shift, by any means, but more of a muted evolution. Houses are going up, some trees are coming down, and the community center is looking refreshed and energized. And, as you drive home from your job or a trip to the store, you might notice the large birds taking flight on two-wheelers off dirt bike ramps. You might hear the echo of laughing shrieks that have decidedly human tones or observe an unusual set of footprints that tip you off to the new type of creature inhabiting our hamlet.

The children are here. And they've come to play.

also during the recent market decline. And several long-term residents have lately succumbed to the allure of sleepless nights and potty training. Today, upwards of 40 children live in Muir Beach and Green Gulch Zen Center at least part-time. Nine of them attend Strawberry Point Elementary School and next year it looks like that number will grow to at least eleven. At 9 ½ miles, Strawberry Point is the furthest Mill Valley public school from Muir Beach. It is also the most economically and socially diverse, perched on Richardson Bay with a small wetland and views reminiscent of home. The Mill Valley School District has finally created the laudable, albeit unwritten, policy of sending Muir Beach children to the same school, greening their mantra from "if you've gotta get in a car, you might as well drive" to "if you've gotta drive, carpool." Muir Beach parents, ever mindful of time and gas prices and personal sanity have banded together to create carpools to and from the various schools, using private vehicles or Dial-A-Ride to ferry the increasing number of children over the hill.

Thanks to the efforts of Muir Beach stalwarts like Nina Vincent and Harvey Pearlman, many if not all of the families know each other through the annual family potluck. Attending these gatherings, you might expect that this youthful resurgence will last for some time, with a healthy pipeline of babies and toddlers announcing themselves with endearing smiles and tottering gaits. A bustling side-trade in sporting equipment, clothing, and even outgrown beds has sprung up, helping parents cope with suddenly longer limbs and childish whims. This increased exchange has been helped by the creation of a small contact list circulated among the families in order for parents to communicate more easily about family-oriented events, needs, and most importantly, playdates. This year there were more submissions to the Muir Beach Kids' Calendar than months in a year. More fantastic still, there are now babysitters resident here in Muir Beach ready to tackle bedtime stories and baths while worn-out parents sup in Mill Valley or catch a late-night movie. Try asking for their names and you might find a parent eyeing you suspiciously or changing the subject.



Hannah Patterson-Weisberger, Tiana Vincent-Pearlman, and Stella Eigsti show how our "pipeline" has grown.

Photograph by Nina Vincent



The Redwood Creek Restoration at Muir Beach: *Improves habitat and much more*

By Lou Sian

After receiving numerous public comments and several public scoping meetings, the Redwood Creek Restoration at Muir Beach received its official “go ahead” last November with the signing of the Record of Decision. The project formerly known as the Wetland and Creek Restoration at Big Lagoon, Muir Beach, is in its initial design phase. Though the time for public comment has passed, the National Park Service plans to hold public meetings and special events to update and engage the community as the project progresses from the design phase to when the shovel meets the dirt.

This is a large, multi-agency project with a variety of benefits. For instance, Redwood Creek will flow more naturally in its floodplain than it has in almost a century. In a few years, the old levee road at Green Gulch will be removed and a new parking lot with the existing 175 spaces will be rotated to parallel Pacific Way. The current parking lot and levee act like a giant bottleneck at the mouth of Redwood Creek.

With a roomier, improved floodplain, the plan is to build a longer and higher Pacific Way Bridge. Marin County, the agency in charge of the bridge construction, has hired Quincy Engineers. The longer bridge will span Redwood Creek, its riparian corridor and the floodplain from Pelican Inn to the existing bridge. From the bridge visitors will see a more natural coastal landscape, and the piers supporting the bridge will be spaced to allow the creek to meander more naturally through Muir Beach to the ocean.

Improved salmon habitat will have a dense canopy of streamside plants and a series of backwater channels for young fish. In addition, the upper pasture at Green Gulch will be modified and two ponds for the California red-legged frog will be constructed to provide habitat for this endangered species, too.

There’s more in store for people who enjoy Muir Beach and its surrounding trails—a new boardwalk, interpretive signage, upgraded restrooms (vault toilets) and an improved picnic area.

To find out more about Redwood Creek restoration at Muir Beach or to participate in informative site walks, nature hikes, volunteer service days and more, check out the project’s website at <http://nps.gov/goga/naturescience/muir-beach.hum> or contact Natural Resource Management Specialist Aleutia Scott at 561-2859.

Lou Sian is an interpretive ranger at Muir Woods NM and a part of the Community Engagement Team for the Redwood Creek Restoration project at Muir Beach.

Redwood Creek Restoration at Muir Beach Events

Muir Beach Cleanup

Second Saturday of every month, 9 am to 11 am. Rejuvenate by joining NPS Ranger Lynn Sanderson and other volunteers in caring for the beach. Meet at the Muir Beach parking lot at the south end by the boardwalk. Dress in layers. Water, snacks, gloves, tools and equipment provided.

Wildflower Walk and a Bird's Eye View of a new Muir Beach 4/19 (10 AM - 3 PM)

When California hillsides are riotous with spring wildflowers, join Ranger Mia Monroe for a six-mile walk and get a bird’s eye view of the Redwood Creek Restoration at Muir Beach. Afterwards, join Mia for a satisfying Muir Beach cleanup. Bring lunch and dress warmly. Meet at the Muir Beach parking lot. For information and reservations, phone 415-388-2596.

Coho Salmon at Muir Beach: One Fish, Two Fish 5/9 (10 AM - Noon)

Learn about the current status of Coho salmon in Redwood Creek. Join National Park Service Fishery Biologist Michael Reichmuth on a moderately strenuous walk while enjoying dramatic views of the valley and coast. You’ll also get an update on the Redwood Creek Restoration at Muir Beach. Meet at the Muir Beach parking lot. For information and reservations, phone 415-388-2596.

International Migratory Bird Day 5/9 (7:30 AM - 2 PM)

Celebrate International Migratory Bird Day with activities and fun for all ages at Muir Woods and Muir Beach. If ever you were a little curious about our fine-feathered friends, this is a great chance to dive in and learn what you can do to help migrating birds. Bring the family! For more information, phone 388-2596.



Redwood Creek Restoration at Muir Beach
Artist rendition by Tim Well
Illustration courtesy of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area

Slow Shopping Saves Lives

Stories of a Farmers Marketeer Including Gentle Recommendations for How To Shop During Times of Ecological Social and Financial Collapse

By Qayyum Johnson

For a long time I have wanted to tell the community about Green Gulch's campaign to eliminate new plastic bags from the waste-stream of the farm. Long story short: it has been a resounding success—impossible without the support and enthusiasm of our customers. In the last two summer seasons at our stand in San Francisco at the Ferry Plaza Farmers Market we've gone from distributing 1500 new plastic bags on a given Saturday to ZERO. The message I mean to convey is one we learn in a deeply personal way through our zazen practice—change is possible. Especially because when we know that it is good for all beings, it feels good to make the effort.

The dharma gate of shopping has been clarified for me of late. With public consciousness focusing upon the dynamic, interconnected ways in which all our first world consumption patterns have dramatic rippling effects upon the entire planet, I believe now is a time to take the backward step and gaze calmly and clearly at our own patterns of resource use. The fruit of paying attention to the origins of our material lives cannot help but lead to an appreciation of how much we tend to speed along at the socially accustomed clip and miss much of the import and far-reaching impacts of our behavior.

In other words, it might be said that we fail to actualize our *buddhanature* fully when we shop and consume mindlessly. Is it diminished? Are we actually stained by the defilement of ignorance? Are we to bear alone the burden of guilt for our despoiled environment? No, no, and no. Is there fertile ground for awareness and concentration to flourish in the small activities of purchasing organic whenever possible, or choosing locally produced, fair-traded and non-genetically modified goods, or learning to remember to shop with cotton sacks, linen totes, hemp carry-alls and baskets, gunny sacks & backpacks? Yes indeed.

As GGF's market manager, I have had a unique course of study in shopping habits. Since the bags that facilitate that leafy green migration from our stand to someone's home are the subject I wish to address, my critical focus is on two assumptions; the first, that it is normative to go shopping with only money in hand (without bags) and return home larded down with goods (with bags); the second assumption is that these bags will be free.

Upon reflection one-use plastic bags make no sense unless one is wedded to an idea of cradle-to-grave goods and unlimited growth and consumption. The wisdom insight of shopping slowly and mindfully is seeing that plastic bags are not free. We can no more pretend that the 500 billion-1 trillion bags thrown away each year worldwide are doing no harm than we can deny the feeling of responsibility which co-arises with contemplation of what it means to be a true neighbor.

When Wendell Berry and Wes Jackson recently visited Green Gulch, each made a point of underlining an idea of neighborliness that emphasized our fundamental reliance on other people's good and thoughtful decisions. True neighbors recognize their undeniable bonds of kinship and have a stake in one another's well-being. They take action after considering the wide ripple their choices will make upon beings in all directions.

The Slow Food movement articulates many elements of neighborliness and the *buddhadharma*: concentration, actions rooted in non-duality and interdependence, and a desire for all beings (ecosystem, worker, and consumer) to be benefited. We might be radical then and say that slow shopping saves lives. Or that reusable is beautiful. We could enter the stream of a movement away from cultural training which asserts we have a right to wantonly spend our earthly inheritance simply because it is convenient.



Green Gulch farmers (from left): Sarajane Snyder, Sara Tashker (farm manager), and Qayyum Johnson (market manager) at the Ferry Plaza Farmers Market in San Francisco.

A small step we're encouraging and asking our customers to participate in is that they bring reusable bags with them when shopping and don't use one-use plastic. Slowing down as much as possible and allowing shopping to manifest the luminous wisdom vision of *ahimsa* (Gandhi's 'non-harming' ideal) has been our aspiration in eliminating plastic bags. It is estimated that 600 new plastic bags get used—only to be discarded and wind up in the rivers, seas, trees or landfills—every second in California. Every second! Don't for a minute think that each small act of conservation isn't vitally important.

In my own life it has been helpful to see how a middle way naturally emerges in pursuit of a mindful consumption practice. A tendency to extremes is clear immediately: "Either I don't buy anything ever, or create trash or make the least impactful choice every time, or I am a complete hypocrite and failure." Reality is always more subtle than our harsh self-judgment

would have us think. Zero waste articulates an ideal of balance, much as a diversified farm does not need a profusion of off-farm inputs, and also doesn't create another waste problem in the process of bringing its items to market. Yet it is impossible to avoid consuming altogether and thereby adding to the waste stream, so instead I seek a balanced middle by falling first to the extreme of the no-waste zealot (No vacation honey, we would have to drive there and I'm not comfortable using the gas.), and then plunging into ignorance and denial (It's only plastic bags for crying out loud.)

The middle way is mindful awareness of the big picture; deliberating with a wide parental mind about the choices I make and considering their impact on other beings, the natural systems that sustain life and which socio-economic paradigms



Green Gulch Farm reduced their plastic bag distribution from 1500 to zero on a given Saturday at the San Francisco Farmers Market.

my purchases explicitly support.

Gradually a nimble awareness begins to cohere around the intention to pay attention to how much packaging one's life requires. How can I make shopping a consciousness-raising experience? I'll train myself to carry bags every time I go into a store. I'll catch the clerks before they put my things in a plastic bag and use my hands to carry them instead. I may not stop doing things that nourish me because they create some negative by-product, but I will explore means of lessening their impact and be very clear about my intentions in going ahead with them.

In the meal chant at Zen Center we say together, "We reflect on the effort that brought us this food and consider how it comes to us. We reflect on our virtue and practice and whether we are worthy of this offering. We regard it as essential to keep the mind free from excesses such as greed. We regard this food as good medicine to sustain our lives. For the sake of enlightenment, we now receive this food." As we bring our naturally spacious awareness into all aspects of our daily lives, we might vow to explore in great detail the nature of excess and sustenance (and virtue, life, effort, and enlightenment!).

Since most of us must shop at least a little bit in order to sustain our lives, engaging in slow shopping can be an expression of commitment to seeing things as they are. In the world of goods and in our habits of consumption, we dance out our love in a world and time desperate for attentive hearts, in all our choices we might seek to collapse the distance between self and other. One way I suggest we do this is to make our vows of neighborliness the baseline for creating new habits in the marketplace. Know where things come from, how they were made and by whom. Buy less and carry it home sustainably. Thank you all for being such fine neighbors. May this year bring us all closer.

Photographs by Sara Tashker



Muirly Musings From the Woods

By Mia Monroe, Site Supervisor, Muir Woods

We're asking lots of questions this year: Will the salmon return to spawn? Do we still have invasive and aggressive barred owls? Will the otters have pups here again? Will monarchs return to cluster? How tall are the redwoods?

But we also have a few answers!

The Muir Woods Shuttle is permanent, funded in part from fees collected at the woods and will run weekends/holidays from the beginning of May through the end of September. Ridership increases each year... yeah!

And, we have a new way to keep the beach clean! Second Saturday of each month is beach cleanup day...join us from

9 -11 am. New fire rings on the beach, too!

Come check out the new menu and "look" at the park's new concession, the Muir Woods Trading Company.

Learn about birds and other migratory species on May 9, International Migratory Bird Day... 8-2 pm at various sites in the watershed.

Look for the article in this issue [page 6] on the BIG news about BIG Lagoon.

See you on the trail!

Local Coastal Program Workshop

By Brenda Kohn and Laurie Piel

On Tuesday, December 2nd the Marin County Community Development Agency Planning Division held a Local Coastal Program Update Public Workshop at the Community Center. We were one of four scheduled public workshops. The three other locations were Stinson Beach, Point Reyes, and Tomales. We were the first. Because we were the first, there were representatives of all of the other communities in attendance to see what the workshop was all about. Because there had been no publicity we were the least represented. The other attendees were people who are very involved in the issues represented that night and so were followers of the program and its status.

The meeting was conducted by Principal Planner Jack Liebster and Senior County Planner Kristin Drumm. They gave a comprehensive slide presentation as well as opening up the meeting for questions and comments. The time schedule provided by the planners at the MB workshop calls for the whole Local Coastal Program (LCP) Update process to continue into July of 2011, when the LCP package is to be submitted to the CA Coastal Commission for review and certification. Because of the lack of publicity and low turnout Mr. Liebster assured us that they would schedule another meeting at the Community Center in the future. This is what those of us in attendance learned:



Principal Planner Jack Liebster and Sr. County Planner Kristin Drumm make note of the comments from the attendees of the workshop.

To quote from their fact sheet: "In 1976, the California Legislature enacted the Coastal Act, which created a mandate for coastal counties to manage the conservation and development of coastal resources through a comprehensive planning and regulatory program called the Local Coastal Program (LCP). The LCP is a planning document that identifies the location, type, densities, and other ground rules for future development in the coastal zone. Each LCP includes a land use plan and its implementing measures. These programs govern decisions that determine the short and long term conservation and use of coastal resources." The primary goal of the LCP "is to ensure that the local government's land use plans, zoning ordinances, zoning district maps, and implemented actions meet the requirements of, and implement the provisions and policies of the Coastal Act at the local level. Marin County's Local Coastal Program is divided into 2 units, Unit I and Unit II. Unit I, which was certified in 1980, includes the communities of Muir Beach, Stinson Beach, Seadrift, and Bolinas."

More information on the Local Coastal Program and summaries of public comments from the Local Coastal Program Public workshops are available on the LCP website at "www.co.marin.ca.us/MarinLCP. The website also has a "Subscribe" feature in the top left corner of the page where people can click to receive periodic email updates on the status of the LCP. Or, folks can contact Kristin Drumm at 415-499-6290, or e-mail her at kdrumm@co.marin.ca.us



The small audience listens attentively to the Local Coastal Program presentation by the Marin County Community Development Agency Planning Division.

Photographs courtesy of the Marin County Community Development Agency Planning Division

1-5

By Persis Norton

My sister, Jean, found the mourning dove on the way home from school one afternoon. We called the dove "Dovey" or 1-5, it depended on the person talking about her. The dove had been shot, a wound on her right side, that leaked fluids whenever she drank water. In time, the wound healed, and 1-5 became a member of our household. She lived with us for a few years, free to fly loose in our home. Then, one day, she decided to fly out the front door to bird freedom.

The Norton children, Jamie (the babe in arms), Persis, John, Jean, and Joel, were all raised at 320 Sunset Way. Paula and Tom Norton bought the property in October 1945 after the

end of World War II. The Muir Beach land was owned by the family until Tom's death in 2003.



In this photo taken in September 1953, the children are all ready for the new school year.

DUSTY

Little bed
by the front door
you kept us warm
and welcomed us home.

On a patch of damp sand
you leaned into us
assuring us
you were there.
From the start.

You stood at the bow
of our ceremony
and when the lights dimmed
you were our chaperone home
and collapsed at the foot
of our bed.

Scruff, proud black tail
and baggy pants
skipping down the streets
you'd point your bugle
to the sky and announce
the right and wrong
with things.

I've never seen you more
proud that day up at
Coyote ridge
as I watched you stand in
awe at the splendor you
called your back yard.
Your blonde shadow there,
quietly barking.
Loving you.

Nothing was sweeter for you
than that "treat" of recognition,
We were there.
All of us.
We were there
for you too.

Cori Valentine



Dusty Collier 1998-2008
Photograph by Cori Valentine

Day of the Dead 2008

By Laurie Piel

The sixth annual Day of the Dead gathering on November 1st was another Muir Beach Community success. Harvey Pearlman and his band of volunteers worked all day transforming the Community Center into a festive celebration of those who have left us over the years. Along the wall were the names and pictures of our departed community members, families and pets (who definitely are members of the family), dearly loved by those still here on this side of the grass. With the decorations of skeletons and candles evoking the pre Columbian celebration of the departed souls and the added good wishes of long life represented by the 1,000 origami cranes originally created by the community for Ellen Mettler's memorial, many cultures were brought together to share the diversity of Muir Beach in its own version of The Day of the Dead party.

Harvey Pearlman and Nina Vincent hosted the evening filled with song, poetry, music, and great potluck food. Pam Barlow and Judith Yamamoto handed out lyrics and conducted a sing-a-long of the classic folk song "Will the Circle be Unbroken" accompanied by Bruce Barlow on guitar and Gary Duke on ukulele. Joe Connor inspired us with his poetry. Our newest poet was Peter Asmus, the leader of our incredible band from Sacramento, Space Debris. He read two poems that he had written in honor of his father's passing two days earlier. Martha de Barros and Wendy Johnson regaled us with their Zen view of death. Not only were the dearly departed remembered, but the opportunity for families to be together was celebrated as well. With many new children being welcomed to the Muir Beach family, and the Pinto sisters, Erin and Allison (home for a visit from Brazil), sharing time together as only sisters can, the evening was very special.



Pam Barlow and Judith Yamamoto lead the audience in a rousing rendition of "Will the Circle Be Unbroken" at the annual Dia de los Muertos celebration.

At the end of the evening as we gathered together and the notes to our loved ones were tossed in the fire, we were reminded how lucky we were to be members of a community that shares special times together. If you didn't make it to our Day of the Dead celebration in 2008, make it a point to come and celebrate the circle of life (and death) with your community this November.



Martha de Barros and Wendy Johnson steal the show with their witty take on the Zen outlook on death.



Our band Space Debris entertains the assembled crowd.



Marilyn Laatsch helps Tiana Vincent-Pearlman and Hannah Eigsti at the children's table.



The Pinto sisters being best friends too.



The celebrants line up to toss their notes to their loved ones in the fire.

Photographs by Pam and Bruce Barlow and Laurie Piel



Muir Beach Celebrates Obama's Election

By Anne Jeschke

In homes throughout Muir Beach, as elsewhere in the nation, friends and neighbors spent the evening of November 4th waiting and watching TV as the election results came in. Patriotic themes were widespread, and chocolate frosting on cakes spelled out HOPE in the now familiar Obama logo. The results were clear early in the evening, allowing time for everyone to celebrate victory even sooner than expected. Good food and drink, good friends, and victory for Obama made this an election night to savor.



Glued to the TV as results come in are Scott Bender, Paul Jeschke, David Leivick, David Piel, and Laurie Piel.



Bob Hayden raises a glass once Obama's victory was assured.



Muir Beach neighbors Bob Hayden, Brent Smith, and Paul Jeschke enjoy good food and conversation on Election Night, November 4th, at the Jeschke's home on Starbuck.

Photographs by Julie Smith

Family Potluck Becoming an Annual Event

By Suzanne Bender-Van Spyk

Sunday October 5th, 2008 sparkled in the sun as families from Muir Beach and Green Gulch gathered at the Community Center to meet, greet, and get to know each other. Hosted by Nina Vincent and Harvey Pearlman, parents and children from 20 different families played foosball, traded contact information, and explored the playground while learning more about our growing community of children in the neighborhood.

Each family contributed a dish and drinks to share and the food was as excellent as it was diverse. In late 2007, Nina and Harvey hosted a similar event at

the BBQ grounds with kid-friendly activities such as horseback riding, story time, and face painting. One of the valuable outcomes of the latest potluck was a contact list of families and children that has helped facilitate communication about child-oriented topics in the neighborhood and beyond. Families who wish to be included on this email and address list should call Suzanne Bender at 389-8398. We all hope the Family Potluck becomes an annual affair. Thank you Nina and Harvey!



Eli Pearlman enjoys the potluck while Nataya Bassett looks on.



Ryan Wynn (right) snags a toy off the table as Eli Pearlman, Elizabeth Levie, Jeremy Levie, and Lisa Eigsti relax after a good meal.



Elizabeth Levie and Jeremy Levie face off at the Foosball Table.



Parents peruse the potluck buffet. From left: Don Piotter, Angie Banducci Sward, Barbara Piotter, Lisa Eigsti, and Aran Collier.



Angie Banducci Sward planning for another participant at next year's Family Potluck.

Photographs by Nina Vincent

Want To Do Something Different Next Thanksgiving?

By Lonna Richmond

Think about a trip to Orland, CA, to Farm Sanctuary where you can celebrate a compassionate Thanksgiving by joining the staff and farm animal residents for their annual Thanksgiving *Celebration FOR the Turkeys*—a very special holiday tradition that everyone, especially the turkeys, will enjoy! This is just what Erin Pinto, Suzanne Wynn and I did on November 22, 2008. The highlight of the day, of course, is the very special *Feeding of the Turkeys Ceremony*, where the rescued turkeys become the guests of honor and receive a festive feast of pumpkin pie, cooked squash, cranberries, and other goodies made just for them! Besides having the opportunity to walk around and see all the other rescued farm animals, you will have the chance to spend time with other compassionate people, enjoy a delectable vegan dinner, and listen to inspirational speakers.



A beautiful serving of mashed squash with grapes, parsley, and tomatoes. Notice the turkey has been debeaked, which is a common practice on factory farms. Beaks are cut off—without anesthesia—when they are young to prevent them from pecking one another to death, which they will do when stressed out from the confined conditions in which they are forced to live.

When Farm Sanctuary was founded in 1986 it was a fledgling, all volunteer organization that was funded by sales of veggie hot dogs from a VW van. Today, Farm Sanctuary has grown to become the nation's leading farm animal protection organization, with hundreds of thousands of supporters whose mission is to combat the abuses of factory farming and to encourage a new awareness and understanding about "farm animals." Farm Sanctuary has worked to expose and stop cruel practices of the "food animal" industry through research and investigations, legal and institutional reforms, public awareness projects, youth education, and direct rescue and refuge efforts. There are shelters in Watkins Glen, NY and Orland, CA, which provide lifelong care for hundreds of rescued animals who have become ambassadors for farm animals everywhere by educating visitors about the realities of factory farming.



In an ideal world, there would be no need for Farm Sanctuary. There would be no factory farms or stockyards, and cows, pigs, chickens, and other farm animals would not be abused. They would be free to laze in the breeze, bathe in the sun, scratch at the earth, and enjoy life. Unfortunately, animals raised on today's industrialized farms are treated like unfeeling commodities, and their basic needs are completely ignored. People are shocked to learn about the intolerable conditions that are commonplace on today's industrialized farms. That is why Gene Baur was inspired to found Farm Sanctuary and write the book *Farm Sanctuary: Changing Hearts and Minds About Animals and Food*.

Farm animals are de-beaked, de-toed, tail-docked, confined, crowded, neglected and denied the very basics of life: fresh air, wholesome food, room to move and, most importantly, freedom. They are crowded in factory farm warehouses, and confined so tightly that they cannot walk, turn around, or lie down comfortably. Thanks to the recent passage of Prop. 2, by 2015 things will have gotten a bit better for the factory farm animals but until then it's business as usual. At Farm Sanctuary these rescued animals are treated as friends, not food. Farm Sanctuary remains solidly committed to end cruelty to farm animals and promotes compassionate living through rescue, education, and advocacy efforts. After all, a compassionate world begins with you! For more information, please go to www.farmsanctuary.org



Lonna Richmond (left) and Erin Pinto serving up Thanksgiving Dinner at the Turkey Ceremony.



Lonna with Timothy, who also lives at Farm Sanctuary.

Happy Thanksgiving!

Photographs by Suzanne Wynn

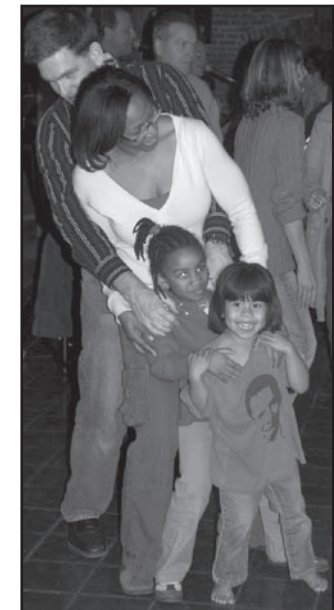
No Moe Bush Bash Review

By Dan Fitzpatrick

Long before we knew who the presidential candidates would be, my neighbor Tim Crosby and I envisioned a party to celebrate the end of our 43rd President's second term: the "No Moe Bush Bash." Along with the rest of the world, we were anticipating a change of leadership, and perhaps direction, of our beloved country.

It was never intended to be a politically polarizing event, nor was it an Obama inauguration rally (that was just an added bonus). Instead it was a chance to release some pent-up frustrations and celebrate fresh leadership, and the subsequent hope that change might bring. Because regardless of where you stand ideologically, you'll probably agree that to be an effective leader you need supportive followers—something "W" lost long ago.

In addition, we felt it was high time to throw a community party, one that would hopefully set the stage for many more to come. One of Muir Beach's greatest attributes is the tightness of our community, so charmingly quaint that it's feasible to throw a party and invite the entire village. Better still is the fact that so many of our neighbors attended the jovial event on a Tuesday night in January.



Tallest to smallest: Scott Sampson, Toni Simmons, Jade Latimor (family) and Tiana Vincent-Pearlman (friend) dance the night away. Photograph by Linda Lotriet

As music buffs, Tim and I wanted to bring incredible music to the beach, so we hired Bootie Cooler, a



"W's" last dance. Photograph by Linda Lotriet



Left to right: As Linda Kelly, Michael Erikson, Curt Himy, Paul Cohan, Christina Ferguson, and Dan Moran of Bootie Cooler play, Kathy and Harvey get down. Photograph by Kevin Batycki.

fabulous local band that wailed deep into the night. The set list included tunes from the Grateful Dead, Rolling Stones, and the Allman Brothers that kept the dance floor packed. The evening culminated with the spontaneous burning of a Bush effigy, provided by Lynda Gross Silva, during an exquisite rendition of "Shakedown Street." "W" was danced around the room, wearing a sharp suit and tie, by a conga line of dancers that eventually escorted him to the raging fireplace. The crowd began singing "Burn the Bush" to the twangy riff, until he was finally cast into the flames—where he promptly exploded. The crowd erupted into cheerful hysteria.

"That was the most incredible thing I've ever seen," Laura Pandapas giggled as "W" melted away.

Based on the event's success, community support and positive feedback, you can expect many more free concerts like it from us in the future. We'd also encourage our neighbors to reciprocate, because you can never have too much great music and laughter in our special little cove.



Darcy Tucker, soon to be Fitzpatrick, comforts a worried Bush. Photograph by Kevin Batycki

Can It Really Be Barbecue Time?

By Anne Jeschke



Eager volunteers gathered for a 'photo opportunity' prior to beginning the meeting.

This may still be February, but May and Memorial Day come sooner than you think. Now is when the Fire Department and community volunteers start the work and planning to pull off the massive fundraiser at the end of May.

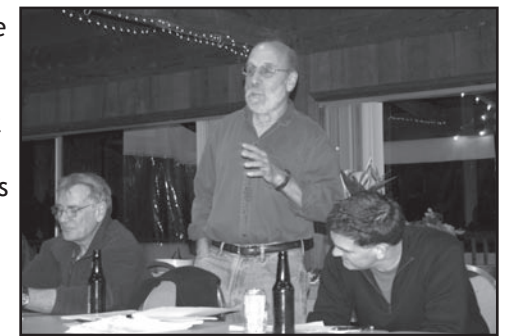
February 7th was the initial planning meeting for this year's affair. Old and new committee chairs, as well as Muir Beachers interested in taking a more active part, came together to review jobs, discuss improvements, and assign responsibilities.

It began in January with calls and e-mails to everyone who led a committee last year. Notes from last year were reviewed and revisions made to describe the committee procedures. This becomes the Barbecue Manual, an ever-changing document that describes each job necessary for a successful barbecue.

For example, Kathy Sward writes in detail about her responsibilities for the shirt booth. It's a complex job starting with an inventory just after the Christmas Fair. Kathy recruits staff to help in selecting new items and colors, ordering, pricing and hauling merchandise to the barbecue grounds and setting up the booth. Sales day is hectic and then it's time for packing up and inventory. Kathy's write-up details names of vendors and supplies and becomes part of the Manual in case there is ever a time when she cannot do the job and we need to recruit a new volunteer.

As usual, not all committee chair positions were filled at the beginning of the well-attended February meeting and potluck. The President of the Muir Beach Volunteer Fireman's Board, Michael Kaufman, asked if anyone would take over the Beans and Bread job, and quickly Aran Collier and Peter Lambert volunteered. Kathy Sward asked for help with selecting and ordering new stock. New resident Laura Van Amburgh immediately raised her hand. Laura had already agreed to take over supervising food for the four Saturday work parties. Laurie and David Piel will take over Raffle duties the day of the barbecue, while Deb and Rob Allen attend their

daughter's college graduation back East. Bob Hayden and Scott Sampson will be doing the Supplies job that Rob usually handles with Bob's help.



Michael Kaufman explains the need for strong volunteers as Brent Smith and Scott Sampson give support.

Coming next are the Saturday workdays to clean up the Barbecue site and prepare the structures for the big day. Each Saturday in May—the 2nd, 9th, 16th, 23rd—many volunteers are needed to do clean up, yard work, repair structures, and more. YOU are needed from 10 am until 4 pm, or any portion of that time. You'll get coffee in the morning, and a hearty lunch to keep your strength up. Come for an hour or two or come for all day. Either way you'll be meeting new neighbors and supporting our Volunteer Fire Department.

At about the same time, committee chairs will be calling around for volunteers. You can help by calling yourself to volunteer. Send calls and e-mails to me, Anne Jeschke, at 388-2278 and ajeschke@aol.com. We can find the perfect job for you!



Rob Allen introduces himself to new Muir Beach addition, Dean Sward, while the proud dad, Jes Sward, watches. Grandma Kathy is in the background.

Photographs by Julie Smith

Beachcomber Spotlight: Firefighter Chris Gove

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

By Linda Gibbs

Many thanks for taking the time to meet with me. Sure.

Were you surprised to see your photo on the front cover of the May 2007 *Beachcomber*?

Well, my mom liked it! Yeah, it was bit of a surprise.

Where's your mom?

San Diego.

How do you make your living?

As a carpenter.

Are you self-employed?

No, I work for Fusion Building Company. It's a green construction company out of Bolinas. I've been there for about four years.

What does that mean, green?

We try to reuse and recycle as much as we can, do like sustainable materials. And it all depends on how much money the client has and how green they want to be. We will build it however they want, but it depends on how far they want to go with it. We've had clients that everything's completely green, as much recycled stuff as we can get. It adds to the cost, but people seem to like it. It's a nice niche.

Green means recycled materials, primarily?

It's basically you try to limit your impact, you know, like cut down as few trees as possible, use as few chemicals as possible, try not to fill the landfills up. You obviously can't build anything and be completely green, otherwise we'd all still live in caves.

Do you build houses?

Yes.

And additions? What kind of services...

Remodels, and anything from a real minor remodel to a new kitchen, to completely redoing the entire house to new construction.

How has the economic downturn affected the business?

We used to be able to just pick and choose, whatever we wanted, and now we're actively having to pursue this stuff. Because most of our stuff is by word of mouth. We don't advertise very much at all. It'll be interesting. We're busy right now, but most of the stuff was stuff that we already had in the bag prior to the downturn. So we shall see. But right now I'm busy, really busy.

Well, that's really good news. Where did you learn your trade?

My dad taught me some of it. And I just picked it up along the way.

He's a carpenter as well?

No, but he was just real handy with his hands. And my parents owned a bunch of rentals and stuff like that, so there was always maintenance to do on them. I just enjoyed it. I've done a whole bunch of other things but I keep coming back to carpentry because it's kind of satisfying working with your hands.

I would think it would be.

It is. Some stuff is just boring, but when you get to work with nice stuff, building something nice, it's quite satisfying.



Firefighter Chris Gove
Photograph by Julie Smith

What are the boring aspects of it?

Dealing with all the subcontractors and just the waiting. You order something and it takes weeks and weeks and weeks. It always surprises me cause I've got a 35, almost 40-year old car [almost restored '72 Jaguar] and I can get parts for it in two days. But I order a faucet and it's six to eight weeks.

How did you find that job?

Matt Silva turned me onto it.

He's also in construction?

Oh, yeah, he actually works with us right now. He's worked with us off and on since not too long after I met him.

Is he a carpenter, too?

Yeah. Actually most of the guys on the fire dept. are in the trades. Just about all of them. I can think of Rob Allen, he's an art dealer. Amadeo [Banducci] is basically a retired farmer. Brad [Eigsti] kind of is in the trades since he's a landscape architect. Mike Moore got his start in the trades, and Fishboy [Jon Rauh] is in the trades, John John [Sward], of course.

Have you lived in Muir Beach long?

Six and a half years now.

How did you come to move to Muir Beach?

Oh, that's quite the story. I was newly single. A friend of mine asked me to come up and build a fence.

You mean from San Diego?

From San Diego.

You were living in San Diego at the time?

Yes, I was raised in San Diego. I spent some time in North Carolina but most of the time in San Diego. And I came up here and built a fence and then re-did a kitchen, and did some other jobs.

Was that in Northern California or in Muir Beach?

That was in Muir Beach.

So the friend lives in Muir Beach?

He owns property here, or his mother did at the time. And I met a girl while I was up here, actually I knew the girl, but I just got reacquainted with her. We started a long distance relationship. I kept trying to get her to move to San Diego. Even though she was from San Diego, she wanted to stay up here. And then I realized I was asking her to do something I was completely unwilling to do myself. So I made two phone calls. Hester had just died, that's David's mother. (David Callander's the guy who set me up here originally, his mother had died.) I called him up, asked him if I could rent the house. And then I talked to Ted Marshall who I'd met while I was up here and asked him if I could work for him. And he said yes, so within about maybe six minutes I had a place to live and a job. So I moved up and Jennifer moved in with me. And we were up here together for I don't know like three years before we split ways. And I've been here ever since.

And when you say that you were working for Ted Marshall, is he in construction as well?

Yeah, he's quite the accomplished carpenter. When you do his interview you'll find him out. But he does Japanese-style carpentry. He's very highly trained and very good at what he does. I helped him build his house. My girlfriend used to get mad at me because her commute was to South San Francisco and mine was down the stairs with a cup of coffee. I'd tell her about all the traffic that I ran into daily and she would smack me in the head.

South San Francisco, that's a hefty commute.

Yeah, it takes about fifty minutes no matter what. I've never seen so much traffic as up here. If I lived in Petaluma I'd move back to San Diego. There's no way I'd commute to the city from there. It's ridiculous. I hate commuting, that's why I live here. I go to Mill Valley, I go to the city. It always boggles my mind that I can lay there in bed and look at a job in the Sunset or the Haight, physically can see it from my house, but I know it's going to take me an hour to get there.

I guess with the kind of work you do, you have to go where the jobs are, and you go all over.

Basically Marin and San Francisco.

So your company doesn't...

We haven't had to, not yet. Who knows, the next job may be in Sonoma. When I first quit working for Ted, I was commuting. I became a slater putting slate on roofs. I met this guy and he paid me a lot of money to help him do slate. I was going to St. Helena, we did a house up there. And then we did a barn and a house down in Monterey. That was a commute. I'd go down there for three or four days at a time.

You did double duty at this year's BBQ as chair of both Work Parties and Parking...

Ask me if I'm going to do that again!

That must have been grueling. How many hours did you log in?

A lot. I try not to keep track.

How long have you been working at the BBQ?

Since the second year I was here, so awhile.

About five years?

Yeah, I went to the first BBQ. I haven't been to any of them since.

Because you were working them?

Yeah, I've been standing in the parking lot.

How many years have you been the Parking Chair?

Since the second year. I've done it four times.

How does one prepare for Parking duties? I mean, do you mark off the rows before the event? What is involved here?

Basically just put some cones out, and get the first few aisles designated, and then have really good volunteers.

What makes a really good volunteer?

What's really important is getting the first few rows set up properly and then the rest of it kinda goes from there. But somebody that knows what they need to do in order to fill that parking lot and stays on it.

And you teach them how to fill the parking lot?

Yeah, that, and give them a lot of beer! It helps get volunteers. I only had to fire one guy.

No kidding? In four years?

Uhh uhh. He got really drunk and starting barking at our guests. And I kicked him out of there.

During the event?

During the event.

Are you going to run both areas again this year?

Absolutely not!

And why is that, Chris?

It's just too much. And not only that, other people need to volunteer, you know. We see the same people year after year after year after year doing the same thing, which is beautiful for the people doing it because it's pretty highly rewarding. But it doesn't allow anybody else to get that same reward.

As Work Party Chair, describe what that entails? I understand there's lots of behind-the-scenes preparation separate from each of the four Saturday Work Parties.

Yeah, there's a little bit. Basically, we do an inventory of what needs to be done. And then we figure out what kind of materials we're gonna need, so we make sure the materials are there. A lot of guys that come down are in the trades so they know what to do. They need very little direction whatsoever. But then the volunteers that show up, they just need something to do.



Chris Gove sweeps his truck after hauling away field detritus at the May 17th Work Party. He did double duty at the 2008 BBQ serving as Work Parties Chair for the first year and Parking Chair for the fourth consecutive year.
Photograph by Laurie Piel

MUIR BEACH VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT

Yeah, like David and me.
Well, you guys are good.

Well, we figured it out after the first time.
Yeah, you figured it out. And that’s what most people do. They come down and that’s the hardest part. Dave Elliott [former Work Parties chair] warned me about that. He said you need a lot of little jobs so everybody that comes to volunteer has something to do. And there’s every skill level. We try on purpose to make the BBQ area look like a shambles.

Really?
Yeah, we call it Dogtown. Levels are *not* involved. Every time somebody brings out a level, we laugh at them and make them put it away.

Because?
Well, for one thing it’s easier to build, and for another, it just kinda looks funky. You know we could build a lot of it perfect because a lot of us are in the trades, but we don’t on purpose. We try to make it functional and not fall apart because we don’t want to redo it two years later. But we never use levels. In fact the only level that I know of that was ever used... I brought my laser level out so we could make sure that the stage was completely flat. But other than that I don’t think a level’s been used on that job. We actually made sure that the deck on the stage was completely flat and level on purpose.

For safety reasons.
For safety reasons and the stairs going down from it and stuff like that. But the rest of it is just like “eh, that looks good.”

So the reason that the site is not preserved from year to year is because you want that funkiness...
No, because it’s too much work. We get done and we’re done. We don’t want to do anything else until the next spring, you know. We’ve got our own lives to live.

It is a huge commitment on your part.
Oh, yeah. The biggest thing we’ve gotta do every year is weed whack. The buildings, like I say, we try to build them good, but just with no levels. But we’ve got to clear the yard every time and that’s a nightmare.

I think the picnic area is great.
Oh, yeah, it’s great just like it is. We don’t want to make everything look like a strip mall. We want it to look funky and that’s on purpose.

Before we turn to your fire department work, I want to ask you about Thursday night volleyball. You are a regular participant, correct?
Yep.

Were you around when this activity was first started?
God no, most of us weren’t even born!

When was volleyball started?
I’m not really sure but I hear tales that it’s about 30 years old. They used to play in that vacant lot across from Winkleman’s [on Shoreline Hwy]. I guess it used to be a baseball field. And then the guy that previously lived in Fishboy’s house [on Shoreline Hwy] had it there on Sundays.

Do you know how long it’s been at the present site on Muir Woods Road?



Chris Gove, who helps maintain the vehicles, checks the oil of the 676.
Photograph by Julie Smith

At least ten years.

I understand that musicians gather and make music while you play volleyball. It sounds like a weekly party.
It is a weekly party and yeah, sometimes we’ve got different musicians showing up.

And do you bring food?
Yeah. A couple times a year I put on a carne asada feast down there and everybody seems to show up for it.

What kind of feast?
Carne asada. I bring carne asada from San Diego. It’s basically really thin marinated beef that I grill on mesquite and chop up and serve as a burrito or whatever. We’re doing it next Thursday [January 15th], show up.

And then you serve beer and wine? Or people bring their own?
Yeah, we have a table down there. If it’s on the table, it’s open season.

The booze you mean?
No, whatever’s on that table is for everybody.

Oh, and so the people who bring the food or the drink put it on that table if they want to share it?
Yeah.

If they don’t want to share it, they keep it with their stuff?
That, or they hide it in the bushes!

I’m a vegetarian and so is David...
The refried beans that I’m going to be bringing are vegetarian.

We could have a vegetarian burrito!

MUIR BEACH VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT

Yeah. We’re going to serve about 7:30 pm.

Well, thank you for that invite. Do you run tournaments or is it more an informal pickup environment?
It’s just a pickup game. Sometimes we play two on two or up to six on six. It depends on how many people are there.

But no more than six on six?
Nope, I don’t even like playing six on six. I prefer two on two.

Because it’s too crowded?
Not only that, there’s a risk of getting hurt because everyone’s running around like idiots. And then nobody really knows whose ball it is. So you get two people going for it and then both of them will pull out so the ball just drops on the ground. With two on two you know whose ball it is. It’s as simple as that. We’d love to see new people down there. It’s a blast. We have a really neat outdoor fireplace that we just put in. It was actually a World War II anti-submarine net buoy. It actually floated underneath the Golden Gate Bridge at one time. And it was made by one of the neighbors up here and was in his house for years. And we had a new resident come in and he hated it. So Matt Silva and I pulled it out through the front door of his house with my truck literally and took it down there and dug a hole and dropped it in the ground.

It’s a buoy?
Yeah, it’s about a five foot steel sphere with a hole cut in the front of it with a chimney on it. It’s got a floor welded into it. It’s a fireplace.

When did you join the Muir Beach Fire Department?
Four years ago.

You had been living here a couple years?
Yeah, about a year and a half or two years.

How did you get involved in the fire department?
I was told to join.

By whom?
Mike Moore. He just looked at me and said, “It’s time.”

Had you had prior firefighting experience?
Not as a firefighter but I’d put out several fires.

In San Diego?
A couple of them in San Diego and a couple of them aboard ship in the Carolinas.

Aboard ship?
Yeah, I used to be treasure salvager.

No kidding? You mean you would look for buried treasure?
Yeah, it takes a special kind of idiot to do that!

Could you tell me a little bit more about that?
I spent three and a half years looking for the El Salvador. She was a Spanish galleon that sank off of Cape Lookout in 1734. My dad is a pretty world-renowned treasure salvager and I didn’t know him. So I went to get to know him and worked for him for three and a half years.

Your parents were divorced?
Yeah, we refer to him lovingly as the donor.

The donor? Oh, of the sperm!
Yeah.

Did he and your mom split up when you were young?
Yeah, when I was a year old.

What year did you go to North Carolina?
1989.

So as a grown man you went to North Carolina. Did you live with him?
No, I lived onboard the boat with several other guys.

Your dad hired you?
Yeah. Well, hired is kind of a loose word because I didn’t get paid for three and a half years.

How did you support yourself?
My needs were taken care of. That was part of the deal.

He gave you food and housing?
Yeah, we lived on the boat and I was basically the cook and the engineer.

If you wanted to go on a date or see a movie...
There would be money for that but not a lot of it. It was a pretty shoestring budget. We burnt through hundreds of thousands of dollars a year but most of it went into the project.

Who hired him?
He bought the rights to the wreck from a guy and then he had investors that invested in it.

How do you buy the rights to a wreck from the 1700s?
Because once somebody starts looking for something, they get what’s called an admiralty claim, and until they cease looking for it, it’s theirs.

They make application?
They go to the Admiralty Court and put in a claim for this specific wreck in this specific spot. And then they have to actively keep looking for it. They basically claim the salvage rights to whatever it is that they are looking for.

Did you find the El Salvador?
We found bits and pieces of her, but I wouldn’t be renting in Muir Beach if we had actually found it because it’s worth about three hundred and fifty million.

Is your dad still looking?
Yeah, actually he is, and I still own one percent of it.

Fantastic.
He’s been looking for it over 20 years now.

Why did you leave that project?
It was time to do something different. I wanted to actually find the wreck rather than just look for it.

If he found it, would you go back and help him?
I don’t know that. Maybe.

You’re a First Responder. What does that mean?
It means we try to respond first. Basically we are trained in first aid and we try to evaluate the situation and deal with it. So if somebody’s bleeding, we try to stop the bleeding. If something’s on fire, we put the fire out. If someone’s heart stops, we hope to start it again. We have several EMTs but most of the guys are First Responders. And it takes a lot of training to go beyond that point. Most of us don’t have the time.

MUIR BEACH VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT

From what Rob Allen was saying, it's a lot of hours. Yeah, and I would love to do it. But the only place to get the training is the Indian Valley campus in Novato and it starts at 6 o'clock. I'm not going to drive up there.

Do you have particular skills that you are good at, such as effectiveness on the radio or driving the 676? Or does one need to be good at everything at the scene?

One pretty much has to be good at the scene. I like to drive just because I'm a control freak. I'm good with the engineering aspects. I try to take care of the maintenance of the vehicles. Cuco and I generally jump on that stuff; Amadeo's always in there, too.

How did you know you would like volunteer firework? Or did you know?

I don't know if I ever knew I would like doing that volunteer work, but it's kind of a tradition in our family to do volunteer work if you are asked.

What's an example of that tradition in your family?

My sister's been a mounted reserve police officer for twenty-five years.

In San Diego?

Yeah, and my parents and my brother and everybody have always gotten involved in school districts and whatever.

So it was instilled in you as a child that volunteering was important?

Yeah, that, and I'm a member of AA. I was told when I was really early in sobriety to do a good deed everyday and not get caught.

How long have you been sober?

22 years.

That's really incredible. Congratulations.

Yeah.

Seriously, that takes a lot of fortitude.

It was either that or die. I really didn't have much choice. You either get sober or die.

And so there becomes a point where you just know...

Yeah, I woke up one day and I knew that day I had to quit or I was gonna die, period. I got sober when I was 22 years old.

You weren't drinking that long then?

I didn't say that.

When did you start drinking?

The first drink I ever had I was seven. It was more drugs in the early years and then more and more drinking as it became more and more legal.

In your teen years?

Yeah.

How many calls do you go on in a year?

It's actually variable. It's been fairly quiet, but I missed one this last Saturday. The past couple months have been unusually quiet [Nov-Jan.].

Do you have an idea of how many calls you might go on in a year?

Usually one or two a month.

What percentage of your calls are medical related and what percentage are fire related?

Fire related's pretty low. Medical and traffic accidents are by far the greatest, probably 70-80 percent.

Last year you mentioned that you and another firefighter responded to trees down on Hwy 1 after a big storm. Do you do a lot of tree clearing?

Yeah, during the winter we get called out for it.

Are there any calls that stand out in your mind as unforgettable, incredibly successful, the kind that make you proud of the department's response? Or maybe they are all like that!

I think they're all like that. We try to be—even though we're volunteers—as professional as possible. Because we know that we're wearing that uniform and that shirt that says who we are. We don't want to look badly to anybody, either to other professionals who are coming over here or whatever. So, yeah, I can't think of any that stands out that I'm any prouder of than just doing it every time.

And lastly, why do you volunteer?

Just to give something back that was so freely given to me.

What was freely given to you?

I don't know, just help. Whenever I ask for help in this community, it's always just given to me. So I was asked to do my share in return so that's what I do. 🐾®

Bicycle/vehicle accident at Milepost 9. Biker transported to hospital.

November 23, 12:45 pm

Highway 1

Motorcycle down. Driver treated at scene.

December 6, 12:30 am

Highway 1

Vehicle rolled over above Green Gulch Farm.

December 11, 11 am

Muir Beach

Medical response Pacific Way.

January 3, 3:45 pm

Highway 1

Head-on collision between car and park ranger vehicle north of Slide Ranch.

MUIR BEACH QUILTERS



The 36th Annual Quilters Holiday Arts Fair

By Laurie Piel

Photographs by Linda Lotriet and Laurie Piel

The 2008 Quilters Holiday Arts Fair was a resounding success and a good time was had by all. Once again our neighbors pitched in and offered their time and efforts to make the fair a success. Volunteers shepherded the shuttle, Café Q, bar, buffet, cashier booth, junior artisans, and Gingerbread Attic through the onslaught of approximately 500 people over two days. Everyone worked hard and thanks to the efforts of the community, the fair generated “more money than ever and brought in a profit of just under \$7,000,” said Fair Coordinator Kathy Sward.

Even before the physical setup begins, Muir Beachers were working behind the scenes. The Quilters gear up many months before the crowds show up. They delegate all of the various responsibilities and tap the expertise of people like Steve Kopp who this year chose the fabulous wines to stock the bar. The main setup began after Bistro on Wednesday. Our trusty team of guys and gals dove in and up to the rafters preparing the Great Room for the main event. The beams were scrubbed clean awaiting the quilts, the panels were assembled, and by Friday the artists arrived bringing their array of beautiful things to tempt the public.

David Piel volunteered to count the attendees and discovered some interesting information. There were approximately one third more people on Saturday and people arrived earlier on

Saturday than on Sunday. Since this is the first year of such a study, we'll see if the pattern repeats itself next year.

From pottery and ceramics to food and jewelry, the fair celebrated the many arts and crafts of not only Muir Beachers but the creative visions of artists around the bay. We were thrilled to have many of our artists return this year as well as some wonderful newcomers. Discovering the hidden talents of our neighbors, such as Brad Eigsti, make the fair very special to our community. We're hoping to add some new artists next year in such mediums as textiles, clothing, lingerie, sculpture and others we haven even thought of. So if any one knows of anyone who might be interested in submitting their work for next year, please let us know or ask them to contact Judith Yamamoto at: judithyamamoto@earthlink.net or Kathy Sward at: kathylovesquilts@yahoo.com.

So, if you missed the fair this year, mark your calendars for Dec. 5th & 6th 2009 and see you there!



Judith Yamamoto and Kathy Sward discuss the business of the fair.



Leslie Riehl and Kathy Sward hang the quilts that decorate the rafters.



Pam McCosker and Kathy Sward choose the quilts for the rafters.



MBVFD Incident Log

Compiled by Paul Jeschke

September 21, 1:00 pm

Muir Woods

Visitor not feeling well. Transported to Marin General Hospital.

September 24, 1:00 pm

Shoreline Highway

4 ½ year-old child suffered nosebleed. Transported privately for medical attention.

October 12, 3:30 pm

Muir Woods

Hiker injured on Fern Creek Trail.

November 15, 12:30 pm

Highway 1

MUIR BEACH QUILTERS



The Beachcomber Booth under construction by its indefatigable editor, Linda Gibbs.



Michael Kaufman, Tayeko Kaufman, and Joey Groneman make the Garden Club booth a tempting Destination.



As a new fair artist, Diana Lerwick got there early to set up her booth.



Deb Allen, Pam Barlow, KT Broomhead (owner/chef of Katy's Kitchen), and Peter Asmus prepare for the onslaught of hungry shoppers.



Tiana Vincent-Pearlman leads the way to Café Q.



Janice Kubota, Leslie Riehl, and Melissa Lasky are ready, willing, and able in the Cashier's Booth.



David Piel, braving the chill, creates the first census of the Fair.



Maxx Moore hosts the setup of the Holiday Decoration Extravaganza table.

MUIR BEACH QUILTERS



Newly discovered talent, Brad Eigsti proudly waits for the next customer.



Charlene Modena demonstrates the correct way to tie a scarf on a giraffe.



Pam Barlow decides whether or not to heed the siren call of KT's incredible double chocolate truffles.



The Collier clan, Aran, Skye, and Lucca, enjoy a breather from family shopping.



Nina Vincent's hats and her own beautiful jewelry flank new fair artist Diana Lerwick caught in a pensive moment.



The master bartender himself, Steve Shaffer, hints at the glories that await in his apple cider and brandy very potent potable.



John John Sward hanging out at the fair.

MUIR BEACH QUILTERS



A picture is worth a thousand words... and Harvey Pearlman's says it all.



Lonna Richmond celebrates the joy of KP duty in KT's kitchen.



Matt Silva, Felipe Passalacqua, and Vicki Longoria man the booths with the best view of the fair.



Momo and Omi Yamamoto bring the Yamamoto family involvement with the fair to three generations.



Pam and Bruce Barlow take a working break from the kitchen.



Harvey Pearlman and John John Sward hold down the fort at the bar.

MUIR BEACH QUILTERS



Suzanne Wynn holds her prized possession... Arlene Robertson's rum cake.



Steve Kopp and girlfriend, Colleen, contemplate their purchases.



Vicki Longoria hugs a new friend found at the fair, one of Tayeko Kaufman's Golly Dolls.



Lainie Johnston, Pam Barlow, and KT Broomhead enjoy a quiet moment over KT's delicious food as the day winds down.



Terry Onorato and David Piel restore the antique table to its traditional home.



A very tired crew relaxes at the end-of-the-day potluck dinner.



District Manager's Report
January 2009
By Maury Ostroff

Over the past few months I've been steadily culling the amount of MBCSD paperwork and other material that has accumulated over the years. I have kept all of the historical CSD Meeting packets and minutes, along with other documents of particular interest. I've also found some interesting artifacts, such as the original 5x8 index cards that Hazel Melo used to keep track of the water billing. (Today it is all kept in the computer, with backups.) In organizing the minutes by date, I was able to compile the accompanying list of MBCSD Board Members and Employees who have worked for the Muir Beach CSD over the years. I haven't finished going through all of the boxes yet, and there are some gaps. If anyone can give me any information on the missing years, I think it would be most interesting in order to maintain our history.

Two things stand out in the list: (1) the number of people who have taken their turn at public service; and (2) the names that keep appearing over a span of 20 or even 30 years.

The third thing that comes to mind is wondering what names will be on this list 5 or 10 years from now? Will it be people who have lived here for years but have finally found the time or interest to serve on the board? Will it be people who have recently moved in to Muir Beach, or will it be completely new residents who haven't moved here yet? Time and shifting demographics will tell the story.

Needless to say, Muir Beach as we know it today would be a very different place, and might not even exist, if many people over the years haven't stepped up and put in a lot of work to make it happen. Things we take for granted, like the water system, the fire department, and our community center are the result of a lot of determined effort, almost entirely by unpaid volunteers. And I can assure you that no one is getting rich from being one of the compensated employees either.

Not everything in the past had gone smoothly and without conflict either. I have also found a set of old audio tapes from a time when CSD Meetings were recorded and literal transcripts of meetings were typed into the minutes, complete with pauses, "umms," and other utterances. I have heard that this was done because some people felt they were misquoted in the minutes, so tapes were made as evidence. Some of these exchanges are painful to read, with accusations and counter-accusations, personal attacks, etc. Such is public life. All I can say is that from what I can tell, things are nowhere near what they've been on occasion in the past and for the most part we have quite a bit of fun and a light-hearted touch at today's CSD meetings.

I have also noted over the years the rise and fall of various committees, sub-committees, and other groups of people coming together to get things done, or perhaps to just have fun and enjoy each other's company. For the most part, these have served a valuable purpose. At other times, there has been the potential for energy to be diverted to questions of "turf" and issues of power and control, as people got frustrated with their perceptions of how things were, or more frequently, weren't, being done.

Bottom line, we are one team. The CSD Board of Directors has the power to set policy over a specified set of commonly-owned assets and responsibilities, to hire and to appoint people to carry out the responsibilities of maintaining and developing those assets, and that the Board is ultimately accountable to the voters of Muir Beach via periodic elections. It is imperative that any actions or decisions which affect publicly owned property or functions of the CSD be brought before the Board and discussed in public before any decisions are made or actions taken. Employees and others appointed by the Board are accountable to the Board for their actions, and in turn the Board is accountable to the public and can be voted out.

Of course, there is a balance, and it does take a village. There are many people who contribute to the community, either individually or as part of other organizations which donate their time and efforts. The point is that the CSD serves a necessary oversight function to protect the public interest, and to ensure that things are done legally with appropriate controls, and with proper public disclosure.

If your name appears on the historical roster of CSD Board members and staff, then all of us owe you heartfelt thanks and appreciation. To those of you who have not taken a formal position with the CSD, but have pitched in over the years in other ways, attended CSD Meetings, or otherwise have helped make Muir Beach the special place that it is, then our thanks go out to you as well. To everyone else, don't be a stranger! Come to a meeting, ask any question, eat a cookie, and don't feel obligated to volunteer, unless of course you find you want to.

DATE	READINGS	CU. FT. USED	CHARGE	PREV. BAL. \$	BILL	DATE PD. & Check #	SPAD	BALANCE
JULY 1993	4353	270	10.50	0	10.50			10.50
AUG.	4613	260	10.50	10.50	31.00			21.00
SEPT.	4907	294	10.50	21.00	31.50			31.50
OCT.	5108	201	10.50	31.50	42.00	6865 11/20	412.00	—
NOV.	5367	259	10.50	0	10.50	0928 1/07	16.50	—
DEC 1993	5572	205	10.50	0	10.50	1/11	10.50	
FEB.								
MARCH								
APRIL								
MAY								
JUNE								

Example of water billing records maintained by Hazel Melo in 1993. Meter readings and billing amounts were calculated by hand, and duly recorded on 5" x 8" index cards.

Muir Beach Community Services District
History of Directors, Officers and Managers

2008: Board Members: Dan Fitzpatrick, Mary Daniel Hobson, Peter Rudnick, Steve Shaffer, Shere Stoddard
District Manager: Maury Ostroff
Deputy District Manager: Leighton Hills
District Secretary-Treasurer: Sharry Mullin
Water Manager: Harvey Pearlman
Fire Chief: John-John Sward

2007: Board Members: Mary Daniel Hobson, Bob Jacobs, Maury Ostroff, Peter Rudnick, Steve Shaffer
District Manager: Leighton Hills
District Secretary-Treasurer: Sharry Mullin
Water Manager: Harvey Pearlman
Fire Chief: John-John Sward

2006: Board Members: Mary Daniel Hobson, Deborah Kamradt, Maury Ostroff, Peter Rudnick, Steve Shaffer
District Manager: Leighton Hills
District Secretary-Treasurer: Sharry Mullin
Water Manager: Harvey Pearlman
Fire Chief: John-John Sward

2004-2005: Board Members: Leighton Hills, Deborah Kamradt, Maury Ostroff, Peter Rudnick, Steve Shaffer
District Manager: Donovan MacFarlane
District Secretary-Treasurer: Sharry Mullin
Water Manager: Harvey Pearlman
Fire Chief: John-John Sward

2002-2003: Board Members: Leighton Hills, Deborah Kamradt, Maury Ostroff, Peter Rudnick, Steve Shaffer
District Manager: Donovan MacFarlane
Water Manager: Harvey Pearlman
Fire Chief: John-John Sward

2001: Board Members: Deborah Kamradt, Erin Pinto, Peter Rudnick, Matthew Schiffries, Steve Shaffer
General Manager: Donovan MacFarlane
Water Manager: Harvey Pearlman
Fire Chief: Mike Moore. June 2001: John-John Sward becomes Fire Chief.

1997-2000: Board Members: Deborah Kamradt, Erin Pinto, Peter Rudnick, Matthew Schiffries, Steve Shaffer
General Manager: Donovan MacFarlane
Water Manager: Harvey Pearlman
Fire Chief: Mike Moore

1996: Board Members: Deborah Kamradt, Erin Pinto, Peter Rudnick, Steve Shaffer, Nancy Wolf Lee
General Manager: Donovan MacFarlane
Water Manager: Harvey Pearlman
Fire Chief: Mike Moore

1995: Board Members: Dale Hopkins, Erin Pinto, Peter Rudnick, Steve Shaffer, Nancy Wolf Lee
General Manager: Donovan MacFarlane
Water Manager: Harvey Pearlman
Fire Chief: Bill Farkas

1994: Board Members: Dale Hopkins, Erin Pinto, Peter Rudnick, Steve Shaffer, Nancy Wolf Lee
District Secretary: Hazel Melo
General Manager: Donovan MacFarlane
Water Manager: Henry Hyde, Harvey Pearlman
Fire Chief: Bill Farkas

1993: Board Members: Robin Collier, Erin Pinto, Nancy Wolf Lee, Judith Yamamoto
District Secretary: Hazel Melo
General Manager: Donovan MacFarlane
Water Manager: Henry Hyde
Maintenance Manager: Harvey Pearlman
Fire Chief: Bill Farkas

1991-1992: Board Members: Robin Collier, Hank Maiden, Erin Pinto, Nancy Wolf Lee, Judith Yamamoto
District Secretary: Hazel Melo
Recording Secretary: Linda Moore
General Manager: Donovan MacFarlane
Water Manager: Henry Hyde
Maintenance Manager: Harvey Pearlman
Fire Chief: Bill Farkas

1990: Board Members: Gordon Bennett, Erin Pinto, Steve Shaffer, Jonathan Teague, Judith Yamamoto
District Secretary: Hazel Melo
Recording Secretary: Linda Moore
General Manager: Donovan MacFarlane
Water Manager: Henry Hyde
Water and Maintenance Manager: Regan McNeill?
Fire Chief: John-John Sward

1989: Board Members: David Brandt, Warren Myers, Ailish Schutz, Steve Shaffer, Leba Wine
District Secretary: Hazel Melo
Water Manager: Jim Land, John Keane

1987: Board Members: Francis Coney, Warren Myers, Ailish Schutz, Steve Shaffer, Leba Wine.
District Secretary: Hazel Melo
Contract Manager: John-John Sward

1983: Board Members: Barbara Burke, Robin Collier, Warren Myers, John Nelson, Martha Freebairn-Smith
District Secretary: Hazel Melo
Manager: Click Pickens
Fire Chief: John-John Sward

1982: Board Members: Barbara Burke, Martha Freebairn-Smith
District Secretary: Hazel Melo
Manager: Click Pickens
Fire Chief: John-John Sward

1980-1981: Board Members: Gary Friedman, Warren Myers, Barbara Rohan, Martha Freebairn-Smith, Janet Stump
District Secretary: Hazel Melo
Manager: Click Pickens
Fire Chief: John-John Sward

Community Center Update

By Laurie Piel

By the time you read this, the new year will be well into its first quarter. The last quarter of 2008 was quite full at the Community Center. Weddings, birthdays, meetings, retreats, and community celebrations filled the Great Room with laughter, music, and the chance to look at life from different perspectives. It truly is a Community Center with tai-chi classes, CSD meetings, Club dinners, pot luck parties, Day of the Dead, Halloween, New Year's celebrations, and Bistro every Wednesday, just to name a few.

With expectations of a cold and wet winter season, the reservations at the Center are down as usual until spring. Although we love the beautiful dry weather we are having, we know we need the rain and are looking forward to hunkering down around the big fireplace on a cold and rainy Wednesday Bistro morning. Bistro, for those of you who haven't dropped in to enjoy the fruits of Nancy Knox and Lonna Richmond's labor, are really missing something. Since I first attended a Bistro a year and a half ago, the attendance has risen, and great fun is had by all of the adults and kids munching on the freshly-baked scones and sharing the news of the week.

The Day of the Dead party was another great success as ever shepherded by Harvey Pearlman and Nina Vincent. Nina also hosts the children's annual Halloween Party. Nina barely had time to breathe with those dates being back to back this year.

Elections were held at the Center, and what an election it was. History was made and everyone, no matter whom they voted for, shared in the pride of process in our own community election site overseen by Nancy Knox and Kathy Sward.

We were also one of four sites that hosted a Marin County Local Coastal Program Update Public Workshop. It was not



New lights on the deck create a festive glow.

well publicized and therefore not well attended. There were so few people in attendance that the leader of the meeting, Jack Liebster, stated that they would return and make sure that the new date was well publicized. See separate article on page 10.

The Quilters Fair was a great success generating more money than ever for the good deeds that the Quilters sponsor every year through their Vision Project, as well as their donations towards improvements at the Center. The current improvement, the storage shed, is well on its way to being finished, thanks to a donor who wishes to remain anonymous. I find it hard to call it a shed, for it is a beautiful addition to the Center and its grounds. With plans and execution overseen by Tony Moore, incredible stonework by the master stonemason John John Sward, and their teams of able assistants, a building worthy of this community has been erected to store the many tables, chairs, and oversized artifacts that the Center has accumulated over the years. The shed also has separate rooms for disaster supplies and the Garden Club. The Garden Club is planning on "sprucing" up the area around the new structure. There are beautiful views to be enjoyed from the stone bench in the front and little area in the back, come and see for yourself.

On the subject of improvements, there is a new, safe, strong, and much needed handrail on the steps leading down from Seacape. The Center has long been plagued by electrical problems, and for quite a few months had no power on the deck side of the Great Room. Paul Brunner donated his time and expertise to fix the problem, thank you so much! District Manager Maury Ostroff is planning an electrical update of the whole building in the near future, thank you Maury. Speaking of lights, the twinkle lights in the Great Room have all been replaced with new ones, and a deck full of new lights have been donated by a friend of ours (one of the grooms that got married at the Center). We finally have some light on the deck so lovely evenings can be enjoyed under the lights as well as under the stars. And lastly, the CSD has purchased eight new tables. Some of the old tables will be donated to Slide Ranch.

In January, the Garden Club had their annual dinner, and there was an inauguration party January 20th hosted by Dan Fitzpatrick and Tim Crosby. Perhaps this will be the beginning of a tradition celebrating our democracy every four years. Also in January, Erin Pinto hosted a vegan potluck party. As far as I know this is the first one we've had. Here's to many more! February brought us the annual BBQ Kickoff Dinner. If you haven't added your name to the list of volunteers helping to make the BBQ another fabulous success and moneymaker for our tireless Fire Department, now's the time.

The Facilitator Program is just getting underway. We will be having our first training session in February for those of you



Our new storage shed.

who let us know you wanted to be part of the Program.

Last year we had an impromptu feast that was held with the contents of warming freezers and refrigerators after three days of the blackout. With most phones needing power to work, it was hard to let people know about the gathering. This year, should we experience another blackout (I hope not), let's all plan on convening at the Center on the third evening to share the bounty of our homes and hearts with the best neighbors you'll ever have. And, of course, we might be able to lean on Chris Gove for his incredible carne asada again.

I am still collecting back copies of the *Beachcomber* in the hopes of having a central place for people to have access for historical study. The full database project is still a dream of Bryce Browning and me.

Just a reminder, if anyone has any pictures from events at the Center, it would be great if you could pass them



New handrail at the MBCC.



Inside the unfinished new shed.

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!

Photographs by Laurie Piel

REAL ESTATE

Real Estate News Bits & More

By Debra Allen, Realtor

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2008 turned out to be an extremely busy real estate year for me and most agents that I know in Marin County, despite the stock market slide in the fall. What ended up happening after September was that buyers who had been waiting for months and years, returned to the real estate market ready for deals and getting them! Suddenly, everyone wanted property and even real estate agents were buying; and some listings were receiving multiple offers just like the old days (the ones that were priced low, that is). The bank-owned homes that hit the market I'm sure made it appear as though all of the sale prices in Marin had declined, but that number always changes each month depending on what types of homes sell (in any market), and really isn't a

good indicator of anything, in my opinion, except that in a month or two someone somewhere got a good buy.

The end of 2008 was not a good time to sell for those sellers who purchased within the last couple of years, however, as they generally were not getting their money back. But for many years those sellers probably had also benefited from making large profits on other home sales, so really things were just evening out. Some sellers didn't appreciate all the "bottom feeder" type of buyers who were out there and opted to remove their homes from the market and rent them instead. Some buyers may have missed out completely by saying that they were going to wait for things to get worse, as I have a



Jack Hadley and daughter Memory Hadley in front of 285 Sunset Way

feeling that they may wait themselves right into an expensive market—as the ones that were asking were the ones that were getting!

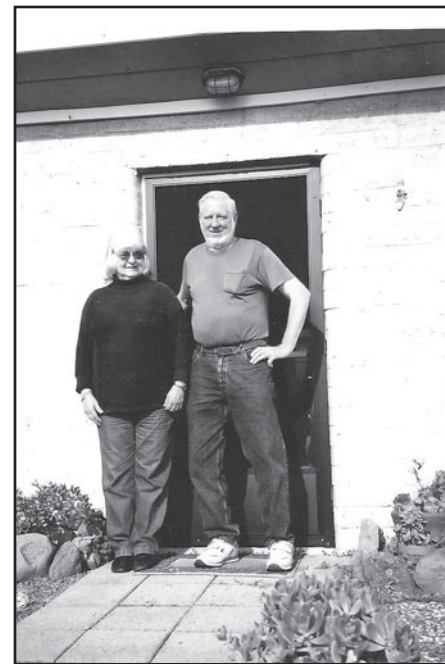
During this time, I also noticed a surge of activity of listings that were not making it to MLS (the Multiple Listing Service). I belong to a "Top Agent" network in Marin (last time I checked I was ranked agent number 30 in the County), which handles emails that market properties that are not on MLS. The emails were flying in at a fantastic rate. (We agents have to let the Board of Realtors know that we've taken a listing but are excluding it from MLS.) I'm not sure all of the reasons why some sellers were hesitating to let their homes go on MLS, as it can be a fantastic marketing tool (and helps get the word out internationally), but using "Top Agent" seems to be a way to test the market without being so final and public, I suppose. Also, with MLS there is a DOM meter (days on the market) which chases each listing, and some buyers use it to claim that the listing is "old" and therefore "not worth what it's listed for." Some sellers don't want to be bothered by hearing buyers' reasons for their list prices being "high," and retain more control if the home's not on the open market and off of MLS (buyers tend to be more respectful of sellers in this case). Muir Beach homes, just like the rest of Marin, sell both on MLS and off market, it all depends on the seller's wishes.

So, the bank owned prices (which seem to be about one-half to three quarters of what the house is probably worth) have really turned our buyers into deal-demanders, and some normal sellers don't appreciate this new desire that buyers have. But, thanks to these bank-owned homes, some very wonderful buyers who couldn't have bought before are now homeowners. For example, I recently sold a home in Mill Valley to a lovely first-time buyer couple and their baby for under \$400,000, which would have been unheard of even a year ago had this bank-owned opportunity not come about. A sad ending for

some creates a very nice beginning for others!

In 2008 I sold homes all over Marin, but was most honored to sell two Muir Beach homes that had belonged to the families of original owners, the Martins at 130 Sunset and Mr. Hadley and his daughter Memory at 285 Sunset. They each had some neat old Muir Beach stories to tell me, like Jack Martin riding a dune buggy up in the Seacape area before there were homes there, and Memory Hadley riding her horse on Little Beach and eating the wild strawberries that she said were all over the property, and the crow that hung around during the construction (hence the name "Hadley's Crow's Nest"). I've sold other original Muir Beachers' homes before, and I always feel extra grateful being able to introduce new folks to this unique place and having the sellers feel good about their buyers! I'm sure for these types of sellers, selling is bittersweet, and I hope you've welcomed these buyers and all the rest of the newcomers that moved to Muir Beach in 2008!

For 2009, remember that loan rates are great, loans and escrows may take longer (since loan brokers and lenders are busy due to those great rates), appraisers are being very careful (since no one has an easy idea of price anymore), and there are many homes for sale on MLS and in other places (so ask your agent to find them for you). And don't spend too much effort being fearful, as it's a new time, a new year, and everything works out in the end!



Jack and Judy Martin in front of 130 Sunset Way

(Please check out the 2009 events page on www.muirbeach.com, and let me know if you'd like something added. And be sure to contact me if you've got anything to donate for a MBVFD raffle prize; it's coming up sooner than we know!)

Photographs by Debra Allen



The Critter Report: Step by Step

By Dave MacKenzie

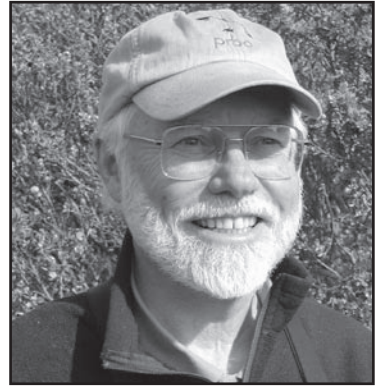
When the rains come at last (and let's hope they keep coming!), flooding and mud can slow things down in Muir Beach. The wet season is a great time for the naturalist, however, since the nighttime parade of animals finally comes into view.

The art and science of wildlife tracking is obviously very ancient and is still practiced by hunters and nature fans. Here in the Muir Beach area we have many opportunities for detecting which of our various interesting critters have recently passed by on our favorite trail.

One of the best local tracking areas is the Levee Trail, which goes from the Redwood Creek bridge on Pacific Way, following the creek on the east side all the way around past the cattail marsh (aka "Big Lagoon") and continuing to the footbridge over the creek (the existing trail to the beach). The Redwood Creek Restoration at Muir Beach—formerly known as "The Wetland and Creek Restoration at Big Lagoon, Muir Beach", or the "Big Lagoon Project"—is scheduled to remove the Levee Trail in the 2009-2010 timeframe, but hopefully we can find new tracking spots. What I like about the Levee Trail is that it gets muddy! What better surface to see animal tracks than nice gooey mud? (With snow a close second.) Unfortunately, concerns over downstream siltation and visitor satisfaction lead our Federal and State park agencies to "improve" trails with gravel and other "clean" surfaces. So we trackers lose out a bit!

If you can get to the Levee Trail the morning after a rainy day, you will probably see many well-defined tracks. Raccoon, with its characteristic 5-toed paw print, is probably the most common track, with the parentheses-shaped Mule Deer tracks second. With luck, you may see Bobcat tracks, with their small toes and characteristic double-front, triple-back bumped pads.

Study the tracks carefully, because there may be many other critters which have passed by in the night. River Otter, Coyote, Rough-Skinned Newt, and Great-Blue Heron are possible. How can we tell who's who? The classic reference on tracks (available at all good book stores or Amazon.com) is the *Peterson Guide to Animal Tracks*, by



Dave MacKenzie has been contributing nature articles to the *Beachcomber* for 13 years, which is when he and his wife Bonnie moved to Muir Beach. Dave does engineering consulting from his home office, but also spends a lot of time searching the Redwood Creek Watershed for interesting critters. His unfulfilled desire is to see and photograph a mountain lion in the wild. At this point he has only seen tracks, kills, pets and photos. Help him out with timely reports and primed cell phone cameras! Photograph by Bonnie MacKenzie

Olas Murie. I would also recommend *The Laws Field Guide to the Sierra Nevada*, since it covers so well many of our local species. Learning to track is an adventure, and with a bit of luck you may follow the ultimate track: to the critter itself!

Perhaps my best and luckiest tracking was a few years ago when I was riding my mountain bike (slowly) up the Middle Green Gulch Trail. I realized I was following very fresh Bobcat tracks in the muddy trail. Suddenly the tracks seemed to disappear off the narrow single-track and I was pondering which way the Bobcat went. I got off my bike and stared into the Coyote Brush, and there was a small Bobcat staring sheepishly at me from a tunnel in the brush not 15 feet away. Wow! I tracked all the way to the critter!

There are many other signs that critters have passed by and they are also described in the tracking books. Murie gives the real "poop" on poop, or scat, which is an excellent clue to critters. Bobcat scat, for example, breaks into sections like a Tootsie Roll; whereas Coyote scat (also common around Muir Beach) is broken into pointy-ended sections. Bobcat scat also usually contains lots of small bones of the California Voles they love to eat whole; Coyote scat often consists only of long Brush Rabbit fur; the Coyotes pick around the bones of the larger animals, but also sometimes swallow voles whole. By the way, the best way to test scat to see if it comes from a predator is to get down on the trail and sniff it on the ground. Predator scat has a characteristic "meaty" smell, whereas with herbivores (like deer or rabbits), there's pretty much no odor. If you want to keep a bit of proper dignity while doing this, you can pick up the scat with a stick to sniff, but down low to the ground is always better. Watch a dog—they keep their noses close to the



Bobcat



Bobcat



Raccoon



Raccoon

ground. By the way, dog poop smells horrible, as you may already know; wild predators are much more pleasant!

Pet dogs, humans, horses, mountain bikes, and other human-caused trail damage can really mess up tracks. Dog tracks, in particular, look a lot like Coyote tracks. Those who walk their dogs illegally on trails make it tough for us trackers! Dogs are legal on the Levee Trail, so that's one reason to get there early.



Coyote



Coyote

When the rains are over, and the dryness of summer sets in, tracking can still be good if you can find a dusty spot in a trail. A bit of wind erases tracks here, so if you find a clear one it must be very fresh!

Tracks in mud or dust can be preserved with photos, of course (put a measurable object alongside for later study of the print), or better with a bit of Plaster-of-Paris. Buy an inexpensive box of the plaster at the hardware store, make a 2" wide by 6" diameter cardboard ring, and with a water bottle and a ziplock bag you can make a soupy plaster mix right on the trail which will set up in the track in about 15 minutes. My two personal favorite casts are of a Bobcat from Muir Beach and a wild pig from the Santa Cruz area. Kids love this project!

So get out between the rains, tiptoe through the mud and check for those nighttime critters which you usually don't see, but we know are there!

Track sketches and Egret sketch by Dave Mackenzie

I Want To Paint Everything I See

By Joy Perrin

Every night as my little dog and I drive back over the hill to Muir Beach, waves of gratitude rise up in me and I roll down my windows and take in the splendor of the stars and moon, the singing frogs, or even the fog! Most days we've played several gigs within a hundred miles, always scouting out plein air watercolor locations in our travels. I've become a pretty prolific painter since moving to California in 2003. After forty years of having to put art 'on the back burner', I have a voracious appetite for painting. Northern California's so amazingly beautiful. More often than not, at day's end, we'll pull off the road, trek up into the weeds, set up and paint until last light. I want to paint everything I see.

I was originally going to be an artist, a painter. I had attended University of Kansas Midwestern Music and Art Camp during high school, winning numerous awards in 1968. I was also thrilled to record my first LP there that summer. I dreamt of attending University of Kansas to study art after high school in St. Joseph, MO. Musically, I was a bit of a hometown celebrity playing for social clubs, coffeehouses, and bandshell concerts since about age 12. Born in Iowa and raised in Missouri and having had plenty of that relentless freezing Midwestern weather and upbringing, I couldn't wait to get out of there.

When family problems dashed my University dreams, I took off with fellow hippies to Columbia, MO, playing coffeehouses, anti-war demonstrations, and doing freelance art. After a bit of floundering, I was presented

with an opportunity to make a living at music. Cliff Fredericksen of St. Louis took me on the road playing bass, and launched me into an amazingly well-rounded education in American popular music.

One band led to another, and years flowed together as I toured the Midwest, the South, and East Coast playing everything from Ramada Inns in the Midwest, to Blues/Country Music bars, roadhouses, and concert halls around the South and East. I lived in (and worked out of) St. Louis, Kalamazoo, Sperryville, Charlotte, and Richmond before landing in Manhattan in 1984.

I lived in Manhattan 16 years, playing rock, cabaret, weddings, swing, funk, bluegrass, jazz, and blues. I've been in about 50 bands! To make a living as a musician in Manhattan, if you're not 'schooled', and in an orchestra pit, you either wait tables or get very versatile, playing in five or six bands at the same time, like me. I was pretty well known as a bass-playing blues singer. Along the way I've played with greats like Tracy Nelson, Bo Diddley, John Lee Hooker, John Prine, Ink Spots, Drifters, Maurice Williams, Jimmy Spruill, and more.

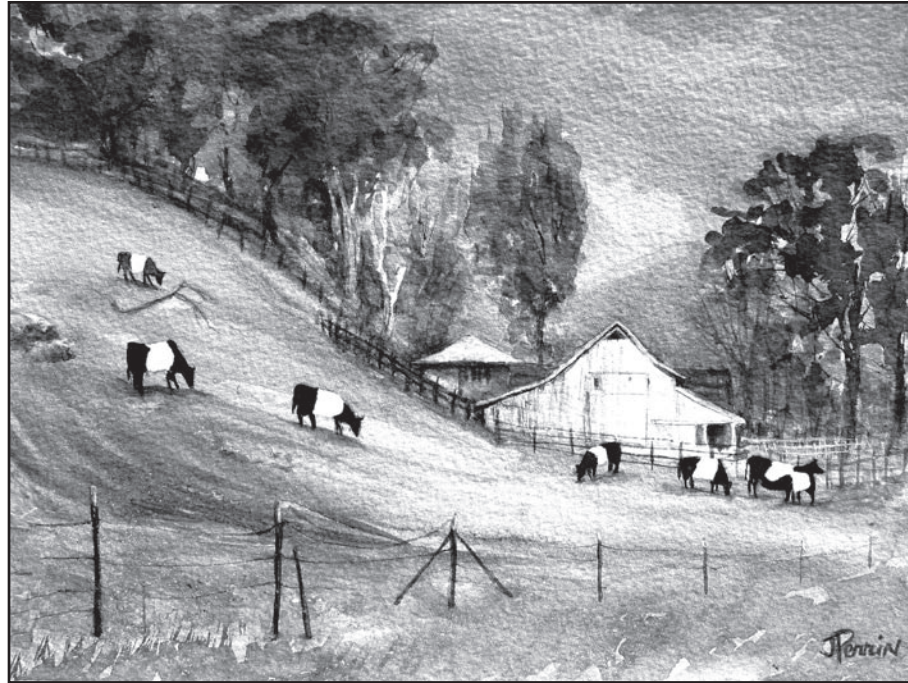
Fortuitously, as nightclubs bit the dust, I was reinventing myself as a 'music specialist for seniors'/one-person-band, switching back to guitar. I met this great guy, Lee Perry Gross, who booked me all over the place. I learned this huge repertoire of older twentieth-century music. I learned to sing in eight languages (Website: musicforseniors.com). It was scary to leave



Phoebe Posing, watercolor, 11" x 14"



Better Days, watercolor, 10 1/2" x 14 1/2"



Dutch Belties in Napa, watercolor, 7 1/2" x 10"

that 'sure thing' and start up from scratch here in California.

How'd I get here? I'd left Manhattan for Pelham Parkway in 2000. Reconnecting with nature, I don't think I'd seen the sky for 16 years! One night, while filling out a profile online, asked where I'd most like to live?, "Why not dream?", I thought, and wrote, "In the mountains, by the ocean." Within six months, after a whirlwind of circumstances, God plucked me up, depositing me here at Muir Beach! I hadn't even known a place like this existed. From the minute I arrived, I loved the light, peace and quiet, sparkling ocean, smell of the air, huge night sky...and the magical community.

My music business booming (I also play parties, Beachers!), I nature trek with pocket paints and Prairie Sue, my little Bee Terrier. I swim a mile or so three times a week. I finally feel like I have enough worthy paintings to begin exhibiting. I'm framing and preparing for my first one-person exhibit. I feel I owe myself an Artist's Coming Out party! Location TBA. You're all invited!

I love living in the serenity at Bernard's. I'm excited about my journey as an artist (see color images at www.joyperrin.com). There's so much to learn. The experience of painting outdoors quiets me and makes me feel connected to a Power greater than myself. It's



Joy and Prairie Sue and Mt Tamalpais



Mt Tamalpais from Sausalito, Autumn, watercolor, 12"x 15"

because of that Power, amidst 60 gigs a month, I'm able to arrange days off to paint! For me, communing with that Omnipresence is to exist Now...caught up in the moment, making conscious contact, letting the act of painting flow through me. That's an ecstatic experience for me. Talent is God's gift to us, and using that talent is our gift back to God. I'm having the time of my life. God is my booking agent. And also the Best Artist!

Photographs by Joy Perrin

If Women Hold Up Half the Sky

By Judith Yamamoto

"He was in the Navy?" Joe asked. Bailey's studio portrait took up a whole page in Sarah's family album. "Look at him, he's a baby."

"He wasn't very old when he went in. Let me see." Sarah leaned closer. "Wow! He is young!"

Bailey had always been so much older than she, and now, for the rest of her life, it was going to be all backwards.

She looked up at Joe. "It was World War II, he was maybe eighteen. The Navy put him through med school."

If women hold up half the sky, she figured it must be the part with all the memories. The back story, the way great air masses moved along the coast the summer Cousin Bailey died, fog blown along the sand dunes at Ocean Beach and into the city. Halfway down the block, the street signs disappeared, San Francisco forever losing itself.

Always, the wars that took the men away.

The women remembered the little details. Sarah could still see those cute shoes their first baby wore for almost a year. The way the soft leather curled over her tiny toes.

How the handle of Joe's longshore hook stuck out of his back pocket when he closed the door behind him. Cold, those mornings were.

More and more, the stuff no one talked about.

Sarah looked again at the portrait of Cousin Bailey in his sailor suit. The light bounced off the brown curls at the edge of his white sailor hat. Look at him, Mom had said. Such a good-looking boy, and so smart!

Aunt Lily, Bailey's mother, beamed.

The thin aunt said nothing.

They mustn't tempt fate any more than they already had. Knock on wood.

Once Mom told Sarah a story about a child in far away North Dakota. This child, Mom said, had walked from one farm to another, and the next day, following her footprints, were the footprints of a cougar.

Had that child been her mother? Sarah couldn't remember. Or maybe one of the aunts? A neighbor child?

Since Mom died, the stories were all falling apart.

If the babies had colds, Cousin Bailey would go out to his car and come back up the stairs with his black doctor's bag. He'd open the bag and take out a wide wooden stick. "Stick out your tongue and say 'Ahhh.'" He'd lay the stick on top of an outstretched tongue, bend over the small face looking up at him.

He was six feet, four inches tall, taller than

anyone else in the family.

The memories made the dead less dead.

"How come there're no pictures of Bailey's father? What happened to him?" Joe asked.

"He drowned," Sarah said. "He was sitting on the seawall down at the Marina, and he fell into the water."

"But how could that happen? It isn't that deep, is it?"

"Maybe he wasn't conscious when he fell in."

"That wall is only a couple of feet high."

"No one ever talked much about it. Aunt Lily told everyone he'd had a heart attack."

Joe looked at Sarah, his eyebrows going up.

"That was one story," Sarah said. "Bailey wasn't even born yet. His older brother, Rob, was six."

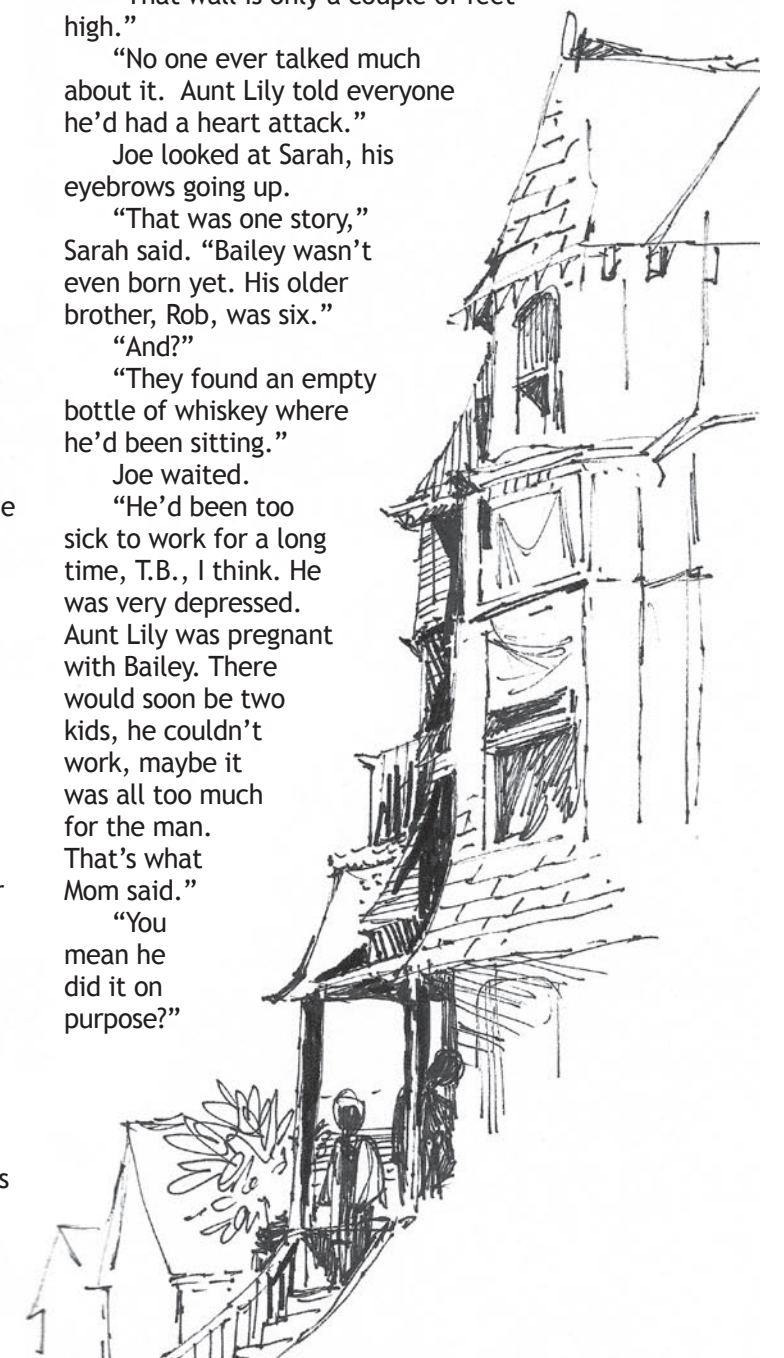
"And?"

"They found an empty bottle of whiskey where he'd been sitting."

Joe waited.

"He'd been too sick to work for a long time, T.B., I think. He was very depressed. Aunt Lily was pregnant with Bailey. There would soon be two kids, he couldn't work, maybe it was all too much for the man. That's what Mom said."

"You mean he did it on purpose?"



FICTION

“That’s what Mom told me. Suicide. But they were Catholics. Aunt Lily told everyone it was a heart attack.”

“Did Cousin Bailey know what happened to his father?” Joe asked.

“Not until he asked me.”

The fog made the street outside disappear into nothing, a nothing of light.

Joe turned to the window. Quiet for a moment, his voice matter-of-fact. “When did he ask?”

“When he was dying.”

A doctor in the family meant there was always a second opinion. He would come to the hospital, stand at the nursing station, look over the charts from his great height. Talk to the doctors. It had been like having a brilliant consultant stopping by to discuss your case, just having Bailey walk into your room.

Mom had been so proud of her nephew.

Aunt Lily and Mom talked together on the phone whenever Bailey did something wonderful. Then Mom called the thin aunt in North Dakota.

Graduation from medical school. Those years as a Navy doctor while he paid back his military obligations, sailing to hot storybook ports in the South Pacific.

The prestigious job at the university.

Teaching, research. The big grants, the pediatrics wing at the hospital named after him.

The thin aunt listened. She didn’t say much.

Sarah cleaned the house for a week when Bailey died. It was easier for her to not think when the vacuum cleaner roared out all the other sounds, even the ringing of the telephone.

The first call from him had come only two months before.

“I just got out of the hospital,” he said. “Pneumonia. I was in for five weeks.”

“Five weeks! How are you feeling?”

“Pretty weak. I’m hooked up to an oxygen tank most of the time. At least I’m back home.”

Silence. She waited, heard his breathing.

“I’ve been thinking about my mortality. Can you come over?” Breathing, catching his breath. “I’m photographing things I’m giving to people. Getting my will together. I want to get it all in order.”

“I’ll be over tomorrow,” she said. “Saturday.”

“Great.” Between every sentence, the heavy breathing. “You can cook my dinner. I’ve got people here all week. Nurses from the university on weekends. You know Dolores?”

“Of course.” Aunt Lily had wanted him to marry Dolores, or Aileen, or Sylvia. They were all devoted to him.

“Dolores can have an evening off.” His voice dragging a little. “Have you cooked in my kitchen since I remodeled it last year?”

She stopped at the store the next day, loaded up on salad greens, garlic and onions and cheeses, pasta, broccoli. What would make it a little more special? He was such a gourmet cook. When the kids were little she’d baked bread, and Julia Child’s *gateau a l’orange* for birthdays. Now, Trader Joe had great instant meals that came in boxes.

She hovered over the vegetable bins, picked out a fresh-looking bunch of arugula, poured pine nuts into a plastic bag.

There was a parking space right in front of his pink stucco house. The painters had called it terracotta when they painted it, he’d told her, and now look at it. Definitely pink.

A long flight of stairs led up to the grilled gate in front of the door. Another flight, inside the house, went up to the first floor. The house was built on a hillside, with a view of San Francisco Bay and huge container ships from China edging under the bridge.

Bailey stood at the top of the inside stairs, pushing buttons so she could get in.

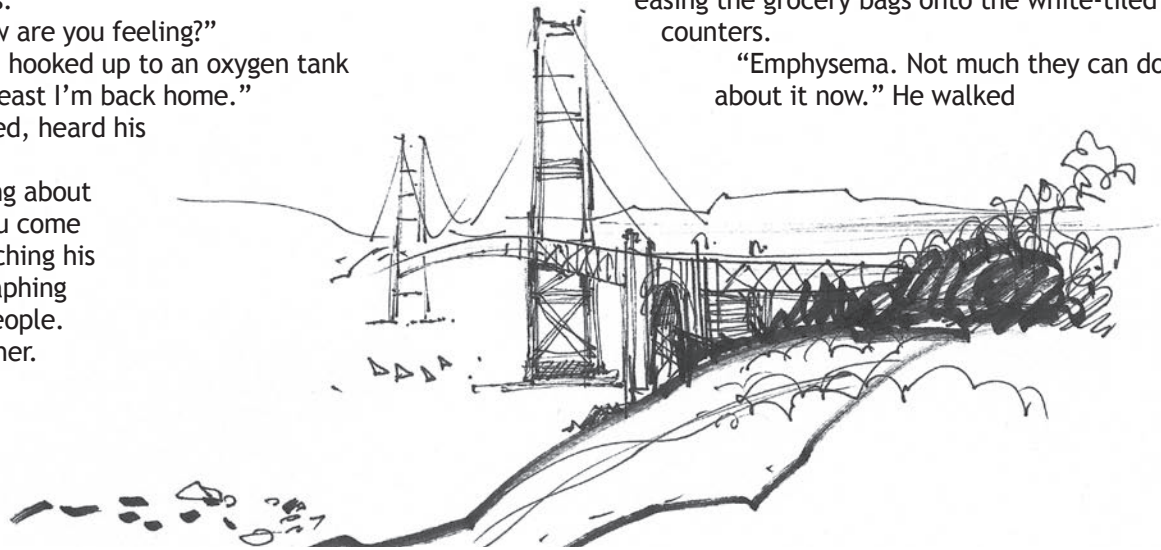
He was so thin.

Oxygen tubes shivered in his nostrils.

“Dump the groceries in the kitchen. Come on into my study.” His shirt moved up and down with each breath. “I want to show you what I’m giving you.”

“What’s wrong with you?” she asked, easing the grocery bags onto the white-tiled counters.

“Emphysema. Not much they can do about it now.” He walked



FICTION

unsteadily down a hall to his study and sat heavily in a leather chair. The camera was on the table. “These bowls... they were Lily’s.”

Green, with a pattern like shells curving up the outsides.

“Far out,” she almost whispered.

“Line them up on the coffee table. I’ll get a shot of them.” Bailey set the Polaroid on his lap while she put the three green-glazed mixing bowls next to each other, the biggest one in the back, the medium-sized and smallest ones in front. She remembered them from Aunt Lily’s neat kitchen, the smell of pot roast at Sunday dinners.

Bailey took pictures, and they looked at them sliding out of the camera. “The color’s not right,” he said. “But they’ll do.”

When they finally sat down to eat, Bailey was worn out.

“Did your mom ever talk to you about how my father died?” he asked.

“You don’t know?”

“I got a copy of his death certificate. It wasn’t an accident, was it?”

She told him everything she knew.

“He’s awfully sick,” Sarah told Joe that evening. Joe shook off his jacket. “What’s wrong with him?” “He says it’s emphysema.” “Yeah. And Bush won the election in 2000.”

On her next visit, Bailey asked Sarah about her mother. He wanted to talk about her mother’s last five years of sickness and pain. “What a disaster that was,” he said.

“Nothing anyone could do about it.”

“That nerve operation didn’t work either. You just wish those things would work.”

The operation had been Bailey’s idea. He’d found the surgeon with the hot new procedure. Looking back, that really wasn’t Bailey’s style.

Or maybe it was. One side of him was so careful, waiting for FDA approval of a drug even though it might take years.

The other side was always wanting to help. Keeping up with the latest studies in the medical journals. Talking to other doctors. Referring desperate women to the safest abortion clinic in Tijuana.

Explaining the operation to Mom the week before, the surgeon told her that if the cutting of nerve ganglia in her spine didn’t stop the pain, he had another operation he could do on her brain.

When she came out of the anesthesia, she’d looked at Sarah for a long minute, not moving.

The not moving was a bad sign.

“Well, I hear I’m going in for the brain operation now,” she’d said.

“Mom! What are you talking about?”

“I heard them,” Mom said.

It took a while for Sarah to sort out the morphine hallucinations from what the doctors had actually said. “No, Mom, I don’t think so. No one said anything about another operation.”

Mom was swathed in white sheets, in a white bed, in a white hospital room. “I’m cold,” she said.

Sarah got a blanket from the nurse.

White.

Sarah hadn’t told Bailey what Mom said.

What he wanted to talk about now was how Mom had died.

“What had she done, that time you found her?” Bailey sat back in the chair. “What happened?”

“She took every pill she could get her hands on.”

“So she was unconscious when you found her?”

Sarah wondered how much he really wanted to know. “Yes.” More than unconscious, she was so very far away.

“What did you do?”

“Called nine one one.” Telling Mom she was sorry, she had to. Telling Mom, over and over, Don’t worry, it’ll be all right.

Knowing Mom didn’t want to wake up again.

It had taken Sarah another three years to get out of Mom’s way, help her find a way to die.

Here was the good thing about Bailey dying. He didn’t do it until after his mother, Aunt Lily, had been dead for twenty years. He even managed to hold off until a year after Mom died.

But his older brother, Rob, was still alive. Married to Lillian. Christmas dinner was always at their house, because Lillian believed in family and in God.

“Have you talked to Rob lately?” Sarah asked.

“Not really. He’s been out of town a lot.” Bailey was sinking into the chair.

She looked at him.

“We don’t really talk much,” he said.

No one talked much. Bailey had been the beautiful son, the one Aunt Lily doted on. The one who was a cut-up all through school, who could drive a mother crazy with his questions.

The thin aunt didn’t dote. She had not been doted upon, being the lonely and the first-born child in their big family. The one told to watch the younger ones, the one who got married before she graduated high school. Had a baby at seventeen.

She told Sarah she’d turned away from God. “God on

our side?” she said. “I think not.”

It was Bailey who announced at the dinner table one night that what was going to wipe out the world was a mega virus. “No chance to get a vaccine together in time. We’re not even close to the technology.” Sarah’s daughter, Annie, was five that year. She put down her fork. “Are we going to die?” “No,” Sarah said. “Come on, Bailey, we’re eating. And we’re celebrating New Year’s Day.” Mom started passing second helpings around the table. That must have been twenty years earlier. Long before anyone had heard of AIDS.

All during the month of July Sarah wore an extra sweater. She was washing the breakfast dishes when the phone rang. “Sarah? This is Bailey’s friend, Dolores.” Sarah tightened her grip on the dish towel. “Bailey?” “He’s back in Saint Mary’s. Says he wants to see you.” “I’m on my way.” Bailey stretched almost from one end of the bed to the other, sidebars up. Two IV stands beside the bed. His skin was pulled tight over the bones of his face. He smiled when he saw her. “Sit here, on the bed, so I can look at you.” “What’s going on, Bailey?” “For one thing, I’ve got this IV hooked into my heart. Don’t worry, I’m not dead yet. I want to tell you something.” Sarah slid the sidebar down, sat near his knee. “I’ve got AIDS.” “Oh, no! I was afraid of that, I’m so sorry, I’m so sorry.” She stopped herself. “I’m babbling.” “It’s okay.” “It’s not.” “I’m going home next week. With this IV in me, at least for a while.”

The following week, Sarah called. Bailey didn’t pick up. Hell, she thought, as the message machine kicked in. “I’m coming over today, bringing some lunch with me,” she told the machine. An attendant buzzed her in when she rang the bell. He held Bailey’s arm, walked beside him down the hall. Even so, Bailey staggered at the kitchen door. The attendant slowly sat him down at the kitchen table. “The line fell out,” Bailey said. Sarah ran water into one of his bigger pots, put it on the stove.



“I’m going back to the hospital,” he said. “They’re going to put it back in.”

She poured cornmeal into the boiling water, stirring. She watched it bubble and thicken, finally added butter and grated cheese.

Nothing would ever fatten him up again.

She watched him take a bite, slowly chew. “Have you told Rob yet?”

“I told him I was having some problems with my stomach. . . Going to repaint the house, too.”

His eyes seem to be coming out of his face, even when he closed them.

“This is good polenta, Sarah. Look how much I ate.”

“I figured it would go down easily.”

He stared into space, grinding his teeth. “Four more days. Did I tell you I was going to repaint the house?”

“Yes.”

“Four more days, I go back to the hospital.”

Sarah carried their plates to the sink, ran cold water over them.

“Did I tell you I’m going back to the hospital next week, Sarah?”

“You did.”

“Can’t seem to remember much.”

The thin aunt had stayed on the farm. She’d gotten the sheriff to run off her first husband when he came home late from the Silver Penny bar in Burlington one too many times.

Her older daughter was sad, her younger daughter loved to dance. *Doing the best I can*, the thin aunt wrote to Sarah’s mom, before Sarah was born. Back when Mom had graduated from high school and left North Dakota. Mom had moved to Florida, a place she thought might be hot enough to burn away all the cold winters of her childhood.

Far enough to start over, a new life; make her own stories.

Are you all right down there? the thin aunt had written. *I’m sending you this picture from today’s Minot Daily News. They’re running stories about your part of the country, one of your famous hurricanes. Never saw anything like that up here.*

The clipping was a long shot of palm trees in Miami Beach, all in a row, uprooted and lying across a road.

Don’t come back.

Only two days later, Dolores called to say Bailey was back in the hospital. “He had a seizure. It was a grand mal, but luckily he was lying down on the bed so he didn’t fall on the floor. I’d just given him a shot.”

“Then what?”

“I called nine one one.”

Bailey was glad to see her when she came in. “Can’t seem to write my name so anyone can read it.”

Sarah stared at all the plastic bags and blinking lights hanging over him.

“Coming home pretty soon, though.”

“Ah, good. That’s good, Bailey.”

“So do you think your mother wanted to kill herself?” Bailey asked.

“Listen to this,” Joe said. “Iran and Syria better watch out.”

“Now what?” Sarah had barely heard the president’s voice in the short news clip.

“More evil governments for us to attack.”

Sarah pressed the tips of her fingers into her forehead. She wasn’t listening.

Bailey was in the hospital for two weeks. The night he got home, Sarah’s phone rang.

It was Dolores, talking in a loud, cheery nurse’s voice. “Listen, just be prepared for him to look a lot worse.”

She’d pick some flowers, make a tiny bouquet of azalea blossoms and the blue forget-me-nots that bloomed along the back fence.

“Really, now,” Dolores said.

“Okay. I’m ready.”

“Unrecognizable.”

Sarah and Joe were still sitting at the breakfast table the next morning, a small bunch of pink and blue flowers wrapped in a wet paper towel lying beside her plate, when Dolores called.

“Bailey died,” she said.

Sarah stared at the phone. “When?”

“Four-thirty this morning. Rob is coming over.”

“So he told Rob it was AIDS?”

“Not until the very last day he could still talk.”

Joe was watching her when she hung up.

I want you to have this scroll here, too, Bailey had said, gesturing at the wall and the narrow, yellowing paper covered with faded, but perfect, peach blossoms on a falling branch. I’m writing it all down, he’d said.

“He died,” Sarah said.

Tell me how your mother did it, he’d said.

“I guess we all saw it coming,” Joe said.

“But maybe I should have done more,” Sarah said.

It was her youngest child who used to bring her tiny bouquets, picked along the street on her way home from school.

“What are you talking about? Why?”

The questions. They were beginning to float in now, one at a time.

Did you want me to help you?

The TV suddenly boomed into the room, making no sense to her. The president was talking about a mission, about not backing down, about death, death, death.

Later, Sarah thought of Bailey surrounded by women. “I wonder if they talked to him more than I did,” she said to Joe. “Or listened better.”

“Why do you think you always have to do something?”

“Dolores found a stash of syringes and morphine in his medicine chest.”

“And?”

“She said maybe he waited too long, waited until he couldn’t do it himself.”

Did you want me to help you die?

Later still, Sarah saw that the longest days had somehow arrived and passed by. The fog was thickest now in the city streets, everything lost.

If women hold up half the sky, it must be the part that no one talked about. The part with the questions that, in the end, would never go away.

Is there anyone you’ve loved, who doesn’t know?

Are there messages you wanted me to send?



COMMUNITY INFO



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** - Noon - 1:00 pm - 1st and 3rd Mondays, Mailboxes, Highway One across from Pelican Inn. For more information, 415.499.7544.

TUESDAY

- **Anusara Yoga** - 6:15 - 7:30 pm. Taylor's zendo, 1821 Shoreline Hwy. All levels, beginners welcome. Instructor: Rachel Clare Teannalach 415. 897.8158

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 donation)

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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Yes, I want to support the *Beachcomber*. Enclosed is my donation for:

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Made of 100% Turkish terry velour, this luxurious royal blue towel (30" x 60") carries the Beachcomber masthead in elegant translucent tone on tone printing. Lovely for your home and a great gift idea, too.

Name: _____

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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