

# BEACHCOMBER

SINCE 1946





A Beachcomber Newcomer .....	2
Muir Beach CSD Special Mtg ...3	
The Coho Return to Muir Beach via Highway 1 .....	3
The Whimsical Sculptures of Marilyn Stiles.....	4-5
To Surf in Northern California.....	6-7
Puppy Wedding .....	7
The Critter Report .....	8-9
Community Dinner .....	9
Early 2019 Muir Beach Real Estate Update .....	9
Muir Beach Advocacy Group Notes and News .....	10
Muir Beach Caring.....	11
Trial of a Dog's Nose .....	12-13
Dog of the Month.....	13
A Celebration of Marin Stereotypes.....	14-15
Miller Wedding.....	15
Announcements .....	16
On the Cover.....	16

*Beachcomber* is a community newsletter published quarterly by and for residents, friends, family and former residents of Muir Beach. Published since 1946 (on and off), circulation 200 (more or less).

Submissions may be sent to the **Beachcomber mailbox** on mailbox row or emailed to **editor@muirbeachcomber.com**

Contribute your essays, poems, stories, photographs, artwork, announcements, reviews and kid

## A Beachcomber Newcomer

I am “on assignment” for Anne Jeschke to write something for the Beachcomber as a newcomer to Muir Beach. With Gail Fall’s “library” in front of me, I have just spent the last several days leaping back and forth through Beachcomber time. What a crazy kaleidoscope of observations through the decades. Many intelligent, poetic, thoughtful voices have graced its pages. It’s truly a history of a unique place and time. I encourage other newcomers to the beach to get lost in its pages too.

My husband, Steve, and I finally settled permanently last July in our little house on Sunset. We had been coming and going from our home in Princeton, NJ, for the last few years, extricating ourselves from fully engaged lives with jobs, family and friends. While East coast born and bred, the Bay area has always felt like a second home since our grad school years. It has been a beloved part of the world for us and our hope has always been to settle here at some point in our lives. Having our older son move

here for school, and eventually settle and raise a family, was the final push to make it happen. We have one other son living in Brooklyn, NY. We are reassured that he too, along with his family, will be moving out here in the next year or two.

While familiar with the Bay area, we had never heard of Muir Beach until our realtor drove us here, almost on a whim. On that foggy, grey day, the stage for our next chapter in life was set. We bought the house essentially one week later. Though love at first sight it may have been, it was clearly a risk. While I am a bit impulsive by nature, my husband not so much -- it was a pretty intense week! I won, and Steve has been thanking me for it ever since. And we are both thanking Deb Allen for all her help to make it work.

While the beauty, the changeable weather patterns, and the wild nature right outside our back door are all extraordinary, what I have found the most striking is the Muir Beach approach of “live and let live.” As a newcomer, if you want to be received with welcoming arms, there are those generously beckoning you forth: jump in, volunteer for this or that, come to Bistro, celebrate with us at any number of community sponsored shindigs (I can tell you, having lived for 20 years in a stuffy, snobby, university town like Princeton, this is not always the case!). But if you are drawn to a more introspective life, cherishing the absence of urban/suburban civilization, and wanting to stay squarely in your own head, that’s ok too. This is the perfect setting for starting our new chapter in life. Thank you Muir Beach!

– *Kate Somers*

stuff – anything that celebrates Muir Beach and our community. Everything printed should be considered solely the opinion of the writer and printed in the form and condition as submitted. Beachcomber exercises no editorial control over content or distribution, except for readability and general appearance.

Acquisitions: Anne Jeschke  
Circulation/Website: Maury Ostroff  
Design: Janet Tumpich  
New team member: Kate Somers

# Muir Beach CSD Special Meeting – January 10, 2019

*By Mike Miller*

At the regularly scheduled CSD meeting on December 12th, the Board of Directors after reviewing three separate bids for the Sunset Way Improvement Project, selected JML Contractors bid of \$781,000 which was well below bids presented by Ghilotti Construction or Pimenthal. The JML proposal was in line with the original estimate of the consulting engineering company ILS who originally designed and recommended the requirements for the project.

This special CSD meeting was to discuss and consider various issues to move the Sunset Way Improvement Project forward. Most of the discussion was whether or not to hire an outside Project Manager at roughly \$100,000 based on current PM salaries that are calculated at 10-15% of the project cost. Leighton Hills volunteered his services at no cost. It was pointed out that his in depth knowledge of our existing water system is invaluable to the project since it involves replacing the existing water service to residents on Sunset Way prior to the repaving of the road. Even if an outside PM were hired, Leighton would need to be involved in bringing that person up to speed on the water system. With Leighton's past experience in project management, successfully installing the \$650,000 Upper Water Tank, and overseeing the installation of three roads at his development in Fairfax, it was decided by the Board in a 4 -1 vote, with Peter Lambert voting no, to accept his offer to serve as Project Manager for the Sunset Way Improvement Project. Project Management and Oversight,

Homeowner Communication, Cost Controls, Contingencies and Additional Cost Projections have been well thought out and defined by the Board and can be found on the website as AGENDA, Special Meeting of the Board of Directors for Thursday, January 10, 2019.

Steve Shaffer will assist Leighton and has accepted the responsibility of communicating with the Community as to what to expect on a daily

basis once construction begins. All questions and concerns should be directed to Steve who will pass them along to the appropriate person for answers.

The Board is aggressively hoping for a May 2019 start date pending coastal and construction permits. Once started, the project is expected to be completed in 60 days. Bring your questions and concerns to the next CSD Regular Meeting.

## The Coho Return to Muir Beach... via Highway 1

*By April Randle*

Redwood Creeks' native Coho salmon returned from Warm Springs Hatchery, via Highway 1, for the third and final time this December. Approximately 200 salmon were collected from Redwood creek in 2016 as fry (hatched in 2015) and reared to reproductive age at Warm Springs Hatchery in Sonoma County. They were welcomed home by the Muir Beach Community and biologists from the National Park Service (NPS), Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) and National Marine Fisheries (NMF). The Coho release is part of a creative and critical pilot experiment aimed to save our local Coho run from extinction. Coho numbers in Redwood Creek had reached dangerously low numbers in the decade leading up to 2014, and were further threatened by the prolonged drought. It was decided in 2014 to remove the remaining salmon from the creek in hopes that they could be kept at the hatchery and returned to Redwood Creek to spawn when they reached reproductive age and the rains returned. The first



*Salmon release.*

*Photo by Nancie Bailey.*

major releases in 2016 and 2017 were a success, the adults spawned, and the numbers of fry in the creek increased. Coho require clean, clear, cold water. They live in stream and lagoon habitat for the first 1-2 years of their life and then go through a remarkable transformation into smolts as they prepare for life at sea, where they spend another 1-2 years. Upon their return, they bring nitrogen and other nutrients to the stream and riparian forest. Next year we hope to welcome home the Coho salmon to redwood creek by more traditional means.

# The Whimsical Sculptures of Marilyn Stiles

By Tayeko Kaufman

Once you have seen the magical and whimsical clay sculptures or ‘critters’ by Marilyn, you want to know the artist. Her lizards, toads, frogs, slugs, ravens, foxes and pigs speak volumes for the sense of humor and dignity she imparts to her clay friends. A reclining lizard reading a book on a path on a warm sunny day; a pig adorned with carpenter belt filled with tools ready for work; a pair of ravens in deep conversation on a tree limb, or a crafty fox with tilted cap who may have just raided the chicken coop, all anatomically fashioned so their true nature cannot be denied, yet so human in their pose and expression that the viewer can’t help but smile and be amused.

So it was with great anticipation that the Muir Beach Garden Club commissioned Marilyn to create a fountain to sit at the foot of the 3 lovely Japanese maples that we planted in the early Spring of 2008. When she saw the location, she simply smiled and said, “I already have the fountain that is a perfect complement for the site.”



*Artist Marilyn Stiles in studio.  
Photo courtesy of Wyeth Stiles.*

Collaborating with Master Mason, John John Sward, who created the perfect basin and beautifully stacked, slate background for the installation, the site has become a visual and auditory focal point on the North facing side of the Community Center.

After graduating in Art Education from SUNY Buffalo in 1961, Marilyn taught elementary school art in Liverpool, New York, then spent 2 years in Peru in the Peace Corps with the purpose of developing craft cooperatives among the artisans she worked with. Upon her return, she married Ed Stiles, master craftsman, and they moved to Druid Heights, California. That was 46 years ago. She worked for several years in the Open Studio at U.C. Berkeley and later taught ceramics at St. Domenico High School. The Stiles have two sons: Seth who lives in London with his wife Cat, and Wyeth and his wife Trina, who have two beautiful girls, Sienna 6 and Raya 3, currently residing in Bellingham, Washington.

Marilyn’s interest in clay peaked while working in the Peace Corps in Peru where she made her first sculpture, a small hawk. She can’t say why she found the process so exciting, but said like all artists, she loves the material she uses, “...clay is very plastic, everyone that works with it does something different, unique, it’s like a signature.” When asked what inspires her creations she simply replied, “Life, whatever is happening, a sighting, something said, something read,



*John John Sward installing the fountain.  
Photo courtesy of Laurie Piel.*



a word play by Ed....” As a child, Marilyn played in a creek behind her uncle’s house. She found a private, magical, secret world full of creatures and insects and became enamored with frogs, a favorite subject in her work. Upon moving to Druid Heights, foxes that graced her deck and ravens that visited every morning, not to mention the lowly slugs that oozed up the glass all became part of her repertoire. “Inspirations come from ‘doing’. You may start with an idea or concept, but it inevitably transforms along the way.”

Marilyn’s signature turquoise-blue glaze is one she has used for many years. “It’s a white stoneware that I fire to cone 6, mid-range. I mix the glaze then add different colorants: copper, cobalt and iron. The amazing thing is that the process of creation is never boring and opening the kiln is either a surprise or a disappointment. There’s always something new to learn or attempt....I consider myself to be very fortunate.” And we feel fortunate to have Marilyn as a neighbor and local artist.



*Fountain under the maples.*

*Photo courtesy of Michael Kaufman.*

The Muir Beach Garden Club hopes that the fountain will add to the ambiance of what makes our community so special, and to thank Marilyn Stiles and John John Sward for their beautiful work. Please take some time to visit the installation and enjoy the view as you have your coffee and scone at Bistro. And please remind our younger residents that this is an art installation to be viewed and not a play structure or a wading pool. For more information on Marilyn Stiles please visit: <http://marilynstiles.com/>. Marilyn’s work can also be seen and purchased at the annual Quilters Xmas Fair.

**The above article was first published in the October 2011 issue of the Beachcomber.**

It is with great sadness that we witnessed the passing of a dear friend and local artist, Marilyn Stiles, on December 9, 2018. She was a long time resident of Druid Heights and Friday Harbor, lived and worked her magic on her clay creatures for over 50 years. Married to Ed Stiles for 53 years, she is predeceased by her husband, son Wyeth and his wife Trina, and their two daughters Siena soon to be 14 and Raya soon to be 11.

During the last three years, Marilyn collaborated with Leslie Riehl and Tayeko Kaufman in mixed media dolls. She created the heads, arms and feet of her wonderful animals and Leslie and Tayeko provided costumes to fit the personalities of the faces. Known as The Kudas, the dolls were well received and won many awards at the County Fair and were accepted to the Mill Valley Fine Arts Festival last year.

Marilyn’s sense of humor, curiosity, and her love of all things natural can be seen in her extensive body of ceramic work. Her ability to sense the animal inside the clay and bring its spirit to life was exceptional. Her critters brought smiles to all that had the opportunity to view her art.

On a personal note, the past three years of collaboration with Marilyn on the creation of our mixed media critters was an especially happy and joyous time in my life. She was a dear friend and will be missed by all who knew her.

# To surf in Northern California is to experience a certain sort of enchantment...

By Beth Nelson

My son Tennessee was born in a small Basque fishing village where the sea was central to our life. In those days we would take the ferry each day from Hondarribia in Spain across the Txingudi Bay to Hendaye, France, to swim each day. I would lie down on my boogie board and have my son lie down flat on my back, wrapping his arms tightly around my neck; and then we would fly over the water on a wave, him screaming in my ear. He was two and three then. I like to think this was probably his first introduction to “surfing.”

When we first moved to Muir Beach, I bought two boogie boards, and we would go in together at Little Beach, high on cold water and serotonin; fearless fun. He was eight then. This was not Spain but Northern California. A very different sort of sea.

There then was a time when he didn't want to go in the water anymore. About the time he was becoming a teenager, he preferred to sit high up in the beautiful cypress tree near Arlene's, looking down over Little Beach, reading. So I went into the water alone those days, hoping he too would return to the sea.

About this same time we moved to Stinson Beach. Maxine and John, proprietors of the Parkside Café and Restaurant, invited us to our first Thanksgiving dinner there. When we walked into their beautiful beach house, surf movies were playing on a big screen TV and a group of boys, sun tanned and sun bleached, welcomed my son into their inner



*Tennessee (center) at 13 years old.*



*A white out at Stinson on the first swell many years ago.*

circle. Someone said to Tennessee, “Do you surf?” and I remembered he replied, “Not yet.” I believe they were all about 11 years old at that time.

That first year in Stinson, surfing became his obsession and mine. It's not easy to surf in Northern California. Nothing is ideal about it at all, and everything about it is difficult. But there is a saying “If you can surf Nor-Cal, you can surf anywhere.”

Within six months he was standing up and within a year, it occupied the most important part of his life. To live was to surf. There were

old guys and young guys and middle aged guys, who became his mentors. He joined the Stinson Beach Junior Life guard program and learnt water safety, first aid, how to bring someone drowning to shore, and most importantly, about the comradely around surfing and the water. Many evenings were spent down on the Calles, with me watching the boys surf through the sunset, right into dark. “It's sharky time” I would shout, trying to get them home.

A few years later we moved back to Muir Beach and I wondered how we were going to replace the Bolinas Channel, the surf spots and friends from Stinson? And so the Wednesday morning “Dawn Patrol Brigade” was invented. There were only a few rules: you showed up at our house the night before, did your homework, slept over, and got up at 5:30 a.m. to head out to Cron, also known as Fort Cronkhite. No whingers allowed.

We'd play reggae music, with the roof of the VW Bug rolled back, (their music of choice to get pumped for surf), the kids piled in the car, hip bone to hip bone, the dark, the mysterious tunnel while one waited for the light to change...and then there was Cron!

Sometimes the kids went in before the sun was up and I would stand on the shore counting the boards and bodies, while the little tugs began to head out to meet the container ships, the perfect backdrop. Cronkhite, one of the most beautiful spots in the

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## To surf

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world to surf. One morning we saw a mountain lion. Many mornings their hands were so cold I had to zip their zippers before we headed back to school.

And after a while, this ritual began to bond them all... this little gang of pirates. I had known some of them since age 5. I think one could say “Dawn Patrol” may well have been one of the best times of my life. The freezing cold air and sea, the sun coming up behind the rocks, the tugs going out, the sheer adrenalin of surf at dawn. Many of the old guys showed up, coffee mug in hand, boards on top of their BMW’s and Audis before they went to work, often never going in, but simply wanting to experience vicariously again Dawn Patrol, before they headed off to corporate jobs and stress.

This Christmas when Tennessee came home, I found the same boys gathering here...the “Dawn Patrol Boys”. And despite our small quarters, they still slept here and ate here and headed out in the morning cold, ready to surf and be together again.

It’s hard to imagine now, life without this...life without surfing. The stinky booties, the wetsuits taking up half my house, the sand on the floor and in the beds, their laughter, their sheer joy in being together in the water, the inside jokes, the surf spots going down the coast, the memories and the incredible beauty and life force the ocean brings to things..

To surf in northern California, is to experience a certain enchantment.

And I have had the pleasure to be part of that. Teach your kids to surf, you will never regret it.

Surf resources in Marin:

Stinson Beach Junior Lifeguards (every summer, free to West Marin children)

Proof Lab Surf Shop, Mill Valley

Big Dog Surf Camp, Mill Valley  
Live Water Surf Shop, Stinson Beach

Marin Surf Camp, Stinson Beach

Two Mile Surf Shop, Bolinas

Tommy’s Surf Camp, Bolinas

And our own Nicki Clark, right here in Muir Beach, at Marin Outdoor Adventure Camp

## Puppy Wedding at the Overlook

Tango Puppy Prakin & Tiko Rosano were married December 30, 2018 at the Muir Beach Overlook.

Tango & Tiko had met at various events in Muir Beach over the past two years, but, did not fall into puppy-love until late fall of 2018 when both were frolicking at the Muir Beach Overlook.

Tango immediately smitten with Tiko’s dashing hair and athletic build. His positive disposition, doggy intelligence and playful game of tail chasing made it easy for Tango to fall for her Labradoodle friend.

Meanwhile, Tiko found Tango beautifully demure, irresistibly confident and loved how she was always up for a fun game of fetch. Not to mention, Tango, five years Tiko’s senior shared with Tiko her secret paw shake and all the best gopher holes for digging.

As Tango walked down the aisle, Tiko waited with baited doggy breath. Vows were exchanged, tails wagged and the happy pups were pronounced husband and wife.

Congratulations and best wishes to two of our finest Muir Beach canine friends!

Maid of Honor: Jack Smith

Best Man: Duncan Tede

Wedding Planners: Zoey & Tessa Prakin, Somer Staley and Zora Paul

– Nancie Bailey



# The Critter Report

By Dave MacKenzie

On December 18, 2018, after Muir Beach had finally received some rain worthy of the denizens of Redwood Creek, 175 Coho salmon were released into the creek as part of the Coho recovery project. Coho salmon are on the federal endangered species list, so this restoration program is part of the mandatory recovery project for the species. As Muir Beachers know, the Coho have become practically extirpated (locally extinct) not only here, but in many streams of the north coast. This is the third release, which corresponds to the Coho's three-year life cycle. This year's smolt will, hopefully, return to Redwood Creek in three years to spawn in the stream where they were born. How great it was to see the released fish traveling up the creek to the spawning grounds. Many Muir Beachers, NPS personnel, volunteers and press were in attendance for this release event. A brief but nice talk about the fish returning to their native stream was given by Wendy Johnston, and this set the stage for the special event.

Due to the government closure, it may be a while before we know how well the release and the smolt (baby fish) production goes. Researchers funded by the federal government have been shut down this winter, which has affected many projects, from wildlife to human health research. These fish are expected to do well, since the following rains have been strong, but not too heavy.

Nearby, in the front lagoon, a River Otter has been showing up on a trail cam. It usually rolls in the sand dunes a bit to clean up its fur, which is so essential to its very wet lifestyle. But, given an opportunity,



*Coho back home!*

it would welcome a Coho salmon meal! Fortunately, River Otters and the Coho salmon have co-evolved for maybe a million years, and so the otter cannot catch enough Coho to severely hurt the population. But everybody likes salmon!



*Otter takes a break at front lagoon.*

A second otter was also documented in the front lagoon, so it is possible that there will be a family of otters in Redwood Creek in the spring. Keep your eyes open!

The annual "Thanksgiving" Monarch count was done in Muir Beach as well, with very poor results. We only saw one Monarch at last year's roosting site on Charlotte's Way. Disturbingly, Monarch numbers seem to be reduced by almost 90% from last year overall in California. Not good. However, this may yet

lead to Monarchs being listed as an endangered species; we'll see. Causes are always debated, but in addition to habitat loss, pesticide of agricultural crops may be leading to a big loss of Milkweed which is necessary for the Monarch caterpillars' survival.



*Marbled Murrelet.*

In other critter news, the Southern Marin Christmas bird count was conducted on December 29, and it included a survey of all birds (literally ALL!), in the Muir Beach area. In addition to the expected species, four Marbled Murrelets were spotted just offshore. This small fish-eating seabird (black and white, and smaller than a gull) is an Alcid, which means it is related to penguins! Even more interesting is the fact that up until the 1970's, no

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*Special delivery of rare cargo!*



*Darren Fong gets another fish for the creek.*

one knew where Marbled Murrelets bred, until it was discovered they fly inland into mature fir, hemlock, and redwood forests, and make their nests high in the trees. So the first flight for the baby murrelets is a quick descent into the ferns and foliage of a thick forest floor, not the ocean where they will spend most of their lives! They have not been found to breed in Muir Woods (so far), so our winter visitors probably come from further north (or from Big Basin area in the south). Another unusual bird for Muir Beach seen on this year's count was a Rock Wren, which is making it's home on the cliffs of the Muir Beach Overlook when it is in the area.

There is always a lot of wildlife to see around Muir Beach. Happy critter watching in 2019!

## Community Dinner set for March 22

*By Paul Jescke*

Preparations are underway for the annual Muir Beach Community Dinner to be held Friday night, March 22 at the Community Center.

First held in 2012, the popular event brings together Muir Beach residents, adults and children alike, for a multi-course dinner and a chance to visit with friends and neighbors. The event is organized by the Elderberries who stipulate that the dinner is strictly social and promise there will be no long speeches or polemics.

Individuals who have moved to Muir Beach in the past year are especially welcome and will be introduced at the dinner.

As usual, the dinner will be prepared by a professional chef who, in addition to a main dish, will offer vegan and vegetarian options. The full menu will be announced well in advance and will be published in mailbox fliers and Laurie Piel's Eventsletter.

Reservations are mandatory. Details about the RSVP process will be announced next month. Thanks to support from the Community Services District, prices remain at an amazingly low \$10 for adults, \$5 for children 5-11, and free for kids 4 and under. Beer and wine will be available or BYOB.

## Early 2019 Muir Beach Real Estate Update

*By Debra Allen*

**Sellers:** If you're considering a home sale in 2019, it could be best to beat the "spring market", as Realtors and their buyers are ready and waiting now! Remember to have your home and windows cleaned, the yard trimmed with pathways and stairs in a no-slip condition, firewood moved away from touching the home or from being on top of any decks, all building debris that's stored under the home and garage hauled away, clearly mark your name and address on your mail boxes as well as have your address visible near the house, and always consult with your Realtor about the added value of hiring a professional home stager.

**Buyers:** Just be patient.

**Neighbors:** If you didn't get a little 2019 Tide Chart booklet and would like one, just let me know.

debra.allen@compass.com, 415-279-3751



# Muir Beach Advocacy Group Notes on Buses and Other News

By Christian Riehl

## A Bus Station in Muir Beach?

**That again?!** In late November, we got word that CalTrans had completed a draft of a new long-range planning document for our area- titled the Transportation Concept Report- that included the construction of bus stops in Muir Beach specifically for the Muir Woods shuttles. While the draft is not a public document yet, we were able to take a look at it (as did the Point Reyes Light, which reported on this topic). The recommendation for bus stops grew out of meetings held in 2016 that included representatives from the NPS, Marin transportation authorities, and a Marin Supervisor. What was especially surprising is that this idea was put on the table even though strong opposition from Muir Beach residents, along with a looming lawsuit against the NPS, caused the NPS to withdraw its plan to build a bus station at mailbox row by the barn and nearby wetlands in 2014.

It just so happened that the NPS scheduled a meeting on December 3 to update the public on the Memo of Understanding (MOU) regarding parking at Muir Woods. A contingent of Muir Beachers attended this meeting, which gave us the opportunity to talk to county and NPS representatives about the bus station plan and, also, other issues. Herewith:

I asked Supervisor Dennis Rodoni for his support in getting the Muir Beach bus station removed from the CalTrans plan. He said he'd heard from a number of constituents about problems with the draft plan, but was otherwise noncommittal.

NPS community liaison officer Mia Monroe said she'd heard from some Muir Beachers who want a bus stop.

On the other hand, GGNRA Chief Planner Brian Aviles said they had no plans in the works to resurrect the bus station. I tried to get him to promise they wouldn't bring it back up -which, of course, he couldn't really be expected to do- but, he did repeat that he had no intention of bring it back up again. (GGNRA Superintendent Laura Joss listened in on our conversation, but didn't say anything).

I also spoke to Nancy Whelan, General Manager of Marin Transit, as I couldn't find online the annual Muir Woods Shuttle Evaluation report (this has since been corrected and you can now find it), and she was kind enough to give me her copy. These reports give lots of interesting stats on the performance of the Muir Woods Shuttle. How well do those buses do? Of course, it depends on what one considers success. However, in 2017 ridership was down and costs were up. The money collected from the \$5.00 fares covered only 45% of the cost of the bus service. In total, the bus service loses money to the tune of \$225,000- half of which is paid by the NPS/ Parks Conservancy, and half is paid by Marin. It will be interesting to see this years' report and the effect of the reservation system and the price drop to \$3 for a round trip to Muir Woods.

Why is the bus station idea still in the works? What can be done to get it out of the CalTrans long-term plan? Give Dennis Rodoni a call and let him know what you think: 415-473-7331.

Oh, by the way: the NPS is happy with the Muir Woods Reservation System and said it is meeting expectations in reducing crowding on peak days.

**Pacific Way Bridge:** I spoke to Eric Steger, chief engineer at Marin County Public Works, about the eroding/ collapsing roadway at the Pacific Way bridge. He said they know about the problem, and are waiting on Cal Fish and Game and Cal Dept. of Water Resources to give them the okay to shore it up. He didn't see getting approval to do a repair until at least the middle of this year.

**Diaz Ridge Connector Trail and Redwood Creek Realignment Project:** The NPS gave themselves a Finding of No Significant Impact for their environmental review of these two projects. The Diaz Ridge Connector Trail is slated to be completed in mid-2021, but it won't 'connect' completely to the Redwood Creek Trail; instead, it will stop short at Bob Winkelmann's place. Interestingly for bike riders, Brian Aviles of the NPS told me that bikes will *not* be allowed on the new Redwood Creek trail.

**Franks Valley Road Rebuild:** Not much news: the county public works people didn't have any new info on this project, just that it's been pushed out probably to at least 2021.

**If you want to get involved in the Muir Beach Advocacy Group:** If you want to help out and participate, please let me know (muirbeachguy@gmail.com). It mostly involves keeping up to date on actions and policies by county, state, and federal people; going to a few meetings now and then; and keeping Muir Beachers informed.



# Muir Beach Caring

*By Nina Vincent*

When Eli was eleven years old we decided to take him from our special home here in Muir Beach, and his privileged existence in the bubble of Marin County to live in Oaxaca Mexico. We settled in a small village above the city where the majority of the families around us lived a very different life than the one we were accustomed to. Eli attended the public school on the village square a stone's throw from our home behind the adobe wall. Some of the kids in Eli's school lived in adobe homes with mud floors, curtains for doors, one bed for many and very little extra to share.

One day Eli came home and told me he would need to bring lunch money to school each day. I was a bit confused by this request, almost a demand, as we generally grabbed a fresh warm tamale from the women in the square after school or walked down to the end of our road our sandaled feet slapping the cobbled streets in time with the clap clap of the tortilla maker who would wrap our warm tortillas in paper. Eli and I would munch on a few before we made it home to fill them with cheese, or some other simple delicacy of the day.

I asked Eli why he needed lunch money. He told me that many days at school the kids would be asked to give their lunch money over to help a fellow student in need. Our conversation, so many years ago, went something like this: "Raul came to school today and told the teacher his grandmother had died but his family didn't have the money to bury her. The teacher asked the kids to help him out

with their lunch money. And the other day Jorge came to school and reported he'd broken his glasses and couldn't afford a new pair. The kids all handed over their money. I need to have lunch money so I can help out too."

In Mexico there is no shame in asking for help. There is no shame in needing help. The kids in Eli's class gladly gave their lunch money over to help a fellow classmate or their family. What they had was very little, but they gave it gladly and without judgement. I have always remembered this example of community. And I have been grateful to live in Muir Beach where I have been able to ask a neighbor for help in times of need. I hope that all my neighbors know that they may come to me and ask as well. There is no shame in asking for help it is an opportunity to deepen connection and grow stronger as community.

Muir Beach Caring is our community's lunch money pool. It is there for all of us. We need not hesitate to reach out when for example we are ill, or in need of extra assistance. There are community members who are eager to assist you. I know of several neighbors who have thankfully received help.

There for you are rides to medical appointments, warm meals brought to your home with the possibility of a friendly neighbor staying to sit and chat over your meal – or dropping it at the door to leave you well fed and in peace.

We here in Muir Beach share so many wonderful traditions together:

Day of the Dead, the MBVFA BBQ picnic, Bistro, Solstice parties, Elderberry dinners and so much more. We dance, drink, eat, laugh, cook, clean, and work beside one another throughout the year. Sharing in the work, and the fun is only one aspect of what makes community strong. Helping one another when in need builds trust, respect, empathy and caring.

So next time you are in need of a little extra assistance, please call on Muir Beach Caring – help make our community even stronger than it already is.

Muir Beach Caring:  
415-320-6847 or  
[muirbeachelderberries@gmail.com](mailto:muirbeachelderberries@gmail.com)

Here are just a few of the ways Muir Beach Caring might be able to assist you or a neighbor:

- \*Deliver meals to your door
- \*Drive you to medical appointments
- \*Do errands over the hill for or with you
- \*Stop in for a cup of tea or a fireside chat if you are alone and in need of company
- \*Walk your dog, take out your recycling, pick up your mail while you heal and recover

There are so many ways we can be there for one another.

Let's be like the generous children of Oaxaca and ask without shame or hesitation so that others can give with an open heart.

# The Trial of a Dog's Nose

*By Kathleen Call*

If people had told the younger BMW me that I would one day be desperate for a minivan, I would have called them liars and fools. But here I am today, eyeing every Odyssey and Grand Caravan with sweaty palms and a gleam in my eyes.

I'm looking for my dog rig.

If you are going to be trialing in any dog sport, be it agility, flyball, obedience or dock diving, you need a dog rig. My sport is K9 Nose Work, and it only took one day-long trial in a field in Napa at 105 degrees to convince me that I did indeed need that reflective tarp, the Yeti ice cooler, the Ryobi battery fans and the tent pop up. Therefore, a vehicle wide and deep enough to store it all, efficient gas mileage be damned.

K9 Nose Work is a relatively new dog sport, having been founded just a decade ago by three professional scent dog handlers who just started setting "hides" out for their dogs for fun. They would find a public space, like an outdoor parking lot, and hide (therefore the name "hides") small tins that contained one or two Q-tips dipped in an essential oil, such as birch. Then their dogs would find them. Simple yet so fun, the budding sport soon attracted other dog folks. A short while later the National Association of Canine Scent Work was formed, becoming the first sanctioning body for K9 Nose Work, oftentimes referred to as Nosework or Scenting. It is now an international sport with hundreds of trials in North America alone every year.

The beauty of Nose Work is that it is the only sport that requires dogs to be trained in nothing. Absolutely nothing. As a matter of fact, if you

try to use obedience commands with your dog, you will be roundly chastised by your instructor and may be considered suspect by your fellow competitors. This drives dog trainers crazy, because all of the beautiful ring heels and jumps and attention to handler mean nothing. Nothing. What does matter is that you understand your dog's body language well enough that you can confidently call an Alert when your dog's nose is on the hide. If you don't, you either time out or call a False Alert, which disqualifies you.

A K9 Nose Work trial always involves four "elements": interiors, containers, exteriors and vehicles. There are three corresponding odors that will be used, depending on level of difficulty: birch, anise and clove. There are five levels of increasing difficulty: NW1, NW2, NW3, Elite and finally Summit. A NW1 trial might consist of one birch hide in all four elements, each to be completed in 2-3 minutes. A recent Summit exterior search consisted of an entire baseball stadium, with an unknown number of mixed odor searches, all to be found in eight minutes. Just thinking about that makes my heart pound and my mouth go dry.

NACSW sanctioned K9 Nose Work trials are becoming wildly popular and are difficult to get into, because they require a space that offers all four elements and which has not been previously used for scenting. Dogs will alert on "residual odor", odor molecules that still cling to a surface after months have gone by. There needs to be sufficient parking for the 40-50 people who are either trialing or volunteering. Potty spaces for the dogs are a must, of course. And, like

most dog sport venues, dogs may not socialize while at the trial. So if your dog can remain comfortably crated in your rig for the greater part of a day, great. If not, you may want to reconsider trialing and take a nice walk on the beach instead.

Dogs that do well in K9 Nose Work have independent drive, focus, intensity and confidence. Does your dog need to have those qualities when you begin? No. Just doing K9 Nose Work can build all of those qualities, and more. It's a great sport for dogs that are reactive on leash or shy, fearful or too rambunctious. The act of sniffing impacts the pleasure center and seeking part of the brain, and most handlers will report that after a search their dogs are calm and relaxed. It is also a sport that is available to handlers of all fitness levels and age. The woman who told me about her Summit search in the baseball stadium was probably in her 70s and carrying a few extra pounds.

I started in Nose Work with my Kelpie, Sharik. She was willing to humor me but eventually made it clear that she just wasn't into it. I let her retire and began the search for a new sport dog. One day I sent my boss at Marin Humane a picture of a likely looking black lab puppy. She responded with a picture of a brindle pit mix puppy. This was The Mighty Casey. Black and cream brindle with golden eyes. The pit bull head on a lean sight hound body. I was smitten. But, enough to adopt?

I decided to bring him to a meeting at work where I was demonstrating Nose Work for shelter dogs. I piled a bunch of boxes on the stage and

*Continued on next page*



## ***The Trial of a Dog's Nose***

*Continued from previous page*

placed a treat inside one of the buried boxes. I held Casey by his collar and pointed him towards the stage, pulled back just a pinch to kick in some opposition reflex and then let go. He hurtled across the stage and slammed into the pile, his head buried in the box with the treat. The crowd gasped and then began applauding. I was gobsmacked. I had my next Nose Work dog.

We started by building a strong foundation for him with simple box work, then began training all four elements in a variety of environments. In order to assure success in trials, dogs should be trained to track odor regardless of where they are. Unlike other sports, there is no set pattern for where the searches are done. There is no familiar equipment, such as an agility field or a flyball field. Searches are done in wind, rain, heat and snow. There will be unusual items and distractors, such as interesting trash smells and perhaps a flapping plastic bag. Dogs need to be able to ignore anything that might take them off the pursuit of the odor. They must accurately identify the source of the odor and quickly move on. They must also be able to indicate if there is no odor available: that is called "clearing" the search area.

Once I felt Casey was "odor obedient" we enrolled in the required Odor Recognition Test. In order to participate in NACSW trials, you have to successfully pass a birch ORT for NW1, an anise ORT for NW2 and a clove ORT for NW3. You can take a shot at passing all three in one day, which is what I decided to do. What the heck.

My body was buzzing with adrenaline the day of the ORT. As we stood in the staging area, I repeated my mantra of "Whatever happens is OK. You are doing this for fun". Yeah, right. When we walked into the room I barely noticed the judge and steward and timers lined up along the wall. All I could focus on was the two rows of white boxes in front of us and the blue tape of the start line. I leaned over Casey while holding his harness and let him orient himself towards the odor of three tiny Q-tips taped inside one of the 12 boxes. I whispered his cue, "Go Hunt!"

He took off towards the boxes as I let the 15 foot long line run through my fingers. At each box he paused and sniffed and then moved on again. I was willing myself not to call "Alert!". Trust your dog, trust your dog, trust your dog.

Casey paused a bit longer at one box, and with an elegant lift of his front left paw, he tapped the box once, twice, three times, then turned his head and looked right into my eyes.

"Alert!"

"Yes!"

Casey went on that day to pass all three odors: birch in 20 seconds, anise in 10 seconds and clove in 22 seconds. We were then eligible to trial in all Nose Work trials going forward. That was a year ago. Since then, we have trialed in at least five trials in Oregon and California. We are working on a NW2 title in NACSW and an Advanced title in Sniffing Dog Sports or SDS. We are trialing in AKC Scent Work in April.

And I'm still looking for the perfect dog rig.

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## **Dog of the Month - Duncan**



# A Celebration of Marin Stereotypes

By Durand Begault

As a life-long bay area resident, I was well aware of the mostly comic but also dismissive fables, stories, tales and overall reputation of Marin County, home of our lovely Muir Beach. I've known for years (turning the volume down on KYA when it was a hit) that Francis Ford Coppola filmed the "music movie" (precursor to the MTV music video) of the cringe-worthy smiley face happy tune "Mill Valley" by Rita Abrams' 3rd grade class ("Where people aren't afraid to smile, and people stop and talk a while"). In decades past, I pogo'd (sic? do punks care?) to Jello Biafra's "Moon Over Marin" and laughed at Robin William's scathingly funny routines about the county, its peoples and its traditions. So...when we moved to Muir Beach from San Francisco five years ago, I decided it was my civic duty to dive into the hot tub of the best stereotypes about Marin. I missed their birth, but I could relive them- and so can you, dear reader!

Now in fairness, I've also continued to appreciate and enjoy more serious characterizations and history; I think the film "Rebels With a Cause" (<http://rebelsdocumentary.org>) is required watching for those of us that appreciate the rare possibility of living where we do, and the recent book "It Happened in Marin" by Jim Holden covers the shocking stories of Synanon, the Soledad Brothers shootout, etc. And some stereotypes, as we of course know, can be mean or harmful. But some of the Marin County stereotypes are the funniest, particularly from the late 70s-early 80s. You may know of many others, but here are my top three.

First, hot tubs. Is it a stereotype or simply a fact?! I've always enjoyed mineral waters in locales from Esalen to the Sierras, and so when we first saw what would be our new house in Muir Beach, I was mega-excited: there were not one, but two hot tubs... a busted redwood barrel from the late 70s with two generations of broken heating devices, green slime, and character; and the other a workable fiberglass pre-form dating from early in this century. I considered fixing the old one, but a crusty repairman who had seen the whole Marin spa scene counseled me wisely in his Tom Waits voice: "Ya know, having two hot tubs is like having two wives. You'll never be able to take care of both of 'em or keep 'em both happy." Plus, I found out, you can't replace the redwood anymore; there's a low risk of hot tub folliculitis; & no variable jets or other modern features on the classic models. And, so, I stuck with the fiberglass functional choice.

One fine Marin evening, whilst sitting in the fiberglass tub for the first time, sipping my extra dry martini and gazing at the stars, my thoughts turned naturally to John Walker Lindh, the "American Taliban" from Mill Valley (arrested in 2001). Were there hot tubs in Helmand Province? The late President George Bush famously said of this unpatriotic soul that he must have been "some misguided Marin County hot-tubber." Unbelievably in our current political clime, Bush later apologized after reaction from readers of the Marin Independent Journal. "Call off the dogs please. I apologize. I am chastened. I will never use 'hot tub' and 'Marin County' in the same

sentence again....I will now soak in my own hot tub and try to be more sensitive to the feelings of others- not John Walker Lindh, though." (articles.latimes.com/2002/feb/28/local/me-bush28). Someday I thought I might survey the residents of Muir Beach about their hot tubs and their use. Is everyone fundamentally patriotic?

Second, but definitely first in terms of the sheer number of what have become treasured stereotypes, Cyra McFadden's *The Serial: A Year in the Life of Marin County* may or may not make you wonder, "hmmm....what's really changed?" It's not a big leap from a fondue pot to the InstaPot. The ultimate chronicle of nor-cal speak! Recognize multiple landmarks, like the 2 AM club! Grow and relate and increase your self-actualization to a mellow high as you read gems such as the grocery shopper earnestly answered by the butcher, "Can you relate to a side of roast beef?" Cyra was an English teacher who was aghast at her students essays in the 1970s. This is a hilarious book that was later made into a very poor movie starring Martin Mull in 1980. It's super funny but lots of folks were offended at the time because it poked fun; but from our vantage point today, we can only go.....woaaaah. Not gonna give any more away if you haven't read it. If you have and you lived here during that era, I'll bet you can totally relate!

Finally, everyone needs to immediately stop reading this article (for a reason other than its thesis or poor writing style) and dial up in YouTube the masterpiece

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## Marin Stereotypes

Continued from previous page

of network news re-por-tage: “I Want It All Now,” an NBC quasi-“documentary” (ahem) from 1978. Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DFpMoEttjvA&lc=Ugityfv3F5eGC3gCoAEC>. This 49 minute, two part, epic historical document begins with scenes that helped establish the infamous stereotype that everyone who has lived or wants to live in Marin most admires: getting a naked peacock feather massage for four hours (and for only \$180! Anyone know where I can get one now?). Thrill as the condescending sanctimonious narrator Edwin Newman of NBC reports on such weird phenomena as divorced parents who share responsibility for their children and care for each other! What causes these people of Marin to pursue activities such as

self-improvement or drive “a large number of foreign-made cars”? The comments on YouTube are in themselves hilarious (my favorite stereotypical tongue-in-cheek (I think) comment is the first one that comes up from pandaKrusher). The narrator closes by saying “We wonder if one can leave Marin County behind, for we would guess that a lot of what goes on here is already somewhat familiar say, in Bangor, Maine, or Corpus Christie, Texas; though perhaps in a form other than a hot tub!” And the theme music about a rainbow, which sounds like a rejected Karen Carpenter B-side, is sung by none other than Rita Abrams (but without the 3rd graders)!

So if you are new to all of this, do take time to deep dive into a few of these humorous Marin

County stereotypes, for we may learn from them and truly enjoy, defend and prosper from them, albeit in a misguided way in the hot tub of our consciousness. Our ancestors and pioneers from the seventies endured the pain and humiliation of these stereotypes, so that we may now laugh, and enjoy!

About the author. Durand Begault lives on Starbuck Drive. He is the author of the widely-panned 2015 *Beachcomber* essay “How it might have happened”, a semi-historical account of the encounter between William Kent and John Muir. Kent gave us Muir Woods and flooded Hetch-Hetchy.

*Disclaimer: This article is for entertainment purposes only. No tofu was harmed in its production.*

## Miller Wedding

By Suzanne Miller

The highlight of 2018 for the Miller family was the marriage of our youngest son. Scotland Ordway Miller married Mellisa Ann Davis at Little Beach.

Scot and his brother, Michael, grew up here in Muir Beach and spent a good portion of their time at Little Beach. So they built a bamboo “altar” at the far end of the beach.

Scot and Mellisa were attended by their long-time friends, Scot’s brother Michael as best man and our grandson, Dylan and granddaughter, Delilah, as the Ring Bearer and the Flower Girl.

Mellisa made her entrance by walking down the path above the beach, and literally floated down on the wind.



The Community Center was decorated in teal and crystal and I even managed to serve matching blue champagne.

The happy couple honeymooned in Paris and the South of France and are now living in Tennessee Valley.

Some of you may be wondering how

he received the name of Scotland. My husband, Michael, and I were married in an old stone church in St. Andrews, Scotland. When they were old enough, we took them back to be baptized in that same old stone church. Upon our return, one of my nephews said, “I sure am glad you didn’t get married in Turkey!”

## ANNOUNCEMENTS



*Scotland Ordway Miller married Mellisa Ann Davis. See story page 15.*

### ON THE COVER

#### *Surge*

Beeswax, damar resin, graphite and oil on panel; 36" x 48"  
Laura Lovitt



Laura graduated with a BA in Art from the University of California, Santa Cruz in 1988, and shortly thereafter attended the California College of Arts and Crafts (now CCA), where she studied graphic design. As the business of graphic design became more digital in the mid to late 90s, she moved on to ceramics, working as a ceramic artist and muralist for almost 20 years. In the last several years, she has once again found her way to a new medium--encaustic painting. Comprised of beeswax, tree resin, oil paints and graphite, her current large scale works on wood panel attempt to explore the impacts of human activity on wildlife and the environment—specifically overfishing, poaching and climate change.



*Puppy Wedding at the Overlook. See story page 7.*



*Sundown at Muir Beach Overlook on the last day of 2018.*

So happy to run into great neighbors spontaneously. A time to reflect on shared experiences; volleyball evenings with running commentaries, fire department drills and calls, family game gatherings, Solstice celebrations, kids running around the community center, sign painting for the BBQ, family days on little beach, hearty Christmas carol singing at the pub. Thanks for all the great memories!

— Lynda Grose

Community Dinner March 22.  
*See story page 9.*



Mabel Capability Taylor graduated from Barnard College in May 2018 with a BA Summa Cum Laude in American Studies. She was awarded the Schwimmer Prize for Outstanding Graduating Senior in the Humanities and the John Demos Prize in American Studies. In 2016-2017 she attended St. Peter's College at the University of Oxford where she studied English and History.

She wrote her thesis about the work of M C Richards at Black Mountain College. In the fall of 2018 she was invited to deliver a paper at the annual conference of Black Mountain College historians in Asheville, NC.

She currently works at the Metropolitan Museum of Art as an Administrative Coordinator and Executive Assistant to the Vice President of Construction and Facilities and lives on the Gowanus Canal where she is working on running, freelance book design and completing a paper for the Journal of Black Mountain College Studies.

— David Taylor