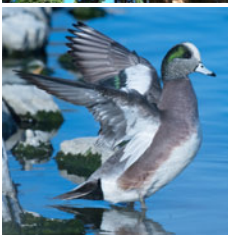


T H E
ECHO

APRIL 2018

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How I Cut the Cord and Saved \$543/Year

by **PETER DYKE**

How high is your Comcast (or AT&T) bill for Internet access and/or cable TV? Have you ever thought there must be a way to reduce it but didn't know how? Here's my story of how I did it.

Maybe it can inspire you.

Last year I was paying \$149/month; this year I'm paying around \$100 for better service. So you can understand how, and to craft a strategy for yourself, it might be helpful if I explained some basic concepts first.

How Cable Companies Increase Their Bills

Once upon a time, cable companies such as Comcast provided just TV channels—first network TV (like NBC, ABC etc. local channels), then they added special channels that were only available on cable TV, such as MSNBC, CNN, Fox News, etc. Then they added Internet access, so you could browse the web, stream Netflix, check your email, Skype with your grandkids

etc. Still they wanted to charge you more. So they added home phone, then home security options which cost them nothing and are just another way to get a few more \$\$ from you. At some point they started charging for things you thought were (and indeed were, originally) included, like Franchise fee, Regional Sports fee, PEG Access support (whatever that is!), modem rental fee, DVR fee, etc, so for example their advertised rate of \$89.99 actually becomes \$129.98 when the bill arrives.

They also figured out another way to get more money from you: the annual (or two year) contract. This implies that if you agree to their outrageous pricing schedule once, you'll think you have to keep paying for all the services—such as Double, Triple, Quadruple play, (it just goes on) till the end of that term. The salespeople do not explain that although you have agreed to a contract, you did not commit to a specific level of service within that contract—they scare you into

CONTINUED ON **PAGE 11**



IN REMEMBRANCE

Mike York

March 15, 1947–March 1, 2018

We deeply regret the sudden death of our jolly friend and *Echo* contributing author Mike York, whose awaited quantum physics installment on Entanglement would have been published in this issue.

THE
ECHO

APRIL 2018

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SUBMITTING ARTICLES

Email articles with "ECHO" as the first word of the subject line and a copy of the article in the body of the email to Erma Wheatley:

ermawheatley@gmail.com

Images should be as large as possible to enable a 300 ppi resolution (*pixels/inch*).

DEADLINE

Everything is due the 8th of the month or sooner for the following month's issue.

Management Update

Management update for April, 2018.

When our weather begins to warm up we will heat and open the pool for resident use.

Remember Marin Valley is a NO poison community. There are many alternative methods to eliminate rats and gophers without the use of poisons. Owls and coyotes are sickened or die when they eat poisoned rodents.

Please refrain from flushing handy wipes. They are a constant problem for our sewer pump system.

Men's and Women's Sauna: Please do not pour water over the heating element. This has taken place for a long time and can be dangerous. 220 volt systems are not watertight.

These are dry heat saunas, not steam room units.

A few Park rules that have an effect on you and your neighbors:
Paid vehicle storage prevents people from using our guest parking spaces, which impacts clubhouse events. We are not providing spaces to STORE your car if it is not being used as our parking is limited. Thanks for your cooperation.

Park Rule 21.1 Parking: Parking at each mobile home space is limited to the number of vehicles that fit within the carport and driveway. Vehicles on the street can get in the way of any first responders, so please don't leave your car or truck parked on the street overnight.

Park Rule 21.4 RV Storage: RV parking is not to be used for vehicles that are inoperable or stored permanently. Keep your RV space clean and void of garbage or any stored items other than your RV.

Park Rule 21.3 Repairs: No repairing or servicing (whether major or minor in nature) of vehicles (including boats) will be permitted in driveways, carports, or streets.

Park Rule 12 Carports: Carports and porches are not designated as storage facilities. Many residents need to be reminded of this rule. It affects the Park and your neighbor's home value to have items stacked in your carport. Thanks in advance for your cleanup and removal of stored items.

Thank you for your continued cooperation



Matt Greenberg
GENERAL MANAGER
gm.mvmcc@gmail.com

415-883-5911 ■ 415-883-1971 Fax

Letter to Residents

Greetings from the PAC Board.

Our finances are in order. The debt service on the loan is 2.49 as of January 31, 2018, well above the required 2.0. Our cash plus short-, medium-, and long-term reserves is in excess of 4.75 million dollars.

MVEST continues to be active in focusing our attention on our safety issues around our community. For further information, see their report in this *Echo*.

Larry Cohen and I meet with the Novato City staff again in March following up on the issues raised at the last meeting and opening discussions about future plans for Marin Valley. Look for the agenda posted on the PAC bulletin boards March 23, and come to the next PAC meeting April 4 to hear the results.

PAC's subcommittee on Rules and Regulations has written a mission statement, and it is available for your review in this month's *Echo* following this letter.

The agenda for the next PAC meeting is posted in the clubhouse before the meeting, and we will email it to you if you have already placed yourself on the email list. If you would like to be included in the list to be notified please contact anilahere99@gmail.com

Come and contribute with your presence and your opinions to the next PAC meeting
Wednesday, April 4 at 6 pm.

In service,



Jay Shelfer
PAC PRESIDENT
jjshelfer@yahoo.com

PAC Elections

The seats currently held by

Jay Shelfer
John Hansen and
Peggy Hill

are up for election.

- **Sunday, May 7 – Saturday, May 13**
Nominations accepted by the election committee. Contact **Larry Cohen** (415-883-7786) or **Steve Plocher** (415-302-9043)
- **Sunday, May 14 – Friday, May 18**
Election committee prepares and mails ballots if more than three nominations.
- **Tuesday, May 15 (6 pm)**
Meet the candidates – Fireside Room.
- **Monday, May 21 – Friday, June 1 (3 pm)**
Ballots accepted at the clubhouse voting box in the lobby.
- **Friday, June 1 (4 pm)**
Votes counted.
- **Saturday, June 2**
PAC annual meeting; new PAC board members introduced.

To Marin Valley Residents!

by **PEGGY HILL**

The revision of the Rules and Regulations for our Park is only at the beginning stage. But because of the many comments and ideas we have heard from residents about our R&R's, I am attempting to put together a brief overview of what is important to most of us. This includes a Mission Statement along with a general philosophy of what is important to our community, our residents.

Please take a few minutes to read the following and email me (peggyhill@yahoo.com) your comments and thoughts.

The Rules and Regulations Committee has not been active for two months because of the winter colds and flu affecting so many of us. Hopefully, we will be back at work this month.

Thank you, Peggy Hill

MISSION STATEMENT

Community Living at Marin Valley

Marin Valley, a 55-plus senior community, affords the residents a beautiful and peaceful place to live along with friendly neighbors and the enjoyment of the beauty and serenity of nature in a quiet setting.

Our philosophy

MARIN VALLEY—

A harmonious and environmentally friendly senior community

Quiet Living

- Marin Valley residents appreciate a quiet neighborhood throughout the day and especially between the hours of 10 pm and 8 am.
- Because our homes are in close proximity to each other, Marin Valley residents and guests need to be aware that some noises (loud amplified music, televisions, radios, excessive wind chimes, loud motorcycles, cars and trucks, air conditioners and washing machines, etc.) can be upsetting to neighbors. When in doubt, ask your neighbor if a particular noise is a problem—be a good neighbor.

Night Sky Enjoyment

- Marin Valley residents are conscious of light pollution and strive to reduce the use

of artificial lights to allow residents and guests to enjoy the wondrous night sky.

- Neighbors appreciate porch lights turned off after 10 pm; motion detector lights are fine as long as they don't shine into your neighbor's bedroom windows.
- Residents appreciate low-wattage, shielded light fixtures with light directed to the ground, rather than upward into the night sky or into neighbors' windows.

Clean Air

- Marin Valley is gradually becoming a tobacco smoke-free community, and residents appreciate not smelling neighbors' smoke.
- Wood-burning fireplaces, high-emission vehicles, fragrant laundry products, etc. pose a health issue for many residents; they are also polluting and thus strongly discouraged.
- Spare the Air day ordinance restrictions are observed.

Beautiful Surroundings/ Visual Enhancement

- Marin Valley residents appreciate mobile home lots and homes that are clean, attractive, and fire safe; weeds, garbage bags, boxes, etc. should not accumulate on mobile home spaces, carports, or decks/porches.

Safe Environment

- Marin Valley residents appreciate residents and guests who drive safely, follow the speed limit, watch out for pedestrians, and stop at all stop signs.

Because Marin Valley is subject to earthquakes, fires, etc., vehicles parked on streets and cul-de-sacs need to be able to be moved within a moment's notice to allow emergency vehicle access.

Rules and Regulations

- Marin Valley residents appreciate it when the Rules and Regulations are followed. The most frequent complaint from residents is that too many residents and their guests ignore the R&R's. ■

Message from Mar Val

Dear Friends,

You need only attend a Mar Val monthly dinner or a weekly Pub Night to be aware of how very important volunteers are to ensuring the success of our functions.

The volunteer cadre of Mar Val consists of residents who volunteer in the Library, are members of the Greeting Committee or were involved

in assisting with social events during the period April, 2017 through March, 2018.

On **Saturday, April 21, 2018**, we will be hosting our annual dinner to recognize and thank those volunteers identified in the previous paragraph. As always, all residents are cordially invited to attend this year's celebration. We have included two individual

reservation forms, one for Mar Val volunteers and one for non-volunteers. Please review the instructions for each category, submit the form with your check and join us at this year's party.

With warmest regards,

Kathleen Dargie
Kathleen Dargie
 MAR VAL PRESIDENT
 kfdargie@aol.com

MAR VAL VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION DINNER

APRIL 21, 2018 ■ 5PM COCKTAILS ■ 6PM DINNER

M E N U

Chicken Picatta or Risotto with Spinach/Mushrooms
Fresh Steamed Asparagus ■ Green Salad ■ Apple Crisp

*Reservation deadline is April 18, 2018 at 5 PM or when 140 reservations have been received.
 For questions, please call Carolyn Corry at 415-370-6403.*



If you **have volunteered** for Mar Val between April 2017 and March 2018 and wish to attend the Appreciation Dinner, please complete the reservation form indicating your entrée choice and the committee for which you volunteered. Include a check for \$12 per volunteer. When you check in at the event, your check will be returned to you. If you do not come to the event, this check will be cashed.

If you **did not volunteer** during this time, you are still most welcome to attend. Please complete the appropriate reservation form indicating your entrée choice and include a check for \$15. This check will not be returned to you.

Separate checks are needed for VOLUNTEERS and NON-VOLUNTEERS. No cash please.

Mar Val Volunteer Appreciation Dinner—VOLUNTEERS

Please CIRCLE entrée choice Volunteer activities for Mar Val

RESIDENT _____ Chicken Vegetarian _____

RESIDENT _____ Chicken Vegetarian _____

Volunteers attending _____ @ \$12 each Check for _____ is enclosed. (NO CASH)

Your check WILL BE returned to you when you check in at the dinner. Reservation deadline—April 18—5 pm, or when 140 reservations have been received. Questions? Please call Carolyn Corry at 415-370-6403.

Mar Val Volunteer Appreciation Dinner—NON VOLUNTEERS

RESIDENT _____ Chicken Vegetarian Please CIRCLE entrée choice

RESIDENT _____ Chicken Vegetarian Please CIRCLE entrée choice

Residents attending _____ @ \$15 each Check for _____ is enclosed. (NO CASH)

Your check WILL NOT be returned to you when you check in at the dinner. Reservation deadline—April 18—5 pm, or when 140 reservations have been received. Questions? Please call Carolyn Corry at 415-370-6403.



Emergency Go-Bags

by JOHN FELD

By failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail. Benjamin Franklin

A go-bag should be an easy-to-carry container such as a backpack. It should be stored year-round in an easily accessible place in case you have to leave your home suddenly.

Everyone in Marin Valley should have a “grab and go” bag. It’s one of the most effective preparations for an emergency. This is a bag(s) that contains the bare minimum of everything you need to have if you have to leave your home at a moment’s notice. An emergency is impending or has arrived, and you have to leave immediately. What do you take? This is not for the situation when you have 24-hours’ notice and you can carefully pack your photos, all your papers, your computers, and your favorite lampshade. This is for when you have seconds, not minutes to get out of your home to save your life. Bill Crozier had one when he had to immediately vacate his burning home, and it helped immensely reconstructing his life after the fire destroyed his home.

Parents of small children know this well. They never go out without all the necessary items, which they keep ready. This is something we need to have in our hall closet or in the trunk of our car, ready to evacuate quickly.

So what goes into such a bag? You should assume that you have to survive for a short time with what is in the bag, and that if your home is lost, you can, at least in part, rebuild your life with the contents of this bag.

The bag itself. If you are fit enough to carry a backpack, then this is optimal;

otherwise, a carrying bag with handles. Be aware that you may have to carry this bag as you walk out of your home, so keep it light enough to enable you to do so, while still containing all the basic needs. So rather than find a bag and see what you can fit in it, start with what you **HAVE TO** take, and find a bag that is large enough to contain your necessary possessions. Be careful of suitcases with wheels. Can you go from your home at least as far as the clubhouse dragging a wheeled suitcase? Some are not very “road worthy.”

First, write out what exactly you want in the bag, get the stuff, and then find a bag that fits the stuff. If you have no experience with backpacks, go to your local sporting goods store and ask. First, go down the following list. You might find you’re trying to carry too much stuff. Make sure your choices are not too heavy to lift. Be brutal in discarding things you love but cannot carry. If you have heavy gold ingots under your mattress, get a safety deposit box at a bank, and they will be much safer. Be aware that the following is a **LONG** list. You may not need all of these items, but it is a good place to start choosing.

1. A copy, preferably on a Flash drive, of all your **important papers**. These should include copies of deeds to your home, bank records, insurance papers, copies of birth certificates, passports, and your will (you do have one don’t you?). The originals of all these should be stored somewhere very safe, preferably in a bank lock box. It is not a bad idea to create several Flash drives, and maybe give one to your kids, relatives, and neighbors.

2. Water, four full 500 ml water bottles. This is your immediate emergency supply. Not enough to live on for a week, but enough to last each person a day or two. Water containers should be large enough to contain what you can physically carry. Be careful, water is heavy! Most packs have external loops on which you can secure canteens and water carriers, so make sure your water container has a loop or strap that can easily attach to your pack or bag. (And be sure to get the necessary clips to do this.)

3. Some way to make a **fire**. Either a windproof lighter or windproof matches with a striker.

4. Food for at least two days, preferably three. Try not to make this all energy bars, but something more satisfying. No matter how delicious your favorite bar is, after two days with nothing else, it will be hard to stomach. If you have food that needs cooking or at least heated, then you should include some kind of stove and pans.

5. A personal emergency **first aid kit**.

6. Some form of **shelter**: A lightweight sleeping bag or blanket, and if it is not built in, some form of waterproofing.

7. Tools, which might include a Leatherman multi-tool, a portable hand-crank, emergency radio, flashlight, spare batteries.

Other items to consider:

- Plastic ponchos and rain gear
- Whistle to signal for help
- Face masks (N95’s)
- Plastic sheeting to shelter-in-place

Homeless Encampments and Us

by **BILL DAVIS** and **KEVIN MULVANEY**

Homeless encampments have often been associated with out-of-control fires, usually started by cooking fires or cigarettes and a potential danger to us. Homeless people could easily have started the fire that spread across the adjacent field to us a couple of years ago.

Recently, MVEST Steering Committee member Kevin Mulvaney walked the TPL lands surrounding our community. He was looking for all the homeless encampments that have been created around the Park.



One of nine encampments discovered

He found nine of these, some on top of the hill between us and the freeway,

others between us and the Bay Vista estate, and yet another close to the railroad tracks. He photographed each encampment and noted its location on a map. As far as could be ascertained these were all abandoned, some recently and others years ago.

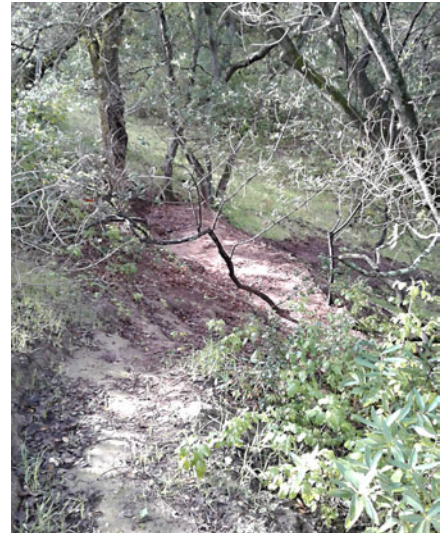


Another deserted encampment

PAC took this MVEST report to a 2x2 meeting that PAC holds with City staff. The new Assistant City Manager, Peggy Flynn got right onto the issue and the next day City employees started clearing out the sights. The last ones will be gone when the rainy season ends.

in our home right now. And they can easily fit into a small carry-on-style bag. This may sound like a lot, but it's better to have it and not need it than to need it and not have it.

So get this all together this week. Putting it off or not doing it can



An encampment cleared and restored

MVEST discovery and the City's quick response is an example of working together in partnership to make this a safer community.

Homeless encampments are a serious threat to this wildland-urban-interface part of Novato. Careless ignition of abundant dry ground fuels could easily become a devastating fire spreading into this community. If you see homeless people coming or going into the wildland surrounding this Park, please report your observations to Management for proper follow-up. The City of Novato has many resources available for the less fortunate and homeless. The Novato Police Department is willing to investigate any illegal camping.

Please maintain vigilance when you are driving in or out of the Park for suspicious or unusual activities. Safety always requires vigilance, our vigilance. ■

- Garbage bags and plastic ties for personal sanitation
 - Can opener
 - Complete change of clothing, including a long-sleeved shirt, long pants, sturdy gloves, and shoes
- Most of us already have most of these

cause a real headache after the event. Anything degradable, such as food, should be replaced at yearly intervals.

What you should have in your shed or car constitutes another article, which will be forthcoming.. ■

HOL *Home Owners League Message*



HOL is busy making Marin Valley an active, healthy, and happy environment.

About that contractor/handyman binder.

. . . If you fill out one of the forms about someone who has done work at your home, please do not put that completed form in the binder. There is a special box right next to the binder to put those in. I mis-spoke in last month's *Echo*!

Gym machines: The HOL Board discussed what/if any changes should be made to the current gym machines and requests for a new NuStep, a leg press, and a rowing machine. We put up tally sheets by each piece of equipment to figure out how much each one is being used. The results were interesting—by far the machines used most often are the treadmills. All the bikes are also used a lot. The Arc Trainer takes up a lot of space and is not used much, and the small gold incline bench is also used infrequently. Removing those two items would free up space. At the next HOL meeting, we will be choosing which machines should go and which to keep. If you want to have a say in this, come to the meeting, or write your opinion down and put it in the cubbyhole marked

“Opinions” by the bulletin board. The purchase of the rowing machine and/or the leg press can come out of current HOL monies. The NuStep is too expensive for HOL to buy and we would have to work out an agreement with Management to get one.

Just-1-Hour: We are looking for someone to take over and head up this helpful service in the Park. Joan Nelson has all the information. It's a great service and so accommodating for those of us who seek assistance for needs that are difficult to meet on our own. Please contact Janie Crocker, or Joan Nelson if you are willing to give it a shot. (See next page.)



The **Marin Valley Craft Show and Sale** will be **April 15** in the Ballroom. Mark your calendars! Anyone can participate at no cost. Setup is 10 am–12 pm. Clean-up is 4–5 pm. Ten percent of proceeds go to HOL. For information contact Tara Plocher—taraplocher@gmail.com.



New Watercolor Class in the Park!

Christine Cohen would like to teach a watercolor class for us! It will be in the Ballroom from 3–4 pm on Wednesdays starting April 18. Students need to bring their own materials. Look for her flyer at the clubhouse desk or on the HOL bulletin board. For questions, call Christine at 415-518-3431. Donations are appreciated but not necessary.

Bulletin board: HOL keeps an active bulletin board of upcoming activities with cubbyholes just to the right for you to drop off suggestions and opinions.

We will be participating in the **Earth-Day anti-litter campaign** on April 22, so get ready to pick up litter along Marin Valley Drive. **Peggy Hill** has volunteered to coordinate.

Quack Quack,

Janie Klimes Crocker

Janie Klimes Crocker

HOL PRESIDENT

jkklimes@swbell.net • 281-414-3984 cell

NEW: Meditation Group for Courage and Grace

Michael Hagerty and Joan Nelson are hosting a meditation group in the Fireside Room **every Tuesday at 5–5:30 pm** specially designed for people with chronic pain or disability. Many of us will suffer from these as we age, and both Michael and Joan have been through them in the last few years. Many spiritual traditions teach that how we handle our times of suffering can either make our suffering worse or be a source of courage and grace for ourselves and our loved ones.

We will have 20 minutes of silent meditation and will provide time to ask advice of others who are dealing with similar issues. We can also include a healing ceremony for those who wish. We especially invite people to attend who are dealing with disability or pain, as well as those who are happy, healthy, and well—because most of us will confront disability and pain as we age, and we can be prepared to meet the hard times with courage and grace.



COMMUNITY DANCE

Saturday, April 7 • 7–9 pm

Terry Patten will be our April guest DJ playing a mix of happy danceable music—old and new, moderate, uptempo, and a few slow ones, ranging from the 4 Tops to the Beatles to Michael Jackson to the Black Eyed Peas—from Stevie Winwood to Ed Sheeran to Linda Ronstadt to Adelle to Bruno Mars. Come share the joy!

Just-1-Hour Volunteer List

by Joan Nelson

A bad neighbor is a misfortune as much as a good neighbor is a great blessing. Hesiod

Which one are you?

It's scientifically proven that people who donate time and energy to charity (even money, to a certain extent) get feel-good chemical squirts in their brains. This is known to psychologists as "helpers high." Also, studies show that accepting the generosity of others makes the accepters' as well as the givers' brains squirt feel-good chemicals.

Want to get some feel-good squirts? You may have not noticed, or perhaps you noticed but ignored, a resident's need that's not being met. You may be a volunteer with skills and abilities that you want to share. You may be a recipient (temporarily or permanently) unable to do an important task, but reluctant to ask for help. By matching residents, the

Just-1-Hour program helps create a community of care and concern.

To add your name to the volunteer list see below, and also available in the Just-1-Hour box on the wall at the clubhouse), or for more information, contact:

Joan Nelson FigleafJoan@comcast.net
415-506-4166, 415-595-6221, cell

Shareen Akroosh	Meals; Plant/pet care; Letter writing; Shopping/errands	PatriciaAkroosh@sbcglobal.net	415-883-3077
Kamala Allen	Phoning; Letters; Emotional support/coaching; Office help	Dr.Allen108@gmail.com	415-306-6865
Lenny Gaskell	Hauling items to dumpster on dumpster days	Narda_Gaskell@yahoo.com	415-884-2989
Inga Grace	Visit with therapy cats	IngaGrace@hotmail.com	415-884-9088
Michael Hagerty	Rides; Phone calls; Plant/pet care; Emotional support	mrHagerty@ucdavis.edu	415-383-1345
Jim Harais	Computer issues	Jim@marinvalley.org	415-883-4088
Howard Hinkle	Rides		415-328-7403
Greg James	Rides	yankeezlutango@yahoo.com	650-380-2881
Martina Koeckritz	Visiting; Emotional support; Shop/errands; Trash out	tourko@aol.com	415-640-8436
David Krasnor	Rides; Laundry; Plant/pet care; Handyman; Dog walking	Krasnor@sbcglobal.net	510-506-9000
Michael Krupp	Reading aloud	KruppMI@gmail.com	415-234-6947
Elaine Locke	Visiting; Reading; Phoning; Plant care		415-506-4334
David MacLam	Remove juniper; Teach Taiji (a Martial art)	DavidMaclam@att.net	415-382-1974
Inula Martinkat	Emotional support	Inula@iups.edu	415-884-4469
Mickee McInerney	Light meals/soup	Dave4ever@comcast.net	415-234-6189
Charly McInroy	Shop; Errands; Light Housekeeping; Visiting	ClMcInroy@icloud.com	415-506-4339
Ursula Pederson	Reading; Shopping; Letters; Light housekeeping		415-506-4664
Ron Romaine	Small jobs. Limited yard work. Eves/weekends only	maxamp@att.net	415-612-4290.
Roberta Urquhart	Meals		415-883-0843
Nancy Warfield	Meals; Errands; Computer/office; Light housekeeping/yardwork	NrWarfield@me.com	510-734-3115
<i>Professional Caregivers donating Just-1-Hour:</i>			
Kathryn McMudie		theryn330@gmail.com	415-517-8583
Jeannie Freedom		JeannineFreedom@yahoo.com	810-543-3265

To be listed as a volunteer, please fill out this form or send your name, phone, and email to Joan Nelson, 415-506-4166 or figleafJoan@comcast.net.

Indicate your availability for any below:

Visiting (details such as therapy dogs or cats, reading, etc.) _____	Plant or pet care _____	Handyman (or woman) _____
Rides _____	Letter writing _____	Light housekeeping _____
Phone calls _____	Sewing/mending/ironing _____	Full house cleaning (details) _____
Meals _____	Help with meals _____	Trash take-out on Sunday nights _____
Laundry _____	Emotional support and coaching _____	Other _____
	Shopping and errands _____	Comments: _____
	Computer/office help _____	



First & Third Thursdays ■ Clubhouse
7 pm ■ Please, No Food or Drink
 Feel free to bring a comfortable chair

Almost Famous Thursday • April 5 • 7pm

(2000) Comedy, Drama 2 hrs 3 minutes

Director: Cameron Crowe **Starring:** Billy Crudup, Patrick Fugit, Kate Hudson, Frances McDormand **Oscar:** Best Writing, Cameron Crowe;
Golden Globes Winner: Best Picture; Best Supporting Actress, Kate Hudson

Oh, what a lovely film. I was almost hugging myself while I watched it. *Almost Famous* is funny and touching in so many different ways. It's the story of a 15-year-old kid, smart and terrifyingly earnest, who through luck and pluck gets assigned by Rolling Stone magazine to do a profile of a rising rock band. The magazine has no idea he's 15. Clutching his pencil and his notebook like talismans, phoning a veteran critic for advice, he plunges into the experience that will make and shape him. It's as if Huckleberry Finn came back to life in the 1970s, and instead of taking a raft down the Mississippi, got on the bus with the band. Roger Ebert



Oh Brother, Where Art Thou?

Thursday • April 19 • 7pm

(2001) Drama 1 hr 47 minutes

Directors Joel Coen and Ethan Coen **Starring** George Clooney, John Turturro, John Goodman, Holly Hunter **Oscar nominations:** Best Screenplay, Ethan Coen and Joel Coen, Best Cinematography, Roger Deakins **Golden Globes: Winner—** Best Performance, George Clooney, **Nominee—** Best Motion Picture



Loosely based on Homer's *Odyssey*, the movie deals with the adventures of Ulysses and his friends in 1930s Mississippi. Escaped from a chain gang and trying to reach Everett's home to recover the bank heist's buried loot, they are confronted by a series of strange characters—among them sirens, a cyclops, bank robber "Baby Face" Nelson (very annoyed by that nickname), a campaigning governor and his opponent, a KKK lynch mob, and a blind prophet who warns the trio that "the treasure you seek shall not be the treasure you find." ■

ART
 IN THE
PARK



by **SUZIE LAHR**

The Marin Valley artists have done it once again! An exciting new exhibit was installed in March in our very own Marin Valley Gallery. We hope you will stop by and enjoy the abundance of creativity, talent, and diversity of artwork of our resident artists. Please visit the Gallery, sign our guestbook, give us your comments, and show your appreciation

On Sunday, **April 22 at 3 pm** we will have an artists meeting to discuss the final decision and participation in the 2018 *Art in the Park* event on Sunday May 20. The event was not held last year, and this year we hope to generate enough artist participation to make it a go again! In the past we have had demonstrating artists painting live models, stone carving, and spinning wool, as well as many creative displays and artworks of all mediums. Artists and residents enjoyed fine cheeses and breads, farmers market organic fruit, gorgeous flower displays, and tasty sweet treats in an afternoon meeting each other and discussing the processes of creating beautiful works of art.

All artists old and new alike are welcome to join our Marin Valley artists group so give me a call at (415) 884-9611.

Heads up: an amazing local exhibit *Found In Our Own Backyard* at the Bartolini Gallery—behind the back of the Marin Civic Center—is an eye opening beautiful and extremely creative exhibit focusing on the environment and the damaging effects of packaging and technology components found here on our beaches, trails, and parks (until April 12). ■

Cutting the Cord

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

believing that you can not reduce your service level without penalty. This is NOT so. You can downgrade your service without penalty, if you do not cancel *all* services altogether. As they explain it on their website: *We want to make sure you know that the promotional offer you selected requires a minimum term agreement and is subject to an early termination fee if you cancel all Xfinity services during the agreement term.*

So would you like to extricate yourself from this nonsense, take charge of what you are paying for—and pay considerably less for frequently better service, and not pay for stuff you don't need or use? This is how I did it.

Internet Access

The first thing to understand is that if you want to continue to have service as good or better than you have right now, all you need from Comcast or AT&T is Internet access. Nothing else, but you do need that much. They do have a de facto monopoly on this—Comcast offers highspeed Internet access, AT&T here in the Park offers very slow DSL only, and that's about it (satellite Internet access currently totally sucks and is a very last resort).

TV Without Cable

So how would I get TV channels? There are 4 mainstream options currently, that work just like Netflix—it's a channel on your Roku, Amazon FireTV, or Apple TV box, or maybe an app on some smart TVs, but those tend to get updated last.

There are currently four mainstream Internet TV providers:

- DirecTV from AT&T
- Sling TV from Dish
- Hulu with Live TV
- YouTubeTV by Google.

They all come in at around \$25–45/month depending on your choice of channels, and ride on your Internet access. You can activate them on a month to month basis, with a 7-day free trial to get you started. I compared channel selections and pricing on each of their sites (these are bundles; you still can't really go a la carte and subscribe to only one station even if you only ever watch MSNBC or Fox for example) and read reviews until I chose Google's YouTubeTV (not the same as YouTube, confusingly), which has very extensive free unlimited DVR and on demand features that I like, and the best picture quality. The other providers have very limited or expensive add-on DVR. I pay \$35/month (as an early adopter; it's \$40 if you start now) and get all the channels I watched before, and it's a much better picture than what Comcast used to provide. I can also watch on my iPad or laptop at no extra charge.

How Fast Does My Internet Access Need To Be?

OK, but what about the Internet access, what do you need? If you're a heavy Internet user you might want a faster service, but I'm unwilling to pay extra for speed I rarely notice, nor do I have a bunch of connected teenagers or software developers in the house. So I called Comcast, cancelled my cable TV service with them, and they offered me 65 Mbps (pronounced "Meg"—a measure of the speed of access) for \$64.95. The sweet spot of price/performance for your access speed is about .65 Mbps. It's also about 10 times what AT&T DSL can offer on a good day. Since I had already replaced my "Internet Equipment Rental" from Comcast (\$10/month) with an identical modem I purchased on Amazon for \$89.99 one time, the \$64.95 was really what I would be paying each month. (You might need a router also if you don't have one, around \$30).

Now it gets interesting ...

But after three weeks Comcast sent me an offer for "Internet Plus Instant TV" at 150 Mbps for \$54.99. Reading it carefully I saw I could actually get 65 Mbps for \$44.99, and ignore the Instant TV part, which only works on a smartphone or an iPad, not on the TV, and with very limited channels unless you want to pay extra. It's also possible they might have this or a similar offer available for you immediately when you cancel the Cable TV part, or they may hide behind saying it's for "new" subscribers only. After 30 days with no Cable TV—even if you have kept the Internet access—you become a New Subscriber anyway, and so eligible for low offers again.

So I'm now paying \$45 for Internet access from Comcast + \$35 for YouTubeTV. I also chose to subscribe to HBO (\$15) and Showtime (\$11 if you use their app, or \$8.99 if you are an Amazon Prime subscriber and use the channel on Prime Video). A grand max total of \$103.99. I used to pay \$149.28 for the same selection. An annual savings of \$543.

Wait, What About The Phone?

What about if you have a phone line with Comcast? If you want to keep the number, you can port it to Ooma and pay less than \$5/month in fees, after buying the box for \$89.99. Or get Google Voice (difficult to port a number, so accept a new one) which is free for all US calls on an Obihai 200 box that costs \$49.95 one time. Both these options just need the Internet access.

I realize this can all be confusing and I just can't fit all the details into this article, which is not intended to be a step-by-step manual, more a telling of what I did. If you want more—model numbers, have questions etc.—email me at pd@pdyke and I'll try to help. ■

California's Redwood Genera

by FRANK SIMPSON



California's Coast Redwoods *Sequoia sempervirens* (forever flourishing, forever green) are the tallest trees in the world.

Most who call California home are aware of our magnificent Redwoods. There are two genera living here, both named in memory of Chief Sequoia, inventor of the written language of his Cherokee people. Along the Pacific Coast, from Big Sur to the Oregon border, are the Coast Redwoods, *Sequoia sempervirens* (forever flourishing, forever green). These are the tallest trees in the world, some near Orick, California, reaching well beyond a football field in height. They appear as very wise, gentle giants, living to approximately 2,200 years. These trees are useful for lumber, due to their red-colored wood and bark being resistant to fire and decay. The Coastal Sequoia first were imported to England via Russia, likely collected by the fur traders of Fort Ross.

In the Sierra Nevada Mountains around Yosemite grow the Giant Sequoia, *Sequoiadendron giganteum*. These giant trees

are designated "Wellingtonia" in England to commemorate the Duke of Wellington's decisive victory over Napoleon at Waterloo in 1815. The trees of this latter genus are not quite as tall as the Coastal Redwoods but are considerably more massive in width and bulk, making them the largest living organisms on Earth. The Giant Sequoias are more cold-tolerant than the Coast Redwoods and live somewhat longer, to approximately 3,200 years. These Sierra Redwoods are not as suitable for lumber, as their trunks tend to shatter when they fall.

According to the fossil record, ancient redwoods were distributed widely in the Northern Hemisphere. A few years ago, for example, I drove into the Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument, just west of Colorado Springs, Colorado, expecting to see dinosaur bones. I was surprised to find on display the remains of yet another redwood,

Sequoia affinis, now extinct. Visually, this species had smaller cones similar to the Coast Redwoods, but narrower fronds like the Giant Sequoia of our Sierra Mountains. Thus it looked to be a predecessor or perhaps an intermediary bridge between the two “modern” California redwoods with which we are familiar.

But a truly interesting story concerns another “extinct” redwood, which prior to WWII was known only from its fossil remains. In 1944, a now famous Chinese forester, Zhan Wang, collected specimens from an unidentified tree in remote Lichuan County, Hubei Province, China. These trees, which the locals called *shuisa* (water fir), had twisted trunks that were being used to make furniture; some of the larger trees even were worshipped, with temples built around their base. According to a fascinating pamphlet published by the Save the Redwoods League, Professor Ralph W. Chaney, a paleobotanist at the University of California, Berkeley, noticed Professor Wang’s discovery. Chaney wondered if perhaps Zhan Wang’s tree was a living example of the extinct *Metasequoia* redwood that Chaney knew only from its fossils. In 1948, with the war ended, Chaney bravely traveled to China. Mao Tse Tung was just rising to power, and exportation from China was strictly prohibited. So Professor Chaney smuggled a few seedlings out of China in his suitcase. He then wisely distributed his handful of priceless “living fossils” to universities and botanists around the world for preservation and study. Some were planted on the UC Berkeley campus. One of Chaney’s specimens, which I have seen and have inquired about, still is thriving on a hill below the Botany greenhouses at the University of Wisconsin (*Metasequoia* is more cold hardy than are the California redwoods). Another may have been entrusted to Wakehurst Place in West Sussex, England. But soon after planting his rare seedlings, Chaney and others learned something unique about

Above: *Wellingtonia*: Britain’s Tallest Christmas Tree—Wakehurst Place, West Sussex, UK. Right: Chinese Dawn Redwood (*Metasequoia glyptostroboides*) displaying its autumn colors



the *Metasequoia* that was impossible to discern from their fossils. These trees, like the larch tree, are deciduous—they turn brown in the fall and lose their needles. Regrettably, no one mentioned this fact to UC Berkeley’s groundskeeper, who, thinking these bare coniferous trees had died, had the campus’s *Metasequoias* cut down. One only can imagine what became of our unfortunate gardener!

Today, however, we know of three living genera of Redwood: the Coastal Redwood and Giant Sequoia of California, and *Metasequoia glyptostroboides*, more commonly called the Dawn Redwood, of Lichuan, China. These gorgeous trees have been cultivated and now can be purchased from nurseries around the world. ■



American Wigeon

Article and Photography by DAVID GRAY



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The American wigeon (*Mareca americana*) is one of the family of dabbling ducks. Dabbling ducks are surface feeding and rarely dive when foraging; their feet are significantly smaller than those of the diving duck, and so they lack the

propulsion needed to hunt underwater. One often sees them “tipping up”, bottoms-up in the water as they forage for algae, aquatic plants, and insects. It is a pose that is amusing to see. They also eat plants in wetlands and fields.

Identification of the male is easiest: the brilliant green-colored “swoosh” on the side of its head, the white crown that extends down the back of the head, the gray bill with a black tip, and the pinkish-brown body set it apart. The female lacks the green

male. Her beak is identical to that of the male. American wigeons are ubiquitous across North America, wintering in the U.S., Mexico, the Caribbean islands of the Bahamas, and Cuba and Hispaniola and breeding throughout Canada and Alaska. The oldest known wigeon was over 21 years old. While they are not currently a species of concern, their numbers are dwindling.

These American Wigeon males were photographed at the Las Gallinas ponds, where there are many other dabbling duck species: mallards, Northern shovelers, and cinnamon



and white markings on the head and the pinkish tint to the body. Her tailfeathers are mottled, and she lacks the bright white patch seen on the

teal were also out and about on the ponds. As winter comes to a close, it's time to get out and see them before they head back up north! ■

teal were also out and about on the ponds. As winter comes to a close, it's time to get out and see them before they head back up north! ■

SUNDAY 1	MONDAY 2	TUESDAY 3	WEDNESDAY 4	THURSDAY 5	FRIDAY 6	SATURDAY 7
6:30-9:30AM Taiji McLam/ Clubhouse Deck 1-4 PM Mahjong Fireside Room	6-8+AM Trash Pickup 9:30AM Low-Impact Exercise Fireside Room 10-11AM Aerobics Bamboo Rm 6PM MVEST Meeting Fireside Room 7:20PM Poor Man's Poker Card Room	6:30-9:30AM Taiji McLam/ Clubhouse Deck 10:00-11:30AM Chair Yoga Fireside Room 11:30AM John Marino/ Fireside Room 5-5:30PM Meditation Fireside Room	6:30-9:30AM Taiji (McLam/ Clubhouse Deck 10-11AM Aerobics Bamboo Rm 11AM-1PM Whistlestop call Roberta 415-883-0843 11:15AM-2:00PM Craft and Chat Ballroom 6PM PAC MEETING	6:30-9:30AM Taiji McLam/ Clubhouse Deck 9:15AM Qi Gong Dove Bamboo Room 6 PM Silent Meditation 7 PM Film Night ALMOST FAMOUS	10-11AM Aerobics Bamboo Room 4PM Canasta 5-7PM Pub Night Ballroom 7 PM Board Game Night Fireside Room	9-11AM MVEST Emergency Practice 7-9PM COMMUNITY DANCE
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
6:30-9:30AM Taiji 1-4 PM Mahjong ECHO DEADLINE	6-8+AM Trash Pickup 9:30AM Low-Impact Exercise Aerobics 6PM MVEST Meeting 7:20PM Poor Man's Poker	6:30-9:30AM Taiji 10:00-11:30AM Chair Yoga 5-5:30PM Meditation	6:30AM Taiji 10-11AM Aerobics 11AM-1PM Whistlestop 11:15AM Craft and Chat 6PM MAR VAL MEETING	9:15AM Qi Gong 6 PM Silent Meditation 7PM Film Night O BROTHER WHERE ART THOU	10-11AM Aerobics 4PM Canasta 5PM Pub Night 7:15 PM Bingo	
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
6:30-9:30AM Taiji 11AM-4 PM CRAFT SHOW AND SALE Ballroom 1-4 PM Mahjong	6AM Trash Pickup 9:30AM Low-Impact Exercise Aerobics 6PM MVEST Meeting 7:20PM Poor Man's Poker	6:30-9:30AM Taiji 10:00-11:30AM Chair Yoga 5-5:30PM Meditation	6:30AM Taiji 10-11AM Aerobics 11AM-1PM Whistlestop 11AM Bridge 11:15AM Craft and Chat 2:30 PM Readers' Theatre 3-4 PM Watercolor Class Ballroom 5 PM Mar Val Volunteer Dinner RESERVATION DEADLINE or after 140 reservations 6 PM HOL MEETING	9:15AM Qi Gong 6 PM Silent Meditation 7PM Film Night O BROTHER WHERE ART THOU	10-11AM Aerobics 4PM Canasta 5PM Pub Night	MVEST Evacuation Practice MAR VAL VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION DINNER 5PM COCKTAILS 6PM DINNER
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
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29	30	MAY 1				
6:30-9:30AM Taiji 1-4 PM Mahjong FULL MOON 6 PM	6AM Trash Pickup 9:30AM Low-Impact Exercise Aerobics 6PM MVEST Meeting 7:20PM Poor Man's Poker	6:30-9:30AM Taiji 10:00-11:30AM Chair Yoga 5-5:30PM Meditation	6:30AM Taiji 10-11AM Aerobics 11AM-1PM Whistlestop 11:15AM Craft and Chat 3-4 PM Watercolor Class 6 PM PAC MEETING			

APRIL 2018