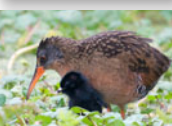


T H E
ECHO

APRIL 2019

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PAC Elections

by JOHN HANSEN

The seats currently held by

Larry Cohen and Steve Plocher are up for election.

**Monday, May 6—
Sunday, May 12**
Nominations accepted by the election committee. Contact John Hansen 415-847-7155 johnhansen.emt@gmail.com

If there are more than two nominations:

- **Monday, May 13—
Friday, May 17**
Election committee prepares and mails ballots
- **Saturday, May 18 (11 am)**
Meet the candidates — Fireside Room.
- **Monday, May 27—
Friday, May 31 (3 pm)** Ballots accepted at the clubhouse voting box in the lobby.
- **Friday, May 31 (4 pm)** Votes counted.

Saturday, June 1
PAC annual meeting (in lieu of the first Wednesday of the month); new PAC Board members installed.

At Moulin de Papier

Husband, you are gone. I am here—
connected to nothing.

I churn the water of the past
like the waterwheel, wet wooden
slats stamped with mold.

Here I discover myself
still at your service.

A habit I must change.

Lee Dunne



Pop-Up Party with Pen Women

Tea, Treats, Art & Poetry

Wednesday, April 17 • Clubhouse • 1-3 pm

RSVP Lee Dunne 616-750-4266

Sponsored by the Golden Gate-Marin Branch of
National League of American Pen Women



Bill Hartwell Is Coming Again to Marin Valley

**Sunday, April 28
3-5 pm**

- Country-folk singer-songwriter Bill Hartwell, who currently resides in San Diego, primarily performs in Southern California, but his gigs have taken him from coast to coast. His performances over 30 years include playing original songs from his five CDs.
- Bill is an old friend of residents **Charlotte Kells** and **Lee Dunne**, who sponsored the event last year. This year HOL will be sponsoring this free event for our community.
- Light refreshments
- Check out www.billhartwell.com

IN MEMORIAM

Martin Dvorin

January 31, 1923 – March 11, 2019

THE ECHO APRIL 2019

MARIN VALLEY MOBILE COUNTRY CLUB

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DIRECTOR/HOSPITALITY Larry Moore 883-0486
DIRECTOR/RESERVATIONS Carolyn Corry 370-6403

DEADLINE

**Articles—due the 8th of the month or
sooner for the following month's issue.**

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*).

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

Remember Marin Valley is a NO POISON community. There are alternative methods to eliminate rats and gophers without the use of poisons. Our owls, coyotes, and turkey vultures are impacted when they eat poisoned rodents.

Please refrain from flushing Handi Wipes. They are a constant problem for our sewage pump system.

Men's and Women's Sauna: Please do not pour water over the heating element. This has taken place in the past. The wood floors can get damaged, and this is **extremely dangerous**. 220-volt systems are not watertight. These are **dry heat saunas**, not steam room units.

A few Park rules that affect you and your neighbors:

Paid vehicle storage prevents people from using our guest parking spaces and poses an impact to clubhouse events. We are not providing the option to store your car, 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 or driveway.

Park Rule 21.4 RV Storage
RV parking areas are not to be used for vehicles that are inoperable or stored permanently without being used. 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 aware of this rule. It affects the Park and your neighbors' home value to have items stacked in your carport. Thanks for your anticipated cooperation with cleanup and removal of stored items.

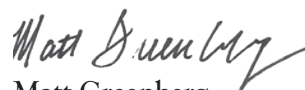
Utilities

Remember, if you are experiencing any problems or have concerns with your gas system, please call the front desk first before calling PG&E. MVMCC is your gas company. Management and maintenance personnel have received comprehensive professional training and testing. We hold certification to answer questions and/or help with any problems or concerns. This is required to stay in compliance with California Public Utilities Commission.

PG&E "CARE" Program

The California Alternative Rate for Energy provides a monthly discount on energy bills for income-qualified households. Contact the front desk for more information or your application.

Thank you,



Matt Greenberg
GENERAL MANAGER
gm.mvmcc@gmail.com

415-883-5911 ■ 415-883-1971 Fax

Greetings from the PAC Board,

Our finances are in order. The debt service on the loan is 2.52 (computed by our finance committee, Steve Plocher, C.P.A.) as of December 31, 2018, well above the required 2.00. Our cash, plus short-, medium-, and long-term reserves, is in excess of 4.9 million dollars.

Firewise Sites

MVEST was one of the first of the ever-growing number of Firewise sites here in Marin county. These organizations spread awareness of fire dangers and the high risk of not being prepared. Firewise sites receive training and support from FIRESafe Marin and from fire districts and fire departments all over the county and state. These agencies have provided financial support (MVMCC already has received over \$100,000 to aid in planning and fuel removal) as well as important related information on how to mitigate and reduce the growing danger of fire here at Marin Valley.

The recent fires in Northern California evidence this danger. The Tubbs and Paradise fires destroyed whole communities, causing billions of dollars of damage to homes and businesses and the deaths of scores of residents. When members of MVEST and I visited Santa Rosa, we saw how the present dangers of spreading fires happen. It was a firestorm, not one that can be suppressed by conventional means. The Tubbs Fire spread total devastation at over 30 miles an hour and jumped Highway 101 and other large thoroughfares without pausing. The winds were strong enough to lift pickup trucks and hurl them into trees and across roads. The aluminum on homes and cars simply

melted into puddles. The danger is not only the wall of fire itself, but also the countless embers carried by tornado-strength winds to areas miles from the existing fire. MVEST and Marin Valley Management are focused on removing the excess fuel both surrounding us and within the community and on helping to spread awareness of what has become the extreme danger of fire-prone plants (junipers, pampas grass, bamboo, etc.) that must be removed from near our homes.

The PAC and its standing committee MVEST have granted permission for Firewise and FIRESafe Marin (whose members include Marin Valley residents, the fire districts, and fire departments throughout Marin) to meet at the clubhouse to exchange information, knowledge, and support.

FIRESafe Marin Meetings

FIRESafe Marin meetings occur occasionally one morning a month. When they do meet, it is on a Friday from 9 to 11 am.

Firewise Meetings

Meetings for Firewise representatives are quarterly on Fridays at 11 am–1 pm. The annual Firewise workshop from 9 am to 1 pm, such as the one held on March 8, and occasional other smaller workshops, such as the March 19 Green Contractors Workshop, which includes our own contractors, aside from presenting a temporary parking problem, cause minimal interference to our normal routine.

While the immense value of these meetings for the community certainly exceeds the occasional inconvenience of a full parking lot, the **parking** issue is acknowledged as disruptive for

residents due to the limited number of spaces available. This is being addressed by PAC, Management, and the City. Our proposal is to designate some dedicated parking slots only for residents.

These meetings are over by 1:30 pm. Residents who would like to access the clubhouse might choose to reach the office by phone or email or to come at other times to conduct their affairs. Welcome to the new reality of dangers caused by climate change. The increased fire threat may not be the only increasing hazard we face. Our community is extremely fortunate to have MVEST to research and find reasonable solutions to the kinds of problems we have never before had to face. MVEST is recognized countywide and beyond for its organization and leadership role.

Sewage System

For the past decades, we have been building cash reserves for the eventuality of renewing the utility infrastructure of Marin Valley. Case in point is our sewage system, with two lift stations and related plumbing. The life expectancy of the system has been exceeded. Failure of the system would not be a good indicator of when to repair or replace, as the failure would add considerably to the cost due to fines, cleanup, and then replacement of the equipment, not to mention the nuisance and inconvenience to all of us. We are fortunate in having the engineering group who originally designed the system to survey and advise us on how to proceed. The PAC project planning committee, consisting of John Hansen and I, has worked with the City's engineering group, Park Manager

Matt Greenberg, and the design group to work out the most cost-effective, totally adequate system not only to cover the replacement but also to ensure safeguards for most anticipated needs and emergencies. You will recall the emergency last year when the electrical systems failed, requiring the replacement of an electrical transformer and the related emergency electrical generation equipment rental—an experience we don't want to repeat. Final details are being considered, and we will be approaching the City Council to include the project in next year's budget.

Land Below the Clubhouse

The PAC's project planning committee met with many residents prior to the PAC Board meeting on March 6. We received many comments and suggestions for the use of the land below the clubhouse. There will be several more meetings to focus on the wishes of the residents before any suggestions are brought to the PAC Board for approval.

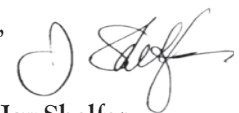
PAC Elections

On Page 2 is the list of seats that are up for election along with the election dates and times.

April Meeting Half-Hour Later

The April PAC meeting will begin a half-hour later than usual at 6:30 pm on Wednesday, April 3. The agenda shall be posted in the clubhouse the previous Sunday.

In service,



Jay Shelfer
PAC PRESIDENT
jjshelfer@yahoo.com



MVEST Sounds the Alarm

by CAROL-JOY HARRIS

On a rainy Saturday morning in February, teams of volunteers fanned out in Marin Valley to visit the homes of those who signed up for Sound the Alarm, an event staged by the American Red Cross*. My husband Bill Davis and I were one of many teams that day.

Most teams consisted of two people, but some had three. One person was the “educator” and the other the “technician.” I’ll leave you to guess which was which in our particular team. Once the home was inspected to see where the existing smoke alarms were, if any, the resident and the volunteer team would decide whether and where to install additional alarms. The ones we were installing are the new kind that last for ten years; they are sealed, and during their lifespan the battery never needs replacing. At the end of ten years, the entire alarm is replaced.

The educator would also talk to the resident about escape routes; fire extinguishers; emergency plans such as “go bags”, notification of family members in case of evacuation, plans for pets; and other such topics. All this was while the technician was up on a step stool installing any needed new alarms.

Besides the Marin Red Cross, volunteers also came that day to help from the Solano Red Cross and even from the Salvation Army. The Red Cross has told us that this was the biggest Sound the Alarm event for the entire Marin and Solano County

region. They were expecting to visit 25 homes, but by the end of the day, 54 Marin Valley homes were made safer because of these wonderful people who gave up their Saturday to do this for our community.

There were a few people who had signed up to be visited that day but for one reason or another were missed. If you signed up already, you will be contacted by the Red Cross, and they will make the effort to come back to Marin Valley to visit your home.

If you did not sign up but would still like a free smoke alarm, you can call the American Red Cross’s local disaster program manager, Vincent Valenzuela, at 707-366-5047. You can also call Vince if you’d like to volunteer for events like this or for any other of the Red Cross programs – and there are many! I can personally attest that the experience was rewarding and – yes – fun!

And I was justifiably proud when I was told these things by the visiting volunteers:

It’s so beautiful here! You’re so lucky!

Everyone I talked to loves living here.

Even people who live by themselves don’t feel alone here. Everyone looks out for their neighbors.

Of course, my favorite was by a dynamic 90-year-old woman who lives alone and who volunteers at a local hospital:

I really appreciate the MVEST articles every month in the Echo. They’re so helpful. ■

* The American Red Cross is a volunteer organization that is supported solely through donations and has no government affiliation.

FADR First Aid Class

Saturday, April 13 • 9 am–1 pm



On April 13, First Aid for Disaster Response (FADR), part of the Marin Medical Reserve Corps, will conduct a first aid class in the clubhouse. The Medical Reserve Corps program volunteers include nonmedical, medical, public health, and mental health professionals such as physicians, nurses, pharmacists, emergency medical technicians, and specialists.

We are fortunate to have a FADR class here. The course, presented for Marin Valley and Pacheco Valle residents, covers recognizing basic life threats, clearing and protecting airways, and stopping severe bleeding; it includes principles and practice of tourniquet application, applying a splint and sling, and safely lifting and moving victims.

This four-hour, skill-building workshop trains participants to recognize life threats in 15 seconds, protect an airway, and stop bleeding. The focus is to build skills to help save a life in the first few minutes to hours after a major disaster when 911 crews likely won’t be able to help everybody who needs help. The class is very interactive in design and is made up of short hands-on demonstrations and ample time to practice skills, led by many expert presenters and coaches to guide your practice, using first aid supplies you normally can find at home.

Although designed for nonmedical volunteers, many MDs, RNs, and EMTs attend these workshop for timely and valuable updates in knowledge and skills. The training is led by Marin Medical Reserve Corps doctors, nurses, and EMTs to provide individual coaching. Continuing education credit is available upon completion.

There is no charge for the class. If there are too many people wishing to participate, MVEST will initiate another class here. Look for a sign-up sheet at the clubhouse front counter. ■

Message from Mar Val

Dear Friends,

As has been our custom for many years, Mar Val has once again set aside a Saturday in April to recognize those residents who have volunteered their time to our group in the preceding twelve months. If you have volunteered in the library, been a member of the Greeting Committee, or were involved in assisting at any of Mar Val's events

during the period April 2018 through March 2019, we are inviting you to be our guest at the **Mar Val Volunteer Appreciation Dinner on Saturday, April 20.**

We appreciate that there are numerous residents who volunteer with all the organizations comprising MVMCC; nonetheless, we are financially unable to underwrite the cost of dinner for so significant a number.

We do wish, however, to extend a most sincere invitation to all residents to join in the celebration on April 20th. Please note we have provided individual sign-up sheets for Mar Val volunteers as well as for nonvolunteer guests.

Tres de Mayo Pub

Since Cinco de Mayo falls on a Sunday this year, our annual celebration at Pub will take place on

Friday (Tres de Mayo). Pub opens at 5 pm, and the Mexican dinner will be served for approximately 20–25 minutes beginning at 5:30 pm. If you have ever attended this event, you know it's a fiesta not to be missed.

With warmest regards,


Kathleen Dargie
MAR VAL PRESIDENT
kfdargie@aol.com

MAR VAL PRESENTS



VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION DINNER

APRIL 20 ■ 5 PM COCKTAILS ■ 6 PM DINNER

M e n u

Chicken Piccata or Risotto with Spinach/Mushrooms
Fresh Steamed Asparagus ■ Green Salad ■ Apple Pie

Reservation deadline is April 17 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 2018 and March 2019 and wish to attend the Appreciation Dinner, please complete the reservation form indicating your entrée choice and the committee on which you volunteered. Include a check for \$15. When you check in at the event, your check will be returned to you. If you do not attend the dinner, your check will be cashed.

If you **did not volunteer** for Mar Val during this time, you are most welcome to attend the event. 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 NONVOLUNTEERS. No Cash.

Mar Val Volunteer Appreciation Dinner Reservation Form—VOLUNTEERS

RESIDENT _____ *Please circle entrée choice*
Chicken Risotto

RESIDENT _____ Chicken Risotto

Volunteer activities for Mar Val _____

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

Reservation deadline is April 17 at 5 pm or when 140 reservations have been received. Your check WILL BE returned to you when you check in at the dinner. Questions? Please call Carolyn Corry at 415-370-6403.

Mar Val Volunteer Appreciation Dinner Reservation Form—NONVOLUNTEERS

RESIDENT _____ *Please circle entrée choice*
Chicken Risotto

RESIDENT _____ Chicken Risotto

GUEST _____ Chicken Risotto

GUEST _____ Chicken Risotto

residents/guests attending _____ @ \$15 each Check for _____ enclosed. (NO CASH)

Reservation deadline is April 17 at 5 pm or when 140 reservations have been received. Your check WILL NOT BE returned to you when you check in. Questions? Please call Carolyn Corry at 415-370-6403.

MAR VAL PRESENTS

TRES DE MAYO



PUB EVENT – MAY 3

PUB AT 5 PM ■ DINNER SERVICE AT 5:30 PM

Tim Hart will once again be creating a Mexican feast for Mar Val's Tres de Mayo celebration at Pub.

Reservations are required if you wish to enjoy this delicious dinner.

Reservation deadline is May 1 at 5 pm or when 100 reservations have been received.

This event is for residents only. Questions, call Carolyn Corry @ 415-370-6403.

MAR VAL TRES DE MAYO RESERVATION FORM

RESIDENT _____ RESIDENT _____

residents attending _____ @ \$5 each Check for _____ enclosed.

Reservation deadline is May 1 at 5 pm or when 100 reservations have been received.

For questions, please call Carolyn Corry at 415-370-6403.

HOL Home Owners League Message



Spring is finally springing! Birds are singing, flowers are blooming, and Pauline is planting.

Yard Sale—HOL is planning on having a village-wide garage sale this summer. It will operate like many you have seen in other communities. We are establishing rules now. There will be some parameters regarding what you can sell, because we want to complement Mar Val's Black Cat in October. If you want to participate, you will be required to sign an agreement that you won't sell anything that could be sold at Black Cat. Things you can sell include furniture, electronics, clothing, books, and some household items that are not part of a set. Each participant will get a flag or marker on their mailbox and their address on a map. Unlike other neighborhood garage sales, the cost of advertising and supplies will be funded by HOL. We welcome any suggestions, which should be directed to Meg Jordan or Kamala Allen.

MUCH more information on this will be forthcoming and a flyer will be distributed with that information later.

HOL is also working on a way for you to dump your unwanted stuff. We can no longer have a Dumpster, but we know how difficult it is to have unused stuff hauled off. This MAY be in conjunction with the garage sale, but participation will not be limited to garage sale people. More on this exciting prospect later.



Rollin' Root—Don't forget to come every Thursday to the clubhouse parking lot from 11 am–noon and shop for fresh organic foods. It's not just fruits and vegetables; there are nuts, fresh organic yogurt, and GREAT PRICES!

Poop Stations— Management will be installing two new dog poop stations, one at the bottom of Sunrise and one at the junction of Marin Valley and Marin View.

Ed Collins is trying to get together an HOL-sponsored poker tournament. Contact him at mretc@hotmail.com.

Craft and Chat group is getting larger and larger. We have a lot of fun sewing, crafting, and chatting every Wednesday at 11:30 in the library. JOIN US! Craft group volunteers will repair clothing, sew seams, and replace buttons free of charge if you bring the items in. They will also teach you how to make repairs and sew on buttons yourself.

???—Other questions to think about: How can we help people in the Park who need to make money, and how can we help people improve their front yard spaces?

Note: Next HOL meeting is **April 17 • 6 pm • Fireside Room**

Janie Klimes-Crocker

Janie Klimes-Crocker
HOL PRESIDENT
jkklimes@swbell.net
281-414-3984 cell

HOL COMMUNITY PRESENTATIONS



COMMUNITY DANCING

First Saturday of the Month • Saturday • April 6 • 7–9 pm

DJ Michael Hagerty will offer sounds of the '60s, '70s, '80s, and '90s to dance to.

Want to Learn Swing Dancing and Line Dancing?
It's good for your brain and your heart—and it's fun!

Michael Hagerty will teach swing and line dancing at **6:30 pm** just before the Community Dance. Michael has trained with National Champions Olga and Dima Sukachov and has performed here. "We'll learn simple ways to start dancing and to look good anytime, whether you are dancing alone or with a partner."

LEFT Michael Hagerty shown with his dancing partner Kat at the March dance.



FILM
NIGHT

1st and 3rd Thursdays • Clubhouse • 7 pm
Please, no food or drink • Feel free to bring a chair



As It Is in Heaven Thursday • April 4 • 7 pm
Comedy, Drama, Musical (2004) 2 hr 13 min

Director Kay Pollak

Oscar Nominee Best Foreign Language Film of the Year

A successful international conductor interrupts his career and returns to his childhood village in the far north of Sweden. He is soon asked to listen to the fragment of a church choir just to give a little bit of good advice. From that moment, nothing in the village is the same again. The choir develops and grows. He makes both friends and enemies and finds love.



Pulp Fiction Thursday • April 18 • 7 pm
Crime, Drama (1994) 2 hr 34 min

Director Quentin Tarantino

Starring John Travolta, Uma Thurman, Samuel L. Jackson, Harvey Keitel, and Christopher Walken

Awards 64 awards, 69 nominations

Widely considered the most influential American movie of the 1990s—Director Tarantino synthesized such seemingly disparate traditions as the syncopated language; the serious violence of American gangster movies, crime movies, and films noirs mixed up with the wacky atmosphere of cartoons, video games, and Japanese animation.

ART
IN THE
PARK



by SUZIE LAHR

We cordially invite
all Marin Valley residents to our
Artists Wine and Cheese Reception
Sunday, April 14 from 3 to 5 pm
to celebrate the 5-Year Anniversary
of the Marin Valley Gallery

Twenty to twenty-five artists in the Park are here to bring you springtime beauty and delight displaying over 30 works of art encompassing all styles and mediums in our new Marin Valley Gallery exhibit, which was installed at the end of March. The creativity in Marin Valley is ever expanding, with much inspiration drawn from one another. Our very own **Janet Bogardus**, an exceptional artist and teacher, is teaching a weekly drawing class at our clubhouse and has motivated eight to ten of us either to begin exploring or to renew our creative spirit. You will see a display from this class in our current gallery exhibit along with the other works submitted by our resident artists.



Marin MOCA

500 Palm Drive – Hamilton

Terrain—An Exhibition of Paintings by Janet Bogardus

– 2nd floor gallery

Viola Frey: Her Self – 1st floor gallery

Through April 15

Marin Community Foundation

Hangar 5 Hamilton – Suite 2

Exterior – works by Michael Murphy, Nate Geare,

Terry Thompson

Through June 14; weekdays 9 am–5 pm

de Young Museum

Golden Gate Park, San Francisco

Monet—The Late Years: Through May 27

Gauguin—A Spiritual Journey: Through April 7

Novelty Keeps Your Brain Healthy

Consider Play, Improvisation, and Learning Something Entirely New

by MEG JORDAN

Our brains love newness. Who knew?

Well, you might have already known that in a subtle way: We notice if something is different in a loved one's appearance, or our favorite grocery items aren't in the customary shelf spot, or an unfamiliar auto expense is on the credit card statement. In fact, we're so used to spotting newness that it may seem second nature by now.

*What's that ding on my car door?
That wasn't there before.*

Who moved my chair?

The human brain is wired to seek out novel images, sounds, and words, and while we used to think that scanning activity of the brain is tied to survival ("hmm ... that growl in the night doesn't quite sound like my mate's usual snore"), new findings indicate that it may be more often tied to motivation, learning, and reward.

Game designers take advantage of that finding. *League of Legends*, one of the most popular online games today, keeps you motivated (a.k.a. addicted) to the worldwide competition by rewarding the beginner's fledgling efforts as you knock off monsters and climb the fantasy ladder to champion status. But even a simple online game of Word Scramble or Lumosity is said to offer rewards in your quest to excel and thereby provide stimulation for neurons.

Brain Buzz

The novelty switchboard in humans and higher mammals is located in a wide swath known as the SN/VTA (substantia nigra-ventral tegmental area). Researchers noted through fMRI imaging how the SN/VTA fired when novel faces and scenes (called "oddballs") were shown to study subjects. If the face was somewhat familiar, the SN/VTA was quiet. It only activated when significant difference or newness occurred. Not surprisingly, highly negative scenes didn't make any impact—seems we're all too used to scenes of violence and inhumanity—not in this area of the brain anyway.

The hippocampus and amygdala are linked to SN/VTA activity through memory and learning. There seems to be a straightforward motivational boost to explore our environments, take risks, and learn something new in search of rewards. Ever think that learning is its own reward?

Congratulations. You get the Notorious RBG-quality-brain certificate.

It does help to have comfortable, trustworthy footing in familiar territory before setting out on your novel explorations. Language teachers report how their students progress faster at learning a language if new words are presented side by side with the familiar ones. Once you get "J'aimerais aller a la biobliothèque," it's easier to muster "J'aimerais aller sur Mars avec une fusée fabriquée par Elon Musk."

Improvisation and Play

I've recently rediscovered how improvisation workshops are ideal for greasing the neuronal pathways for creative thinking and exploration. One clever improv exercise involves jumping into a vignette that your improv partner initiated. You're not quite sure what the intent is, but no matter; you never want to leave your partner hanging out there in space with no counterresponse, so you have to spontaneously, without judgment, without editing, match their activity seamlessly.

Those unrehearsed, unplanned moments demand that you're fully present in a way that rivals a longtime meditator's alpha state.

Yowza. It's tough at first



but gets easier. The brain integrates audio visual input with cognitive processing, memory fill-in, and other somato-sensory signals. It feels like all your gray matter pistons are firing at once. You can actually end a two-hour evening of improv with a sigh from your brain—thanks for the workout. I'm hoping we can try some of it here in the Park soon.

Play

Can you recall the feeling of fresh, childlike joy at the height of summertime play? If not, maybe you didn't get in quite enough free, unstructured playtime as a child. Don't worry, it's never too late.

Playtime that involves humor brightens your spirit, and the laughter that ensues creates a bounty of mental and physical benefits. Also, play can get you beyond the most miserable conditions. Watch Roberto Benigni's character Guido create a lifesaving playful activity for his son as they overcome the hardships of war and imprisonment in the award-winning film, *Life Is Beautiful*.

Music

Learn to play an instrument. When an issue of the peer-reviewed journal *Brain and Cognition* reported that playing an instrument may keep musicians' brains sharp and functioning with quicker reaction times than nonmusicians, I noted how many more medical colleagues were

taking up piano and string instrument lessons at midlife and beyond.

It didn't matter that the study participants had more than seven years of training; the evidence was so impressive that sensory neural pathways were strengthened. It was worth plodding through Mozart's "Minuet and Trio in G Major"—it helps to ignore the fact that he wrote it at five years old.

Dance

Dance whenever and however. Go to the first Saturday of the month Community Dance here in the Park. Learn new dance routines (see *Michael Hagerty's class pg. 8*). Take a ballet, tap, or ballroom dance class. Your brain will benefit from the cognitive and motor skill practice of breaking down steps (what ballet dancers calls "marking") as you do a slow walk-through, then gradually build to performance speed. Both cerebrum and cerebellum enjoy synchronized fluidity (Bergland, 2008).

In fact, any movement, as long as it's not rote, repetitious, or bilateral/

boring (walk, job), qualifies as novelty movement, especially the spin or twirl (not recommended if you have vertigo). But then, if we spun and twirled like a whirling dervish since we were kids, we wouldn't get so dizzy, says Christopher Bergland in *The Athlete's Way*. Bergland assembled

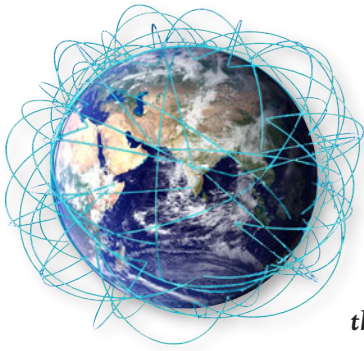
neurophysiological findings on benefits of nonbilateral movement. Ever notice how professional dancers can spin and not get dizzy? They exercise the cerebellum regularly and that fitness-for-the-brain pays off with fewer stumbles, falls, and spills. For seniors, frequent falls lead to broken hips, spine and pelvic fractures with complications, and shorter lifespans. You don't need to spin on the dance floor, but the simple act of turning around can provide a 360-degree perspective that has its own rewards.

More ideas for introducing novelty to your brain:

- Learn a new language
- Enjoy Game Night here in the Park. (*First Friday of the month*)
- Discover online games such as Word Scramble, WordBrain, WordScape, Yahtzee, and Lumosity.
- BrainHQ is another online game-like venture designed to exercise your neuronal connections in a health-enhancing way. ■

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Globetrotters

by VICKI WADDELL

*In our quest to find out what motivates our neighbors to go to the far reaches of the earth, please find our third Globetrotter article below. This time we wish to thank **Dianne and Ron Rodrigues** for sharing their experiences.*

What Motivated You to Travel?

Ron: As a youngster, I traveled quite a bit with my parents throughout the States. I recall one trip in particular with my grandparents. For almost a whole month, we traveled up and down the Pacific Coast visiting the Missions of California. After school, I joined the Navy, so that's when the "travel bug" really hit me.

Dianne: My exposure to travel came from copious reading. My family didn't travel much, but my "travel bug" finally hit me as a young adult when I realized I wanted to see all those magical places I had been reading about.

Where Did You Begin Your Travels in Earnest?

Dianne: Travel for pleasure began about five years shy of my retirement from the VA. This fit quite well into my nursing career, which at that time required me to travel all over the US. The Embassy Suites in Washington DC, only ¼ mile from the Pentagon, became a favorite place for us to stay. Over time we became very well known by the establishment. When we walked into the bar, no questions were asked. Our drinks were already on the table. Oftentimes, we wouldn't get a bill! The manager would sneak us



Tuscan village

candy, too, and on one occasion there were 40 pieces to consume!

Ron: This hotel is frequented by the military. They sit in the bar, order drinks, and watch the interchange between us and the staff. Finally one of the fellas couldn't contain himself anymore and had to ask: "Who the heck are you?"

What Trips Do You Love the Best?

Dianne: We have timeshares in various locations, and Hawaii is one of our favorites. Then Italy! The Italian countryside, food, the people, weather, and riding bikes through the Tuscan hills are simply irresistible. We have consistent luck booking our accommodations through Airbnb most everywhere we go.

Ron: My favorite is New Zealand for its warm and inviting people, its history, and its wonderful seafood, especially the green lip mussels. Napier

is a favorite town of ours. It was completely destroyed by an earthquake and then rebuilt in the '30s in Art Deco style. Another favorite is Rotorua. It's fun eating in a restaurant that was once the police station. Actually, there

are locals who still frequent this restaurant who actually remember being locked up! Wine and beer tasting are very popular in New Zealand. In fact, bike riding to their tasting rooms is much easier than in Sonoma, where bikes are looked upon as a lawsuit waiting to happen. Dianne enjoys rating beers on her phone and sending this information over the airwaves to her friends.

What Is Your Favorite Mode of Travel?

Dianne: Of course, first class! But when there are no upgrades to be had, we take advantage of Ron's connections and use military transport as often as possible, which saves us money. We travel by commercial plane to a destination and then return via cargo. Here's what is in our military "go bag" and what we've learned from traveling in this manner:

- Military transport only allows 30

lbs. per person, so we pack lightly. Here's a tip: Pack everything and then take it all out and then repack only half.

- We take two carry-ons and one small tote plus our backpacks. Whether you fly military or not, keep in mind that large bags don't always fit into small rental cars.
- Our "go bag" consists of warm clothes, air mattress, down blankets, gloves, hat, and earplugs. Yes, it can get pretty noisy on a cargo plane!
- To travel this way, you need to be open to sudden changes in your itinerary. You also need enough money to get home just in case you get stranded somewhere.

What Have You Learned from Traveling?

Dianne:

- Be willing to cross a bridge!

- When you first arrive at a city, get your bearings by using the "hop on, hop off" buses.
- People all over the world have commonalities. It's amazing when you travel all around the world only to meet people who live in California!
- Once you learn about other people's philosophies and culture, then you understand why they do what they do.
- When you're open to talking with people, sometimes you just "click." Next thing you know, you're staying with them and they stay "besties" for life.

Ron:

- How much we dislike very rude people who only think about the almighty dollar as opposed to service. Camel jockeys at the Giza Pyramid and the gypsies in Rome fall under this category.

- No longer interested in visiting third world countries. Too dangerous and too difficult to get around.

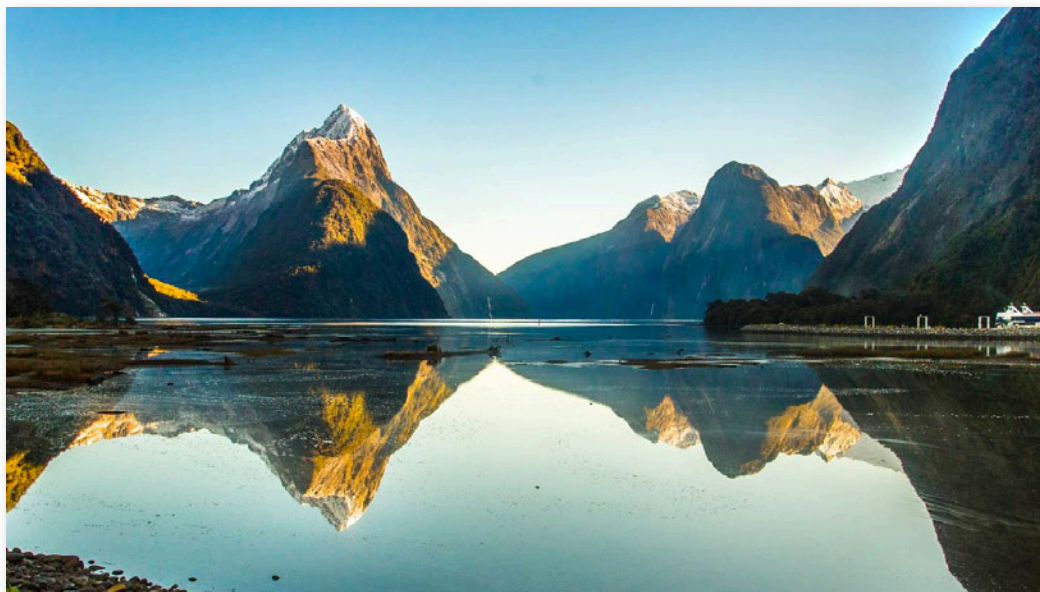
What's Your Funniest Experience?

Dianne: We rented a Mustang once in Germany. Whoever programmed the navigation system prior to us selected only secondary roads – no freeways! Took us a whole day to realize why we were taking such a long time getting to our destination!

What's Next on Your Bucket List?

35-day cruise from Alaska to Russia and then on to Japan.
Panama
Southern France
And more ... ■

I would love to include your travel experiences in a future Echo. Please contact me should you wish to be interviewed. Kindest regards, Vicki Waddell (415-382-8684).



New Zealand

Life Is Sacred

Life is
Sacred

So stop
Killing

Don't
Shoot

Don't
Poison

Don't weed
Those

Or
Us

Don't
Swat

Or crush
To death

And don't
Kill children's dreams

© Tom Bowlin 2019

Virginia Rail and the Sora

**Article and
Photography
by
DAVID GRAY**

With the coming of spring, it's time to be on the lookout for the next generation of birds to start appearing. Often the chicks look

quite different from the adults, as is the case with this pair of Virginia rails (*Rallis limicola*). The rails are a very secretive family, and it is rare to see them because they see or hear us first. They are typically hidden in the reeds and rushes along the banks of a marsh. Their calls are an odd series of a grunt with a squeak appended, repeated maybe 20 times. This is often the only tangible sign of their presence.

The clapper rail is the largest of the family Rallidae, weighing 10 ounces, followed by the Virginia rail at 3 ounces, then the sora at 2.5 ounces, and the smallest two, the black and the yellow rails at 1.8 and 1.1 ounces, respectively. All of the rails have a range that includes the San Francisco Bay Area, but so far I have only seen the Virginia rail and the sora (with one very long shot shown here), both in Point Reyes National Seashore.



Virginia rail



Sora male

The Virginia rails spend their days foraging for food in the marshes, using their long bills to probe below the wetland flora. They eat pretty much whatever they can catch: arthropods, aquatic insects and their larva, even small fish. In lean times they will eat seeds. The sora's diet complements that of the Virginia rail, primarily eating seeds, due to the sora's shorter beak.

The rail parents build their nest on elevated land in the marsh from reeds and blades of reed foliage, often using living reed foliage as a roof to their well-camouflaged home. Both parents contribute to the effort of nest building. The female lays one clutch of eggs per year, anywhere from half a dozen to a dozen eggs. The incubation duties are shared by both parents for its two- to three-week duration, as is feeding the nestlings for another couple of weeks. Once the chicks are old enough, they start to venture out. The one pictured here is very small, so I'd estimate it's about three or



Virginia rail chick



Virginia rail with chick



Baby cottontail

four weeks old. I was amazed to see a rail at all, and when this tiny black fluff ball came racing across the marsh to its parent, I was spellbound. The chick stayed right beside the parent, watching it hunt for food, and likely learning how it's done.

So keep your eyes open for those little balls of fluff this spring. These photos were taken in May, so hopefully this tip is well timed.

Speaking of fluff balls, here's a baby cottontail, photographed the same day as the Virginia rails. Enjoy! ■

