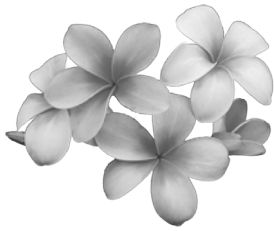


T H E
ECHO

AUGUST 2017

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Letter from the Editor

In the reality of seeming seamless, the vast web of interconnectedness was exposed as the underbelly of technology just plain stopped. Our world showed its complexity and dependence on those needed to make the electrical magic happen.

While it became clear that the Park power outage was not a plug-and-play, easy fix, some people complained—others rose to the occasion to monitor, help out, check on others, and see where they could be helpful.

PAC, MVEST, and volunteers worked for many hours keeping the lines of communication active. They especially noted that the new Deputy Public Works Director/City Engineer, Chris Blunk, spent a long time investigating, directing, and graciously offering help where needed and expediting the movement of manpower and machines. His performance was exemplary. For what might have seemed like eternity to residents, he along with many others from the City and Management worked to find and get the appropriate people and equipment. Electrical specialists worked with a complex and difficult puzzle that kept changing.

Some residents who lost their food from refrigerators and freezers are settling with their insurance.

This was just electricity. Let's work together to prepare for when and if everything goes out at once.



IN MEMORIAM

William "Wym" Hoxie

June 18, 2017

Letters

Electrical Outage

Matt was on the phone working diligently on our behalf for over 12 hours a day during the outage and was able to secure some very specialized and difficult-to-locate technicians and to wrangle them from other jobs to come to the Park. He deserves lots of praise. Folks seem to forget he is on medical leave and didn't have to do anything.

No matter what you do—you can't please all the folks all the time.

I am going to get a glass of wine and enjoy the beautiful hum of my refrigerator.

Carolyn Corry

When the frustration (power failure) hit, I started to look for someone to snap at. Then I watched our baffled-but-dedicated MVEST team along with a handful of equally baffled-but-dedicated electrical engineers as they struggled to unknot the knotty problem.

It soon became clear that there was nobody to blame (unless it was someone from way back when the wires were buried underground).

Instead of snapping, I took the time to watch our crackerjack MVEST team performing its protocols in a cool and professional manner. Then I took a deep breath and counted my blessings. I'm glad my happiness doesn't depend on never having a fridge full of spoiled food!

Thanks, guys!

Joan Nelson

DIRECTORY UPDATE

New Residents

Valerie Renwick

107 Panorama Drive

Lee F. and Ellen Dunne

69 Marin Valley Drive

THE
ECHO

AUGUST 2017

MARIN VALLEY
MOBILE COUNTRY CLUB

100 MARIN VALLEY DRIVE
NOVATO, CA 94949
415-883-5911 / 415-883-1971 FAX
WWW.MVMCC.COM

EDITOR/DESIGNER Erma Wheatley
COPY EDITOR Mary Barbosa

PROOFREADING

Mary Barbosa, Carol-Joy Harris, Anila Manning

A PUBLICATION OF MHB Group Region 8
www.mobilehomeboard.com/

MARIN VALLEY

GENERAL MANAGER Matt Greenberg
gm.mvmcc@gmail.com

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VICE PRESIDENT John Hansen 415-847-7155
SECRETARY Peggy Hill 415-382-0185
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DIRECTOR/RESERVATIONS Carolyn Corry 370-6403

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 edition.

PAC *Letter to Residents*

Greetings from the PAC,
Our finances are in order.

With the City's budget now approved and new personnel on board, the City's staff now has time to get up to speed with our activities and needs. Our current budget was approved, and work is progressing without pause.

The new fiscal year has begun, and the approved budget for MVMCC has anticipated the current and near-term needs of the Park.

Management

Manager Matt Greenberg is out on medical leave until September. Residents can have their requests addressed through the front desk attendants, who relay them on to Al Frei in Sacramento. Al Frei is in contact with Matt on all pending issues, and although Matt is still recovering, he is active in the affairs of managing the Park. Since the outage Matt is also in daily contact with MVEST.

Dumpster Redo

MVEST is looking into how we may be able to reinstitute the Dumpster service, which had to be canceled due to abuse of the program. Please note that report in this issue.

(See Page 9) Your input is requested—perhaps you could lend a hand to manage this very helpful program. We would all like to see it reinstated.

Rules and Regulations

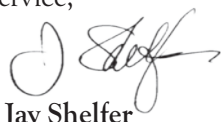
A PAC committee, chaired by Peggy Hill and John Hansen, is currently looking into the existing Park Rules and Regulations. The committee meets most Fridays in the library at 3:45 pm. Contact Peggy Hill to confirm if there will be a meeting.

To keep current with the activities of the PAC, you can read the minutes of monthly Board of Directors meetings on the website mvmcc.com/pac.htm. The previous month's minutes are posted on the PAC bulletin board at the clubhouse and archived in the library.

Our next meeting is at **6 pm, August 2** in the Fireside Room of the clubhouse. See you there.

And many thanks to all who participated in the annual meeting of the PAC on June 3rd.

In service,



Jay Shelfer
PAC PRESIDENT
jjshelfer@yahoo.com

Electrical Outage at Marin Valley

By the time you read this description of the events surrounding the electrical outage, hopefully power will have been restored to all residents.

On Thursday, July 6, there was a power outage to over 7,000 residents in San Rafael and Novato. Although power was restored on Friday, the automatic resetting of our main electrical system caused a reactive fault somewhere in the Marin Valley system. On Sunday there were areas in the Park with power, some with partial power, and other areas without power. What effectively happened was a short on one of the three legs of our system. This caused the disparity in who had power and who did not over the weekend.

We attempted to resolve the problem immediately, but the specialized high-voltage electricians needed were already deployed for electrical emergencies in other parts of the Bay Area. They arrived Monday. By evening all areas of the Park save the lower end of Club View had been restored.

The weak link in the system turned out to be

a transformer toward the center of Club View. A new replacement transformer has been found, and it will be configured and installed ASAP. Until then a standby generator has been installed on Club View to power up the remaining houses from Sunrise to the end of Club View. Although the noise will be difficult for those residents in that area, replacement of the faulty transformer is being expedited as fast as possible.

During this unfortunate situation many residents stepped up to assist. City Councilor Pat Eklund, the City Manager, the City Engineer, the staff of public works, Matt Greenberg and Park Management, MVEST volunteers, and residents weighed in with support. The solution to this problem was very difficult to diagnose and equally difficult to temporarily fix until the new equipment could be installed.

The shortcomings of our systems will be analyzed, and refined procedures and equipment will be considered to mitigate any such future emergency. Let us look at this as an opportunity to work as a community and improve our living conditions here at Marin Valley.

HOL *Home Owners League Message*

Your Home Owners League is here to help you interact with MVMCC management and organizations to facilitate the flow of information and assist in the resolution of issues including management, city and architectural changes, upkeep, safety and preparedness, and a variety of health and community services. HOL also provides social and recreational activities.

With much appreciation to Miriam Spross and her board for supporting us during this month of transition, our strong new board will kick off the 2017-18 fiscal year with the annual

HOL Funds Collection letter asking for your (suggested \$20) contribution. A couple of neighbors will “tube” you soon, with the annual HOL Funds Collection Letter. Your voluntary dues will benefit you. And it will benefit the whole of our unique and thriving village.

Are you more fortunate than many of us? Please consider raising the amount of your contribution.

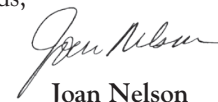
Can't afford the suggested \$20 donation? No problem. You are invited to bring us your “two cents” regarding relevant issues and suggestions: Meetings are on third Wednesdays,

Fireside Room, **6 pm now**. Everyone is invited to attend the next HOL meeting: Wednesday, August 16.

*Meanwhile, look for the letter in your tube, and return the envelope for your contribution!

Got questions? Contact me. I'll see what I can do.

Regards,



Joan Nelson
HOL PRESIDENT
figleafjoan@comcast.net
415-506-4166
415-595-6221 cell

*You will also find an Activities/Interest Survey to complete and return with your contribution.



PHOTOGRAPH: MARIANNE YORK

LEFT TO RIGHT: Tara Plocher, *Treasurer*; Joan Nelson, *President*; Jeannine Freedom, *2nd Vice President*; Joanne Woodward, *Secretary*; Janie Crocker, *1st Vice President*.

Community Connections

Consider Yourself Blessed!

by **JOAN NELSON**

Are you aware of how lucky you are to be making your life here in this special place?

I was reminded of our shared good luck on July 6, the night the power went out: I considered myself blessed by a power outage that got me out

walking by the light of the full and silvery moon! I found others similarly detached from their TVs and Internet connections savoring the (naturally)

SEE NEXT PAGE

Attention, All Marin Valley Opera Lovers

Special for Residents

by PEGGY HILL

The Marin chapter of the San Francisco Opera Guild is once again presenting its fundraiser supporting opera education in Marin schools as well as previews of SF operas for the Marin community at the Redwoods in Mill Valley.

This CHAMPAGNE GALA is on **Sunday, August 6, 2 pm**, at the **San Domenico Music Conservatory in San Anselmo**. The program begins with arias sung by the Adler Fellows and a talk by Andrew Truett, a SF Opera Chorus member and Marin resident, followed by a reception with wonderful champagne and delicious appetizers and sweets.

\$50 per person—however, there is a special for Marin Valley residents: a limited number of \$25 tickets.

Please call 415-382-0185 or email peggyhill@yahoo.com for information.

lighted darkness. Even without a full moon, I plan to do more after-dark summer walking!

Next time you have a flash of recognition regarding how lucky you are to live here, jot it down and get it to me to include here in the Echo's Community Connections column.

ART IN THE PARK



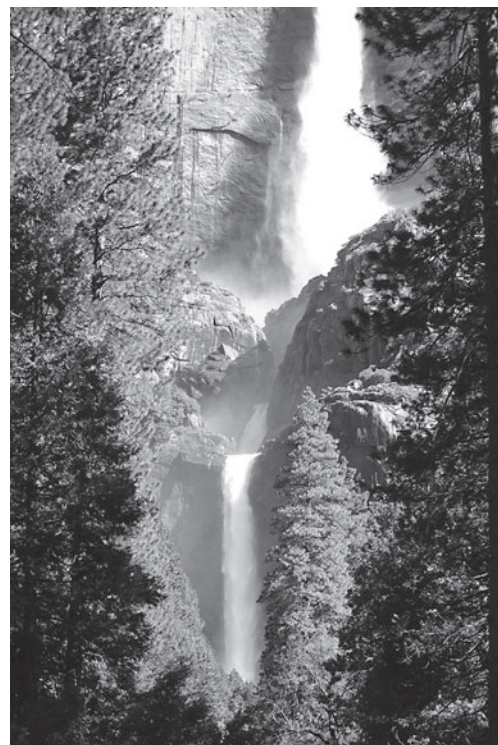
by SUZIE LAHR

If you have not visited the clubhouse lately, stop by and you will see our new signage, "MARIN VALLEY GALLERY" above the Fireside Room door in the lobby. The resident artists send a big thank you to all of you who helped make this happen.

MARIN VALLEY GALLERY

The new photography exhibit that graces the clubhouse walls will be up from July through mid-October. Our resident photographers are amazingly talented, so make sure you visit the gallery and sign our guest book to show them your appreciation and support.

A call to all resident artists of all mediums: We will be having a group show later this year to be hung in the latter part of October and remaining up through the holiday season. Get those creative juices flowing so you can join us. You do not have to be a professional artist to join in, and we welcome first-time and old-time exhibitors alike. This is a community effort, and I love showing off all the talents that abide in the midst of this Park. I currently have 55 artists on my email list, which is a large chunk of our population here! Thank you all for making all of this come to fruition.



PHOTOGRAPH: CHERRIE DOUGHERTY



PHOTOGRAPH: CHERRIE DOUGHERTY



PHOTOGRAPH: DAVID GRAY

MAR VAL *Message from Mar Val*

Dear Friends,

While we regret learning that neighbors have decided to move from the Park for personal or health reasons, those changes result in the opportunity to welcome new residents on an ongoing basis. For those of you new to living in Marin Valley as well as those living here for a longer period, we would be delighted to have you join us any Friday at Pub or at one of our monthly dinners. Also, one of the most rewarding ways to become involved in the community is to

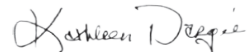
volunteer your time working with one of our organizations.

August heralds our annual fantasy trip to the tropics. It is once again time to break out the hula skirts, the Hawaiian shirts, the flower leis, and all the brilliant colors. The **Luau** will take place **Saturday, August 19**, beginning at **5 pm**. Be prepared to enjoy watching our lovely hula dancers while sipping exotic drinks from the Tiki Bar.

Hopefully we will be enjoying warm weather well into October; however,

the **Labor Day BBQ** marks the conclusion of Mar Val's 2017 parties on the deck. As you will note from the attached reservation form, the cutoff date for the **September 4** party will be during the last week of August, so please note the date.

With warmest regards,



Kathleen Dargie
MAR VAL PRESIDENT
kfdargie@aol.com

MAR VAL LABOR DAY DINNER

SEPTEMBER 4, 2017

5 PM Cocktails 6 PM Dinner

M E N U

BBQ PORK RIBS OR GRILLED VEGETARIAN PASTA

TUSCAN POTATO SALAD

ICE CREAM BARS

\$12 per person. **Reservation deadline is August 30 at 5 pm** or when 120 reservations have been received.
For questions call Carolyn Corry at 415-370-6403.

MAR VAL SEPTEMBER 4, 2017 LABOR DAY RESERVATION FORM

Please circle entrée choice

RESIDENT _____	BBQ Pork Ribs	Grilled Vegetarian Pasta
RESIDENT _____	BBQ Pork Ribs	Grilled Vegetarian Pasta
GUEST _____	BBQ Pork Ribs	Grilled Vegetarian Pasta
GUEST _____	BBQ Pork Ribs	Grilled Vegetarian Pasta

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

Guests attending _____ @ \$12 each Make checks payable to Mar Val.

Reservation deadline is August 30 at 5 pm or when 120 reservations have been received.

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



MAR VAL LUAU

AUGUST 19, 2017

5 PM Cocktails 6 PM Dinner

M E N U

BBQ TERIYAKI PORK SKEWERS OR TERIYAKI VEGETARIAN SKEWERS

VEGETARIAN FRIED RICE • ASIAN SALAD

HAWAIIAN ROLLS

TROPICAL DESSERT

\$12 per person

Reservation deadline is **August 16 at 5 pm** or when 120 reservations have been received.

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

MAR VAL AUGUST 19, 2017 LUAU RESERVATION FORM

RESIDENT _____	<i>Please <u>circle</u> entrée choice</i> Pork Skewer Vegetable Kabob
RESIDENT _____	Pork Skewer Vegetable Kabob
GUEST _____	Pork Skewer Vegetable Kabob
GUEST _____	Pork Skewer Vegetable Kabob

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

Guests attending _____ @ \$12 each Make checks payable to Mar Val.

Reservation deadline is **August 16 at 5 pm** or when 120 reservations have been received.

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





How to Keep Cool in

by **BILL DAVIS**

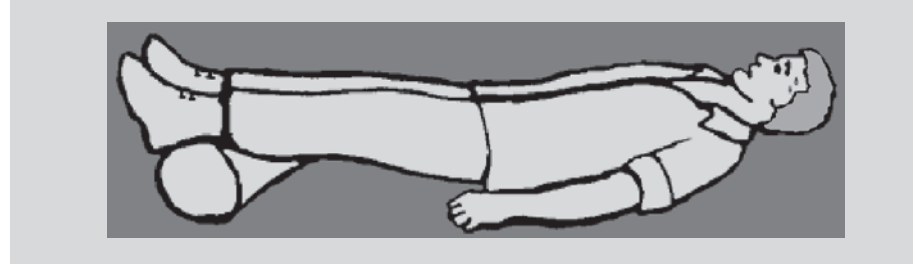
Just flip on the air conditioner and relax. Well, not so fast, please. That might not work for some of us, and there might be several other procedures you can do simply to stay cool.

The radiant heat on many of our metal roofs during the day transmits a large amount of heat into our coaches. Although this is nice in the wintertime, in the summer it can turn our places into ovens. If your coach is vented at the gables, then this helps the heat escape from your roof and ceiling. If your roof is not vented, give some serious consideration to having that done. A handyman could do it for you easily.

Fortunately, we live in one of Marin's best microclimates, usually kept comfortable in the evenings by a gentle breeze that flows off the San Pablo Bay from the Pacific Ocean. It is pulled inland to the Central Valley by the lower pressure of the high daytime temperature there, as the less dense valley air draws the colder, high-density air off of the bay and the ocean. So, as hot as it might be here between 10 am and 2 pm, the gentle flow from the coast is a wonderful relief. However, your coach is probably still heated up and radiating inward into your living space.

Ventilation

There is a very simple solution when it is cooler outside than inside. Open three to four windows and generate a cross-ventilation flow. You can also add a couple of slow-speed fans to



assist the cross flow. It is a lot cheaper than the air-conditioner, and besides, it is fresh air—good for you!

So let's say one evening there is no gentle flow of a breeze into the Central Valley. The situation is one where the air is stagnant and you can tell it's going to be hot all night. Well, if the air conditioner does not work, then staying well hydrated and in front of a fan is your only choice. Consider a trip to the clubhouse, where you can shower and dip into our beautiful pool.

Personal body temperature is normally around 98.6 degrees Fahrenheit, or perhaps a couple of degrees lower. But when the ambient temperature itself is 98 degrees, you know it is darn hot and you are not going to cool off. Now, besides the external heat, you yourself could easily overheat. For years I was a nurse in a family camp at the 7,000-foot level in the Sierras, in Kings Canyon National Park. I had about 250 campers and staff to keep healthy. Sometimes my first aid station was quite busy. The closest hospital was 63 miles away down mountain roads. Besides the routine care of basic urgent camper problems, the last thing I needed was a stupid heat stroke. The only way to manage those campers and staff in that hot

mountain environment was to give them a simple rule to follow. I would instruct them all at the orientation at the beginning of camp, "If you are not peeing once every two to three hours, then you need to drink more water." That was my steady advice, and it worked well. The only time I had to treat someone with heat exhaustion at that camp was when I had as my patient a slightly confused cardiologist from New York with an attitude. A rather interesting event.

Stages of Overheating

There are three stages of overheating that are very important for you to know: dehydration, heat exhaustion, and heat stroke.

Dehydration

Often by the time your body tells you that you are thirsty, you are already dehydrated! If you are in the heat and cannot get out of it, there are symptoms of dehydration that you should be aware of, signaling that you are approaching heat exhaustion. If you feel weak or dizzy or if you have cramps or spasms anywhere, then stop your activity. Game over. Hydrate and rest in a cool, shaded place. If you are not better in one hour, you need a medical evaluation or should consider having a

the Heat

friend drive you to an emergency department. Simply put, you need help.

Heat Exhaustion

Next comes heat exhaustion. Your body temperature is still normal, but your skin is cool and clammy. You feel nauseated, dizzy, or perhaps uncoordinated. You might not be thirsty. Your heart rate may very well be rapid. You are in serious trouble and need immediate rehydration with salts and minerals, as in Gatorade. Especially as, at our age, we do not recover as quickly as we once could, if this happens it is again a time to declare that you need help before it is too late.

Heat Stroke

Lastly, there is heat stroke. Your body stops sweating, your skin is hot and dry, your core body temperature is 103 degrees or higher, you have a strong and rapid and pounding pulse, and you are most probably mentally impaired. A coma is approaching, followed by impending death. Every year you can read about these unfortunate cases in the news.

To wrap this all up, it is easy to confuse thirst and hunger, especially in people with a body mass index (BMI) greater than 25. Simply put, you need more hydration in hot weather. It's just that simple. You need to pee every two to three hours, whether you're on flat land or in the Sierras. ■

Dumpster Day 2.0

by JOHN HANSEN

Continuation of the Dumpster days of old was cancelled by PAC at the request of Park Management due to repeated, flagrant abuses of the service by a few individuals. Those abuses led to unacceptable budget over runs, excessive cleanup requirements, and unnecessary neighborhood disturbances.

This is unfortunate, as the availability of this service facilitates a more convincing request to residents to maintain clean and orderly yards, carports, and storage areas. In addition to enhanced aesthetics, a tidy abode significantly contributes to its defensible space. Clutter can be a dangerous impediment to emergency responders—keeping a tidy residence could conceivably save a lot of grief, even a life!

Clutter also increases health risks by inviting pest infestation such as rats, mice, roaches, and mosquitos, among others. In general, the accumulation of clutter and debris is unsafe and unhealthy, and it degrades the environment of the Marin Valley community.

While the Dumpster day program as we have known it is discontinued, the respective budget line item has been retained and the door left open for Park Management to consider creative ideas to replace the old program with a plan that could effectively mitigate past problems.

A cursory analysis of the situation:

Problems

- Dumping of debris in the Dumpster vicinity both before the Dumpster arrived and after it was obviously filled to capacity
- Dumping of recyclables, e-waste, and hazardous materials in the Dumpster and vicinity
- Dumping of construction and remodeling debris
- Possible dumping by nonresidents
- Disregard for residents in the vicinity of the Dumpster.

Contributing Factors

- The Dumpster has been delivered on Saturdays and remained for several days before removal.
- The Dumpster was relocated from the clubhouse parking lot to the outermost reach of the Park at the end of Club View Drive, largely to accommodate its extended stay.
- In turn, the Dumpster was insufficiently monitored, especially during the remaining weekend and at night.
- Residents' knowledge of the rules of conduct was too often either unknown, forgotten, or simply disregarded—in some instances flagrantly so.
- Marin Valley budget allocation was predicated on Park residents' presumed sense of community responsibility to understand and abide by the rules, their ability to reasonably police themselves, and their use of sound judgment and common sense, especially when the Dumpster was obviously full.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10

— The numerous service abuses led to the need for a second Dumpster to accommodate excessive dumping, and a substantial cleanup effort by Park Management, resulting in unacceptable cost overruns.

— The numerous abuses also caused undue disturbance of the local neighborhood, especially during the remaining weekend and evenings, even late at night.

Proposed Solutions

1. The Dumpster should be **delivered on a weekday** and **retrieved on the same day** to mitigate off-hour abuse and the associated disturbance of residents.

2. The Dumpster should be **parked at a central location** to facilitate monitoring—the proposed alternative is the clubhouse parking lot—an inconvenience to some on that day, but only on that day.

3. The Dumpster site should be **continuously monitored** for up to 12 hours or longer before the Dumpster is delivered, during the loading period, and again after the Dumpster is retrieved. This should mitigate off-hour abuses and resident disturbance.

4. **Assistance from other organizations** should be pursued when possible for collection of recyclable metals, e-waste, and hazardous materials, concurrently with Dumpster availability.

5. Proof of Marin Valley **residency** should be **required** for access to the Dumpster.

6. A document listing the approved Dumpster day Park **rules should be distributed** to all Marin Valley residences. A copy of these rules—signed by the resident affirming their understanding of the rules—should accompany their proof of residency in order to access the Dumpster.

7. In order to (a) maintain the budget line item allocated for Dumpster days, (b) mitigate the risk of cost overruns, and (c) facilitate the substantial increase in labor necessary to organize, operate, and monitor a new Dumpster day, it will be necessary to establish a **team of volunteers** to conduct this community service. This team must work under the authorization of PAC and the supervision of Park Management.

Of the three volunteer service organizations—Mar Val, HOL, and PAC/MVEST, perhaps the nature of a Dumpster service might be more in alignment with HOL, yet only MVEST is nearly equipped for this challenge. While ongoing discussions within the MVEST Steering Committee have not achieved a consensus, a majority is interested in proceeding.

It is possible, too, that a special task force could be created specifically for

the Dumpster program. This option has not been discussed, and it is unclear who would establish, populate, and lead such a group.

All Marin Valley residents are welcome to attend meetings each month at 6 pm in the Fireside Room: PAC—the first Wednesday, HOL—the third Wednesday, and MVEST every Monday. These and other important **Marin Valley issues are discussed at these meetings, and your input is welcome.** ■

MVEST Volunteers Help Promote Wildland Safety in Novato



On occasional Tuesdays from 4 to 8 pm during the Downtown Novato Farmers Market, MVEST volunteers are distributing Firewise brochures and communicating information about wildland safety precautions. To participate please contact John Feld at 415-884-2675, johnmfeld@gmail.com.

Marin Valley Rules and Regulations

The committee continues to collect ideas for R&R changes. By this time, you should have received a tube flier requesting your ideas for changes to our R&Rs—the committee will add your ideas to a list being prepared to show to Park Management and the City of Novato. Questions, suggestions? Contact any member of the committee—**Joe DeAvila, John Hansen, Peggy Hill, Connie Marelich, Miriam Spross.**



COMMUNITY DANCE

ON VACATION FOR AUGUST

COME IN SEPTEMBER for *The Summer of Love dance*





Film Night

First and Third Thursdays
7 pm • Clubhouse

Please, no food or drink.

Feel free to bring your comfortable chair.

Contact:
johnmfeld@gmail.com



Departures

Thursday • August 3 • 7 pm

(2008) *Drama* 130 minutes

Director *Yōjirō Takita*

Starring *Masahiro Motoki, Ryōko Hirose, Tsutomu Yamazaki*

Departures examines the rituals surrounding death in Japan with this tale of an out-of-work symphony cellist who returns home with his wife looking for a job. He comes upon an

ad for “Departures” and answers it thinking the job concerns travel. But it is for a “Nokanashi” (more or less Japanese for an undertaker).

Upon discovering that he will actually be preparing the bodies of the recently deceased for their trip to the afterlife, Daigo accepts the position as gatekeeper between life and death and gradually gains a greater appreciation for life. But while his wife and friends universally despise his new line of

work, he takes a great amount of pride in the fact that he is helping to ensure that the dead receive a proper send-off from this world.

The film follows his profound and sometimes comical journey with death as he uncovers the wonder, joy, and meaning of life and living. Bring a hanky.

Oscar for Best Foreign Language Film of the Year, 2009.



American Beauty

Thursday • August 17 • 7 pm

(1999) *Drama, Romance* 122 minutes

Director *Sam Mendes*

Starring *Kevin Spacey, Annette Bening, Thora Birch*

Suburbanite Lester Burnham tells of the last few weeks of his life. He is husband to a real estate agent and father to a high school

student. Although husband and wife once loved each other, they now merely tolerate each other. The typical wallflower daughter hates both her parents; the three suffer individually in silence in their home life. While the daughter tries to steer clear of both her parents, the mother, relatively new to the real estate business, wants to create the persona of success to further her career. The father merely walks

mindlessly through life, including at his job in advertising. His company is downsizing, and he, like all the other employees, has to justify his position to the newly hired efficiency expert to keep his job. Things change.

Five Oscars: best picture, best actor: Kevin Spacey, best director: Sam Mendes, best screenplay, best cinematography, and nominated for best actress in a leading role: Annette Bening. ■

How to Humanely Get Rid of Rats

by **PJ BREMIER**, *Marin Independent Journal*

Suggested by Pauline Hawkins

Oh, rats! That's what many of us may be exclaiming at the recent rat explosion taking place across Marin. Blame it on this year's wet and wild winter.

"All wildlife from the bottom of the food chain to the top is connected," says Melanie Piazza, director of animal care at WildCare, the San Rafael-based wildlife rehabilitation center.

"When there is lots of rain, there are more rodents—mice, rats, voles, and gophers—[and] predators such as hawks, owls, raccoons, and coyotes can have more babies," she says.

"During the years of drought, there were fewer food sources and less water for them. Now, with water and food more plentiful, there are more plants, more prey animals, and more predators."

For a nominal fee, WildCare Solutions Services will come to your home, find the access points, and help you exclude unwanted animals.

When it comes to the garden, relax. "That's where rodents are supposed to be because there's a whole chain of predators that are an important part of the ecosystem," Piazza points out. "Without them, we wouldn't have owls, hawks, bobcats, and all the species that we appreciate."

But when the numbers are too large or there is property destruction, WildCare offers sustainable suggestions.

"We tell folks you can spend the rest of your life trapping and killing

rodents, but you're only opening territory for new ones to come..." says Piazza.

Remove Food Sources

Feed pets inside, and choose a wild birdseed mix that doesn't attract rats (Wild Birds Unlimited in Novato offers a no-mess blend), or attach a seed tray under the bird feeder to catch most of the spilled seed.

Consider a rat-proof feeder for backyard chickens or ducks, and remove eggs daily, as rats will eat them. Once a chicken learns to eat an egg, they all will, leaving you with a daily mess and no eggs for yourself.

Attach metal flashing to fruit tree trunks to prevent rodents from reaching fruit, and prune limbs away from fences. Harvest ripe fruit on time and pick up fallen fruit immediately.

Plan for Exclusion

Some vegetable gardeners exclude deer with deer fencing, but to prevent rodents you should fully encase vegetable gardens, even underfoot, in quarter-inch hardware cloth.

Snap Traps

"We never recommend using snap traps outdoors," Piazza says. "They are indiscriminate killers injuring and killing both baby and adult skunks, squirrels, and opossums."

Depending on where the nontarget animal enters it, "[the trap] can break its leg or crush its snout and nasal passages, and if the trap isn't secured to the ground, [the animal]

can run away and die of infection or starvation." Call WildCare if you see an animal in this situation, and they will pick it up and help it."

There is an exception. "You can place snap traps outdoors in boxes that look like black bait boxes and secure them tightly to the ground," Piazza says. "Just make sure the tunnel to the trap is long so a baby animal can't get its head inside or an adult, its paw."

Glue Traps

We advise never, ever use glue traps," she says. "I wish they were banned. Rats and mice run across them and die horrible deaths, often pulling off limbs, struggling to get away."

And, they're not the only ones. Piazza has seen birds, snakes, and lizards become stuck on them. "They're cruel and inhumane," she says.

Poison

"This is a huge no—never, ever, under any circumstance. It's not an instant death, and even if you don't care about a rat's feelings, care about the owl, fox, or other top-tier predator that eats the poisoned rat."

WildCare has been conducting an extensive survey of its deceased patients for rodenticides. Out of 591 submissions, 76 percent tested positive for rodenticides. "It's not what killed them or brought them in; it's just what showed up in the tests," Piazza says. "And, many of them showed exposure to three or four different [rodenticides]."

Silveira Ranch—Safe for Now

by ANILA MANNING

Electron “Zappers”

I’ve had success in the garden recently with electronic zappers even though the manufacturer says the chance of rain is why they are designed for indoor use only.

I find they work much better than snap traps. They’re more humane as they kill instantly, they’re easier to set and easier to deal with if you’re squeamish—just turn the trap over into the trash can and release [better yet, flick the trap contents into the wild for the food chain]—and they are reusable. Just make sure to position them where baby animals such as skunks and squirrels can’t get in.

Trouble with Raccoons

Piazza encourages you to call WildCare Solutions Service for affordable humane solutions to deterring them.

Fine Living by PJ Bremier is reprinted with permission from the Marin Independent Journal. PJ Bremier writes on home, garden, design, and entertaining topics every Saturday. She may be contacted at P.O. Box 412, Kentfield, CA 94914 or pj@pjbremier.com.

WildCare is at 76 Albert Park in San Rafael. Contact them at 415-456-7283, or visit wildcarebayarea.org. Find a 24-point DIY home inspection and other information at discoverwildcare.org/wildlife-resources, or set an appointment with WildCare Solutions Service at 415-453-1000, ext 23.

On 101 north, we’re the second exit after the cows,” we say, and most people here know just where that is! After passing a string of office parks, suddenly there are pastures filled with calm cows, the classical tower of St. Vincent’s, and a scenic mix of grasslands, valley oaks, and tideland habitats around the Miller Creek estuary.

Marin County recently

settled with the Silveira family concerning this 340-acre ranch on the southern border of our Park. The settlement prohibits development of the ranch for at least the next ten years, under the Williamson Act, and it could pave the way for permanent preservation.

According to Marin Supervisor Damon Connolly and Don Dickenson (a longtime member of the county Planning Commission and a conservation activist), the “objective is to work with the Silveira family and the community to permanently protect the treasured Silveira ranch, through either acquisition or a conservation easement. This would preserve the open countryside and safeguard the agricultural and cultural legacies that exist in the area for future generations.”



“Additionally, part of the land is within the 100-year flood plain and provides us with an opportunity to adapt to sea-level rise. These historic tidelands and diked bay lands could provide important natural steps toward sea-level rise resilience, along with connecting

the Bay Trail between Hamilton and the Las Gallinas Valley Sanitary District wastewater ponds, and even

possibly with the Marinwood trails to the west.”

When the Novato City Council met in our clubhouse, there was discussion of building another exit road out of the Park, and I seem to remember one of the Council folks saying they would keep that in mind for any future development to the south. Looks like that may not happen for at least another ten years.

For more about the history and politics of the decision, go to www.marinij.com/opinion/20170705/marin-voice-silveira-ranch-settlement-advances-conservation and www.marinij.com/opinion/20170702/marin-ij-editorial-silveira-pact-buys-time-for-county-and-owners.

We can enjoy the quiet and wildlife and spaciousness for a while longer!

Bushtit

Article and Photography by DAVID GRAY

The bushtit (*Psaltriparus minimus*) is a very small, quick, and shy bird. Weighing only 0.2 ounces fully grown, these birds are about the same size as a kinglet. Their erect and unevenly tipped tail feathers are one identifying characteristic, as is the bright green-yellow eye of the adult female. They are often heard but not seen directly, usually just a flitting in the brush out of the corner of one's eye. They are gray-brown in color so they blend into the bushes. This fondness for bushes gives them the first part of their name. The "tit" means "small", from the Old Icelandic "titr." Bushtits are the only species in the Aegithalidae family living in the Americas.

Bushtits frequently travel in flocks. I photographed these bushtits recently at Vichy Hotsprings near Ukiah. They were in a flock of maybe 10 or so, but it was impossible for me to count; they never sit still! I noticed the horde in a sycamore grove as they went from tree to tree. Their bright, cheeping calls were what drew my attention to them, then the sighting of activity—lots of it! But seeing motion is different from being able to focus on one bird, which is where an 800mm lens and a sturdy tripod come in handy. And patience. And a patient partner.

Bushtits are seasonally monogamous, building interesting

hanging-basket-style nests. The nests take anywhere from two weeks to two months for the pair to build. Spider webs and plant material are used in its construction. Imagine being so small that a nest made of spider webs could support your weight!

The young bushtits are fledging now. The parents are feeding on bugs and sycamore thistle, sometimes hanging upside-down. The chick in my photographs is waiting not so patiently for its breakfast of regurgitated sycamore thistle—yum!

Enjoy these little birds in our Park; their industrious activity is inspirational. ■



AUGUST



AUGUST 2017

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1-4 PM Mahjong 	6-8 AM Trash Pickup 9:30 AM Low-Impact Exercise 10 AM Water Aerobics 7 PM MVEST Meeting 7:20 PM Poor Man's Poker	8 ECHO DEADLINE	10 AM Water Aerobics 11 AM-1 PM Whistlestop <i>call Roberta 415-883-0843</i> 11:15 AM-2 PM Craft Group 6 PM PAC MEETING	9:15 AM Qi Gong (Dove) 6:15 PM Silent Meditation 7 PM Movie Night 7:20 PM DEPARTURES Poor Man's Poker	10 AM Water Aerobics 4 PM Canasta 4-5 PM Movement Meditation 5-7 PM Pub Night	5
6 1-4 PM Mahjong 	6-8 AM Trash Pickup 9:30 AM Low-Impact Exercise 10 AM Water Aerobics 6 PM Firewise Meeting 7 PM MVEST Meeting 7:20 PM Poor Man's Poker FULL MOON 8:24 PM	8	10 AM Water Aerobics 11 AM-1 PM Whistlestop <i>call Roberta 415-883-0843</i> 11:15 AM-2 PM Craft Group 6 PM MAR VAL MEETING	9:15 AM Qi Gong (Dove) 6:15 PM Silent Meditation 7:20 PM Poor Man's Poker 5-7 PM Pub Night 7:15 PM Bingo	11 Water Aerobics Canasta Movement Meditation Pub Night Bingo	12
13 1-4 PM Mahjong 	6-8 AM Trash Pickup 9:30 AM Low-Impact Exercise 10 AM Water Aerobics 7 PM MVEST Meeting 7:20 PM Poor Man's Poker	15	10 AM Water Aerobics Bridge 11 AM-1 PM Whistlestop <i>call Roberta</i> 11:15 AM-2 PM Craft Group Readers' Theatre Group	9:15 AM Qi Gong (Dove) 6:15 PM Silent Meditation 7 PM Movie Night AMERICAN BEAUTY 7:20 PM Poor Man's Poker	18 Water Aerobics Canasta Movement Meditation Pub Night	19 MAR VAL LUAU 5 PM Bar Opens 6 PM Dinner
20 1-4 PM Mahjong 	6-8 AM Trash Pickup 9:30 AM Low-Impact Exercise 10 AM Water Aerobics 6 PM Firewise Meeting 7 PM MVEST Meeting 7:20 PM Poor Man's Poker	22	10 AM Water Aerobics 11 AM-1 PM Whistlestop <i>call Roberta 415-883-0843</i> 11:15 AM-2 PM Craft Group 6 PM HOL MEETING	9:15 AM Qi Gong (Dove) 6:15 PM Silent Meditation 7:20 PM Poor Man's Poker	25 Water Aerobics Canasta Movement Meditation Pub Night	26
27 1-4 PM Mahjong 	6-8 AM Trash Pickup 9:30 AM Low-Impact Exercise 10 AM Water Aerobics 7 PM MVEST Meeting 7-8 PM Want Back Support? (Bamboo Room) 7:20 PM Poor Man's Poker	29	10 AM Water Aerobics 11 AM-1 PM Whistlestop <i>call Roberta 415-883-0843</i> 11:15 AM-2 PM Craft Group	9:15 AM Qi Gong (Dove) 6:15 PM Silent Meditation 7:20 PM Poor Man's Poker	1 Water Aerobics Canasta Movement Meditation Pub Night	2 7-9 PM COMMUNITY DANCE SilverLove Dances