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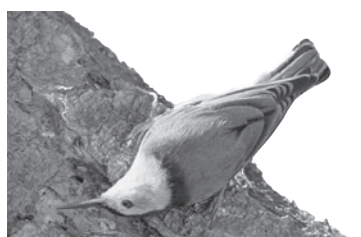
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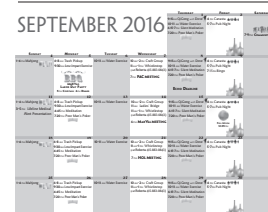
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# Withdrawal of Hamilton Fields Planning Application

by Anila Manning

Let's put in a 55-acre commercial recreation complex on top of the hazmat landfill just over the hill to the north! We'll be able to hear happy people on four baseball fields, a tournament baseball field with night lighting and bleacher seating for up to 1,000 spectators, two multi-use fields, a 50,000-square-foot indoor sports training center, parking, and other site amenities. Plus a 12-acre neighborhood park including a youth baseball field, a youth multi-purpose field, dog park, water play feature, play structures, sports courts, and picnic facilities.

Oddly, many neighbors complained, and the developers announced they would scale back their plans to reduce the stadium seating size, eliminate lighting, and relocate portions of the project to adjacent city land.

According to a City of Novato announcement, "As of July 18, the application filed by the Marin Sports Academy for the Hamilton Fields project in March 2015 has been withdrawn and closed out at the request of the applicants, Marin Sports Academy LLC. This means that there is no application being processed by the City for this project.

"The original application, submitted in March 2015, proposed a 55-acre commercial sports complex and community park project at Hamilton Parkway and Todd's Road. As part of the City's planning process for proposed private development projects, the City sent the applicants a letter in April 2015 documenting aspects of their submittal which were incomplete. While the applicant made public announcements regarding a revised plan to reduce the size of the stadium seating, eliminate lighting, and relocate portions of the project to adjacent city land, no revised application was submitted to the City.

"If a new application is filed with the City, the community will be notified and the application will be posted. All information regarding the prior proposed project can be found at [novato.org/hamiltonfields](http://novato.org/hamiltonfields). To sign up for City news and e-notifications, please go to [novato.org/connectwithus](http://novato.org/connectwithus)."

Apparently the private developers have leased the land from the Army for \$10. That's too juicy to walk away from; what will their next move be? For lively discussion pro and con on this development on [NextDoor.com](http://NextDoor.com), search for Hamilton Fields.

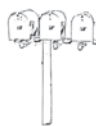
So take yourself and a friend out for a walk around Ammo Hill and enjoy the spaciousness and birds here and now!

**CORRECTION** — An honorable mention ribbon should have accompanied Laura Kradjan's "Retro Mellow Marshall" painting of Marin County Fair resident winners in the *Echo* August issue.

## 2016-17 Directory Update

### New Residents

**Charlotte Kells**  
173 Marin Valley Drive  
415-234-6013  
[charkells@gmail.com](mailto:charkells@gmail.com)



**Kevin Mulvany**  
115 Panorama  
408-736-7202

**Valerie Young**  
170 Marin Valley Drive  
415-506-4040  
[youngsanluis@hotmail.com](mailto:youngsanluis@hotmail.com)

## THE ECHO

SEPTEMBER 2016

### MARIN VALLEY MOBILE COUNTRY CLUB

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MARIN VALLEY MOBILE COUNTRY CLUB

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### PAC BOARD

PRESIDENT Jay Shelfer 415-883-6945  
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SECRETARY Peggy Hill 415-382-0185  
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### STANDING COMMITTEES

FINANCE David King, Stephen Plocher  
MVEST Serena D'Arcy-Fisher, John Hansen,  
Bill Davis, John Feld, Alan Gump,  
David Gray, Carol-Joy Harris  
MVMCC PROJECT PLANNING J. Hansen, J. Shelfer

### HOL BOARD

PRESIDENT Miriam Dvorin Spross 415-884-0607  
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2<sup>ND</sup> VICE PRESIDENT Helen MacLam 415-612-4155  
SECRETARY Joanne Woodward 415-506-4568  
TREASURER Gwendolyn Morgan 415-475-2629

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PRESIDENT Kathleen Dargie 415-884-2649  
1<sup>ST</sup> VICE PRESIDENT Dan Sebastian 415-382-7738  
2<sup>ND</sup> VICE PRESIDENT Pat Thurston 415-884-0740  
SECRETARY Carole Gathman 415-884-2720  
TREASURER Sandee Duncan 415-883-3034  
DIRECTOR Dee Schneider 415-883-4182  
DIRECTOR/BAR MANAGER Fred Dargie 884-2649  
DIRECTOR/HOSPITALITY Larry Moore 883-0486  
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](mailto:ermawheatley@gmail.com)

Images and photographs should have a resolution of 300 ppi (pixels per inch).

**DEADLINE Everything is due the 8<sup>th</sup> of the month or sooner for the following month's edition.**

# PAC *Letter to Residents*

Greetings from the PAC Board.

Our financial situation is in order. We easily met the bank requirements in paying off the loan for the fiscal year ending June 30. Our long-term reserves are more than \$4 million.

## **Infrastructure**

We are anticipating the need to redo the infrastructure of utility pipes under the street and our homes carrying gas, water, sewer, and electricity. PG&E is looking at redoing the way we receive gas and electricity, and we may be able to piggy-back on this activity to include some of the aging infrastructure in the original Phase 1 of MVMCC and begin replacing the infrastructure in Phases 2/3. At this point, according to the engineers' analysis a few years ago, this does not appear to be necessary. We will have an update when BKF Engineers, Surveyors, Planners updates MVMCC's master plan in October.

## **Rent Differential**

The City staff is preparing a workshop in October here at MVMCC on their attempts to address the rent differential that was an outgrowth of the rent policies of the previous owners. This workshop may also address the potential of subsidizing those residents in need of financial assistance.

## **Shower First!**

The Project Planning Standing Committee has taken on the review of the potential outdoor shower at the pool. An ADA-approved one will cost upwards of \$35,000. We are attempting to encourage people using the pool and spa to shower first. To date, this seems to be too much for many. Showering at home earlier, not feeling dirty, or simply avoiding the Park's rule seems to be happening instead. So, many folks simply hop in without that rinse-off shower available in the locker rooms, creating a health hazard and an additional load on the filtration system in the pool and spa.

Please  
use the  
showers  
we have  
already.  
Shower first  
before  
using the  
pool or spa!

## **Emergency Safety**

Marin Valley Emergency Safety Team remains quite active in preparing residents and our infrastructure for emergencies. Please volunteer, and take note of MVEST's update in this month's *Echo*.

## **2x2s**

Every two months two members of the PAC Board meet with two members of the Novato City staff. These are known as 2x2s. Resident concerns are discussed as well as any information the staff wishes to be conveyed to the residents. The discussions are very informal. This year the PAC Board representatives will be Larry Cohen and me.

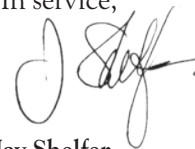
Membership is taken up yearly after the seating of the new PAC Board each June. If you have any issues related to MVMCC and the City, please notify the PAC Board, Larry Cohen, or me. There is a PAC mailbox in the clubhouse, and we are available by email; our addresses are [jjshelfer@yahoo.com](mailto:jjshelfer@yahoo.com) for Jay Shelfer and [anilahere99@gmail.com](mailto:anilahere99@gmail.com) for Larry Cohen.

The next 2x2 meeting is scheduled for September 19. Reports on the meetings will be available on the PAC bulletin board as well as in the *Echo*.

## **Next Meeting**

The next meeting will be at **7 pm** on **September 7** in the Fireside Room. Please join us.

In service,



Jay Shelfer  
PAC PRESIDENT  
[jjshelfer@yahoo.com](mailto:jjshelfer@yahoo.com)

# Management Update

## Retaining Walls

Management is currently grading retaining walls for replacement or repair. Do you have a deteriorated wall you would like us to view and determine if repair or replacement is necessary? Call me at the front desk.

## Driveway Repairs

Please contact me if you feel your driveway has a trip hazard or is in need of new asphalt overlay. We will inspect and repair, if needed.

## Fire-Prone Material Abatement

We are paying close attention to fire safety and abatement issues here in the Park. We are working to cut back or clear fire-prone material from all common areas.

Please advise me if you still have tall grass, poison oak, blackberry, or any fire-prone plant in a common area within 30 feet of your home.

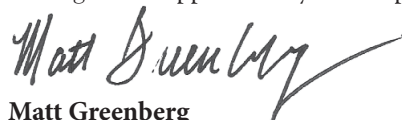
## Cats

Please keep all pets indoors unless on a leash out for a walk. Multiple cats are on report with the front desk as unattended and/or outside. Remember, the young quail are vulnerable to cats.

## Dogs

Please go the extra mile to keep your dogs quiet, especially at night. People need their sleep and quiet time when working or just home relaxing. Please do not leave dogs unattended or tied up outside. They will inevitably bark for their owner. Remember, all residents with pets have a signed pet agreement.

Management appreciates your cooperation.



## Matt Greenberg

GENERAL MANAGER

[gm.mvmcc@gmail.com](mailto:gm.mvmcc@gmail.com)

415-883-5911, Fax 415-883-1971



24" iMac and Dell Windows PC with new cable network.

# HOL Home Owners League Message

## PC and Mac Computers

We are up and running in the library! We have two wonderful computers for resident use: a Dell Windows PC with a glorious 24-inch screen and an iMac desktop with a built-in 24-inch display, camera, and microphone.

## New Cable Network

We have a new blazing-fast cable network for which we have Matt, our manager, to thank. For you techies, we are running with a download speed of 179.28 Mbps and an upload speed of 23.42 Mbps, a fantastic improvement over our former DSL connection!

## Furniture

Compared with getting new furniture, getting our new technology going was a piece of cake! My apologies for not realizing how high the Canon laser printer/scanner would be when put on the top shelf of the new Balt printer stand. We are working on accessible furniture solutions for our new computer system as I write, and we hope to have these in place very soon.

## Security

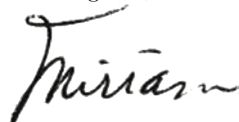
Please remember: Nothing can be saved on the library computers when they are “frozen” by the

Deep Freeze program. Deep Freeze ensures that your passwords, “important numbers” (credit card, SSN, tax return, etc.), and other private information do not remain in the computer as long as you either restart or shut down. We suggest backing up your work on a USB flash drive or emailing your work to yourself. Another great option is Google Docs, a free office suite using Web-based software that includes word processor, spreadsheet, and presentation programs.

Special thanks go to **Nancy Bingham, Gail Chadbourne, Matt Greenberg, and Greg Pierce** for all their invaluable support in planning for and setting up the computers.

HOL meetings are held the **third Wednesday of the month at 7pm in the Fireside Room**. We welcome both kudo and kvetch. Most especially, we welcome your own creative ideas for new activities and ways to improve our lives here in the Park. It's never too late to make a contribution!

Best regards,



Miriam Dvorin Spross  
HOL PRESIDENT



**Community  
Dancing**  
**Saturday,**  
**September 3**  
**1st Saturday of the Month**  
**7-9 PM Free Event!**

**C**ommunity Dancing continues the first Saturdays of each month with the exception of October when we will dance the *second* Saturday of the month **Saturday, October 8.**

## HOL-Sponsored Activities

**Book Group** 1x/mo — Julia Matthews  
**Community Dancing**, 1x/mo — Inga Grace, Pia Andersson, Michael Hagerty  
**Craft Group**, 1x/wk — Jeannine Freedom  
**Low-Impact Aerobics** 1x/wk — Peggy Hill  
**Meditation** 1x/wk — Joan Nelson  
**Silent Meditation** 1x/wk — Zoe & John Hansen  
**Water Exercise** 2x/wk — Kamala Allen

**Qi Gong** (Dove Govrin) and **Tai Chi** (Jay Shelfer) occur once a week but are not directly affiliated with HOL  
**All card games** are non-affiliated

## HOL STANDING COMMITTEES

**Art in the Park** — Suzie Lahr  
**Community Connections** — Joan Nelson  
**Contractor/Handyman** — Nancy Bingham  
**Directory** — Erma Wheatley  
**Just One Hour** is morphing into a new name  
— Joan Nelson  
**Wildlife** — Dee Schneider



## Need a Ping Pong Partner?

Come to the ping pong table in the card room  
**Thursdays at 3 pm.**

# Message from Mar Val

Dear Friends,

## Last Outdoor Event BBQ Monday, September 5

Although I am reasonably certain we will continue to enjoy excellent weather in the weeks ahead, the reality is that fall is fast approaching. As you read this issue of the *Echo*, we would like to remind you that Mar Val's last outdoor

event of 2016 takes place on Monday, September 5. **The reservation deadline for the Labor Day BBQ is August 31** or when we reach the maximum 120 reservations.



## Black Cat Saturday, October 29

Most of you are aware that Mar Val sponsors one major

fundraiser each year, the Black Cat, which takes place concurrent with our Halloween celebration. The success of this event depends on the generosity of our residents in donating various decorative items, small kitchen appliances, tools, jewelry, and objets d'art, which are then sold to other treasure-seeking residents.

**The Black Cat will be held Saturday, October 29, 2016**

Full information regarding dates and times for delivering donations to the clubhouse will be provided in next month's *Echo*. In the meantime, we will appreciate your identifying items for inclusion in this year's Black Cat.

Warmest regards,  
*Kathleen Dargie*

**Kathleen Dargie**  
MAR VAL PRESIDENT  
[kfdargie@aol.com](mailto:kfdargie@aol.com)

## Community Connections

by Joan Nelson

**Just-1-Hour** — Need a few minutes of help with a brief, one-time task? Or want to volunteer to do a small favor for a neighbor? Pick up a current Just-1-Hour volunteer list from the Just-1-Hour wall box in the clubhouse.

**Buddy System** — If you haven't yet arranged with a close neighbor to be "buddies," with access to one another's homes in case of suspected emergency, please do so soon. Then fill out a "Buddy" form for Matt.

**At-Home Potlucks** — The August 6 At-Home Potluck was a patio dinner at Shareen Akroosh's. It was attended by six Park residents, who were able to relate in a broader way than would otherwise have been possible.

Anyone can schedule a small At-Home Potluck event, where you will meet a potluck selection of people as well as ingest potluck edibles — a great way to engage with new, interesting faces!

### Lifeline Medical Alert Presentation

Come, learn how you might actually save a life (maybe your own).

**Sunday, September 11, 3-5 pm**  
**Fireside Room**

Lifeline offers free installation and a special discounted Park monthly rate!

For details on any of these items, or to learn about the new "Readers Theater" (enjoy playing a part, in a scene, with a script, for fun?), contact Joan Nelson: [figleafjoan@comcast.net](mailto:figleafjoan@comcast.net); 415-506-4166, cell: 415-595-6221. ■



## READERS THEATER GROUP

PLAY A PART

READ SCENE  
SCRIPTS FOR FUN

4 PM ■ WEDNESDAY  
SEPTEMBER 21  
15 VIEW RIDGE

HOME OF YVONNE DEVINE

# For the Love of Trees

## Please Adopt a Young Tree to Care For

by **Pauline Hawkins**

I drove many miles and looked at many mobile homes before I was lucky enough to find Marin Valley. As I drove up over the hill, I was thrilled to see the trees and knew this is where I wanted to be. Being a camper and hiker for many years, I cherish the areas most filled with trees. You could say I am a tree lover and tree hugger.



*Shumard red oaks needing a home in the Park.*

### Trees Clean the Air

Trees absorb odors and pollutant gases (nitrous oxides, ammonia, sulfur dioxide, and ozone) and filter particulates out of the air by trapping them on their leaves and bark, as well as add beauty.

After being here 16 years, I can tell you that about 30 large trees have been cut. They were either sick or dangerous to existing homes. Always a heartbreak to me, the first time I heard the buzz saw and saw this beautiful tree come down, I actually cried.

So when I joined Park Improvement, my one goal was to plant as many trees as possible before I can no longer do so. So far, I have planted 30 new trees in the Park.

The following link is to an article about an armless man and a blind man in China who planted ten thousand trees, a truly moving story. Worth taking time to read — [www.onegreenplanet.org/news/blind-man-and-his-armless-best-friend-plant-trees-in-china/](http://www.onegreenplanet.org/news/blind-man-and-his-armless-best-friend-plant-trees-in-china/)

I have been given some very young Shumard red oaks; they are beautiful trees and the leaves turn red in the fall. They are truly just babies, 24 inches tall. After I plant them

**I hope I can find five people who will commit to watering them weekly for two years**

or a little more, depending on the progress of growth. I have planted three, which I will care for.

In the past I had two very trusted residents who took on that task for me: Bonnie Edwards watered five trees for over two years, and also Julie Manson. I was very thankful.

Wouldn't you like to see beautiful oaks with leaves that turn red in the fall in our beautiful Park? Of course you would! I am not sure how fast they will grow, but with love and care I am sure they will grow beautiful and strong and just add to the beauty of our Park. ■

# ART IN THE PARK



by **Suzie Lahr**

Coming soon! A new gallery exhibit will be gracing the walls of the MVMCC clubhouse. Stop by after September 1 and visit our new resident artist exhibit. Stay tuned for a preview in the next issue of the *Echo* in October.



Join **Janet Bogardus** for inspiring projects that help you:

- See to draw
- Draw expressively
- Find your own mark-making style
- *Trust your drawing!*

**September 11, 1-5 pm**

Marin MOCA Classroom,  
781 Hamilton Parkway  
\$10 materials fee; \$60 — MMOCA members; \$70 — non-members.

Janet Bogardus is a Park resident and a Bay Area artist with more than ten years' experience teaching drawing and painting to college students, seniors, and children.



# Hot Water

by Bill Davis

**B**eautiful hot water with the flick of a wrist — so essential to our daily activities and life. Please do not take it for granted. The hot water heaters in our homes come with a long history of dependability and safety. They are built with a metal holding tank where the water is heated. Most companies use steel because of its strength. When water starts to warm up, the pressure inside the tank begins to rise. If the tank is not strong enough or the pressure valve does not work, the tank will burst with a tremendous explosion. Pressure relief valves have improved over the years and are quite reliable nowadays. There are two pipes attached to the water heater: one for fresh water coming in and the other for the hot water that comes out when you turn on your hot water. There are internal valves to regulate the flow of incoming and outgoing water to prevent backflow in either pipe.

Where does the heat come from? Most water heaters in Marin Valley Mobile Country Club are gas burners, though some are electric, and a few are on-demand systems with no tanks (another story). The temperature is regulated by a thermostat inside the water heater. When the water reaches a preset temperature, the heat source is shut off. If the thermostat fails to shut off the heat source, the pressure will build up until the safety valve opens and relieves the pressure, allowing water to drain out through an exit pipe.

What kinds of problems can occur to your water heater? If the flow valves fail, you will not get hot water. If the thermostat fails, you will get either no hot water or too much, and the safety valve will open. The steel tank might leak, and if yours is old enough, it eventually will. The burner could fail and not heat the water. The gas could leak, and a gas explosion could occur.

## Calcium Buildup Needs Draining

Also, the tasty water we enjoy in this Park has a lot of minerals in it. Calcium buildup eventually will develop inside the bottom of your tank. It needs to be drained out yearly by attaching a garden hose to the hose bib valve at the bottom of your tank and opening it for a minute. Usually a surprising amount of calcium debris is flushed out. My tank seems to work much better every time after I flush it.

Why all the concern about hot water heaters? Well, think for a minute about some of the potential dangers. Go to YouTube and look up “hot water heater tank explosions” for some impressive views of what is easily possible. You have a 30- to 50-gallon steel tank containing hot water that will eventually leak and thereby possibly cause expensive water damage or dry rot. You have a gas appliance (probably) that can leak natural gas and cause a fire. You have a thermostat that can fail—and the fix is not cheap. You have valve systems in the tank that can fail. You have hard water that causes mineral

buildup in your tank that can cause premature failure. Finally, you have a potential catastrophic bomb in your house that will explode given the wrong conditions.

## Tank Routine Maintenance

So it is worth a check and routine maintenance. Years ago, there was a handyman who did a lot of substandard work in this Park who was finally “blacklisted” by the Park’s management company, Al Frei, from doing any future work in the Park. I would mention his name, but you can find more about this questionable handyman in our library’s contractor reports binder. About a year after his banishment from the Park, I read an article about him in the *Marin IJ*. His hot water heater burned his own house down. What’s that story about the cobbler’s kids going barefoot? And the biggest cause of fire in the mobile home park in Napa after the earthquake there last year was from gas leaks from hot water heaters breaking out of improperly secured installations.

Water heaters in general are very dependable, but nothing lasts forever. Proper and routine maintenance is your friend, and it is simple. Go on the internet or YouTube and research a little on your own. If you have a trusted handyman, consider using him or her. A tradesman or plumber can check it out for you. If your hot water heater is old, tired, and worn out, you *might* still be able to get some more



# Tradespeople/ Companies on *NextDoor.com*

by Jack Travis

time out of it. But usually, outside of a simple adjustment, no plumber will work on it. They usually suggest you replace the old workhorse with a new one because they can more easily stand behind their work and a warranty. Prices vary and come in around \$1,000 to \$1,500, plus a permit from HCD (required).

What piqued my interest in this subject? Our safety in this Park is never an accident. Take a good look

at the photo below. It shows what's left of a mobile home that burned. I saw it about a month ago while traveling across the Central Valley. I was stunned and did an immediate U-turn. It had been cordoned off by the local fire department, but I crossed the barricade anyhow and investigated the site. Take a close look at the steel I-beams that are twisted from the intense heat of the fire. The cause of the fire was ... I am sure you've figured it out by now. ■



*The remains of a mobile home fire from a faulty water heater.*

Of the 130 Park members now on *NextDoor.com*, 80 have joined the MVMCC general discussion group, which is exclusively for Park members' concerns. I urge the remaining 50 who have not signed up to do so and enjoy the increasing amount of information/resources we can share among ourselves in the Park. If you're stymied by how to sign up, email me, [jwtravis2@gmail.com](mailto:jwtravis2@gmail.com), and I'll put you in directly.

## **MV Tradespeople/Companies**

There are also several breakout groups for special interests, the latest being the MV Tradespeople/Companies group.

It's for people in the Park to share their experiences after having work done — or looking for someone to work on their homes. It's starting to take off.

To join it, you must first be a member of *NextDoor.com*, then select "Browse all groups" and request to join.

If you have trouble, email me and I'll sign you up.

## Save 30% or More on Your PG&E Bill

You might be eligible for a discount on your PG&E bill! See Matt for an application for the California Alternate Rates for Energy Program (as the landlord representative, he needs to fill out part of it).

This discount is income-based; there's a table of guidelines on the application form. Matt says it's easy to fill out, and PG&E has approved everybody who has applied from here so far.

# Tyger, Tyger

by Bill Noble

**M**y partner Desiree Storch and I are just back from a 20-day adventure in Brazil: the southeastern Amazon, the Pantanal — the world's largest wetland — and Chapada dos Guimarães National Park, guided by my friend of nearly half a century, naturalist Michael Ellis, and Fabiano Oliveira, a breathtakingly skilled, passionate young Brazilian naturalist.

I'm going to tell you about two enormous jaguars, up close, at dusk, but first I'm going to tell you a little about jaguars in general.

**Jaguars:** third largest of the great cats. Their range, from southwest U.S. to south-temperate Argentina, encompasses desert, mountains, savanna, sea coast, and the vast Amazon. In places, they are semi-aquatic; in the flood-forests of the Amazon, they are semi-arboreal. Their numbers are greatly reduced, and they have vanished altogether from half their original range.

Gone or decimated — in all but one place: the Pantanal, where they not only are still abundant, but because of abundant prey, grow to twice the size of other jaguars. The biggest here weigh more than 300 pounds. A jaguar's bite is in relative terms the strongest of all the cats; short-jawed, massively muscled, it exerts a bite-force of more than 1,500 pounds, designed to crush skulls. In the Pantanal, they prey mostly on caiman and capybara. Until this trip, in my life in wild places, I had glimpsed one jaguar, for seconds, far away.



*Average-sized male jaguar from the Pantanal*

*Male human 5'9" tall*

*Average-sized male jaguar*

**W**e coast in near silence along a 50-foot-wide channel, the sun ready to plunge into its brief equatorial dusk, when our boatman Domingos says quietly, "Jaguars." Pacing the three-foot-high bank in the late golden light is an adult female, obviously in heat; a step behind is a huge male, a creature Fabiano says he knows as the largest in the Pantanal.

Nobody moves. Or breathes.

The female slips into the water, swimming across the channel a hundred feet in front of our prow, her tail bannered

vertically. We never see the male swim, but he obviously does, because minutes later they're both pacing again — this time, unexpectedly, with the male leading.

A female is in heat for up to two weeks of her 37-day cycle and may mate with as many as four males. She roars and copulates up to a hundred times a day.

We drift closer.

I struggle to put words to the fluid confidence of these engines of muscle and bone: their lazy swagger, the pistoning shoulder



blades, the great paws kissing into the forest. They vanish instantly into the leafy dapple.

When we are just opposite the male, he swings his great head and stares, close enough across the narrow water that it's easy to imagine him springing into our boat.

One one-thousand, two one-thousand, three one-thousand . . . and then he and the female stride on, passing in and out of cover, in and out of sight. A

tiger-heron squawks and flies up; small forest birds call in alarm. A big caiman thrashes away in the marsh grass.

The sun hits the horizon and is gone. The light shifts to gold-rose. A capped heron rows eastward overhead, and then a jabiru, still high enough to catch the sun.

A noisy swarm of parakeets zips by, blue-headed parrots shout, a limpkin lets loose its loud, anguished call. The first bat tilts past.

We continue to coast with

the jaguars. Again they emerge from a screen of leaves with the female close behind the male. The male stops and begins to turn.

The female rears up in attack, jaws at full-fanged gape. She throws herself at the male, ROARING so loudly that it vibrates our intestines. The male meets her head-on. They crash out of sight behind a screen of bushes.

Is that mating? If so, it's truly terrifying sex. Or is it merely a feminist reminder that a

hundred times was enough for the day? We never know for sure, but Fabiano says mating. We drift with them till the light goes to black and the Southern Cross spangles the heavens, then turn the boat, open the throttle, and trust our boatman to speed us all the night miles past snags and sandbars to supper, our houseboat, and breathless storytelling. In the beam of Fabiano's light, the red eyeshine of numberless caimans lines the shores as we speed home. ■



# Interview

by Marianne York

*“Who lives well, long lives ... This age of ours should not be numbered by years, days, hours ...  
What is living well? How does one do it? Each of us has a personal recipe that resists generalization ...  
Active involvement in living—now that just may be an answer.”*

**M**any years ago I was involved with a project on aging that asked the above questions. As I was interviewing Joan, it appears that she has successfully found her answer.

Joan Nelson, 80, was born and raised in New Jersey and Colorado and moved to Northern California in 1975. She is the mother of four sons; three live in the area.

She moved into Marin Valley at the end of February 2015, leaving a “rock-solid” house in the Dominican area of San Rafael to “squeeze into a far less secure tin abode where I thought I would grow old and die.”

Soon after moving in, she was diagnosed with cancer and underwent surgery and radiation. She needed help, and it was readily and lovingly offered by her next-door neighbors. Her cancer is now in remission. Today she feels “blessed with youthfulness and health.”

In the short time Joan has lived here, she has made quite an impact. Today, she manages and administers HOL's Just One Hour program. This program involves providing one-time support to our neighbors. Many of the requests are for rides and errands. As a psychologist, Joan is well trained to assess a situation and offer community resources when “just one hour” isn't enough. She says, “Why does it take a disaster to know your neighbor? Let's open up that opportunity now.”

Joan is both a feminist and a pioneer. She has worked with Masters and

Johnson and was trained by both Betty Friedan and Werner Erhard. In addition to being a wife (4x) and mother, she received a master's degree in Psychology and a PhD in Human Sexuality. But it seems she's not retired from developing another close relationship of her own. She recently

PHOTOGRAPH BY MARIANNE YORK



**JOAN NELSON**

retired from an active couples counseling and sexual dysfunction practice in San Francisco. Trained as a Humanist Minister, she has presided over dozens of weddings and funerals. Joan is also cofounder (with Michael Hagerty) of the Death Forum. She says she has been preoccupied with death since childhood. The topics of sex and/or death were strictly

verboten at her family's table; as a result, she has spent her life and career talking about both! Last month she celebrated her 80<sup>th</sup> birthday here with a living FUNeral, which she advocates for everyone.

As if her current involvement in the Park isn't enough, Joan is the Social Justice Chair at the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Marin and presents sermons there. She was involved with the passage of the recent “Right to Die” legislation. She says her “week would go to heck” if she missed a Monday morning aerobics class. She also does water aerobics here, walks every day, attends classes at Dominican University's Osher Lifelong Learning Institute, and is learning to play the ukulele. She also marched in Novato's July 4<sup>th</sup> parade for Single Payer Health Care (8<sup>th</sup> year). She is a dynamic force!

Of course, Joan is still coming up with a lot of ideas for this community — a back-pain support class, an autobiography group, a play reading group (with Yvonne Devine) ... there is no lack of ideas!

Her longstanding phone message states, “The purpose of life is to make as much love as you can, while you can.” If you are as impressed with Joan's energy and vitality as I was, take note, and consider the value of active and meaningful involvement — be it intellectual, social, cultural, or leisure — but pursued actively with a full heart. And also, let's not forget to love one another while we can. ■

# Take a Hike

by Mike Holland

**T**his little poem by Frederick Latimer won't win a Pulitzer, but it does aptly describe the starting point for this month's hike—Lucas Valley's Big Rock Ridge.

The Big Rock Ridge is the large range that extends from the Burger King at our off-ramp westward to Nicasio. There is debate about whether the title of "Big Rock" refers to the entire ridge or to the singular huge boulder that lies beside Lucas Valley Road four miles west of Highway 101. I've run the entire length of the fire road and seen some other mighty big rocks, but none as impressive as the one that serves as our trailhead.

The Lucas Big Rock Trail is relatively new. It was created out of the agreement between George Lucas and the County of Marin that sanctioned the

building of Skywalker Ranch Number Two. The trail builders did a terrific job of fashioning an accessible route that incorporates creeks (in winter), fantastic views, and numerous switchbacks. Those switchbacks are necessary because the trail summits at over 1,600 feet. Despite the elevation gain, the entire hike is only moderately strenuous.

The most popular route is to start at the Big Rock on the north side of Lucas Valley Road and walk 3.5 miles to the double transmission towers. You have 360-degree views from here and on a clear day can see most of the Bay Area. I particularly like this hike/run in the spring when the hills are emerald green, as it makes Lucas Valley somewhat unrecognizable; you have the almost unsettling feeling of being lost. When can we say that in Marin County?

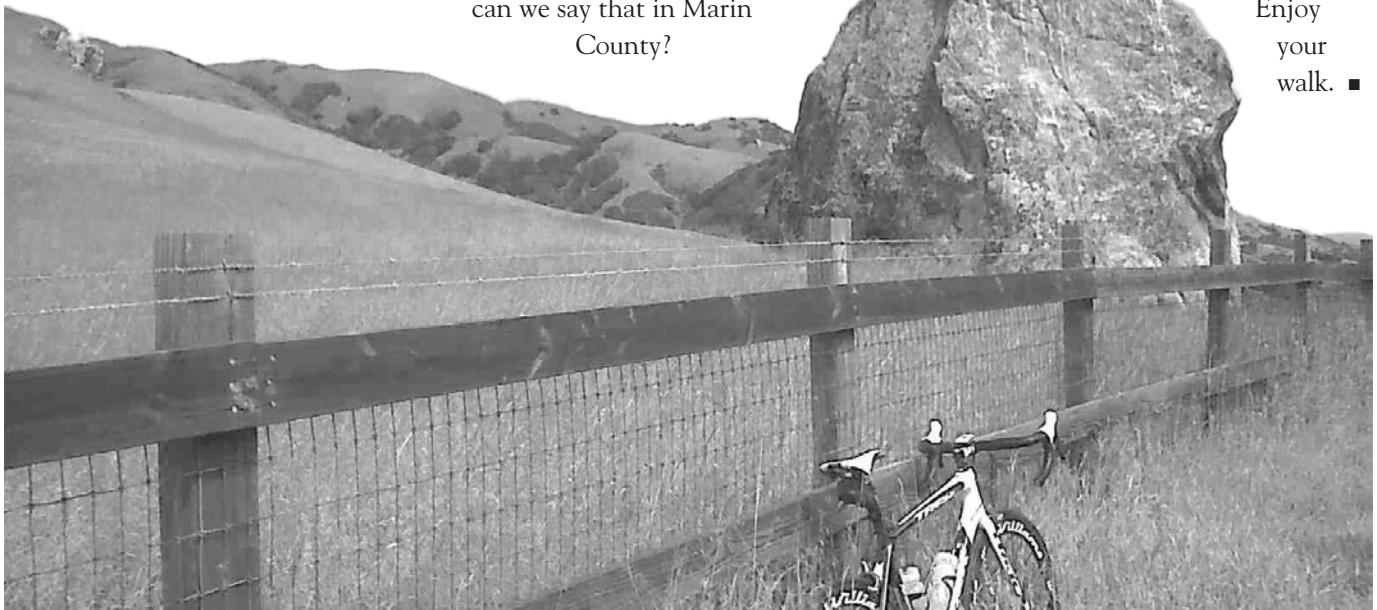
*I wish I were a big rock, sitting on a hill;  
Doing nothing all day long, but just sitting still.*

*I wouldn't eat, I wouldn't sleep, I wouldn't even wash;  
I'd sit and sit a thousand years, and rest myself b'gosh.*

There are lots of signs of wildlife, especially fox and coyote. Mountain lion definitely used to be found in this region. A motorist once reported sighting a lion "in a tree along Lucas Valley Road peering down at the cars going by." This puma must have thought he was Snoopy.

Remember to bring water because it can be warm in the exposed areas. If you're really hungry and thirsty when you finish, I strongly recommend driving straight to McInnis Park Golf Course to replenish with beer, wine, coffee, and/or food at the Club Restaurant. If you're really voracious, I recommend you hunker down at home with a copy of Wallace

Stegner's *The Big Rock Candy Mountain*. Enjoy your walk. ■



by Bill Noble

Photograph by David Gray

## Winter & the Nuthatch

*Once or twice and maybe again, who knows,  
the timid nuthatch will come to me  
if I stand still, with something good to eat in my hand.  
The first time he did it  
he landed smack on his belly, as though  
the legs wouldn't cooperate. The next time  
he was bolder. Then he became absolutely  
wild about those walnuts.*

*But there was a morning I came late and, guess what,  
the nuthatch was flying into a stranger's hand.  
To speak plainly, I felt betrayed.  
I wanted to say: Mister,  
that nuthatch and I have a relationship.  
It took hours of standing in the snow  
before he would drop from the tree and trust my fingers.  
But I didn't say anything.*

*Nobody owns the sky or the trees.  
Nobody owns the hearts of birds.  
Still, being human and partial therefore to my own successes —  
though not resentful of others fashioning theirs —*

*I'll come tomorrow, I believe, quite early.*

Mary Oliver

# White-Breasted Nuthatch

**A**bout the time you're reading this, our nuthatches, mostly quiet during breeding season, will have begun their nasal tootings up and down our oak trees and at our feeders. All through winter, their calls will be one of the everyday sounds of strolls through the Park.

David's compelling photographic portrait shows you what to look for as you scan the trunk and big limbs of our oaks — and no, his picture wasn't accidentally printed upside down. Over most of North America, we have two small birds that specialize in gleaning insects and spiders from the trunks of trees: this nuthatch, and the brown creeper. Why don't they fight it out and the more efficient species displace its competitor? We call their strategy "niche separation": the creeper imitates a miniature woodpecker and spirals its way up, propped on stiff tail feathers, just like a woodpecker. The nuthatch spirals downward, headfirst. And this gives the two species just enough of a different view of goodies to gobble that they can coexist.

We have three kinds of nuthatches in Marin: first, our big, white-breasted, which specializes in oaks and mixed-species forest and woodland — a hefty six inches long. Next in size is the red-breasted,

with a bright black-and-white eye stripe and a rust-red belly. They favor conifers (and even smear a ring of pitch around the entrance to their nest hole to discourage parasites and predators). They're irregularly migratory and even eruptive, so if you listen carefully around our Monterey pines in September and October, you might be treated to their high, nasal yank yank. Third in line is the aptly named pygmy nuthatch, a denizen of our Douglas fir forests. Brown-capped, gray-blue backed, they live in troops that all roost in the same tree hole every night, snuggled together. You have to head to West Marin to find them. I've seen red-breasts three times in the Park, but never a pygmy.

White-breasted nuthatches like big, old trees, especially for their nests, seeking out cavities that have been hard for ornithologists to access. As a result, this bird-feeder favorite that'll even learn to perch on you for seeds if you invest a little time in reassuring them, is well-studied throughout all of its life, except around its nest!

Nuthatches share a strategy with jays, acorn woodpeckers, and some other birds: They're scatter-hoarders, pounding seeds and small nuts into deep crevices in tree bark, to come back and harvest when food is scarce.



Why are they called “nuthatches”? (No, it has nothing to do with our current election season.) The word has ancient origins, but it seems to be from their habit of wedging a seed in a bark crevice to whack open for eating.

These little balls of feather are monogamous, defending a territory of 10–20 acres and staying together until one of the pair dies. The male is dominant — except around nesting time, when



the female is fully in charge. During that time, the dad of the family brings the mom-to-be frequent snacks, which she accepts as merely her due.

I’ll finish up by talking about something I’ll come back to at greater length when we talk about other small forest birds: mixed-species flocks. All over the world in all sorts of woodlands from the tropics to the northern limits of trees, small birds

spend most of their days in little traveling flocks that can have up to 20 or so individuals and half-a-dozen species, ranging all the way up to pretty good-sized woodpeckers. In the temperate northern hemisphere, the nuclei of these flocks almost always feature one or another of the many kinds of chickadee. Our nuthatch is a regular member; studies show that they spend a lot more time feeding (and

being more adventurous about it) when they’re in a mixed flock. What gives? Each species brings to the flock its own senses and strategies for detecting predators, so the flock as a whole holds a superior awareness of danger. And each species recognizes and reacts to all the other alarm calls and behavior. In America, we talk a lot about competition, but cooperation is just as important in the world: ask any nuthatch. ■

# SEPTEMBER 2016

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1-4 PM Mahjong	6-8 AM Trash Pickup 9:30 AM Low-Impact Exercise	10-11 AM Water Exercise	10 AM -2 PM Craft Group 11 AM -1 PM Whistlestop (call Roberta 415-883-0843) 7 PM <b>PAC MEETING</b>	9:15 AM QiGong <i>with Dove</i> 10-11 AM Water Exercise 6:15-7 PM Silent Meditation 7:20 PM Poor Man's Poker	4 PM Canasta 5-7 PM Pub Night	7-9 PM <b>COMMUNITY DANCE</b>
	 <b>MAR VAL LABOR DAY PARTY</b> 5 PM COCKTAILS 6 PM DINNER			<b>ECHO DEADLINE</b>		
1-4 PM Mahjong 3-5 PM Lifeline Medical Alert Presentation	6-8 AM Trash Pickup 9:30 AM Low-Impact Exercise 4:45 PM Meditation 7:20 PM Poor Man's Poker	10-11 AM Water Exercise	10 AM -2 PM Craft Group 11 AM Ladies' Bridge 11 AM -1 PM Whistlestop (call Roberta 415-883-0843) 6 PM <b>MAR VAL MEETING</b>	9:15 AM QiGong <i>with Dove</i> 10-11 AM Water Exercise 6:15-7 PM Silent Meditation 7:20 PM Poor Man's Poker	4 PM Canasta 5-7 PM Pub Night	
				 FULL MOON 7:33 PM		
1-4 PM Mahjong	6-8 AM Trash Pickup 9:30 AM Low-Impact Exercise 4:45 PM Meditation 7:20 PM Poor Man's Poker	10-11 AM Water Exercise	10 AM -2 PM Craft Group 11 AM -1 PM Whistlestop (call Roberta 415-883-0843) 7 PM <b>HOL MEETING</b>	9:15 AM QiGong <i>with Dove</i> 10-11 AM Water Exercise 6:15-7 PM Silent Meditation 7:20 PM Poor Man's Poker	4 PM Canasta 5-7 PM Pub Night	
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