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ECHO

DECEMBER 2020

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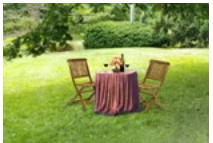
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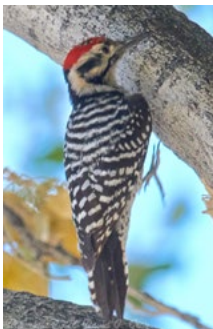
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Letters to the Editor

Just One Hour

I am turning over responsibility for Just One Hour to **Marlene Montalvo**, effective immediately. Residents who need Just One Hour services should contact Marlene at marlene24@comcast.net or 415-883-8786 rather than me from now on.

Thanks, **Ray Schneider**

Park Safety Reminder

One of the great things about our mobile home community is that it is a VERY safe place to live, both night and day. We all need to work together to keep it that way year-round. Remember to call 911 for all medical emergencies, fires, or crimes in progress, such as observed car, residence, or clubhouse break-ins.

For all other immediate safety issues, call Park General Manager **Matt Greenberg** at 415-883-5911 day or night. This would include suspicious vehicles or individuals noted in the Park.

Any after-hours calls need to go to the main number 415-883-5911 and ask to page maintenance. Either **Mark** or **Greg** has a pager at all times for emergencies. For routine maintenance concerns, just email Matt at gm.mvmcc@gmail.com

Thanks, **Kevin Mulvany**

Register with Alert Marin
to receive emergency alerts from
Marin County www.alertmarin.org
415-473-6376

Directory Update

New Residents

Rose Dias

45 Marin Valley Drive
925-759-0377 cell
r4dias@yahoo.com

Vivian Gold

29 Club View Drive
828-691-6916 cell
viviangold13@yahoo.com

Eric Beneken

39 Scenic Drive
415-924-4869

Breezeway

—Recycling Alert

The recycling company recently changed the bins at the clubhouse so they all are now just the large size. Each bin is colored and marked for what should be recycled into it, and yet it seems as if residents throw their trash in the wrong ones without looking; boxes are thrown in the bins without breaking them down. Please be aware of using the correct bins.

Thank you, **Pauline Hawkins**

—Newspaper Plastic Bag Recycling

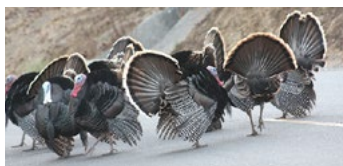
A box for clean, dry, and folded plastic newspaper bags is next to battery recycling at the clubhouse. The bags can be reused several times! Spread the word to others.

Thank you, **Inga Grace**

—Giveaway Bench

At night everything on the giveaway bench will be locked away in the HOL shed. Please do not leave any bedding. Soon we may transfer everything to a shed, which will be open during the day for browsing and taking things and locked at night.

Thanks, **Tara Plocher**



Our Feathered Friends the Turkeys

Many residents in the Park have a love-hate relationship with them, but the bottom line is that turkeys have as much right as we do to live here; after all, we invaded much of the land that they along with the other wildlife have roamed on for many years. So it is not alright to throw rocks or other objects at them or to drive a little faster when they are having a little romance on the street or might come a little closer to your property than you would like. If you drive slowly toward them they will move, and if you walk toward them they will scatter.

I feel very fortunate to be able to see all the wildlife here roaming the Park. We really are the lucky ones.

Mickee McInerney 4 Marin View Dr.

T H E ECHO

DECEMBER 2020

MARIN VALLEY MOBILE COUNTRY CLUB

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www.mobilehomeboard.com/

MARIN VALLEY

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SUBMITTING ARTICLES

Email articles with "ECHO" as the subject line to **Erma Wheatley**: ermawheatley@gmail.com with a copy of the article in the body of the email. Images should be as large as possible.

ECHO DEADLINE

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

MVMCC PAC Management Update Letter to Residents

Happy Holidays, Marin Valley!

Storm Drain System: The Parkwide drain inspection and cleaning is in progress prior to winter weather.

V-Ditch and sump pump systems: V-ditches are being cleaned of debris. These lead to the storm drains for water evacuation during rainstorms.

Retaining wall projects: The four last retaining walls are complete for this fiscal year.

Pool/Spa: The pool is closed for the winter, but the spa is still being heated. Signups are required with one person at a time unless the second person is someone you live with.

Security cameras: Park Management has set up security cameras through Bay Alarm at the intersection of Marin Valley Dr. and Marin View Dr. These new cameras store unlimited data to the cloud, and all license plate numbers for vehicles traveling through the three stop signs are saved, so please come to a full stop and obey all traffic laws.

These cameras are now registered with the Novato Police Dept. SCRAM Program.

Surveillance Camera Registry and Monitoring Program: Traffic violations are recorded and can be sent to Novato PD for possible citations. Do your part and help sustain a safe environment for residents to walk without fear of being hit by a car.

Now that it gets dark earlier, please remember to wear reflective clothing while walking at night on our streets. Be safe and visible for vehicles.

Thank you,



Matt Greenberg

Matt Greenberg
GENERAL MANAGER
gm.mvmcc@gmail.com
415-883-5911 ■ 415-883-1971 Fax

Greetings from the Park Acquisition Corporation Board.

Our finances are in order. Our cash, plus medium- and long-term reserves are in the area of \$6 million.

PG&E Utility Conversion

Program: Several years ago the Novato Financing Authority (the then titleholder of MVMCC) and with the encouragement of the PAC submitted a request to join PG&E's and the PUC's Mobile Home Park Utility Conversion Program. This program was to upgrade and convert the existing gas and electric infrastructure from the management of the mobile home parks to the utility companies operating in their areas. At that time, this pilot program was oversubscribed and MVMCC was not chosen. We have been approached once again with the prospect of joining this program. We will keep you advised. To have PG&E take on the responsibility of redoing the gas and electric infrastructure should obviate MVMCC's need to redo that infrastructure.

Video Cameras: Management has installed video cameras near the laundry which have the capacity to record traffic moving in and out of MVMCC and to record license plates. This information will be shared with the Novato Police. This action should provide added security to Park residents and potentially provide evidence for traffic violations. Please observe traffic signs in the MVMCC.

Clubhouse: Management and the PAC are closely monitoring

the county's directives governing public assembly during the Covid-19 pandemic. When Management can safely open the clubhouse for residents' use, it shall be considered with the safety of the residents in mind.

I urge you to investigate and participate in ongoing activities concerning PAC's MVEST, HOL, and Mar Val reported on elsewhere in the *Echo*, while being mindful of the contagious viruses that are around.

The PAC's Board meetings are enriched by resident participation. Your observations and suggestions on how MVMCC can better serve your and the community's interests are always welcomed. Come to the video presentations or email us.

The agendas for the coming PAC meetings are posted 72 hours prior to the meetings and are also available to those on the mailing list. Contact **Anila Manning** at anilahere99@gmail.com to be added to this list. To be included in the videoconferences, see the links provided on the agendas. There is a good likelihood that these meetings will continue to be broadcast on Comcast channel 26. A recording of the November Board meeting is available on [YouTube](#) and under [PAC minutes](#) on our website.

In service,



J Shelfer

Jay Shelfer
PAC PRESIDENT



Testing for COVID-19

by JOHN FELD

Unless you have been in a total news denial/hibernation for the last ten months or so, you probably know that one of the major tasks for this country regarding COVID-19 is to get as many people tested as possible, so we can more accurately ascertain who has and hasn't got the virus. Since the start of the fall, the virus is spreading in almost all states at an alarming pace. In the USA, millions have had COVID-19 and over 240,000 have died from it. These numbers seem to be enlarging at a scary pace. Over the past year, doctors, nurses, hospitals, and others have found ways to keep more sick people from dying, but the fatalities are still rising.

Scientists have found ways to reduce the rapid spread, and this is by wearing masks when outside your home, distancing from others by at least six feet, maintaining a strict quarantine when you get a positive result, and then tracing all your contacts since your incubation period began.

This article is written to inform you how and where to get a COVID-19 test should you decide it is necessary, and what the implications of it are. But first, let's make sure we have a little deeper understanding of what the test entails.

What Test to Get

There are two types of tests available for testing for COVID-19: diagnostic or viral tests, and antibody tests.

A viral test tells you if you have a current infection. Currently, there are two types of diagnostic tests – molecular (RT-PCR) tests that

detect the virus's genetic material, and antigen tests that detect specific proteins on the surface of the virus. Samples are typically collected with a nasal or throat swab, or more recently from saliva collected by spitting into a tube.

An antibody test looks for antibodies that are made by the immune system in response to previously having had the virus. Antibodies can take several days or weeks to develop after you have an infection and may stay in your blood for several weeks after recovery. An antibody test might tell you if you had a past infection. However, antibody tests are much less reliable than viral tests.

Health-care workers test for antibodies because they may infer prevention from recatching the virus, although this reaction is still not completely understood for this particular virus. Some viruses, such as mumps, scarlet fever, and diphtheria, provide a lifetime immunity, and the immunity can be triggered by a vaccine. Other viruses offer a much-shortened immunity, sometimes lasting days, weeks, or months; and still others can make subtle mutations as they spread, rendering vaccines partially or completely unreliable. The flu vaccine presents such a problem because flu viruses tend to mutate from season to season and country to country.

Until recently, most diagnostic tests for COVID-19 required a clinician to insert a long swab into the nose, sometimes down to the throat. In the spring the FDA granted emergency approval for a saliva-based test. This is easier to perform and more

comfortable — spitting into a cup versus submitting to a swab pushed deep into your nasal passages.

Both the saliva and swab tests work by their ability to detect genetic material from the coronavirus. Both tests are very specific, meaning that a positive test almost always means that the person is infected with the virus. However, both tests can be negative, even if a person is proven later to be infected (known as a false negative). This is especially true for people who carry the virus but have no symptoms.

COVID-19 symptoms may appear within 2–14 days (most common) or, rarely, up to 45 days. Many people will catch COVID-19 and not exhibit any symptoms. These cases are called asymptomatic. Although feeling well and feeling no ill-effects, asymptomatic people do still have COVID-19 and can pass on the virus to others without being aware of being ill.

Tests are not always reliable, especially negative results. If you get a positive result from a diagnostic test, then you have the infection. A negative result, however, is not an assurance that you don't have COVID-19 or that you will not catch it later. Sometimes, the virus spreads in a way that may not show up in a test.

You should get tested if:

- you feel that you have COVID-19 symptoms
- you have had close contact (within 6 feet for at least 15 minutes) with someone with confirmed COVID-19

- you have been asked or referred to get testing by your health-care provider or local or state health department.

Not everyone needs to be tested. If you do get tested, you must self-quarantine/isolate at home pending test results and follow the advice of your health care provider or a public health professional.

Where to Get Tested

Every major health-care program in Marin is obliged to administer anyone within their system who asks to be tested (call your provider for details). Additionally, several places in Marin will administer a test for anyone for free regardless of insurance or life circumstances. These are run by **Marin Community Clinics**—call 415-448-1500 to schedule a telephone or in-person visit.

Not all of these places require appointments, but availability is limited.

In Novato, You Can Go To:

Marin Community Clinics – Novato

6100 Redwood Blvd.

Alternate Saturdays: Dec. 5 and 19

9 am–12 pm (noon)

Call first: 415-448-1500

Marin Health Adult Acute Care Clinic

75 Rowland Way, Suite 100

Appointments required

Call: 628-336-5205

Hill Education Center (next to

The Margaret Todd Senior Center)

720 Diablo Avenue

Tuesdays 1–3 pm

Walk-up only (no drive-through);

no appointment required; health insurance not required; no charge; first-come, first-served while supplies last.

Novato High School

625 Arthur Street

Tuesdays 1–3 pm. No appointment required; health insurance not required.

Elsewhere:

Marin General Hospital

250 Bon Air Road

Greenbrae, CA 94904. Referral only

You should typically get results within 2–7 days. Some labs are overwhelmed with tests, so be sure to ask how long results will take before taking the test. If you feel you may have symptoms, be aware that you should completely self-isolate at least until you get your results.

If you get a positive test result or you believe you have been in contact with a carrier, you should isolate yourself until you get a negative result or your doctor tells you it is safe.

If you do have to place yourself in quarantine, you should contact anyone you were with for 15 minutes or longer or with whom you have had repeated contact. The health department employs some contact tracers, but not enough, so you may have to reach out to likely contacts yourself. If in doubt, call them.

Quarantine really does mean staying out of contact with anyone as much as possible. People in your home should do everything they can to stay apart, and nonquarantined people should be extra vigilant about mask wearing, hand washing, and disinfecting.

It is not yet known what recovery looks like. Some people will feel better in a week or two and never have any more symptoms. Others can have ongoing symptoms (some very unusual) that may persist for weeks or maybe even for life.

Research is ongoing to try to pin down what immunity we can expect from having had the virus. Some have no susceptibility to COVID-19, and this so-called immunity may last for a matter of days, weeks, or months. It appears to be unlikely for immunity to last for years. A very few people have been known to get sick twice or more, and some known to die from their second infection.

Please stay safe, wear a mask, shop as little as possible, and don't go to indoor parties. So far, we have managed to be COVID-19 free in Marin Valley. We are all vulnerable due to our age, so let's play it safe. ■

What You Need to Know About COVID-19 and Your Pets



Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

A small number of pets worldwide, including cats and dogs, have been reported to be infected with the virus that causes COVID-19, mostly after close contact with people with COVID-19.

- Based on the limited information available to date, the risk of animals spreading COVID-19 to people is considered to be low.
- It appears that the virus that causes COVID-19 can spread from people to animals in some situations.
- Treat pets as you would other human family members — do not let pets interact with people outside the household.
- If a person inside the household becomes sick, isolate that person from everyone else, including pets.

This is a rapidly evolving situation and information will be updated as it becomes available.

Some coronaviruses, such as canine and feline coronaviruses, infect only animals and do not infect humans.

Risk of People Spreading the Virus that Causes COVID-19 to Pets

We are still learning about the virus that causes COVID-19, but

CONTINUED ON PAGE 11

HOL Home Owners League Message



And the COVID-19 saga still continues ... and we are still surviving and thriving!

I hope everyone enjoyed our Holiday Faire Walkabout! There were so many interesting items, and a fun time was had by all. Look for more walkabouts in the future.

HOL Yearly Donation Drive

Thanks to all who have contributed to the yearly drive. As of the first of November, only 40% of residents have contributed. Please remember to put your donations in the "Waivers" box in the breezeway or in Tara Plocher's bright purple basket hanging on the edge of her steps (51 Club View), **NOT IN HER MAILBOX!** Or you can put a stamp on it and mail it.

Have you seen the breezeway and its "Giving Bench" with its collection of giveaway items? Stop by frequently; the merchandise changes often. **PLEASE DO NOT** take any of the bins! They should stay there to keep the area neat and organized. Tara cleans it up at least once a day; she has taken it upon herself to keep the area neat and tidy. Thanks to you, **Tara Plocher**, for your endless stream of great ideas, energy, and commitment!

Personal Trainer Rich Frye's exercise class is completed for the season. Please look to join us in the spring.

Be on the lookout for a food truck to come to us. Date and type of food is not yet known, but we want to try it out. Contact **Erma Wheatley** or **Kim Holscher** for suggestions or to volunteer to help.

Ray Schneider, our **Just One Hour** Coordinator/Chairperson, has decided to hand the reins over to **Marlene Montalvo**. Ray has been doing the job for two years and has worked diligently to connect those who need assistance with those who are willing to volunteer to help. We will miss him along with his diligence and commitment to keeping our village connected. If you need help, call Marlene at 415-883-8786 or email at marlene24@comcast.net.

HOL has established an information table in the clubhouse breezeway. Any and all important events and happenings will be posted there.

Along with our Community Gardener, **Pauline Hawkins**, we welcome the installation of a drip watering system in the flowerbed in the front of the clubhouse that parallels the walkway. Now we can keep her lovely plants alive! Thank you, Management.

Janie's primary phone number in the Directory is no longer operative. If you need to call me, please use my cell number, 281-414-3984, where you can leave a voice message.

NOTE: The next HOL meeting is Wednesday, December 2 at 6 pm via Zoom. Please join us. Email Janie Klimes Crocker if you want to attend, and I will send you an invite. Also, if you have something you want to add to the agenda, let me know. janieklimes1948@gmail.com.



Janie Klimes-Crocker

Janie Klimes-Crocker
HOL PRESIDENT
janieklimes1948@gmail.com
281-414-3984 cell

Pool and Spa Update

During this time of COVID isolation, access to the pool and spa has been a source of enjoyment, exercise, and relaxation for many residents. A big thank you to everyone who followed the rules of use to keep us all safe. With colder temperatures, the pool heat has been turned off. The good news is that the spa will remain open through the winter. The same COVID rules apply: maximum two people from the same household or one person per session. While many think the spa is big enough to accommodate more people safely, we have to follow the county rules in order to stay open. Please be respectful and follow them so we can all continue to enjoy the spa over winter. Spa sign-up sheets will remain on the pool fence. The new spa hours are 10 am-9 pm, and you can sign up for two sessions – 25 minutes each – per week in advance. If a time slot is free on the day, you are welcome to it. Enjoy! ■

Serena Fisher Pool and Spa Committee

Successful Run



HOL's first-ever dump run was a resounding success! **Ed Collins**, with much-appreciated help from **Peter Dyke** and **David McLam**, made two trips to the dump on November 6. The rented U-Haul trailer was filled to overflowing with junk from about 20 homes. Everything went off without a glitch, though Ed did discover that the Novato landfill does not accept pressure-treated wood (sigh). Another run is planned for January or February. This was a free service to residents sponsored by HOL, though several homeowners gave donations, for which HOL is grateful! ■ **Ed Collins**

Overlook Something?

by JOHN FELD

We have all been so occupied with the world around us – COVID-19, the elections, the fires, unemployment, shopping, and so on – that maybe some things have slipped past us without us noticing. One of those events was the Home Owners League (HOL) asking for donations to keep the organization viable. Much of what HOL does costs no money – the work is done by volunteers, and events may at most collect donations for any instructors/leaders – but occasionally, HOL does have to lay out some money. This could be for new equipment and chaise lounges for the pool, ice cream socials, subsidies for food at Rollin’ Roots, or taking our stuff to the dump; and sometimes HOL spends money on resources such as new shredders, computers, and printers for the clubhouse, snacks for meetings, equipment for events and activities, and also new daffodil bulbs for along the roadway. It is amazing how much money is spent keeping our community alive and vibrant. Although the demands never seem to diminish, items do get more expensive, and our needs keep on evolving.

This year HOL has received a lot less in donations; in fact, only about 40% of residents have donated instead of usually at least 66% of our households. While HOL events are somewhat reduced during the pandemic and the clubhouse continues to be closed, there are still causes that HOL needs to spend money on.

If you can afford it during these difficult times, we would be most grateful if you could send in your yearly contribution, or whatever you can afford. Usually, we ask for \$20. Some people send considerably more, others less, and some residents would consider even this amount difficult. Whatever you can afford would be most gratefully accepted and would help keep our community efforts ticking on.

If you feel moved to contribute either for a missed donation or for an additional one, please remember to put your donations in the “Waivers” box in the breezeway behind the giving bench, to the right of the bulletin board, or in Tara Plocher’s bright purple basket hanging on the edge of her steps (51 Club View), and, please, NOT IN HER MAILBOX. Or you can put a stamp on it and mail it.

Thanks for helping to make Marin Valley such a great place to live. We rely on you to help us make things happen. ■

HOL COMMUNITY PRESENTATIONS



BREAKING THE RULES Creative Ferment in Modern Art

Wednesday, December 16 • 6:30–8 pm

Join me, **Janet Bogardus**, for a Zoom presentation on Wednesday, December 16, 6:30–8 pm showing how European and American art from the 1900s to the 1960s constantly and boisterously reinvented itself. If you love all the rule breaking, or if it’s left you scratching your head, you’ll understand and enjoy more about how and why it all happened. Q&A will follow. If you enjoyed the talk and would attend more of them, please text Janet at 415-271-7224. There is no cost for this first talk.

Join the Zoom meeting at <https://bit.ly/38F91cJ>
Meeting ID: 872 217 8346 Passcode: mvmcc

Janet Bogardus is a painter and mixed-media artist who has exhibited her work since 1989 in California and New York. She’s taught college courses in modern art history, painting, drawing, and mixed media at numerous Bay Area locations, including Marin Valley. See her work at www.janetbogardus.net or on Instagram [#janetbogardusart](https://www.instagram.com/janetbogardusart). ■



Biography Night

Tuesday, December 8 at 6:30 pm

Join **Stephen Plocher** on Monday, December 8 at 6:30 pm for Biography Night on Zoom. Contact Kim Holscher at kimholscher51@gmail.com for the link and to be notified of future Biography Nights. ■

Death: An Idea that Never Gets Old!

by ANEESHA DILLON



Today as I write this article, it is the Day of the Dead. By the time you read it, Thanksgiving might be long gone, and before we know it, it will be 2021! But now, it is autumn ... Halloween is just over, the leaves are turning colors, and every day it gets a little darker, a little chillier.

Autumn always throws me to my center, especially in recent years, as I get older. Just as nature turns inward at this time of the year, to regenerate and prepare for the next year's blossoming, so I tend to turn toward my own center in self-reflection in this season.

This year it is all about death. Let me explain.

For many years now, I have been preparing for my eventual retirement from a job (that I love) but that requires me to travel internationally, a

lot. I've had to be away from home for weeks or months at a time throughout the year and never really got to spend quality time here with my neighbors in the Park, where I have lived for just over five years. And I have never had the time to deeply study an area that has long been of interest to me — end-of-life issues.

Now, with COVID-19, my traveling life has halted abruptly, and without work I have had a lot of extra time on my hands. This has given me the chance to do some deeper learning in a subject that has become a bit of a passion — end-of-life work. So I have been training as an End-of-Life Doula and as an Educator in death and dying issues at the Conscious Dying Institute.

As part of my Educator training, I am asked to gather a small group of interested people and to present a six-week, free-of-charge, online course. It is a journey that offers participants the chance to look more deeply at five significant areas of meaning in life:

- 1) **PHYSICAL** —
Body, place, and comfort
- 2) **EMOTIONAL** —
Relationships/forgiveness
- 3) **PURPOSE** —
Gleaning meaning of life
- 4) **SPIRITUAL** —
Honoring beliefs and practices
- 5) **PRACTICAL** —
After-death care and ceremonies

This small course is offered to those of us who would like to benefit from it as a personal process, to look into our own lives and understand the meaning and the personal legacy of our lives. And it is also for those of us who might at some point be part of a support team for relatives and friends as well as for those in our community who might need emotional and spiritual support as we grow older. We really can create a network of wise, caring neighbors who will be there for each other through the coming years.

Those of us who live in Marin Valley are all of a “certain age” when we might naturally begin to be interested in aging and mortality issues that become more visible in this current phase of our lives. So I am writing this article to let Park residents know that this course will be happening from early January until the middle of February. If there is enough interest (8–10 people) at MVMCC, this first group could be limited to residents only.

I plan to offer a short Zoom introduction on Wednesday, January 6, 2021, at 11 am to explain the course in greater detail, and thereafter we would meet every Wednesday for six weeks. The course involves reading, writing, and sharing in the large group as well as smaller, more intimate discussions.

If you would like to express interest, sign up, or ask any questions in the meantime, feel free to email me at aneesha@oshopulsation.com. Or call 415-827-7137. ■

Message from Mar Val

Dear Friends,

Although Mar Val is unfortunately unable to host the annual Thanksgiving

and Holiday dinners this year and therefore will be unable to extend our greetings in person, the Board joins in wishing you

and yours a very happy Thanksgiving and our heartfelt good wishes for the coming holidays.

With warmest regards,



Kathleen Dargie

Kathleen Dargie
MAR VAL PRESIDENT
kfdargie@aol.com

Best Three Months End of Life Fulfillment, Care, & Planning *A Life Changing Journey and Exploration Beyond Advance Directives* Information Zoom Meeting January 6, 2021, 11am-12noon

IMAGINE THIS:

You have 3 Months to live AND you can make them the very best they can be for you and everyone. All you need is a beautiful vision and thoughtful plan with others to help you fulfill it! The "Best Three Months" is a life changing journey through all 5 Domains of life ~ an End of Life fulfillment, care and planning process. The "Best Three Months" helps you prepare for your transition, life completion, happiness. It helps you envision and actualize your The "Best Three Months" with friends and family, creating sacred rites of passage before, during and after death.

We'll Explore Five Life Domains:

Physical: Body Place and Comfort
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Purpose: Gleaning Meaning of Life
Spiritual: Honoring Beliefs and Practices
Practical: After Death Care and Ceremonies

And Ask:

- * What is most important to me?
- *What do I value most?
- *What comforting care will I want and need?
- *What can't I live without?
- *What priorities, wishes, and dreams will I focus on?
- *Who do I want to help me fulfill my plan: friends, family, doctors, others?

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Getting Rid of Rats

Rats are among the most common pests in Marin County, wreaking havoc in the home and garden. They also elicit some of the most visceral reactions from gardeners, who find their beady-eyed presence downright creepy. Fortunately, there are many strategies to both prevent and eradicate rats. The first step is to understand how and why rats show up and what they need to survive.

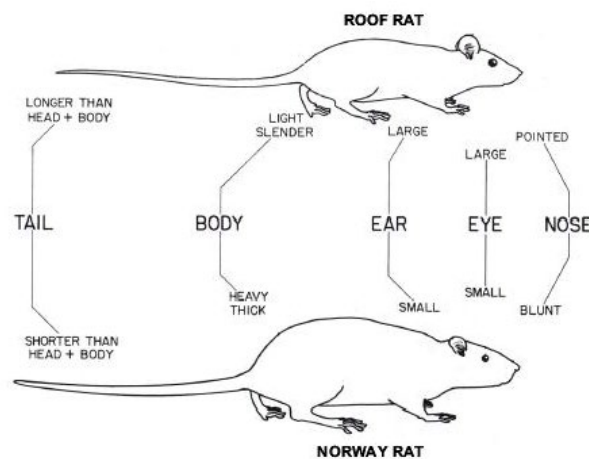
Know Your Enemy

Norway Rat – Norway rats (*Rattus norvegicus*), also known as brown, sewer, or wharf rats, have a blunt nose and a tail that's shorter than their body. Moving in an area up to 150' in diameter, Norway rats burrow along building foundations, beneath rubbish or woodpiles, in moist areas, and in gardens and fields. Indoors, they usually frequent the ground floor or the basement. Mostly nocturnal, their poor eyesight is offset with keen senses of hearing, smell, taste, and touch. They constantly explore and learn about their environment, memorizing pathways, obstacles, and locations of food and water.

Roof Rat – Roof rats (*Rattus rattus*), sometimes called black or tree rats, are smaller than Norway rats. They have pointed muzzles and tails longer than their head and body combined. Roof rats are agile climbers and usually live and nest above ground in shrubs, trees (they particularly like palms), and dense vegetation such as ivy, honeysuckle, and blackberries. With their excellent sense of balance, they run along overhead utility lines or fence tops at night, traveling up to 300 feet for food. Inside, they can be found in attics, walls, false ceilings, and cabinets.

Native Wood Rat – Our native wood rats (*Neotoma* spp.) are generally not pests. Wood rats have hairy tails and large ears. They build nests above ground from sticks, twigs, plant materials, and manmade debris, hence their common name of "pack rats."

The following diagram will help you identify the characteristics of Norway and Roof rats:



Signs of a Rat Infestation

You are not likely to see rats, just their damage. Rats leave many clues that they've invaded:

- Large comma-shaped droppings
- Pitter-patter of tiny but speedy feet across your roof at dusk or dawn
- Birdseed that disappears overnight
- Chunks missing from tomatoes and other edible crops
- Gnawed plastic and resin food containers, electrical wires, doors, walls, and insulation
- Burrowing types can undermine building foundations and slabs.

Rats eat almost any type of food: fruits, nuts, pet and bird food, fresh grain, meat and fish, even slugs and snails.

How to Prevent a Rat Problem

Like most living creatures, rats need food, water, and shelter to survive. They often show up in search of one or more of these requirements and end up staying when they find it. This is especially true when they find a food source. Here are some common ways to make your home and garden unfriendly to rats:

- Harvest or pick up fallen fruit, nuts, and vegetables as they ripen.
- Feed your pets during daylight and remove uneaten food right away.
- Keep garbage and recycling cans covered.
- Store bulk foods, birdseed, and dry pet food in covered metal containers, as rodents can chew through plastic or resin containers.
- Use rodent-proof birdfeeders.
- Remove excess garden debris.
- Trim trees, shrubs, and vines to at least four feet away from roofs and utility poles.
- Thin heavy vegetation from around buildings or fences.
- Stack wood and household items at least 18 inches above the ground and 12 inches from fences and walls.
- Seal any opening larger than the size of a dime with rodent-proof material such as metal, hardware cloth, mortar, concrete, or copper-mesh wool.
- Weatherstrip front, side, and garage doors so they close tightly.
- Keep your shed door closed as much as possible.
- Repair damaged ventilation screens.

How to Manage a Rat Infestation

Use Traps – Trapping is an environmentally safe and effective method of eliminating rats. Large snap traps are inexpensive and reusable. Trap

placement and location is crucial for effectiveness. Place traps in natural travel ways so the rodents have to pass over them. Put the short side of the trap containing the trigger against the wall or runway. Setting multiple traps 10 to 20 feet apart improves the odds of catching one. Using gloves, bait the trap with nuts, dried fruit, pet food, peanut butter, or bacon, and secure it to the trigger with light string, fine wire, or even glue. You can improve your trapping success by leaving traps unset with unsecured bait until the bait has been taken at least once.

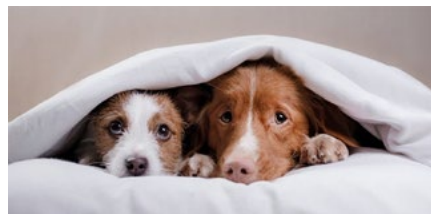
Invite Natural Predators – Birds of prey, especially barn owls, enjoy a steady diet of rats and other rodents. Adding an owl box to your neighborhood is an effective way to invite these welcomed predators.

Avoid Toxins –There are many poison bait products that kill rats. Unfortunately, these products can also inadvertently injure or kill predators (cats, dogs, owls, hawks, fox, bobcats, coyotes, etc.) that might eat a poisoned rat. Symptoms of poisoning may take hours or days to see. When used indoors, the animal may die within wall or attic spaces, resulting in significant odor problems and a swarm of flies.

Be Safe – Rats are potential vectors of disease. Do not touch a dead rat with your bare hands, and wash hands thoroughly after handling traps. Always wear protective gloves while removing a dead rat, place it in a plastic bag, seal it, and discard in your garbage can.

Dig Deeper –Learn more about how to get rid of rats from the University of California Integrated Pest Management online resource. *The Marin/Sonoma Mosquito and Vector Control District* is another good source of rat control information. ■

From:
UC Marin Master Gardeners. Article originally written by Nanette Londeree and Marie Narlock, edited by Lisa MacCubbin.
Contributed by **Pauline Hawkins** for the *Echo*.



it appears that it can spread from people to animals in some situations.

Infected pets might get sick, or they might not have any symptoms. Of the pets that have gotten sick, most only had mild illness and fully recovered.

What to Do If You Own Pets

Until we learn more about how this virus affects animals, treat pets as you would other human family members to protect them from a possible infection.

Because there is a risk that people with COVID-19 could spread the virus to animals, CDC recommends that pet owners limit their pet’s interaction with people outside their household.

- Keep cats indoors and do not let them roam freely outside.
- Walk dogs on a leash at least six feet away from others.
- Avoid public places where a large number of people gather.
- **Do not put a mask on pets. Masks could harm your pet.**

There is no evidence that the virus can spread to people from the skin, fur, or hair of pets. Do not wipe or bathe your pet with chemical disinfectants, alcohol, hydrogen peroxide, or other products, such as hand sanitizer, counter-cleaning wipes, or other industrial or surface cleaners. Talk to your veterinarian if you have questions about appropriate products for bathing or cleaning your pet.

Talk to your veterinarian if your pet gets sick or if you have any concerns about your pet’s health.

If you are sick with COVID-19 (either suspected or confirmed by a test), you should restrict contact with your pets and other animals, just like you would with people. Until we know more about this virus, people sick with COVID-19 should avoid contact with pets and other animals.

If you are sick, avoid contact with your pet including petting, snuggling, being kissed or licked, sharing food, and sleeping in the same bed. If you must care for your pet or be around animals while you are sick, wear a mask and wash your hands before and after you interact with them.

In the United States, there is no evidence that animals are playing a significant role in the spread of COVID-19. Based on the limited information available to date, the risk of animals spreading COVID-19 to people is considered to be low. However, because all animals can carry germs that can make people sick, it’s always a good idea to practice healthy habits around pets and other animals.

- Wash your hands after handling animals, their food, waste, or supplies.
- Practice good pet hygiene and clean up after pets properly.
- Talk to your veterinarian if you have questions about your pet’s health.
- Be aware that children five years of age and younger, people with weakened immune systems, and older adults are more likely to get sick from germs some animals can carry.

For more information, visit *CDC’s COVID-19 and Animals and Healthy Pets, Healthy People* ■

From:
www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/pets.html
Updated September 9, 2020

Contributed by **Pam Berkon** for the *Echo*.

Christmas Celebrations in Days of Yore

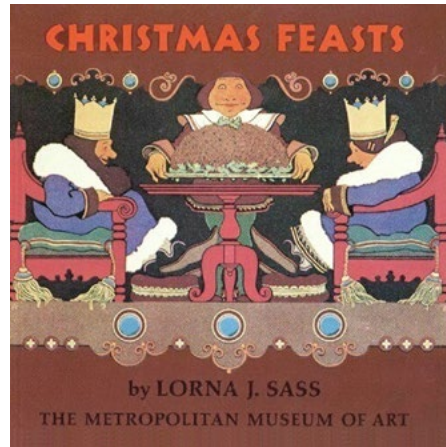
by Lorna Sass

It is no accident that, in the Northern Hemisphere, Christmas falls at the time of the winter solstice, that period when the sun is so far south that it seems to vanish altogether, leaving half of the earth in almost total darkness.

Then, as gradually as it vanishes, the sun begins to appear again, warming and bringing light to where it was lacking, bringing with it the promise of new crops and a new year. It is in this recurrent drama — the rebirth of the sun — that people from earliest times have found cause for celebration.

The color green has played a prominent role in these celebrations — the evergreen of holly, ivy, and pine has made these plants natural symbols of enduring life during the long, wintry months. Since at least Roman times, evergreens have been brought indoors to celebrate the season, and by the 15th century it was the custom at Christmas for “every man’s house, as also the parish churches to be decked with ivy, bays, and whatsoever the season of the year afforded to be green,” according to one chronicler of the time.

Christmas as we know it today has its ancient seeds in the Roman Saturnalia. Beginning around December 17, all work was suspended for seven days, and Romans took to the streets with carnival-like abandon. Characteristics of what were to become Christmas traditions were already in evidence: halls festooned with laurel leaves, gifts exchanged, and small wax tapers lit as protection



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against the hovering spirits of darkness. The festival reached its peak around December 25, a day set aside for special reverence to the sun.

For my cookbook, *Christmas Feasts from History*, published in 1981 by the Metropolitan Museum of Art, I adapted recipes from an ancient Roman manuscript, *Apicius’ De re coquinaria* (Of Things Culinary), a compilation of Roman recipes from the 1st to the 4th centuries A.D. This was a challenging task since the Romans used combinations of ingredients and spices in a very provocative and curious way: pureed asparagus with tiny birds; sea urchins with chickens; pork with apricots, fish sauce, wine, and vinegar. Some of the more complicated recipes contain so many different flavors blended together that presumably no single taste was expected to predominate. In fact, keeping the diner in the dark about the ingredients in a dish was actually a goal of skilled Roman cooks: “At table no one will know what he is eating,” is the bold claim made proudly at the end of one Roman recipe!

Since there is considerable evidence suggesting that Christ was not actually born on December 25, many scholars agree that the main reason for establishing this date for the celebration of the Nativity was to substitute a Christian holiday for the well-established pagan Saturnalia. The medieval English words “Cristes Maesse” (Mass of Christ) appears as early as 1134 A.D. and evolved over time into the word Christmas. Another legacy of the Middle Ages is also apparent in the word wassail, a verbal survivor of the Anglo-Saxon *wes hal*, meaning “be in good health.”

One Arthurian romance begins in the midst of Christmas revelry at Camelot, where King Arthur, his Knights of the Round Table, and their ladies are celebrating for 15 days “with all the food and mirth that men knew how to devise.”

The abundance of food served at medieval feasts is legendary. One early chronicler noted that in 1398, King Richard II of England and his liege lords consumed 2,000 oxen and drank 200 tons of wine. Peacock gilded with a saffron paste and festooned boars’ heads were highlights of the menu.

During the Middle Ages there was no specific room set aside for dining, so at the time of a feast long boards were set on sawhorses in the castle’s large main hall. Diners sat on backless benches; only the King or Lord of the Manor sat on a chair with a back — giving us our current expression “chairman of the board.”

Diners ate with their fingers, pointed knives, and spoons — forks were not used until the 17th century! Food was placed on trenchers, or “plates” made of thick slabs of four-day-old bread. Our word “trencherman”, referring to a hearty eater, also comes from this time.

The 17th century was a rough time for Christmas celebrants since the Puritans made any form of merrymaking illegal. Indeed, by 1647, Oliver Cromwell’s Parliament insisted that the shops remain open on December 25 and that no Mass be celebrated on that day. There were riots against these edicts, and this attempt to abolish Christmas was ultimately a dismal failure. When Cromwell died in 1658 and Charles II was restored to the throne two years later, Christmas once again became merry.

The abundance offered on Christmas tables during this time is jaw-dropping. In *The Accomplisht Cook* (1671), Robert May suggests 20 dishes for the first course and 19 for the second, including a dish of larks, stuffed breast of veal, boiled partridge, a grand “sallet,” minced pies, roasted turkey, and a swan pie, among other treats.

Minced pies during this period were traditionally baked in rectangular “coffins” (as pie shells were then called). This shape was meant to symbolize either the crèche or Christ’s

sepulcher. The spices were thought to represent the gifts of the Magi. In addition to containing raisins, prunes, and dried currants, mince pies typically included ground lamb and beef suet seasoned with cloves, mace, nutmeg, and black pepper. The combination of meat and fruits —

and soon mass-produced in all sizes and shapes: Christmas bells, scrolls, and even fans. Counterbalancing the increasing commercialization of Christmas were some of the old, enduring country traditions such as keeping a Yule log burning for twelve days to ensure good luck for the coming year.

The elaborate Victorian holiday table looked like a kaleidoscope of special effects with utensils provided for every purpose. In addition to the basic table setting of knife, spoon, and fork, there would likely be asparagus tongs, oyster forks, marrow spoons, and fruit knives. Mrs. Isabella Beeton, in her voluminous *Book of Household Management* (1861), suggests a December dinner for 12, including a first course of soup and fish, entrees of beef filets, fricasseed chicken, oyster patties, and curried rabbit. The



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second course might include roast turkey, boiled leg of pork, roast goose, and stewed beef. Then — would you believe — a third course of widgeon, partridges, mince pies, orange jelly, lemon, cream, and apple tart. I don’t know about you, but I feel full just reading this suggested menu. Fortunately, reading is calorie-free.

No matter how you celebrate or what delicious morsels you set on the table, wishing everyone in our beloved community a very delicious and healthy holiday season! ■

It was during the Victorian period that Christmas became the holiday that is celebrated today. By the 19th century, Christmas trees became an essential part of the festivities, though the idea of decorating an evergreen for winter festivals can be traced back to pagan times. It was also the Victorians who exchanged the first Christmas cards — at first handmade

COVID-19 and a Hangtown Wedding

by **BILL DAVIS**

For the past eight months my wife Carol-Joy and I have stayed home and gone out only to the grocery store, hardware store, and nursery when necessary, while always observing strict masking and social distancing and avoiding all crowds and gatherings. The COVID-19 pandemic has not reached the apex yet, and a surge is expected this winter. So an upcoming family wedding on Halloween presented us with a huge dilemma.

I am the Davis family patriarch. Our tribe usually produces about 50 to 100 at family gatherings or weddings. The other tribe might match that number or not. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the total number of attendees was cut down to 50 for the backyard wedding. However, Carol-Joy and I made it clear that we would not attend without masks and proper social distancing. The groom, my grandson, informed me that no one would be wearing masks, but he would see to it that we were seated alone at a special table for two and six feet away from everyone for social distancing, and that our masks would be respected. After a long discussion at home with Carol-Joy, we decided to go to the wedding wearing masks and maintaining proper social distancing, then leave immediately after the ceremony or at any time we felt threatened with exposure to COVID transmission.

The event was a most colorful and unusual adventure. One mile outside of Placerville (incorporated as Hangtown in 1854), past the gun firing range — with a full parking lot on this sunny Saturday afternoon — and after taking the first right a half mile up the hill, we found balloons, multiple pickup trucks, dogs roaming all over, and the two tribes gathering, with nary a mask in sight and many laughing and hugging each other like there was no pandemic. Being masked up, we walked into the backyard; we knew we were stepping into the hot zone. There it was, a classic COVID-19 superspreader event unfolding right before our eyes. A shiver went up my spine. We knew we had to either turn and run or stay and exercise extreme caution. My grandson Spencer quickly appeared with a big smile and showed us to our reserved table for two that was set way in back, eight feet from everyone else but with an excellent view. *OK so far*, I thought.

My tribe, all smiles, presented themselves to us one at a time, respecting the social distancing. All five grandkids appeared, as well as son #2 and his wife (son #1 was missing), and other family members. Following that reception, the other tribe's seniors paid their respects to us one at a time. The wedding ceremony then got underway. It took place under a lovely trellis bedecked with beautiful floral touches. The bride has

a Latin tradition, so there was an altar to the side that was decorated in the traditional Día de los Muertos manner. A local probation officer, a longtime friend of the bride's family, was the wedding officiant. (There's a joke there somewhere.) The ceremony was tender and sweet. We left immediately after congratulating the newlyweds. That was when I found out why my #1 son was not at the wedding. He had just been furloughed from the Sacramento Fire Department because of testing positive for COVID-19!

Now, talk about not getting a noose around our necks. If he had not had the COVID-19 test, that asymptomatic fireman would have been at the wedding and a very possible superspreader of COVID-19. It was a narrow escape. We were happy for the new couple but jubilant for ourselves to have been lucky to have ducked a "COVID-19 execution" in Hangtown, CA. It could have been the last event we ever attended.

We drove straight home to our wonderful community of Marin Valley, with our mask-wearing, social-distancing neighbors. What a beautiful sight it was to see Mt. Tamalpais in the distance from atop the Mare Island bridge. We were never so happy to arrive safely home.

Please wear your mask and keep the distance safe. ■



Ladder-backed Woodpecker

Article and Photography by DAVID GRAY

The ladder-backed woodpecker (*Dryobates scalaris*) is not a local bird, but we found one on our trip across Nevada in late October, not too far from Area 51 in the Pahrangat National Wildlife Refuge. South of the junction of US-375 (the Extraterrestrial Highway) and US-93, this refuge has a large lake that is fed by the Pahrangat Creek, a ribbon of green in the Nevada desert. The ladder-backed woodpeckers live in the deserts of the American Southwest and on south into Mexico. They were so closely associated with deserts that they were previously named the cactus woodpecker.



Listening for prey



Leaping to a new perch

Well-named for the markings in its upper back that look like ladder rungs, the male has a bright-red crown – a little holiday red for the season. The female has the same markings, with a black crown. Their facial markings also distinguish them: the linkage of the



Upside down with ladder-back markings visible

eye stripe with their malar (cheek) stripe against a background of a cream-colored throat and neck with a black nape sets them apart from other woodpeckers.

As with most woodpeckers, the toes of the ladder-backed woodpecker form an X, with two toes forward and two toes pointing backwards. Most birds have three toes forward and one pointing backwards. This unusual orientation in the woodpeckers makes them zygodactyls, and allows them to hang upside down with ease. As he hunted for insects lurking under the bark of a tree, this little guy cared not at all which way was up.

They are small birds, weighing about 1.2 ounces on average. Their wingspan measures a little over a foot, and they can be as long as 7-1/8" long. They are cavity nesters, with the male doing most of the cavity excavation. Pairs have one brood a year of a clutch of up to seven eggs. Their size is between those of the downy woodpecker and the hairy woodpecker, both of which live in our Park.



Happy holidays to all! Soon we will pass the winter solstice, and the days will start getting longer again. ■

DECEMBER 2020

| SUNDAY | | MONDAY | | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SATURDAY |
|--------|---|--|--|--|---|---|---|----------|
| | | | | 1 6 PM PAC Board Meeting <i>Zoom.us / Contact Anila Manning for link</i> | 2 6 PM HOL Board Meeting <i>Zoom.us Contact Janie Crocker for link</i> | 3 11 AM-12 PM The Rollin' Root <i>Clubhouse Parking Lot</i>  | 4 1-1:30 PM The Rollin' Root <i>Clubhouse Parking Lot</i>  | 5 |
| 6 | 7 6 AM Trash Pickup 5-6 PM MVEST Meeting <i>Zoom.us / Contact John Hansen for link</i>  | 8 6:30 PM Biography Night Stephen Plocher <i>Zoom.us / Contact Kim Holscher for link</i>  ECHO DEADLINE | 9  6:30-8:30 PM Resilient Neighborhoods | 10 11 AM The Rollin' Root  | 11 1 PM The Rollin' Root  | 12 | | |
| 13 | 14 6 AM Trash Pickup 5 PM MVEST Meeting <i>Zoom.us</i>  | 15 | 16  Breaking the Rules with Janet Bogardus 6:30-8 PM on ZOOM <i>Contact Janet Bogardus for link</i> | 17 11 AM The Rollin' Root  | 18 1 PM The Rollin' Root  | 19 7 PM Salon in the Park Darkness and Light <i>Zoom.us / Contact Kim Holscher for link</i> | | |
| 20 | 21 6 AM Trash Pickup 5 PM MVEST Meeting <i>Zoom.us</i>  | 22 | 23 | 24 11 AM The Rollin' Root  | 25 CHRISTMAS DAY | 26 | | |
| 27 | 28 6 AM Trash Pickup 5 PM MVEST Meeting <i>Zoom.us</i>   FULL MOON 7:28 PM | 29 | 30 | 31 NEW YEAR'S EVE | | | | |

2021