

T H E
ECHO

April 2023

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Letter to the Editor

On a recent walk around the Park I noticed the following: new fencing along the north side of the clubhouse (looks great); an apparent V-ditch being dug in the large meadow below the clubhouse; and a regrading (I think) of the dirt path behind Panorama. I was not aware that any of these projects were planned or when they were to occur. I'm also curious about the purpose for the work done in the garden in front of the clubhouse. Management sometimes informs us of upcoming work, but I'd appreciate knowing about *all* our improvement projects. Maybe an ongoing column in the *Echo* would meet that need. I wonder if other residents feel the same way?

Michael Holland
29 Scenic Drive

Editor's note: A resident installed the meadow V-ditch with Management approval; Management projects are reported in the *Echo* (see pp. 3 and 4) and at PAC monthly meetings and minutes accessible at www.marinvalley.net.



In Memoriam

Janet Nadine Martin Smith 1928-2023

Janet M. Smith lived in Marin Valley from 1989 to 2020 and passed away on January 26, 2023, in the peace and quiet of her youngest daughter's home in Healdsburg, CA. She was 94 years old.

Janet was born on April 27, 1928, to Carl and Gwendolyn Martin in Washington, Iowa. Following the death of her mother, Janet's family moved to Sausalito, CA, when she was 14 years old. Janet remained close with her two siblings, Jack and Carol, throughout their lives. In 1946 she graduated from Tamalpais High and went to work for Bank of America as a bookkeeper – a skill she continued to use throughout her life.

In 1957 Janet married the love of her life, Walter A. Smith (1911-1986). They lived a beautiful life full of travel (usually for business or bowling tournaments), running a business (Hagen & Smith Moving Company), parties (rumor is theirs were always the best), and family (combined, they had eight children).

Janet was a lifelong Girl Scout, involved in horse camps, cookie sales, the Historical Society, and acting as a Scout leader for over 35 years. She was honored in a 2020 ceremony for her many years of dedication and felt this was one of her greatest life accomplishments.

Beyond this, Janet was an avid volunteer (Kaiser Permanente), sports lover (SF Giants, 49ers, Warriors), and hobbyist (Marin Merrie Mini-Makers). She held love in her heart for people from all walks of life and put her family above everything.

Janet Smith – Mom, Grandma, Great-Grandma, Friend – is deeply missed and will always be remembered for her loving heart, sweet spirit, and ready smile. She is survived by her five children (Barbara, Scott, Jennifer, Matt, Jeff), 12 grandchildren, and seven great-grandchildren.

A Celebration of Life will be held for Janet on Saturday, April 29, at Mill Valley Scout Hall, 177 E. Blithedale Ave. from 1 to 3 pm. Please join us to share your memories of Janet with her family.

THE ECHO 2023

MARIN VALLEY

MOBILE COUNTRY CLUB

100 MARIN VALLEY DRIVE • NOVATO, CA 94949
415-883-5911 / 415-883-1971 FAX

www.marinvalley.net

EDITOR **Anila Manning**

COPY EDITOR/PROOFREADER **Mary Barbosa**

PROOFREADERS **Carol-Joy Harris,
Tara Plocher, Laura Kradjan-Cronin**

PARK DISTRIBUTION/DELIVERY **Mark Crocker**

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www.mobilehomeboard.com/

MARIN VALLEY

GENERAL MANAGER **Matt Greenberg**
gm.mvmcc@gmail.com

PAC BOARD

PRESIDENT **Jay Shelfer 415-250-0375**
VICE PRESIDENT **John Hansen 415-847-7155**
SECRETARY **Carol-Joy Harris 415-883-2824**
TREASURER **Stephen Plocher 415-302-9043**
AT LARGE **Vicki Waddell 415-382-8684**

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MV PROJECT PLANNING **John Hansen, Jay Shelfer**
MVEST **John Hansen, Bill Davis, John Feld,
Stephen Plocher, Joan Cervisi, David Gray,
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BAR MANAGER EMERITUS **Fred Dargie 884-2969**

SUBMITTING ARTICLES

Email articles with "ECHO" as the subject to **Anila Manning: anilahere99@gmail.com** with a copy of the article in the body of the email. Images should be high resolution.

ECHO DEADLINE

The 8th of the month or sooner for the following month's issue

MVMCC *Management Update*

Projects

This month we are focusing on maintenance and capital projects:

We had quite a bit of debris cleanup after the January storms, and we cleaned out the V-ditches and all of the catch basins as well.

Lots of water came out of the clubhouse basement into the card room and the billiard room. This must also have happened sometime in the past, because we discovered an old, nonworking sump pump in the basement. This will be replaced. Meanwhile, the carpets have been steam cleaned and treated with enzymes, and no longer smell.

We had the north perimeter boundary below the clubhouse inspected and replaced the broken barbed-wire fence with all new posts and wire.

Several weeks ago, we finished a large concrete retaining wall on Marin Valley Drive; this is our biggest wall of the year.

Now there's a new concrete walkway between the two doors of the gym so folks will not track mud inside. During this project we found that all the catch basins in the front garden were not functioning properly, as several drains and pipes were broken and old, so we have replaced quite a bit of this system.

The crew removed, redug, leveled, and replaced the decomposed granite and flagstones in the front garden (removing trip hazards), using hardener. Previously it was just dirt, and there was no compacted gravel under the old granite. The same thing was done on the granite PG&E path, as rains had been causing ruts.

We asked Public Works to come out after the storms, because there was a lot of gravel and mud on Scenic Drive, but they didn't have the time, so they recommended a company. Unfortunately, the day the contractor started, his machine broke, and it took eight or nine days for him to come back.

The City inspected the hillsides and found that they are holding up well; vegetation growth since the last big rain makes landslides unlikely.

Water usage

The last reading for water was on January 18. We had a total of 28,300 gallons of use per day for the month. The same time last year, our total usage was just under 32,000 gallons per day, so it looks like this year we used 3,000–4,000 fewer gallons per day. At least part of this reduced usage is due to leak repair; there were some slow leaks that had been running constantly.

Utilities

A lot of residents are concerned that the monthly gas and electric bills have gone up. I went through all the bills and found that some folks have the same average bills and others have \$200–\$300 gas bills and very similar electric bills. It looks like the rates are similar to what they had been in past years, but the usage is increasing with the cold weather. When residents use electricity and gas, they are subject to rate tiers 1–4; rates do increase when your use exceeds your baseline.

Thank you for your continued cooperation.

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

Letter to Residents

Greetings from the Park Acquisition Corporation Board.

Finances

Our finances are in order. Our cash plus medium- and long-term reserves continues at \$5.5 million. With the City's pileup of delayed accounting, funds due us and payments out are still being finalized.

Sewage Pumping Station

Construction of the replacement/renewal of the sewage pump station no. 1 near the clubhouse is delayed. We are awaiting word from City staff as to when work will begin.

Vaccine

COVID and its new variants are still around. Do not let your guard down. Practicing social distancing and continued masking are advised but not required as the state and country tire of the mandated precautions to avoid the transmission of COVID. The CDC still reports you are less likely to be seriously sick if you have been vaccinated, and avoidance of transmittable situations is encouraged.

Infrastructure

Outside agencies have completed the expected overview of our infrastructure. The City of Novato's engineering group, having reviewed it, has yet to pass it on to the Helsing Group and the PAC Board. We are still awaiting these reports as we work to prepare next year's budget.

Projects

Several projects are in process for the Park, including the clubhouse roof and solar heating for the pool. We are told that the City's engineering group will work to accomplish these before summer.

Activities

Management, MVEST, HOL, and Mar Val are all very active on your behalf, and their activities are reported on in articles in each month's *Echo*. I urge you to investigate

and participate. It is best to see the notices at the front desk to take advantage of these worthwhile events. By the time the *Echo* is out, often these events have changed or happened.

Participation

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

Election

The five-member PAC Board will have an opening in June for a two-year term. If you are interested in running for election, contact Carol-Joy Harris at caroljoyharris@comcast.net, John Hansen at johnhansen.emt@gmail.com, or Timo Navsky at pgemsky@comcast.net.

Agendas

For future PAC Board meetings, agendas, including the Zoom link, are posted 72 hours prior to the meetings and are available to those on the mailing list. To be added to this list, contact PAC Secretary Carol-Joy Harris at caroljoyharris@comcast.net. You can also find the Zoom link on our marinvalley.net homepage.

Meetings

A recording of the March meeting is at <https://youtu.be/62Ts8MSOQ2s>. The next board meeting will be on Tuesday, April 4, at 6 pm.

In service,




Jay Shelfer
PAC PRESIDENT
jjshelfer@yahoo.com
415-250-0375 cell



Let's All Work Together

by **JOHN FELD**

HOL and MVEST working together ...

... to help bring YOU different ways to make your **garden more attractive and more fire-safe.**

Starting with Zone Zero

We are specifically working on what is called “Zone Zero Defensible Space,” which is making sure there is a three-to-five-foot clear space around your home, containing no combustible plants or material. This has been found to be one of the most successful ways to mitigate home fires. Also, we will be looking at limbing up your taller trees so there are no inflammable leaves or branches for the first few feet up from the ground or for smaller trees, up to 1/3 of the trees’ height. This will help prevent fires from spreading burning material up into trees. Overall, this also means restricting plants to those that are drought tolerant and easily maintainable.

In the Zone Zero space, preferably use only inorganic mulch, such as rocks, gravel, and decomposed granite. Further out, restrict mulch to composted mulch and avoid shredded or “hairy” mulch and pine needles.

We are trying to prevent plants that accumulate dead leaves and flammable vegetation such as eucalyptus, palms, bamboo, and manzanitas, as well as oily plants such as rosemary, juniper, lavender, pines, and firs – resulting in less maintenance.

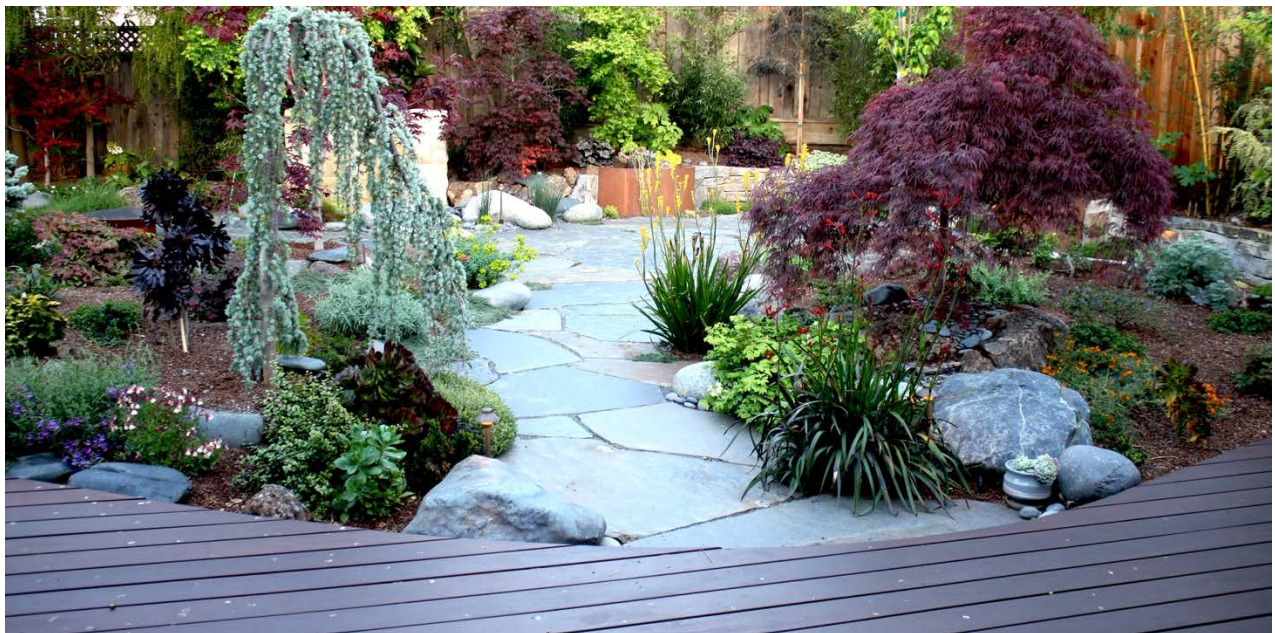
How We Can Help You Find Free Funds

We are working with several organizations to assist funding this work and are consulting with Park management regarding the selection of trees and shrubs.

The work may be funded through the HOL Yard Maintenance Fund, along with donations from the community for inexpensive and minor fixes. For more costly projects, we will help locate grants to assist in the financing. Depending on availability, they will cover 50-100% of the cost. Several types of grants are available; larger projects may entail spreading the work over several years. So far, Novato Fire District has awarded 1,518 matching grants for fire mitigation. Already completed home-hardening work might also be eligible for grants or reimbursement. Remember, these grants are limited, so don't waste time before applying. See p. 8 for one resident's success getting a grant.

Identifying Need

If and when you are selected, we will communicate with you personally. Working with you, we will find the best potential solution for your needs. We will not come into your yard without an invitation. The whole process will be secure and will assure you of complete privacy.



If you feel you would like us to inspect your home, feel free to drop me a line and I will add you to the list. Many people have already had inspections from the Novato Fire District, and we will be happy to work with their recommendations. Contact Novato Fire District Wildfire Mitigation Specialist Yvette Blount at yblount@novatofire.org to get your free inspection.

The result should be an artistic blend of various hardscape selections (rocks, pebbles, sand) and small, suitable, decorative plants such as flowering natives. See plant suggestions, shown to the right, from Fire Safe Marin's website at <http://firesafemarin.org>.

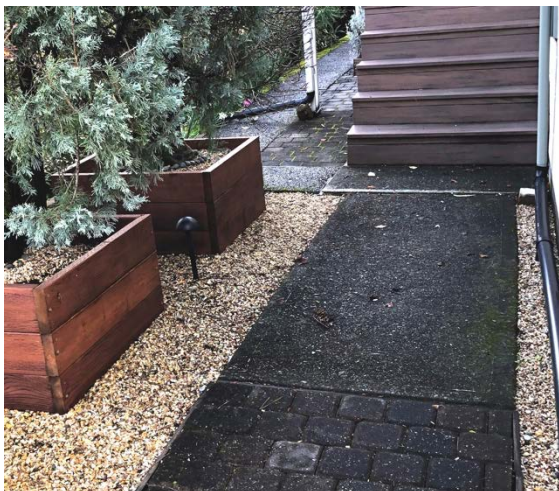
We are also looking into ways to implement:

- Replacing vents with firesafe vents that will not allow burning embers to enter into or under your home.



- Replacing your single-pane windows with safer double-pane ones.
- Installation of gutter guards to keep flammable material away from your home.

Keeping our yards clear of flammable material is an ongoing process. Take a walk around the Park and see how many houses have plants growing in their gutters and accumulated dead leaves. Also see the number of residents who have already started protecting us all with fire-safe gardens, as here:



Bergenia

Revisiting your home's defensible space each year can make a big difference in how your house survives fires.



Aeonium

We realize that there have been very few fires in the Park, but with the increase of extended fire seasons in general and around Marin specifically, this is something we should all be aware of, and a clean yard makes the neighborhood generally more pleasant. One unsafe house in a street can endanger all houses!



Barberry

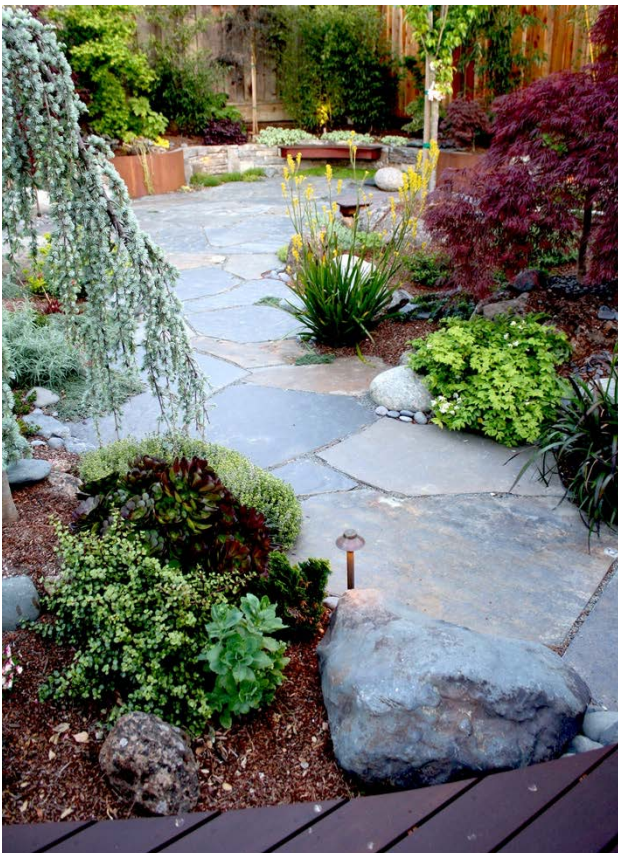


Agave

So get in touch, and watch our streets become prettier. EVERY BIT HELPS.



It's up to all of us to save our homes by making smart gardening choices. Prevention can help avoid catastrophe.



Marin CIL Presentation for Seniors with Disabilities

Sunday, April 16 • 11:30 am – 1 pm

On Sunday, April 16 the Marin Center for Independent Living (MCIL) will be here to make a presentation on the services and advocacy they provide for seniors and people with disabilities. One way or another, this covers all of us. Their mission is to assist people with all types of disabilities to achieve their “maximum level of sustainable independence as contributing, responsible, and equal participants in society.”

MCIL is nonprofit based in San Rafael and is sponsored by, among others, the Department of Rehabilitation, Marin Health, Wells Fargo, and the Bank of Marin.

Among the many services they provide are information and teaching relating to independent living skills, navigating benefits, assistive technologies, home modifications, and disaster relief.

Their presentation will cover resiliency for elders as well as dignity and home living. They will present their services for supplying free

- long-life rechargeable batteries for wheelchairs, oxygen makers, and sleep apnea devices
- hospital beds
- ramps allowing the disabled to get in and out of their homes.

They will also discuss the complex field of navigating your benefits.

This should be a very informative event and will be held in the clubhouse ballroom from 11:30 am to 1 pm. Everyone is welcome. Come and learn about MCIL’s marvelous services and find out how they will be working with MVEST. There will be pizza and refreshments.



Another Successful Resident Novato Fire Protection District Grant

by **MICHELE RODRIGUEZ**

I recently purchased a 1971 Western Sturgis mobile home with single-pane windows. As part of the purchase, we reviewed past energy bills and realized that cost savings from energy efficiency would be an important home improvement. According to the Dept. of Energy, home windows typically last 15-20 years, after which the seals begin to weaken and allow water and/or drafts to seep in.

We decided to replace the majority of our single-pane windows with double-pane windows. We chose vinyl frames because they don't require painting and have good moisture resistance. The glass itself has a low-emissivity coating that reduces energy loss by as much as 30-50%. This low-e coating is invisible but lowers the daylight transmittance as well as solar heat gain through the window. Between the dual-pane glass is argon – a nontoxic, clear, and odorless gas to minimize heat transfer between the interior and exterior of the window.

The Novato Fire Protection District does require Park residents to have Wildland Urban Interface (WUI)-compliant tempered glass windows. As part of the collaboration between the Novato Fire Protection District and the Marin Wildfire Prevention Authority, they offer home hardening and vegetation grants for Novato residents.

Details are here: [Wildfire Mitigation and Vegetation Management | Novato Fire Protection District \(www.novatofire.org/prevention/wildfire-and-vegetation-management\)](http://www.novatofire.org/prevention/wildfire-and-vegetation-management)

The grants award up to 50% of monies spent – up to \$1,000 for the vegetation management program and \$2,500 for the home hardening program. Grants operate within a fiscal year July 1-June 15. Some examples of qualified goods and services from Novato Fire:

Vegetation Management Matching Grant Program

- Removal of dead vegetation
- Removal of juniper, bamboo, Italian cypress, rosemary, and fountain grasses
- Removal of shredded bark mulch
- Clearing debris from gutters and roofs
- Cutting back tree branches from roofline and chimney
- Installing rock around perimeter of structure

Home Hardening Matching Grant Program

- Replacing non-WUI compliant materials with WUI-rated materials
- Installing fire-rated vents of 1/8" or less wire mesh
- Installing gutter guards
- Replace single-pane windows with double-pane tempered glass windows
- Replace wood siding with stucco/cement board

To Receive a Grant

First, schedule a free property assessment with a Wildfire Mitigation Specialist. Mine arrived within days of calling, and the inspection lasted less than 30 minutes. A report with photographs was generated within days and uploaded to their website, and I was given an online access code to view it.

My window-replacement quote included the requirement for WUI-compliant tempered glass. I uploaded pictures of the final installed product along with the report, my original quote, and the paid invoice, and copied the Novato Fire Protection District. They called informing me that my material had been received and a check for \$2,500 would be sent to me. Within a week I received the check. I do appreciate that the Novato Fire Protection District and the Marin Wildfire Authority believe that paying for 21% of my windows is important.

This grant is a one-time-per-fiscal-year offering. If homeowners cannot afford to replace all the windows at once, they could spend \$5,000 annually and receive 50% back with a \$2,500 grant. Like any grant, monies are available as long as the allocated money has not been distributed, and if it is budgeted annually. Please note that the District did ask for a 1099, so the money may be taxable.

Message from Mar Val

Dear Friends,

As I write this in early March, it is pouring cats and dogs and windy, but we are happily on the verge of spring ... thankful for the rains but so ready for some sunshine, long days, tulips, and Easter eggs.

Come join the Pub folks every Friday night at 5:00 pm for Friday Fingers – great food, terrific drinks, and lots of fun.

The Spring Fling is April 15, featuring fresh salmon or quiche along with appropriate side dishes. The drink of the night will be Sangria ... a sure sign of spring.

Mar Val will be holding dinner events outside starting with the Memorial Day event on May 29, weather permitting. Weather has been all over the map lately;

events will be moved to the ballroom if weather predictions are for too high/low temperatures, wind, or even more rain. We do want to be able to relax and enjoy the evening and not have to contend with nasty weather.

Dig out your sombrero and come celebrate Cinco de Mayo, actually on a Pub night this year. Tim Hart will once again be cooking for us: pork verde, rice, beans, and chicken or cheese tamales. Drink of the night will be margaritas on the rocks. All residents and guests are welcome at Pub, but if you wish to enjoy the Mexican dinner, you MUST have a reservation.

Hope to see you soon at a Mar Val event.



Cinco de Mayo Pub Event **Friday, May 5**

5 pm Cocktails 5:30 pm Dinner

Try our Margaritas on the Rocks!

MENU

Pork Chili Verde
Chicken or Cheese Tamales
Refried Beans, Rice, Tortillas

\$10 per person. Make checks payable to Mar Val
Deadline for reservations: Wednesday, May 3, by 5 pm
(or when 100 reservations have been received)

For questions, call Susan Hoff @ 707-365-9426



Mar Val Spring Event

Saturday, April 15

5 pm Cocktails 6 pm Dinner

Try our *Spring Sangria!*

Menu

Salmon with lemon caper sauce or Vegetarian Quiche

Mixed Salad New Potatoes Rolls

Dessert

\$15 per person, make checks payable to Mar Val

Deadline for reservations: Tuesday, April 11, by 5 pm

(or when 140 reservations have been received)

For questions, call Susan Hoff @ 707-365-9426

Home Owners League Message

Welcome,

It seems like we have left the rain behind us, and apparently our reservoirs are full. Spring began officially on March 20, so hopefully it will soon get warm. The rain has curtailed several HOL events, but we plan for more exciting activities. We are sad to report that the Chair Yoga class is canceled. A new class starts April 5 on Thursdays at 10 am in the Fireside Room. As of April 1, proof of vaccination and masks are not required for the clubhouse, but masks are still recommended.

Painting Class

We are fortunate to have noted painter Janet Bogardus teaching a six-week series of classes, *Intro to Painting with Acrylics*. Participants will need to provide their own materials, and a list of these is posted at the front desk in the clubhouse, along with a sign-up sheet. Tuesdays 4-5:30 pm starting April 4. \$15/class.

Recycling

There will be a presentation by Marin Sanitary Service about their services, new equipment, and to answer questions about recycling in the Park. They will be here on Saturday, April 8 at 11 am, followed by refreshments.

Dump Run

Our HOL-sponsored dump run was delayed due to health issues and is now scheduled for April 22.

This great service has been run by HOL VP Ed Collins. Ed is looking for a few fit and healthy people to assist in the heavy lifting. If you would care to assist or would like things hauled away, please contact him at mretc@hotmail.com. Donations are appreciated.

Beautiful and Firesafe Gardens

HOL and MVEST are working together to make our gardens more firesafe, while at the same time, extra beautiful. See pp. 5-7.

Today's the Day

Our latest play is shaping up to be a bonanza. It is a song and dance event with a huge cast and will be performed twice: Saturday evening, May 20, and Sunday afternoon, May 21. Tickets will be \$10, and it is open to residents and guests. Masks are highly recommended. There will be no recording.

Celebrating Pauline

HOL is planning a celebration of everything Pauline Hawkins has contributed to the beautification of our wonderful community. Some years ago, she removed huge amounts of juniper from in front of the clubhouse and planted a picturesque English garden.

The two benches and flagstone path were added, and the garden spread to include the street frontage that we have all enjoyed. Pauline also is responsible for the lovely garden by the pump house at the west end of the parking area. Additionally, she has planted many trees around our community and cares for all the daffodils, jonquils, and narcissi that line Marin Valley Drive every spring. Pauline has for many years helped Mar Val and the Black Cat events. We are still working on an appropriate date for the event, which will be held in the ballroom, and everyone is welcome to attend and wish Pauline many more years of community life.

Information on Wills

HOL wishes to purchase a book and/or software on self-written wills for our library. Some people use attorneys, but many people write their own. Please send your recommendations of publications and computer software you may be aware of.

Warm regards from the HOL Board,



John Feld

John Feld
HOL PRESIDENT
johnmfeld@gmail.com
510-495-4138 cell



Learn How to Paint with Acrylics

by **JANET BOGARDUS**

I'm offering an art class starting in April, "Intro to Painting with Acrylics."

We will cover color mixing and use of acrylic media in creating several representational and abstract paintings. Participants will need to provide their own materials, and a list of these is posted at the front desk in the clubhouse, along with a sign-up sheet.

We will meet for 1½ hours once a week for 6 weeks in the ballroom, Tuesdays at 4-5:30 pm, April 4, 11, 18, and 25, and May 2 and 9.

Suggested donation: \$15 per class.

Still Not Sure What Gets Recycled?

by **ELLEN JANE SCHULZ**

Community Meeting with the Pros • Sat., April 8 • 11 am – 1 pm

Environmental Consciousness (or Conscience?) and Garbage

Garbage is probably not the first thing that comes to mind when you think of environmentalism: subjects like oil and gas pollution, contaminated waterways, mines and drilling, loss of habitat, climate change in all its forms. But garbage, recycling, and composting are things we deal with every day.

Someone once said *You can be part of the problem, or you can be part of the solution* — I like it.



Marin Sanitary has asked that we come to the workshop with questions. I already have several, and can act as an intermediary, if you'd like to send your questions to me before the event (ellenjanesmusic@gmail.com). This will facilitate their presentation.

Please come to this HOL-sponsored hands-on workshop from Marin Sanitary Service on Saturday, April 8 from 11 am to 1 pm. You are sure to learn something new. And of course, there will be pizza and refreshments.

WHERE DOES IT GO?
FIND OUT
SATURDAY • APRIL 8 • 11AM-1PM
BALLROOM - REFRESHMENTS - FREE
Q/A - MARIN SANITARY SERVICE

Dump Run on Earth Day – April 22

by **ED COLLINS**

Now that we're healthy again, we will be picking up your unwanted items that won't fit in trash cans and taking them to the dump. To be put on our list, email mretc@hotmail.com or text 415-377-7696.

No phone calls, please. Items for the run need to be piled in your carport or driveway and clearly labeled as junk. You may need to help load it or arrange to have someone to help if the items are large.

HOL will cover the costs, and **volunteers and donations** are appreciated.

Toxic materials such as chemicals, oil, paint, and pressure-treated wood are not accepted — take to Recology Sonoma Marin Recycling Center at 7576 Redwood Blvd., Novato, 800-243-0291 www.recology.com/recology-sonoma-marin/novato-recycling-center/.

Electronic items are also not accepted — take to Bel Marin Keys: Computer & Technology Resource Center, 42 Digital Dr. #3, Novato, 415-883-1428. Or Renew Computers in San Rafael, www.renewcomputers.com.

Springtime Exhibit Call to All Artists

by **SUZIE LAHR**

Installation Saturday, April 22 • 10 am – 12 pm

April, it's that glorious time of year. Daylight savings time is here and our days are longer, the weather is warmer, and our clubhouse walls will be filled with new artwork. Our Marin Valley artists have been diligently working to create new pieces for your viewing pleasure.

If you are an artist we have not yet met, we invite you to join us. There are a few particulars to know if you would like to exhibit a piece in the Clubhouse Gallery for residents and visitors to enjoy and potentially purchase.

The exhibit hanging crew will accept your work between the hours of 10 am and 12 noon on the morning of April 22. This area of the clubhouse will be closed off to all visitors and residents during this process.

Art to be hung must be framed and tightly wired across the back of the piece at least 5 inches down from the top of the frame. Please place a label with your name, title of the piece, medium, and the price for interested



Art and Photograph: Susan McMudie

buyers on the back of framed pieces or the bottom of display pieces.

You will be checked in when you deliver your piece by two delightful ladies, Jae Tillinghast and Anne Lakota. David Gray and I will be there to greet you, too! We begin arranging the exhibit at noon, so you must have your piece there by then. You also need to retrieve any of your art that

is currently displayed.

We will need a computer wiz to create our price list and wall labels. Can you or someone you know step up to the plate to help us with that once the exhibit is set up?

My phone number and email are 415-884-9611, suziela@aol.com. I look forward to meeting you and having you become part of our art community.

Our New Play: *Today's the Day!*

by **JANIE KLIMES**

There are Writers in the Park!

There are Directors, in the Park!

There are Singers in the Park!

There are Dancers in the Park!

There are Actors in the Park!

There are Producers in the Park!

All these people are your friends and neighbors whom you see every day. All of them (over 40 of us) are working HARD to produce this unforgettable musical that will be performed

**Saturday, May 20
at 7 pm
&
Sunday, May 21
at 2 pm**

All residents, friends, and family members are welcome, including those who live outside the Park.

There will be a sign-up sheet at the front desk on April 27. You will be asked to include your name, text number, email address, and sponsor name if applicable. The cost will be \$10 per person, payable to HOL. Put your check (no cash please) in the designated HOL box at the front desk. **No reservations without payment.**

We PROMISE a fun-filled, romping good time! Performances of *Today's the Day!* will be full of music, dancing, comedy, and audience interaction. It will provide 1½ hours of laughs and entertainment. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me at janieklimes1948@gmail.com.

Embracing Being Old

by **LORNA SASS**

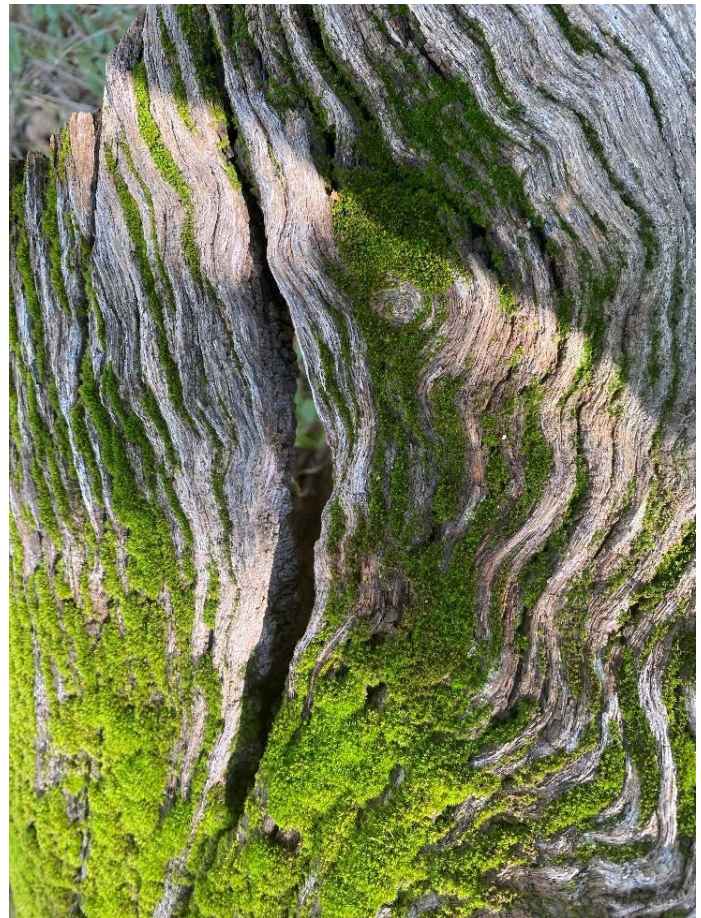
I don't recall the precise moment when I began feeling old. The movement from acknowledging that I was "getting older" to actually "being old" was gradual, but I did notice that when I turned 77 last October, I felt a sense of shock. That shock reverberates in my body and mind every time I think of my age.

It's not that I didn't see it coming. I've had aches and pains for at least a decade, and when I went off gluten and dairy in hopes of improving my digestion, I noticed no improvement in my vitality or sense of well-being. I've been depressed on and off most of my life, but that feeling has become more front and center now that I'm retired and the distraction of a career no longer monopolizes my attention.

Sadly, we live in a culture that doesn't acknowledge or celebrate the arrival of oldness. There is no welcoming committee waiting with open arms to receive us, and there is considerable encouragement to pretend it isn't happening. I'm not even sure it's beneficial that we look younger than our parents did at our age; maybe with more wrinkles and a slower step we would get more respect?

Feeling the need for companionship and a rite of passage into oldness, I sought out a crone's group online. I began meeting weekly with women to discuss how we are dealing with being in our final chapter. I was surprised and envious that a few of the women are in their late fifties and getting a head start on the experience of elderhood — a chapter for which I didn't find myself sufficiently prepared.

I had hoped for a ritual to begin our circle, a chance to step formally into cronehood, but the



PHOTOGRAPH: LORNA SASS

organizer didn't provide that. As a result, the group has not had the power it might have. Nevertheless, it has been helpful to discuss the words *crone*, *hag*, *elder*, *witch*, and *wise woman* in an effort to come to terms with how society views us and how we view ourselves.

When I was going through menopause in my fifties and living in Manhattan, I went to a gathering of luminary women that included Gloria Steinem. When the panel opened for questions, I raised my hand and asked in a tone fraught with frustration and anger, "I feel like no one warned me what this experience would be like. What's up with that?"

Gloria answered without hesitation, as if she had been pondering this herself: "It's an existential experience," she said. "No one can really tell you how it's going to feel."



That answer has stayed with me because there is a certain truth in it. But I recently discovered that it's not the whole truth.

As an example of the miracle of being given what we need, I found the perfect book to shine light on my inquiry in our amazing Breezeway Boutique (thank you, Tara and Kevin!). It is titled *This Is Getting Old: Zen Thoughts on Aging with Humor and Dignity*. Most touchingly, I just noticed this very minute that the signature on the title page reveals the prior owner to be our dear, departed Marianne Gontarz York.

While reading this book, I felt a kinship with the author, Susan Moon, who writes about how her bad knees forced her to move from cushion to chair for her Zen meditation practice. Moon confesses to forgetfulness, and Marianne underlined her words “memory loss is a normal part of aging.”

A few pages later, Marianne also underlined this thought: “I used to think I was pretty smart, and now I am given the opportunity to let go of that identity. I have a different brain now, but as long as I’m grasping for the mind that I had twenty years ago, I suffer.”

Reading the words above and seeing Marianne’s underlining helped me feel less alone and less judgmental about the increasing number of times I forget where I’m going and what I’m supposed to do next, the 10-second lapse before I can remember a word or a person’s name, and my lack of focus when I’m trying to read a book.

Lately I have begun to drop things several times per day – a sign that there might be some neurological adventure in my near future – and then again, there is the restless leg syndrome that bothers me at night when I am trying to read or sleep. Not to mention the challenge of remembering which pills to take when and what doctor appointment is next ... or was it the dentist?

I have been pretty hard on myself when goofy senior moments occur and easily move into fear, thinking about the potential horrors of the future. But in my better moments I try to remember the Buddhist lesson about the second arrow: the first arrow is when I trip, and as if that weren’t bad enough, the second arrow is when I beat myself up for being a stupid idiot for not seeing what tripped me.

Keeping the second arrow in mind, these days I am working on being more compassionate with myself. I remind myself that I’m not getting older and dopier on purpose; it’s just the way things are.

Oops, gotta go now. Just looked at the time and am borderline late for a doctor’s appointment and still have to wipe the food stain from breakfast off my shirt and locate my keys ...

Lorna is considering starting a crone’s group in Marin Valley. Please email her if you are interested in joining: LornaSass33@gmail.com.

Birds of Baja

Text and Photography by **DAVID GRAY**

We took what has become an annual break from the northern California winter, traveling to Baja California and Baja California Sur in February in our campervan. The furnace died our first night out in 37-degree temperatures, so we hastened southward with no heat or hot water, picking up an electric blanket the very next day. I am writing this article at the Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument in southern Arizona, on the border with Mexico.

What an amazing place for birding Baja is! All of these photos were taken on Baja's east coast at Bahia Concepcion, off the Gulf of Baja, a.k.a. the Sea of Cortez, except for the osprey, which were on the Pacific coast. The highways in Baja meander from coast to coast, depending on the occurrence of coastal mountain ranges. I photographed too many birds to squeeze into one article, including four species of hummingbirds: Xantus's male and female, a male Costa's, Anna's, and Allen's. Tricolored, great blue, and little blue herons; great and snowy egrets; double-crested cormorants in mating plumage ... the following are arguably the best.

The magnificent frigate bird (*Fregata magnificens*), top right, with its nearly 8-foot wingspan makes a swooping dive, starkly silhouetted against the sky.

A beautiful male verdin (*Auriparus flaviceps*) forages for insects and berries in the bushes. They are quite small, less than 5 inches in length and weigh about 0.2 ounces.



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A male cardinal (*Cardinalis cardinalis*) graced us with its presence. His mate was there,





too, but she was shyer. Their range runs from the east coast to the Plains states in the US, and down through Texas, northern Mexico, and southern Baja. It was a pleasant surprise to see them, as we never see them in California.

Two osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*) on their nest on the Pacific coast in Santa Rosalita. Their range includes all of the continental US and most of Canada and Mexico.

We were visited by a pod of porpoises in Bahia Concepcion, and one of them waved.

As one of our favorite sayings goes, "Ask your doctor if Baja is right for you."



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<h1 style="color: blue;">APRIL 2023</h1> <p>Please check our website marinvalley.net for any changes or for Zoom links.</p>						1 1-4PM Breezeway Market 5PM Dancing Meadow
2 10-10:30AM Meditation <i>Zoom/Michael Hagerty</i> 4-5PM Taiji <i>Deck David MacLam</i>	3 5AM Trash	4 4-5:30PM Painting with Acrylics <i>Ballroom with Janet Bogardus</i> 4-5PM Taiji 6PM PAC Board Meeting <i>Zoom/contact Carol-Joy Harris</i>	5 2-3PM Craft&Chat 5PM Dancing Deck 6PM HOL Board Meeting <i>Fireside Room</i>	6 10AM Chair Yoga <i>Fireside Room</i> 11AM-12PM Rollin' Root 	7 12PM Mahjong 4-5PM Taiji 5PM Dancing Meadow 5-7PM Pub 6-10PM Game Night <i>contact Ed Collins</i>	8 11AM-1PM Marin Sanitary Recycling Ballroom 5PM Dancing Echo deadline
9 10-10:30AM Meditation 4-5PM Taiji	10 5AM Trash 5PM MVEST <i>Zoom/contact John Hansen</i>	11 4-5PM Taiji 4-5:30PM Painting with Acrylics 5PM Mar Val Spring Event deadline	12 2-3PM Craft&Chat 5PM Dancing 6PM Mar Val Board Meeting	13 10AM Chair Yoga 11AM-12PM Rollin' Root 	14 12PM Mahjong 4-5PM Taiji 5PM Dancing 5-7PM Pub	15 5PM Dancing 5-7PM Mar Val Spring Event dinner
16 10-10:30AM Meditation 11:30AM-1PM MarinCIL <i>Ballroom</i> 4-5PM Taiji	17 5AM Trash	18 4-5PM Taiji 4-5:30PM Painting with Acrylics	19 1PM Ladies Bridge <i>Private, Fireside Room</i> 2-3PM Craft&Chat 5PM Dancing	20 10AM Chair Yoga 11AM-12PM Rollin' Root 	21 12PM Mahjong 4-5PM Taiji 5PM Dancing 5-7PM Pub	22 10AM Dump Run <i>contact Ed Collins</i> 10AM-12PM Art Installation 5PM Dancing
23 10-10:30AM Meditation 4-5PM Taiji	24 5AM Trash	25 4-5PM Taiji 4-5:30PM Painting with Acrylics	26 2-3PM Craft&Chat 4PM Book Club <i>contact Carol-Joy Harris</i> 5PM Dancing	27 10AM Chair Yoga 11AM-12PM Rollin' Root 	28 12PM Mahjong 4-5PM Taiji 5PM Dancing 5-7PM Pub	29 5PM Dancing
30 10-10:30AM Meditation 4-5PM Taiji						