

# POINT REYES LIGHT

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**BOLINAS** > Mardi Gras parade pulled costumed locals out of their shells. /12



**VALLEY** > Craft collective in Forest Knolls features antiques and classy goods. /10



**ARTS** > Watercolor orchids by Bolinas artist will be on display at Fort Mason. /5



**CALENDAR** > Chinese new year will be celebrated all week at the Point Reyes Library. /20



A peloton of bicyclists pedalled past Tomales Bay Monday in the third annual Tour of California. The route crossed 40 miles of Highway One and ended in Santa Rosa. Photo by T. Yeatts

## Preschool head resigns in face of silent board

by Justin Nobel

The Papermill Creek Children's Corner Board of Directors placed Executive Director Meg Frye on administrative leave on February 4. Two days later, Frye submitted her resignation to the board. Parents were notified in a letter from head teacher Nadine Varley, now the acting executive director. Some parents were happy to see Frye gone—at times she had clashed with popular teachers. Others were outraged and wondered why the woman who had helped secure much needed funding was all of a sudden ousted. Most people are confused and

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## Less ice, late grey whales

by Justin Nobel

Arctic sea ice covered an area 40 percent smaller than the long-term average last year, a change that has likely affected the southbound migration of grey whales.

Last Saturday, visitors at the Point Reyes Lighthouse spotted three whales traveling north. Grey whales typically pass Point Reyes from late December through early February, during their massive migration from the frigid waters off

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### HABLANDO /4

How and for whom the Latinos voted and why

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Lance Leonard Brown, 1947-2008

### ASK MISSY /15

Our children learned to swim at shell beach

## A literary angle on art

by Jacoba Charles

An arching tangle of willow guides you into a small room. The sound of falling water intersects with textures of leaf, flower, river and forest. A series of sculptures, made from natural objects such as kelp, stone and the slim boughs of native trees, are presented against blank walls, tracing delicate shadows on the floor.

Almost a quarter of the room is filled with a pond built with rock, driftwood and bark chips. Water pours into it from a waterfall flowing down a screen, onto which digital nature photographs are projected. Nearby is a rough bench made from a thick, weathered plank.

This is a collaborative art installation, titled RePose, currently on display at Gallery Route One in Point Reyes Station. The interplay of sculpture, digital imagery and water is designed to incite contemplation of the human relationship with nature as the viewer wanders through.

The installation reflects on the legacy of Wallace Stegner, author and pioneering wilderness advocate. It is one of five art exhibits planned to coincide with the literary conference entitled "Geography of Hope: Celebrating Wallace Stegner" that will be held in town next month.

"Our intention was to create a space

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### Extended Sheriff's call /3

>> A Forest Knolls woman lost her dream bike when burglars kept into an old dairy barn she rents on Tamal Road.

# Lance Leonard Brown, 1947-2008

by Justin Nobel

Lance Leonard Brown, a sailing enthusiast who built homes in West Marin, repaired the Inverness Boat House and once navigated a 20-foot sailboat to Mexico relying only on the fruits of the sea for food, passed away last week at the age of 60.

"He loved to sail," said daughter Michelle Brown. "He loved to build stuff and he could fix anything"

Lance was born September 16, 1947 and spent most of his youth in Richmond. He grew up with two sisters and a brother and moved to Inverness in his early 20s where he spent much of his life. He helped raise three daughters, Rebecca, Michelle and Leah.

He held a variety of jobs, working at the boat launch on Tomales Bay. For a time he worked for Dirt Brothers, a locally-owned construction company. He also helped rebuild the Inverness Boat House.

Lance played pitcher on the Pacific Slopes, a softball team that held weekly games at West Marin School. He wrote articles for *The Tomales Times* about his travels, including one titled "This Little Ship Came Home," about an epic trip to Mexico on a 20-foot wooden sailboat with friend Danny Joslin. They left from Inverness with only three Snickers bars for food and caught fish to supplement their diet. When they finally reached Mexico they naively landed at a military base. Soldiers pointed their guns at them but by the end of the night the storm-tossed Inverness sailors were sharing beers with the troops.

While living in Inverness, Lance kept a rowboat at Chicken Ranch beach which he used to paddle out to a 30-foot wooden sailboat moored offshore, the "Tomales Princess." He enjoyed taking friends and family out into the bay.

"We would leave really early in the morning and sail to Shell Beach to watch the Water Dogs' swimming lessons," remembered Michelle.

Sometimes, the girls and their father anchored the sloop off Hog Island, and fished for salmon near the mouth of the bay. The boat had a small cabin with little beds and they spent the night onboard, falling asleep to the lull of the waves.

A big adventure for the children was rowing the dingy ashore to dig up clams and explore the beaches.

On another occasion, he rowed a small boat from Inverness to Sausalito. "He rode tug boat waves for awhile and when he got tired he rowed back," said Leah.

In 1998, Lance left Inverness and traveled the West in an old Winnebago. Michelle and

## For and Aft...

Opening day on San Francisco Bay, and The Fearless was there.

Dan Joslin and I sailing through this celebration of thousands of vessels trying to determine how many beer cans had already sunk (judging from the numbers still afloat).

Many boats: large luxurious cruisers, old wooden sailing vessels, fiberglass class boats, row boats, surfboards with sails. I wouldn't have been surprised to see a sailing inner tube.

Among the celebrants The Fearless sailed, bound for Tomales Bay. Darkness came. The party was behind us, and against the last of an incoming tide we motored through the gate.

Shortly after midnight, the sails were set – the Pacific Ocean beneath the keel.

The winds were steady and brisk from the northwest. The swells were about 12 feet, and the Pacific (or peaceful) Ocean didn't seem all that peaceful. Nor did my stomach.

Dan agreed to the first watch and a tack to the west. I nearly emptied my stomach on the lee, went below, and promptly fell asleep.

I was awakened by a crash and the sound of water running into the cabin.

With the awakening came the realization that the winds had increased, and then the winds were on me – the howl

in one ear and Dan's voice in the other. The Fearless was coming about. I came up on deck. The cockpit was half full of water.

Dan told of a sea breaking over The Fearless, apparently jarring the cabin hatch loose because the next gust blew it away. We ran with the wind, looking for the hatch, lost and gone.

We once again came about and took our westerly tack, this time sailing an open boat. Dan was still on watch. I went below, slept greedily, awoke to darkness – still sick, came on deck, hung over the lee for awhile, then took my watch as Dan went for sleep.

Tiller in hand, wind in my face, and stars in my eyes – all on this moving black sea. I felt good, and The Fearless felt good, decks awash as often as not, heeling under too much sail.

On occasion, two swells would join efforts and push The Fearless very high – only to dive off into the trough. She seemed to love it. No moans, groans, or pounding – except from Dan who would experience weightlessness when she fell off one of these swells.

He would then drop against his bunk in the bow when The Fearless reached the trough.

The sky gave evidence a new day was dawning. The blackness slipped away. The winds lessened slightly. Dan was up on

by Lance Brown

deck and the Point Reyes lighthouse was in sight.

We spent the day trying to get around the point in steadily rising winds. But with so much sail, we were being set, so by mid-afternoon we were about 12 miles off the point, nearing the Farallones.

With the rising winds, it became apparent that we could not make it around the point, so we came about and headed for the protection of Drake's Bay.

In the few short hours it took us to reach Drake's Bay, the winds had reached about 30 miles per hour. Once in Drake's, we dropped sails with some muttering and growling at the wind, at seas which made this a difficult, wet job. And we motored up to the beach with the other boats seeking shelter.

Once below: cook, eat, dry out, hope friends understand we are safe in Drake's Bay and not at sea in this nasty weather, sleep.

Tuesday morning: calm sea, no wind. We motor around the point and pick up a light breeze. Sail to Tomales Bay. Motor through the mouth on a very calm outgoing tide.

A leisurely, restful sail in light winds and warm sun to Inverness. Feet on earth... home.

*Republished from the May 6, 1976 issue.*

Leah received postcards from Alaska, Colorado and Fresno. Eventually, he sold the RV and ended up in Los Molinos, a small farming town south of Redding, where he passed away.

Lance's sometimes spontaneous impulse to travel affected his daughters.

Six years ago, Michelle enlisted in the army. "I wanted to get out and see the world," she said.

She is part of the 705th Explosive Ordinance Disposal division and just finished her second tour in Iraq. She is currently at Fort Polk, Louisiana where her term of service will end in March.

"I used to talk to my dad about the army all the time," said Michelle. Lance spent time in the Air Force in the 1960s, although he was never shipped overseas.

The daughter and her father exchanged dog tags and Michelle continues to wear his.

"He always wanted me to send him hats and pins and patches," said Michelle. "Ev-

erybody back home would always tell me, 'oh, your father is so proud.'"

Leah traveled far afield as well. She packed her belongings in a horse trailer and moved to Florida, where she lives about five miles from the beach in a small town called Navarre, near Pensacola. She owns a 1938 wooden sailboat that looks just like the one Lance took to Mexico.

"I saw it on the side of the road with a For Sale sign and I thought, 'what the heck,'"

## >> Art

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where people would appreciate the natural environment," said Jacqueline Mallegni, one of the three creators of the installation. "There is this part of being human that interfaces with nature. We are so much a part of it, and it is a part of us."

The series of art installations associated with the Stegner conference started as a brainstorming session on the part of Steve Costa, owner of Point Reyes Books and the conference director, and Suzanne d'Coney, the conference coordinator.

"We were thinking about various panels and different ways to express or inter-

said Leah.

She paid \$700 for the boat, which is made of redwood and spruce and was built in Scotland. She also changed the name, from "The Scotsman" to "Tomales Princess."

"I got my love of the ocean from him," said Leah.

*Lance is survived by his daughters Leah Barbo, Michelle Brown and the late Rebecca Brown as well as numerous friends across West Marin.*

pret Stegner's philosophy," d'Coney said. "At one point in the conversation, we realized visual art would add a whole different dimension to the conference instead of just talking."

The series of shows was arranged through a partnership between the Tomales Bay Library Association and Gallery Route One. Funding came in part from a grant by the Marin Arts Council. People were invited to submit proposals for projects, which were reviewed by a jury of local artists.

"Friends and people who had heard about it contacted me. They thought my work was so appropriate to the subject that I should apply," said Mallegni, who was not previously familiar with Stegner's work. "His reference to the geography of hope spoke to me and resonated



# Viconian cycles and marine life protection

## OPINION

BY TOM YARISH

Students and scholars of James Joyce's *Finnigans Wake* become too familiar with cycles of literature, history and perversions of most every modern language. Indeed, it is hopeless to approach Joyce's enigmatic maze of word play and innuendo without the help of astute scholarship and unusual devotion to mind-bending self-abuse. First year *Wake* students become aware of the works of Italian philosopher Giovanni Battista Vico who described history as passing eternally through four eternal cycles, to wit: theocratic, aristocratic, democratic and chaotic—"suggesting that life has again reached the stage of chaos and is awaiting a divine thunderclap that will bring the world to its senses and start the four-part cycle anew." (*Time* 8.744.)

As an environmental activist deeply concerned with a rapidly deteriorating global ecology it seems to me that we are coming to the final stage of another historical cycle in the history of life and evolution. I'll avoid a litany of things going wrong for the moment except to say that in the course of a few generations we have witnessed massive alterations in the environmental factors that have determined the course of evolution. This unhappy observation is based on the declining productivity of the oceans and quality of air, soil, food, water and habitats that most of the scientific community accepts without question.

Having survived a non-malignant brain tumor in 1998, I began to question environmental factors that impinged on my own health, and I came to join the ranks of cancer and health activists in the Bay Area and nationwide. Local breast cancer activists and researchers were forming new alliances as it was revealed that Marin and San Francisco Counties had unusually

high incidences of breast cancers, among other malignancies and health problems. I undertook a new education in toxicity, biosciences and virology to complement my existing interests in habitat and water quality following an open-ended pursuit of rapidly expanding frontiers of arcane sciences and technologies. *Finnegans Wake* may have signaled the onset of the last stage of the Viconian cycle as complexity transforms to chaos and into realms of the unknowable. Similarly, our industrialized world may be on a parallel track.



Profound innovations in molecular biology have presented scientists with a new range of Joycean enigmas. A recent UC San Francisco breast oncology retreat

program entitled *epigenetics* is a case in point. Most significantly, *epigenetics* is the emerging science of non-genetic factors that control the functions of genes. These factors can be heritable across generations and can have grave or benign impacts on the health of organisms from microbes all the way up the food chain.

Not to be too technical, but one of the mechanisms by which this happens a DNA-protein structure called a *histone*, which becomes inactivated by the addition of an extra molecule known as a methyl group, hence *hypermethylation*. At this point you know enough to begin your education with a few Google searches. Keywords: *hypermethylation, RNAi, polymerase, bisphenol-A (BPA), apoptosis, mutagen, progenitor cells, epigenetics, APOBEC3G, endocrine disruptors* and *haplotype*, to name but a few. For even more fun, take the Joycean gambit and dismember and recombine your keywords. In fact, if *Wake's* predecessor *Ulysses* is considered one of greatest English novels of the twentieth century, molecular biology may become the greatest masterpiece of mystery writing of the twenty-first century and may have been anticipated by *Wake* or Vico as the world descends into utter chaos.

Enter the ongoing debate over Marine Life Protected Areas (MLPAs) along the California coast line.

At the UCSF retreat one of the program directors asked me what I knew about BPA and methylation. I didn't really know, but I soon Googled the topic. BPA is present in consumer plastics and food and drink containers and is known to leach into food and water. It is detectable in most of the American population. It is also classified as an *endocrine disruptor*, which means that at levels measured in parts per billion it can alter the development and fate of cells and tissues. BPA is just one of tens of thousands of chemistries present in the environment, some of which have never been evaluated for toxicity, much

less *epigenetic* toxicity. Does anyone know how BPA or its breakdown products will be passed between generations? Between species? How many generations will it take for subtle *epigenetic* changes to become manifest? Will anyone know how much the human genome has changed as a result of these exposures? What about wildlife that are subject to the same exposures from human activities and waste products?

*Epigenetic* factors are context sensitive. Non-genetic environmental influences such as stress, over-crowding, inflammation, radiation, pollution, nutrition, social activities and lifestyle are likely to have some discernable influence on the character and fate of each generation. Darwin projected these changes to take place slowly over hundreds if not thousands of generations as a species met and adapted to challenges and circumstances.

In the past hundred years we've added incalculable new factors into local and global environments for all species, with tragic results. This is not a classical Darwinian paradigm, but testament to the extraordinary—and little understood—powers that humankind has unleashed. There is no more harrowing example of this phenomenon than the rapidly evolving HIV (see APOBEC3G) and Avian Influenza viruses that have adapted and evaded the best that medical science has to counter them, not over thousands of years but every day in infected humans.

How can any of us pretend to understand the short-term and long-term consequences of our perturbations of both human and natural ecosystems. In an era when scientific expertise goes rapidly out of date who can predict the trajectory of an endangered species, an introduced variety of our favorite oyster, a genetically-modified food crop or a therapeutic dose of x-radiation? Is it too late for caution? Are we indeed in a Viconian cycle?



Jacqueline Mallegni sets up an exhibit at Gallery Route One. Photo by JC.

with my own relationship with the natural world."

She said that when she began researching Stegner's writings, his 1960 wilderness letter immediately gave her a vision for an installation in the space at Gallery Route One, which evolved as she brought on Martin Butt, a creator of ponds and water features, and painter Waldemar Mitrowski as collaborators.

"The digital projection is a contemporary tie onto local materials, marrying both things together in one place in time," said Mitrowski. "They are timed to give you a certain sense of contemplation, a soothing and kind of mysterious situation."

All of the artists agreed that their hope is for the installation to inspire viewers to feel more appreciative of and connected

to nature.

"There's a quality of holding that happens in my work," Mallegni said. "For one sculpture I saw this sphere sitting in this oval kind of shape, with the sphere being this earth and then I suspended it in this womb. It is a way of holding the earth, carrying it gently and caring for it."

Unexpectedly, the installation left me with a feeling of melancholy that verged on claustrophobia. Seeing the displaced sounds and shapes of nature within the sterile confines of an art gallery – while contemplating Stegner's long battle to preserve wildness – changed the tenor of a creation that otherwise might be wholly beautiful.

No matter how graceful the dogwood boughs or how delicious the tangerine hue of the plum wood, I couldn't separate

the aesthetic from the intellectual. Like seeing a sumptuous painting of a banquet, suddenly I longed for the real meal.

Though the artists said they didn't intend to create this juxtaposition, they also didn't try to avoid it.

"We wanted to create a space that conveyed some of the beauty and the magic that can be found out in the wilderness, and somehow try to convey that in a concrete room in a small town," said Butt. "We decided not to try to cover up the artificial gallery space. The contrast adds a little edge to it."

Edge, indeed. Standing among willows on a concrete gallery floor, I couldn't help but worry: in some larger symbolic way, might this art represent what nature we have left?

## >> Letters

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hall meeting to determine the next steps that can be taken locally, and to identify those that require county support. The meeting will be conducted in English and Spanish, and we'll be joined again by Harmony for singing! See you there!

**Kate Kain, Marin Women's Commission**  
Point Reyes Station

### **Anonymous letters**

Dear Editor,

Sad to see the *Point Reyes Light* printing anonymous letters. And trumpeting unsigned accusations on the front page, no less!

In the past, the *Light* wisely shied away from unattributed opinion pieces, rants and "drive by" verbal attacks. Readers appreciated knowing a letter came from a real person in our community. We're left guessing by anonymous letters like last week's hit piece on the Valley's temporary creek side development moratorium. Was the real source a special interest group outside West Marin? Someone local with a hidden agenda? A notorious community curmudgeon? Or a respected neighbor whose arguments merit our consideration?

There's a reason why the vast majority of American newspapers will not publish unsigned letters.

**Frank Binney**  
Woodacre

### **Environmentalism**

Editor,

In light of squabble about stressing seals (photographing), interfering with natural selection (helping seals), returning the Point Reyes National Seashore to original state (killing hundreds of non-native deer, destroying historical barns), removing telephone poles along Bolinas Lagoon (somehow helps lagoon), removing historical oyster farm, trying to remove last affordable shoreline campsites enjoyed by generations, imposed moratorium under threat of lawsuit; evidently what "environmental" groups really want is "look but don't touch" recreational areas overseen by exclusive privileged organizations. Questions arise.

If one is going to interfere with nature's processes by "helping" (while professing non-interference) why not expand supportive services to marine animals like rockfish, and mollusks? Why can't we have a Marine Rockfish Center, or Marine Mollusk Center? To some these animals may not be cute, nor are they mam-

mals, but deserve equal attention and just as important. True, they don't convey facial expressions we're comfortable with, but could be remedied with PRNS public education volunteers.

Once you've seen a clam smile your heart will melt! If we're supposed to stay at least 300 feet from seals in Bolinas Lagoon why's it okay for people to get closer at the popular pull off on Highway One? 300 feet is 300 feet. Must be an optical delusion. Killing off non-native deer is a no brainer, we're already doing that to ourselves with global warming, being of course non-native. Lots of questions. Gets confusing, not to mention silly. But wait until you see what's coming if we allow it to continue.

**James Ellis**  
Stinson Beach

### **Papermill Creek**

Editor,

I have been teaching at Papermill since September as a tutor for at risk kindergarten and first grade students who come from West Marin in the afternoon. I recently retired from West Marin School after eight years there and another twenty-two years at the Marin Horizon School in Mill Valley. I served as a founding board member of that institution, now in its thirtieth year, an administrator and a classroom teacher.

I would like to address two observations regarding Papermill. When I appear for work each day I see an attractive facility that's well organized and appropriate to the needs of the children. The enrollment with some sixty students is full. The educational curriculum is strong with an emphasis on preparation for the school years to come, as well as on successful socialization. The financial status of the program appears solid with both tuitions and grants forming the core. The staff works well together and provides an excellent program. Students are happy and productively engaged in the curriculum. Parents seem pleased with the their children's experience and the school serves as a common meeting ground for families. Meg Frye's leadership is largely responsible for the success of the program.

As a West Marin community member I'm aware of Papermill's history that includes a long-term pattern of frequent conflicts and controversies. I would suggest the term a "culture of crisis" fits all too well. An atmosphere of constant strife serves neither the children, the families, the staff nor those who are ultimately responsible for governance, the Board of Directors. I would challenge board members to reflect on this observation and consider a new course that steers away from that embedded culture of crisis.

**John Littleton**  
Point Reyes Station



RePose is a multimedia exhibit inspired by nature writer Wallace Stegner, on display at Gallery Route One. Photo by Jacoba Charles.

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