

POINT REYES LIGHT

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Point Reyes photographer Art Rogers sets up his large-format camera on top of Indian Hill in Nicasio on Tuesday. His photos are on display along with Thomas Wood's paintings in Stinson Beach. Photo by Jacoba Charles.

Mendoza matriarch passes away

by Jacoba Charles

Scotty Mendoza, a quick-witted and generous woman who co-founded the Western Weekend Queen contest and was a pillar of the Point Reyes ranching community for nearly seven decades, died last Friday. She was 88.

"She knew everybody, and everybody loved her. She could make friends with a mud wall," said her son-in-law, Steve Doughty.

"I've never seen anything like it," said Jim Mendoza, her son. "We would take her shopping in Petaluma, and the checkers and the baggers would come out from

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Panel to judge oyster effects

by Jacoba Charles

The National Academy of Sciences is poised to weigh in on the ongoing stalemate between Drakes Bay Oyster Company and the Point Reyes National Seashore. A nine-member committee of experts on aquatic ecology and mariculture from the East Coast, the West Coast and Ireland has been assembled. It will review the science used by the park to describe the oyster company's environmental impacts on Drakes Estero. Their first meeting on September 4 is open to the public, and a report on their findings is expected by the end of the year.

A second review, to be finished by the end of next year, will be more general and offer best management practices for shellfish mariculture to maintain ecosystem in-

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Camera, easel take to hills

by Jacoba Charles

As the evening light turned buttery and a bank of fog swept in from the ocean on Tuesday, artists Art Rogers and Tom Wood drove up one of Nicasio's tallest hills to practice their crafts.

With only the sound of wind and footsteps in dry grass, Wood set up his easel and oil paints on the northwest side of the hill, facing Black Mountain. On the opposite slope, about 300 yards away, Rogers positioned a massive wooden tripod onto which he fastened a camera the size of a small suitcase.

"People don't usually see painters and

photographers working together," Rogers said. "But we have a lot of fun."

The two have been friends and artists for over three decades, but only began their art expeditions in the last year. Plein air painting is inherently a speedy process, while large-format outdoor photography is comparatively slow. The result is that it takes Rogers about the same time to make a photograph or two as for Wood to finish a canvas.

Rogers' camera is about 100 years old, and when packed away seems to be nothing more than a wooden box with many

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>> Camera

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latches. As he sets it up, a bellows made of black material unfurls from the front, looking like a stubby elephant trunk. The lens is as big as a fist, and the viewing screen is a notebook-sized sheet of frosted glass. The image appears faintly and upside-down on the glass, and Rogers has to duck under a thick sheet of cloth and bob his head back and forth to see his composition.

He has one camera that is panoramic, emblazoning images on a negative that is 12 inches by 20 inches. Three others have more standard proportions, up to 11 by 17 inches. Each negative costs rough-

ly \$15, and setting the camera up to have the best chance at a good shot is an exercise in geometry. The front and back of the camera can move up, down, and side-to-side independently, and each movement controls the focus, distortion and size of the image.

Rogers can easily spend 20 minutes arranging the settings to his liking. He uses a carpenter's level to check his work.

Sometimes, when the light is just right, Rogers races to capture the scene; other times he sets up because he sees potential. "The weather changes really fast," he said. "Sometimes I get set up and then I just wait for the light—and sometimes it doesn't come."

Wood is also a servant to the weather, though not in the same way. His setup time is short, but if conditions change

radically in the middle of a painting he may not be able to finish. On Tuesday, fog obscured the scene he had chosen after an hour. He filled in some gaps by memory, and then gave up.

"That's part of the charm of outdoor painting," he said. "There's that unexpected quality and the changes in weather are going to influence what you do." While Rogers' equipment is cumbersome and requires a car or a cart to move it more than a few yards, Wood has refined his materials to a minimum. A slotted wooden box is designed to keep wet canvases from touching; a spill-proof metal canister holds turpentine.

"Working out the equipment is a lot like backpacking," Wood said. "You keep refining and refining it. You don't want to have too much stuff to lug around."

Last Sunday, the pair's first joint art

show opened at the Claudia Chapline Gallery in Stinson Beach. Though much of the work comes from solo forays, they hope to continue building the body of work that they create on their joint adventures.

"Putting photography and painting together is not that usual," Wood said. "There's a prejudice about putting the two mediums together, but it really depends on the subject matter."

Their exhibit is split on two facing walls in the gallery. On the northern wall, Wood's russet-hued gullies and swales form a collage of Marin's untrammelled hills. On the southern wall, Rogers' high-contrast black and white scenes highlight the timelessness of local pastures and ranches. Together, the two radically different views evoke a fuller sense of place than either does alone.



Tom Wood and Art Rogers work together to document the dramatic landscapes of West Marin with paint and photographs. Photo by Jacoba Charles.