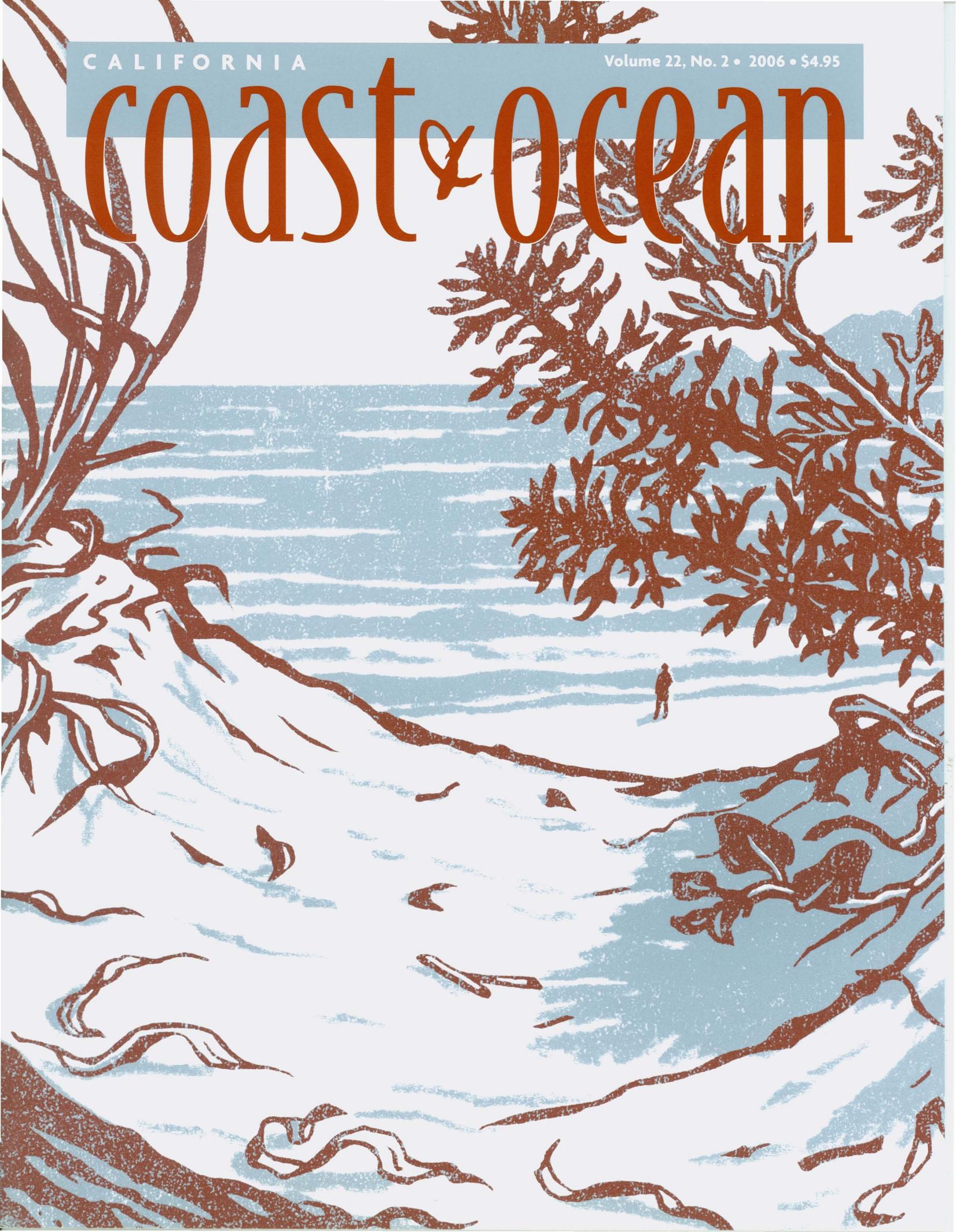


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# coast & ocean



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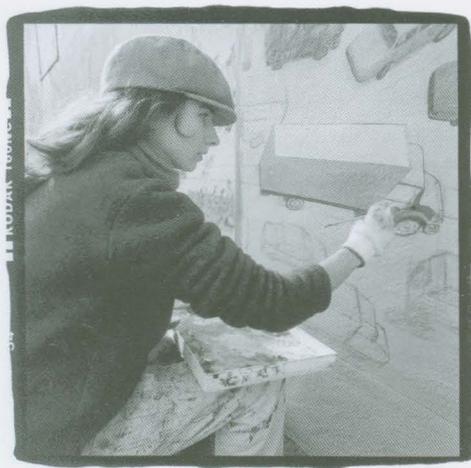
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**Front Cover:**

Block print by Mona Caron, an artist, illustrator, and muralist who lives in San Francisco. Her work includes editorial, poster, and book illustration, and a children's book. Her murals include award-winning public art projects and private commissions. [www.monacaron.com](http://www.monacaron.com)

**Back cover:**

Photo of a hiker on a Lost Coast beach by Bennett Barthelemy

# Coast & Ocean



EILEEN ECKLUND

## SPECIAL ISSUE: MEANINGS OF THE BEACH

Californians talk about their varied relationships with beaches and the ocean. Stopped on the street and the shore in many different locations, the people interviewed represent a vast variety of ethnicities, ages, occupations, and perspectives.

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## CURRENT AND FUTURE OFFERINGS

**T**HE RANGER SHOWED US HOW TO sweep the sand with paint brushes and find little fossils—the kids loved it! Although you're not allowed to take them, it's a park. Next time we go we'll take our own brushes," said Julie Wallace of Auburn, whose eight-year-old granddaughter is gravely ill. After monthly treatments with an experimental drug in San Francisco, they take her and three other grandchildren for a walk along a beach. "We have a lot of fun, it is very healing," she said. Her husband, George, added: "For us inlanders, the beach is a place to relax."

—Interview by Don Nierlich

This issue of *Coast & Ocean* is unlike any other we have published. We have focused on a single topic: Californians' relationships with their beaches. But rather than seeking out land managers, scholars, or community leaders to find out what we wanted to know, we went directly to folks who aren't usually interviewed on this or any other subject. The Wallaces were among them. What pollsters have found again and again is confirmed by people we met along the shore and on the street. Only some of what we heard fit into this issue, but it's representative.

Last February, a survey by the Public Policy Institute of California found that an overwhelming number of adults throughout the state (87 percent of a sample of 2,003) said candidates' positions on the environment and coast would be important in the November gubernatorial elections. Nine out of ten Californians said the quality of the beach and ocean is just as important to them personally as the overall quality of life and economy of the state. "Californians treasure the ocean and the state's beaches," said Mark Baldassare, who conducted the survey. "These attitudes run deep and wide, across political parties, coastal and inland areas, and in the growing Latino population." In fact, Latinos were more likely than

whites (60 percent versus 44 percent) to say the environmental policies of gubernatorial candidates are very important to them.

In this issue of *Coast & Ocean* we flesh out those statistics with some voices and faces.

Heidi Walters of the *North Coast Journal* went to the mouth of the Klamath River to talk with some Yuroks, who have an ancient connection with their coast. Arienne Kozak, a photographer and writer, spent time with vacationing RV campers at Dockweiler State Beach in Los Angeles, where they found peace and relaxation despite the roar of airplanes overhead. Photographer David Maung talked with some folks in San Diego, while Coastwalker Don Nierlich brought back interviews from Santa Monica and Santa Barbara. And Shirley Skeel, who works primarily in radio, wandered through many places in the San Francisco Bay Area and spoke with people from many parts of the state and from abroad. She also produced the "sound postcards" on our website, [www.coastandocean.org](http://www.coastandocean.org). We hope to have the online edition of this issue posted by the time you read this.

This special issue comes at a time when Californians will be making decisions about measures that would affect the future of their coast. Proposition 84, a \$5.4 billion bond measure, is on the November ballot. It would provide funds to ensure the availability and safety of drinking water, improve the reliability of local water supplies, strengthen levees, and preserve natural landscapes, including parks, lakes, rivers, beaches, bays, ocean, and coastline.

We'll be back to you soon with our next issue, which will, as usual, feature a range of articles on coastal concerns. Among them is desalination, a hot subject right now, with

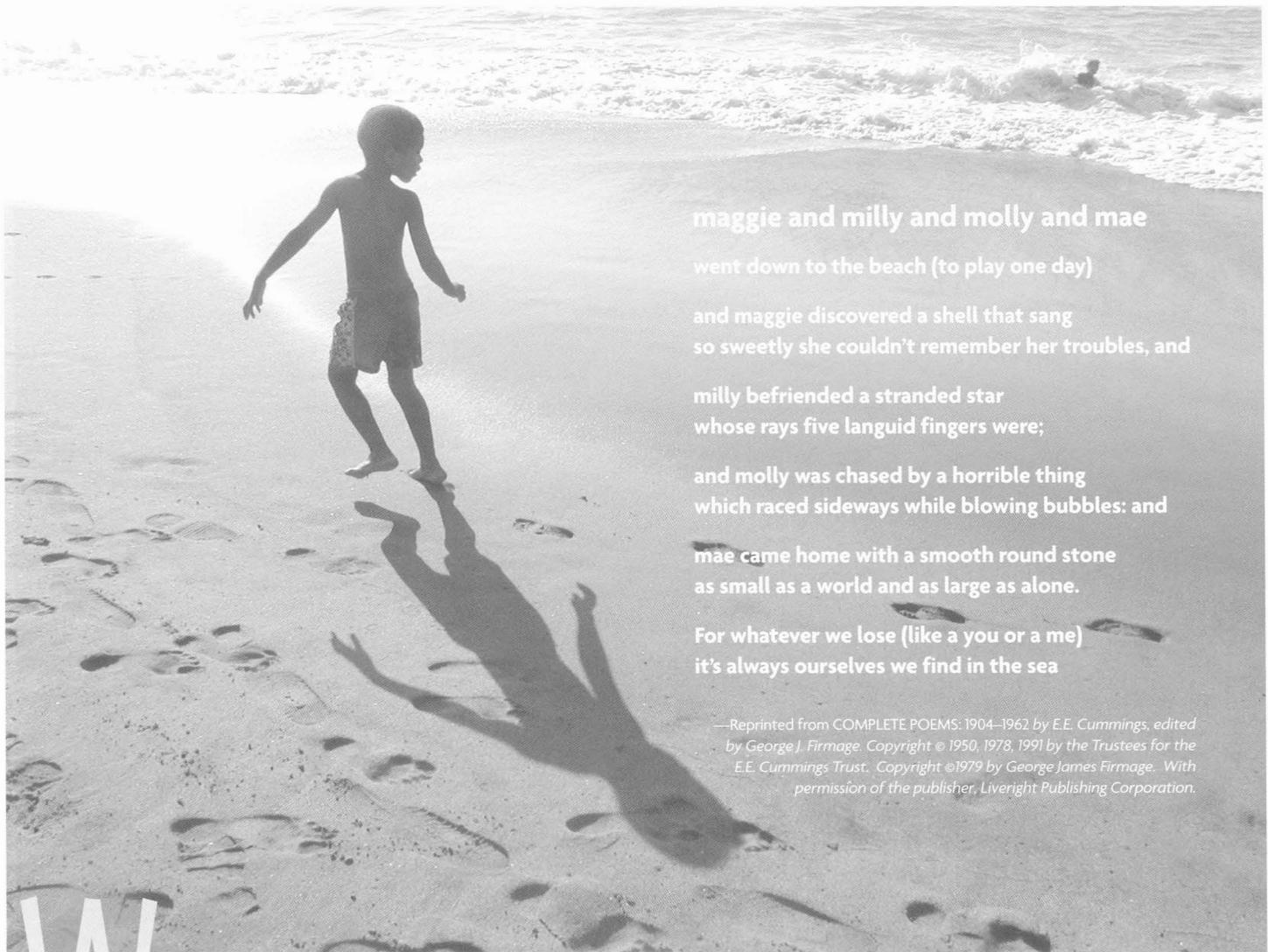


EILEEN ECKLUND

several projects moving forward. Whether these projects would benefit or harm the coast, and whether they are needed now, are matters of intense debate.

Also in the works are articles that emerged from CWO '06, the conference on California and the World Ocean held in September in Long Beach. New research and technology is opening access to previously unknown or inaccessible ocean resources and a race is on to use and exploit them, in both state and in federal waters. Should decommissioned offshore oil platforms be removed, as the law now requires, or should they, or some of them, be converted to other uses? Should Navy ships be sunk offshore to become diving platforms for sports fishermen? Should there be liquid natural gas (LNG) facilities offshore? How about offshore wind farms and solar energy generators? Would the presence of one kind of facility foreclose options for others that might benefit the people of California more? Without preliminary planning and ocean zoning, sound decisions will be tough to make. And yet, how do you plan for technology that is not yet well developed? We hope to contribute to the discussion. Meanwhile, please enjoy some lighter fare, in this issue.

—Rasa Gustaitis



GEORGE KILLINGSWORTH

**maggie and milly and molly and mae**  
went down to the beach (to play one day)  
and maggie discovered a shell that sang  
so sweetly she couldn't remember her troubles, and  
milly befriended a stranded star  
whose rays five languid fingers were;  
and molly was chased by a horrible thing  
which raced sideways while blowing bubbles: and  
mae came home with a smooth round stone  
as small as a world and as large as alone.  
For whatever we lose (like a you or a me)  
it's always ourselves we find in the sea

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WE

VE SEEN IT ON T-shirts, we've heard it way too often: "Life's a beach."

Seems that some surfers took the cynical "Life's a bit\_\_" and gave it a fine turn. But while the meaning may be obvious to people for whom riding the waves is a passion, what exactly does "beach" mean to others? Does the word signify more to them than just wave-washed sand?

A young man from San Jose told me that when his high school buddies said they were going to the beach they actually meant some place—a willow-shaded creek, for instance—where they could gather without being bothered. That information was a seed from which grew this special issue of *Coast & Ocean*, "Beach Talk."

We asked several of our contributors to approach people in public places along the coast and inland and ask them about their beach experiences. What came back surprised us. We were moved as we read the

interviews, often to laughter, sometimes almost to tears.

Whether they go to the beach frequently, rarely, or barely ever, the people interviewed considered beaches important and assumed that they have a right to go to them. Almost nobody said he or she had been prevented from reaching a beach—except by traffic or lack of parking—nor had anyone been bothered by anyone on a beach. We talked with just a scattering of people—this is by no means a survey. We did not send anyone to Malibu, for example, where public access continues to be fought over. What we have is an impressionistic sketch, but it's revealing, especially because the people you'll meet in these pages are so diverse. We think we have compiled a group portrait of today's Californians, which also includes a few visitors from elsewhere.

An astonishing number talked of freedom when asked what beaches mean to them. Along the ocean's shore, their worries melt

away, stress dissipates, and solutions to difficult life problems can take shape. On the beach, conversations happen that just don't occur elsewhere. People find they can be with friends and families in more profound and intimate ways than is possible in their daily lives. Some like to go alone, to sit and walk and consider the great mysteries to the music of the surf. Others love to examine life in tidepools or gather around bonfires. On a beach, people breathe freely and experience their connection with nature. Oh sure, some beaches are messy or dirty, or polluted, or too cold. But there's much more to a beach.

We didn't ask people whether they knew about the Coastal Act, about the many years of struggle for an open, accessible, and beautiful coast. We just wanted to know how they relate to beaches. It's encouraging. People assume they own the beaches. As long as they assume that—and take action when needed—they will own them.

—RG



# DOWNRIVER PEOPLE

Patrick's Point

HEIDI WALTERS

ACCORDING TO STORIES collected from Yurok elders in the early 1900s by anthropologist T.T. Waterman, the Yurok believe that at one time supernatural beings—"the immortals"—lived throughout their land. But when the people, the Yurok, arrived, the immortals departed, except from one place, Sumeg, which today is called Patrick's Point. "This region is the abode of the last immortals," Waterman wrote in his book *Yurok Geography*.

And so our stories begin at this North Coast headland.

Axel Lindgren III kneels by a pile of freshly split redwood planks, which glow pinkish red. It's late afternoon here at Sumeg Village, a Yurok demonstration village at Patrick's Point State Park, 30 miles south of the mouth of the Klamath River. All around Lindgren stand examples of traditional houses, with their small rounded doors and shallow-peaked roofs, weathered to a gray-brown. Near one house is a canoe carved from a redwood log. Lindgren, who works at the park, helped build the village some 16 years ago. Today he's already shown dozens of tourists how his people had, for thousands of years, split huge trees into planks, cut the planks to size using fire, and tied them together with strips from hazel saplings.

Lindgren comes mostly from people who lived in Tsurai, a Yurok village several miles south of Patrick's Point, where the coastal town called Trinidad now stands. His great-grandmother, Eliza Lindgren, was the last Tsurai medicine woman. Along with the rest of her people, she was pushed from the village in

1916. Lindgren also has ties to Weitchpec, a Yurok village up the Klamath River a ways. As for the name Lindgren, he says that long ago a stranded Swedish sailor, left behind by his ship because he was too ill to travel, married into his Tsurai family. “There’s a rock south of Tsurai, on dry sand, that they call ‘Charlie Lindgren Rock,’ because he would go out and stand on that rock to see if he could see his ship go by.” Down at what is now called Luffenholtz Beach there’s another rock, where the Lindgren family fished. “It was primarily our rock,” he says. After catching surf fish, “they would lay the fish over this rock to sun-dry.”

And there are prayer places. “Along the coast to the west of the village of Tsurai is where girls practiced their brush dance. And there’s a cave in front of Trinidad Head—I’ve been in there—where if you go in, and if one drop of water falls on your head, you could become a rich man. If two drops hit you, you could be trapped in there. One man did become trapped, but he was so strong, spiritually, he got out.”

When he was 12, Lindgren explored the cave with another Yurok boy. They motored their boat in, the tide began to rise, and it was slower going trying to back the boat out. They made it—and no drops fell on their heads. “I’m still working for a living,” Lindgren says, wryly.

All his stories seem to involve the ocean. “The ocean, to me, would signify life. The ocean provides not only food, but regalia—mussels, mussel shells, abalone shells—for myself, my

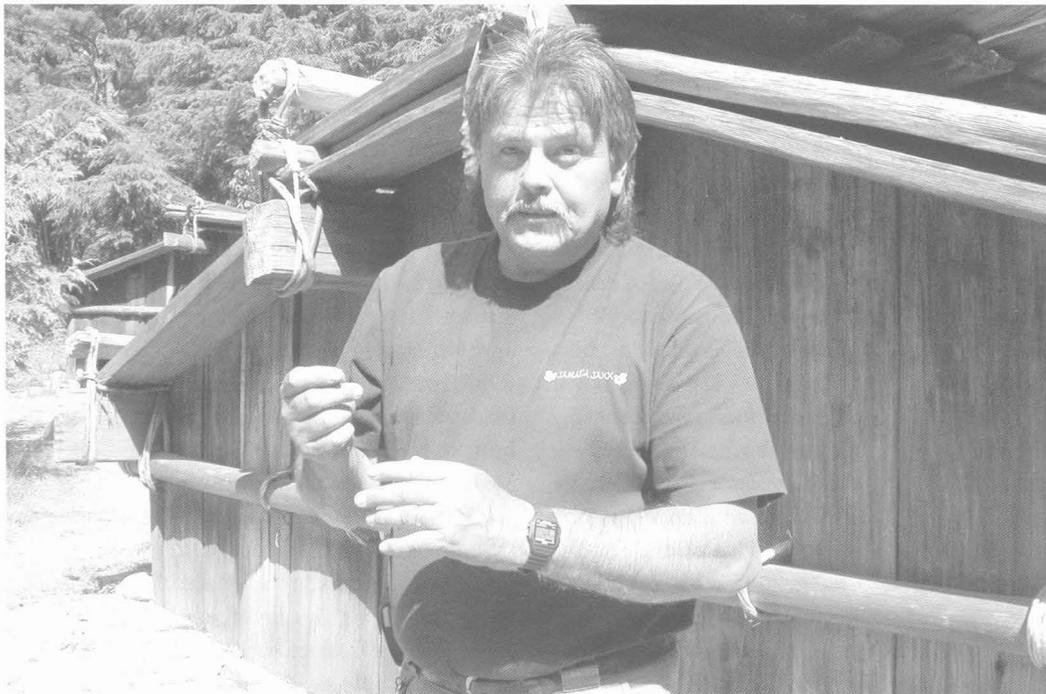
brother, my family. We still go out and get the salmon. We get the bottom fish, we get the surf fish—both the day fish and the night fish.”

Another story: Abalone Girl met Canada Goose Man. They married and had many children. But things started to unravel. Canada Goose Man would go out and hunt up all sorts of treats for Abalone Girl to eat, which she rejected. She didn’t like that goose food. She ate seaweed and only wanted seaweed. So they split up, and Canada Goose Man moved south. And every fall, the kids all go south to visit him—which explains all that honking in the air.

“Also, the ocean can provide a redwood log that washes in.” It might become a canoe, or skewers for roasting salmon steaks, or planks for a house.

Up until 150 years ago, just before the main influx of European Americans—seeking gold, otters, and more—had begun on the North Coast, the Yurok and other northwestern California tribes were among the richest of societies. Among other things, the Yurok thrived on salmon and other fish from the Klamath River and the ocean—although when they fished from the sea they usually kept close to the river’s mouth or ventured not far from the shore in their dugout canoes.

Today the Yurok Tribe is the largest in California, with almost 5,000 members. It is also among the poorest. More than 70 percent of the Yurok population lives without telephones or electricity, and more than 80 percent lives below

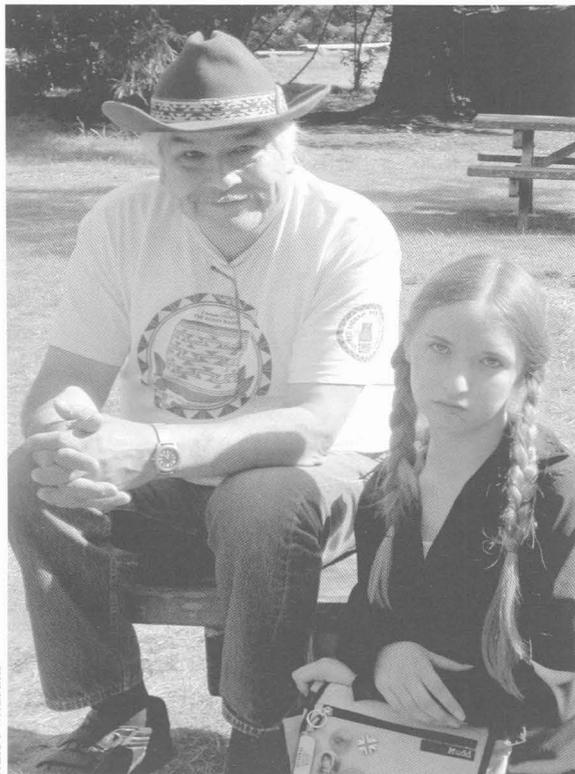


Axel Lindgren III

HEIDI WALTERS



CALIFORNIA COASTAL RECORDS PROJECT



HEIDI WALTERS

**Top: The mouth of the Klamath River**

**Bottom: Mel and Stella Stokes**

the poverty line. But the Yurok culture never died. Today the tribe employs 200 people in its substantial government, many of them in the fisheries department. Many tribal members still fish for a subsistence living, down at the mouth and up along the river.

The Yurok's ancestral territory included Sumeg and extended south to Little River, just below Trinidad, and north to Wilson Creek (where Tolowa territory begins and heads north) in what is now Del Norte County. Today, the Yurok reservation's 65,035 acres is contained within a roughly two-mile-wide and 44-mile-long stretch of the Klamath River, from where the river

meets the sea at Requa inland to Weitchpec, where the Trinity River converges with the Klamath. Some members also live on rancherias up

and down the coast; some live in towns. The tribe's headquarters are in Klamath, not far from the mouth of the river.

These days, Sumeg is left generally to the immortals and tourists—except on ceremonial occasions, when Yurok tribal members re-enact their dances and demonstrate their way of cooking, building, and worshipping.

On this particular afternoon in late summer, after the Sumeg Village Day at Patrick's Point, while Lindgren wanders the grounds, several other Yurok citizens linger near the picnic area, talking.

Mel Stokes, with graying dark hair and a mischievous grin, wears a fine, rust-colored felt hat and sits, at this moment, on a picnic table at Sumeg Village. He is a Yurok from the Pecwan and Swregon villages on the lower Klamath River, reached by a road that dead-ends at a place called Johnsons. "They call it a highway, but I call it Indian Road 1, or Yurok 1," says Stokes. "I've been reading those Tony Hillerman books, and the Navajo, they've got the 'Navajo Road.'"

His heart is still in those places, Pecwan and Swregon. But, he says, he "sleeps in Eureka." Stokes has subsistence fished at Moore Rock all of his life. Moore was his grandmother's maiden

name. "It's two miles up from Pecwan Creek, way up [on the Klamath River]. I used to go down there and set my net and catch salmon. And I'd go to the mouth of the river for eel, and also dip for candle fish. Each fish that comes in from the ocean comes in at different times. January and February it's the eels. The salmon, there's three seasons: spring, summer, and the hookbills [King salmon, in the fall]. We have a name for salmon: *nepuy*. But that's like the generic term; each kind has its own name, too."

Stokes' daughter Stella—long sandy hair in braids, pale blue eyes—sits quietly on the picnic table next to him, listening to him talk to the stranger. She seems a little bored, a little too cool for all this—but patient. She just finished performing, with a number of other young Yurok women and men, some slow, hypnotic traditional dances, the women in white hide dresses stitched with white shells that tinkled as they moved.

Now she's changed back into teenager clothes, and she wants to talk about Harry Potter. She's obsessed with Harry Potter. She has a button bearing his visage on her purse, and a button that says "UK." Because of Harry, she's obsessed with punk rock. She wants to live in the UK (because of Harry)—or San Francisco, having gotten hooked on the place on a recent Girl Scout trip where she "bridged" from one scout level to the next by walking across the Golden Gate Bridge, far above the ocean.

But Stella has been doing the traditional Yurok dances and dress walks since she was eight years old. Even so, she says, until today the last time she did a dance was probably last year.

"Now I'm not being as active in my culture as much," she says. "Maybe it's because I'm busier, or lazy. Now I have school and friends. And Harry Potter. But now that I'm growing up, I'm going to see if I can balance that better."

The question of the ocean elicits a shrug from her. She shares a conundrum: "Even though I'm aquaphobic—I'm afraid of being in water—the ocean is where I am, who I am," she says. "I've lived here all my life, so I'm sort of adapted to it."

It's true the younger generation has more distractions, more things to pull them in away from their culture. At the same time, there's significant activity within the tribe, including language and culture lessons in the schools, to help them maintain their ties to home. And the older generation is helping with that.

Dale Ann Frye Sherman is a border daughter—half Yurok (from the Klamath River) and

half Tolowa (from the Smith River, some 70-plus miles upcoast). For her, the ocean is "identity."

"It's our boundary to our Yurok world. And it's place. It tells us where we are in the world.

"In Yurok, all the rocks were named. The rocks up the river, up trails, and off the coast. So we always knew where we were in the world. And the ocean is one of our boundaries. And it's a source of life.

"I curate at the Clark Historical Museum [in Eureka] and teach at Humboldt State University—Native American cultures and history. And I also teach a female warriors class. I talk about balance in the world. Women have a place and roles in the world. We move in and out of these roles—sometimes we're warriors, and sometimes we're not. I encourage people to be aware of what's around them. It's so easy to walk through life and not see what's around you.

"Humboldt County, Del Norte—this was a paradise before Euro-Americans. We Yurok and Tolowa people don't believe that we're separate from the environment. We're part of the environment. We're here to be stewards. And we're not able to do that with the coming of the Euro-Americans.

"In our cultures we don't have a word for 'wild' or 'nature.' Here, we knew the rivers, the land, the forest. We knew the coastline. We didn't see a need to change it. That's what I meant when I said 'identity.' It's not 'wild,' it's part of my world.

Yurok and Tolowa people actually have laws for how to act in the environment. For instance, we were never supposed to clean fish and let the blood run back into the river. We were never supposed to pollute the ocean with human waste. As a child, I could still go out on the Klamath and look down from the boat and see salmon—it was that clear. Can you imagine? When I was 12, we could still look in the river and see the bottom."

They did not cut trees, she says. "We waited for them to fall in winter storms. Also, men wouldn't cut a whole tree. They would cut a wedge out—for planks for a house, say, or something else. [The tree would repair itself and live on.] We had laws on how to live.

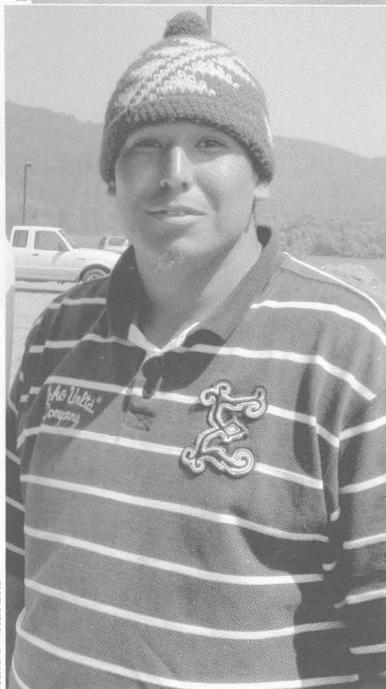
Dale Ann Frye Sherman



HEIDI WALTERS



HEIDI WALTERS



HEIDI WALTERS

Top: Yurok fishing boats

Bottom: Pride Painter

“I feel a great sense of loss, and a total sense of sadness that we don’t have that stewardship now. Because before the coming of Euro-Americans, it was a clean coastline, it was a clean ocean.”

These days it’s hard to call the ocean clean, or the rivers pristine. It has affected the Yuroks’ way of life, and their diet. Dams upriver on the Klamath have severely impacted river flows and quality. In good years the Yurok were able to not only subsistence fish for their daily food, but could supplement their incomes by commercial fishing. But there hasn’t been a good year in a while—a massive die-off of adult Chinook salmon in 2002, and major losses of juvenile fish in other years, have led to low runs and restricted fishing in the river and the ocean. The Yurok have suffered along with non-native fishing communities, and have placed their own restrictions on themselves to allow the river species to recover. They haven’t fished commercially in a couple of years, and their subsistence quotas have been drastically reduced.

Even so, during the different seasons you’ll find a number of tribal members down at Requa, launching their boats to head to the spit and toss out their nets. And there are always a few guys hanging around the dock.

Nonnie Lee, of Seletz and Yurok descent, and Pride Painter—half Athabaskan, half Yurok—sit on the dock at Requa, a glance away from the mouth of the Klamath River, looking at the water. It’s afternoon; the fog has lifted. Out on the leg of sand that barricades most of the river from the ocean, you can see a handful of fisher-

men and women trailing nets in the water near where the river has broken through to the ocean, letting them run with the current. Watching, one can imagine nets full of flopping fish being hauled in.

Lee and Painter are taking it easy at the moment. This, to them, is life very nearly at its best.

“My family grew up on this river,” says Lee.

“I grew up in Eureka,” says Painter, “but I come up here every weekend, especially when the fish are running.”

The ocean, says Lee, means food: “mussels, clams, sea anemones—cut ‘em in rounds, scrape the green slime off, bread ‘em, fry ‘em—eel, sturgeon, salmon.”

“We’re salmon people,” says Painter. “We harvest ‘em to feed our families, our elders—like my aunts, I bring them little gifts of salmon.”

Painter opens a big cooler to show off the seven salmon he caught in his net. Three days ago, he got out of prison—several months at Pelican Bay, his second stint there. And right after that he went out on the spit and fished and camped for two nights. It was—he doesn’t have words to express it, just opens his arms wide and smiles. “I live in Eureka, but this is like my home,” he says, sweeping his hand over it all—river, mountains, trees, spit, ocean. “This is my family roots. It’s our heritage. If we don’t get the salmon, we can’t keep our smokehouses full.”

“It’s sacred, it’s our culture, it’s our pride,” adds Lee.

Painter says too many tourists go out onto the spit these days—they just walk right out there from the river bank, from where his people traditionally used to hold ceremonial dances.

The two men watch the river, talk to each other, laugh. Return to talking to a visitor about the ocean, food, and life.

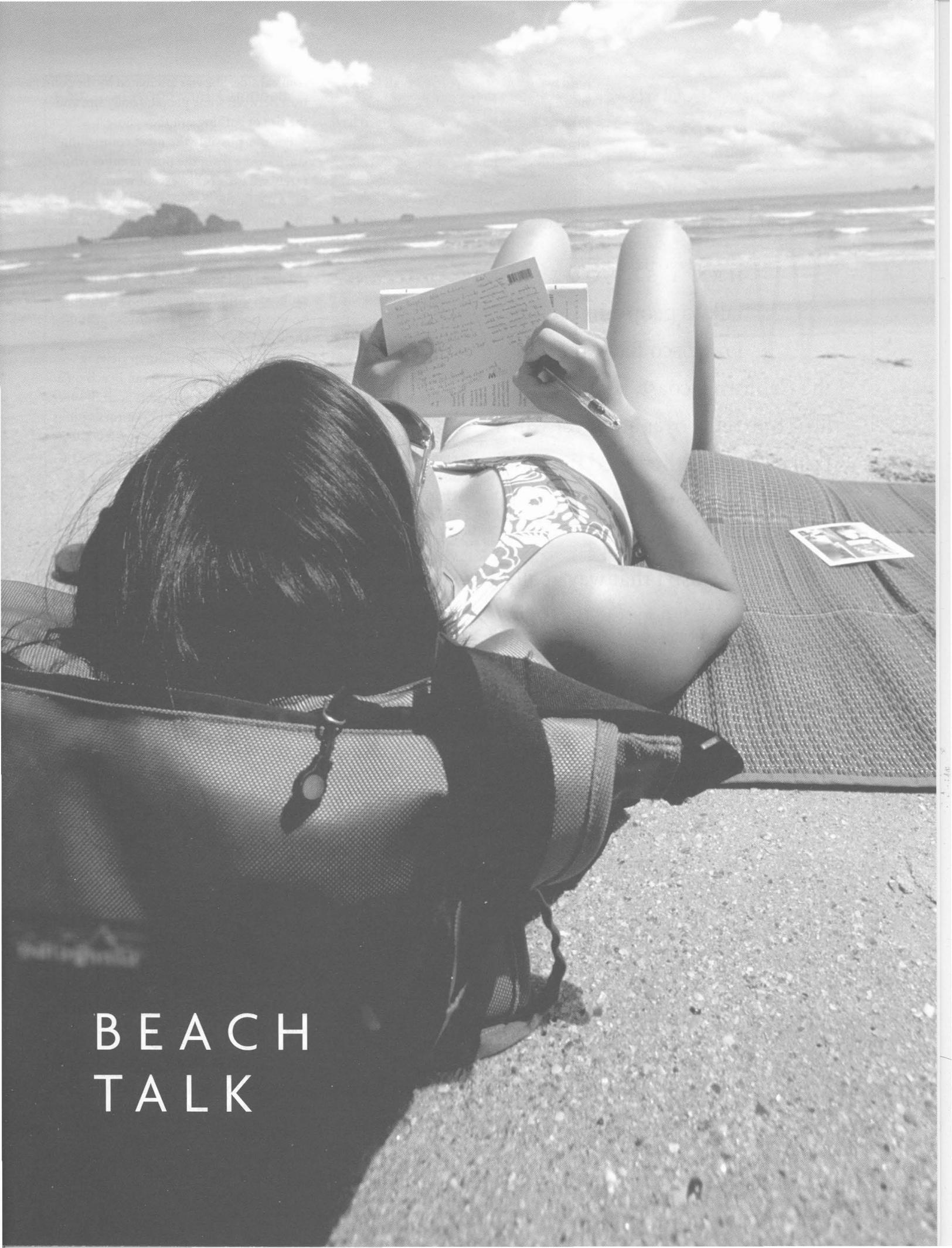
“We have food gatherings,” says Painter. And other ceremonies.

“Brush Dance, that was last month,” says Lee. “Jump Dance, that’s in September.”

Two more young guys walk over, say their whassups, walk on. A few yards down the dock, two young employees—a man and a woman—of the Yurok fisheries department, who have been out counting fish catches, haul their boat from the water onto a trailer and drive off.

Lee lights a cigarette, and he and Painter pose for some pictures. They sit back on the dock and look out at the river, which swirls deeply.

“The big run hasn’t come in yet,” says Painter. ■



BEACH  
TALK

WHEN I SET OUT TO talk to people in the San Francisco Bay Area about the California coast, I expected to hear one reply over and over when I asked them if they used the local beaches: “Are you kidding? It’s too #\*@\* cold!”

Well . . . It wasn’t that way at all.

INTERVIEWS AND  
PHOTOS PP. 11–26  
BY SHIRLEY SKEEL

In two days of tramping around, I had heard plenty of negative stories. People griped about the traffic. They lamented having too little free time to lie in the sun. They complained about litter in the sand and a lack of lifeguards. And yes, people said . . . it really is just too cold. “What, the water?” I asked. Yes. “Or the air?” Yes, that too.

But as I continued to drive around, visiting Ocean Beach in San Francisco, Sausalito, Tiburon, Richmond, Oakland, San Jose, and Santa Clara, a different vision began to emerge. There was the Sonoma State University lecturer who raved about the extraordinary sex and violence of the giant elephant seals at Año Nuevo, near Point Lobos. There was the Oakland guitar salesman who spoke

dreamily about sitting alone and staring out at the water for hours . . . and then looking around in wonder at the dozen strangers dotted along the beach who were also sitting alone, staring out at the sea. There was the Richmond woman who remembered being violently knocked down by the waves as a child, yet delighting in it, and who still feels so “safe” whenever she is in the ocean. There was the sunny-faced Mill Valley mother who taught her children to thank the waves, the birds, and the dolphins for allowing her family to partake in this beauty.

“It all sounds so hokey,” she said with the same slight embarrassment that I saw in several others when they began to wax lyrical about the ocean. But they meant every word.

Besides, as one sensible young San Jose bank teller pointed out, beach-going has its practical side too. He liked the way his tan and personal geography added to his “coolness” factor when he visited East Coast girls. And, as a diminutive Asian-American woman pointed out, the beach even has a

comical side. She was fascinated by the contrast between some people’s body size and the size of bathing suit they chose.

For me, possibly the most compelling stories were from the busy families who rarely see each other except when they go for a picnic on the coast. Not to mention the crazy dog-owners running down the beach with their crazy grinning dogs. And the young surfers with their dangerous passion. And the old sailors with their sailboats. And the teenage kids with their boogie-boards, their campfires . . . and their friends.

Part way through this interviewing spree, I stood alone on Ocean Beach on a warm, windy weekday. A black-and-white freighter slid past a mound of rocks into the Golden Gate. A haze simmered above five-foot-high waves. People loped by on the wet sand with Great Danes, poodles, and mutts. Girls in bikinis sunbathed. Kids dug channels in the sand. A father played baseball with two boys. The noise must have been considerable . . . but it dissipated into a thin, distant song over that huge open space. The beach was remarkably still, in a wave-crashing, wind-blowing sort of way . . . and remarkably peaceful.

I decided to interview myself.

“So . . . How often do you go to the beach?”

Uuuhhh . . . I’ve lived here four years and I think this is the third time.

“Why don’t you go more often?”

Uh . . . I don’t know. I guess it’s kind of far. Or I’m always busy working. To be honest, I really don’t even think of going.

“Why not?”

That’s a good question. I wish I knew. It’s absolutely wonderful here. I haven’t felt so good in ages.

“So do you think you’ll come more often now?”

You bet I will.

“Why do you like it here, anyway?”

Why do I like the beach? Geez . . . that’s a tricky one. You know what? Everybody else said it so much better than I ever could. It’s all here in these pages. Here, have a look. It’s quite something what people have to say about their coast, and the ocean and themselves. Quite a relationship. Quite a dialogue going on.

## ■ Suzanne Woodward, Campbell

### Do you go to the beach?

Well, surprisingly enough, we're about, I'd say 35 minutes from the Santa Cruz border, and we just don't go a lot. I would say once a month—that would be a good month. Twice a year is more the average.

### Why?

I think it's just the traffic; it's crazy. In the winter it's not as bad, but in the summer, your life revolves around the traffic.

### Thirty-five minutes doesn't sound too bad.

No, but it can turn into two hours, two-and-a-half hours on 17, jammed. If there's an accident, forget it.

### Have you ever had any negative experiences on a beach?

Actually, we did. The last time I was in Half Moon Bay, about three years ago, with a friend of mine who's older, there was an undertow that almost swept off a woman who was trying to help a mother gather some beach toys for her child. She got



grabbed and was almost swept into the ocean. She had a very hard time regaining footing, and we had to help her out. It was scary, it made us think of the power of these waves. I prefer Monterey. I go maybe twice a year to Monterey, and it seems more protected, safer.

### Is there anything that would make the beach more attractive to you?

Maybe more lifeguards. There's just not a whole lot of surveillance.

## ■ Ajay Jung, Hayward

### Do you ever go to the beach?

No, I hardly go to the beach.

### Why?

I don't know, not enough time. I play soccer, and that takes up my whole day, basically. I get off school at 3:30, and it's soccer after that.

### Do you never go, or how often?

Like, once every two weeks.

### Oh, you do go once every two weeks?

Yeah.

### How far is it from where you live?

Like 20 minutes. We just go there for a walk or just five minutes.

### And which beach is that?

Alameda Beach.

### Who do you go with?

A lot of friends.

### What do you do there?

Just walk around, go play soccer on the beach, stuff like that.

### What do you particularly like about the beach?

The sand, it's always comfortable. And the water's always nice and cold. Yeah, everything's perfect.

### Some people find the water too cold.

Yeah, sometimes it's too cold.

## ■ Patricia Cook, Berkeley

I haven't been to San Francisco beach really that much. It's colder. The air's cooler, the water's colder. Where I used to live down south, you'd go with your beach chair and your beach towel and your sun-tan lotion and your sunblock, and your beach bag would have your water in it and your book and other little things that you might need, your purse and whatnot. A lot of times I'd go with my mother, and we'd go down by Salt Creek, which is at the Ritz Carlton on the way to San Clemente. She would have the umbrella, and we'd sit there, and we'd go in the water and come back out, and I'd fry myself in the sun. It was just relaxing. I'd



swim or go out in the surf, and it was just an invigorating day. I loved it, I miss it. I really, really miss it. I'm a beach person.



Ajay Jung, and his sister, Saathiya Begg

## ■ Teed Rockwell, Berkeley

Do you go to beaches very often?

My wife is a bigger fan of them than I am, so I sometimes go because she wants to. We both like walking in the sand, because it really does help your posture and it helps your back to walk in the sand. You know, we didn't evolve to walk on concrete.



Have you ever had any really positive experiences on the beach?

Yeah! Looking at sunsets is great. And you know, it's just a nice romantic kind of thing. The beach we go to most often, now that I think about it, is Asilomar, down in the Monterey area. We go down there for vacations. Walking through the natural plant life there is very beautiful, and the sunsets are just gorgeous. Another thing we do is go down to see the elephant seals at Los [sic] Lobos [Año Nuevo]. That is one of the most amazing experiences you've ever . . . that's like confronting Jabba the Hut in the flesh. They're huge—they're like 20 feet long. It's the greatest single collection of natural sex and violence that you're going to see anywhere. They're like sailors; they spend nine

months out of the year on the ocean, and then they spend three months on the land, f—ing and fighting, and you get to see them doing that.

Is there anything you'd like to see improved about the beach and/or the coastline?

I think it's ridiculous that you have to pay money to go to the parks. It's obscene. You remember there was a horror song predicting the future by Joni Mitchell, where she talked about the idea that you put all the trees in a tree museum, and you pay a dollar and a half to see 'em? Well she was right, except that you can't get in for a dollar and a half anymore; you've got to pay at least five.

This is pretty dirty. I mean, it's still a beach, so it's better than nothing. But it's pretty dirty, I think.

—Trinitee Green, Houston  
[at Ocean Beach, San Francisco]

## ■ Kevin Perry Cockerham, Oakland

Do you go to the beach very often?

Yes, I do go to the beach, even though the water's dirty. I go to the beach because I like the scene. I like water in general.

What do you mean, "the scene" and water?

Well, if you take a girl there, it's real nice, it's quiet, and there's only a certain sound, the ocean sound. There's nothing like being at the beach.

Is it important to you?

Of course. I went to school in Oklahoma, Langston University, and there's no coast. You have no bay, you have no water around there, just lakes. So I'm very grateful for having a beach and an ocean, living in California.

How often do you go, would you say?

Oh I go, I'd say like once or twice every three months. Actually, I'm going next week for the City of Berkeley, to take my kids to the Berkeley Marina, fishing.

Who do you go with?

I go with 10- to 12-year-old kids, we have a lot of activities on the beach when we do go, like the fishing. And I go with my friends, we just like to chill; it's a place to get away from everything and just relax. And I'm a Pisces, also, so I love the water.

Is there anything you'd like to see improved about the beach?

People cleaning up. More safe water for people to be around, because now our water is not so clean. We have a lot of infested rivers that are contaminated, and people are dumping stuff, and it's not good. It's not good for the world in general.



What do you do when you go to the beach?

When I go to the beach I just sit there. I just look at the water and enjoy the scene. I mean, it's beautiful.

■ **David Regal, Detroit, and Denise Slaughter, Southfield, Michigan**

*Are you on vacation right now?*

David: My girlfriend and I are just visiting here like we do every year for a couple of weeks, and we come to the beach every day.

*Have you really come every day?*

Yeah, we come for 15–20 minutes just to see how it's going. This weekend was so jammed that we just drove by, because we didn't have time, and there's no place to park, and it was so packed because of the heat. But during the week like this, when it's quiet and nice, we always come down and read the paper for half an hour before we start our day, whatever we're going to do. We have our spot.

*Ever had any negative experiences?*

Never. As a kid . . . this part of the beach right here is called Kelly's Cove—it's just this little ledge right here—so named by myself and hundreds of other young guys who used to hang out and drink beer down there when we were in high school and college, and it became known as Kelly's Cove.

One of the guys, Kelly, was the most regular person down there, and it's still known as that from a lot of the natives.

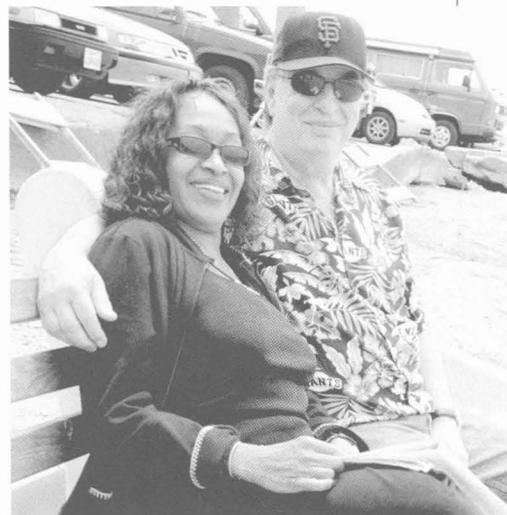
*What does the beach mean to you?*

It puts things in perspective, looking at the ocean. All of a sudden, when you think about all your trials and turmoil and problems, they get a little bit more minute when you start thinking that [the ocean has] been there longer than we have and will be here longer than we are. It's one of the few times when I can just sit and think of nothing and look at it and people-watch, and have that as the background at all times. And that great smell. . . .

*Denise, what do you think of the beaches in San Francisco?*

I've only been coming here for maybe the last eight or nine years, and I had never seen anything like it before. Where I grew up, a beach means a bathing suit and going out playing in the water. Here, a beach means everything—it's a place to think, it's where you start your day, watch the birds, watch the ships. I was blown away by it when I first started coming here. I watched, I think it was a class, daycare, and it was kids from all nationalities.

And at the same time there was a monk walking on the beach, with a robe, and I thought all this together was just amazing.



*Some people think it's too cold.*

Oh, I love it. I come here for the fog. Everybody looks at me like I'm crazy, but it's so hot where I'm coming from.

David: The place we like the best is Princeton, because it's got a couple of nice restaurants and it's right on the wharf, with a big pier to go out and so on.

■ **Jamie Pyrata, West Oakland**

*Do you tend to visit the beach very often?*

I love going to the beaches up in Oregon. I just find the beaches around here are



**Malikah Khaleel and Jamie Pyrata (right)**

very uninteresting, kind of a big pile of sand with dirty needles and lots of garbage around.

*What makes the Oregon beaches more interesting?*

They're not very accessible, so there's not a lot of people there; they're very cold, rainy, and beautiful—lots of driftwood, lots of tidepools, lots of biology, lots of living things to look at and to poke—sea anemones, things like that. The beaches in Oregon are beautiful and the ones down here are kind of a big cat litter box.

■ **Krishnan Chetal, Pinole**

*Do you ever go to the beach?*

Here I don't go.

*Why?*

Because—I don't know why—I'm too old. I don't know. Because my family doesn't go, so I don't go. But when there is sometime family gathering, we go sometime.

*And what do you do there?*

Just sit down, play with the grandchildren. What else?



**Jose Mejia with his son Carlos and friend Edward Vazquez**

■ Jose Luis Mejia, San Francisco,

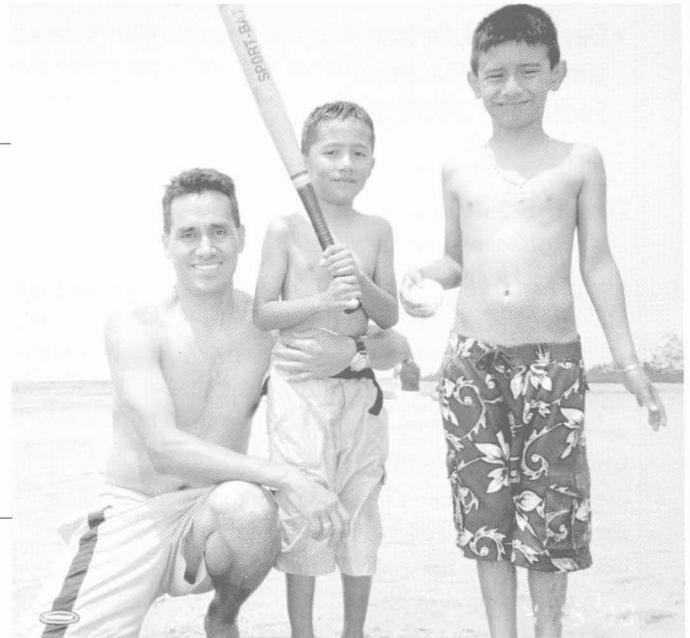
Have you ever had any bad experiences at the beach?

Not yet.

What does the beach mean to you, personally?

For me it means a lot of things. Like to keep in touch with the things that God

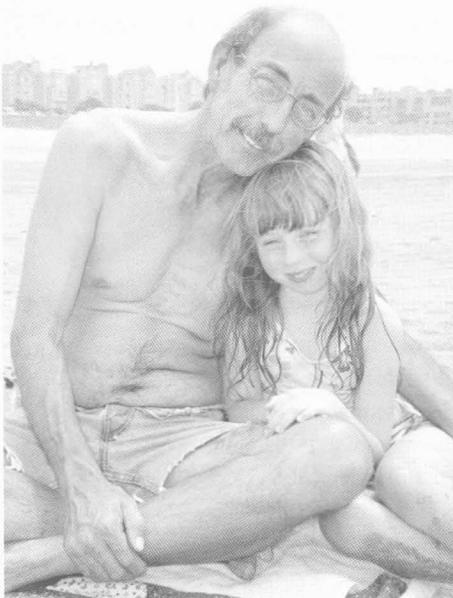
did for us and just enjoy, and share with every single person around me, especially with my family, my son. I want to show him how beautiful it is, the things He did for us, and enjoy and respect them as well.



■ Erich Kreim, West Hollywood, and daughter Heather Kreim

What do you think of the beaches here?

Oh, I like them. I think they're cleaner, so far as I know, than the beaches in Los Angeles, because down there they always have a lot of bacteria problems, it seems.



We went camping a few times at Leo Carillo [State Park in Malibu] and I thought that was really nice, but then recently they said it has had some biological contaminants going on in the beach soil, so that was kind of disheartening to learn. The only other place that we've camped at is Carpinteria State Beach, and that's really beautiful, with the Channel Islands out in the distance. It does have that oil smell, but you just have to live with it a little bit.

The California coast and the ocean, does it mean much to you?

Oh yeah, it means a lot, that it stays natural and not polluted. I know we have to have the oil, but we're paying through the nose for oil, anyway. You'd think it would be an advantage that we have oil rigs off Santa Barbara, but I don't think it helps us much, does it?

Why is it important to you?

Because we love the ocean; it's the heartbeat of the planet, you know, that the oceans stay pristine, especially the coastal waters. If we lose our coastal waters, then the planet's not going to survive much, because that's where most of the life is, along the coast. So yeah, it's very important.

Do you do anything yourself to help to preserve the beaches?

Oh, we always make sure that we pick up, and on our way out, if we see something we'll pick it up and put it in the trash. Some years back I was visiting a friend in Huntington Beach when the *Yankee Trader* or whatever it was ran across the pipe, and there was that big oil mess along all Huntington Beach. I stayed four days and helped with that cleanup. That was horrible.

I get claustrophobic if I don't live close enough to the water, and I've lived around the water all my life, so it is important.

—Eric Blake, Mill Valley

■ James Brickson,  
LaCrosse, Wisconsin

Have you been to California before?

Yes I have, many times. Mainly down in the San Diego area when I was in the service.

What brought you here today?

Well, the grandchildren haven't been to the ocean, and we're with my daughters and their four children. They wanted to go to the beach.

How do you think beaches here compare to others you've seen?

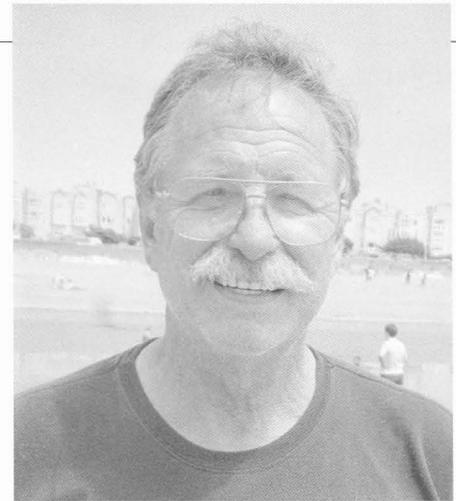
I never paid that much attention to it, really. I'm just out here to enjoy myself, and whatever it is, it is.

Anything you'd suggest to improve them?

Nope. I don't know as if I could.

Are you much of a coast person, coming from Wisconsin?

Oh no, no, I love God's country, I'll tell you. We've got everything right there. The puddle might not be as big, but it's still wet, y'know.



■ Justin Reitz, San Francisco,  
and dog Sparky

Do you come to the beach very often?

Probably three to four times a week. I surf avidly, so . . .

Are you surfing today?

No, definitely not. Waves are no good and board's in the car. [Calls to dog] Sparky. Hey, Sparky! Sparks! Here he comes. C'mere, buddy.

What do you do when you come to the beach?

Usually just hang around and let the dog run around, get some exercise. Pretty much surf and hang out.

What do you think of the beaches in California? I don't know if you've been to beaches anywhere else.

I have. I've been to a couple of beaches over on the East Coast, and I think the California beaches are spectacular, they just need to be cleaned a little bit more. People need to stop littering, maybe a couple of receptacles . . . and/or bathrooms for people to go to the restroom, 'cause I know there's a lot of people who just go right here in the sand, so that's kind of gnarly.

Oh God (laughs).

But other than that, I don't know, the beaches are pretty much fantastic the way they are set up, so you can come in and park your car and drive up and go in the water.

Why else do you say they're spectacular?

The view, the weather. I mean, you just can't really get any better than that. It's pretty amazing. We have the Cliff House here, which is a famously known restaurant that's been redone. You go ten blocks into the city and have everything. . . . Sparky!

Is it easy for you to get here?

Oh yeah, you can take the bus or you can drive. I happen to have a car, so . . .

Do you take a bus sometimes?

I do, if my car's in the shop, which it often is, 'cause it's a piece of crap.

Do you have any particular wonderful memories of the beach or the coast here?

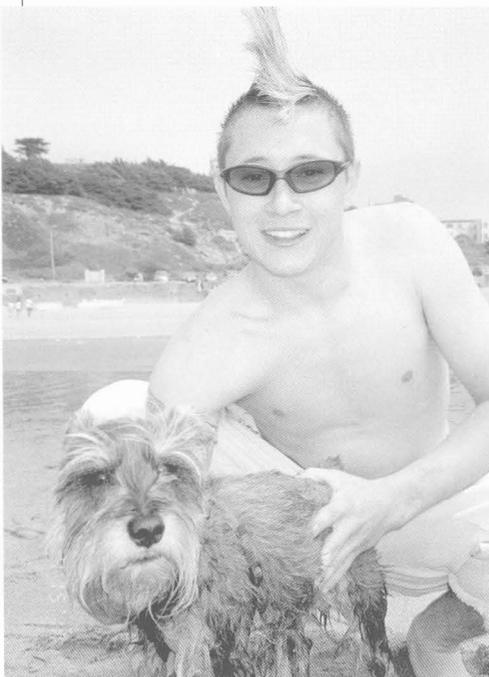
Yeah, about two summers ago I caught about a 15-foot wave out here on Ocean Beach that lasted for about 45 seconds, so that was probably the best surfing experience I've had in quite a while.

And you stayed up the whole time?

Yeah, I stayed up until the end, and then I got nailed by a big fat lip, so it hurt like . . . a bugger. But it's great, you can come out here and experience something different every time. It's really magical; you have to come here to see it.

You've kind of said it, but what does the beach mean to you personally?

Freedom. Like as soon as you step in here, everything else dissipates. You go out into the ocean, it's you and the ocean, and you're riding something that's been traveling for a couple hundred thousand miles, and you get to be a part of that for a little bit. You really don't have to think at all, you're just doing. You walk, you go, you meet people, you say hi, what's up. You just have a really good time; I've never had a bad time at the beach. You go home, you still have the sand stuck between your feet and in other places, and it's like hey, you know, I went to the beach. You walk into a bar after getting out of the surf, and people are like, "Whoa, dude, where were you?" I was at the beach.



■ John Maddox, Auburn



I would say I go to the beach at least six times a year, generally with my family, or just my sons. We go skimboarding, boogie boarding, abalone diving.

*Where do you do that?*

From San Francisco on north. Fort Bragg we'll go to, or Sea Ranch, and just find places to stop off, and ask people where good places are to dive. People give you pretty good advice.

*What do you see?*

The plant life, the sea urchins, all the fish, all the rocks and crustaceans—it's just

beautiful, there's so much color. There really is a lot more to see than people give it credit for.

*Is there any memory you have of a really wonderful time you've had on the beach or coast?*

In California, I'd say the first few times I went abalone diving. I'd never been to the water and gone underneath, never knew just how much beauty California's coast actually has when you go scuba diving or free diving.

■ Sylvia Schlueter and Frank Bauhaus, Germany (near Dusseldorf)

*What do you think of the beaches in California?*

Sylvia: Oh, it's nice!

*Not too cold?*

Not too cold.

*What other beaches have you seen in the world?*

Byron Bay, in Australia, and the North Sea in the Netherlands and Germany. And Spain, Portugal.

*What do you think of the beaches here as compared to other places you've seen?*

The sand is gray; it's not so brown, shiny.

Frank: The beaches here are really big, very wide. I have been in L.A., Long Beach, back in '84, and I thought, Oh, is it big! In comparison to Europe beaches. And the Pacific, it's very very cold water, in comparison to the Mediterranean and the Atlantic. And as I came here I thought, Oh it seems to be not so clean, but it's the type of the sand, and the ash there [from the bonfires]. Really big.

*What would you like to see improved?*

Some volleyball net could be here, to play volleyball. Perhaps some trees, so that you have an esplanade.

Sylvia: Or little shops, with drinks, like in Spain . . .

Frank: Some bamboo huts.

*Some hula girls! What do you tend to do when you come to a beach like this?*

Frank: I would learn to surf. I'm a very active person, I've been a triathlete, so I

will swim and try to surf, not only lying around.

*But you don't surf here?*

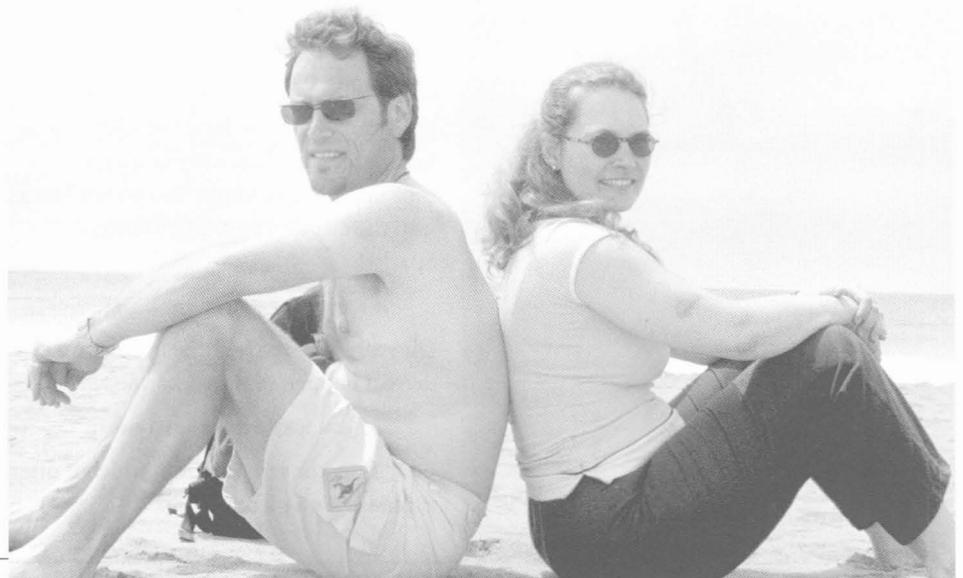
No, no. If I live here, or stay here for weeks, I want to learn it.

*(To Sylvia) What would you like to do when you go to the beach?*

Sylvia: Play volleyball, or just laying here in the sun.

Frank: Tell the truth! Lying there and reading books. (Lots of laughter)

We're completely different!



## ■ Meral Agi, San Mateo

**What do the beach and the coast of California mean to you?**

California is the beach. If you're not from California, that's what people think of every time. Yeah, the beach is California.

**Is it important to you?**

Yeah, most definitely.

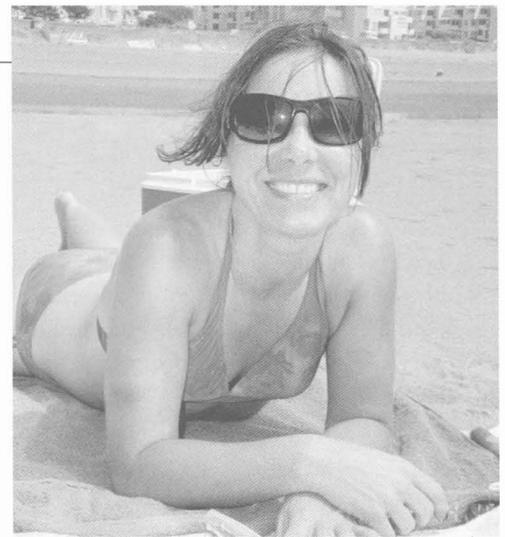
**Why?**

Californians have that beach attitude. Even up here in San Francisco, where we're not on the beach all the time, we have a beach attitude—laid back and relaxed and athletic. I haven't been to the Midwest or any places like that, but I've heard that people

from the Midwest tend to be . . . fat? Not that I'm skinny or anything, but we're health-conscious, more liberal, and to me, liberal and a laid-back attitude sort of go hand-in-hand. I think that's one of the important things about the beach and California and the attitude. And also fashion—Californians have a way more relaxed fashion sense than New Yorkers, who get dressed up more.

**Do you think that in some way that the beach led to the liberal thinking, or that liberal thinkers tend to move to the beach or coastal areas?**

That I don't know. It would be interesting to figure that one out, but I've never really thought about it that way.



**But they seem to go together. . . .**

They seem to go together. They're a good match.

## ■ Meshi Davis, Hawaii and San Francisco

**Do you go to the beach very often?**

You know what, I do, when I want to relax and get peace of mind. I usually go in the evening, when it's completely dark and I can see the whitewash of the water. And I just sit there and think about anything that's going to make my life easier or better.

**Why do you go at that time of day?**

I do it because there's no one there and I can just stare off where the gravity pulls the ocean in. I think to myself, "You know what, I love being here, and I enjoy myself, and I know that I can be productive in life."

**That's wonderful. What does the ocean and the coast mean to you?**

Curiosity and freedom. Curious because we're here for some reason. As for freedom, you have freedom of self; you have

choices of what you want to do with your life, and it's up to you what path you want to take.

**Do you have any particular one memory of a great time on the beach?**

Yes, I do, I do. This was a fluke. I was sitting in the house, bored, and I said you know what, I want to go down to the beach. This was about seven o'clock, when



the sun just went down, and it's beautiful and it's nice out. And this was for the remembrance of 9/11, and everybody lit candles, stretching for miles across the beach. It was so beautiful, the candles and the paper bags. Everybody came out, and they were playing footsies in the water and just looking up in the sky, and just having their own peace of mind, and remembering whomever or whatever it was that made them at peace with themselves. And they made these beautiful loops going around in the sand, all the way out. It was gorgeous. It lit up the sky!

**Do you often go just by yourself?**

No, I go with this guy right over here, Paul. But I used to go by myself all the time.

**Is that your husband?**

No, he's not my husband (laughs). (To Paul): Don't get scared, I'm not ready.

**I'll say your friend.**

Friend, yes.

■ Sean Michael Burke, San Francisco

**What do you do at the beach?**

We like to have bonfires on the beach. I know there's some hullabaloo about banning fires on the beach, and it does piss me off when people don't obey the rules, like when they bring glass to the beach. Just the other day I saw people throwing their beer bottles into the fire, which of course superheats the glass, it loses its temper, then the glass shatters, and you end up with broken glass all over the beach and that's no fun.

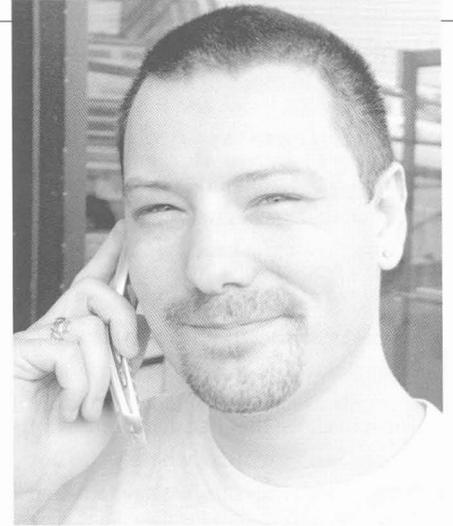
**Do you have any particularly vivid memory of the coast or the beach, experiences you've had there?**

One was when I was a little kid, watching my brother step in a big pile of broken

glass and just slashing his foot wide open. It required several stitches, and to this day I don't like to wear sandals, I don't like to go barefoot, I tend to wear boots (laughs), 'cause I think it traumatized me as a child, watching blood gush out of my brother's foot, I mean it was just hideous. Poor guy couldn't walk for a couple of weeks.

**Do you have any particular thing you'd really love to do at the beach or coast that you haven't fulfilled, or a place you'd like to go?**

I see people hang-gliding down by Fort Funston, there's a little cliff area that the wind comes right up, it's got a great updraft, you can see the birds riding the air currents up there. I see people doing the hang-gliding, and it just looks like so much fun. So someday when I have—I



imagine it's an expensive sport to get into—someday when I have a bit more spare cash and some more free time, it might be a fun thing to do.

■ Rebecca Heitz, Mill Valley

**What does the beach mean to you?**

Oh, it means so many things. It means freedom, and renewal, and joy and energy. It all sounds so hokey, but it really. . . . When I go to the beach and I can walk along the water or go in the water, it's really just a renewal. It makes you realize that the world is a very large and beautiful, mysterious place, and you're very lucky to be a part of it.

**And do you try to pass some of that along to your kids when you take them?**

Absolutely! We're always thanking the dolphins and the birds and the beach and the

water for allowing us to partake in the beauty. (To children): Right? Don't we say, "Thank you, waves, thank you, sand, thank you, seal?"

**Can they say one? Thank you dolphins?**

(little voice): Thank you dolphins.

**Thank you!**

Rebecca: That's Isabella, she's five.

Isabella: I know how to say my name.



David, Nico, Isabella, and Rachel Heitz

## ■ Ronald MacAnnan, Sausalito

**Do you visit the beach or the coast very much?**

Well, I have raced up and down the coast. I used to commute from here to Los Angeles for the boat's annual or biannual haul-outs and paint jobs. Now I haul the boat out locally and I'll be pleasure-sailing on the bay. Oh, I may go out on the coast, but I don't intend to. At 81 I'm not as adventurous as I was years before.

**What is it like sailing on the coast as opposed to in the bay?**

Ooh, that's a broad, broad subject. It can be millpond-quiet out on the ocean, or it can be a holy terror. The trip south is always more pleasant; the trip north is just the opposite. It's renowned for being nasty and miserable: the wind is coming against you, the seas are coming against you. Occasionally it gets mellow out there on a north-bound trip, but rarely. So people have to be prepared to pull into little stopping spots; we call it "gunkholing," or jumping from harbor to harbor to harbor.



**Do you visit the coast or the beach at all now, to go to cafes, or walk, or just sit and look?**

No, my wife and I are like hermits. We socialized enough and partied enough. I owned a big restaurant complex down the street, the famous—famous from old days—Horizons and Ondine, which used to be the Trident. So we got plenty of entertaining and dealing with people, and now we kind of hide and go home and stay there. We have a lovely little place up on the hill.

**Are there any parts of the California coast that you still visit these days, any places you go to?**

No, I'm a bay guy now. My wife and I have both sailed and driven to the various beautiful spots, right on down to the Hearst Castle, and on and on. In fact, William Randolph Hearst started here in Sausalito and was chased away by the locals because he was living in sin, you see, and they didn't allow sin in Sausalito.

## ■ Gerald Price, Concord

**Do you ever go to the beaches on the California coast?**

Rarely, if ever.

**Why is that?**

It's too hot for me normally, and I'm not much of a beach person. I don't want to sit out in the sun and get all dirty. I do love going when I decide to go watch the women, but otherwise I'm not a beach-goer. I'm just a boring guy. I did do the 101 up through the redwood trees. That's a nice drive up the coastline.

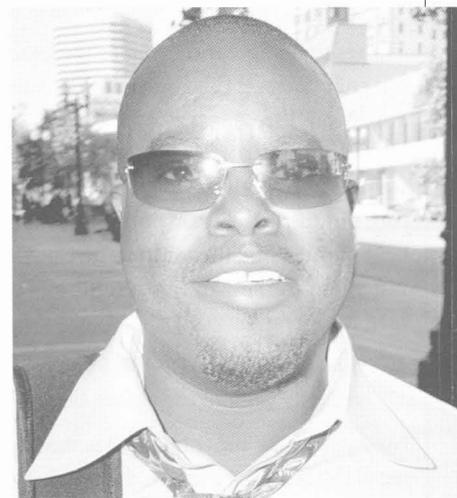
**What do you do with your time, then?**  
Work.

**Oh. Is that part of the problem?**

I wouldn't say so. I'm just not really an outside guy. I did more in my younger years. I'm more of a couch potato now.

**If it was hot and sunny, white sand, would you be there?**

Hot and sunny, but then you've gotta remember, I'm black. You don't see a lot of black people just laying out in the sun on the beach, you know what I mean? Think about it! Think about it the next time you go to the beach. Look around and see how many black people you see laying out in the sun on the beach. Nothing prejudiced, it's just not our thing, I guess.



I don't go real often, but even if I don't go there every day, I drive by it, and I just like knowing it's there.

—Sean Michael Burke,  
San Francisco



## ■ Ha Le Cao, Berkeley

Do you ever go to the beach?

I very rarely go to the beach.

How often would that be?

Maybe once a year.

Why is that?

I just don't . . . that environment doesn't excite me, essentially . . . the scenery is not something that I like that much. I prefer mountains. To me the scenery thing is totally wrong.

Are there beaches you've been to elsewhere in the world that you do like?

I like the beaches in Hawaii. I went to a nice beach in Vietnam. I went to some nice beaches in Costa Rica. On the East Coast the beaches are warmer. It's really the cold.

## ■ Rebecca Jordan, Richmond

Do you go to the beach very often?

Not any more. I used to be an avid beachgoer in my earlier years. I grew up in Santa Cruz. Surfing, all of that. I spent most of my days at the beach, day in and day out.

And now?

I don't go at all.

Why?

Things that affect me going to the beach—one, of course, is the issue with the sun. You know, the concerns with sun rays. Two, I'm concerned about what's in the water. I'm not talking about *Jaws*, or giant fish, but more the toxic pollutants that you hear about. And, the temperature of the water, but the sun and the pollution concern me, greatly.

How long has it been since you've actually been to the beach, then?

Now you've got me thinking, I actually can't recall the last time I was in the ocean, swimming. It's been a really long, long time.

Do you have any particularly wonderful memories of either the coast or the beach?

I can remember diving off the Capitola Pier, headfirst, several times, and surviving. I can speak to that, and also the Santa Cruz Municipal Wharf. I used to dive off of that. It was always a thrill. It was scary and daring. We used to dare each other to do those kinds of things. On West Cliff Beach there's a place out by the lighthouse there—Seal Rock—and I remember diving off the cliff and swimming to Seal Rock in the middle of the night. But that's another story (laughs).

In the middle of the night?

Yes. The moon was out. I survived that as well.

Tell us more. You'd gone loony, or what?

I'm not sure I want to disclose more. I think there was alcohol involved. But I made it out safely.

Do the coast and the ocean have special importance to you?



It has a lot of early childhood and teen memories, and there is a connection. Once I get into the ocean, once I'm there, I feel very safe, even when there's waves crashing. I can remember as a youngster being knocked down by waves, but I always just kind of went with it. I remember opening my eyes and seeing nothing but white bubbles, and being pushed to the bottom of the sand bed, and kind of free floating, and it never scared me. My mother taught us very early how to "never turn your back on a wave," dive under, go as low as you can. So I grew up very, very young knowing how to swim in the ocean, respecting it. So yeah, I have a lot of very early memories, and a lot of crazy stuff too.

## ■ Chris Volpe, San Francisco

**Do you go to the beach very often?**

I do, in fact, just about every weekend.

**What do you do when you go there, and who do you go with?**

What I do is just jump on my motorcycle and head out, a lot of times by myself, and I read or swim. I like to go there and relax and space out and have a good time, soak in the sun.

**Why there?**

I don't know. I think about it sometimes. I see everybody, and we're all just sitting there, looking out at this one thing, and I'm like, "Why are we all doing this?" I think it's because it's just total natural beauty that nobody has to question. Nobody has to ask himself, "Is this a great place to be?" or anything. It just is. It's just a wonderful thing to be as close to as you can.

**Why do you tend to go by yourself?**

You can't really fit many people on a motorcycle. That's my only way to get around. Also I like to go mainly for alone

time, and to read, and I don't want to be distracted by conversation and that kind of thing.

**Do you have any criticisms, things you'd like to see improved?**

I wish there were more restrooms, actually. A couple of porta-potties wouldn't be a bad idea. They make you go and search for these weeds, and everybody can see you, and it's not a really private place to do it.

**Have you been to beaches elsewhere in the world, and how would California compare?**

I have, I've been on the East Coast, and I've been to a lot of different European beaches. I like the California coast a little more than the East Coast, because it's a heckuva lot more scenic, the waves are more dramatic. You don't get these kinds of cliffs on the East Coast. It's pretty amazing. I like the European beaches better, because a lot of them are topless, and I wish more California beaches were topless.

**Do we have topless beaches in California?**



Some of them are. Some areas are kind of marked off, but it doesn't seem acceptable for anybody under 55, for some reason.

**Do you know where the topless—or even nude—beaches are in California?**

The only one I know that's clearly designated is called Baker Beach, and it's right over by the Golden Gate Bridge.

## ■ Ginger Hertz, San Francisco

I hadn't been to the beach for years. I live near Ocean Beach but my husband and my kids, they like to go to baseball games, shopping, do other things. Last Sunday—it was one of the hottest days of the year—a friend and I thought we'd take a walk by the water. I took my shoes off, it was comfortable. Many people were on the beach. We thought we'd walk all the way from Ocean Beach to the Golden Gate Bridge, but when we came to Baker Beach I saw a man in the water. At first I thought I must not be seeing right, it looked like he was naked. I thought, We should call the police, you can't do that! But then we saw many people there in the sand naked. Men and some women. So I thought—What? Well, I guess it's all right then. But they

should put up a sign so people would know. I told my husband. He said there used to be mostly old people there but the ones I saw weren't old, maybe not so young but not old. And they seemed in pretty good shape. We didn't walk to the bridge, we caught a bus and went home.



**Usually whenever I'm upset I love to go to the beach because I feel the waves take away all my problems.**  
—Brown Eyes, *The Beat Within*, from inside juvenile hall

■ **Cynthia Lee, San Francisco**

**Do you go to the beach very often?**

No, except when I'm in Hawaii I do, but the California beaches are too cold for me. I like a warm beach, and I like a beach with



■ **Benny Woo, San Francisco**

**Do you ever go to the beach?**

I haven't been in a while, but I drive by occasionally, and if it's an extremely warm day—even though I didn't go on this heat wave—but, very rarely, maybe once a year.

**What about the coast?**

Not in a long time. I just don't like to drive that much. We use city transportation mostly.

a lot of area, sand, and the California beaches are too narrow.

**A lot of people say they like to go to beaches for the quiet and the vastness and beautiful scenery, and even just time alone, or time with family. Do you get those things in other ways?**

I have a lot of time to myself, so I do my contemplating in those times, but when I go to the beach I like to people-watch—to just watch the different people and what they look like, their body shapes and what they wear (laughs).

**And you find you do that more overseas?**

Mostly in Hawaii, because you get a lot of different shapes and figures wearing a lot of different shapes and figures that aren't really compatible with one another (laughs). So that's how it is.

**You find that interesting?**

Yes, I think it's great when you see a heavy-set lady wearing a string bikini, you know, she thinks she's really beautiful. I'd like to know what's in her mind to make her so bold to wear something like that, you know? Or even a male person who drinks two six-packs of beer every night, and he has the audacity to wear his string bikini (laughs).

**But you could get by city transport to the beach, couldn't you?**

Oh, sure.

**Why do you tend not to go very often?**

I have better things to do, better things than just walking around looking at the ocean (laughs). If I was on vacation, but I haven't been to any beach in a while.

**Does it matter to you that there's beach and coast out there?**

Oh, yes. I think it's very important.

**Why?**

Well, for our natural resources and marine life. I just read this morning in the *Chronicle* that because of the warming climate situation, that the West Coast—the beaches, and the entire West Coast—is warming more rapidly than the rest of the country. There is major concern about the coastline. The Golden Gate Natural Reserve, they're in danger.

**If you don't go to the beach, what do you do with your time?**

Oh, I just have a lot of housework, and I have my computer.

■ **Breona Nicole Garrett, Sacramento**

**Do you ever go to the beach?**

Sometimes.



**What do you think of the beach?**

It's fun. It's very cooling. And it's neat being out there, like shells and crabs and stuff like that.

**What about really good experiences on the beach?**

I found a crab in its shell, before it had moved on to another one. It was kinda scary, but neat.

**Breona Garrett (left) and Shelby McIntosh**

## ■ Bill Rice, San Jose

How often do you go to the beach?

I'd say every six to eight weeks, every two months. I go on weekdays. I used to have a job where I had weekdays off, so I'd go on a Tuesday or a Wednesday. You have a lot of the beaches or—I like trail running—a lot of the trails to yourself, versus the weekends. The weekends I'd tend to stay at home. I'd rather not drive somewhere to enjoy the beach and have there be hundreds of people there.



What about the coast as a whole? Do you go to cafes, or drive or walk there?

I tend to avoid Santa Cruz itself, by the wharf area, but if I do want to hang out near the beach locally, I would go to Capitola. There's nice restaurants and shops. If you consider fishing, like deep-sea fishing, part of that, that's something I would like to do, especially during salmon season, I would try to get a group of friends together to charter a boat and fish.

We've gone out of Half Moon Bay, traditionally, the last few years. Also Monterey.

## ■ Pierre Carter Moss, San Francisco

I've been to the Ocean Beach, oh, about four times now, and it's different than L.A. In L.A., people go to the beach every day, and out here it's not a beach community. You see people on the beach, but they're not enjoying the beach like they should, unless it's a hot day.

How is it different?

Well in L.A., it's a beach-friendly city, you know. You go to Hermosa Beach, Venice Beach, Santa Monica Beach. Everybody's used to it, how they doin' it like that. Out here, I've been to the beach on days it's been cold. You see four or five people walking their dogs, but nobody enjoying it, relaxing with their blankets, the boom box, kickin' it, enjoying, running in the water. The water don't look too good to get in out here (laughs), to be honest with you. And then it's a tragedy, because every

time I hear on hot days there's a death at the beach, somebody's drowning.... This beach out here, it's got history behind it. I mean, we were stationed here before Pearl Harbor. If kids read this article, when Pearl Harbor got bombed, this was one of the first stations that deployed people to Pearl Harbor, to hold it down. People don't know that. Korean War, same thing. They don't know that. We got history, we got bunkers at these beaches. You know, the missiles and stuff. I like going and seeing all that. I love history.

Do you visit the ships and things?

Yes, yes, yes.

Where?

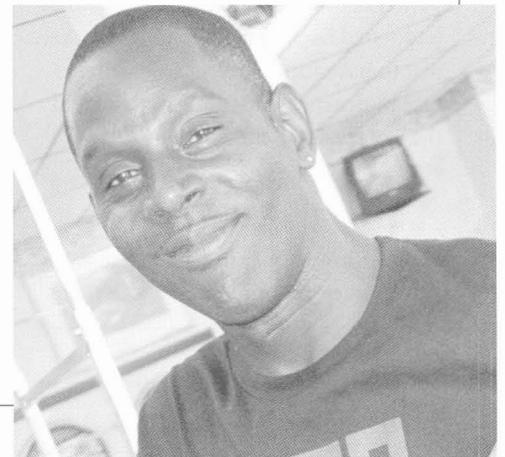
Before the *U.S.S. Missouri* left Oakland port, I went there, I saw that. My son came up from L.A., and I took him there.

How come you're so interested in the boats and the history?

Well, I'm interested in history, period. I like history because that reflects on where you come from. If you don't know where you come from, you don't know where the hell you're going. You've gotta have some sense of history and understand what your purpose in life is. So that's how I live my life.

Have you seen anything else historic on the California coast?

I've seen Hearst Castle—wow!



## ■ John Hansen, San Francisco

About once a month I go out there and sit and watch the waves and the surfers and the people with the paragliders and all that, and it's nice. Calms me down, mellows me out.

Do you just go by yourself?

Usually. Whenever I'm out there working in the area I go kick back in my car and watch

the beach. It makes me feel nice. Rejuvenate, you know, change my perspective a little, and think about things I don't normally think about. Just kind of rejuvenate for an hour or two.

How do you get out there when you go?

I drive in this truck.

## ■ Bong Magsino, El Cerrito

How often do you go to the beach?

I haven't gone there for almost the past two years now, I don't have time for it. Before, we went there every weekend. Like, every Friday night me and my friends would hang out there all night. We'd have like a bonfire, or just like a gathering, friends.



Do you have any particularly fond memories?

Actually, everything is pretty cool, pretty cool memories. We did the same thing every Friday night into the weekend. Hang out there, tell a story what happened in 8th grade or elementary, what happened back then. Just hang out there, just to have fun. We went to Pacifica, Ocean Beach, and Santa Cruz, most of the time we'd go there.

So what's happened in the last two years?

I got work, and busy in school, and work at the same time, so I haven't been there.

## ■ Tony Sun, San Jose

Do you go to the beach very often?

Once in a while. I'm actually going tomorrow, to Carmel Beach. The beach there's really nice, the water's really blue and clear.

Do the beach and the coast mean much to you?

Yeah, 'cause California's known for its surfers, known for the beach. It gives us a reputation.

What do you mean?

## ■ Charyell Porter, Palo Alto

How often do you go to the beach?

Not often like that, probably once a year maybe.

Why not more often?

'Cause nobody takes me.

Does your family not go to the beach?

No, my parents don't go like that. No, we only go sometimes, it just depends on my parents.

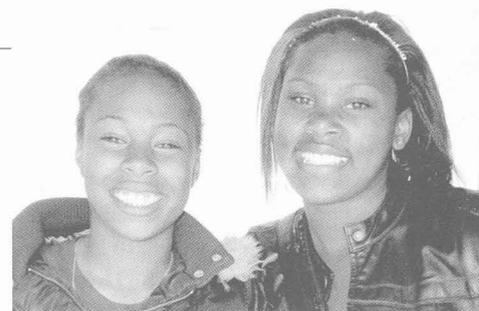
Do they like going to the beach?

My mama do.

Your dad?

Naw, he don't care for it like that.

What do you do when you go to the beach?



Charyell Porter (left) and Carlina Bell

Play in the water. It be cold, but I be playin up in it though.

What do you like about the beach?

It's quiet. You can think there if you want.

Is there anything you don't like about the beach?

Seaweed. All the seaweed.

## ■ Gerald Tomboc, Vallejo

How often do you get to the beach?

Actually, not very often, probably once or twice a year.

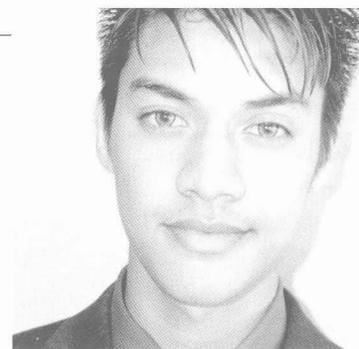


Do you have any particularly good experience you remember?

One time when I was in Monterey, I was not married yet, and my wife came out from—she wasn't my wife at that point—came out from Oklahoma, never had been to the ocean, so she was thrilled to be there. She was backpedaling to avoid a wave, and unfortunately she tripped, and the wave went right over her, so you'd think that wasn't fun, but she enjoyed it.

Did you?

I did too.



Is there one thing you'd someday love to do on the beach or the coast?

I haven't been surfing yet. I want to learn.

■ **Cristine D. Alvarez, San Jose**

We have to head out to Santa Cruz at least once a month. Santa Cruz is our closest beach. Or Monterey. We go to the boardwalk, but we usually set up a whole little area with our family on the beach, so it's mostly my whole family—mother, sisters, brothers.

**How many altogether?**

Lots. Two weeks ago we had about 16 people that all went down from San Jose.

**Does everyone bring food?**

Well, we bring an ice chest, and everyone brings snacks and everything. We pretty much eat on the wharf, go and have clam chowder, but for the beach part it's eating chips and sodas and stuff like that.

**How did this tradition come about?**

It's the only thing that gets us together in the summer. Anything to get out of the city. We go to Santa Cruz or to Monterey, the aquarium. Anything that's near the coast is the best thing.

**So you've been doing it since you were a kid, and now you're carrying it on?**

Yeah, exactly. We all meet there.

**Any particular fond memories or stories to tell about your adventures there?**

Yeah, getting lost at the boardwalk and remembering the main spot was in front of lifeguard number three, that's where our area was where we all sat. For years, has been the place where we always sat. That's my fondest memory. So now we make sure all the kids that go—there's lots of nieces and nephews that remember that we're in front of lifeguard station number three.

**Is there anything you'd really like to do on the coast or ocean that you haven't?**

Well, I've already done it. My husband and I were married in Vegas, and my dream was to get married on the beach, anywhere, so we renewed our vows this year in Hawaii, on the beach in Oahu. That was like a dream I had that actually was able to come true. That was cool.



**Joseph Mischel, San Francisco**

**How often do you go to the beach?**

Not very often, usually just a few times a year.

**Do you swim?**

I haven't actually swum in the water. I've heard it's a little polluted, so I was reluctant to try. Maybe. I'd just have to research it some more. I want to know what's in there exactly before swimming in it.

**Is it important to you to live close to the coast even though you don't go to the shore a lot?**

Yes. Whenever I go more inland, areas where it's all flat and you don't see any water, it makes me a little uncomfortable. I'm just used to living by the water. I grew up in Washington, fairly close to the water, and I'm just more comfortable with the ocean nearby.



**There's a particular kind of people who live by the coast, as opposed to inland, at least in California, I guess.**

Judging from the election results, I would say so (laughs).

**If I really want a warmer beach I'd go to a warmer beach, but I'm in the water now and it's not that bad.**

—Megan Accatino,  
Walnut Creek

■ Daniel Zilberman, San Francisco

Beaches are definitely important to us. We like being by the water. I very much like the sea breeze, so does my wife. The whole feeling of the ocean and the waves and it has just a soothing effect, and our son likes it too. I grew up in St. Petersburg, which is on the Baltic Sea, and my wife grew up in Moscow, but she was traveling to Lithuania, which is also on Baltic Sea.

**What do you think of the California coast compared to the Baltic?**

Well, California's much more south. It's much more picturesque and warm, and

the amount of the beach is lots more.

**Have you had any adventures on the beach?**

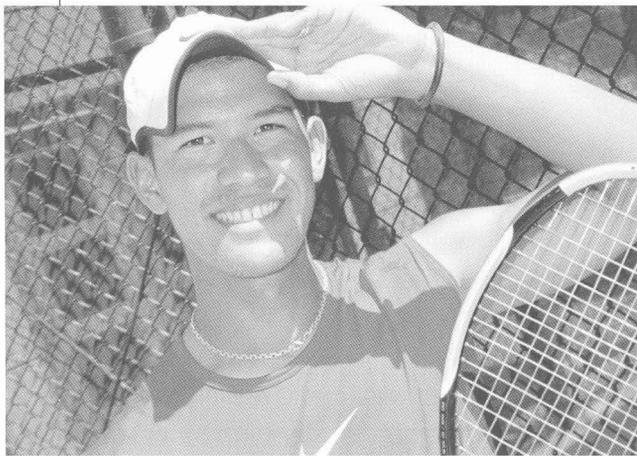
I used to scuba dive, and we went to this area a little bit south of Carmel—I forgot how it's called, it's a national preserve. It had this Whaler Cove, and it's basically a park. We were with a group of divers and just about to go into



the water, we saw a little whale enter this cove, and kinda swimming around and just jumping out of the water, and I was very tempted to go after him, just to see, but he decided to go away. That was very very interesting, because I never saw a whale so close. It was like maybe 30 feet.

■ Taiki Hori, Japan (currently living in Santa Clara)

My wife likes to go to the beach, so I go with her. Maybe I would say, in the summer, like, once a month.



**What do you do there?**

I just sit down, and I like to see the people and what they do, yeah.

**Why do you like people-watching?**

Well, it's kind of interesting, especially in California, there's a lot of people from around the world. Yeah, a lotta people from other countries. Yeah, that's what I like to do, just watch people and see. And I like to talk to my wife about the future and stuff.

**Oh, and the beach is a good place?**

Yeah, a good place, it's more freedom over there. It's so big and I feel like I can express my feeling over there. I like the ocean and mountains.

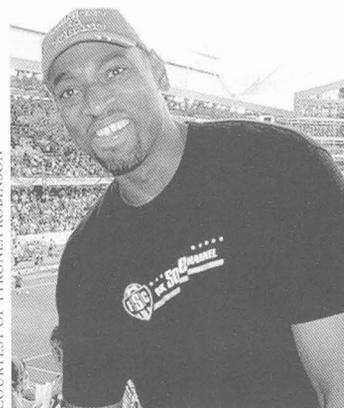
**How do the beaches here compare to Japan?**

Wow! Here the ocean's so cold, very cold. In Japan it'll be warmer. That's why I watch people. If I go back to Japan, I go to the ocean, I swim and I just enjoy, like all the same and yeah.

■ Owen Modeste, Berkeley

Once I was walking on the beach in Half Moon Bay and saw a school of fish in about two feet of water, so close I could connect with them. We tend to scare away nature and it recedes, but they came closer. I was touched by that.

COURTESY OF TYRONEA ROBINSON



**I'm really surprised that a lot of the people who live here or grew up here, especially them, don't go to the beach.**  
—Will Contreras, San Diego

## ■ Mike Stanton, San Diego

### Do you go to the beach?

Seven days a week to do long swims or 'marathon swims.'

### Do you go with family, friends, alone?

I go alone, they call me the swimming monk. . . . In the last ten years or so I've spent a lot of time out here [at Coronado Beach], but I've been frequenting this beach for about 25 years. It used to be just a beach but now I'm more part of it; it's more a part of my life. . . . It's a wilderness experience in an urban environment.

### Do you go anywhere on the coast besides beaches?

Only when I visit the dunes, and that's to sleep a bit before I swim. . . . I've been swimming here for a long time. It's cold, so it's good for training. I like this beach, I'm never concerned about being ripped off."

### What besides sleep do you do when you're out of the water?

Sometimes I read and do T'ai Chi. I've met people here over the years. . . . there's a

group of six people whom I only meet in the water.

### Anything you wish you could do here and can't?

There's really nothing here that impedes what I do. However, I'd love to see more fire rings [bonfire sites] spread out along the beach. It'd be good for everyone and it's not going to hurt anyone.

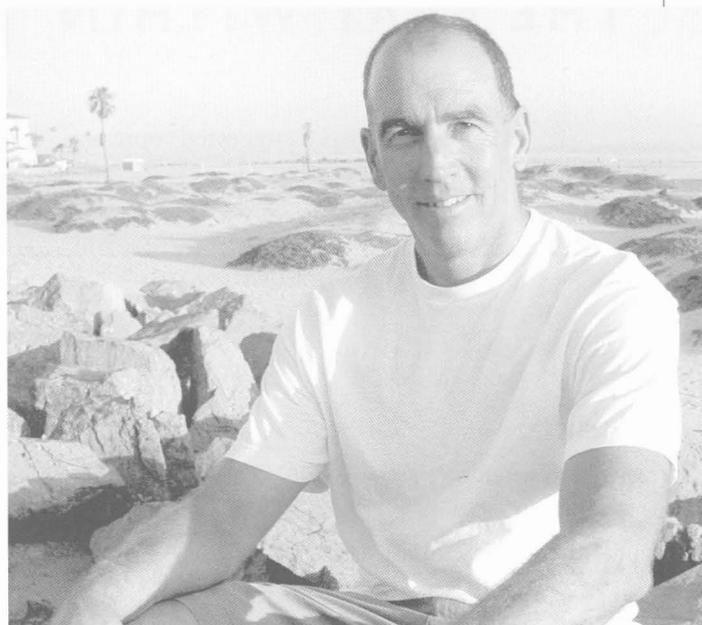
### What special experiences do you remember?

I've had seals try to mate with me—mating season is a little unnerving.

### Did anyone ever try to stop you from going to a beach?

Just when the beach is polluted. Some newer limits because of nearby military installations.

### Do you visit other beaches, outside California?



No, but I swim with the Dolphin Club in San Francisco; if the water gets too warm here, I go there.

*Interview and photo by David Maung*

## ■ Chris Hisamune, Santa Monica

### What attracts you to the shoreline?

I love the diversity of sealife. I remember when I was a kid, we would visit the tidepools quite often, by Marineland. I loved finding sea hares and octopi, sea anemones.

### That's the Palos Verdes Peninsula.

That's right. And I always thought when I grew up I would be a marine biologist. Just to do the things that I love to do. The sea is a source of so much wonderment. And now, as an adult, it's more of a sense of immensity. Living in Santa Monica I love just standing in Palisades Park, which is on the bluff above the beach, and looking down at the ocean, watching the waves washing down on the shore, one after another, looking out toward the horizon, seeing



how far you can see. It's really a source, in a way, of the infinite. I love that. But it's a funny thing, I don't really like being on the beach, because I wear glasses, and the surf starts to coat my glasses with this film that's so tenacious I can't get it off without using water or something, which I usually don't have. So I'd just rather stay off the beach. And I always feel like I'm in need of a shower after being on the beach. I'd rather just sit there in the Palisades Park and look out, and I do that quite often. I love being close to the ocean. I may not get into the water, or lie on the beach, but I do love being close to it. I drive to work from Santa Monica to Beverly Hills, and I enjoy looking in my rearview mirror and seeing the edge of the ocean.

### So in a way the ocean accompanies you, wherever you catch it from your eye?

Yes, right. Now even though I have to admit I love the

mountains more, there are definite strong attractions to being close to the ocean. The air quality is much better, the temperature's more moderate, and not so extreme like in the Valley where I grew up since 1945. I didn't move into Santa Monica till 1990, and I've not wandered very far from that ever since.

### I like sleeping where I can hear the waves.

Funny you mention that. Every now and then, I suppose when the surf is really high from some distant storm, I can actually hear it where I live. It just amazes me how the sound carries. You get the benefit of hearing that wonderful, rhythmical sound that seems to bring about some connection, deep connection, and yet, I feel so gummy. Which is what I don't like, that's one thing I really don't like living so close to the shore.

*Interview and photo by Don Nierlich*

# THE BEAT WITHIN

**T**HE BEAT WITHIN is a weekly publication of writing and art from inside juvenile halls in the San Francisco Bay Area ([www.thebeatwithin.org](http://www.thebeatwithin.org)). It is the product of workshops held weekly in the detention facilities. In an August workshop, a suggested topic was “The Beach.” Here is some of what came in. We thank the contributors, David Inocencio, director of The Beat Within, and Pacific News Service, its sponsor.

## ■ Lonely Taz

remember when it was just  
me and you mom  
right after dad's funeral last year  
we went to the beach  
in half moon bay  
we climbed on rocks and  
picked up sea shells  
you told me story's about my dad  
and how he knew he was going  
to die when he was 38  
and how he loved you and me  
even though he was an  
alcoholic at the age of 14  
and was murdered just to get a sip  
you hugged me I cried  
not scared to show my emotions inside  
I love you mom forever

## ■ Al-Bundy

I ain't really got nothin' to say 'cause I don't think I really been to a beach, but I imagine it like white sand, hella females in bikinis. I think it's hot as hell out there, just kicked back an' enjoying the weather. I don't know that much so I'm 'bout to let y'all go. I'm out.

## ■ A

I love going to the beach. The way the mist hits your face; it's the best feeling in the world.

## ■ Sara

It was September and I went to San Francisco with my ex-boyfriend (at the time we were together), we played in water and walked hand in hand while the sun set. Unfortunately I conceived my child (or misconceived) that day. But if I were older it would have been the perfect end to the perfect day.

## ■ Furly Gurly

I have very fond memories of the beach. I use to go there when my auntie stayed up in the projects. I used to collect the sand dollars and use them as pancakes in my play kitchen (because they're circle shaped).

One of my favorite drinks is a sex on the beach.

## ■ Dominique

It was on January 30th. Me and my one love decided that we would go to the lovely beach, and get the drama off our heads. Away from all the shhh and the crying kids . . .

## ■ Gilbert

I've only gone to the beach once or twice. It was in California but I don't know the name of the beach. I remember when I went there but it was hella long ago. I can't wait to go back to the beach when I get out. I'm going camping with my family and I can't wait.

## ■ John Doe Juggalo

See, I don't go to the beach. The beach, to me, is my music—the Insane Clown Posse!

It lets me escape from the people around me and the things that I don't like in life, so I can think about good things, like—myself, my mom into a drug program, and my loving dad that was always there!

## ■ Anthony

I used to go to the beach with friends and family to get away from a lot of stuff I don't really want to deal with. I never went in too far, because I was always worried about the sharks, and I can't swim too good. I would just go to kick it and talk to a few girls, drink a little, smoke a little bit.

When I finish camp I should go on a regular basis, because it keeps me out of trouble and I still have fun. It's just gonna be hard to stay out because I'm on probation till I'm twenty-two. I'm gonna get a job and go to Great America and Six Flags too.

## ■ DeAndre

Let me tell y'all something. Where I'm from we don't do beaches. Better believe I'm from da ghetto homie. I was raised on guns and bologna. Dat shhh right there. I can see the ocean water from da 'hood, but if I go to da beach I am going to be on the straight licks.

But I always wanted to go back to the beach and just look at the water. Dat a trip I always wanted to go, but what stop me, I don't know.

# — CHILLIN' AT THE BEACH —

was up beat it was like sitting to you about how theres nothing better then to chill at the beach on a

and warm summer day. you have to wake up early in the morning and get every thing ready. buy

## ■ Uce-b

I like and don't like the beach. The reason I like the beach is because I love to see me just sittin' there lookin' at the girls that play in the water and chasin' each other. I also sit there lookin' at the bomb-ass moms that lay there.

But the most thing I like about the beach is looking at the water waves comin' and the sand and just like having the sound of the ocean, and also looking at the sun reflecting off the water. I also liked the smell of the stinky, sour, salty, infested, polluted, expired water. It also a fun place to be with family, friends, for barbeque and birthday parties and other fun stuff. I've been to a lot of beaches.

The reason I don't like the beach is because when I swim—now let me tell you, I'm a pretty good son-of... a-swimmer—but look, check this out. I can swim, but I'm like a rock. The reason I say rock is because I can swim but I can't float. I even almost drowned in the ocean 'cause I thought if you want to float, you have to hold your breath. I even hold my breath when only the water is up to my ankles. That's how scared I was of swimming in oceans. I was so scared that if I touch my toes I hold my breath as if I'm under water. But still I like it... even though I don't.

## ■ Adrian

I love going to the beach. I like to go to the beach with my family and swim, barbeque and just have fun. I really like to go to the beach with my homies at night and have a bonfire. We like to chill and smoke and drank. What I also like 'bout the beach is the sunset. It's so beautiful! I love going with my girl. She loves the beach. We can sit there for hours and get lost in our little world. I would like to go to Brazil and visit the nude beaches.

## ■ The Grinch

I have many beach memories. They are all so good, but each one has its categories: family, friends, girls, etc. I think my favorite of all and the one I think about whenever I think of the beach is a recent one, only a couple of weeks before I ended up in this place.

We just met up with my brother's best friend and he was like another older brother to me. My brother's pit bull named Cali was there also. We were just about to leave for the beach, so we stopped off at the Bungalow to get some wraps and forties.

It was not the best weather out, sort of overcast, but it was a great day to me. Ever since I was little, spending time with my brother has made me happy, and it always will. I am looking forward to another day just like this one once I get out.

## ■ Crackhead

I hate the beach because the water's dirty. It's ugly. People hangin' 'round... and I had a bad experience too. Probably 'cause I was high.

## ■ Starr

I love the beach 'cause the one that I go to, not a lot of people know about it. I also love it 'cause you can have bonfires there without getting bothered at all. People go there and get drunk and smoke and people lay around naked all around and boogie board. Everyone that goes stays late night and when the sun sets there are fireworks all night, every night, for no reason.

## ■ Patricia

Sometimes okay most the time I daydream and I could picture myself alone with my man on a nude beach. Nah, just playing. But for real I would really like to do something romantic like going to a sunset dinner and a walk at the beach. But that was just my imagination running away again.

A. Lopez

# The beach

I remember when it was just  
me and you mom

right after dad's funeral last year  
we went to the beach

## ■ A-Lo

Was up Beat? It's Tank writing to you about how there's nothing better than to chill at the beach on a nice warm summer day. You have to wake up early in the morning and get everything ready. Buy some B-B-Q coals some carne asada.

The night before have my grandma make me some Mexican rice and frijoles de la hoya. Buy some tortillas . . . oh yeah, and you can't forget the brew. Tecate will do you good.

Go swoop the homies up in Hollister and the females. And we're on our way. Usually we'll go to Sunset Beach over in the 831 area. because they allow you to barbeque there. But sometimes we'll go to Lover's Point in Monterey. That's a beautiful beach. Oh yeah, one of the best parts of going to the beach are those bikinis, que no?

Well this G is out.

## ■ Anna

The beach is the perfect place to go when it's just you and the one you love have a romantic dinner by candlelight, watching the sunset, even when you want to take a boat cruise and scuba diving. The beach is a place to relieve your thoughts.

A place to kick off your shoes, walk in the sand and wet your feet. Long horseback riding along the coast, taking your kids to play in the sand, making sand castles, looking for sea shells and other sea animals. The beach is a place where everyone goes to enjoy their self. The beach is a place where I'll take my kids when I get out. The beach!

## ■ At Peace

I pulled up to the beach front. It was a muggy night, and though I hadn't been in the water, my swim shorts were soaked through with sweat. I smelled of sunscreen lotion. The air smelled thick and salty.

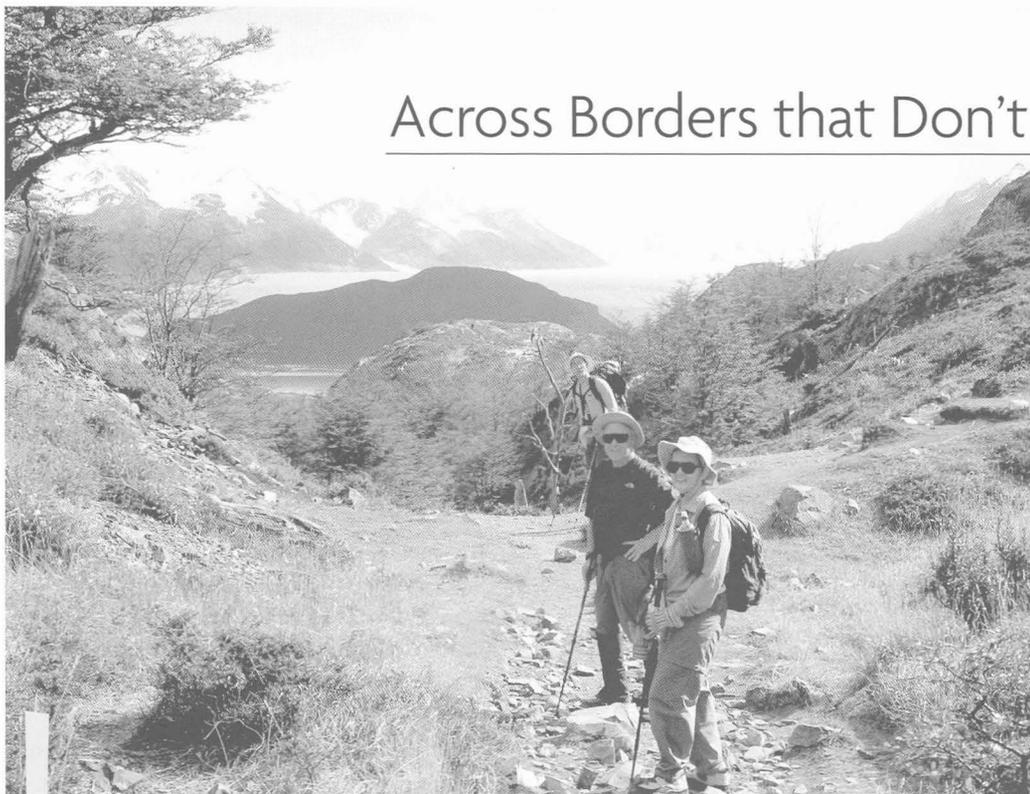
I approached the water cautiously, though I didn't know why. From afar, the ocean looked crimson from the sunset, but upon approaching the water itself, I gasped! The water which had been colored crimson from the sunset, was now neon-yellow—and glowing! I tried to run, but before I turned to do so, a brilliant golden flash shook the ground beneath me.

I froze, stock still, and gazed in awe at what stood—no, at what floated—before me. A spectacle which I would never have conceived in my wildest imagination: the leaders of World War II, right there in front of me. I rubbed my eyes, but the spectacle was still there: President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, Benito Mussolini, Joseph Stalin and the führer of Germany, Adolph Hitler. *(To be continued.)*

## ■ Rook Nasty

I can't even remember the last time I went to the beach. I've been in and out of the hall and Ranch for almost a year and a half. But this time I am getting off probation and I am not coming back. I'll be at the beach.

## Across Borders that Don't Divide



DONALD NIERLICH

IT WAS WONDERFUL TO BE TALKING to Gonzalo Cisternas in Santa Barbara. We first met in Chile, 7,000 miles from the California coast, and this was the second, surprising, chapter of what I hope will be a continuing friendship. Cisternas is chief ranger at Torres del Paine National Park in Chile, and he was here with nine fellow rangers on a tour of California parks, to be followed by a “de rigueur” visit to Washington, D.C.

To explain how I first met Cisternas I must go back to 2002, when my wife, Susana, and I trekked in Torres (“Towers”) del Paine National Park, which in many ways is like our Yosemite: a dramatic landscape of spectacular peaks, great cascades and lakes of almost unimaginable colors, raised from the sea floor by the movement of geologic plates along the Americas’ Pacific rim, sculpted from sandstone and granite by glacier and wind. Torres del Paine is an International Biosphere Reserve. A rapid upsurge in tourism in the park, however, has provoked serious ecological problems for the country, straining the limited financial resources available for parks. This too, is not unlike the situation in Yosemite some years ago, which was urgent then and still exists today.

On the last day of our walk, nearing the Hostel Pehoe, we were buffeted by strong winds; and

while I was walking through a wet spot on the trail, my boot got stuck in a muddy trench and I was blown over, full length into the muck. After I extricated myself I concluded: these trails could use some work.

Three years later, in 2005, we saw a notice in our Sunday paper that the U.S. Forest Service (USFS)—specifically California’s Los Padres National Forest—was looking for volunteers to go to Torres del Paine to do trail maintenance. Amazingly, we were being offered an opportunity to work on the very same trail on which I fell!

The details are complex: the program was the icing on a U.S.–Chile trade agreement; we would do trail maintenance for eight days, and have two days off; we would be accompanied by several USFS experts and consultants who would impart to a group of Chilean rangers some of their knowledge of trail layout and construction, and visitor handling in ecologically sensitive areas. The volunteers would pay their own way.

It was a wonderful experience—we bonded through a common love for trails and natural beauty, and if working side by side wasn’t enough, an hour or so at the end of each day drinking Chilean wine was the extra that made great friendships.

The Chilean rangers worked with us, and we had many animated conversations with the help

DONALD NIERLICH

**Volunteers hiked to a nearby lake and glacier on their day off.**



**Top:** Gonzalo Cisternas (center) directing Chilean rangers

**Middle:** Chilean rangers hold certificates given for completing the trail-building course. U.S. volunteers stand behind them.

**Bottom:** Godwits feed in beach wrack at Isla Vista Beach, Santa Barbara County

of one or another translator. Only a few of the rangers spoke English, and few of us spoke more than a smidgeon of Spanish. We couldn't help but be charmed by their effort, enthusiasm, and quiet manner. Among them, Cisternas seemed most approachable—he was young, outgoing, and spoke English.

We were concerned that the rangers would wonder why we *norteamericanos* had come to work on their trails. Such volunteerism is uncommon in this part of the world. As we worked, many people stopped to ask, "What are you doing here?" Most of the hikers were foreigners—Europeans, Americans (a large class on a high-school science trip), Australians, and even Brazilians and Argentines—relatively few Chileans get to this remote region near the Strait of Magellan. We explained the personal satisfaction of such work, and learned that for many Chileans "volunteering" is an alternative to mandatory military service.

As we left we all agreed: "Let's bring the Chilean rangers to the U.S." That sentiment was also expressed by a subsequent group of volunteers, in 2006. The needed funds were raised through the effort of our sponsors from Los Padres National Forest (particularly Ranger Rich Tobin) and Los Padres Forest Association, the U.S. Patagonian Foundation and Chilean Fundación Patagonia, as well as support from the two nations' governments, the clothing and gear company Patagonia, and gifts from volunteers and others. Thus the Chilean rangers came for their work-study tour of the United States, and I got to visit with Gonzalo Cisternas again, in Santa Barbara.

At a reception in Santa Barbara he told me he found that the beaches here were as beautiful as the beaches in Chile, but was surprised that the sand here was softer and more fine-grained.

"I have been to the beach where Pablo Neruda had a beach home, south of Santiago," I told him, "and it was just beautiful. To think of this poet sitting there and writing this extraordinary poetry, well...."

"Isla Negra," said Cisternas.

"Isla Negra."

*To be continued, maybe at Isla Negra or Torres del Paine, but surely on one coast or the other.*

*See the website of the Patagonian Foundation ([www.patagonian.org](http://www.patagonian.org)) for more photos of the U.S. volunteers in Chile.*

# DOCKWEILER RV PARK



IT'S AN UNLIKELY PLACE FOR paradise: a slab of asphalt downhill from a water treatment plant and an oil refinery, with loud jets flying overhead. But for the couple hundred people in motor homes parked here, it is paradise—or almost. Although Dockweiler Beach lies under the departure path of Los Angeles International Airport, the RV sites are sometimes booked months in advance. The vacationers tend to be from southern California—inland dwellers escaping the heat, families in search of the last affordable beach vacation, retired people, friends who gather here annually, and people from elsewhere, such as the man who was enjoying a week-long rest in the midst of a permanent move from Alaska to San Diego.

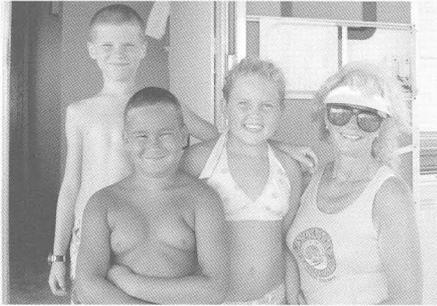
So what draws them here? In a word, the beach, the glorious beach. Just down from the RV park, once you cross a paved two-lane bike path, there's nothing but sand and sunshine, fresh, cool ocean breezes, and the reassuring sound of surf all day and night. Despite the frequent roar of low-flying airliners, almost all the people I spoke with on this particular day in August described the place as “relaxing”—unless it was a kid talking, and then it was “fun.”

“When you live in a hectic world, it's kind of nice to come out where it's relaxing and peaceful,” said Sharon Lofgran as she and her husband, Jim, sat on lawn chairs outside their RV. “And this beach is pretty private. We absolutely love the beach. We also go to Newport Beach, Huntington Beach, Carlsbad, San Diego, but this is probably one of our favorite places. We have all the conveniences of home . . . the only thing that's missing is a Jacuzzi!”

Dockweiler is less crowded than some southern California beaches, partly because it's between two major beach cities, Playa del Rey and Manhattan Beach. Its RV park, unlike many others, has hookups—another definite plus. It's a good place to surf, boogie board, ride bicycles, play Frisbee, but most important, to just hang out and spend some quality time with loved ones.

Bobbie Anderson had come from Redlands, halfway between Los Angeles and Palm Springs, to stay with her grandchildren for the maximum time allowed at the park, 21 days. The parents join them on weekends and some week nights after work, as do friends from home. “This is wonderful for the kids,” Anderson said. “We have so much fun and have had so many people out here.”

TEXT AND PHOTOS BY  
ARIENNE KOZAK



**Top: Bobbie Anderson (right) with grandchildren Shawn Barnes, Nick Cruz, and Carley Goins**

**Middle: Chris Meredith with Steve and Ronel Huth**

**Bottom: Barbara and Joe Branam bought their trailer in 1995 and have been camping at California beaches regularly ever since, from Pismo down to San Diego. Barbara says, "I like the openness of the camp sites here at Dockweiler. You can see the ocean no matter which spot they put you in."**

At one time we had 13 rigs at the beach, all from Redlands. It's been a family tradition for 40 years."

What is it about the RV experience that makes it different from being at home? "I think the family talks more. When they're out like this, they tell us things that maybe we don't want to know!" she replied with a laugh. "You know, when you're home you're busy, you're watching TV, you're doing this and that, going here and there. Here it's more of a family thing—it's smaller, so you're together."

Dockweiler is not quite paradise for them, however, for a couple of reasons unrelated to the airplane noise. Their favorite beach to camp at is San Elijo State Beach, just north of San Diego, mainly because there is a store on the premises so that they don't need to drive anywhere for small necessities. Also, there they don't have speeding bicyclists.

"You have to have somewhere to walk," Anderson explained. "The bike path is too dangerous to walk on. Cyclists ride down here really fast and yell at us—'Get off the bike path!'" It was a complaint I heard from others in the park. One little girl about four or five years old was crying on the bike path because she was yelled at by a cyclist.

And what about the airplane noise, does it bother them? "Actually, we love it!" Anderson answered. Her granddaughter, Carley, chimed in, "We make a game of it. We all ask each other, 'What country is that one going to, or that one?' It's fun."

More than anything else, what I picked up here at Dockweiler RV park is an overwhelming sense of community. It feels like a small town, in all the best ways.

"They're all nice people around here," said Delia Muñoz. "Everyone says hi. They're more relaxed, I guess. It's kind of like family; if they see you need something they'll come over, and then if they want to borrow something from us we'll help them."

Delia and Juan Muñoz, who live in Downey, about a 45-minute drive inland, usually take trips to the more deserty areas near Bishop (east of the Sierra Nevada) or Gorman (60 miles north of Los Angeles), where their kids ride off-road motorcycles. On long weekends they get together there with some of their relatives who also own motor homes. This is their first time at Dockweiler because they wanted to try something different—the beach. "We're going to come back,"

Delia Muñoz said. "Even though you're close to home, you feel like you're far, far away."

Besides watching her children splash in the ocean, one of the things she most enjoys is meeting people here. "They tell you their stories of where they've gone. It's a good way to find out where we might want to go visit next. We make friends with them and then say, 'Well, maybe we'll see you here next time!'"

Kids have a lot they can do here, though they can't really run wild because of the proximity of a busy street, the bicycle path, and the frequently rough surf. Three boys from Duarte, about an hour's drive inland—brothers Niko and E. J. Agundez, ages 15 and nine, and friend John Meredith, also nine—come here every year with their families in several RVs. "You can play volleyball, swim, play games, hang out," said Niko Agundez. "We saw dolphins when we were out swimming."

"Did they tell you in the morning we were getting ready to come out here and we turned on the news and it said, 'Dockweiler—dirty water?'" laughed Niko and E.J.'s father, who had emerged from the RV while we were talking. "I turned it off," he said. "If not, I wouldn't have come down here." "Last time we were here, one of our friends came out of the ocean and there was a piece of toilet paper stuck on her face," said Niko. But that didn't seem to have spoiled their fun, either.

For Ronel Huth, a friend of the Agundez and Meredith families, the beach is much more than just a place to have fun. "I love the ocean," she said. "I feel like I've arrived, this is my destiny, whenever I get to the sand." However, much as it pains her ecologically to say it, Huth admits that their kids would like to be able to ride motorcycles on the beach.

John Mirales had a bright smile as he and his wife Donna prepared to grill some chicken. Their reason for choosing Dockweiler was different: it was the only beach RV park where they managed to get a reservation. They had found that it sometimes takes as long as seven months to get one at a beach.

But they're happy here. They've been to other beaches in California, like Santa Barbara and Carpinteria, which don't have the hook-ups Dockweiler has. When I asked Donna for a final word on what the coast means to her, she said, "Freedom." I'm sure most people here at Dockweiler would happily agree with her. ■

**T**HE HISTORY OF THE MALIBU coast is dominated by an unending battle between those who want to preserve it for themselves and those who want to preserve it for all. Drive by on the Pacific Coast Highway, and you see high walls guarding the sanded gentry.

One gorgeous morning, to get a better look at what all the fuss is about, I hiked the freshly carved 2.5-mile Corral Canyon Trail, through hills frosted with pink bush mallow, to a bluff overlooking Corral Canyon/Dan Blocker State Beach.

Below, cars zoomed up and down the highway, tracing a long sweep of sand edged with white foam. In the distance Point Dume jutted into the blue expanse, forming a horseshoe bay that shelters Paradise Cove and the longest sweep of untrammeled beach left in Los Angeles County for a beachcomber to stroll upon. To the south a celebrity's palm-shaded citadel sat on a bluff overlooking the famed Malibu Colony, with commanding views of Santa Monica Bay and the city skyline.

I snagged a picnic table at the nearby Malibu Seafood Café and was busy wolfing down an ahi burger and watching a pod of dolphins cavort just beyond the wave surge when someone tapped me on the shoulder. "May we join you?" asked a woman in a floppy sun hat and oversized shades.

"Sure," I said.

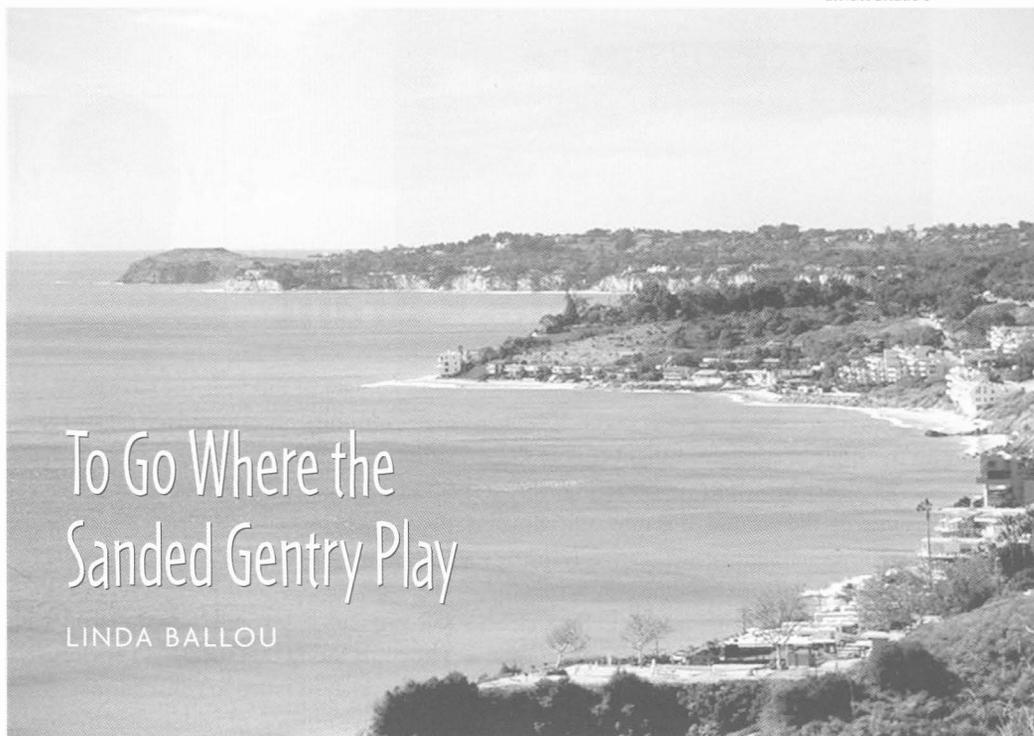
The skin on her face was taut. Her plastic surgeon must have had a sense of humor, because her lips were plumped in the center and carved into a permanent smile.

"They just opened up a coastal access to my beach," she said to her companion. "For years we've been fighting, but they finally won." She sighed.

"Really? Who are they?" her friend asked.

"Busybodies—people who are jealous of us."

I kept my peace. The "busybodies" she was referring to are a plethora of environmental groups and public agencies that include Heal the Bay, the Coastal Conservancy, and Access for All. The new coastal access is by the house of David Geffen, co-founder of DreamWorks studio. Back in 1983 he agreed to allow a path to the beach in exchange for permits to build his home on Pacific Coast Highway at Carbon Beach.



It took 22 years, including three years of litigation, to get him to keep his word to the pesky public.

The public trust doctrine holds that the shores of the sea are common to all mankind. The California Coastal Act of 1976 was passed to make sure the public can reach those shores. In Malibu, the understanding between landowners and visitors is that anyone may enjoy the beach up to the mean high tide line (as required by law), but that sand above that line—the definition of which is elusive and has been subject to much litigation—belongs to those paying millions of dollars to live on the shore. What is not commonly known is that there are easements along the beach that allow the public to stretch out on dry sand and relax without the threat of being washed away. Malibu homeowners have repeatedly been required to remove "No Trespassing" signs put up in an attempt to keep the public off that sand.

Getting up to go, I said to the two women: "I enjoyed sharing my table with you. I think I'll check out my new beach." It was my pleasure.

Malibu turf battles go way back. Feisty Mae Rindge, who owned most of Malibu in the early 1900s, till her death in 1941, tried to stop the Southern Pacific Railroad from

laying track through prime coastal land. An obscure law stated that only one railroad could operate in an area, so she built her own, the Hueneme, Malibu, and Port Los Angeles Railway, to deliver her cattle to the pier she built. It operated until the 1920s. Now its route is mostly developed.

The Rindges' daughter and son-in-law built the Adamson House, a Moorish-influenced mansion that sits on a 13-acre property beside Malibu Lagoon. It is now a National Historic Site, open to the public, as are its lush gardens. Today platoons of pelicans fly low in a V-wedge over the lagoon, stopping to rest as they travel the Pacific Flyway between Alaska and Mexico. Children squeal at the shore while parents chatter in a cacophony of international accents and surfers sift in and out of cresting waves.

On the way home I stopped at the new coastal accessway, midway between Topanga and Malibu Canyons, and discovered a long strand of powdery white sand. I took a solitary stroll on the beach lined with shoulder-to-shoulder upscale homes. Listening to the waves, I remembered what the Chumash called the village that existed on this shore: "Where the surf speaks loudly." ■

*Linda Ballou is a freelance writer who lives in Sherman Oaks.*



## Reprieve for Black Brant



**L**IKE SPRING, FALL IN THE BAY AREA is marked by subtleties. A slight change in the angle of sunlight, a slight chill in the air, a few dry brown leaves skittering around on the ground. It is now officially fall. A seasonal sign I eagerly await is the sound of geese honking their way across the sky toward their winter homes in the Central Valley and coastal bays. It is not unusual in Oakland to wake up on an autumn morning to hear geese in the air.

Where do these geese live in the summer? Way up north in Canada and Alaska, and as far north as Wrangel Island in Russia. They breed and molt in and around lakes and ponds, fly to warmer climes before their food is lost to ice, and return to the Arctic in spring to start the cycle over again.

The smallest and fastest of the geese is the Pacific black brant. On its southward migration along the Pacific Flyway it travels up to 3,400 miles nonstop from Alaska to Baja California in just two and a half days.

Each spring and summer, about 30 percent of the world's population of 110,000 Pacific black brant gather around Teshekpuk Lake, a high arctic wetland complex on Alaska's North Slope, within the 23.5-million-acre National Petroleum Reserve—Alaska. Up to 90,000 geese molt in this area and up to 46,000 caribou use it for calving and migration.

Because of its enormous importance to waterfowl, as well as caribou and other wildlife, this area has been accorded special protection. In 1977, the Carter administration designated 1.7 million acres of the wetlands around the lake as the Teshekpuk Lake Special Area. In 1983, the Reagan administration closed 200,000 acres north of the lake because of its value to molting brant and other geese. Since then, human presence has been allowed there only for scientific research and exploration.

In January of this year, the George W. Bush administration approved oil and gas drilling within about 500,000 acres of the Special Area. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) scheduled a lease sale for September 27. Fortunately for the geese, the U.S. District Court for Alaska stopped the sale two days before bids were to be opened. The court found that the BLM's environmental analysis failed to consider the cumulative impacts of widespread drilling.

This is a welcome reprieve, and we can hope that it's the end of a foolish plan.

Studies have shown that molting brant are highly sensitive to disturbances, especially to aircraft. At the sound of a helicopter, they attempt to escape; being flightless at this stage, they may try to walk overland to other water bodies, leaving their food source behind and exposing themselves to predators.

Oil drilling in the brants' summer home would come as a double whammy for the species, which is already being threatened by global warming. No place on earth is seeing the effects of climate change more dramatically than the high Arctic. According to a report by the U.S. Geological Survey's (USGS) Alaska Science Center, climate change seems to be driving higher rates of coastline erosion and higher storm surges that intrude into arctic lakes and make them salty, robbing geese of freshwater habitat.

"The Pacific Flyway is but a corridor connecting the wetlands of the West," naturalist and author Peter Steinhart has written. In California we have been doing what we can to help the brant and other migrating waterfowl. "What you do in California," said a researcher at the USGS Alaska Science Center, "affects birds up here and has a synergistic effect on the brant population. Many California bays are important to the brant—Humboldt

Bay especially so because of its abundant eelgrass beds."

Brant are interdependent with eelgrass. They graze it, fertilize it, and keep it healthy. "When eelgrass is scarce in winter, fewer brant nest and raise young the next summer, and the population declines," said the scientist. Other species that rely on the habitat are also affected, including salmon, crabs, and myriad smaller species. This is one reason among many the Coastal Conservancy has been involved in efforts to restore eelgrass in many of California's coastal bays and estuaries.

The brant population had been declining during three years of El Niño conditions that caused erosion and saltwater intrusion in bays used by brant in Mexico and California. One heavy consequence was damage to eelgrass. Last winter, conditions were favorable to eelgrass and the brant population rose slightly.

The Teshekpuk Lake Special Area is especially vital to molting brant. It has few predators and its shore habitats provide nutrients for feather growth. Some birds fly up to 1,000 miles from southern Alaska, Russia, and Canada to molt there.

If El Niños become more frequent, as is being predicted because of climate change, the birds may breed less often and skip flying to wintering areas in Mexico, wintering in California instead. The importance of the high Arctic lake, and of California bays and eelgrass, will keep rising.

We hope that someday we will have a national government that takes climate change as seriously as California and many other states now do. I worry about the geese's future, and my own. We can ill afford to lose a harbinger of spring and fall.

*Sam Schuchat is the executive officer of the Coastal Conservancy.*

# COASTAL CONSERVANCY NEWS

## RANGLANDS RESTORED ALONG ESTERO AMERICANO

**P**ROJECTS ON THREE Sonoma County ranches, to begin this fall, will improve water quality and restore habitat in the upper watershed of the Estero Americano. The Gold Ridge Resource Conservation District (RCD) will use \$250,000 awarded by the Conservancy to remove old tires, grade gullies and install riprap and other erosion control devices, install livestock exclusion fences, remove invasive species, and plant native grasses, shrubs, and trees. The work will affect about 750 acres near the town of Valley Ford. The RCD has been granted access to the ranches and the landowners have agreed to maintain the improvements.

Estero Americano, an estuary that flows into the ocean a few miles south of Bodega Bay, is one of the most naturally diverse areas on the northern California coast, rich in wildlife, migratory waterfowl, and wetland habitats. The Estero watershed is bordered by ranchland on both sides and suffers from erosion and sedimentation caused by livestock and ranch operations over the years. Restoration projects affecting 5,100 acres on eight other area ranches were funded by the Conservancy in 2002.

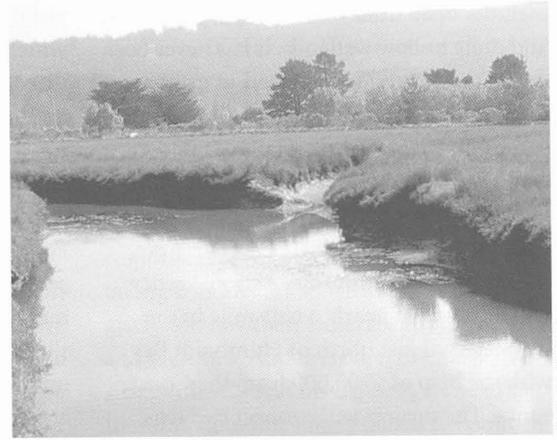
## WETLANDS RESTORATION, IMPROVED ACCESS FOR HUMBOLDT BAY AREA

**T**HE CONSERVANCY HAS approved four grants, totaling \$2,446,000, to acquire and restore wetlands in Humboldt Bay's Arcata Baylands, purchase two properties on the North Spit, and close a gap in the Coastal Trail north of the bay.

The Conservancy and the City of Arcata have worked together for many years to preserve and restore wetlands along Humboldt Bay, which is renowned for supporting many bird species and is one of California's most important stopovers for migratory shorebirds and waterfowl. Arcata Baylands, a 557-acre expanse along the northern shore of the bay, contains five creeks and two estuarine sloughs that provide habitat for tidewater goby and coho, chinook, and steelhead salmon, all federally listed species. The Baylands area is zoned for agricultural use but is increasingly coming under development pressure.

With \$921,000 approved by the Conservancy in June, the City will acquire 68 acres in the Jacoby Creek/Gannon Slough and McDaniel Slough areas of the Baylands, adding to the 489 acres already purchased. A

portion of the funds will be used to restore or enhance 82 acres, both on the newly acquired lands and on existing City lands. Estuary channels will be expanded and reestablished via tidegate removal or modification, levees will be removed to restore floodplain and riparian forest, livestock will be fenced out and native plants installed, and ponds for waterfowl



CITY OF ARCATA

Arcata Baylands

will be created. The City plans to develop guided walks, birding opportunities, photography, and nature study projects in these areas.

This purchase will bring the total acreage protected by local, state, or federal agencies in and around Humboldt Bay to more than 1,300 acres, greatly increasing habitat connectivity.

Two more Conservancy grants approved in June, totaling \$825,000, will help preserve public access and restore dune-plant habitat on two pieces of property on the North Spit of Humboldt Bay. Friends of the Dunes received \$525,000 to buy 38 acres of the 59-acre Stamps property in the town of Manila, south of the Ma-l-el Dunes, which were acquired by the Center for Natural Lands Management in 2003 with Conservancy funds and later transferred to the Bureau of Land Management and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. This property provides convenient access to the beach on the North Spit. The purchase includes the Stamps family's main residence, which Friends of the Dunes plans to convert to a visitor and interpretive center.

The other grant, \$300,000 for North Spit land acquisition, went to the Manila Community Services District to purchase the 54-acre Celestre property. The land will be added to the Manila Dunes Recreation Area, immediately to the south, bringing a total of 155 acres of dunes under protection for public access. The property is part of the North Spit's ancient dune system and



ED UEBER

Estero Americano

includes open dunes, a remnant dune forest, and dune hollow wetlands. It has never been developed for residential use, but eight acres might have served an industrial function at some point. The District plans to build a trail system from the recreation area onto the Celestre property and to the ocean.

In the fourth project approved in June, the Redwood Community Action Agency will fill a gap of nearly a half-mile in the Coastal Trail just north of Humboldt Bay with the help of \$700,000 from the Conservancy. The project will connect two segments of the Hammond Trail, closing the so-called "Hole in the Hammond" by constructing two new trails: a riparian interpretive path for pedestrians only along Widow White Creek, and a paved year-round trail that bypasses the creek, for bicyclists and horseback riders as well as hikers.

## MALIBU LAGOON RESTORATION TO BEGIN

**A**FTER MORE THAN 15 YEARS OF planning, the restoration of Malibu Lagoon is scheduled to begin late this year or early next year. Much of the work, funded by more than \$4.1 million approved by the Conservancy in June, is designed to improve water quality and circulation in the lagoon, where stagnant water collects pollutants and promotes algal growth.

Polluted water flowing into the 31-acre lagoon from Malibu Creek has degraded habitat. During the rainy season the berm across the lagoon's mouth is sometimes breached, contaminating the water of nearby Malibu Lagoon State Beach, locally known as Surfriider Beach, which is highly popular for both surfing and swimming. Along with improvements to the lagoon itself, the State Water Resources Control Board and the Conservancy, in partnership with Heal the Bay, the City of Malibu, State Parks, and the Resource Conservation District of the Santa Monica Mountains, are working to reduce pollution in the creek.

In the first phase of work, State Parks will move the public parking lot at Malibu Lagoon State Beach closer to the park entrance, adjacent to the Pacific Coast Highway. The new parking lot will include permeable paving and a low-impact stormwater treatment system to minimize

pollution from runoff, which currently flows directly into the lagoon, and an interpretive viewing area for students and other educational groups.

In the second phase, State Parks will create about two acres of wetlands on the former parking lot site, dredge silt from the lagoon to improve water circulation, create three nesting islands for birds, replace invasive plants with native species, improve a trail along the lagoon's perimeter, and install various interpretive features. The RCD will use \$550,000 of the approved funds toward the final design and monitoring for both phases of work. The Conservancy received the bulk of the funding—over \$3.8 million—for the restoration from the State Water Resources Control Board.

In 2003, Heal the Bay initiated a lengthy series of meetings among scientists and local residents that culminated in the development of the restoration plan that is guiding the proposed improvements. The last major restoration of the lagoon was done in 1983, when State Parks excavated three channels to reintroduce tidal flows.

## WATER TRAIL IN THE WORKS FOR SAN FRANCISCO BAY

**T**HE WALKING AND BICYCLING public has easy access to much of the San Francisco Bay shoreline, thanks to the Bay Trail. Now waterside access is about to be improved for kayakers and other boaters in small non-motorized craft. Planning is under way for the Bay Area Water Trail, mandated by the Legislature in 2005 at the urging of Bay Access, a nonprofit organization that works to protect and increase Bay access for small non-motorized boats.

The "water trail," will, in effect, be a network of designated sites ("trailheads") where people can safely launch and land. The initial trailheads will be chosen from existing launch sites; new sites will be added



Potential launch sites for the Bay Area Water Trail include Grand Avenue Marina (top) on Alameda Island and China Camp (above) in Marin County.

over time. Trailheads will be linked by signage, and a trail guidebook, maps, and other educational materials and programs will spread the word about the trail's existence, help trail users plan trips, and inform them about safety and proper behavior in sensitive wildlife areas.

A water trail plan is being developed jointly by the Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC), the Coastal Conservancy, and the Association of Bay Area Governments. BCDC will submit the plan to the Legislature in 2008. Recommendations and guidelines are now being worked out in meetings of a steering committee that represents boaters, resource managers, and groups and agencies with responsibilities for navigational safety, wildlife, and habitat. More meetings are scheduled in early 2007. Anyone wishing to attend or learn more about the Water Trail can contact Sara Polgar at (415) 352-3645 or sarap@bcdca.gov.

PHOTOS THIS PAGE: SARA POLGAR



## AN ENCOURAGING HISTORY

*Return of the Condor: The Race to Save Our Largest Bird from Extinction*, by John Moir. Lyons Press, Guilford, CT, 2006. 272 pp., \$24.95 (hard cover).

LATE ON A SPRING DAY in 1987, field biologist Jan Hamber made a critical, and impossibly difficult, decision: she set about taking the last free-flying California condor into captivity. Now all 27 California condors in existence were in human hands, subject to human plans and ambitions. In *Return of the Condor*, journalist John Moir, who covered the condor recovery effort for magazines and newspapers for years, tells the story of that decision and its consequences. He tells the story of that last free bird, a young male named AC9, and of many others of his species. He tells the story, too, of biologists and of conservationists—who notoriously did not see eye to eye on what the future should hold for *Gymnogyps californianus*.

The condor, observes Moir, is a “mirror reflecting human bias.” He demonstrates this idea colorfully, weaving together history, biology, politics, popular culture, and the stories and experiences of players in the long fight to bring the condor back from the edge of extinction. We learn about human knowledge of the condor—from the first written record in 1602, to the first type specimen (the exemplar from which the description of a new species is made) in 1792, to Lewis and Clark’s encounters with the “Vulture of the Columbia” some ten years later. Not only did the two explorers make the first detailed field observations of the bird, but they also used guns to kill condors. “From that time on,” Moir notes, “rifles—as well as poisonous lead bullets consumed by condors when eating hunter-shot game—became major factors in the condor’s vanishing numbers.”

For European settlers, condors inspired revulsion. They were “an uncomfortable reminder that despite Western culture’s

attempts to bend nature to our will, we all die.” Native Americans had a somewhat different view. For them, the condor—known by many bands as Thunderbird—possessed mythic powers. Nonetheless, they also kept condors captive, and used them in ritual sacrifice.

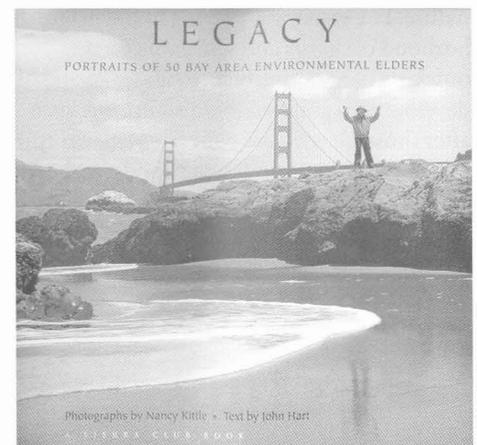
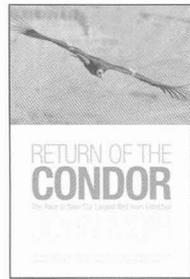
As late as the 1880s, if a person wanted to know about condors, the most useful reference remained the journals of Lewis and Clark. Not until the first decade of the 20th century did condors become the object of careful, if still sporadic, scientific inquiry. In the mid-1930s, an official estimate of a population of only five or so dozen birds sounded an alarm (the true number was probably closer to 200), and in 1937 the 1,200-acre Sisquoc Condor Sanctuary was established in Los Padres National Forest. Meanwhile, political battle lines were being drawn, as the need for more active measures to keep the condor from extinction became clear. On one side were those pushing for hands-on management, including radio-tagging and captive breeding; on the other were conservationists who argued for protecting the lands that these great birds frequented.

In the end, both approaches proved necessary, and ultimately the captive-breeding program was launched in the early 1980s. Moir does an excellent job of telling this contentious, and fascinating, story. He goes with us into the field to watch a condor being taken into captivity with a cannon net, to Los Angeles Zoo to watch the first captive-bred egg hatch, and right into condor nests to watch chicks and mothers interact. Step by step, we see the captive-breeding program grow—often faltering, as miscalculations, mistakes, or simple lack of knowledge lead to experimentation and improvements. We see new understandings arise, as of the deadly effect lead has on condors, and what has been done in

response. We witness the crime of hunters taking condors for sport. We hear biologists’ stories—their frustrations, dreams, and victories. And there are, of course, the stories of AC9 and his cohorts, some of them tragic, some manipulated for political gain, and some simply inspiring.

Toward the end of the book, Moir quotes biologist Kenneth Brower from a quarter-century ago: “When man and condor meet today, it is with a glance of mutual appraisal, each to see whether the other is yet extinct.” *Return of the Condor* paints a heartening, if still hesitant, picture of that relation between human and bird. Under the recovery program, the birds’ numbers have grown from a desperate low of 22 to nearly 300, and more than 125 condors now fly free over the western United States and Baja California. One of those is AC9, the quintessential condor, who 15 years after his capture, having sired 14 offspring, was sent back into the skies, where he is finally free to soar.

—Anne Canright



## BAY BATTLE VETERANS

*Legacy: Portraits of 50 Bay Area Environmental Elders*, text by John Hart, photos by Nancy Kittle. University of California Press, Berkeley, 2006. 160 pp., \$29.95 (hard cover).

THE PORTRAIT GALLERY of gray-haired conservation battle veterans in this volume reminds of the enormous

power citizens have if they come together for a common cause with intelligence and a positive spirit, especially when they are in tune with the spirit of their time. The 50 people profiled in *Legacy* include some who are known and admired in the San Francisco Bay Area, some who are nationally known, and some whose presence in these pages may be surprising because they worked quietly and humbly and remain little-known. Focused on these individuals, the book tells stories of major battles fought in recent decades, mostly for San Francisco Bay and its environs. There is a problem with such a gallery, however, because so many citizens played important parts. A reader may wonder why some have been omitted while others were included even though their work was mostly outside the San Francisco Bay region. Some did not live long enough to be interviewed and photographed, but they are missing even in the index. The large format (10" by 10") suggests a coffee-table book, and certainly there's a lot of material in it to feed a good conservation-minded kaffeeklatsch.

—RG

## A NEED FOR NATURE

*Last Child in the Woods*, by Richard Louv.  
Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, NC, 2006.  
336 pp., \$24.95 (hard cover), \$13.95 (paper).

Everyone over 30 has childhood memories of playing outdoors, somewhere in nature. For me, it was playing in the neighborhood orchards and vineyards on the outskirts of San Jose, before suburban development gobbled them all up. But even after those places were gone, we went camping on the coast or in the redwoods, and had a huge yard and a park down the street.

Such experiences are disappearing for many of today's children, however, writes Richard Louv in this thought-provoking book. He explains factors that have contributed to that loss, and their consequences.

Kids don't play outdoors much anymore. Why not? Partly because of the lure of computer games, partly because our cities and suburbs are not built in ways conducive to safe walking or bike riding, partly because we have scared ourselves into thinking that parks and outdoor areas are unsafe, and partly because we have convinced ourselves that by rushing from one activity to the next we are more successful, and our kids will be more likely to succeed. Louv argues that the opposite is true: that time spent at ease in a natural setting is highly productive because it helps people relax and encourages more creative thinking.

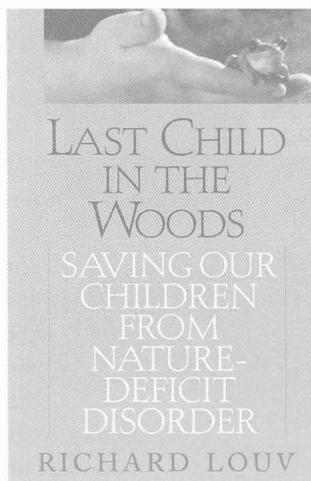
Children who don't play outdoors and experience nature in a positive way are at risk of diminished awareness and a dulling of the senses. Being divorced from nature has led to children having increased anxiety levels and less ability to focus attention. Louv argues convincingly that children are healthier and happier when they are exposed to natural environments and allowed to play in and experience them. He cites many studies indicating that children calm down when they go outdoors, and develop more acute sensory perception and

observation skills. In many instances, those who had experienced and appreciated nature demonstrated more creative thinking and problem solving.

For those over 30, this book is a bit like a bad report card. It is ironic to me that many of us who got excited about backpacking and eating granola in the 1970s' back-to-nature movement have so often decided in our professional lives to commercialize nature and separate our kids from it, while at the same time reminiscing about how much fun we used to have outdoors, getting dirty and doing nothing. We have successfully dismantled many institutions that promoted more healthy lifestyles for children. We have allowed public schools to eliminate recess, and to close down on-site cafeterias in favor of pre-packaged, pre-cooked meals. We divorce our children from nature at great risk to their physical and mental health, and to the health of our communities.

This book has a very serious message, and I have found myself greatly affected by it. Without new generations of children to love our wild lands and natural areas, how will we have new generations of professionals—biologists and the like—to care for them in the future?

—Joan Cardellino

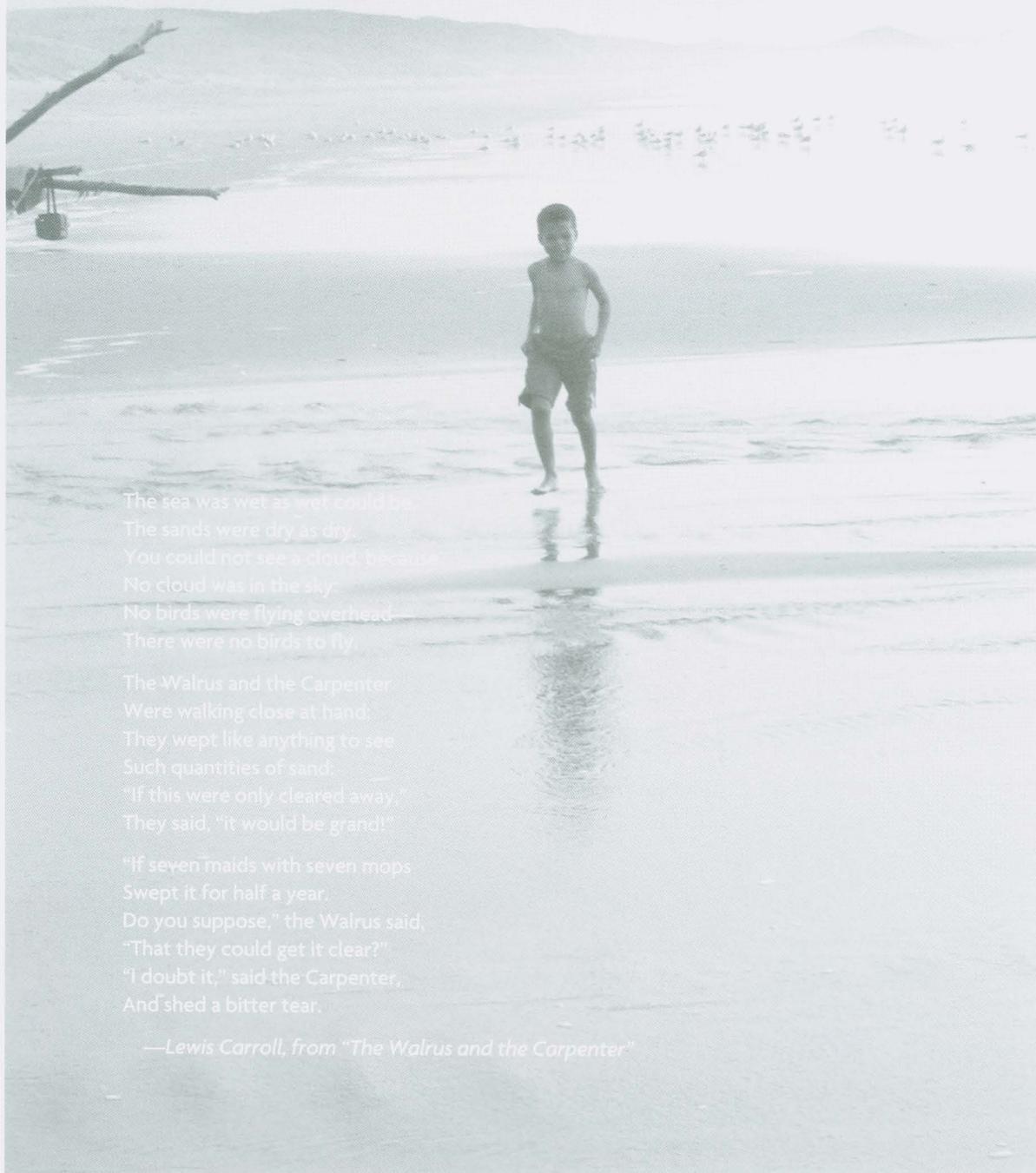


### Editor:

I enjoyed reading "A Fishy Story" in your last issue [Spring 2006]. Overall, I found the article excellent. I believe the author made two mistakes in stating that "white tuna is usually used as a synonym for albacore or bonita." Various fish in the family *Scombridae* are commonly known as bonito. To my knowledge, none are known as bonita. Bonito, most often *Sarda chilien-*

*sis* here in the eastern Pacific, are intermediate in size and characteristics between mackerel and tuna. The flesh of bonito is dark red, oily, and delicious. In sushi restaurants it is sold as *katsuo*. White tuna, known as *shiro-maguro* in sushi restaurants, is usually albacore. Please keep publishing articles about fish.

Kevin Stockmann  
San Rafael, CA



The sea was wet as wet could be,  
The sands were dry as dry.  
You could not see a cloud, because  
No cloud was in the sky;  
No birds were flying overhead—  
There were no birds to fly.

The Walrus and the Carpenter  
Were walking close at hand;  
They wept like anything to see  
Such quantities of sand:  
“If this were only cleared away,”  
They said, “it would be grand!”

“If seven maids with seven mops  
Swept it for half a year,  
Do you suppose,” the Walrus said,  
“That they could get it clear?”  
“I doubt it,” said the Carpenter,  
And shed a bitter tear.

—Lewis Carroll, from “The Walrus and the Carpenter”



# Coastal Conservancy

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