

The Explorers Club

Northern California Chapter

September 2002

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"Outer Adventure, Inner Journey" Tales of a Love Affair with the Sea

Dr. Ugo Conti is an electronic engineer, an oceanographer and a geophysicist by training at UC Berkeley and Italy's Rome University. Since his youth he has had an intense affection for the sea. He will speak of this.

His is not an idle affair. On one occasion he crossed the Pacific, alone, on a sailing inflatable of his own design—in record time despite some shark attacks.

His last 'voyage' was in the engineering world. He designed a somewhat revolutionary craft that has taken

he and his wife/companion on long cruises in Alaska, Canada and Mexico.

Dr. Conti was born in Rome just before World War II. He founded a company in 1983 and sold it in 2000. While Ugo still has a 'day job', he is spending most of his time designing a power ocean-going boat for breaking records!

Listen to him sing the praises of his "Aria", appropriately at the St. Francis Yacht Club.



Date Friday, 27 September 2002

Place: St. Francis Yacht Club
The Marina
San Francisco

Time: 6:30 pm, no-host cocktails
7:30 pm, dinner

Cost: \$55 (by Sep 23)
\$60 (if posted afterwards)

Reach Lesley at 510 527-7899
or

<lewing@coastal.ca.gov>

Reservation Form on page 5



In June It Was Our Chapter Picnic at Angel Island

The day started gloomy as a tight-knit group gathered in Berkeley to take the Cordell Explorer across the Bay to Angel Island. Others persevered via Tiburon. Bundled, they wondered if The City's fog was to last.

By afternoon the weather was glorious. Good food and drink; hiking and biking to the vistas beyond; bocce ball on the green.



Our picnic view onto Angel Island's cove.



Chapter Chair Ewing, enjoying

Editor Langan concentrating on bocce



The Schmieders and Hicks pose.



Diggles at the helm
Patterson & Estey navigating (ready to tour, right)



Origin of Civilized Man in the Americas

A note to fellow Explorers from
Edward S. Ross, FN'79, California Academy of Sciences,
and his partner, Sandra Miller Ross, Health & Habitat, Inc. (501-c-3).

"We have come upon an incredible discovery that will change history of the Americas. Our good friend and colleague in Ecuador, geologist and naturalist Alexander Hirtz, has located an ancient Valdivian city, and discovered the inhabitants had a pictographic system of writing several millennia B.C., which predates other Amerindian groups. This is the first 'writing' in the Americas— making it a true 'civilization'."

This pre-Columbian culture settled around Coastal Ecuador and thrived from 3500 BC to 1500 BC. Some Valdivian ceremonial sites have previously been excavated. However, Alex's site on the Equator proves to be more than just for ceremonies. There is an interesting, pyramid-shaped hill he refers to as 'Astronomer's Hill', where he has unearthed hundreds of stone plates. These are very important and have been interpreted as describing Valdivian theories of relationship between Earth and heavenly celestial bodies. This makes these people the first true astronomers in America, forerunners to all later peoples.

With few exceptions, geometric ideograms of the Valdivians found here have no up or down. The diagrams have an anotropic orientation, allowing them to be turned upside-down without changing the position of various elements. This brings up the concept of "as above, so below"— such as mirroring astronomy to agriculture. The cosmogram's symbols are strikingly similar to ones found a few centuries later in Mesoamerica and Peru, suggesting proof of this Valdivian common ancestry. There are many other fascinating revelations, some already figured out, many awaiting discovery and interpretation— perhaps by you. The whole site has yet to be surveyed. We are in the process of putting together a team and hope to have your input and participation.

There will be a field trip in a few months; we will be the first group to know where the site is! Do plan to come for 10 or 17 days in Ecuador, including several days in the field at Valdivia, in the Western rainforest, and at monkey canyon. A private visit and lunch with the president of University of San Francisco do Quito (co-founded by Alex) and special tours of cultural and archeological treasures are being arranged. There will be an extension trip to our Amazonian rainforest Butterfly Lodge, which you have heard about at various Explorer Club meetings. Alex can set up a boat trip around the Galapagos and/or take mountaineers to one or more of Ecuador's magnificent (presumably quiescent) volcanoes and rafters to primitive white-water.

Trip dates will be chosen by the first 6 people who sign up (415) 383-6130 or <healthhab@igc.org> – so be among them. We'll keep the price competitive; final cost will depend on the itinerary chosen by the group. We will probably do two itineraries, so those helping at the site can spend meaningful time there. We need all the help we can get— this is your chance to get in on the beginning of a discovery as important to America as those around the Mediterranean and in the Middle East are to European ancestry. In fact you may be surprised when the origin of the Valdivians is finalized.

The Rosses ask, "Do you want to be in on this?" If so, call or email.



Steve Van Beek dropped by...

Writer and Filmmaker, Steve Van Beek, who lives in Bangkok and works throughout Southeast Asia, visited the Bay Area, but time prevented scheduling a lecture. He did meet with several members, hosted by Chair Lesley. They managed to glimpse his video of kayaking the headwaters of the Mekong and a discussion of his new book on this great river: "Silithering South".

See his web site: <www.stevevanbeek.com>



Van Beek, Isherwoods, Ewing, Langan

Support San Francisco's Olympic Bid!

Mort Beebe invites members to join the Bay Area Sports Organizing Committee (BASOC) for a Champagne Celebration acknowledging his new book, "*San Francisco, City by the Bay*" and to support the San Francisco Bay Area 2012 Olympic Bid.

Thursday, September 26th,
5:30-8:00 p.m.
the place
Rooftop Terrace,
Hills Plaza Condominiums
75 Folsom Street
(at Spear and Embarcadero)
San Francisco, California

You can view Beebe's photographic prints on display in 21 windows of The Gap, Inc.'s newest Headquarters facility, from a rooftop perspective under the glowing lights of the Bay Bridge. Each image is not only a testimony to the alluring beauty of San Francisco but to one of its premiere world-renowned photographers and commercial institutions.

Mort will be available to sign his newly released book, *San Francisco, City by the Bay*. A limited edition of spectacular, signed SF 2012 Bridge to the Future posters, designed by celebrated Bay Area graphic artists, will also be available to purchase.

Join Olympians, community leaders, celebrities and BASOC members for this memorable fundraising event. A limited number of event tickets are available at \$50 per person. For a \$100 donation, including your entry fee, you will receive 1) a copy of Mr. Beebe's new book, 2) Primo Angeli's Olympic poster and 3) a Bridge Builder pin, all valued at \$140.

Purchase a ticket package online at www.mortonbeebe.com/basoc/ or call (415) 362.3530. Event proceeds are donated to BASOC 2012, a non-profit 501 (c)(3) organization (Tax ID #94-3052945.) For more information about the San Francisco Bay Area's bid for the 2012 Olympic Games, visit their website at www.basoc2012.org.

South Pacific's Elsa

In May, Elsa Roscoe completed her 15th annual journey as a volunteer in support of the Bishop Museum's archaeological expeditions to Polynesian islands. These expeditions ranged the complete width of the Pacific Ocean from east to west including the Cook Islands, the Society Islands, the Marquesas, and the Hawai'ian Islands to Easter Island.

Much of her work was done on Huahine Island northeast of Tahiti. There, her group, under the direction of the eminent anthropologist, Dr. Yoshiko Sinoto, was involved in the excavation and restoration of religious and ceremonial sites (maraes) of the ancient population.

This was no simple task: locating sites, clearing dense tropical growth, carefully digging one-meter test pits 10 centimeters at a time, screening the soil for midden, and recording precise locations of artifacts; all this was done in the hot sun and sometimes rainy weather.

The final job was to plant tiare Tahiti trees on Mata'ire'a Hill, an important historical site, to mark the end of the project.



A Thank You from A Far Our Spring Auction and Sale Support



"May, 2002

"Dear Explorers Club:

"First of all, I want to express my highest respects to you. Thank you very much for bringing aid from such a far-away place and helping us with our studies and all aspects of life. Thank you again.

"Next, I will tell you about myself. I grew up in the countryside and my family's circumstances were very difficult, but with the support of relatives and friends, and the concern of my teachers, I entered the first grade of Junior Middle School. For various reasons, I was going to have to drop out. Just at this time, you extended your kind hands to me, at the hardest time of my life. I see you as my mothers and fathers. From now on, I will certainly study hard and repay you. My education level is still limited, so if I have any faults please give my your guidance. Thank you.

"I wish you success in all things, always. Tashi Delek!

"Your daughter,

Jiangyang Quxi"

(student, Litang Junior Middle School,
Kham, Sichuan Province, Tibet)

—Dana Isherwood

Musings from the Chair

Dear Northern California Explorers:

Welcome back. I hope everyone had a great summer, with lots of exploration, research, learning and fun. I've sent several papers off to the publishers and, if I can just get one small *Proceedings* finished, I will be able to see the surface of my desk.

Eve Iverson, spent part of the summer in Ghana and went on a shopping spree for the chapter. We now have a number of treasurers that we can raffle, or save for the next big event and silent auction. And, we still have some of the Afghan jewelry that Bonita Chamberlin provided to the chapter. If you were at the Angel Island picnic, you saw it there; it will make another appearance at one of the dinners this year. If you have a special urge for something spectacular, that will benefit a good cause, I could also try to arrange for a traveling jewelry show.

The Angel Island picnic was again a real treat. It is never the same twice. This year we huddled around a small box of hot coffee, searched our bags for extra items of warm clothes that we might have overlooked the last two times we checked and just when we thought we would turn into icicles, the sun broke through the fog and the day was marvelous. We ate, we hiked, we played bocce, we talked, and we had fun. Most of us were transported to and from the island under the safe captainage of past-chair Bob Schmieder, aboard the newly refurbished *Cordell Explorer*, so the picnic became a full day affair. I hope



everyone else had as good a time as I did.

Finally, it is now time to start planning for 2003 and beyond. The chapter's functions run on odd cycles. Our program year is from fall to spring, following the traditional academic calendar. The administration year runs from January to December, on a normal annual calendar. My term as chapter chair will end this December, and I think everyone is getting a bit tired of listening to me at meetings. It is time for new blood and new energy.

To ease this transition, I am hosting a brunch on Saturday, October 19th, to talk about the direction of the chapter and to seek new volunteers who want to get involved. Everyone is welcome; just please let me know ahead of time so I can decide whether there is room for everyone in my house, or if I should move the meeting to a local restaurant or café. Mark the date, and let me know you want to attend so I give you directions to the meeting location. In the mean time, I'll be at the next few meetings and continue writing dulcet messages till the ball drops in Times Square.

—Lesley Ewing, FN'93

Evolution @ The Explorers Club

We are embarking upon a new season of listening about exciting explorations and adventures. Steve Smith has again filled our schedule with a diverse and intriguing array of interesting speakers. Are we not fortunate to live with such a bounty at hand?

I reflect that we are a bit spoiled, for we have at hand world-class lecturers who give of themselves to our small group for an evening filled with the enthusiasm of their tales and followed by the opportunity for questions and discussion. This is truly a unique opportunity each month.

Come; enjoy; participate. You will leave a more learned person!

—Lee Langan, FN'99

The August issue of The Explorers Club National Newsletter included a review of our chapter's activities. The associated photo of Rusty and Dan Liebowitz, with Richard Wiese, was mislabeled 'David'— to err is human (but it was submitted correctly...).

Please make your checks out to The Explorers Club, Northern California Chapter,

and mail with this form to:

Lesley Ewing
The Explorers Club
1679 Tacoma Avenue
Berkeley, CA 94707-1826

NOTE: Steve will be away so respond to Lesley for this meeting!

Please reserve _____ spaces for Sep 27, 2002, at The St. Francis Yacht Club. Cost: \$55 each by Sept 23; \$60 if postmarked thereafter (contact Lesley at <lewing@coastal.ca.gov> or 510 527-7899 to assure a reservation).

Name: _____

Address (if changed): _____

Guests: _____

meal choice: (please circle)

meat

fish

vegetarian

Northern California 2002-2003 Event Calendar

(Mark the dates! Future venues to be determined)

September 27, 2002 St Francis Yacht Club	Ugo Conti	"Outer Adventure, Inner Journey"
October 25, 2002	Reid Dennis	"Chasing the Ghost of Amelia Earhart"
December 6, 2002	Chris McKay	"From Antarctica to Mars: The Search for Life"
January 31, 2003	Tom Joyce	"Hajj - The Journey of a Lifetime"
February 28, 2003	Anne Keiser	"Sir Edmund Hillary and the People of Everest"
March 28, 2003	Jim Allan	"In the Deep and In the Dirt: A Look at California's Maritime Archaeology"
April 25, 2003	Martin A. Pomerantz	"Astrophysics in Antarctica: Observing the Universe from the South Pole"
May 30, 2003	Terry O'Brien	"Fair God and Feathered Serpents".
June, 2002	Chapter Picnic	

Please note venues with care. The September 27 meeting is at
San Francisco's St. Francis Yacht Club!

(When copying the URL addresses be sure to keep them all on one line; most are also available as links on our Chapter web site.)

September 2002

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