

The Explorers Club

Northern California Chapter

February 2006

Chair: Lee Langan
415 567-8089
lee@langan.net
Vice Chair: Alan Nichols
415 789-9348
ahnichols@att.net
Treasurer: Anders Jepsen
925 254-3079
ajviking@aol.com
Secretary: Stephen E. Smith
Webmaster: Mike Diggles
Newsletter: Lee Langan

Web site: <http://www.diggles.com/ec/>



James McLane John Rutherford Valley of the Kings Protection Project Saving Ancient Treasures

Ever drive east in bright sunshine along Route 66 in the Arizona desert where the highway dips down into shallow drainage swales? Even look north across the parched desert just as you descend into a swale and see a wall of water and debris roaring down from cloud-darkened hills right at you? If so, my friends, you have just experienced a desert flash flood, as our speaker will tell us.

Jim McLane will describe how

continued on page 2

Halfway between the Nile delta in the north and the Sudanese border in the south, the Nile River cuts a deep U-shaped bend into the Egyptian desert near Luxor. On February 14, 2003, the International Space Station (ISS) flew over the Great Bend; science officer Don Pettit took its picture. The dark river channel is bordered by the intensely farmed floodplain. The sharp margins mark the much drier slopes. These 'wadis' lead down from the surrounding high desert. Ranging in size from small gullies to wide valleys, wadis are carved by infrequent—though often torrential—rains. From the ISS, they all look much alike, but the *Valley of the Kings* is special.

The Valley of the Kings Research Group with Explorers Club Flag 160 (below). Our principle speaker is second from the right; John Rutherford is to the rear above the 'E'. The group comprises most of the professionals responsible for this renowned location.

LOCATION

Date Friday, 24 February 2006
Place: Sinbad's Pier 2 Restaurant
Embarcadero, San Francisco
Time: 6:30 pm, no host drinks
7:15 dinner, hosted wine
Cost: \$45 (by February 23)
\$50 (on meeting date)

Reach Anders at
ajviking@aol.com
925 254-3079

Reservation Form on page 5
Please reserve promptly!



Continued from page 1, Egypt

storm clouds suddenly gather over a very small bone-dry valley in Egypt's western desert. Jim will show the evidence of at least 25 major flash floods that have occurred in the past 3000 years when the clouds dumped water by the bucketful into that sacred little valley in which the kings of Egypt lay buried. He will explain how the flood-water and debris entered some of the most magnificent tombs of ancient New Kingdom Pharaohs and, with the aid of an underlying expansive rock formation, destroyed massive rock pillars and walls supporting the rock roofs of the rock-cut tombs. He will show you photographs of some of the ancient painted wall reliefs that still survive and photographs of shattered rock walls and columns which once displayed magnificent art, the history, and the religious beliefs of New Kingdom Egyptians. In a very real sense, each one of these decorated tombs was a museum of ancient life and art. Now, much of it is gone forever.

So, how do we protect what is left? Jim, co-director of a USAID-funded expedition administered by the American Research Center in Egypt, sponsored by the California Academy of Sciences and carrying Flag #160 of the Explorers Club, will discuss the recommendations of the Valley of Kings Research Group (VOKRG). The VOKRG expedition of geologists, architects, engineers, hydrologists, photographers, researchers and Egyptologists won an ARCE-administered international competition to examine each accessible tomb, map the drainage basin and flood paths and recommend flood protection structure measures for each tomb.

McLane has been an architect for 21 years with a strong commitment to historic preservation. He is a board member of the Association for Preservation Technology International and, throughout his career, has designed measures to preserve and protect historic structures and sites. He believes that, in the future, professionals will concentrate on the preservation of existing buildings and public areas rather than demolish them for modern development. He has worked more than ten years in Egypt on the excavation, surveying and recording of ancient structures and archaeological sites. His expeditions in Egypt include excavation and recording of Old Kingdom Pharaoh Snofru's small pyramid at Seila on the rim of the ancient lake

and a leadership role of ARCE's Egyptian Antiquities Project's *Valley of the Kings Tomb Flood Protection Project*. He is a hands-on professional—he did much of the surveying and mapping of the Valley's drainage system, a prototype flood protection measure for the

tombs of Seti I and Ramesses I, and oversaw the construction of the flood protection structure.

Come to Sinbad's and enjoy Jim's talk. Chapter member John Rutherford (FN92), the other VOKRG co-director will be present and introduce Jim.



The Brooklyn Museum Theban Royal Tomb Project (1977-79). The team discovered an expansive shale layer beneath most of the tombs, which allowed flooding to do damage.

This work (which included John Rutherford) led to the VOKRG protection project. Another NASA photo showing the Valley of the Kings (ellipse) across the Nile from Luxor.



A Crash Course in Biology!

Dr. Dave Capone

San Francisco

A satellite view of large swaths of the South Pacific can show enormous blooms of miniscule life forms. These minimal organisms are too small to view without the aide of a microscope but accumulate vastly. Doug Capone opened a view of exploration into the realm of nanobiology hardly realized by his audience at San Francisco's venerable Dolphin Club. He travels the world collecting and studying prokaryotes, those tiny ($0.5 \mu\text{m}$) life forms that have been enormously influential in the evolution and existence of plants and animals. For example, some convert gaseous nitrogen from the atmosphere into usable 'fixed' nitrogen (ammonia, nitrite and nitrate) which can be absorbed by the roots and used by plants to manufacture protein and nucleic acids.

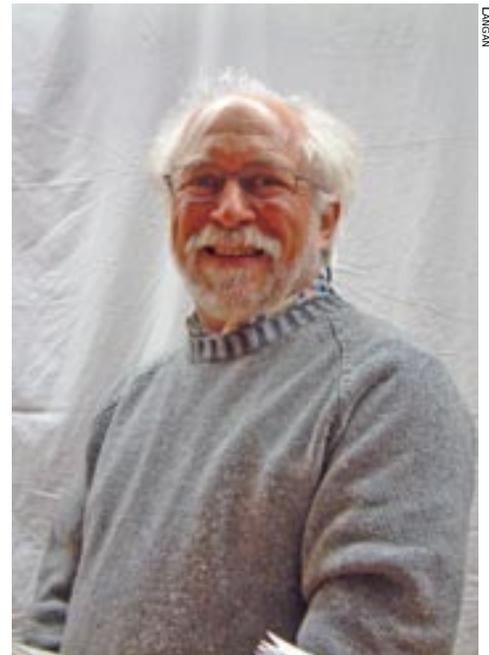
They create nutrients in the broad oceans that are consumed up the food chain to result in the creatures so familiar to our tables; thus, by extension, to ourselves. They also absorb carbon and nitrogen to help balance global warming. Over eons they are the creators of increased global oxygen until it reached a level adequate to support 'complicated' cells. These cells diversified over geologic time; the prokaryotes are still around doing their fundamental processes.

We actually know very little about them. Whereas biologists have investigated perhaps 90% of larger life forms, Capone estimates he and his peers have studied less than 1% of these basic cells! In one interesting slide Doug showed a microscopic view of the prokaryotes and eukaryotes which had an uncanny resemblance to a view of the cosmos taken from the Hubbell spacecraft telescope. There appears to be as much to understand in inner space as in outer space.

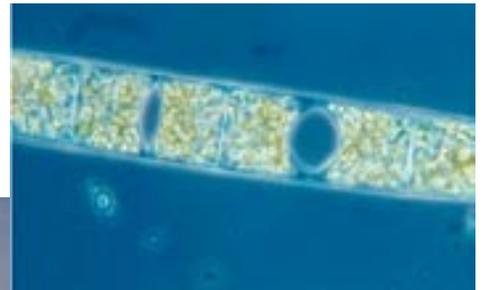
Many biologists now categorize three broad branches of life: botany, zoology and monera. Many only learned about the first two, the plants and animals. The third, *monera*, contains the smallest one-celled specimens. It is the only kingdom of

organisms which lack a nucleus and perform specific functions. It includes bacteria, viruses and blue-green algae. Some of these are pathogenic; most not. There is much to investigate, and this is the focus of Capone's research and teaching at the University of Southern California. He noted there is much discussion as to the categorization of all life forms as many biologists attempt to simplify what is a very complex field of study.

Doug has participated in numerous ocean voyages, spent time in the Antarctic and in other harsh environments and studies the satellite images to understand these creatures. In the end, a microscope is required to study each specimen. He opened our eyes to a world of field exploration that involves laboratory insight of DNA, RNA and geochemistry. It was a fascinating talk.



Our speaker (above)
diatom *Rhizosolenia* (below)



Dave Capone in the field.

At Mono Lake, California, a site for ancient prokaryotes

In the open Pacific preparing to sample a bloom at a variety of depths.



"Dream Big and Dare to Fail"

—Norman Vaughan

Several members pointed out the passing of an esteemed member of The Explorers Club and good friend of this Chapter. Norman Vaughan died four days after his 100th birthday in Alaska. He just didn't make that planned last climb on Mount Vaughan. Here is the notice from his web site:

24-Dec-05 11:22 AM - Erik

Muegge : Norman passed away very peacefully Friday surrounded by family and friends. He lived a wonderful life and always dreamed big and dared to fail. We thank you for your continued prayers, thoughts and support. We, along with you, deeply miss Norman. He has had such a big impact in many of our lives. This is a difficult time for all of us.

At this time there will not be a memorial service, but instead deferred until prior to the start of the Iditarod. In lieu of flowers, we are asking that you donate to a fund that will be used to help teach about nutrition to those with heart disease. The address is below. Please designate it in memory of Colonel Vaughan. Again, thank you for your support and prayers.

Gifts in memory of Colonel Vaughan
Providence Alaska Foundation
3200 Providence Drive
Anchorage, AK 99508

Message from Carolyn: This is of course a very sad time not only for me but for everyone who has been touched by Norman. Right now it is difficult for me to describe my feelings and stream of thoughts, but I do want you all to know that I feel the love and compassion. ... What a life we had together over those 18 years. Who would have ever thought. Norman was such a precious and extraordinary person in our lives. I will miss him desperately even though he will be in my every thought and action. Hopefully his motto will inspire us all to dream the big dreams and dare to achieve them. My other favorite motto of his was "You haven't failed until you quit." He never quit and neither should we.



Some details from the National Geographic site:

Col. Norman Vaughan, was the last living member of Admiral Richard E. Byrd's 1928-1930 Antarctic expedition (the first to fly over the South Pole,) had raced a dog-team in the 1932 Olympic Games, led more than 200 rescue dogs in World War II's Battle of the Bulge, and competed in the Iditarod 13 times. Some heart trouble kept him from musing of late, but for his 100th birthday, the "Indomitable Snowman" from Salem, Massachusetts, planned a trip that would test the hearts of men half his age.

"I was born on December 19, 1905. For my 100th birthday, I plan to go back to Antarctica and climb the mountain that's named for me.

"I climbed Mount Vaughan for the first time just before my 89th birthday. I was very glad to be the first person to climb it. It's a very rugged mountain. There are long glaciers on both the north and south sides. I am planning to climb the south glacier which has anywhere between a 30- and 50-degree slope. It is mandatory to rope up because there are many crevasses, and if you slip into a crevasse, you might never come out. Most likely we will take the same route, but the details haven't been finalized yet. I will have six guides, plus a doctor and a nurse at the base. I will have my first taste

of champagne ever at the summit. I've never had a drink in my life. Well, only at the altar when I took communion.

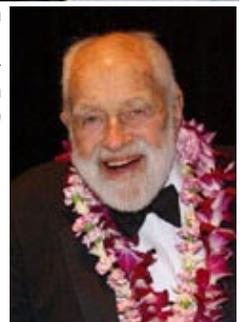
"My advice for young explorers, or anyone, is dream big and dare to fail. If you don't try to accomplish your dream, you fail before you start."



With sledging dogs in Anchorage.

At 88, before climbing Mt. Vaughan (background)

Norman at the ECAD Centennial, where several Chapter members had a chance to say hello.



The Chapter Chair

Dear Northern California Explorers:

If you were at the Dolphin Club in mid-January you learned what was happening in the field of biology. Doug Capone enlivened the evening with great slides and managed to elucidate on exploration unknown to most present. If anyone ever complained that there is little left to explore he left that thought clearly answered: go forth, there is so much to see right before your very eyes. You just have to appreciate it, hidden like ancient burials.

Speaking of such burials, come in February to learn how natural forces can damage what the Pharaohs thought would last for eternity. They did not consult their hydrologists. Now, a whole team of scientists has focused on how to overcome millennia of destruction. In fact they have been doing this for a decade!

The remainder of our lecture season has been completed. Alan Nichols will summarize his amazing 10,000 miles on bicycle from Istanbul to Xian. Don Walsh, who you may remember has traveled to the deepest spot on earth—I mean *really* travelled, to the lower reaches of the Marianas' Trench— will speak to us in early April. In May, Ed von der Porten will finally speak about his grand Manila galleon find, the 1576 *San Felipe*, off the coast of Mexico. What a line up. Mark your calendars.

ECAD is just arriving soon and several members of the Chapter plan to attend, including yours truly. Let me know if you are going to New York so we can coordinate a table or other gathering.

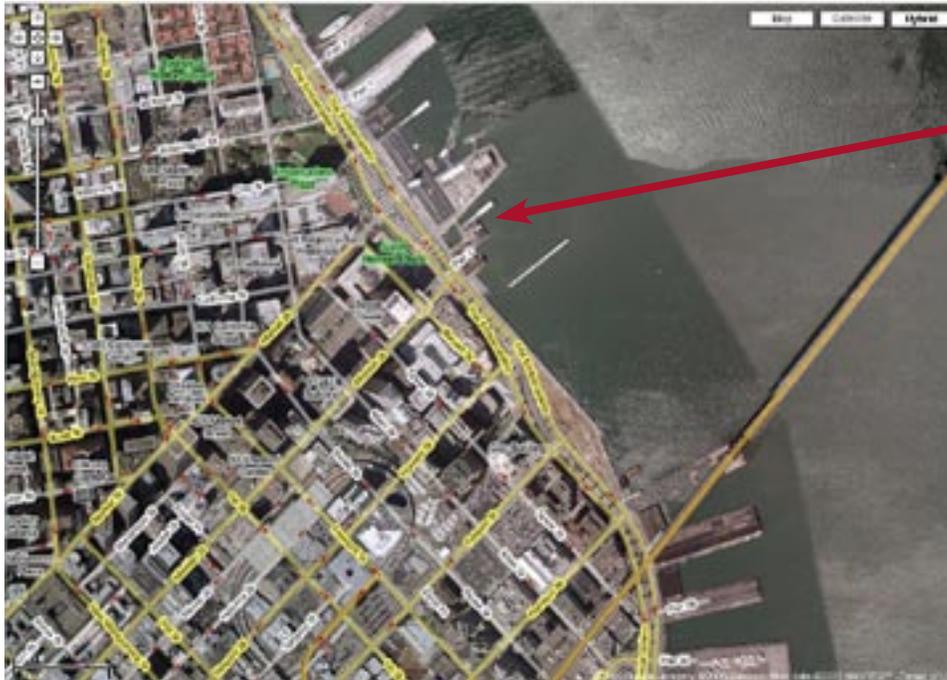
I want to thank the twenty members of the Northern California Chapter who stepped up to the plate immediately and paid their annual Chapter dues. I ask that those of you who have misplaced the thought to send your \$25 now.

I am still looking for two members to come forth to assist in making arrangements for our April and May meetings. Give me a call.

Finally I ask that each of you keep in mind the expansion of our Chapter. Find a kindred soul who will enjoy our lectures and members. Urge them to join. It is well worth it.

See you at Sinbad's.

—Lee Langan, FN99



Sinbad's Pier 2
Restaurant
Explorers Club Talk

Access by BART, CalTrans, Muni
or your vehicle!

Ferry Building Area
The Embarcadero
San Francisco

Please reserve _____ spaces for February 24, 2006, at Sinbad's, San Francisco.

Cost \$45 each; \$50 on meeting day. Prospective members are welcome.

Dinner wine is, once again, courtesy of Redwood Creek Winery!

Name: _____

Address (if changed): _____

Guest(s): _____

Also enclosed are my Chapter Membership 2006 Annual Dues of \$25.

Please mail this form to
Dr. Anders Jepsen
23 Dos Posos
Orinda, CA 94563
or, preferably, email
ajviking@aol.com
or call 925 254-3079

meal choice (please circle):
meat – fish – vegetarian

Northern California 2005-2006 Event Calendar

(Mark the dates! Venues will be identified at time of event.)

October 14, 2005 (Friday)	Dan Liebowitz	The Last Expedition, Stanley Across Africa
Delancey Street, San Francisco		
November 18 (Friday)	Arlene Blum	Breaking Trail: A Climbing Life
Sinbad's Restaurant, San Francisco		
December 7th (Wednesday)	Charles Merdinger	Remembering Pearl Harbor on the USS Nevada
Marines' Memorial Club, San Francisco		
December 9th (Friday)	Robert Johnson	Photographs at the new museum
DeYoung Museum, San Francisco		
January 13, 2006 (Friday)	Doug Capone	Planet of the Prokaryotes
The Dolphin Swim Club, San Francisco		
February 24 (Friday)	James McLane	Egypt -Exploration and Preservation of Ancient Sites
Sinbad's Pier 2 Restaurant, The Embarcadero, San Francisco		
March 18 (Saturday)	ECAD (NYC)	What's Left to Explore?
March 24 (Friday)	Alan Nichols	Cycling The Silk Web
April 7 (Friday)	Don Walsh	Choices under discussion
May 19 (Friday)	Edward von der Porten	Galleons in the Dunes
June 17 (Saturday)	Dave Moorer	Annual Chapter Picnic

In full and lively color!

To experience this newsletter in color,
see the PDF version at our web site.

Please note venues and dates with care.

At 6:30 on February 24th, a FRIDAY meeting at Sinbad's Restaurant in San Francisco

Send address changes and corrections by email to Steve at nauticos@oceanearth.org

February 2006

Lee Langan

The Explorers Club

Northern California Chapter

2660 California Street

San Francisco, CA 94115

