

The Explorers Club

Northern California Chapter

May-June 2006

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Four Mexico-United States expeditions (from 1999 to 2005) to a wreck site along the desert shore of Baja California, and study of newly available documents, have enabled the authors to reconstruct the story of the earliest eastbound Manila-galleon shipwreck. The results include identifying the ship as the galleon *San Felipe*, lost without trace in 1576, recovering her history, and explaining her tragic fate. They have discovered lead sheathing with iron nails from her lower hull, large amounts of wax from her cargo, more than a thousand Ming porcelain and stoneware shards, and a unique cloisonné plate rim.

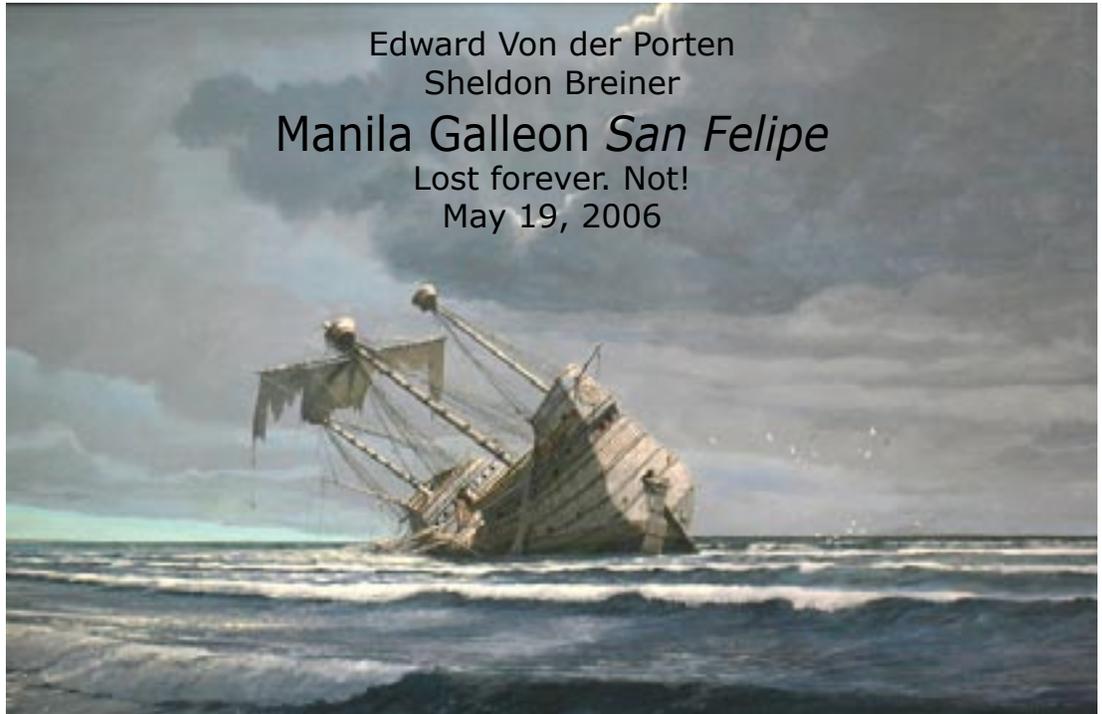
In addition, they have gained a remarkable insight into the Chinese-Philippine-Mexican trade at this early point in the history of the Manila galleons (1573-1815). As a result of this work a bilingual traveling museum exhibit, titled "*Treasures of the Manila Galleons*," has been developed. It includes material from the wreck organized to reach a wide range of audiences.

Meeting LOCATION

Date Friday, 19 May 2006
Place: Golden Gate Yacht Club
The Marina, San Francisco
Time: 6:30 pm, no host drinks
7:15 dinner; 8:00 talk
Cost: \$50

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

Reservation Form on page 5
Please reserve promptly!



Edward Von der Porten
Sheldon Breiner

Manila Galleon *San Felipe*

Lost forever. Not!
May 19, 2006

painting, Gordon Miller

Both chapter members will show a comprehensive slide series to tell the *San Felipe's* story and the story of her rediscovery.

Edward Von der Porten (FN80) is a Naval historian, nautical archaeologist, museum director, and educator. He has been a researcher of maritime subjects including pre-Viking and Viking shipbuilding, Henry VIII's *Mary Rose* and the development of the big-gun warship, Francis Drake's California encampment, early Manila galleon wrecks, early Chinese trade porcelains, and the World War II German Navy. His interest in the galleons led to working with Sheldon Breiner (FN78) at a site he identified in Baja California. Breiner is a preeminent geophysicist who has devoted decades to applying

geophysical tools to find hidden archaeological sites. The work reported here is a prime example of how the geological sciences directly assisted in locating the lost galleon.

Both explorers have kept this location as quiet as they could to prevent looting. Come listen while they tell what they found, and how they found it! A fascinating true tale

Picnic LOCATION

Date Saturday, 17 June 2006
Place: Angel Island
San Francisco Bay
Time: 10-3 on the Island
8:30 Berkeley Departure
Cost: BYO food & drink
(PLEASE RESERVE)

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

Reservation Form on page 5
Please reserve promptly!



Breiner (from)

Pedaling Across Asia

Alan Nichols

San Francisco

Few know that it is possible to drive from Europe to China. It is, but it is not easy. History and prehistory have woven a web of travel ways along the span between the Far East of today and Eurasia. Our speaker, Alan Nichols (MN84), picked his way among these routes during an odyssey that spanned 16 years. On four separate well-planned trips he bicycled 10,000 miles—from Istanbul to Xian, along twisted roads and with assorted side adventures. (An equally determined ‘crow’ would traverse a Great Circle route at ‘only’ 5,000 miles.) Well planned, yes, yet filled with events not anticipated, many that would deter all but the most dedicated explorers. In May 2005, he completed the journey, waving Explorers Club Flag 186 high as he rode to central Xian. Few men, and no known women, have ever traversed this entire distance.

Generations have travelled along these mountains, plains and deserts. The daunting effort is admittedly made easier today by roadways of various qualities and over various passes. Easier in the sense that even cycling is possible; daunting in that one risks life and limb when, in the blink of an eye, a passing behemoth truck could blow the pedaler into an impossible siding or the cyclist himself could lose concentration and be lost over the edge into a canyon perhaps never visited. These are the physical dangers exacerbated by raging winds and dust storms, fierce headwinds and mountain ice. Today, as in the past, regional politics, religious intolerance, outlaws and bewildering legal constraints all present barriers. Food is generally available; what you can eat, to maintain good health during the journey, must be watched. Nichols managed with the help of a sag wagon, a local driver and (always) a trusted aide.

Alan began his interest in cycling the route after a chance meeting in Hong Kong, just when it first became possible to visit Tibet as a Chinese ‘autonomous region.’ Invited by a stranger to cycle there, he found himself accepting the challenge. A decade later, after a quintuple bypass heart operation he and his

son took the second leg and crossed the ‘stans’, Uzbek to Kyrgyzk. On his last two journeys (Iran plus Turkey and the Chinese completion), his wife Becky was in charge of all arrangements, while his focus stayed on the route and cycling. What a team. This evening, after describing the Silk Web with fascinating tidbits from its past and comments about the present and observations on several Sacred Mountains along the way (another long-time study of Alan’s), a fast-paced presentation based upon their digital photographs and video was shown. Becky organized this splendid summary of the last of the journeys across western China to Xian.

A most satisfying evening dwelling upon a most engaging subject. This feat should help to bring into our awareness the vast differences we face in the world, as represented by the diversity of the peoples along the Silk Web. After millennia of isolation, this region of mystery is learning about the whole world; we must learn about them as well!

Xian;
journey’s end.



ECAD Report

Annually the, now, 31 Chapter Chairs meet at our New York headquarters. This was my first attendance as your Chairman, and it was of great value. Not only is it a charge of adrenalin to visit that beautiful building, and a reminder of all of those past and present who belong to The Explorers Club, but it was particularly enjoyable and encouraging to meet fellow chairs, Club officers, staff and directors. We stand amidst an active vital group keeping the venerable organization moving ahead.

This was the prime message from our meeting: we are moving ahead by improving communication, by expanding our internet presence, by supporting expansion around the world, by utilizing our archives and by involving the chapters. It will be Richard Wiese’s



Becky & Alan Nichols at GGYC

legacy that The Explorers Club has decentralized beyond the comfortable confines of Manhattan to recognize itself as a truly international organization devoted to the advancement of field research.

If you have never been to an ECAD weekend, plan to go sometime. It is the best opportunity to get a sense of the value of being a member. The headquarters building is a gem; the refinements of recent years have brought it into good repair and shining; the displays of past explorations are all about (the most recent: Henson & Perry’s sleigh from the Arctic.) The events fill this venue with fellow explorers, and all are in a convivial mood to exchange acquaintances. One comes away with a sense of camaraderie, having met an exciting group of people who enjoy each other’s company.

The website (www.explorers.org) is becoming ever more important to our club. Members can now change their name and password, modify contact information, make reservations, obtain club merchandise, pay, see events available around the world, find reciprocal clubs, restaurants and places to stay, download writable-PDF membership applications or flag requests, and carry on communications with other members via a new bulletin board. As they are submitted, each Chapter will have its own introductory page—of our own creation—which then links to our Chapter site (www.diggles.com/ec.) This page can be updated as we wish. I suggest you bookmark the headquarter website and keep in touch.

To improve interacting with the far-flung chapters, a limitation that has been criticized in the past, the Board of Directors has assigned one member to be a direct contact with each chapter, to act as our conduit to communicate directly. In addition, the Vice President of Chapters remains another way to approach the headquarters. Then, familiarity with the staff and each of their responsibilities, is a third way to find how the Club can respond. Weather you need to utilize the increasingly helpful research resources, to make a flag request, to suggest some support you may know about there are increasingly responsive ways to interact.

—Lee Langan



Seeing Sights Under Pressure

Oceanographers are very smart, as demonstrated by Dr. Don Walsh in his marvelous talk before a standing-room only audience for our April meeting. When the *Akademik Keldysh* (above right) goes to sea with its load of very adventurous tourists—those desirous to seek out the deeps like no others can—the dozen or so working oceanographers stay aboard ship. Comfortably. The two third-generation MIR submersibles (above) bring samples to them after each dive. The paying passengers make the dive, enjoy their experience, and science benefits! All win by having lay folks support the largest oceanographic vessel afloat. This is a unique cooperation between scientists and consumers, between any one in the world that wants to participate, for a fee, and between the Russian fleet, an Australian entrepreneur and American and European engineers.

Physical Oceanographer Walsh, the Club's 2001 Explorers Medalist, entranced his listeners in a *tour d'force* no-notes presentation of the history of two famous big-ship sinkings, their rediscovery and, now, what it is like to visit them miles below the sea's surface.

The *RMS Titanic* was built in 1912, along with sister ships, the *Olympic* and *Britannic*. She travelled a total of 110 hours and sank ignominiously under conditions so well known. She was designed to remain afloat with three compartments flooded. Unfortunately

four filled, and she sank, broke apart and rained bits and pieces over an area 12,500 feet below. In 1985, Bob Ballard took Woods Hole's *Alvin* below the surface for the first glimpse. Nutrients pouring off the George's Bank make the site murky, but all who visit find the

experience awesome. For those of you who cannot do so, there are a few exhibitions* that travel the world containing materials retrieved; Don says these are well worth a visit; check out:

<http://www.rmstitanic.net/>

The *Bismark* was Germany's pride, the most powerful battleship ever built. Completed in 1940, she set to sea to sink Allied ships in May 1941. She succeeded in destroying the pride of the Royal Navy, the H.M.S. Hood; 3 of 1600 aboard survived. Churchill ordered his Navy to "sink the *Bismark!*" Don described the raging battle that



ensued; after six hours of point-blank combat, the Royal Navy accomplished its goal, and the mighty ship fell to a depth of 15,500 feet. Only 127 of the 2100-man crew were picked up. In 1989, Ballard found her and, again using *Alvin*, made the first visit. In 2000,

the first tours were offered; the MIRs take about 14 hours round trip from the mother ship. The water here is more clear and one can see the huge guns toppled out of their placements onto the ocean floor—and the swastikas on the bow and stern.



painting: Ken Marshall

We thank Medalist Don Walsh for his wonderful educational and entertaining lecture. Deep Ocean Expeditions** is the only company in the world that offers diving like this; when the economy of Russia improves, the *Akademik Keldysk* will return to her full-time scientific programs. So, if you want to take advantage of a very unusual opportunity you should act soon!



Unfortunately

Rock Stearn



Don Walsh and his mother Marta with Lee Langan, Chairman

* RMS Titanic Inc. has sole rights to recover and display artifacts retrieved. All are to be made available for public display and research. Long Beach at the *Queen Mary* is the closest exhibit at this time—another in Des Moines or Miami.

** Deep Ocean Expeditions (DOE) was founded in 1998 by Australian diver, climber and adventurer Mike McDowell (M197). Details are available at their website

<http://www.deepoceanexpeditions.com>



“What I learned at the ECAD”
—Dave Moorer



Good Grub(s)

No kidding, there I was. Scorpions to the left of me, Madagascar hissing cockroaches glaring at me from the right, tarantulas and rattlesnakes were everywhere! Then there was just the always-crafty alligator and I. He glared at me. So, I ate him.

Yes, I ate him and plenty of other tasty, succulent exotics at the ECAD this year. It was, as always, a divine feast for the eyes as well as a savory sense for the palate. This was my second ECAD. I was so excited to go back to New York for another weekend of reconnecting with old friends from last year and meeting new ones as well. Where was my club blazer? This IS the Explorers Club after all!

I arrived at the Waldorf Astoria in the classiest of vehicles, a pedi-cab. My guest, Heidi Benedikt, and I were cycled in luxurious comfort to the front door in style and met by Barbara Berg as we took in the sites on our way to the grand ballroom. In search of my EC martini, shaken not stirred, I ran into a friend, Evan Davies who had been key in getting the EC flag for my initial expedition to Ecuador in 1998. Valentina Vladimirovna Tereshkova from Russia, the first woman cosmonaut, delighted us. The producer of the film “*March of the Penguins*” particularly impressed me as he received the communications award this year. The evening went into the wee hours and I can’t say now everyone who graced the podium. It was another magical evening as usual.

I had the distinct pleasure of being at the chapter chair meeting on Friday with Lee Langan and got to see the inner mechanics of the various chapters worldwide. It seems we aren’t all that different in terms of our goals and needs. Lee and I were able to invoke the spirit of Zeus and toast Chapin and the other adventure gods on St. Patrick’s Day at a local pub, where the sound of ancient bagpipes played outlaw tunes into the night.

Sunday’s open house was full of events and the passing of the torch from one president, Richard Weiss, to the incoming president, Dan Bennett, from Texas. It seems we are in good hands again and are off to a good start this year. Now if I can only find an EC tartan for next year!



iViva Concha! Act NOW

On May 5, 2006 (Cinco de Mayo), the world premiere showcase of *Viva Concha! Rose of the Presidio*© by Candace Forest will open for three performances at San Francisco’s vintage opera house, The Victoria Theatre, 2961 16th Street. Tickets from \$20 - \$30 are available online at www.victoriatheatre.org.

Viva Concha! Rose of the Presidio is based on a true story of the 1806 love affair between San Francisco’s Concha (Concepción) Arguello and famous Russian explorer, Nikolai Rezanov. The musical commemorates the 200th anniversary of the celebrated lovers, immortalized in anthologies and school textbooks for more than a century.

Chapter member Eve Iversen (CO86) has done research on Concha and was closely involved in the development of the musical.



Our Annual Picnic

June 17, 2006 at Angel Island

The Chapter’s annual outing to Angel Island is a respite from the ‘thinking’ meetings we attend most of the year. A chance to kick back, chat and play whatever games are brought forth. Great fun is to arrive via Capt. Bob Schmieler’s *Cordell Explorer*; last year the weather was so great he gave a full tour of the Bay as a bonus! Let him know:

www.cordell.org

Make plans to join—especially if you have never done so. ‘Tis good fun.

Bring your own food stuffs and drinks—folks often share. We will post a reminder card in early June to the local Zip codes.

The Chapter Chair

Dear Northern California Explorers:

We are fast approaching the completion of our 'academic' year, 2005-2006. Our speakers have been outstanding; our attendance increasing; our venues diverse. I am sure you will be pleased with Ed Von der Porten's report on his now-it-can-be-told Baja find, and the June picnic will be fun for all who make the time to attend.

This is a third double issue, so I make note of the picnic too; the next newsletter will be in the Fall. We must also reflect upon our governance for the Calendar Year 2007. As we did last year, we welcome recommendations. These interests should be sent to our Secretary, Steve Smith, so that they can be considered by the Nominating Committee composed of former Chairmen and presented to the membership in the Fall.

My comments on attending the annual meetings of the Club in New York are separately reported herein, as is Dave Moorers's report on

the gala ECAD. This is an experience that all members should have at some time; it expands one's faith in exploration!

During this lecture year we have attended several venues in our effort to find a comfortable fit for the Chapter: a balance of a suitable lecture location, food to sustain all present, an convenient location and an affordable price. This combination is a common concern for all of our chapters, a challenge around the world. I believe we have found a solution for the moment: the management and governance of the Golden Gate Yacht Club have welcomed us, and their meeting room, upstairs or down, is most satisfactory. The buffet for our sit-down March meeting was lauded by all; the bountiful *hors d'ourves* fed the April attendance (of well over 100!) The open no-host bar kept the costs in line. We will return in May, for another sit-down, no-host-bar affair.

Both meetings at the GGYC were accompanied by downpours, making the bayside sailboat location very appropriate. While there is ample free parking, there is also a walk for those who do not arrive first. Nary a complaint. The vista is

spectacular and erases any brief tendency to raise an issue. Even the lack of close public transport seems to have made little difference. The salt air refreshed.

With a venue like this, there are some questions raised. Should we keep the price low (as we did in April) and strive for greater attendance and finger food? Should we retain the dinner at the \$50 level? Should we consider a different night of the week? (Friday's traffic is a mess, often.) We may or may not be able to get Redwood Creek to donate wine next year, and we have used our larder; unless we do, or even if we do (as there is a corkage fee), I think the convenience of the no-host bar is a plus. Finally, should we continue to seek a still-more-suitable spot? What do you think? Please send comments via email—a letter if you wish—to me.

There is already a full slate we are considering for next year, excellent topics and prominent speakers. If you have suggestions, toss them in the hopper—again email me! Your officers want to respond to you, the members of the Chapter.

We will mail and email a reminder of the picnic to the locals on our mail list; the picnic is always relaxing and a great time to visit. Angel Island has become a tradition. Bob Schmieder's boat has again been kindly offered for those who make it to Berkeley on schedule.

Meanwhile begin thinking about those Summer field trips. See you in May for a very intriguing talk on finding the lost.

—Lee Langan (FN99)

Please reserve _____ spaces for May 19, 2006, at Golden Gate Yacht Club, San Francisco.

Cost \$50 each. Prospective members are welcome.
Dinner wine is courtesy of Redwood Creek Winery!

Name: _____

Address (if changed): _____

Guest(s): _____ meal choice (please circle):
_____ meat - fish - vegetarian

Please reserve _____ spaces for June 17, 2006, at Angel Island, San Francisco Bay.

Bring your own food and drinks. Prospective members are welcome.
Charcoal, condiments and soft drinks provided.

Name: _____

Address (if changed): _____

Guest(s): _____

For those not paid, please:

enclose your Chapter Membership
2006 Annual Dues of \$25.

Please mail these forms to

Dr. Anders Jepsen

23 Dos Posos

Orinda, CA 94563

or, preferably, email

ajyiking@aol.com

or call 925 254-3079



Northern California 2005-2006 Event Calendar

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

October 14, 2005	Dan Liebowitz	The Last Expedition, Stanley Across Africa
Delancey Street, San Francisco		
November 18, 2005	Arlene Blum	Breaking Trail: A Climbing Life
Sinbad's Restaurant, San Francisco		
December 7, 2005	Charles Merdinger	Remembering Pearl Harbor on the USS Nevada
Marines' Memorial Club, San Francisco		
December 9, 2005	Robert Johnson	Photographs at the new museum
DeYoung Museum, San Francisco		
January 13, 2006	Doug Capone	Planet of the Prokaryotes
The Dolphin Swim Club, San Francisco		
February 24, 2006	James McLane	Egypt -Exploration and Preservation of Ancient Sites
Sinbad's Restaurant, San Francisco		
March 24, 2006	Alan Nichols	Cycling The Silk Web
Golden Gate Yacht Club, San Francisco		
April 7, 2006	Don Walsh	Deep Sea Visitations!
Golden Gate Yacht Club, San Francisco		

May 19 (Friday) Edward Von der Porten & Sheldon Breiner
Golden Gate Yacht Club, Marina, San Francisco Galleons in the Dunes

June 17 (Saturday) Dave Moorer Annual Chapter Picnic, Angel Island, SF Bay

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 May 19th. a FRIDAY meeting at Golden Gate Yacht Club

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

May-June 2006

Lee Langan

The Explorers Club

Northern California Chapter

2660 California Street

San Francisco, CA 94115

