

The Explorers Club Northern California Chapter

May 2007

Note venues and dates with care.

We will meet on the Peninsula!
Our event is at 6:30 on
May 18th, a Friday, at the Parkside
Grille, 884 Portola Road, Portola Valley.

In color at our web site: <http://www.diggles.com/ec/>

Portola Valley — May 18, 2007 Don Dana

The First Americans! A Skinboat Expedition up the Siberian Coast

One of the more enduring mysteries of modern archaeology is how and when the first humans arrived in the Americas. For decades, scientists were convinced that the first colonists followed caribou herds across a land bridge that once connected Siberia and Alaska. Recently, with the discovery that early humans colonized Australia 30-40 thousand years ago, it is increasingly hard to challenge that early humans might have used the same boat-building and navigation skills to colonize the Americas that they used in Australia. However, clear archaeological evidence of Ice Age boats and coastal settlements in Siberia and Alaska may never be found, because the ancient coastline is now under hundreds of feet of water.

It is beyond dispute, however, that native people have been making and using several kinds of boats in the Arctic since before recorded history. Most of these boats were made entirely of locally available materials, such as driftwood and the skin of marine mammals. The largest of these boats, called an *umiak* in Siberia and Alaska, was certainly capable of hauling multiple families and heavy loads. Intrigued by the question of whether such a boat could have been used by early humans to colonize North America, our speaker, Don Dana, set out to build an *umiak* and test its capabilities during an extended voyage in the Bering Sea.

It took five years, and multiple trips to Alaska and Siberia, for Don to find native people who were willing and skilled enough to build such a primitive boat. Construction took an additional two years. The crew, consisting of marine mammal hunters from the Chukchi village of Lorino and the Inua village of Yanrakyntot, named the boat "*The Beluga*" after their favorite whale. In July of 2006, *The Beluga* set sail north under favorable winds for Cape Dezhnevo, the western edge of the Bering Strait. At our meeting, Don will show us the slides of the expedition and discuss what was learned.



DANA



DANA

Don, a member of this Explorers Club Chapter, is not a scientist, but he has enjoyed a lifelong interest in human origins, evolution, behavior, and survival. He has participated as a volunteer on expeditions researching Mayans in Guatemala, early humans in Tanzania, lemurs in Madagascar, and Broken Mammoth—perhaps the oldest paleo-indian site in North America. In East Africa, he was taught how to hunt with a bow and arrow by the Hadza, one of the last surviving hunter-gatherer cultures in the world.

Don chairs the Grants Committee for the Leakey Foundation in San Francisco, and he chairs the Science Committee for the Earthwatch Institute near Boston. In his day job, he manages the real estate for Wells Fargo Bank.

Ceremonial Masks in Modern New Guinea

Dr. Philip Rasori
San Francisco

Phil Rasori completely revised his presentation to the Chapter when he realized it was 18 years to the week he had first stepped foot in New Guinea; he dug into old slides and began with originals taken in April, 1989. He has been back nine times, and his corpus of spectacular portraits has grown to a treasure trove documenting cultures remarkably different than others on earth.

As a physician who specializes in international health, especially among indigenous peoples, he has had the unique ability to gain confidence with tribes: men, women and children—that allows him to record his other professional passion as a photographer. The result is extraordinary photographs of people in hinterlands like the highlands of Papua New Guinea. Not only did he show numerous examples to the admiring group, he detailed the wigs, body paint and masks. We gained an understanding of the effort put forth to decorate oneself in this place. Each of the stages of creating ornate ceremonial masks and wigs was outlined. The materials—human hair, boars, parrots, birds of paradise, possums, sea shells, dog teeth, beetle backs—all have meaning and define the status of the wearer. If you are a Huli you immediately know who you are meeting! The same can be said of many of the 1200 cultures (and languages) that comprise the five million people of the island.

Dr. Rasori spent a dozen years as medical par-

ticipant in tours arranged by Mountain Travel-Sobek; it was a co-founder, Dick McGowan, who introduced him to New Guinea—insisting that he go; it changed his life. (He had previously chosen Africa as a principle focus.) The two of them arranged for a group of doctors (and Rasori's ten-year-old son) to join in the first trip: to Tari Valley. He was unprepared for the existence of ancient peoples living the same way they have for millennia. We could appreciate this as he showed the first photos from the first day; this remains one of his most favored. That day they were advised a tribal war was in progress, and Phil asked their local guide to take a route that would skirt the fighting. Alas, the battle had moved and within hours they found themselves confronted by a hundred hostile warriors. Potential disaster was averted by a quick thinking guide who brought assurance the outsiders would not be harmed; however, the enemy clan would

be summarily killed! Phil even had pictures!

An hour's presentation allowed only an introduction to New Guinea's complex history and prehistory. Enticing tidbits were highlighted as he focused upon one group, the Huli. It takes 18 months to grow the simple initial wig: an 'afro' teased into entwining itself through a weaved bowl; nearly five years to grow a more complex version. The hair is trimmed from the head, and the wig can be used throughout one's life. The men grow these as part of a complicated process of initiation into manhood.

Many of the clans of New Guinea have great respect for their ancestors—and there are many, as it is estimated the land has been populated for over 25,000 years. It is common to see the skulls of prior generations mounted in their living quarters or at nearby shrines.

And, so it went. A wonderful presentation; the speaker's comment: "I have never spoken to a group where so many had actually been to New Guinea! Clearly explorers." He dedicated the talk to his mentor, Dick McGowan, who died in late February.



Lee Langan, Chair, Phil Rasori, speaker, Anders Jepsen, Treasurer, with display of Rasori photos

The Chapter Chair

April's meeting: another astounding evening when a part of our world, unknown to most, was introduced by an explorer who brought it back to talk about it (and to see it, in his beautiful photography!) We had a decent turnout—everyone who came was pleased—yet it seemed a pity more could not attend to enjoy and learn. It becomes increasingly clear we need to increase our membership. As we near the end of our academic year, it may be a futile plea; nevertheless, when you think Explorers Club, think who else would enjoy this camaraderie and opportunity to expand one's own horizon.

We shall hold our next meeting on the Peninsula (in Portola Valley, a particularly bucolic setting most anytime); our first meeting in the Fall will again be in Sebastapol; in January (or possibly February) 2008, we have an East Bay venue and presentation scheduled. All of these are in an effort to spread around the Bay Area. (I have been listening to requests for members to meet closer to their homes.)

I would like to encourage someone to step forth to

organize a web-based means that would allow car-pooling to any of these locations. There are a substantial number of Chapter members who choose not to attend, because they do not want to drive solo and return after a full evening. If we can coordinate carloads, more will attend (and a designated driver can be selected!) I look forward to hearing from someone willing to organize this. Soon.

We will not be back to the Golden Gate Yacht Club until October. This has been a real find for the Chapter: the staff is always very helpful and friendly; the view as fine as any, anyplace; the services outstanding (and the parking ample.) I particularly love stepping out to the fresh smell of the bay and the colorful lights shimmering from the Golden Gate, after a meeting. Hard to beat! We want to find a way (hopefully by carpooling) to allow many more to attend.

I report that more members and supporters have paid annual Chapter dues of \$25; fortunate for all, a few have been more generous. As Chair, I thank you all; I encourage those who remain (alas too many) to participate in this nominal fee. Our Treasurer awaits.

At our meeting I asked that any one interested in participating in the management or activities of the Chapter step forth; 2008 may seem a long time distant, but we shall introduce prospective candidates in September and vote in October. Contact any officer listed on page one, or Lesley Ewing, Chair emeritus.

This will be our last newsletter until Fall. Circle your calendar for June 16, a Saturday, for the Angel Island picnic: details will be posted on our web site (and we plan to mail a postcard reminder.) Plan ahead for Sunday, September 23, as well; a visit to the Boudreau's at the time of the wine harvest is a delight.

—Lee Langan (FN99)

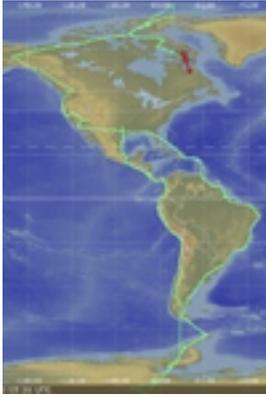


SUSAN ANDERSON

LANGAN

Polar First

They arrived a bit later than planned, but Jennifer Murray and Colin Bodill landed their Bell 407 helicopter at the North Pole on April 20th! Off by only eight days from their plans at takeoff in December! On May 1st they were on their way back, in northern Quebec.



Details of the record-breaking success are at www.polarfirst.com.

Zero South

The success of two explorers flying from pole to pole and effectively circumscribing South and North America bring to our attention to another planned expedition scheduled for deployment in December. A not-for-profit group, which originated in Silicon Valley, *Drive Around the World (DAW)*, has been successful in using private funding to take long-distance ground-vehicle trips to raise money for charitable causes. In doing so they undertake exploration during these expeditions.

The next planned trip is to drive a modified military Humvee from McMurdo Sound the thousand miles to the South Pole (and back)—powered by hydrogen technology. The name of the project: *Zero South*. In your chairman's opinion this is a splendid exploration goal. It has all of the elements of the kind of trip that was undertaken by private money during the early days of the Club. The plan is to travel to the far end of the earth in a new way, to traverse dangerous territory known only in general terms, and to return with new knowledge of the traverse.

The Zero South project will benefit from Army's Cold Regions Research & Engineering Laboratory (CRREL) help in surveying a route to identify and remediate dangerous, vehicle-swallowing crevasses. The trail to the Pole is critical, because it would allow overland resupplying for South Pole research facilities.



CRREL THE ANTARCTIC SUN



Raytheon's ground (and snow/ice) penetrating RADAR is used to locate crevasses along the proposed route to the Pole.

"A hush fell over the standing-room-only crowd at the Explorers Club in Manhattan on Feb. 5. In a room whose dark-paneled walls are hung with flags once planted in the far-flung precincts of Everest and Antarctica, the man at the lectern had just finished talking about his anthropological travels through almost 40 countries, across some 500,000 miles, where he recovered from food poisoning and chigger bites in Peru and swam through shark-infested waters off Easter Island."



NICHOLAS ROBERTS FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

This is the 22 April *New York Times* take on a talk by Josh Bernstein, of "Digging for the Truth" on the History Channel. He is one of the many candidates for Club versions of 'Indiana Jones' (some of whom are in our Chapter!)

With success, the Zero South project includes plans to spend two subsequent years touring to display three vehicles and to promote non-pollution, carbon-free transport, global climate change and the importance of our polar regions.

The creative minds behind this project include several noted technologists and environmental leaders. The film director of "Who Killed the Electric Car" will produce a documentary. The Explorers Club connection includes Kristin Larson (our Chapter's Board liaison) and Buzz Aldrin. At ECAD 2005, the DAW 'Longitude Expedition' was honored having completed 41,000 miles crossing four continents and 31 countries in 15 months. It raised funds to help cure Parkinson's Disease. Perhaps some more DAW participants will apply to the Club as explorers!

There was a bit of a brouhaha over 'tourists' invading Antarctica and its commercialization. Paid travel to set foot at the North Pole or to fly in space exists. Cruises are ever more common nearing or landing on Antarctic ice. Perhaps you have an opinion about this. Perhaps it is just part of the debate surrounding adventure versus exploration. However, it is difficult to conceive Zero South as a tourist adventure. It is exploration, privately funded. Exploration is always an adventure!

(Alas, adventures are not always exploration; one has to return with more than personal satisfaction and achievement.)

Drive Around the World, the project sponsor/organizer/coordinator is a 501(c)3 non-profit entity. See more at: <http://www.drivearoundtheworld.org>

Ancient Andean Library?

Stan Hall (FI93) sends greetings from Scotland. He has just published the third volume of his trilogy on the Ecuadoran *Cueva de los Tayos* (Caves of the Oil-birds, first popularized by Von Däniken, and legend in the northern Andes.) Stan has devoted 30-plus years to seeking the existence of a supposed library inscribed on 'metal' located within a cave complex. His web site:

<http://www.goldlibrary.com>

Another web document gives details of his background on this search: http://www.philipcoppens.com/metal_libr.html Alas, until it is found, it remains a myth/legend/mystery.

Bekins' Exhibit Ends mid-June

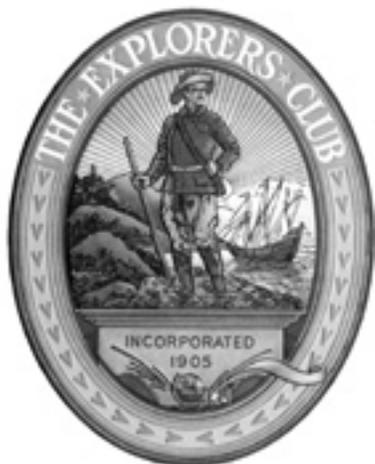
Spring is here, and it is time to drive out and see the wildflowers at Point Reyes! The Bear Valley Visitor Center, near Olema, is featuring an educational wildflower exhibit of my images (in the hallway leading to the auditorium.) The Center is open every day (9-to-5, weekdays; 8-to-5, weekends. Phone (415) 464-5137.

My exhibit will be there until mid-June. Many of the wildflower pics were taken at Chimmey Rock. The Rangers are helpful on where and what you will see that day. Enjoy! —Joan Bekins (FN86)



©JOAN BEKINS

May 2007



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Treasurer: Anders Jepsen
925 254-3079
ajviking@aol.com
Secretary: Stephen E. Smith
Webmaster: Mike Diggles
Newsletter: Lee Langan

Don Dana — Skinboat Expedition 18 May — Parkside Grille, Portola Valley

Northern California 2006-2007 Calendar of Events (Venues will be identified at time of event.)

Our next Meeting
May 18, 2007 (Friday) Don Dana
The First Americans: Siberians!
Held at Portola Valley's Parkside Grille

Future Meeting Schedule
June 16, 2007 (Saturday) Annual Picnic
Angel Island (contact Dave Moorero)

September 23 (Sunday) Gene & Sibyl Boudreau
Meteorite Collision (Rick Blake)
Boudreau Home, Sebastopol

Meetings earlier this Season
September 17 Gene & Sibyl Boudreau
Tarahumara Expedition (Lee Langan)
Boudreau Home, Sebastopol
October 13 James G. Moore
King, 40th Parallel, Discovery of the West
Golden Gate Yacht Club, San Francisco
November 8 Ed Ross
The Lives of Insects (Exhibition)
Presidio Officers Club, San Francisco
December 8 Jeff Morgan
Global Heritage Fund in El Mirador, Petén
Marines' Memorial Club, San Francisco
January 19 Olaf Malver
Kayaking the Frontiers of the Seven Seas
Golden Gate Yacht Club, San Francisco
February 23 Helen Klaben Kahn
Hey! I'm Alive! Lost in the Yukon
Golden Gate Yacht Club, San Francisco
March 23 Craig Childs
Tracking Vanished Peoples Across Southwest
Golden Gate Yacht Club, San Francisco
April 20 Phil Rasori
Ceremonial Dress in New Guinea
Golden Gate Yacht Club, San Francisco

May LOCATION

Date: Friday, 18 May 2007
Place: Parkside Grille, 884 Portola
Road, Portola Valley, CA
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 ---->
Please reserve promptly!

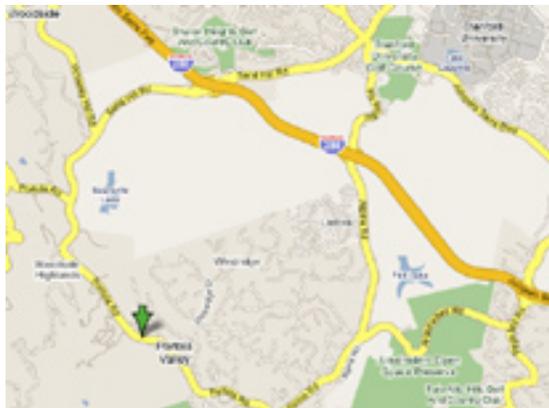
Please mail information below, with payment,
to Dr. Anders Jepsen
23 Dos Posos
Orinda, CA 94563
or email ajviking@aol.com
or call 925 254-3079

Reserve ___ spaces for **May 18, 2007**, at Parkside Grille,
Portola Valley, CA
Cost \$50 each.

Prospective members are welcome.
Drinks are no host for the evening! Wine hosted at table.

Name: _____
Address (if changed): _____
Guest(s): _____

INCLUDE ANNUAL DUES!



If you are challenged to find this spot: it is the first building in a small shopping center, and their phone is (650) 529-9007

