

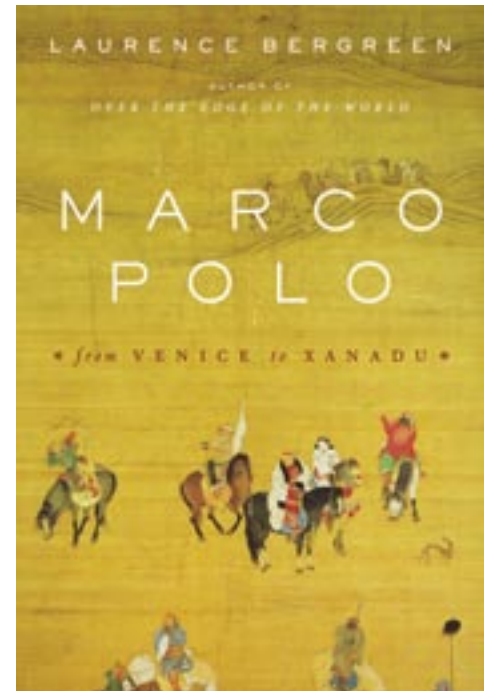
The Explorers Club Northern California Chapter

November 2007

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

Note venues and dates with care.
Our next event is at 6:30 on
November 8, a THURSDAY, at the
Golden Gate Yacht Club,
San Francisco

San Francisco—November 8, 2007 Laurence Bergreen Marco Polo's Time Machine from Venice to Xanadu



Acclaimed author Laurence Bergreen (FR03) will take our audience on a highly compressed version of Marco Polo's 24-year sojourn in China in the service of Kublai Khan, the most powerful ruler in the world. Marco learned to see the world through the eyes of the Mongols, who ruled China, and so he will talk about their empire, worldview, culture, and penchant for conquest. Larry will also discuss both the clash and blending of cultures, as Marco attempted to enlighten deeply skeptical Venetians about the wonders of China, a civilization centuries ahead of Europe in all respects.

In addition, he will discuss the many challenges of researching events that occurred halfway around the world, and in the distant 13th century, for this book. Warner Brothers is developing a feature film based on this book starring Matt Damon and written by William Monahan, who won an Oscar for *The Departed*.

His books have been translated into fifteen languages worldwide. His previous work, *Over the Edge of the World: Magellan's Terrifying Circumnavigation of the Globe*, was published to international acclaim; it was a New York Times "Notable Book" for 2003.

In addition, he is the author of *Voyage to Mars: NASA's Search for Life Beyond Earth*, a narrative of NASA's exploration of Mars, published in November 2000. In 1997, *Louis Armstrong: An Extravagant Life*, was published; it appeared on many "Best Books of 1997" lists. In 1994, his *Capone: The Man and the Era* was a Book-of-the-Month Club selection. His biography, *As Thousands Cheer: The Life of Irving Berlin*, appeared in 1990.

Larry Bergreen graduated from Harvard University in 1972. He is a member of PEN American Center, The Explorers Club, the Authors Guild, and the board of the New York Society Library. He lives in New York City.

(Kepler's Bookstore will have a representative with copies of Marco Polo for sale. The author will be glad to sign.)

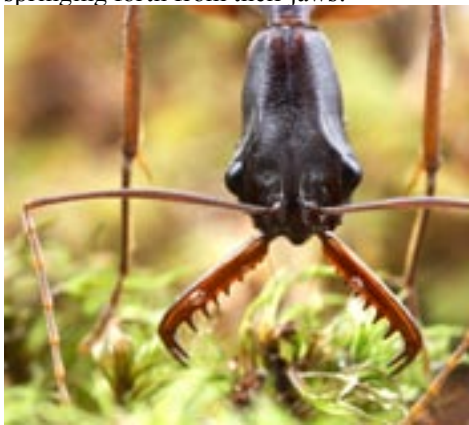
Larry Bergreen & Marco Polo, Hangzhou, China, 2005



Crawling All Over Madagascar

Brian L. Fisher
San Francisco

Brian Fisher shared a bit of his knowledge about ants and how they are studied—and where—with our chapter on a rainy night along San Francisco Bay. Most remarkable was his work, which brings Eadweard Muybridge into the 21st Century. He showed a clip of motion gathered using extraordinarily fast digital capture—50,000 frames each second—of a Madagascar species of ant which can leap a distance a dozen times its length! If you have ever watched a spider dash from a hidden corner of its web to catch prey, you can understand why such a leap could save the life of these ants! The images were amazing when slowed to show the gymnastic grace of these creatures. How do they do it? These photos show them springing forth from their jaws!



Alex Wild

This was but a small portion of Dr. Fisher's informative talk. He described the transition of the field of taxonomy from former traditional methodologies into a new computer-based, internet-compliant expanded technology. Clearly a leader in this field, his energy seems expanding in many directions. Fundamentally, he has moved from a morphology-based science to one grounded in DNA barcodes. He showed how the similarities of species, and their dissimilarities, were equally apparent by detailed morphology or detailed genetic barcodes. Either approach lends a definition which can define the unique creatures which inhabit a given environ. Thankfully the DNA approach is more objective, faster and more easily compared using digital algorithms. It is also faster than the tedium of reviewing the dead specimens pinned to drawers in the world's museums.

In 2000, Brian chose Madagascar as a suitable location to develop detailed ant studies; like Australia, it has been separated from the contiguous land masses for millions of years. Under the auspices of the California Academy of Sciences, where he is Curator of Entomology, he has fostered the Madagascar Biodiversity Center in Tsimbazaza National Zoological Park

in Madagascar's capital city, Antananarivo. This is a modern laboratory, teaching facility and residence where the biology of the island is studied. On fieldtrips they gather a million specimens each year, so this is a busy place. The week after our talk, Brian departed for two months of mostly field work based from this center.

His photos of the travail of Madagascar field work and the labors of intra-island travel are to behold. Fortunately you can do so with his brand new portfolio book: *Save an Ant; Save a Planet* available on the web. (Proceeds support the center!)

<http://www.blurb.com/bookstore/detail/94432>
He also has published *Ants of North America*, a definitive review of this genera.

<http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0520254228/>

For those interested in the immediacy of the web, visit his Ant Web site; you will get drawn in:

<http://www.antweb.org>

In the Bay Area, you can join an ant survey! It is also amenable to the use of

coquereli, the Trap Jaw Ant (left) jumps with great power

Fisher has selected 185 sites within the island, a nation the size of California; freeways, as we know them, do not exist.



BBC

Brian Fisher in the field in Madagascar.

Google Earth as a tool for showing distributions, associations and details of ants all over the world.

Dr. Fisher has indeed brought his field of study into modern times.



The Northwest Passage ?

Capt. Vince Backen of the *R/V White Holly* attended our meeting in October. When introduced, he outlined his offer to provide a platform for studies in the Northwest Passage next Summer and in 2009. His ship will be there, and he wants our Chapter, in particular, and The Explorers Club as well, to participate as we can. The *White Holly* is from a small class of merchant ships completed at the end of WWII; she was built in Napa and christened on D-Day! She is quite capable of the voyage; indeed, she has made many oceanographic expeditions./

Vince has proposed that the focus of an expedition be to seek Sir John Franklin's lost ships; others have tried, and the remains of many 129 lost members of the mid-19th century expedition have been located. (I refer you to Google the web.) With the dramatic melting in the Summer Arctic, Capt. Backen believes there is a new opportunity.

So, who would like to get involved? Contact Vince at 707 552-6053, and let's see what details might be developed.

To see what Vince and the *White Holly* have done:

<http://www.whiteholly.org/>

Ron Reuther, Past Chairman — 1929-2007

Ronald Theodore Reuther, our Chapter Chairman from 1989 through 1994, died peacefully on October 4, in the presence of his wife and family members at his Belvedere home. He was a dynamic, enthusiastic zoologist, aviation enthusiast and historian, administrator, author, speaker, and eminent researcher of Amelia Earhart's and Fred Noonan's disappearance.

Ron possessed a remarkable memory for people, events and places. At any meeting he attended, and these were frequent even when he was recently ill, he would introduce a guest with a pertinent story. He would tell a tale of interest too, always enlivening our meeting.

Ron had a long and distinguished career in the service of many prominent national and Bay Area institutions. Notably he was Director of The San Francisco

Zoo (1968-1973), scientific advisor to the Gorilla Foundation, and founder and principle official of The Western Aerospace Museum, Oakland (1986-2000).

He was born in Miami, Florida, on Christmas Day in 1929. Ron moved to the Bay Area in 1943, where he graduated from Lowell High School (1947) and UC Berkeley (1951). After attending graduate school, he received his USAF wings in 1954; he flew B-26s and C-119s in Europe, Africa, and the Middle East. Ron retired as Lt. Col. from the Army Reserve in 1981.

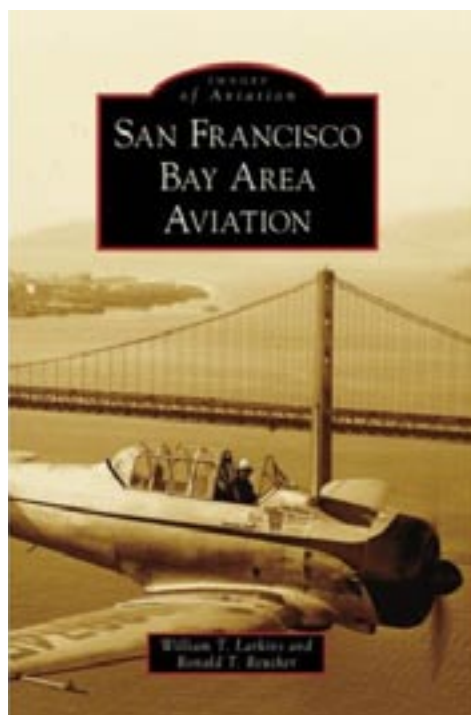
He married Mary Bernadette Howard in 1956 and entered into a professional life in zoology: became General Curator, then Assistant Director of the Cleveland Zoo, Director of the Indianapolis Zoo, Director of the San Francisco Zoo, and Executive Director and President of the Philadelphia Zoo. He was President of the American Zoological Association (1968-1970) and the American Association of Zoological Parks and Aquariums (1970-72). Ron was recipient of many medals and certificates of accomplishments.

While Director of the San Francisco Zoo, he became the first foster dad to the famous sign-language-learning gorilla, Koko, born July 4, 1971. She was fed with a baby bottle, diapered, played with, and loved by Ron's family until she quickly became too powerful to keep. Ron encouraged a young graduate student, Penny Patterson, in her proposal to teach human sign language to Koko. Penny and Koko spent their days in the Children's Zoo and nights in a nearby trailer. These early efforts led now Dr. Patterson and Dr. Ronald Cohn to form the successful Gorilla Foundation, where he continued to serve as an advisory director.

Ron once tried to protect people at the zoo by wrestling with a loose mature chimpanzee, resulting in a plaque: "Chimpanzee Wrestling, Second Place."



LANGAN



The Chapter Chair

There are but a few days for me to issue this newsletter because of the short span between our October and November meetings. Sorry for those who missed Brian Fisher touch upon his expansive work with ants; it was another sterling address to our fortunate group. We are the beneficiaries of hearing from outstanding explorers.

November will be another worthy talk. (I borrow from Garrison Keeler and Lake Wobegon: "Our speakers are all above average!") Marco Polo showed light upon the culture and academies of China, when the proud European region was unaware. Larry Bergreen gives new insight into this

opening between East and West. His book will be a popular gift this season.

In October (and again in November) we are the beneficiaries, as well, of the generosity of Redwood Creek Winery. Because of their general support of the Club, and their proximity to our Chapter, they have donated dinner wines for all of our meetings. Thank you!

At the October meeting, our annual election was held. As has been the custom, all those members present at this meeting vote upon the presented slate. This year, the recommendation by all who contacted me and prior chairs was to stay the course. By acclamation we were reelected for 2008. Thank you.

Beginning in 1980, Ron participated in the activities of The Explorer's Club. When chairman, Ron brought the chapter into a position of leadership within the Club as a whole; in 1996, he organized the "Golden Gateaway", featuring explorers from around the world, as a West Coast version of the ECAD held each year at the Waldorf Astoria. He prepared a 30-year history of the Chapter which we published in March 2003. (It is on line at our web site.)

He is survived by wife, Gerry Elkus (also the widow of our Chapter founder, Charles L. Elkus) and family. We will miss his charm and support.

A memorial service is planned on November 11, at 2 p.m. at the Corinthian Yacht Club in Belvedere-Tiburon (43 Main Street.) If you plan to attend, please park in the public lot across from the club

In December there will be no newsletter HOWEVER there WILL be a meeting—actually an afternoon reception at our home on Sunday, December 9 from 1 to 4 pm. I will send a reminding postcard to all addresses in the Bay Area.

The following speaker dinner will be in late January, preceded by the next newsletter.

What do you think of the new *Explorers Journal* format? I would like to know; recent issues, while still in the magazine format, featured articles of *exciting* adventures. The editor and format have disappeared. The new size is more dramatic change: size and style. Send an email.

—Lee Langan (FN99)

November 2007



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

Laurence Bergreen — Marco Polo
8 November — Golden Gate Yacht Club, San Francisco

**Northern California
2007-2008 Calendar of Events**
(Venues will be identified at time of event.)

Our next Meeting
November 8 (Thursday)
Marco Polo, Laurence Bergreen
Golden Gate Yacht Club, San Francisco

Future Meeting Schedule

December 9 (Sunday)
A gathering of Explorers
2660 California Street, San Francisco

2008 (details to be announced)
(tentative dates)

January 18
February 22
March 29
April 25
May 30
June 21 (picnic)

Meetings earlier the season

September 23 Rick Blake
Meteorite Collision near Sacramento
Gene & Sibyl Boudreau Home, Sebastopol
October 19 Brian Fisher
Save an Ant; Save a Planet; Madagascar
Golden Gate Yacht Club, San Francisco

November LOCATION

Date: Thursday, 8 November 2007
Place: Golden Gate Yacht Club,
San Francisco, CA
Time: 6:30 pm
7:30 dinner, then talk
Cost: \$60 members and
reserved guests

Reserve ___ spaces for **November 8, 2007**, at
Golden Gate Yacht Club,
San Francisco, CA
Cost \$60 each.
Prospective members are welcome.
Drinks are no host for the evening!
Wine hosted by Redwood Creek, at table.

Name: _____

Address (if changed): _____

Guest(s): _____

Meat, fish & vegetarian servings available.

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

