

The Explorers Club Northern California Chapter

January 2008

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

Sausalito—January 26, 2008
Vince Backen
OR/V White Holly
A visit to a working research ship.

Note venues and dates with care.
NEW DIFFERENT DATE
Our next event is at 1:00 on
January 26, a **SATURDAY**, at the
SF Bay Model Pier
Sausalito



On January 26th, Capt. Vince Backen has invited the Chapter to visit his oceanographic research ship, the *OR/V White Holly* docked by the Bay Area Model in Sausalito. You will have a chance to tour the vessel and learn some details about the plans to use this ship in the Northwest Passage this coming summer and the next.

Capt. Backen is planning to provide his ship for an expedition to find the remains of the *Erebus* and *Terror*, Sir John Franklin's lost ships from the ill-fated mid-1800 expedition. All men were lost. Over the years remains of the crew were found. They had attempted to traverse overland to the south, but they were overcome by the cold. The ships have not been found, but Canadian researchers have identified magnetic anomalies in the suspected vicinity near King William Island.

The *White Holly* was built in Napa and commissioned on D-day. She is the former Navy lighter, YF-341 which the Coast Guard acquired for conversion as a coastal buoy tender after the war. Eight ships were built entirely of steel; they were originally designed to carry ammunition and cargo from shore to deep-draft vessels anchored off-shore. All had sufficient cargo space for storing equipment and an open deck and boom for handling large objects. Each was named for a plant, shrub or tree, prefixed by "White." Backen acquired her in 2002 and has restored her to fine shape. He has used the ship for several research expeditions and for training maritimers.

Vince is from Marin County and is a member of a family who have long fished professionally. As a teenager he worked fishing boats off Alaska. After achieving the status of a Bar Pilot, at the turn of the century he took the entrepreneurial step to acquire the *White Holly*. Come see his ship!

Nearby is the *San Francisco Bay Model*. Hidden below the slopes of Sausalito, this is a wonder for hydrologic study created by the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers. Allow time to visit. The model will be open from 9 to 4 for self-guided tours.

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

The *OR/V White Holly* docked at the Bay Model pier in Sausalito (above) and at sea near the Farallons. At left she is deploying a two-man submersible, the *Seamagine*, in 2006. For more details visit the web site given above.



The *San Francisco Bay Model* is a three-dimensional hydraulic model of San Francisco Bay and Delta areas capable of simulating tides and currents. The Model covers over 1.5 acres in size and represents an area from the Pacific Ocean to the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta. (Free admission.)



The Man Who Made the Silk Web Famous

Laurence Bergreen
San Francisco

Laurence Bergreen walks the walk and talks the talk. He researches his books himself; he goes to the places involved; he writes convincingly; he delivers a great lecture. He held forth on Marco Polo for our November meeting with informative details, interesting bits from his biography and responses to all questions with knowledge and detail. It was a pleasure to behold.

Our Vice Chair, Alan Nichols (right in photo), introduced the author of *Marco Polo, from Venice to Xanadu*. This was most appropriate, and appreciated by Larry, who was amazed that a fellow explorer had actually cycled the entire 'Silk Web.' Nichols was delighted in his read of this new book: "Bergreen has produced a major contribution to our knowledge about this most famous merchant from Venice, despite the plethora of books previously written and published—including many many translations of Marco Polo's own writing." He noted that Bergreen has placed the 16th Century into the context of the 21st Century; changes, of course, but similarities too!

Marco Polo was taken on his 24-year journey by his father and uncle; they had been in China before. Indeed, many others had, as well. But, they never wrote about their travels. Marco Polo found his place in history because he did. There were no Lonely Planet guides; the caravans

moved slowly. He was 21 years old when he entered the empire of Kubla Khan after three years crossing the distance that Alan Niclols rode on his bicycle in months.

To his amazement Polo had entered the *future*, as Bergreen observes. Efficient city-states, like Venice had populations under 100,000. They were proud of mass-production techniques where their boats could be turned out as quickly as one each 15 minutes! All the better to maintain a good war footing, for there was constant battle with other city states. (Indeed, upon his return, Marco Polo himself was captured by Genoans—in whose confines he wrote his travel book.) In China, he encountered cities with a *million* people, high technology and a peaceful state (even under the 'conquering' Mongols.)

Befriended by Kubla Khan, the all-powerful ruler, Marco, his father and uncle, were encouraged to travel on the emperor's behalf. In fact, they were retained with a 'golden handcuff', a golden document they carried assuring protection. No one would harm them under assured threat of death. Without this, their eventual return to Venice would be impossible—they returned only after Kubla Khan died at age 80!

Marco Polo's book was passed around the nobility of Europe, pre-Gutenberg. It also became one of the first printed books. It inspired Columbus and Magellan. It inspired exploration. His tales of the

Orient were not all accepted, some were considered 'tall.' Yet, as Bergreen has researched, over time all of his descriptions of places, customs, finances and cultures proved correct in the reports of later visitors and modern archeologists.

Read the book! (And, you might want to pick up others Laurence Bergreen has written: on Magellan, Louie Armstrong, Al Capone, NASA.) Good stuff.

Holiday Gathering

In early December explorers from the Northern California Chapter gathered for conversation and fellowship at the home of Chairman Lee Langan and his wife, Karine. It was a sunny, almost balmy afternoon, and the food and wine were served by other members of this three-generational home: Oliver and Snow (Yingxue) and Susan, with young children Teo and Fin underfoot as were Carl and Tiberius, dog and cat.

Bill and Dana Isherwood, were present from Seattle (and Beijing). Bill a Chair Emeritus, was joined by two other former chairmen: Bob Schmieder and Steve Smith. Some sixty other stalwarts of our chapter spent the afternoon exchanging tales and plans and stories. The consensus was that this became an unusual opportunity to

meet and learn more about fellow members. Too often the pace of the evening lectures leaves inadequate time for such.

A few guests were exposed to the active membership. It is hard to realize or, perhaps, to remember one's earliest impressions of the Club. The reputation draws many interested in gaining knowledge about the corners of the round earth; when they ask, "What is it all about?" the formal response of promoting field science seems inadequate. Responses to such a question can be a bit rambling. They distill, however, that the club is its members. A diverse group of individualists who are devoted to discovering the unknown in surprising places, often in their own way. Often persevering against odds. Some are supported by institutions; some go it alone. All return to tell what has been found. Or, the story about the adventure itself, lest the effort be ignored.

The small cosmos that collected for a few hours in a San Francisco neighborhood was a good representative. Antarc-ticans, Mayanists, etymologists, geologists, oceanographers, alpinists—the usual lot. The camera lay there to be used; it was not; conversation prevailed. Just imagine.

The Chapter Chair

Happy New Year!

We have a terrific line up of activities for the upcoming year. We have someone identified for each meeting, but some are still being refined. There is quite a mixture of topics and events. The intent is to provide a schedule that will draw larger attendance and invite new members to join The Explorers Club.

You will note that we are ranging farther a field than in recent years—at the end of May a weekend in the environs of the Monterrey Peninsula is planned. In September we will again have a meeting on the San Francisco Peninsula. In January we venture across the Golden Gate to Sausalito. The rest of the meetings will find the comfort of our friendly Golden Gate Yacht Club.

To help more people attend we are also encouraging car pooling, and three individuals have volunteered to coordinate north, south and east possibilities. The idea is simple: contact these folks and they will try to assure there are rides for all. It will work if there is enough advanced notice! Let Anders know of your interest when you respond.

As we began a few years back, we have 'chapter dues.' These primarily support the newsletter printing and mailing although there are other small expenses that crop up each year. Note that ALL officers, speakers and helpers are completely voluntary, and there is no compensation. This is a long tradition of The Explorers Club, and we are incredibly fortunate to have the quality of presentations we hear each month. (The national officers, Board members and Committee management are voluntary as well. Only a small permanent staff are Club employees.)

So, please pay your dues promptly and willingly.

We send out about 325 newsletters each month. At one point we attempted to limit these and encourage email communication only. Several folks responded; the newsletter each month is on our web site in full color, and they are notified! Nevertheless, the number of members and 'friends' did not reduce the snail delivery very much. Upon reflection, the newsletter is a good way to promote the Chapter so a few more is just fine. If you know someone who would enjoy it, ask Steve to add their name.

The January meeting will be interesting and different; come; rain or shine. We'll be prepared.

—Lee Langan (FN99)



SAN FRANCISCO
OCEAN 2008
FILM FESTIVAL

February 1, 2008
Opening Night Party
Aquarium of the Bay

February 2-3, 2008
Movies & More
Cowell Theater at Fort Mason Center

For tickets & festival information visit oceanfilmfest.org or call (415) 561-6251

SFOFF is part of the In Performance Series at the Cowell Theater at Fort Mason Center, which is supported by Grants from the Arts/San Francisco Hotel Tax Fund, the Wells Fargo Foundation, and the Fort Mason Foundation.

San Francisco Ocean Film Festival Year Five!

The San Francisco Ocean Film Festival (SFOFF) was conceived and founded by chapter member Krist Jake (MN78). It has become very successful and is now greater than ever in its fifth year. Krist is turning over much of the operation of the festival these days, but he is to be congratulated on creating this very enjoyable event. If you have never participated, now is the time to do so; the films are always enjoyable and enlightening.

In the past years we have tried to coordinate our meetings to coincide with the festival opening. This year the timing did not fit. We have maintained the ocean theme by our visit to the White Holly however, and we have invited SFOFF volunteers.

In addition to the seven film programs, SFOFF 2008 will include several special events:

On February 1, the Festival officially kicks-off with an Opening Night Party at Aquarium of the Bay.

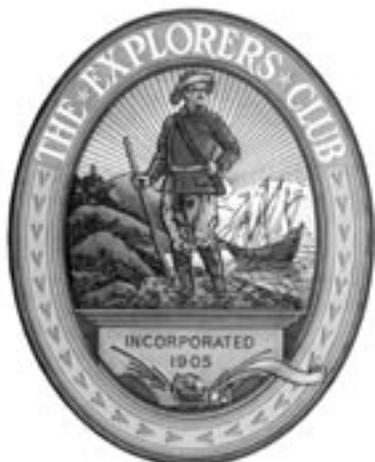
In a SFOFF special presentation, Roger Payne and Lisa Harrow perform *SeaChange: Reversing the Tide* at the Cowell Theatre on January 31 in a not-to-be-missed event.

The 2008 Festival inaugurates four competitive awards for the best films in our Adventure, Environment, Wildlife and Culture categories, which will be presented at the Festival's Closing Night screening on Feb 3.

On Thursday and Friday, SFOFF will host school groups invited from around the Bay Area who will view special film screenings and talks organized through SFOFF's Educational Program.

Festival Passes and Tickets are on sale now. For more information, contact the Festival office at (415) 561-6251 or info@oceanfilmfest.org.

January 2008



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Webmaster: Mike Diggles
Newsletter: Lee Langan

Vince Backen — OR/V White Holly
26 January — S.F. Bay Model Pier, Sausalito

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

Our next Meeting
January 26 (Saturday)
OR/V White Holly, Vince Backen
SF Bay Model Dock, Sausalito

Future Meeting Schedule

February 22 (Friday) Larry Lansburgh
Amazon's Dream People GGYC
March 29 (Friday) in planning
April 25 (Friday) Jeff Morgan
Global Heritage Fund New Sites GGYC
May 30-Jun 1 Hicks home; Monterey Peninsula
September in planning
October 24 (Friday) Guitty Azarpay
From the Silk Road to UC Berkeley. GGYC
November 21(Friday) in planning

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 8 Laurence Bergreen
Marco Polo
Golden Gate Yacht Club, San Francisco
December 9 Lee & Karine Langan
A gathering of Explorers
Langan home, San Francisco

January LOCATION

Date: Saturday, January 26, 2008
Place: White Holly, Bay Model Pier, Sausalito, CA
Time: 1:00 - 3:00 On board, lunch
9:00 - 4:00 Bay Model open
Cost: \$25 members and guests
(cost for provided hot lunch)
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

Reserve ___ spaces for **January 26, 2008** at
OR/V White Holly,
Bay Model Pier, Sausalito, CA
Cost \$25 each.
Prospective members are welcome.

Annual Dues payable @\$25

Name: _____

Address (if changed): _____

Guest(s): _____

Advise if you desire a car pool!



A bit of a circuitous route, but
the Bay Model is well known!
Best Sausalito exit is north
Bridgeway.

Plenty of parking!

OR/V White Holly