

The Explorers Club

Northern California Chapter

March 2009

Note venues and dates with care.
San Francisco, CA!
Our next event is at 6:30 on
March 27, a Friday evening,
at the Golden Gate Yacht Club.

In color at our web site: <http://www.explorersnorca.org>

San Francisco—March 27, 2009

Payne Johnson

Stephens' Maya—Then & Now

Tracing the Path of an Early Central American Explorer

In November 1839, New Yorker John Lloyd Stephens landed by ship in the Kingdom of Guatemala hoping to find the remote village of Copan, where early Spanish records indicated their soldiers had seen old stone ruins in the nearby tropical forest. Stephens had said that he was frankly skeptical of finding anything.

Stephens, however, found himself in the midst of finely carved statuary and stone walls with symbols of an unknown language carved upon them. He spent the next four years discovering more than forty ancient cities and published, together with his traveling companion Frederick Catherwood, two books describing the unknown Maya civilization to the world.

In 1989, 150 years later, Explorers Club Fellow Payne Johnson began a five-year expedition carefully retracing and photographing along the path of Stephens' footsteps and discoveries. Johnson will tell about his and Stephens' adventures and will show images of the same places visited by both and how they have changed in the century and one half.



Johnson spent a childhood acting in Hollywood movies, was an Air Force flight crew member on B-50 bombers during the Korean War years and graduated with degrees from University of Southern California and San Diego State University. He enjoys photographing ancient cave murals in Baja California mountains (a fruitful topic for another visit to our chapter), and he has been retracing other explorers footsteps in Latin America, Egypt, Jordan and Syria. He leads custom archaeological tours in many countries. Payne is a former Chapter Chair of the San Diego Explorers Club.

The location of these sketches, plus many more, taken from John Lloyd Stephens' publications on his early explorations, were found by our speaker and photographed as they are in modern times.

Payne Johnson,
with Flag 168,
at the original
Spanish port in what
is now Guatemala.



Harbor Waves

Surprise! Massive volumes of water can rush ashore. San Francisco

Orville Magoon is a curious guy, where he sets his mind he delves deeply. At our February meeting we listened to his intent interest in one particular “episodic event,” the *tsunami*. Tsunamis (from the Japanese, “Harbor Wave”) happen infrequently, but when they do, watch out! Be aware! They can be very deadly and very destructive. If you are informed you may be able to get to high ground; if not, you could be killed. Buildings and landscapes cannot get away; they are damaged or destroyed.

Tsunamis are ocean waves with very long periods, upwards of 20 or 30 minutes! They are caused by sudden enormous water displacement: a landslide, an earthquake, an eruption, an asteroid. They sweep across the ocean at speeds of a jet aircraft, bouncing back and forth, sometimes for days. A cause half way around the world may appear at a nearby coast. Fortunately, since 1946, wave-monitoring buoys give some warning. Not much, but if you live in a potential damage area you should get this alarm. Do not chase the water as it recedes! Run the other way.

Magoon has studied the damage and potential damage of these huge episodic waves since his youth: he experienced (and filmed) a killer tsunami at Waikiki on April Fool’s Day in 1946. The water rose nearly fifty feet in some places. The wave, generated by an earthquake in the Aleutians, left a lasting impression, and he

has become a cautioning expert to locals around the world that might be in a place subject to such an event. Sometimes people listen; curiously some (even authorities) at first react to his warnings as those of a crank. He persists, convinced by engineering studies that places prone to this damage should take prudent measures.

He gives a positive example of huge protective gates in a Japanese river which can close to prevent a tsunami flood surge. He asks, “Why should such a closure system not be considered for the BART tube in San Francisco Bay?” Studies show a wave similar to the 1964 tsunami in Crescent City, California, that might enter San Francisco Bay, would spill into and fill the BART tube—completely!

The difficulty in warning people about what might happen is that it seems a rare event. In actuality at least 25 tsunamis occurred in the last century. Nevertheless many other risks impact on our lives each day; the potential of tsunamis falls someplace after earthquakes. The engineer in Orville argues: it can happen, be prudent. At least, be aware; proximity to the ocean’s coast carries this extra reason to understand nature’s fury.

Dr. Donald D. Treadwell, a geologist colleague of Magoon, assisted in the preparation and offered comments during the evening—typical of those between an engineer and scientist!



Tsunami floods create damage even if not racing ashore; a flood will lift a pier which, when lowered, can break apart because it no longer settles on the same posts!



Walls will come apart when nails are pushed out by the pressure of water inside.



A 25-ton tetrahedron was displaced from a pedestal in Crescent City. Experts calculated the enormous forces required. (A photo taken just after the tsunami showed it was, instead, moved by a huge redwood log pushed ashore in the debris.)

Tsunami Gate, Okushiri Island, Japan
Such a suggested option would close BART tunnels, when an episodic event may occur.



Our speaker, Orville Magoon, is flanked by Chairman Alan Nichols and Chair Emeritus Lesley Ewing, who works on the coastal impact of tsunamis with Orville.

HELP WANTED

Volunteer victims (virtual) for our Field Medicine Expedition.

Members who have written published books for our Story Night, next Fall.

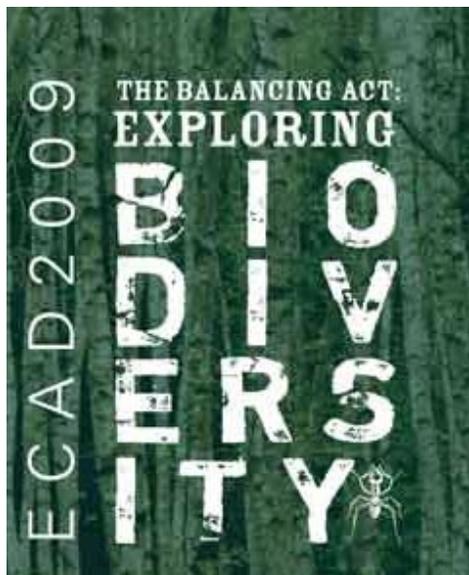
A reminder: we would like to send as many notifications and newsletters as possible by email to be green. Please notify Steve Smith at

nauticos@oceanearth.org if you will accept email-only communication. Note our new web address for the chapter: www.explorersnorca.org



It is with great sadness we report the death of Marta Walsh in Oregon on February 23rd. You recall we celebrated her 100th birthday last Summer at "Marta's Tea" in Alameda, very near where she raised her son Don—the Honorary President of the Club.

Don made note that our party was a very fond memory for her. It was for us too.



It is not too late to reserve to attend the Explorers Club Annual Dinner (ECAD) on March 21. Anyone who makes the effort reports this major fund-raising venture for the Club, held each year at the Waldorf Astoria, is a memorable experience. (This year will include a real treat from the Northern California Chapter!) Contact Lee Langan or Alan Nichols if you wish to attend as a NorCA group; tickets and details can be obtained at

www.explorers.org

NorCA Field Expeditions

Field Expeditions: an additional benefit for the Northern California Chapter. This Spring, we will introduce two new "hands-on" exciting events in the field for a limited number of interested Members and Sirdars. No charge, but bring your own lunch. The Chapter will provide water, soft drinks and some dessert.

1. April 18. 9 AM. Mort Beebe (FN78), a world-renowned photographer, will lead us on a trail on Mt Tam demonstrating good techniques of expedition photography with running suggestions for our own shots and a final critique of our best effort in each category. You'll need a digital camera and good walking shoes for the moderate hike. May want your laptop to download and edit results.

2. May 9. 9 AM. Paul Freitas MD, an emergency care specialist, will lead us on a hike on Mt Diablo with a hands-on experience of emergency care of various common expedition injuries (using volunteer victims.) Walking shoes or boots for the moderate hike. Dr. Freitas will provide cell-phone advice and a personal critique on the mountain as to handling of emergencies, followed by recommended medical expedition preparation. Please bring your favorite travel disaster story to share.

Sign up by sending email to sacred-mountain@att.net. Details of the exact locations, and directions, will be sent to all who register.

Go & Tell

Good news that must be shared was announced at our February meeting; each of these items, albeit dramatically different in import, were cheered.

Sue Estey and Tom Patterson announced their engagement; happened on St. Valentine's Day! Congratulations!

Bob Schmieder announced that the *Cordell Explorer* is relaunched from dry dock and shall be ready to accept passengers for a June Angel Island Picnic. Date to be announced.

The Corner Chair

We had an enthusiastic fun meeting last week. Special thanks to Joan Boothe for the whole new set of name tags; she has also volunteered to add your field of interest if you let her know.

Thanks to Lesley Ewing we heard her friend Orville Magoon enlighten us on the next tsunami. The Explorers Club is so well regarded that we can attract good speakers; its an opportunity more people should have. We should encourage people who do join us as guests or speakers to become members if qualified and, otherwise, as Sirdars (participants in our chapter meetings and activities.) Please bring your interested friends and family to our meetings and sign them up with Joan for our notice list, the Newsletter, and, if desired, the Explorers Club *Journal*. They will add new energy, younger potential members, and new dimensions of participants and audiences.

Members should have their ballots by now. Be sure to vote for Lee to be a national Director; we need him. If you haven't received a ballot, let me know.

Finally be a good sport and pay your voluntary dues (\$25). You'll then be placed on our Honor Role for direct email to Paradise.

Thanks to Mort Beebe and Paul Freitas for leading a new experiment, our "Field Expeditions". —Alan Nichols (FN84)

A Babe in Toyland

Some members just may remember the classic "Babes in Toyland" (1934) in which our March speaker performed, hidden beneath a piggy mask! He was far more evident in *Our Gang* and dozens of other films.



March 2009



Chair: Alan Nichols
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925 254-3079
ajviking@aol.com
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510 526-2216
sestey@earthlink.net
Secretary: Stephen E. Smith
Webmaster: Mike Diggles
Newsletter: Lee Langan

Following Early Explorers 27 March — Golden Gate Yacht Club

Northern California Calendar of Events

(Venues will be identified at time of event.)

Our next Meeting

March 27 Payne Johnson
Stephens' 1839 Search for the Mayas, GGYC

Future Event Schedule

April 18 (Sat) Mort Beebe
Photography Field Expedition, Mt. Tam
April 24 (Fri) Christopher Whittier
Stories of Gorilla Country, GGYC
May 9 (Sat) Paul Freitas, MD
Medical Emergency Field Expedition, Mt. Diablo
May 15 (Fri) Doug Findley
Sailing the NW Passage, GGYC
June (TBD) Angel Island Picnic
November (TBD) Story Night

Earlier Meetings

May 30 Nancy Black
Whale Watching off Monterey, Hicks' home,
Garrapata Beach, Big Sur
June 25 Marta Walsh at 100
DOER Marine, Alameda
September 27 Art Ford
Antarctic Tourism, Liebowitz home, Woodside
October 18 Don Hartsell
Lighter than Air, GGYC
November 21 Leela Hutchison
Giant Cave Crystals, Dana home, Tiburon
December 7 Holiday Gathering, Langan home
January 30 Malcolm Potts & Martha Campbell
Sex in 21st Century, Golden Gate Yacht Club
February 27 Orville Magoon
Tsunamis—Real and Personal, GGYC

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

March LOCATION

Date: Friday, March 27, 2009
Place: Golden Gate Yacht Club
1 Yacht Road, San Francisco
Time: 6:30 - reception, no-host drinks
7:15 - buffet dinner, wine
8:00 - speaker
Cost: \$55 (in advance); \$60 (27th)

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

Reserve ___ spaces for **March 27, 2009** at
Payne Johnson at GGYC
San Francisco, CA
Cost: \$55
(Chapter 2009 Dues: \$25)

Name: _____

Address (if changed): _____

Companion: _____

If you desire a car pool from the
Peninsula call Helen Klaben Kahn at
(650) 888-4058!

*Sue Estey is away this
month, therefore send
responses*

