The Explorers Club Northern California Chapter

October 2009

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

Archaeology in the land of the Queen of Sheba

Yemen is situated in the south west of the Arabian Peninsula, a remote isolated country bordered by deserts and oceans. Saudi Arabia lies to the north, Oman borders the east, the Red Sea extends the length of its western coast, and the Gulf of 'Aden stretches away into the Indian Ocean to the south. As a result of tectonic activity the long north-south range of the Asir Mountains parallel to the Red Sea, create both a rich highland farming resource and a barrier between the coastal Tihama and the inland deserts. While the traditional buildings of the highlands are of stone when one reaches the fringes of the deserts then the famous eleven storey mud brick houses become the norm. The capital Sana'a' is a World Heritage site and as late as 1950 the main gate of the ancient walled city was closed every night at 9 pm. An introduction to this ancient realm where the Queen of Sheba supposedly lived and ruled the Kingdom of Saba will explore three sites representing different time periods and locations.



Note venues and dates with care.

San Francisco, CA!

Our next event is at 6:30 on
October 30, a Friday evening,
at the Golden Gate Yacht Club.



San Francisco—October 30, 2009 Diana Pickworth, Ph.D. EXPLORATION AND EXCAVATION IN ANCIENT YEMEN.

BINTAYN METHUL: a Bronze Age hunting site along an ancient, now subterranean, river bed crossing the desert has both Paleolithic and Neolithic remains. The Bronze Age landscape of death has been extensively explored throughout the Near East, but in Yemen it is remote and difficult of access. Therefore this small glimpse is important within the broader framework of our knowledge. The tomb types on the top of both of the twin volcanic cones of Bintayn Methul are typical, referred to as turret or beehive tombs. These massive stone tumulus structures which encase a rectangular burial pit dot the skyline. Also excavated was the rectangular tomb encased by menhir stones lying out in the desert, from it we extracted the small female idol and a stone hand axe.

KADIMAT AS-SAAF: a late first millennium capital city in the Wadi Tuban was destroyed by the great Sabaean King Karib'il Watar in the eighth century BC. Set on the edge of a fertile wadi it is typical of the city-state development. Survey and collection of pottery indicate that this was a gathering point for the camel caravans before they made the long journey north to Gaza—with the spices, frankincense and myrrh so prized by the Mediterranean world.

'ADEN, HAFA AL-QADI: trade debris

from a disused well, gave evidence of the Chinese trade beginning in the tenth century AD to India, Arabia and Africa. Celadon and later Ming painted porcelain was brought to the Yemeni Rasulid court by the Chinese Admiral whose seven voyages are well documented. A small rescue excavation is the only evidence of this as the area behind the ancient port was leveled by the British at the beginning of the colonial period. Located within Jebel Shamsan's volcanic crater, 'Aden is a city whose natural deep harbor provides a southern gateway, connecting Yemen with both the east and west.

Diana's earliest archaeological research was in Iraq where she worked for four years at the site of Nineveh, near the northern modern city of Mosul, until political unrest dispersed the team to all parts of the Near East. At that time Diana returned to Yemen, flying in 1990 directly from Baghdad, via Amman to Sana'a', the capital city of Yemen, in search of a research project. She has worked there ever since, teaching for three vears at the University of 'Aden. Her first research was on the symbolic role of the bovine statuary buried in the tombs of the kingdom of Qataban. This was followed by her doctoral research on the gemstones, in "Seals of Yemen".



Following Shackleton's Trail after 84 Years

A Flag Expedition across South Georgia

San Francisco

Our chairman believes Jim Sano (MN03) may have the best job in the world as an explorer. He goes everywhere, it seems, as the President of Geographic Expeditions. The veritable National Geographic calls his company "the best outfitters in the world," a well-earned accolade. On September 25, Jim opened our annual lecture series to tell us of his first crossing of the island of South Georgia, a flag expedition following Sir Ernest Shackleton's epic trek in 1916 with his final surge of energy to reach help to save his crew stranded at Elephant Island. Jim planned five days to traverse, with modern gear and tents, scheduled at the beginning of the Antarctic Summer (November); Shackleton took 36 hours with no mountain gear at season's end (May).

Nevertheless, the 23 participants at the millennia, walked across the broad snow fields leading to the 4000' pass in mostly good weather. Mountain weather can change in minutes, and they did have this experience; the tents were handy retreats. The photographs Jim showed reflected the rugged mountain spine of the island. However, their route was not to ascend peaks, rather to pass across the glaciers as easily as possible.

The actual route is 24 miles. (Shackleton did not have this understanding; the rudder of his 20-foot rowboat had broken when he landed at South Georgia's southern shore; he had no choice but to hike across the island; he could not row along the shore.) The white fields of snow were inviting to Sano's trekkers, the pictures showed.

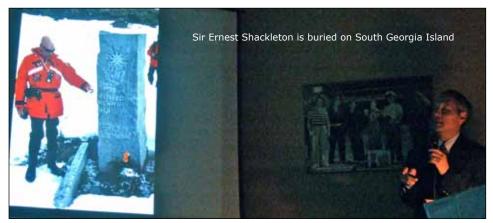


Chair Alan Nichols presents a gift of one of Von Hurson's first aid kit essentials to speaker Sano

Looking down from the pass Shackleton had chosen, one can see the curving valley—into the unknown when Shackleton and his two mates sat on their coiled ropes and let fate define their last struggle to reach Grytviken, the whaling port. One feels sure he felt he could roll into the snow rather than cascade over some unknown ridge, but the decision was a bold one. When Sano's team skied down, the weather turned; in the fog and rain they reached the beach before they anticipated. The glacier had retreated significantly.

Their was no question that the men and women who shared this experience had a tangible renewed respect for the reputation Sir Ernest has earned. Even when crossing the South Atlantic from Uusuhia, Argentina, they passed through 20-foot seas—to give a hint at the 1916 row across 800 miles of open ocean.

Geographic Expeditions repeated the island crossing in 2002 and 2004; if you want to go, they will do so again in late November under the guidance of Peter Hillary and Dave Hahn. See www.geoex.com.



Welcome to our newest member, Dida Kutz! She is a scuba diver and works at the Language School in Monterrey. And congratulations to Bob Higgins whose expedition efforts have qualified him for Member status; he was previously an Associate.

HELP WANTED

Chair needs some help coordinating membership applications of qualified persons who have expressed interest in becoming members.

Send field trip ideas to Von Hurson: wynelady@sonic.net

Local chapter calendar-year dues are \$25; support the newsletter.

(We would like to send as many notifications and newsletters as possible by email, but our mail list remains about 320.)

Please notify Steve Smith at nauticos@oceanearth.org to accept email-only communication.

The newsletter is looking for an individual to report upon members tales, a highlight of our meetings; contact lee@langan.net

Stories Plans for our first Story Night, to be held on January 29, 2010, are well underway; they were part of the conversation at the speaker's table in September. The topic evolved into what are good books each explorers should be sure to read. Jim Sano offered to provide his list—reproduced here. (Anyone who attended his talk certainly should read *Endurance!*)

You editor welcomes comments on this list and additions thereto.

Geographic EXPEDITIONS

Classic Adventure Titles

The Worst Journey in the World by Apsley Cherry-Garrard Everest, the West Ridge by Tom Horbein Annapurna by Maurice Herzog Endurance by Alfred Lansing No Picnic on Mt. Kenya by Felice Benuzzi Into Thin Air by John Krakauer Sailing Alone Around the World by Joshua Slocum The White Nile by Alan Moorehead Seven Years in Tibet by Heinrich Harrer Running the Amazon by Joe Kane We Die Alone by David Howarth Kon Tiki by Thor Heyerdahl Travels in West Africa by Mary Kingsley Carrying the Fire by Michael Collins Travels of Ibn Battuta The Spirit of St. Louis by Charles Lindberg Alone by Richard Byrd The Long Walk * by Slavomir Rawicz

While not a book to be read, congratulations go out to our Chapter Chair Nichols for his published article in the most recent *The Explorer Journal: A Risky Road to Freedom in the footsteps of His Holiness, the 14th Dalai Lama*. It is a story of risk, now and fifty years ago.

(*a great read, but considered fiction these days)

Alan holds strong views about Tibet from his many years of travel to that high plateau, once hidden away and left alone but now an 'autonomous region' claimed by China. He has ridden his bicycle over long distances there; this time he and Becky rode the highest railroad in the world, from Beijing to Lhasa in two days.

Our Best Idea Many of you may have watched Ken Burn's remarkable series on our National Parks. Broadcast sequentially on KQED it became a tour de force to watch the whole series—even when it was shown back to back twice (in prime time and in the middle of the night.) Fortunately it will be available for future viewed, because it takes a while to absorb.

As a personal comment: I had always admired San Francisco's foresight in building the Hetch Hetchy water system which provides superb drinking water far

beyond the City and electricity that powers our municipality. It became a shock to learn, perhaps I should have known, that there was a huge conservationist battle against the flooding of that pristine almost-like-Yosemite valley.

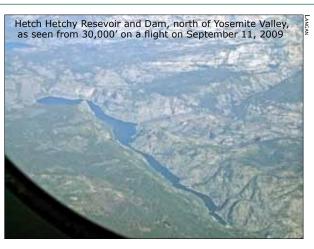
The difference I surmise, is that I was viewing the benefits from the distant future, and the fight was about saving our wilderness. The same fight occurred at Powell Lake with it's Glen Canyon Dam-only it was not in a National Park. Established Yosemite NP already included Hetch Hetchy. I feel sure HH would not be possible today, yet the fresh smell of the Sierras at the Pulgas Water Temple is a reminder that millions have been served well.

Our apology to John Muir. -Lee Langan

The Corner Chair I was so inspired at our last meeting. Jim Sano gave a great talk, but even more importantly so many members and Sirdars contributed to the success of the evening, bringing guests, reporting on expeditions, and announcing the things our Chapter is planning and doing. Von Hurson and her exquisite trek kit for our speaker. (I will be promoting it to the New York officers): Lee Langan and his CD about our field trips (we'll feature it at our next meeting October 30); Char Rygh and Becky for gracious hosting without our chief Host Gerry Elkus (Gerry set it all up in detail and in writing before she left); Sue Estey and her PayPal pitch. (I'll try again; its so handy for everyone).

And expeditions galore: Gene Boudreau (Mexico's Sierra Madre with the Tarahumara); Char Rygh and Ken Howery (summiting Shasta); Anna and Paul Freitas (The Amazon adventrure); Jim and Laura Gregory (Moroco North Sahara trek); Tom Hall and Liz McLaughlin (sea kayaking in Prince William Sound).

Becky and I will attend the dinner in New York in October to hear about risk management in expeditioning and to work in the American Museum of Natural History archives looking for some rare materials for our next expedition. Their archives are huge so if we dont return, you'll know where to send the rescue team.



Be happy, be a **SIRDAR**.* Some new and interesting people have enlivened our chapter this year. The *Sirdars*. In the history of India sirdars have been indispensable as leaders of expeditions and Indian Army logistic commanders. Now they are *local* members in our chapter. Charter-member Sirdars **Von Hurson**, field trip leader; **Char Rygh**, **Nancy Elkus** and their chief **Gerri Elkus**, hosting; **Paul Freitas**, field trip leader; **Kay Schmieder**, Story Hour event chair; and that's just a few.

Bring interested friends and guests to our next meeting and our Sirdar Chair, Member **Joan Boothe** (hoodooskr@aol.com), will welcome them to join. As Sirdars they can be on our email list, bring their own guests to our meetings, attend all functions and participate in our activities. Of course, they can also subscribe to *The Explorers Club Journal*.

Some become Sirdars to take advantage of our support and advice toward full membership in The Explorers Club.

Spouses of members, ARISE. Instead of being a camp follower, participate on your own. Become a sirdar! —Alan Nichols (FN84) (*A sirdar is a local chapter participant **not** a member of the The Explorers Club. We urge all who are interested to become official members, and we will help you do that.)

Volunteer's Dues Even as the year winds down, please pay your Calendar Year 2009 \$25 to Sue Estey via check or Paypal. Here are those who have responded so far!

Guitty Azarpay Richard Blake Barry Boothe Joan Boothe Nonna Cheatham Norden "Dan" Cheatham Nicholas Clinch Wendy Crowder Mike Diggles Susan Dutcher Gerry Elkus Sue Estey Lesley Ewing Richard Faggioli Paul Freitas Charles Geraci Robert Higgins Kenneth Howery Yvonne Hurson Ann Hutchison

Alan Hutchison Krist Jake Anders Jepsen Kathy Jepsen Keith Kvenvolden Elgen Long Liz McLouglin Charles Merdinger Alan Nichols Becky (Nichols) Rygh Charlotte (Nichols) Rygh Edward Pennathur Sudha Pennathur Diana Pickworth **Bob Piper** Elsa Roscoe Rick Saber Robert Schmieder Mark Smith Stephen Smith James Weil

October 2009



Chair: Alan Nichols 415 789-9348 nicholsalan9@gmail.com Vice Chair: Anders Jepsen 925 254-3079 ajviking@aol.com Treasurer: Sue Estey 510 526-2216 sestey@earthlink.net Secretary: Stephen E. Smith Webmaster: Mike Diggles Newsletter: Lee Langan

Diana Pickworth in Yemen 30 October — Golden Gate Yacht Club

Northern California Calendar of Events

(Venues will be identified as soon as known.)

Our next Meeting

October 30 (Friday). Diana Pickworth Yemen Archaeology, GGYC

Future Event Schedule November 20 (Friday) . . . Nathaniel J Dominy Tsavo Lions of yore, Dana home, Tiburon December 12 (Saturday) Alan & Becky Chair's Reception . . . Nichols home, Tiburon December 20 2010 , 2010. Story Night Golden Gate Yacht Club January 29, 2010. . . . February 26 Reginald Barrett . . GGYC March 26 Adam Wolf Siberian Tundra April 30 planning May 21 planning

Earlier Meetings February 27 . Orville Magoon Tsunamis—Real and Personal, GGYC March 27 Payne Johnson Stephens' 1839 Search for the Mayas, GGYC March 27 Mort Beebe Photography Field Expedition, Mt. Tam Christopher Whittier Stories of Gorilla Country, GGYC

Vay 9 Paul Freitas, MD Mav 9 . lay 9 Paul Freitas, MD Medical Emergency Field Expedition, Mt. Diablo Sailing the NW Passage, GGYC May 15 June 6 Angel Island Picnic June 13 Mt. Shasta Climb September 25Jim Sano Retracing Shakleton, GGYC

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

October LOCATION

Date Friday, October 30 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 (25th)

Please mail information (to right),

to Dr. Sue Estey 216 Carmel Avenue El Cerrito, CA 94530

or email <u>sestey@earthlink.net</u> or call (510) 526-2216

Reserve __ spaces for October 30, 2009 for Diana Pickworth at GGYC San Francisco, CA

Cost: \$55

(Calendar Year Chapter 2009 Dues: \$25)

Address (if changed): _

Companion:

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

We have established a PayPal account.

For those of you who have these accounts, you can sign up and remit dinner costs to the NorCA Chapter by transferring money to: explorersnorca@gmail.com



