

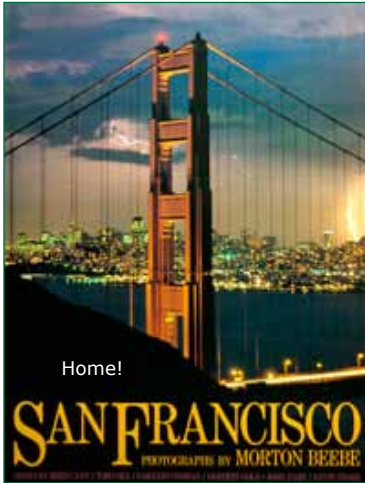
# The Explorers Club

## Northern California Chapter

January 2010

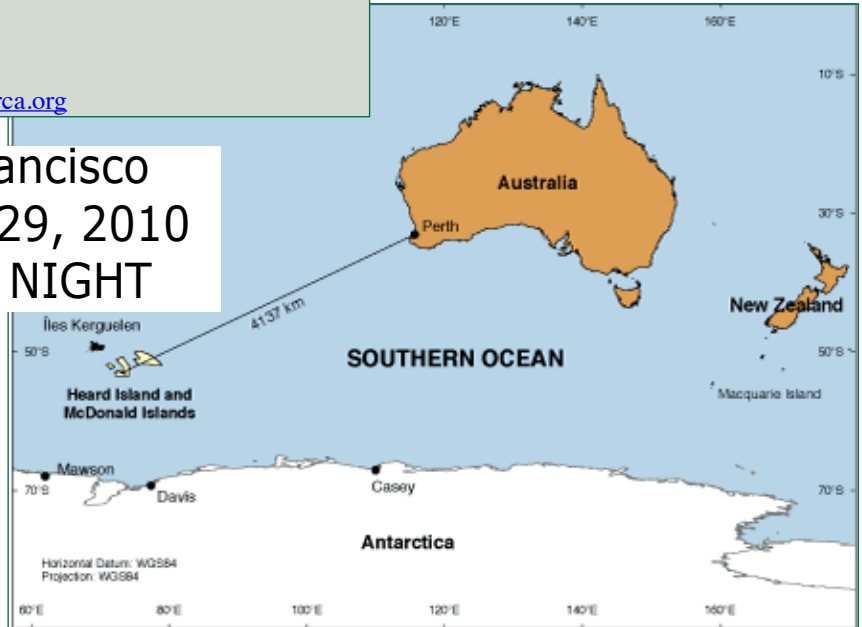
In color at our web site: <http://www.explorersnorca.org>

Note venues and dates with care.  
**San Francisco, CA**  
 Our next event is at 6:30 on  
 January 29, a **Friday** evening,  
 at the **UNIVERSITY CLUB**.



### San Francisco January 29, 2010 STORY NIGHT

We have  
 authors  
 come  
 to hear 'em!



Heard from Heard!

Storynight, Jan 29, will be an exploration—a first for The Explorers Club worldwide—exciting adventures into Africa, Peru, breast cancer, a Miwok Sierra salt factory, a San Francisco best seller, and six of the planets most remote islands. We will honor a half-dozen published authors who are also leaders and members of our Chapter, living proof that we are all explorers, flag expeditions or not, published or not.

Storytelling is integral to our species. We'll see extraordinary pictures, hear fascinating tales, and be inspired, even surprised or shocked. Come see for yourself. Bring some friends.

The line up, in random order:

**Dan Liebowitz** wrote Stanley's *Last Expedition*. He will discuss just how difficult it remained to travel in Africa while he researched the book. The book is a special read about 1000 men trekking across the Congo, indeed across Africa, on a mission.

**Mike Diggles** is a geologist for the US Geological Survey. With his fellow geologist, Jim Moore, he found and deduced the origin of an unusual series of pits in the Sierra's granite. They are not what was originally thought. How did they know?

**Mort Beebe** has been taking pictures of his home town for over fifty years. *San Francisco, City by the Bay* has been released as a third edition. How do you select from a huge horde of photographs? How do you know where to go to get those jaw-dropping images? How long did it take? Kevin Starr, Herb Caen, Barnaby Conrad liked them enough to add text.

**Robert Schmieder** is a ham, a ham radio aficionado. He organizes and participates in travels to the far corners of the earth to

engage in this habit. His story is excerpted from his book *VK0IR Heard Island (1997)*. The expedition was an amateur radio event in which he took twenty men to this sub-Antarctic island in the Indian Ocean for three weeks. They made a world-record number of radio contacts with amateurs worldwide. What did they talk about? The book was written in six weeks,

**Tom Hall** wrote *Health manpower planning in Peru: A case study in planning* in 1969. He has continued as a world-travelling epidemiologist since. This was his introduction to the elusive health systems in low-income countries. The book documents the near bizarre problems and deformities of the Peruvian health and health-training system. We think we have problems, Tom speaks about the near futility of trying to rationalize the health workforce, in Peru or anywhere!

**Liz McLoughlin** has had a bout with breast cancer, and written about it. There is a whole world of pink-ribbon ladies out there that have braved this disease, some more successful than others. Come listen to one who knows.



SALT?  
 Who would have known?



"One cannot relax one's vigilance for a moment!"

**VERY IMPORTANT NOTICE: we will be at a NEW venue in San Francisco!**

# Eat and You Shall be Found

Long after death, the Tsavo lions reveal their meals

Tiburon

Don and Jeanne Dana opened their home, once again, to invite members of the chapter for a lovely evening dinner and wine preceding our November talk; Don, who is Vice President and Grants Chair for the Leakey Foundation and an explorer in his own rights, suggested Dr. Dominy, and aren't we fortunate. Daughter Danielle Dana, a member in New York, also joined in the evening.

It must be great to be a student in Nate Dominy's anthro classes at UC Santa Cruz. He knows his subject and expounds with enthusiasm. The NorCA Chapter got a taste on November 20th, when Dr. Dominy described how he brought mass spectrometry to bear to clarify a century-old massacre at Tsavo, Kenya. Hollywood has thrice projected Col. John Patterson's tale of *The Man Eating Lions of Tsavo*—estimates range from 28 to 135 humans were eaten over a nine-month period as a bridge was being built along the rails crossing Kenya in 1898. The good fortune is that Col. Patterson killed the offending animals. He used the hides as floor rugs back in England until his fortunes faded; he then sold them to Marshall Field. Since the 1920s both mane-less males have graced a diorama at the Field Museum—a bit smaller than in real life because the rug had become bedraggled.

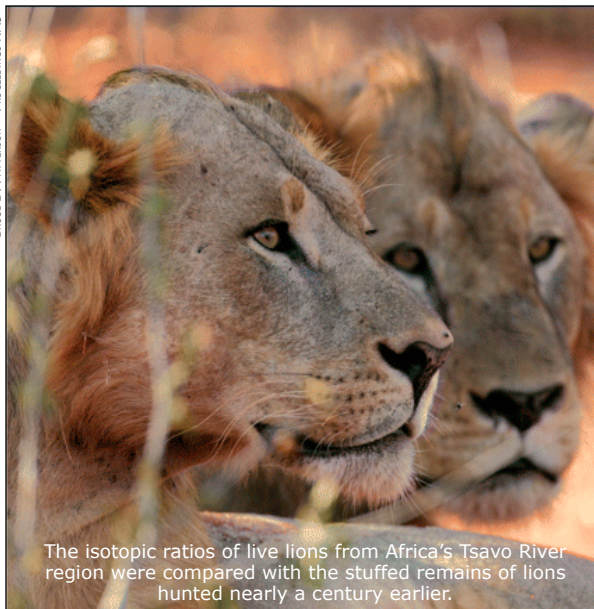
Dr. Dominy's research involves defining the effects of food on human (and animal) development. He is especially interested in what early men ate, and how *homo sapiens* managed to escape extinction as a biped in a world of fast running hunter quadrupeds. Details of his research involve isotope-level investigations using mass spectroscopy. He used this background to study the actual lion skeletons and hides. In particular, ratios of nitrogen and carbon isotopes are clear indicators of plant eaters or carnivores; they can even reveal the habits of whatever other animals a species might have eaten!

A paper has just been published\* where the authors, including Dr. Dominy, explain how they show one of the lions ate 25 people in 1898; the other, 10 people. They may, in fact, have killed many more but been scared off before consumption. The most voracious lion evidenced damaged teeth; perhaps his sore mouth caused him to prey on sleeping humans. The other lion was healthy. It is surmised they hunted cooperatively, normal lion behavior, but the absessed male dragged his prey for a lonely meal. The moral: watch out for lions with bad breath. Watch out anyway. Lions are still eating humans at the rate of 300-400 per annum.

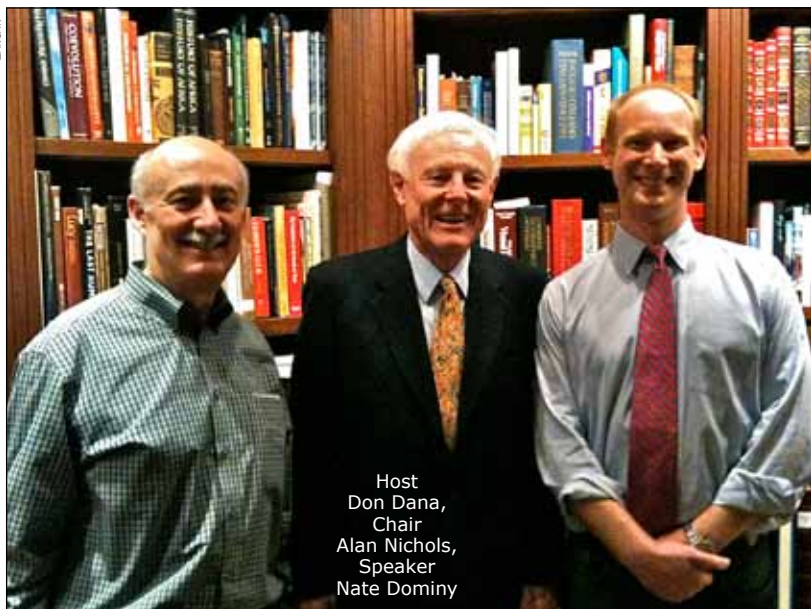
In 1999, Nathaniel Dominy, as a graduate student, was awarded an Explorers Club grant for \$1500. It allowed him to visit Africa for early studies, and he thanked the chapter as representatives of the club for this good fortune. The Club's initial recognition very specifically led to greater financial support. He said this was his first chance to return the favor; we felt fortunate.

\* "*Cooperation and individuality among man-eating lions*" was the cover article published November 10, 2009, in the *Proceedings* of the National Academy of Sciences.

As noted in the announcement, Dr. Dominy was among the *Brilliant 10* upcoming scientists recognized by *Popular Science* in November 2009.



The isotopic ratios of live lions from Africa's Tsavo River region were compared with the stuffed remains of lions hunted nearly a century earlier.



Host  
Don Dana,  
Chair  
Alan Nichols,  
Speaker  
Nate Dominy

## NorCA Chairman's Holiday Reception

It was almost a summer-like evening on December 12th when Becky and Alan Nichols invited the members, their guests and prospective members to their lovely home in Belvedere. Becky surely exemplified her reputation as the "Martha Stewart of the Silk Web" with the elegant décor and delicious food and drink. Nearly seventy folks mingled in active conversation—almost hard to get a word in edgewise amongst explorers. Tibet was a top topic as Alan's famous bicycle route across the Silk Web was shown on a large map hung along one wall. Yemen, even

before it's ominous news, was another, with Diana Pickworth's recent talk in mind. Don and Jeanne Dana may have walked over from their home nearby—they answered lingering questions about the Tsavo lions from the talk they hosted in November. Former Chair Bill and Dana Isherwood were there as a consequence of the concurrent American Geophysical Union meetings in the City.

Everyone had something to say, and everyone learned something new. It was a delightful event. Thank you both, Alan and Becky!

## HELP WANTED

Chair needs some help coordinating National merchandising for Explorer items; contact Alan.

The newsletter continues to seek an individual to report upon member tales, a highlight of our meetings; contact [lee@langan.net](mailto:lee@langan.net)

Chapter dues for 2010 calendar-year are DUE (only \$25). They are not part of the national Club dues; they only support the chapter.

(We would like to send as many notifications and newsletters as possible by email; our mail list now remains about 290.)

Please notify Steve Smith at [nauticos@oceanearth.org](mailto:nauticos@oceanearth.org) to accept email-only communication.



Cave entrance: Jim and Von Hurson, Rick Saber, Alan and Becky Nichols, Char Rygh



Cave Geology 101



An optional small passage

CAVE PHOTOS BY PETER HEMMING

## Finding Dark Holes – A NorCA Field Trip, Santa Cruz County

To some, crawling into a hole in the earth – and slithering about on slippery mud to fit into small spaces – with headlamps as the only source of light in an otherwise amazingly dark world is not for everyone. But therein lies the spirit of adventure that brought together ten hearty souls on December 5 for a venture into a cave to explore the unknown mysteries of the under-world.

It was a blustery but sunny day as we headed for our goal – the Empire Cave in Santa Cruz. Alan and Becky Nichols were there, of course, as was Char Rygh, Sue Estey (a former cave diver), Rick Saber, divers Barbara Berg and Dida Kutz, Von and Jim

Hurson and photographer Peter Hemming.

Led to the mouth of the cave by new Sirdar, Fofo Gonzales, a highly experienced caver (and officer of the local National Speleological Society) who has led expeditions and explored caves around the world, and accompanied by an expert cave geologist, we descended into a world that would prove absolutely fascinating.

Inside the cave were two large chambers that allowed everyone to gather together, while we learned, hands on, about cave geology – specifically this one, made up of a small series of marble caverns. To explore some of the smaller passages required hands

and knees crawling – and some occasional delightful slithering in soft mud. Alan was the first into every one of them. One small passage lead to a tiny chamber with phosphorescent rock and, upon switching off our headlamps, the experience of complete and total darkness was, in itself, mesmerizing.

By the time we surfaced, with huge smiles, we found some of us had become totally hooked on caving. It was a remarkable adventure – proof that, to an explorer, the whole world is a playground – a place to discover what lies above and below the surface of planet Earth.

—Von Hurson (Sirdar09)

**The Corner Chair**—HAPPY NEW YEAR... We have an unusual set of monthly programs already set up (see the newsletter coming events) and field trips. Don't forget to vote early and often for our own **Lee Langan** for the Board when you get your ballot in late January. Our meeting Jan 29 is a first: I strong armed six of our published member authors (see the lead article in the newsletter) to tell us an insider story about their writing; it will be fun so bring an unsuspecting guest!

Can't heap too much praise on the **Danas (Don and Jeanne)**. What a dinner they furnished to the lucky ones who signed up early, and it was capped by Nate Dominys fascinating man-eating lion stories. It's no surprise that he has a grant of \$600,000 to do whatever he wants. I would do that for a lot less!

I decided not to hire a hit man to collect next years dues, but please pay anyway; we need the stimulus package. Speaking of free money, the Chapter received a call to apply but assumed The Senate would balk at sending me to Mongolia on my next expedition.

Congrats to **Bob Higgins**, our new Member Chair; two new Member applica-

tions (former Sirdars, I might add).. Thank goodness our powerhouse Sirdar Chair, **Joan Boothe**, made it back from South Island; we need her.

**Becky**, the Martha Stewart of the Silk Web, put on a fabulous Trailhead party for all members in December. aided and abetted by **Jim and Von Hurson** who furnished the mulled wine that left me speechless.

—Alan Nichols (FN84)

**Playing in the Snow—our first Field Trip of 2010!** Let the fun begin! Save Saturday, March 6 for a crash course in winter survival. We'll be heading for the Sierras for a scenario-studded trek into the snow. Experience it all first hand—Ski Patrol / Mountain Rescue style. More details to follow in future communications, or if you just can't wait, contact Von:

[trekking@sonic.net](mailto:trekking@sonic.net)

**Lichen Looking**—A field trip to Point Reyes National Sea Shore led by member Lawrence Glacy is in the works. If interested contact Von at above email

**Ocean Film Festival** If you have followed these pages over the years you know that chapter member Krist Jake founded the San Francisco Ocean Film Festival. It is growing bigger and bigger in its seventh season, scheduled this year February 3 through 9. Details

[www.oceanfilmfest.org](http://www.oceanfilmfest.org)

**Whale Watching trip Jan 16.** Dida Kutz thought explorers might be interested in a fundraiser for Monterey Chapter of the American Cetacean Society, of which she is on the Board. \$30 for non-members, includes one-year membership (monthly newsletter). This is the height of southerly migration for gray whales. See here more info: <http://www.starrsites.com/acsmb/tripwntr.htm>

**Compass Symposium**— Another reminder for the *Compass Symposium* arranged by the Pacific Northwest Chapter. It will again be held at the Lakedale Resort this Spring. The dates: April 22-25, 2010. For details about schedule, costs and signup, contact: Lynn Danaher (MN05):

[Lynn <islandlynx@aol.com>](mailto:Lynn<islandlynx@aol.com>)

January 2010



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

## Story Night at NorCA 29 January – University Club, San Francisco

### Northern California Calendar of Events

(Venues will be identified as soon as known.)

#### Our next Meeting

January 29, 2010 (Friday) . . . . .several  
Story Night . . . . .University Club  
February Field Trip (TBD) . . . . .L Glacey  
Lichen Field Trip, Point Reyes National Seashore  
Future Events

February 26 . . . . .Reginald Barrett  
California Wildlife . . . . .University Club  
March 6-7 . . . . . Alan Niclols  
Snow Camping Field Trip, Lake Tahoe

March 26 . . . . .Adam Wolf  
Siberian Tundra . . . . .University Club  
April 30 . . . . .Seth Shostak  
Are We Alone in Space? . . . . .University Club

May 21 . . . . .planning  
June TBD . . . . .Angel Island Picnic  
July 1 . . . . .Joint Meet with Dendrology Society  
Marcel Robinson. . . . .University Club

#### Earlier Meetings (2009)

April 24 . . . . . Christopher Whittier  
Stories of Gorilla Country, GGYC  
May 9 . . . . . Paul Freitas, MD  
Medical Emergency Field Expedition, Mt. Diablo

May 15 . . . . . Doug Findley  
Sailing the NW Passage, GGYC  
June 6 . . . . . Angel Island Picnic  
June 13 . . . . . Mt. Shasta Climb  
September 25 . . . . . Jim Sano

Retracing Shackleton, GGYC  
October 30 . . . . . Diana Pickworth  
Yemen Archaeology, GGYC  
November 20 . . . . . Nathaniel J Dominy

Tsavo Lions of yore, Dana home, Tiburon  
December 5 . . . . . Fofo Gonzales  
Cave Field Expedition  
December 12 . . . . . Alan & Becky Nichols  
Chair's Member Reception Nichols home, Tiburon

Send address changes and  
corrections by email to Steve at  
[nauticos@oceanearth.org](mailto:nauticos@oceanearth.org)

**USE PAYPAL!**

### January NEW LOCATION

**Date:** Friday, January 29, 2010  
**Place:** University Club  
800 Powell St., San Francisco, CA  
**Time:** 6:30 - reception  
7:15 - dinner  
8:00 - talk  
**Cost:** \$49 in advance; \$60 on the 29th  
Chapter 2010 dues: \$25  
Please mail information to Dr. Sue Estey,  
216 Carmel Avenue, El Cerrito, CA 94530  
or email [sestey@earthlink.net](mailto:sestey@earthlink.net)  
or call (510) 526-2216

Reserve \_\_\_ spaces for  
January 29, 2010  
STORY NIGHT  
at a NEW VENUE in San Francisco  
Cost: is \$49 (Chapter annual dues are  
now due, \$25 for members and sirdars)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address (if changed): \_\_\_\_\_  
Companion: \_\_\_\_\_

**Please NOTE this NEW location is  
changed from all prior notices.**

### 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](mailto:explorersnorca@gmail.com)

There is also a PAYPAL BUTTON on our website ([www.explorersnorca.org](http://www.explorersnorca.org)); easy to use!



**NEW MEETING  
PLACE!**

**University Club,  
Atop Nob Hill  
where the cable  
cars cross**

The University Club has Valet Parking for \$20; numerous garages (not inexpensive) are nearby. There is often some street parking. Muni, via the cable cars OR Sacramento #1 stops very near the Club; BART connections are easy; even CalTrans is a good option. Car pool! The University Club is wheel-chair accessible.