Matthew Lewin, MD, PhD became Director of the Center for Exploration and Travel Health at the California Academy of Sciences in San Francisco’s Golden Gate Park in 2010. He still practices as an emergency medicine physician in the San Francisco Area. For the past ten years his research has focused on emergency medicine problems as they pertain to travel and expedition medicine (primarily emerging infectious diseases.)

Matt will discuss the fundamentals of travel and expedition medicine as they pertain to emergencies. In order to understand emergencies and non-emergency situations, a working knowledge of those things that can kill you quickly is required. Unfortunately, lack of such knowledge, skill, preparation or judgment can turn a non-emergency into an emergency. He will discuss the manner in which he plans for travel and expeditions from the perspective of a physician and in the context of experiences working in the Gobi Desert, the rain forests of the Philippines and in the Peruvian Desert—with the American Museum of Natural History, Chicago’s Field Museum, the California Academy of Sciences and others. Additionally, he will discuss some recent discoveries and some tricks of the trade.

Dr. Lewin graduated from Redwood High School and the University of California, Berkeley. His medical degree is from the University of Texas. His PhD in Neurophysiology from the University of Texas M.D. Anderson Cancer Center, specialized in the physiology of pain. Board Certified in Emergency Medicine, he was on the full-time faculty of UCSF for seven years. Matt observes that one of his most interesting discoveries is the description of an emerging infectious disease from Central Asia which he identified in paleontologists working in Mongolia. *Rickettsia sibirica* has now been identified on several continents.

Most recently, he has been working on a method to improve the capabilities of obsolete CT scanners found in most developing countries. Using the same methods used for CT scanning fossils, with his students he came up with a way to allow even some Soviet-era CT scanners to perform 3-D image reconstruction of spinal injuries using only software available for free from the internet.

Look forward to another infectious talk from the Academy of Science!
Joan Boothe told a tale that was hard to believe at the November 18th meeting of the Northern California Chapter. Chapter members and friends were on seat edges as she spun details from a century before. Twenty-nine men found themselves at the end of the then-known world, stranded in seriously frigid conditions for an unknown reason and for an unknown length of time. Can you imagine?

Can you imagine watching your ship sink before your eyes while standing on ice knowing that you were the rescuers? Not only were those souls who had endured a year waiting, and now were stranded; so were you. The psychological impact, the mental state we so worry about in modern times, must have been immense. Fret you might, but you would perish for certain if nothing is done. These were explorers of the heroic age. Joan told about Nordenskjöld and his mentor Larson’s plight, and how it worked its way out with the loss of only one seaman (from a heart condition exacerbated by the ardor of the tasks at hand.)

The 1901 Swedish expedition was planned to seek more knowledge of those cold lands of the Antarctic that had been reported by an earlier 1893 whaling search. The vessel, aptly named Antarctic, was captained by Larsen who had sailed on the earlier journey. In 1902, a small scientific party of six men were put ashore to winter-over at Snow Hill Island, as far south as anyone had lived. They would be picked up in the austral Summer of 1903. They built a prefabricated structure and conducted dog-sledge trips to gather specimens and observations. As the time for return approached they maintained vigil at their small building. But, the returning Antarctic had sunk, unbeknownst.

Before she sank she had also left three men at a food depot; they were also stranded. The Antarctic winter was approaching upon all three camps—for those at Snow Hill it was the second winter. Keep in mind there are no forests for fuel, and the penguins were fast fleeing, where ever penguins go.

You can also imagine the audience reaction. What happened? You are fortunate, you can read Joan’s just-published, well-received, very-readable history of the Antarctic Peninsula: The Storied Ice. Anyone planning to travel on one of the Antarctic tours to this vastness should read it as a primer, as well as to learn the fate of the Swedes (Chapter 7). You will also learn the value of careful preparation. It is too easy for us to forget a time when satellite communication, short-wave radio, much less the omnipresence of information technology and world meteorology, did not exist. When you went forth a century ago (or earlier) you had to think about all contingencies.

Joan’s talk was spellbinding and maintained the high level we have become so accustomed to enjoy at our meetings. Thank you.

From the Chair— Who was it that said ‘Things Change’?

When Lee Langan’s Story Night with the National Directors was suddenly changed, we had to jump through a few hoops to reschedule our meeting back to Friday the 27th of January, relocate the venue to the City Forest Club in San Francisco, design a new menu and find a new speaker. Luckily our February speaker was able to advance his presentation by a month. With a big sigh of relief I thank Joan Boothe and Rick Saber for taking care of all those logistics for me.

Meanwhile, we’re working on organizing some field trips. One of them, to the New Almaden mercury mine south of San Jose, is especially interesting for me because, in 1971, I made air-borne mercury measurements there as part of an early environmental study of that contaminant. Back then ‘My Mercury has a tuna in it’ was one of the jokes of the day. It should be an interesting trip. And of course our Annual Picnic Expedition to Angel Island is presently scheduled for June 9th. More about all of that in our next newsletter.

Finally, I want to express the appreciation of the entire club to Rick and Aldeana Saber for hosting our annual Christmas party. Some 80 explorers were in attendance for several hours of refreshments and socializing. Thank you Rick and Aldeana! —Anders Jepsen PhD FN03

From the Board— Why oh why? Why did The Explorers Club Board of Directors opt to change their January meeting from our fair city to the New York Headquarters. Simply stated, your local director (yours truly) offered to defer the meeting because the matters to be discussed required more than the day allotted during the visit. The board also needed some materials that reside in the Lowell Thomas Building.

Over the past few months some natty issues have been under discussion—issues deserving of confidentiality. They are varied and, I can give assurance, deserved of the board's time. You have an active and devoted board, and opinions are held strongly; so there is debate prior to resolution via a vote. Some of the positions held during private conversations have leaked and been scrambled as they get repeated. This has caused consternation, and the resolution thereof requires some extended discussion. Thus, we shall convene where we have time and resources.

When I offered to defer the visit to San Francisco, I confirmed with your current officers that our invitation remains. I am sure the planned Story Night (with Board Members) will be rescheduled as it best fits the Chapter’s plans. Meanwhile the Board will address the matters noted by our Honorary Chairman in a recent message and a consensus shall be reached. —Lee Langan FN99

Member Moment, 18 Nov: Dan Cheatham—Don Cheatham got caught up in the enthusiasm of the Big Game, scheduled for the day following his moments. As a former member of the University of California Band, the echoes of the nearby pep rally brought fond memories about which he gushed enthusiastically. Once a Bear, always a Bear!

The condensed review of his days in the U. S. Islands of the Far Pacific was brief—as a National Park Service ranger, he ranged throughout and rose to manage all of the region.

NorCA Holiday Reception at the Saber’s Dec 5th

Diana Pickworth in “Native Dress”—a Yemini wedding dress

Our hosts: Aldeana & Rick Saber (Vice Chair)

Chair Anders Jepsen & Kathy

Rick, Diana Harry Hicks & Lee Langan

NorCA Chapter 2011 Contributors


Our list will be reset in the next issue! Add Your Name by sending $25 to Treasurer Joan Boothe
January 27, 2012 – Expedition Medicine

Matthew Lewin, MD
Forest Lodge
254 Laguna Honda Blvd
San Francisco, CA 94116-1409
(415) 753-8326

Date: Friday January 27, 2012
Place: Forest Lodge
254 Laguna Honda Blvd
San Francisco, CA 94116-1409
(415) 753-8326

Time: 6:00 - reception
7:15 - dinner — 8:00 - talk

Cost: $49 in advance; $60 after 20Jan
Students: $35. (2012 dues $25!)

Please reserve by Jan 20!

We have an established PayPal account
For those of you who have an account, you can sign up and remit dinner costs to the NorCA
Chapter by transferring money to: explorersnorca@gmail.com
There is a PayPal button on our website (www.explorersnorca.org); easy to use!

WE ARE MEETING AT A NEW VENUE FOR THE NorCA CHAPTER

The Forest Lodge has been sought out as a meeting place in the heart of San Francisco; location details are mapped on page 2 of the newsletter. The Lodge has the catering and space needs we require, and our January meeting will be an opportunity to see how it fits!

There is parking, and the location, while unfamiliar to many, is easy to find just across from the City’s Laguna Honda Hospital.

Muni access is VERY easy from downtown via the light-rail Taraval ‘L’ Line and Ocean View ‘M’ Line. Exit at the Forest Hill station and walk a block north. These lines can be reached by BART and the Peninsula’s CalTrain. (Forest Hill Station is located deeper underground than any other Muni Metro station; so much so that, unlike other stations, most people use an elevator to reach the platform at Forest Hill.)