An Exploration into Cancer

Where are we in finding a cure?

Tony Liang

San Francisco—November 21, 2014

Just about anyone may embark on an expedition, but only an Explorer explores. Exploration doesn’t require an exotic location or death-defying act, and it certainly doesn’t cease in their absence. Indeed, the tireless inquisitive mind of an explorer can do its duty from anywhere. This month’s speaker will speak to us about progress thus far in one of the longest explorations in human history: our guide is scientist Tony Liang, our exploration is in the realm of cancer, and cancer drug discovery, and our destination is a cure.

Tony has been involved in the study of cancer biology for over twenty years. He characterizes the cancer biologist’s challenge as one of resolution, both informational and personal. Why is resolution important for cancer research and drug discovery? As in all things dealing with exploration, the explorer’s personal resolve is paramount to the continuation and success of the expedition. However, no matter the personal resolution, if the explorer does not have concise maps, well-informed guides, or a dependable supply line, the expedition is as good as doomed. This is where informational resolution comes into play.

Cancer is a global disease, because cancer can exist within any cell that is otherwise outwardly healthy and well behaved. If cancer were a house in a subdivision, it would look just like every other house on the block. Only a very close look at just the right elements would reveal its potential to bring the entire subdivision to a state of urban blight and social discord. Thus, if one aims to discover which house in a subdivision is cancerous, a simple address search will not provide the informational resolution required. One must be creative and utilize every tool available—even invent new tools—to obtain contextual information about what the house in question contains, what it doesn’t contain, how it interacts with its neighborhood, how it fits into the social fabric in the city, county, state, and so on.

Tony has worked in both academia and industry. He has been fortunate enough to be a part of the drive toward translational research. That is, his understanding of cancer biology can be used to inform the development of effective therapies, while his understanding of what makes drugs effective can be used to decide which research approaches may be most valuable. This meeting is sure to produce more questions than answers, and we look forward to joining forces with Tony for an evening of considering them.

Mr. Liang is a Staff Scientist at the Buck Institute for Research on Aging in Novato. The Buck Institute is the nation’s first independent, non-profit scientific institute dedicated solely to understanding the connection between aging and chronic disease.

A NorCA Holiday Reception at Chair Rick and Aldeana Saber’s

San Rafael, SUNDAY
December 7, 2014 — 4-8 PM

We continue the tradition, as the season approaches, to gather and trade stories rather than to sit to listen. Once again we shall be the guests at the home of Chairman Rick Saber and his lovely wife, Aldeana. The December meeting of the Northern California Chapter will be held on Sunday, December 7, from 4 to 8 pm at 828 Point San Pedro Road, San Rafael. Members, Sirdars, and their partners, are welcome, together with potential members.

BE SURE to sign up with Steve Smith*. The gathering is free (a $20 donation to the Chapter coffers is welcomed), yet it is very important and helpful to know how many to expect for food and beverage planning!

To the right is a map showing the location of the Saber home by the bay. From 101 find your way onto 3rd Street which becomes Point San Pedro Road. Parking is easy.

* ecnca@oceanearth.org
Mea McNeil knows her bees and queues; on September 26, she shared insight with the chapter into how long these super-organisms have been contributing to man and the world’s ecology. Bees are explorers; they go into the field and return with knowledge for the hive. Mia has devoted her insight into exploring them in return: she knows their history, their biology, their habits, their utility; she is an authored expert.

Bees are super-organisms in the sense defined centuries ago by geologist James Hutton that they are part of a social unit where the division of labor is highly specialized and individuals are unable to survive by themselves. They contribute to our life by pollinating hundreds of plants; often these cannot create seeds without this service. They have been domesticated for millennia, proven by the existence of Neolithic cave paintings. Famous beekeepers such our own Sir Edmund Hillary are counted among professionals. Chinggis Quan’s ‘mark’ remains exposed on many natural hives, a residual of when he collected taxes on honey.

Bees, like humans, spread from Africa into Europe and Asia. It took man’s exploration to bring them to North America. A string of researchers developed our insight into how they do what they do; before such research, humans (and other animals) just enjoyed their honey. In the US, honey bees reached the apex in World War II. For one thing their wax was extensively harvested for various military uses. However, the use of pesticides that followed has had an extraordinary deleterious impact on the honey bee population. In the recent decade over a hundred different poisons have not only killed the vermin they were intended to constrain, they killed man’s friend, the bee. It is not certain this can be reversed, and the resulting impact is life changing. Even ‘green’ Marin County has killer pesticides; one study has determined 95% come from home gardens!

The USDA, under the Obama Administration, has developed a Pollinator Protection Plan. There is hope.

Mea ended her talk by sharing some honey and introducing a Honey Wheel, developed at UC Davis; it is an attempt to allow people to verbalize the different tastes of honey.

Strange Rocks and Stranger Plants: an Exploration of the Presidio Serpentines

On October 25, Dr. Dylan Burge, Assistant Curator of Botany at the California Academy of Science, led members along the Presidio’s Bluffs Trail to look for native plants, where the serpentine outcrop has a profound effect on plant evolution and ecology. We saw bush monkey flower, lizard tail, and blue blossom. The land managers in the Presidio are attempting to fix erosion problems using native plants which form stable mixed communities with deep, intertwined roots that tend to prevent water from flowing and, thus, reduce the erosion.

In addition to its effect on plants, serpentine has a profound effect on human life. The south piling of the Golden Gate Bridge is cemented into this friable, brittle rock, a major earthquake hazard.

At the end of the hike we ascended to the World War II Memorial, to see one of California’s rarest plants, the Raven manzanita, known from just this one wild individual which appears to depend on serpentine soils for its survival. Although this plant is the only ‘wild one’, the species has been replanted into the Presidio as well as in private gardens.

A wonderful day in the wildness of the City, enjoyed by all! Thank you Dylan.

EDITOR’S NOTE: On July 2, 2014, at a Chapter Board Meeting, the decision was made to act upon conversion to digital distribution. Members now have to “opt in” to receive the printed version. As of the October-December 2014 issue (this), you will not receive a mailed copy if you do not specifically ask. Contact Steve Smith to submit your email if not already receiving notices OR for a b&w print. Pass the word!
From the Chair—As we wrap up another year, a look back reveals that plenty of Chapter activity took place in 2014! Many new Members and Fellows have joined our ranks, all with their life’s accomplishments to share with us, perhaps as future speakers. One very interesting prospect, but not quite yet a Member, will be our November Speaker, an expedition, our cells rush to find solutions saving us from an early demise. Join me on the unique trip he plans for us the week prior to Thanksgiving.

As we move toward winter, hopefully a wet one, come one and all to celebrate the holidays one last time at our home in San Rafael, Sunday 7 December, from 4-8 PM. Merriment, camaraderie, shared stories and a roaring fire are sure to dispel the wintry darkness and set our spirits aglow for the holiday season.

Looking forward to 2015, watch for announcements of monthly speakers who will cover an array of explorer topics already in advanced planning and booked. Though not quite the gigantic New York event, we are working on a unique meeting for May 2015, for the installation of our incoming Chair, Capt. Bob Schmieder who has nearly completed our emerging website meant to enhance NorCA’s presence dramatically in 2015. I also acknowledge and thank each and every Chapter Board Member who has tirelessly worked on your behalf and made my task as Chair much easier.

Warmest Thanksgiving Wishes and an early Merry Christmas to all. —Capt. Rick Saber MN’01

The Lowell Thomas Dinner — A Time to Remember

The Lowell Thomas Award Dinner on October 11 in the Los Angeles suburb of Santa Ana was exceptional. The Bowers Museum went all out to host the entire weekend; its Executive Director, Dr. Peter Keller FN’84 offered gracious hospitality. The highlights of the event, many agree, were the presentations during the morning symposium. The Norma Kershaw Auditorium audience was entranced.

The evening gala included a reception in the Spirit & Headhunters Exhibit, an array of interesting offers for a silent auction organized by San Diego Chair Nancy Nenow, a fine meal during which a live auction raised funds for the Club, and an adjournment back to the adjacent auditorium for the actual presentation of the awards. The awardees were each emotionally appreciative for the recognition they have received. (Our Chapter’s Dr. Sheldon Breiner was among the awardees!) The program was introduced by David Dolan FN’03, who had organized the entire weekend with great skill and insight; he thanked all of the West Coast Chapter Chairs for their help and input. Bill Liss MN’13 acted as Master of Ceremonies, giving insight into each individual he introduced.

Two flags were returned: Synnøve Khan returned the Kon Tiki Flag for its place of honor in the Clark Room after a summer at the Kon Tiki Museum in Oslo to celebrate the centenary of Thor Hyerdahl’s birth. Dr. Tom Levy FN’09, who had moderated the symposium earlier in the day, returned Flag 117 from use in Namibia and Jordan. The keynote was delivered by Dr. Wade Davis MED’87, who acknowledged that he has just taken his first ‘job’ as Professor of Anthropology at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver. His life before has been a continuum of exploration and photojournalism. He spoke with inspiration on the contribution that exploration, with science as a base, has made proving that despite the diversity of culture we are all the same humans.

It was a great weekend; thank you David and your team.

From the Board—Your Board deliberated for long hours at Santa Ana preceding the Lowell Thomas gala weekend, as routine business had accumulated since last May. Particularly interesting results were the confirmation of 2015 ECAD details planned in March for the American Museum of Natural History and honorees: Explorers Medalist Neil deGrasse Tyson, Sweeney Medalist Bruce Blanchard (DC Group), Certificate of Merit Awardee Bill Steele & Mandip S. Soin (SE Asia) and Finn Ronne Awardee David Templeman Adams (UK Chapter). New Bylaws will be circulated at the time of the next elections. TEC and Diagio have joined together to support exploration around the world with a sponsorship and licensing agreement, resolving all legal issues that had been raised. Fifty five new members were elected. Your Club has several new initiatives in the works; it is in good shape.

—Lee Langan FN’99

“IT’S A WONDERFUL WORLD” A Personal Photographic Exploration of Nature and Place by Joan Linn Bekins October 14 to November 22, 2014

President Alan and Becky Rygh Nichols

Chair Rick and Aldeana Saber

Chair Emeritus Anders and Kathy Jepsen

Director Lee and Karine Langan

It was a great weekend; thank you David and your team.

—Lee Langan FN’99

President Nichols, VP Constance Difede, Awardee Sheldon Breiner (l-r)
November 21, 2014 – Cancer Science

November 21, San Francisco @ City Forest Lodge

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>FRIDAY, November 21, 2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Place</td>
<td>City Forest Lodge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>254 Laguna Honda Blvd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>San Francisco, CA 94116-1409</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>6:30 - reception</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7:15 - dinner — 8:00 - program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost</td>
<td>$49 in advance; $60 after 18 November</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>$35. (2014 dues: members, $25; Sirdars, $50)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please mail reservation information, checks & dues to Steve Smith, email ecnca@oceanearth.org, call (925) 934-1051, or mail to 402 Via Royal, Walnut Creek, CA 94597

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!

(There is a slight extra fee of $2 for this service.)

*November Meal Options (select your choice)

Chicken marsala, salmon, veggie option: eggplant parmesan

The City Forest Lodge is a meeting place in the heart of San Francisco. The lodge is hidden in a driveway just south along Seventh Avenue as it turns into Laguna Honda Boulevard. There is always local parking in the neighborhood! Please do not park in the adjacent church parking area.

Location details should be researched in advance

There is parking, and the location, while unfamiliar to some, is easy to find tucked away just across from the City’s Laguna Honda Hospital. Once the lot is full, park within the neighborhood, just uphill to the west. 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.)