To all the Members and Sirdars of the Northern California Chapter of 
The Explorers Club

BEST WISHES FOR A HEALTHY AND PROSPEROUS 2021

HAPPY NEW YEAR!
LISTENING, RECORDING AND COMPOSING AT THE ENDS OF THE EARTH
A COMPOSER’S SEARCH FOR MUSIC AT HIGH LATITUDES
Investigating natural environments and ecosystems and human relationships with them.

By Zoom November 20, 2020, Cheryl E. Leonard MN’20

The speaker at our November zoom Chapter meeting was one of our newer members, Cheryl Leonard, MN’20, a musician with an advanced degree in musical composition. ‘How does that sort of thing fit into the world of exploration?’ you might ask. This meeting gave as good an answer as one might hear from any of the other various professionals that are active explorer members in The Explorer Club. It gave a reason for going to those far away places; places that might have particular sounds, sounds that we don’t experience in civilization, and recording them to bring back home for study. In the case of the speaker, she wanted to hear the sounds particular to arctic and antarctic environments.

Why the polar regions? The speaker’s love of winter snows, physical challenges, trekking and adventure. And as a determined explorer she did the planning, got the support from the National Science Foundation, assembled the appropriate equipment, went to the regions, recorded the sounds and picked up relevant artifacts.

Why make Polar music? Ms. Leonard grew up in snow, loves snow and the outdoors, trekking, physical challenges and mountaineering. As a musician, she also loves unusual sounds.

This exploration required special technology including microphones and hydrophones for both air and underwater records as well as ultrasonic sensors to enable access to unique sounds. Operating recording equipment while wearing mittens made things more complicated. While the sounds of the icesheet crumbling into the ocean was fairly easy to obtain, that of the chattering penguins or the roaring walrus was trickier.
Leonard returned home with her recordings and various specimens such as bones, shells and rocks. Her project then was to show how these items - the recordings and the other items - could be used in music. The result was the development of musical instruments of a sort and the composing of musical notation to be followed in performing with these instruments. The result was an array of unique items from which sounds could be produced. With collaborators, she was able to present performances which used them to show, among other things, the sound of water dripping from icicles such as she had heard in a chasm in the antarctic. The illustrations below show the way her music is displayed on paper to guide the player, and also shows how things were set up for a demonstration that was carried out at The Exploratorium in San Francisco.
December is always a time to take account of the past year -- and what a year it’s been. We had two normal meetings then, overnight, group events shutdown and we all learned the difference between zoom and vroom. I am so impressed by how well everyone adapted; but, of course, flexibility and taking on new challenges are all part of being explorers. In March our dinner meeting was to be an in-person presentation and musical performance by Cheryl Leonard. Cheryl had good sense to cancel mid-month and by the end of the month, it was very clear that her judgement was spot on. Members like Jimmy Friedman and Joyce Chang stepped up to give us a functional presence in the virtual world and by spring we started holding zoom meetings. Since few of us were going into the field this year, we even had a few summer presentations. And we are now back to our monthly presentations for the fall and winter. In November, we had an early Thanksgiving treat as Cheryl Leonard showed us some of her instruments, some of her compositions and a sample of her scoring notation. Cheryl has been in both polar regions, and obtained collection permits to remove bones, limpet shells and other objects she could use for music. We have gotten a brief glimpse of her work during the Chapter Connect and this presentation was a chance to learn more about her unique work.

December brought us both sadness and joy. Brigadier General (Ret.) Chuck Yeager, HON’63, died on December 7th. Known for breaking the sound barrier, he said afterwards, “Later, I realized that the mission had to end in a let-down because the real barrier wasn’t in the sky but in our knowledge and experience of supersonic flight.” He was not very active in our chapter; yet I always liked seeing his name in our roster and I will enjoy seeing his name in the 2020 roster for the next year that was sent out recently.

Another moment of joy this month was the chapter holiday party. We started with a recitation by Barbara Berg of The Month Before Christmas by Shawna Hi and a toast to the chapter and to 2021. Then we took zoom to a new level and went to breakout rooms. About 55 members, sirdars and friends talked about all sorts of holiday traditions, various trips (road, diving and climbing), favorite exploration locations, or watched exploration slides taken by our members. I roamed from room to room, seeing great slides of African animals, hearing stories of exploration disasters, talking about wine terroir, legacies of WWII, and my favorite, talking about scotch and the 1907 Shackleton blend. The smaller rooms allowed folks to have more personal conversations, almost like a normal meeting. We finished by recording holiday greetings, and a message for the December 21st HQ Holiday Party about local holiday and end-of-year traditions.

2021 will bring new events and surprises. For the January meeting, Tom Dolan will be arranging a session with book authors. Expect more details soon as the calendar develops. In the meantime, enjoy the holidays, have a good new year, and with the good news about vaccines, we can start planning expeditions for 2021.

Take care and explore safely.

Lesley Ewing, FN’93

FROM THE CHAIR – December 2020

Wanted for Up-coming Friday, 22 January 2021 Zoom meeting

Exploration – A book review

We are looking for several members of our chapters to present a briefing on their Exploration work that includes published work. This would be a 15-minute presentation followed by brief question and answer period. It’s time for us to get inspired, and while we are still restricted in our field work we can motivate each other from our exploration past.

Please contact Tom Dolan, Vice Chair, of your interest to participate. tdolan@outdoorstorms.com
**Chapter Email Addresses and Chapter Phone Number**

- Chair: Lesley Ewing FN’93 chair@explorersnorca.org 510-459-0858
- Vice Chair: Tom Dolan MN’14 tdolan@outdoorstorms.com 510-459-0858
- Secretary: Joyce Chang MN’17
- Treasurer: Anna Freitas MN’10 treasurer@explorersnorca.org
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**MEETING VIDEOS**

Our Chapter tries to record all of our dinner meetings. Videos of recent speakers’ presentations are available on the Chapter Website.

**DO YOU WANT TO GET INVOLVED IN THE INNER WORKINGS OF THE CHAPTER?**

There are lots of tasks that come up during the course of a year: speakers, meetings, field trips, membership, newsletter, etc. A good place to get started is by volunteering to serve on a committee. Talk to any of the Chapter Officers or Directors for more information.

**NORTHERN CALIFORNIA CHAPTER 2021 DUES**

The Northern California Chapter dues are paid for the calendar year. Dues are now due for 2021. New members who sign up in the 4th quarter are covered for next year.

Sirdars have annual dues of $50.00. In addition to their national dues, Explorer Club Members have optional dues of $25.00. Dues can be paid by check payable to The Northern California Chapter of The Explorer’s Club or by paypal. If you use paypal, there will be a $2.00 fee for the service. If you pay by check, please mail your check to Anna Freitas, 161 Camino Posada, Walnut Creek, CA 94595.

Please note that Northern California Chapter dues can be tax-deductible depending on your individual tax situation.

**ECAD 2021**

ECAD 2021 is being planned now, with one option to be an outdoor event somewhat later in the Spring. Check the main website for more details closer to Spring 2021.