“Inspiration for new Explorers must be engendered at a young age, and long before ten years old.” For a curiosity to develop: to both learn and experience the universe in a unique manner that indeed may lie dormant until truly needed, a child must receive the inspiration from an adult whom enchants, inspires and invests time in them by giving love and sharing a personal passion, the subject of the passion is less important, it is rather the intensity and single-minded pursuit of an interest. I would argue that it is solely the passion of the elder for his own field of research that fuels the child’s inner world.


The interface between the offered broader experience to the young child and the experience of the adult is vast. And I feel that the goal is not to teach the child about one’s own subject at all. Far from this concept, it is purely to inspire the child to be fascinated, observant and curious.

As an example of an enduring thirty-year project of research and scholarship that holds one of my passionate interest I have chosen to speak about the relationship between my archaeological research in the Near East and the effect of conflict, both ancient and modern at the site of Nineveh, Mosul in modern northern Iraq.

NARWHAL: REVEALING AN ARCTIC LEGEND
John Wilken – SM’18

Explorer John Wilken’s passion for marine biology ignited when he stepped out onto the tidepools of Fitzgerald Marine Reserve at four years old. Fascinated with the abundance and diversity of marine life at his fingertips, Wilken quickly developed an exploratory relationship with the ocean.

Further ventures included whale watching, visiting the Monterey Bay Aquarium, and SCUBA diving. As an Eagle Scout, Wilken was hired at the Pennington Marine Science Center on Catalina Island, where he worked full-time as an aquarist and science educator for the Boy Scouts. After that experience, Wilken decided to pursue a degree in Aquatic Biology at the University of California, Santa Barbara.

In 2015, at 19 years old, Wilken was selected by the National Eagle Scout Association (NESA) to join the Smithsonian Narwhal Tusk Research Program on an expedition to Pond Inlet, Nunavut. Wilken will discuss his experience as a member of the team, relaying the challenges and learning opportunities presented by the Arctic. He’ll provide details on the setbacks and successes the team encountered as they pursued their goal of collecting organ and tissue samples from a female narwhal. He will also highlight the contrast between the social and environmental worldviews of the team and Pond Inlet’s Inuit community.
HOLIDAY PARTY A ZOOMING SUCCESS
13 DECEMBER 2020

With an attendance of about 70, the Chapter’s annual Holiday party did a good job of bringing members together, but it was a bit tricky to keep up with the action in all the rooms that were humming along at the same time. Chair Lesley Ewing introduced the event and guided us all between the various breakout rooms. Several Rooms had been established to address particular interests of the attendees. These were:

RECIPE
The Recipe section, hosted by Chair Lesley Ewing, reviewed the various submissions and discussed the plan for the mailout to members after the New Year. The meeting then morphed into a break out on Wine.

WINE TASTING
Hosted by Jim and Von Hurson, the participants had a chance to taste and learn about 4 of the Valiance wines that they produce. Beforehand, they had made available bottles of Rose of Pinot Noir, Tempranillo, Chardonnay and Cabernet Sauvignon. (One had to buy a couple of bottles ahead of time to have ready to taste. Such is the limitation of a Zoom wine tasting). Considerations of such oenological matters as bouquet and balance were addressed for attendees.

EXPLORATION PHOTOS
The viewing of past exploration photos was chaired by Anders Jepsen who had a collection from past photo contests. In addition to those, there were choice pics from Jim Prigoff’s collection from an Africa trip and his urban art, as well as some of the interesting photos from Bob Schmieder’s expedition to Heard Island.

TRAVEL
Hosted by Vice-Chair Tom Dolan, what started as a consideration of travel details quickly became a general sharing of experiences of trips to Asia, Egypt and around the US. Doctors who participated shared their experiences and had tips of how to deal with particular health issues while travelling. The impact of the covid-19 pandemic on travel across the world has the potential to change what were the general rules for travel and survival.

ANTARCTICA
At this break out room, hosted by Joan Booth and Paul Freitas, there was great interest in learning how to visit and explore the Antarctic continent. Joan and Paul told of their experiences and answered many questions.
FROM THE CHAIR – January 2021

Happy new year and welcome back to our 2021 meeting events. Despite the promise of vaccines (some of our members already have gotten their second shots!!!), we’ll be having zoom meetings through May. A late summer, in-person chapter picnic might be possible and an outdoor ECAD in New York might also be possible for late spring or early summer. But, for the meantime, be cautious about your exploration efforts. January 20th will mark the one-year anniversary of the first confirmed Covid case in the US and now is not the time to be cavalier.

We’re trying to keep you engaged with the chapter even though we’re doing so from our own homes. The January 22nd meeting will be an evening with authors, featuring Diana Pickworth, FN’01 and John Wilken, SM’18. For our February 26th meeting, Prof. Kent Lightfoot will talk about fires and indigenous land use practices. Francesca Cohn, SM’19 took a class with Professor Lightfoot and suggested him as a speaker for our chapter. On March 26th, Deana Weibel, MN’20 will talk about her recent research into religious and spiritual motivations for robotic space exploration. Our connection with Deana is one of the unexpected benefits of the pandemic; she lives in Minnesota, found us from our web presence and wanted to join our chapter to have some club involvement while everything is happening through Zoom. Meeting plans for April (in the 23rd) and May (on the 21st) are still in development. In May, in addition to a presentation, we will have our annual meeting to elect officers for the 2021 - 2023 period. Mark your calendar now for all future meetings and expect more information about the annual meeting and election in future newsletters.

We will continue to have open Board of Directors meetings. The next two scheduled meetings will be February 7th and April 13th; they will be zoom, and anyone who wants to learn more about how the chapter works or just has some free time is welcome to join us.

Explore safely and bring back good stories,

Lesley Ewing, FN’93
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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 signed up in the 4th quarter of last year are covered for this 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.