



SPRING 2011

The Bagpiper

INVERNESS ASSOCIATION



Coffee, Food and Music Ignite the Downtown

Vladia Turns Thursday Nights into a Music Jam



The happy times are here again crowd fills Vladimir's restaurant, now run by daughter Vladia Nevl Brooks, with music every Thursday night.

Blackbird Café Spreads Its Wings

SELF-DESCRIBED WILD CHILD Jude Robinson first saw Inverness at the end of 15 at the end of a cross-country hitchhiking trip. Four years later she came back, 19 and pregnant. Fast forward many years and many stories and she's back again, this time as the co-proprietor of the brand new Blackbird Café smack in the in heart of Inverness. Her business partner is Carol Whitnah, daughter of the late Barbara Dewey, another woman with a long history of Inverness memories and turning points.

Carol and Jude met when Jude was a hospice nurse for Barbara Dewey, a well-known Inverness character, who died in 2005. They became friends and at some point discovered they were born exactly three days apart, Jude in Los Angeles and Carol in Berkeley. In case you wondered where their sunny smiles come from, those are two 53-year old Leos there, serving coffee and pastries behind the freshly built pastry and coffee bar. On opening day, March 16, they laughed over the definition of sharing the spotlight—"It's complicated but it works"—and happily soaked up the pleasure of having a long-imagined dream turn into a physical reality.

The town realized the Café was open and soon it was a-buzz with locals checking it out and chatting it up with friends. Art Rogers lined the walls with vintage photographs from the 70's and 80's so old timers can time travel back to the days of Point Reyes Nation, as he originally called his photo essay. They plan to open 7 days a week, 7 a.m. – 9 p.m. and encourage musicians and poets and other local activities to make note of the right place at the right time to bring back the old Inverness hang-out-and-get-to-know-each-other days.



Blackbird Cafe co-owner Jude Robinson visits with daughter Zoe and grandson Colton.

Honorary Renaming of Post Office for Jake Velloza

Spc. Jake Robert Velloza, an Inverness soldier who died in Iraq on May 21, 2009, will be honored by an official renaming of the Inverness Post Office, an honor authorized by Congress. A wood sign with his full name will be placed above the post office signs now displayed at a formal dedication ceremony sometime this spring or summer. The honor was initiated by Father John O'Neill, priest of Sacred Heart Church in the years that Jake attended services there, and endorsed by Rep. Lynn Woolsey. Susan Velloza, Jake's mother, explained that the family is responsible for producing the actual sign and hopes those who knew him will participate in making it.

A Fresh New Energy in the ❤️ of Inverness

ON A COLD WINTER (make that spring) night you can drive through the downtown of Inverness and suddenly see a cheerfully lit up scene against steamy windows coming from the new Blackbird Café. The next morning the scene is repeated: hot drinks and pastries and a chance to visit with a neighbor, old friend or visitor who once lived here. The new café now joins Priscilla's Café, the established eatery run by Priscilla Levy, with an ever-evolving menu of old and new favorites, and Vladimir's, founded in 1960 by the late Vladimir Nevl and now run by his daughter. These days Vladimir's is gradually becoming known as Vladia's, combining a menu of Czechoslovakian cookery (drawing old world fans from the whole Bay Area) and plenty of spirits flowing as a young crowd has discovered a friendly home for music and merriment. The word has gone out that Thursday night in Inverness is the place to meet friends and listen to impromptu music offerings. As soon as Vladia moves the tables out of the way from the last diners, singing and dancing begins.

Lots of people are responsible for the new energy downtown. Marshall Livingston, owner of the historic building built in 1900 that recently got a new coat of paint and some nice flourishes (check out the handmade handrail by Don Eastman) has a new partner in his project, Dick Lemon. His participation helped finance septic improvements that keep everything flowing legally and responsibly in an environmentally sensitive area. Among the new tenants in the complex is the relocated *Point Reyes Light* newspaper in the way back. ("In the former laundromat," noted Tom Kent in case your memory doesn't go back that far.)

Next to the Post Office—to be renamed the Spc. Jake Robert Velloza Memorial Post Office—attorney Martha Howard works from an office that has been her digs for 25 years. She's seen it all come and go since 1986 as a tenant on the Vladimir-owned property. Does she know when the restaurant's afternoon bread baking is in progress? You bet she does.

On the other side of the street, the flux continues. Dan Morse's picturesque real estate office with his niece Ruby Neri's horse paintings (the Inverness Library until 1986) awaits its next incarnation. The Dixon Marine Services operation (in the former Inverness Garage) owned by Rebecca Dixon and her husband Mark Sutton is bustling with activity inside and out. The Inverness Store, owned since 2003 by Raj Singh, is in the planning stages for some aesthetic changes and a new paint job. Perilously located a few inches above sea level, the store has weathered two major floods in recent years. On a pleasant weekend day you'll always see people sitting on hay bales enjoying barbecued oysters, populating the picnic table and benches that overlook the bay or the little beach next to the parking lot.

The Inverness Association maintains that beach, Plant Park, Dana Marsh and all the historic footpaths and footbridges that link the neighborhoods of Inverness. The IA also cooperates with the Inverness Garden Club, the Inverness Yacht Club and the Inverness Library in many small ways, financial and administrative. Together, these businesses and others more subtly located here and there throughout the community create the quality of life that matches the surrounding.

Sometimes Inverness seems sweet and sleepy, but circa 2011 it appears to be waking up and sending a signal of hospitality and social activity. On August 13 the Inverness Fair, an event produced by the Inverness Association, will carry that fine theme into a summer celebration. This year the IA especially want multi-generational participation from all the people who treasure the intimacy of small town life. That would be YOU!

Joining the IA means you belong to the one organization that covers the western shore of the Tomales Bay waterfront, from people to parks, and keeps you informed on issues that affect your lives. The IA accepts memberships at whatever level you can afford, above or below the official dues of \$30 individual, \$45 family. (\$10 of those levels goes to the Tomales Bay Watershed Council.) Please join and encourage people you know who love Inverness to join! Our PO Box is 382. You know where the post office is.

—Elizabeth Whitney, Editor



The Inverness Fair Wants You!

West Marin Fund Comes to the Aid of Local Nonprofits

THE ECONOMIC SKIES of West Marin got a little brighter with the announcement of the arrival on the scene of the West Marin Fund, a local collaborative fundraising enterprise aimed at attracting a new layer of monetary support for existing non-profit organizations. A major role of the Fund will be to solicit major donations from a demographic that is not currently targeted: wealthy part-time residents and frequent vacationers.

Many of the non-profits in West Marin (numbering in the 80s) struggle to support their causes by creating labor-intensive, small-scale fundraisers. These stretch the financial resources of the local community—one that includes many residents with limited means—and still leave the organizations short of their financial goals. From the West Marin Fund's point of view, these organizations need to concentrate their efforts less on fundraising and more on their projects.

Soliciting major donations from the individuals of means with long histories of loyalty and involvement with West Marin is an enterprise that takes a certain kind of focus and expertise, and that is what the Fund represents. They have set as their goal an initial capital campaign of \$1 million in cash donations supplemented by planned gifts in wills and trusts.

Another goal of the Fund is to increase volunteerism among the retired
(Continued on page 6)



Lemon & Livingston

EAT, DRINK & BE MERRY



INVERNESS



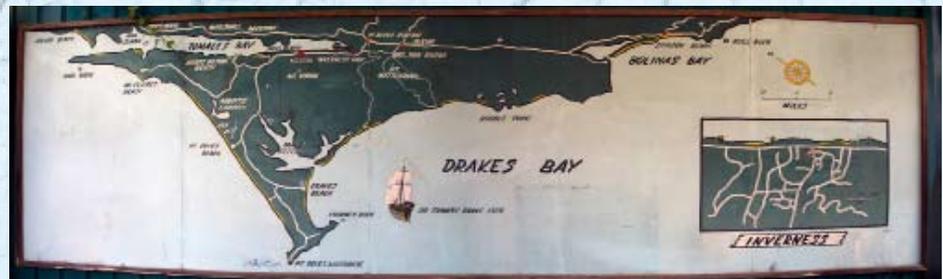
PEACE







Email from Susan Morse Neri about her daughter Ruby Rose Neri, the artist who painted the horses on Dan Morse's office: "BA from San Francisco Art Institute, MA in Fine Art from UCLA, currently shows at the David Kordansky gallery in LA, teaches in southern California, shows in NY, Bern art festivals, was famous graffiti artist in SF (tag "reminisce") in the late '80's. [ed note: she's in Wikipedia!] Married to Torbjorn Vejvi, sculptor, has 2 yr. old girl, lives in LA, wishes she lived in Inverness."



West Marin Fund

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professionals of the West Marin community by helping the nonprofits with their administrative challenges. In today's grant-giving world, most grants specifically target the end-project and meeting staff costs requires more and more local fund-raising. Helping recruit volunteer professional help for the non-profits, along with offering grants for administrative overhead, is another way the Fund envisions supporting the current organizations.

The Fund, similar to other community funds such as the Marin County Foundation, is a California public benefit nonprofit corporation. The initial Steering Committee includes Julie Cassel, Steve Costa, Wendy Friefeld, Gary Ireland, Dick Lemon, Michael Mery, Harriet Moss, Cynthia Ohama, Beth Perry, Suzanne Speh and Murray Suid, many of whom live in Inverness. Dick Lemon is the Executive Director.

The office, he revealed to *The Bagpiper*, is in his bedroom of his Second Valley home, in keeping with the intention of the Fund to keep overhead down. (Meetings, however, take place around a cheerful fireplace.)



The photographer whose images highlight this issue is Elizabeth Fenwick of First Valley. She has had a long professional career and now her heart leads her photography, which includes loving Inverness, co-creating the Latino Photo Project for Gallery Route One and her own fine art imagery. Check her website for the "Our Town" gallery (www.elizabethfenwick.com).

“What we are striving to do with the Watershed Council is to bring people together in a place where we can have meaningful conversations—What do we know? What do we need to know? What can we do about it? What is the best way to move forward?”

Neysa King, Coordinator, Tomales Bay Watershed Council

State of the Bay

THE TOMALES BAY WATERSHED COUNCIL presented a two-day conference at the Inverness Yacht Club last October 22 and 23 on the “State of the Bay 2010.” A full house of 100 participants absorbed presentations by biologists, ecologists, researchers, political officials and local volunteers, all contributing vital data and analysis concerning the state of the beloved body of water that nestles in the heart of the West Marin watershed. The detailed power point reports were mirrored by the presence of the bay itself on a stormy weekend, visible to all from the Yacht Club windows. Even a rainbow showed up in the thick the meetings, accentuating the mostly good news of the health of the bay, its myriad animal species, birds and plant life.

The Good News: *The Giacomini Wetlands Restoration Project proves a huge success.*

Bird populations have made a comeback; vegetation recovery is above expectations; the wetlands species are more diverse and interacting as never before.

“Many of the improvements anticipated over the long-term after the former pasturelands evolved into salt marsh wetlands are already beginning to occur, including increases in wildlife use, changes in the type of wildlife, substantial reduction in pollutant concentrations, and active conversion of the old pastures by establishment of common and uncommon salt marsh plants.”

Lorraine Parsons, Vegetation Ecologist, Point Reyes National Seashore

More Good News: *The bay is responding positively to stream repair and erosion mitigations projects.*

[3500 conservation practices implemented since 1959 on ranches within the watershed.] “A practice could be re-vegetating a creek, creating an alternative water source, fixing a gully...It’s a true partnership of projects and effort across Marin County and within the watershed...It’s been a slow, steady constant rate of work being performed by a group of conservation practitioners.”

David Lewis, Director, UC California Cooperative Extension Marin

The Bad News: *The big picture of climate change and its impact on the ocean, thus the bay, is sobering.*

“Tomales Bay is subject to forcing from three systems, which are all changing in response to global climate change: watershed, ocean and atmosphere. Observations of rising sea level, increasing upwelling, decreasing pH, and more intense winter storms in the region are likely to lead to significant changes in the oceanography and ecology of Tomales Bay.”

Dr. John Largier, Professor, Coastal Ecology University, UC Davis

Navigating the great unknowns in today’s economic and political climate is a major challenge.

Where will funds for the Chicken Ranch Beach Restoration come from? Water Quality impairment issue remains unresolved.

“There’s still a lot left to do is the big take home message.”

Neysa King

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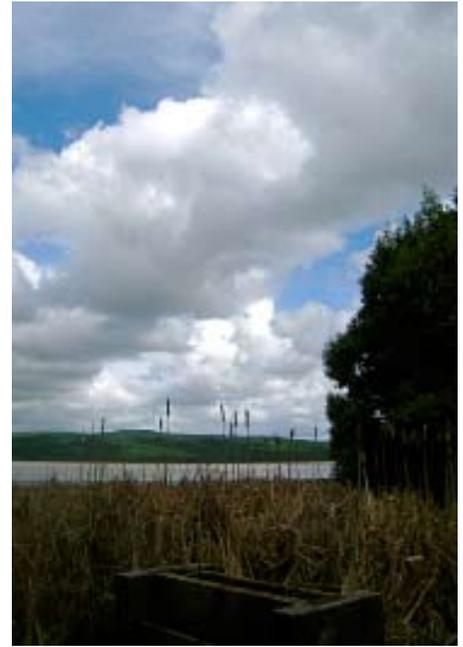
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The golden M, as it was sometimes called, has been removed from the tidelands property owned by Wayne Demmel and returned to Margaret Grade, owner of Manka's. Admired by many for its artistic qualities, the locally designed and built sign was nevertheless deemed an illegal billboard by Marin County officials since it was a permanent free-standing sign located off the property of the business it advertised. The sign appeared in October, replacing an older wooden sign, and was not welcomed by Demmel and several neighbors. The county ordered the sign removed by a March 15 deadline.

The Bagpiper

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INVERNESS ASSOCIATION
INVERNESS FOUNDATION

The Inverness Association meets on the 4th Wednesday of each month at 7 p.m. at the Jack Mason Museum.

The agenda is posted in advance on our website:

www.invernessassociation.org