

# POINT REYES LIGHT

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Art Rogers at an opening last Sunday at Toby's Feed Barn. Rogers exhibited his prize-winning photographs alongside the oil paintings of Dana Hooper. Photo by Robert Plotkin. /25

## Bolinas-Stinson hires Kostelnik as principal

by **Samantha Gilwait**

The Bolinas-Stinson School District has chosen one of its own to become the new principal. Come August, Leo Kostelnik will return to the Bolinas-Stinson campus not as a teacher but as the instructional leader for staff and students.

We were looking for people who had classroom experience and who understood how small school systems worked, said Larry Enos, Superintendent for the Bolinas-Stinson and Lagunitas school districts. The person has to feel like the school matches them and we like to feel that the person matches the school.

Kostelnik has been a teacher at the Bolinas-Stinson School for six years and is

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## Green light bulbs use heavy metal

by **Jacoba Charles**

A diminutive swirl of glass tubing, known as a Compact Fluorescent Lightbulb, has become a symbol of the green movement. But these energy-efficient bulbs come with a downside: a warning label printed on the base of some bulbs announces, "consult local codes for proper disposal" and "contains mercury." They are illegal to throw in your household garbage, and for West Marin and Fairfax the nearest legal disposal sites are in

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**Cowgirl Creamery's 10th Anniversary celebration**

## Frank Cerda, activist, 1913-2007

by **Justin Nobel**

Months before his 95th birthday, Frank Cerda donned cat ears and tail and paraded through Western Weekend in support of feral cats. During his nearly century-long life Frank stood up for the poor and under-represented – from the San Francisco steelworker to the homeless kitty – in rallies and parades across the Bay Area. Frank passed away on June 30 in his Walnut Place home.

It is fitting that his last stand was in West Marin, where he spent the majority of his adult life painting, practicing carpentry, making peach ice cream for children and providing friendship, guidance and laughter for a community he cared deeply about.

"He spoke from the heart," said Judy Borello, a local resident who knew Frank

for nearly 40 years and remembered him as a "wonderful Bohemian character."

"We all didn't agree with him," she said, "but he spoke passionately about what he believed in and we always applauded him and loved him for that."

### Callow "pot boy" grows up fast

Frank Cerda was born July 15, 1913, in San Francisco, the youngest of three brothers. His father was a longshoreman in Barcelona and an anarchist who left Spain in the late 1800s. Frank was always proud of his Spanish heritage.

After graduating high school, he got a job

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### Extended Sheriff's call /3

>> Anti-Semitic graffiti, lewd, pornographic threats are the latest in string of thefts and vandalism at the Lagunitas School.



Frank Cerda (third from right, with beard) in a life-drawing art class in a Point Reyes Station studio, July 23 1974. Cerda was an activist and artist.

## >> Cerda

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as a “pot boy” with a company that painted signs, mixing paints for more experienced painters. On one of his first days he was sent to a brothel to replace a sign above the door.

“I was a callow 17 and-a-half-year-old and I didn’t know a thing about girls,” Frank later told an interviewer. “I became an expert about brothels at a very tender age.”

During Prohibition he worked with his older brother painting gambling table covers and decorating speakeasies.

Frank’s first marriage ended in divorce and, in 1950, he married Mary Yeagle. They had two children, John and Lynn, and later moved to Lagunitas, which was more conservative in those days. Frank’s anti-Vietnam campaigning wasn’t always appreciated, said Lynn.

“He butted a lot of heads in Lagunitas,” she said, “but he loved talking to people with different views.”

Frank later spent time at a commune in

Novato and, in 1970, moved in with Lucy Shoemaker after her husband died in a car crash.

“He impacted our lives in a very special and beautiful way,” said Wendy Shoemaker-Calomiris, one of Lucy’s six children, whom Frank helped raise.

### Activism and adventure abroad

In 1965, while Frank was working as a contractor in San Francisco, he took a seminal trip to Mississippi with four other white contractors to rebuild an African American church that had been fire-bombed. Three civil rights activists from New York had been murdered and Frank’s group was warned that their scraggly appearances and California plates would attract suspicion. Frank’s group built the church in two-and-a-half weeks without any trouble.

At the age of 62, he traveled to Spain with his son John to retrace his roots. But the Barcelona phonebook had more than a page of Cerdas. Rather than try and call all of them they spent time along the coast and in Pamplona, where Frank ran with the bulls. “He was macho in a lefty sort of way,” said John, explaining an act that many of his friends never understood.

Activism and adventure at home

One of his greatest friends was Judy Borello, who met Frank in the late 1960s while he was being carried out of her Inverness home on a stretcher. Judy had hired him to build a 20-foot-high vaulted kitchen ceiling. Frank fainted in the process.

Judy asked Frank to design a mural above the door of her saloon, the Old Western. Later, as a birthday present, he painted the outside of the Western with murals of drunk cowboys locked behind bars. Indoors was a mural of Judy with a cowboy hat and spurs riding a whale.

“After a few totties, he was even more lovable than usual,” said Judy, who kept the mural up for years afterwards.

During his 70s, Frank became involved with the labor movement in San Francisco. He painted signs for rallies and once built a paper mache dragon that breathed dry ice. He stood up for members of other building trades across the city, including Danny Prince, a member of the Ironworkers.

“Building a movement for working class people was a big part of what Frank’s life was about,” said Prince.

During his later years, Frank took many meals at the Pine Cone Diner.

“Do you serve old hippies in this joint?” Frank ritually asked owner Joannie Kwit as he walked in. His usual was the Hang Town Fry, a three-egg omelet with oysters. He rarely missed Wednesday’s special: Halibut fish n’ chips.

“We made sure he had one good meal in him a day,” said Joannie, who brought meals to him in the hospital when he was sick.

Frank sat at the yellow table in the corner, a spot where he could easily look out the window and watch for friends. Tom Kent, a 64-year-old Inverness resident, was a longtime friend who often joined Frank at the Pine Cone.

“He would talk to a kid exactly the same as he would talk to a senator,” said Tom. “He spoke directly and from the heart.”

*Frank is survived by daughter and son-in-law Lynn Cerda Price and Gerald Price of Oakland, and son and daughter-in-law John and Catherine Cerda of Santa Rosa, and four grandchildren: Gelyna Price, 13; Jasmina Cerda, 17; Lisa Cerda, 14; and Lilianna Cerda, 9.*

*A celebration of his life will be held Saturday, August 11, at 2 p.m. at Toby’s.*