

POINT REYES LIGHT

Volume LX No. 49/ Point Reyes Station, California

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ELECTIONS > West Marin cast votes for Obama, McCain, in a high turn-out. /9



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CALENDAR > A soprano from Fairfax joins female septet on Saturday in San Geronimo. /20



An American flag hangs at the Inverness home of Caleb Davis, who returned last month after two tours in Afghanistan and one tour in Iraq. Photo by Justin Nobel.

County says no new permits in watershed

by **Jacoba Charles**

A two-year moratorium on building permits within Stream Conservation Areas (SCAs) in the San Geronimo Valley will be voted on by the Marin County Board of Supervisors on February 12.

A Salmonid Habitat Enhancement Plan will be developed during that time, to provide guidelines for the county's policies and actions in San Geronimo Valley SCAs. The plan and moratorium will affect properties along the 3.5-mile-long stretch of Lagunitas Creek between the Inkwells and the crest of White's Hill.

SPAWN had made it clear that without drastic action – such as developing

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Where have the salmon gone?

by **Jacoba Charles**

Some of the lowest coho salmon runs on record have been worrying fisheries biologists up and down the California coast. Redwood Creek in West Marin had zero fish return for the first time in its history.

"The problem is ubiquitous," said Bruce MacFarlane, leader of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association's Salmon Ecology Group in Santa Cruz. "Everything is down, and none of the creeks are show-

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HABLANDO /4

How did the Latinos vote, and why?

OBITUARY /22

David Fields knew every car and truck in the area

ASK MISSY /15

Becalm yourself, and learn to live simply

Inverness to Iraq, and back

by **Justin Nobel**

Bombs fell over Baghdad on March 19, 2003. The next day, high school students demonstrated outside Diekmann's General Store in Tomales. Three truant youths lay down in the road outside Bolinas, and a cadre of Lagunitas middle schoolers marched over White's Hill.

It wasn't surprising that West Marin youths protested the war. After all, it's West Marin, and they are youths. More surprising was that shortly thereafter, a few young men enlisted to fight in the war. One was Caleb Davis, and last month, after two tours in Afghanistan and one in Iraq, he returned home.

I always knew that I wanted to be in the army, said Davis. "It was obviously an unpopular decision given West Marin is so liberal, but I never made my decision based on other people."

"It was a huge, huge goal," he said, "and a dream."

Caleb grew up in a modest-sized home in Inverness just down the street from the school. He was born in the bedroom, attended to by a midwife and Dr. Whitte. He played soccer in middle school and at Tomales High he was a star linebacker. During his junior year, the football team won the state championship. "He has al-

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Extended Sheriff's call /3

>> A Bolinas man was reported in a subject's house, where he was not wanted. He said he was "just trying to make some coffee."



Caleb Davis at an American compound in Afghanistan. He completed two tours in that country, and one in Iraq. Now he's home. Photo by Josh Hass.

>> Iraq

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ways been very focused and determined," said his mother, Cathy Davis.

"In seventh grade, he came home from school one day and said, 'Mom, I'm going into the military when I graduate high school,' and I said, 'oh, okay.' I figured he had a long time to change his mind and that he probably would, but he never wavered."

During high school he trained: 500 push-ups a day and several miles on the treadmill. He had his eye on a Special Operations unit with a very difficult set of entry requirements. There was a challenging written test and a series of physical tests that included timed sets of pushups and sit-ups and running two miles in under 13 minutes.

"I didn't want to be your normal dude sitting there in Iraq," said Davis. "I was looking for something above and beyond."

He was willing to forgo other passions in pursuit of his dream. In his senior year, he decided not to play football. His coach and teammates tried to change his mind. "People think you're young, you don't really know what you're doing," said Davis. "I didn't play football because I didn't want to get injured and ruin my career in the military."

The team went on to win the state championship.

During his junior year, Davis spoke to recruiters in Petaluma and when he turned 18 he took an aptitude test at a command center in San Jose, a sort of SAT for the military. To get into Special Operations he needed to score above 40. He got a 48, and was assigned a spot in the 173rd airborne division,

an elite unit based in Vicenza, Italy.

On a rainy evening in Santa Rosa just months before he was to graduate high school and ship off, Davis slipped in a wet parking lot and broke the two major bones in his leg. His contract with the 173rd was terminated. He spent five months in a cast that extended from his toes to his knee. The doctor wanted to do corrective surgery but Davis knew that any pins or plates embedded in his skin would jeopardize his chances with Special Operations, so he told the doctor "no."

"He thought it was a stupid decision," said Davis. The doctor told him that he might never walk right again.

The winter after Davis graduated, the cast came off. He wasn't exactly happy to find what was underneath.

"My leg had atrophied so much it didn't look like my leg," he said. "I thought I was doomed."

Around the same time, he got a call from a recruiter in Petaluma: there was a spot in the unit he wanted. He resumed his training and several months later he retook the aptitude test. On February 18, 2004, he officially joined the military. He was sent first to Fort Jackson, South Carolina, then to Fort Gordon, Georgia, where he was trained as a satellite radio operator, then to Fort Benning to receive airborne training and a grueling year of training for Special Operations.

They try to break you down mentally by placing you in extreme physical conditions, said Davis, like making you stand outside in the rain and cold or do a "ridiculous amount of pushups and sit-ups."

Out of a class of 178, 42 graduated. Davis was one of them. Several months later, he was on his way to Afghanistan.

Words of advice

At one point, just before Davis was getting ready to leave, his mother sat him down for a talk. "I just want to let you know there are options," she told him, suggesting that the family would help take out loans for him if it was the incentive of cheap schooling that was leading him into the military.

"I didn't want him to go off to the army just thinking this was the only thing," she said. "I wanted to make sure this was truly what he wanted to do."

Others, including his high school history teacher, Robert Harr, who has been at Tomales for 24 years, encouraged him to reconsider.

Harr enlisted in the military in 1972, in the midst of the Vietnam War. Not wanting to get drafted into the army he joined the Air Force. The war ended six months after he enlisted and he spent most of his time at a base in California. Harr doesn't remember his military days fondly. Once, while traveling at an airport in Texas a girl his age called him a baby killer and spit on him.

"It was disappointing to be shunned by your own generation," said Harr. "You were not a hero. You were a piece of shit."

Many of his friends were misled by recruiters. They were promised great jobs when they got out that never materialized. Most of his memories he has chosen not to remember at all. "The only thing I have left is one old field jacket, one old fatigue shirt and one pair of pants," he said.

He explained that the idea of adventure was what drew 18-year-olds in his generation to the military. "I think we watched a lot of John Wayne movies and we had a lot of romanticism about the whole notion of combat and travel and adventure," said Harr. "Now media and movies like *Saving*

Private Ryan have shown the side of war that's not so romantic and glamorous."

Harr decided that based on his own experiences he could give some perspective to students such as Davis who were eager to sign up. "War is not really something you want to do," he said. "There are other ways you can find adventure and travel."

Initially, he thought Davis was being misled and duped into something he didn't completely understand. "I used to think, 'yeah, yeah, sure, okay, you're going to be Special Operations,'" said Harr. "I didn't think it would pan out."

One time, Harr challenged Davis in front of the class, saying that he knew the unit he wanted to go into and that he wasn't going to make it. "He was so focused that he actually made it happen," said Harr.

"I'll never forget that," said Davis. "It kind of fueled the fire."

Misunderstood

While Davis was gone it was difficult for his parents. "I fully accepted the fact that my son may die over there," said Cathy Davis. "Whenever he would come home on leave it was an unbelievable relief. I almost felt like just falling on the floor."

The Davises often felt that the community cared more about ridiculing George Bush than the safety of their son.

"One guy come up to me and instead of asking how my son was doing, he went into a tirade about how Bush was responsible for blowing up the twin towers," said Mrs. Davis. "I was so mad I couldn't even think. I just felt that was so unbelievably insensitive."

Although she had expressed concerns

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throughout his life about him joining, in the end she was very proud of him. Now, she is happy to have him home.

"He is such a man, and I am so incredibly proud of him," said Mrs. Davis. She hasn't discussed many of his more personal stories yet. "I figure there is plenty of time," she said, "and if he wants to talk to me about it, wonderful."

A changed worldview

When Davis stepped off the plane in Afghanistan it was the first time he had been outside the U.S. He was struck by how rural and isolated the country was. In some villages, kids flocked to their vehicle, asking for food, candy and toys.

"You say 'city' to an American and they think Chicago or New York," said Davis. Over there, you could call Point Reyes a city, he said.

Coming home to America, it's hard not for him to point out the differences. "You get a lot bigger picture about what's really important," said Davis. "Here you have people really stressing about making a lot of money and you go to Afghanistan and you see people who live in the dirt and they survive fine."

"I think Americans are blinded because we're very spoiled ourselves," he added. In the United States, he continued, "you go down these strips and there are just hundreds and hundreds of new cars waiting for Americans to consume. Over there, they don't even have paved roads. It's just ridiculous."

Before Davis was deployed, he married Brianna Thornton, a Tomales rancher's daughter that he went to high school with. He plans to settle down with her some-

where in the area. He just applied to the California Highway Patrol and intends to use money provided by the Montgomery GI bill to cover the \$9,000 academy costs. "I never went into the military thinking or knowing I was going to retire," said Davis. "My goal was just to make it."

The other soldiers

Not all soldiers come home in as good of shape as Davis.

Tony Martin, a native of Valley Ford, was another of Robert Harr's students to recently return from a tour in Iraq. He came to school to say hello to Harr, and spoke to his economics class.

He had some pretty vivid experiences, explained Harr. Shrapnel blew into his back when his Humvee set off an IED and his best friend had his legs blown off.

Another of Harr's students who entered the military was a girl named Jennifer he had coached in softball. She was injured in a parachute accident and suffered brain damage. Military specialists thought that returning her to a familiar environment would be helpful for her condition. One day, she visited Harr at school.

The more I talked the more she said she remembered, said Harr. "I felt really sorry for her."

When I spoke to Harr last week, I asked him what he would do if one of his students today expressed interest in signing up.

"I don't think we should be fooling those that are naive and leading them into something they shouldn't be getting into," he said. "You want to inform them as much as you can so they're not going in blind, but, if someone fully understands what's in store and has done their research and has talked to people and has looked at all available points of view and still feels that way, then I think as a teacher, as a father and as a human being we have an obligation to support them."

Still away

Caleb is home for good, but Jake Velloza, who lives a couple streets over, is still on duty. He arrived home on leave at the end of November. Friends decorated the purple bridge with a sign that read, "Welcome home Jake." But the stay was short. Early last month, he was shipped to Fort Hood, Texas, where he will be until his next deployment to Iraq, at the end of this year.

When I asked his mother, Susan, how he was doing, she seemed overwrought. "He's doing okay," she said. "It's the army."

I called Velloza in Fort Hood on his cell phone on Wednesday. He picked up right away and was eager to talk. It was noisy and there were many other voices in the background. At one point, someone interrupted, and not wanting to keep him from his duties, I let him know he could go if he had to.

"No," said Velloza, "just someone asking for a cigarette."

He said that since elementary he has wanted to be in the military.

He wanted to enlist as soon as the U.S. invaded Iraq, but his parents made him wait. After high school, he lived on his own and worked in construction for a year and a half. He attended training events in the East Bay with Davis and spoke to the same recruiters in Petaluma.

"Now that I'm in the military I can say that the recruiters are good people, but they lie to get you to enlist," he said, "they lie big time."

His desire to enlist remained.

"I just woke up one day and went to talk to a couple of old recruiters," said Velloza. "By the end of that month, I was in the military."

He likes the sense of camaraderie and holds dear some of the friendships he has made. He doesn't like morning drills, combat and deployment.

"I've had some of the scarier moments of my life and I've had some of the most fun moments of my life," said Davis, who is in

a heavy infantry brigade. "I've seen people burned to death. I've seen people shot and I've had RPGs blow up right in front of me." His first tour in Iraq was extended and he ended up being there for 15 months.

He said money is a big reason for why he is there. "You don't get any taxes taken out except for social security," he said. He will get an enlistment bonus of \$21,000 over three years and he earns between \$16,000 to \$18,000 a month.

"It really isn't that much," he said, "but I'm single and I have nothing to spend it on."

He has thought about staying after his tour is up, but says many of his sergeants are leaving, and he doesn't want to get stuck with new people. "Now that I've been to war I can understand what's going on in the world," he said. "Before, I had no idea what it was like."

The war is regularly misunderstood and misrepresented by the media, Velloza said.

"When a reporter comes to your base they just want to know how many people have been killed," he said, but a lot more than that is happening. "We're passing out books. We're building schools. We're trying to get this country back in line. It's not us who are screwing everything up, it's the insurgents. We build a school and a week later they blow it up."

Velloza was friendly and chatty. He laughed freely and didn't avoid any questions.

Then, suddenly, he becomes serious.

"Now, I have to go," he said.

David Roy Fields, 1957-2008

by Justin Nobel

David Roy Fields, who mended West Marin's ailing automobiles and trucks for more than 30 years, passed away last week at the age of 50.

He basically knew everyone in the area who could drive, said his daughter, Bridget Fields. "He loved to work with cars."

David was born on October 31, 1957. He grew up in a home overlooking Tomales Bay, on the road above the Marshall General Store. He spent his childhood roaming nearby fields and meadows with his brothers, Duane and Dennis, and his sister DeeDee. The children had a pet cow that lay in the yard and served as a couch on lazy summer days.

David went to elementary and middle school in a one-room schoolhouse across the street from St. Helen's Catholic Church, "a little house on the prairie kind of school," said Bridget.

At Tomales High School, he played basketball but his real passion was football. He was wide receiver.

At age 17, David began working in the shop at the gas station in downtown Point Reyes Station. He took courses at an auto mechanic school in Colorado, and afterwards returned to the same Point Reyes repair shop.

In 1981, he married Jeannine Lehnhard. They had three children, Bridget, Thomas and Nicholas.

While his kids were growing up, he owned a Chevy Chevelle, a Pontiac GTO and an El Camino. "He liked the muscle cars," said his daughter.

On weekends, he raced a little red pinto with yellow flames on the hood at a track in Lakeport. "There were a lot of characters up there," said Bridget, who remembered watching her father from the grandstands, "a lot of beer drinking and hot dog eating."

David won a trophy for most improved

racer one year.

The family lived in Petaluma but David spent much of his time at the shop, in Point Reyes Station. When his kids visited him there he would teach them how to change the oil or replace a flat.

"The necessities," said Bridget, "so that if I ever broke down I could fix it myself."

David is survived by his three children, Bridget, Thomas and Nicholas Fields; his father John Fields; his brother Duane Fields; his sister DeeDee Fields; his mother-in-law Jacqueline Lehnhard and his father-in-law, the late Bill Lehnhard; as well as numerous nieces, nephews, sisters and brothers-in-laws. A memorial mass will be held at St. Vincent de Paul Church at 35 Liberty Street (between Western Avenue and B Street) in Petaluma on Saturday, February 9 at 1:30 p.m. In lieu of flowers, the family has requested, donations be made to the Fields Family Fund, Wells Fargo bank, Acct. # 3673711853.

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