

POINT REYES LIGHT

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COUNTY > Novato landfill has plans for expansion, locals protest at public hearing. /6



INVERNESS > Teen beats national mountain bike champ, talks about the sport. /7



ECOLOGY > Oil spill preparedness six months after the Cosco Busan fiasco. /14



CALENDAR > Opening party for KWMR's visual art project and auction is on Sunday. /20



May 1st is celebrated in various ways, from bonfires to labor demonstrations to May Pole dances, to a German rite in which a tree wrapped in streamers is delivered to a sleeping girl.

Apple moth spray angers Bay Area

by **Jacoba Charles**

The use of an aerial pheromone spray to control the Light Brown Apple Moth was postponed by Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger last Thursday, following a meeting with government officials from Marin County.

"I am very gratified that the governor listened to my concerns about the safety and efficacy of aerial spraying," said State Senator Carole Migden, who spearheaded the meeting.

The spraying program has been postponed until toxicological tests study the safety of the spray for the health of humans

Please turn to **page 13**

Stinson loses Shady Rest

by **Justin Nobel**

Richard Lacaze, a lifelong Stinson Beach resident who hauled the town's trash for nearly a decade and provided a crash pad for wayward wanderers and down-on-their-luck locals on his leafy lot behind the firehouse, passed away last week. He was 55.

"He lived hard," said Elliott Kolker, a friend for almost three decades and the last in a long line of companions to whom Richard offered shelter. "Richard had a heart of gold—he basically died from trying to make up for all the excess all at once."

Richard Warren Lacaze was born July 10, 1952 at Marin General Hospital. His father, Henry Lacaze, ran Henry's Service, a plumbing and trash hauling company he

Please turn to **page 9**

ARTS /5

Locals hit the stage with talent and scripts in hand

OBITUARY /5

Longtime Bolinas-Stinson School teacher passes on

ASK MISSY /15

Ladybird Johnson spoke for our children's children

Uncertain future of seeds

by **Jacoba Charles**

Genetically engineered plants turn seeds into property, warns author Claire Hope Cummings. They are created by multinational biotechnology companies, then patented.

When their patented gene is incorporated into someone else's crop, as in the case of Canadian canola farmer Percy Schmeiser's case, the courts have ruled that the companies own that seed too.

Schmeiser was sued by Monsanto for ownership of his seeds in 1997 when a neighbor's genetically engineered crops pollinated his fields. He fought the law-

suit, lost, and was catapulted into a life of advocacy at age 62.

With the lawsuit, he lost control of plant stock that he and his family had been breeding for over fifty years.

"It's not very funny, you know, when farmers lose their rights," said Schmeiser. "Organic farmers could wake up tomorrow morning, and if they are contaminated they no longer own their seeds or plants as happened in my case."

Genetically modified seeds are a growing presence on our ecological – and economic – landscapes, though the changes they incur are largely unobserved. Food

Please turn to **page 10**

>> Shady

continued from page 1

started in the 1940s. His mother, June Lacaze, did the books.

Richard and his older brother Skip attended Stinson Beach School, at the time a two-room school house with four grades to a classroom. When Richard was four the family moved into a home on Willow Avenue, where he was to spend the rest of his life, a bucolic three-and-a-half-acre patch beneath the Bolinas Ridge where two creeks come together.

“When we were growing up there wasn’t much going on indoors,” said Skip. The boys walked to school along Shoreline Highway and spent afternoons with friends playing in their backyard, one of the few flat spots in town.

Richard graduated Tamalpais High in 1970 and began working for the family business.

Some years earlier Henry had bought garbage routes in Bolinas and Mill Valley and dropped the plumbing. The family hauled trash to the Martinelli Ranch outside Point Reyes Station.

Henry died in 1971 and Richard took over, supervising operations until the business was sold in 1979. He welded and worked construction, later taking a job at the recycling center in San Rafael.

During this time his mother began lodging guests, including several drivers who did routes for the family hauling service. Eventually the homestead earned the nickname “Mama June’s Shady Rest for Family and Friends in Need,” after a popular 1960s TV show called Petticoat Junction, in which a redneck family ran a hotel in the sticks.

“It’s always been a really outgoing, great family to have around,” said good friend Craig Gilman, who spent weekends with Richard fishing and four-wheeling in the Sierras.

Richard fished locally too, casting for stripers and perch from Stinson Beach with friends like Glenn from the Market.

June died in 1985 and Richard remained on the property, continuing the tradition of largess. He set up ping pong tables, amassed pets, including a cat, Mittens; dogs, Beaver, Hobart, Stranger and later Juggles; and three potbellied pigs, Hootie, Furman and P-Winkle. He continued to offer lodging to virtually anyone who asked.

“It became more and more just friends of Richard who lived there,” said Skip, who explained that his brother became too generous with those he let in, and people took advantage.

“A fair number of times he ended up with people who weren’t paying their share of utilities and who weren’t assisting in keeping the place livable,” said Skip. “Some didn’t behave too well.”

“At its best it was for family and friends who needed a place to get back on their feet,” said Elliott, who was born in Missouri and first came to West Marin in 1979 and



Protesters of the Iraq War walked Main Street on Thursday in Point Reyes Station. Photo by Justin Nobel.

moved into Shady Rest in 2006.

At its worst it was a hideout for drugged miscreants and petty criminals. Several lodgers were suspected of a local house burglary and the spot earned a reputation. In July of 2006 a female housemate fell asleep with a lit joint at her side. It wasn’t long until Shady Rest was engulfed in flames. Five people were in the house at the time, but thanks to heroic efforts from other housemates and a hasty firefighter response, no one was killed or severely injured. But the heyday of Shady Rest was over.

“For the next year we did our best to get rid of the scumbags and hangers-on,” said Elliott. Richard took charge of his own life, too.

“He lived hard, and after the fire Richard did his best to reverse the trend,” added Elliott.

Six months ago he went to the California Pacific Medical Center to inquire about receiving a liver transplant. “They said, ‘Son, there’s nothing we can do for you unless you start helping yourself,’” Elliott explained.

He started chopping wood, riding his bike, joined a gym over the hill, walked Juggles on the beach and went to Alcohol, Narcotics and Weight Watchers Anonymous meetings.

But apparently it was too late. On April 21, Richard died from conditions likely related to his weakened liver.

On Monday afternoon under a sunny sky and a warm breeze, Elliott showed me around Shady Rest. He wore socks under leather sandals, black jeans and a blue T-shirt that had on it drawings of dogs making peace signs. Long waves of graying hair contrasted with a curling yellowish beard.

Except for a woman working on her Volkswagen, the place was devoid of people, but packed with things, and pets. Fur-

man, a bristly black and white pig, nudged the dirt in the driveway with a square bulky noggin. A cactus with broad fleshy pads seemed out of place beside the half-burnt home. Lower windows were boarded and upper ones framed by peeling shingles and burnt siding. The home’s frame was intact but the second floor was gone and shafts of sky punched through a collapsed roof.

“She came here around Christmas,” said Elliott, pointing to the woman milling about inside her VW, which was on metal stilts with the top popped. “She said she just needed to fix her engine—Baghh!”

He led me into the home, the bottom floor of which was unaffected by the fire and apparently structurally stable. A bag of Idaho potatoes, some lettuce and three Budweisers rested on a cluttered wood table in the kitchen.

For the pigs, explained Elliott. “They love beer.”

The cabin where Richard slept was nestled under pines, cozy-looking and flanked by a freshly chopped pile of wood, evidence of his twilight effort to get in shape. Nearby, Hootie rooted in the dirt, tusked, blackened and hideous.

Laid out in perplexing precision on a freshly cut lawn were a procession of items passed by time. A cushioned lawn chair, a clothes line with a purple sweatshirt hung to dry, a motorboat half cloaked by a light blue tarp, a stumble of large stumps, a dismantled motorcycle and a 1950s green pickup sunk into the yard with an overgrown cabin strapped to its back.

“Here’s a typical story,” said Elliott, noting the defunct truck. “Some guy comes, says he will build a spec house on the back of a truck, says it will only be a couple feet above the cab and it will only take him a few months...”

The unwieldy rhomboid structure stood perhaps 20 feet above the cab, like someone had been carrying something heavy and plunked it down to rest but never picked it back up.

“He wanted to cut down some trees to get it out of here,” said Elliott. “We said, ‘Geeettt outtaa here!’”

Across the yard the second-story windows of the burnt home stared back at us. Dark mold draped the side of the home like mascara running from the glassless eyes of its naked windows. The entire property seemed like a campy reenactment of some long outmoded lifestyle, dregs of a bygone era.

“We had all sorts of plans,” said Elliott. “We were gonna bury someone on the property and dig them up and say we were an Indian burial ground and open a casino.”

“Just because the plan didn’t work doesn’t mean it wasn’t a good idea,” he added wistfully. “That’s what Richard would have said if he were here now.”

Mittens curled on the gravel drive and somewhere Furman and Hootie unearthed grubs.

“No one else is coming down here,” said Elliott. “I’m the last one.”

Richard is survived by his brother, Skip Lacaze; sister-in-law, Vera Dahle-Lacaze; nieces Ellie and Katie; aunts Dorothy Lagorio and Kathy Ward, as well as numerous cousins and friends. A ceremony remembering him will be held Sunday, May 18 at the Stinson Beach Community Center at 11:30 a.m. Donations should be sent to the Liver Disease Management and Transplant Program at the California Pacific Medical Center: CPMC Foundation, P. O. Box 45902, San Francisco, CA 94145 or www.cpmc.org/giving.