

# MOUNTAIN NEWS

Fall / Winter 2010

**MOUNT DIABLO INTERPRETIVE ASSOCIATION**

*The Bi-Annual Membership Newsletter*

## **PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE.....**

There has never been a more active time for your Mount Diablo Interpretive Association or our Mount Diablo State Park, and it is my privilege to serve as your president during this exciting time. The story continues to be one of both financial challenges for the California State Park System and the increased need for cooperative associations and their members to fill the gap. I am proud to say that MDIA and its membership are stepping up to meet this challenge through many programs that serve to enhance the visitor's experience in the park.

Earlier this year, as recognition for many of the important programs that your association provides to the park and its dedication to state parks protection and advocacy, MDIA, along with many other state park cooperative associations and related organizations, received a State Parks Grassroots Champion Award from the California State Parks Foundation. As a member of MDIA, this award belongs to you, and you should be proud of the positive impact you are having on the California State Parks System. This award was given to us on State Parks Advocacy Day, when California State Representatives open their doors to talk about how they can support the state parks in these tight budgetary times. While the California state budget continues to be a challenge, I was personally motivated by the fact that many of our representatives use state parks regularly and appreciate the value they bring to the state.

A wet and cool spring brought a long season of blooms of wildflowers to the mountain, and as I write this, the summer heat has dried all but the most protected portions of the mountain. The visitor centers at the summit and at Mitchell Canyon have been busy, keeping our docent volunteers busy even on the hottest of days. Fall should bring cooler weather and of course the tarantulas. Fall is a great time to take a guided hike sponsored by MDIA. If you have not purchased a new 6th edition Mount Diablo Trail Map, now is a great time to do so and take a fall hike on the mountain.

Another feature of the park that I would suggest that you make time to visit is the Native Plant Garden located behind the visitor center in Mitchell Canyon. New gravel paths were placed in the garden to lead you around many identified native plants that can be found throughout the park. This is a great place to brush up on your botanical skills or simply enjoy a stroll through the garden.



*Jim Mitchell, MDIA President*

Many of the programs that MDIA started this and last year are starting to come to conclusion. The most obvious of these to the park visitor will be renovation of the summit museum. The Summit Visitor Center and Museum hosts thousands of visitors from around the world every year, and MDIA is partnering with the State Parks Department to assist with this renovation. Through deferred maintenance funds allocated to the park in 2008, the Parks Department is leading an extensive renovation of the interior of the summit building to add new interpretive capabilities and visitor facilities. As a member, you have received an appeal

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### **MDIA BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

Jim Mitchell, President  
Leslie Dawson, Vice President  
Stephen Elliott, Treasurer  
Helene Crowley, Secretary  
&  
Burt Bogardus, Leslie Contreras, Sue Donecker,  
Jim Holmes, Ruth Ann Kishi, Ken Lavin,  
Roi Peers, Maria Tice, Nancy Topp, Mike Woodring,  
Clayton Worsdell, Ralph Wright

## MEET MDIA BOARD DIRECTOR HELENE CROWLEY



Helene Crowley was elected to the MDIA Board in 2008 and currently serves as the Board secretary. She is also a hike leader and is responsible for interpretive panels.

Helene was born in Indianapolis, Indiana, and grew up in Massachusetts, where she enjoyed reading, music (she sang in the church and school choirs), pets, and family. This is where her love of the outdoors developed. Since then, Helene has lived in Germany, France, New Jersey, Missouri, and Connecticut, as well as

California. She has been living in the Bay Area for the past 15 years with her husband Ted. She has three adult children: two daughters, Jennifer and Jessica, and one son, Alex.

Helene earned BS and MA degrees in English and an MBA. She taught English and reading for a few years, then worked in the software industry at several startups. She now works at the San Francisco Federal Reserve as a software testing engineer.

Since her childhood, Helene has added cooking and gardening to her passions, in addition to hiking, music, pets, and family. Besides leading hikes for MDIA, Helene is also a Sierra Club Hike Leader.

When asked why she volunteers for MDIA, Helene responded, "To give back to the mountain, which is a true treasure and has given me many hours of joy, serenity, and beauty. I also enjoy working with the Board and making a contribution there."

Another talent that Helene shares with MDIA and park visitors is her poetry. Be sure to read her poems in various issues of the *Mount Diablo Review*.

If you wish to submit articles or photographs for the

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email [mdiamail@aol.com](mailto:mdiamail@aol.com) or

leave a message at 925-927-7222.

Submission deadlines:

Spring/Summer issue February 1

Fall/Winter issue August 1.

## LOUISE ARCHER WIHERA JAN. 12, 1923 – FEB. 24, 2010

Louise Wihera, long-time MDIA volunteer, passed away on February 24, 2010, due to complications from a long-term illness. Born and reared in the Bronx, Louise was a city girl and "New Yorker" until she and husband E. John Wihera moved to the Bay Area. She embraced California living and came to love the hills of Mount Diablo, which surrounded her. For many years, she was an active member of MDIA and would drive to the top of the mountain weekly to volunteer her time and share her love of the mountain with visitors.

According to fellow MDIA volunteer Edith Valle-Riestra, "A big contribution she made to her beloved mountain was to make wild-flower displays which were placed in the large display case at the Summit Visitor Center. She was given permission by the State to collect the flowers on the mountain for this purpose. This was perhaps two decades ago? Now, each spring, as the mountain bursts forth with blooms, we shall remember her as we enjoy their beauty."

Louise is survived by her four children, Anne Donaker, Carolyn Summerville, Richard Wihera, and John Wihera; nine grandchildren; and three great-grandchildren. Louise was preceded in death by her husband of 47 years, E. John Wihera. Louise will be missed by her many MDIA friends.

### **SUPPORT MDIA THROUGH WORKPLACE CAMPAIGNS**

MDIA members who are, or were, employees of the County, State, or Federal Government, are no doubt familiar with workplace giving/donation campaigns. These annual employee campaigns provide current employees and retirees with the opportunity to designate pre-tax monetary support to eligible non-profit organizations. Application for inclusion into these campaigns is rigorous, and non-profit organizations must comply with qualitative and quantitative guidelines before they are to be considered. MDIA is pleased to announce that it will again be included in this year's campaigns. If you are participating this year, please consider donating to MDIA to help support MDIA activities, publications, and specific events geared to enhancing and enriching one's experience in Mount Diablo State Park. These workplace giving/donation programs usually run September through December. If you have any questions, please feel free to call Jim Mitchell at 925-939-6421, or email him at [mitchell.mdia@gmail.com](mailto:mitchell.mdia@gmail.com).

Thank you for your consideration!

## VIERA-NORTH PEAK – 165 ACRES OF WILDFLOWERS, A HOT SPOT FOR BIODIVERSITY

by Seth Adams,

Director of Land Programs at Save Mount Diablo

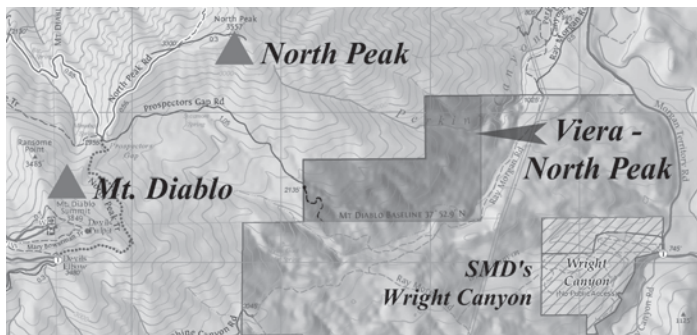
“Viera-North Peak is a natural addition to Mount Diablo State Park, with which it shares its border, and has been a Save Mount Diablo (SMD) and a state park priority for decades,” said Ron Brown, SMD’s Executive Director.

The Viera-North Peak property, on the morning side of Mount Diablo, rises from near Morgan Territory Road toward Prospectors Gap between the two peaks. The 2,300-foot elevation property, on the slopes of Diablo’s North Peak (3,557 feet) east of Clayton, is one of two highest elevation private properties remaining on Mount Diablo (3,849 feet) and is one of three highest left in Contra Costa County. The property is visible for over two hundred miles, with views to Lassen Peak, the Sierra, Half Dome, and Mt. Whitney.

### Botanical Treasure Chest

“Viera-North Peak is the best and most botanically rich property that Save Mount Diablo has ever purchased,” said botanist Heath Bartosh of Nomad Ecology. “It includes globally rare plants like the endemic Mount Diablo jewel flower, Diablo manzanita, and the Mount Diablo fairy lantern, which is as common as a weed. It has some of the finest serpentine habitat yet to be protected, high diversity and many transition zones plus a good range of topography, all packed into 165 acres.” More than 50 rare plant species have been recorded on the property. “Endemic” indicates exclusively found in a specific area, in this case on Mount Diablo.

On the slopes of the main peaks, the property shares their complicated geology, resulting in diverse soil types. With its range of habitats, exposures, and elevation change from 1,000 feet to 2,300 feet, all these factors combine to support hundreds of plant species. Viera’s soils are so rocky and there is so little grassland that neither feral pigs nor grazing have done much damage. Small rocky meadows are flower fields, more blooms than nearly anywhere on the mountain. Bartosh has also confirmed the threatened Alameda whipsnake onsite, and mountain lions have been sighted in the vicinity as well.



### Lucy Viera and Mary Bowerman

The Azevedo-Viera ranching family has owned the Viera-North Peak parcel since 1904. The family moved to the Mount Diablo area in the late 1800s. Antonio Correa Azevedo acquired the family’s first parcels on Mount Diablo in 1900. His brother Joseph Correa Azevedo acquired neighboring lands including the Viera-North Peak parcel in 1904. After Joseph’s death, his widow Maria Theresa Cardoza Azevedo married her brother-in-law Antonio, combining the family’s land.

The Viera-North Peak parcel was transferred to daughter Luzia “Lucy” Correa Azevedo Viera in 1924. Lucy Viera held the property until her death in 2002, and it has been owned by her estate in the Lucy E. Viera Trust since then.

SMD co-founder and botanist Mary Bowerman first hiked the parcel in the 1930s as part of her botanical research on Mount Diablo. After she co-founded Save Mount Diablo, Mary made sure that Viera-North Peak was on SMD’s very first priority list 38 years ago. She never let the organization lose sight of its importance.

“This is a great example of why Save Mount Diablo’s work is important,” said Brown. “The State’s budget crisis has slowed park expansion. Bond funds, which will eventually allow the addition of Viera-North Peak to Mount Diablo State Park, have been frozen. We’ve worked hard to keep Mount Diablo State Park open – state parks are an important part of California’s economy – and we are stepping in to make sure that high priority properties such as Viera-North Peak aren’t lost.”

Save Mount Diablo is conducting a capital campaign to raise the remaining funds needed to ensure permanent preservation of Viera-North Peak. For more information, visit [www.savemountdiablo.org](http://www.savemountdiablo.org) or call 925-947-3535.

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from me to donate to this very important project, and there is still time to contribute to this cause. We are looking forward to the grand opening and a whole new experience for the park visitor.

MDIA is also working on several publications that will be available later this year and next at the visitor centers and local sports and book stores. New publications will include a photographic art book of Mount Diablo featuring photographs from renowned local photographer Stephen Joseph, a new trails guide, a new book on mountain lore that will replace our current place names booklet, and a new brochure describing common mammals that can be found in the park.

MDIA, of course, continues to play its role in support of the docent program, Summit and Mitchell Canyon Visitor Centers, park aide staffing, trash removal projects, trail signage program, and Junior Ranger program.

To provide these and other services and support to Mount Diablo State Park, we need your continued support. There are several new ways in which you can provide the funds needed to support your park through MDIA. You can now donate your used vehicle through our vehicle donation program. Also, at no cost to you, you can get a percentage of your retail spending donated to MDIA through eScrip. Information about these programs and others can be found on our website, [www.mdia.org](http://www.mdia.org).

I would like to personally invite you to our annual membership meeting that will be held at Mitchell Canyon on the afternoon of October 30, 2010. At that meeting, I will review all of the programs that MDIA supports, give recognition to the many volunteers who donate their time to the state park, and have a guest speaker who will talk about some aspect of our beautiful park. I look forward to meeting each of you at the meeting.

Like most organizations, MDIA does some communication via email; it is not only timely but cost-effective. If you would like to add or update your email address in the MDIA email directory, please provide it to Nancy Topp at [mnvtopp@pacbell.net](mailto:mnvtopp@pacbell.net). Please be assured that your email address will not be shared with any other organization or company without your permission.

### **MATCHING GIFT PROGRAM**

If you or your spouse work for, or retired from, a corporation that operates a "Matching Gift Program," your contribution to MDIA may be matched by your employer, which doubles the impact to MDIA. In addition, if your employer conducts an annual charitable gift drive, you can designate MDIA to be the recipient of your payroll deduction gift. Please ask your employer's Human Resource office if your employer has a "Matching Gift Program" or a "Workplace Giving Program."

Events/hikes about Mount Diablo are described on the MDIA website:  
<http://www.mdia.org/events.htm>

We encourage you to frequently check the listings and join in on these activities. Thanks!

## **MDIA BOARD MEETINGS DATES FOR 2010**

*The MDIA Board meets Thursdays from 7:00 p.m. to 8:45 p.m. at Sports Basement, 1881 Ygnacio Valley Road (across from Heather Farm Park), Walnut Creek, 925-941-6100. Sports Basement generously allows MDIA to use one of their private meeting rooms.*

*MDIA members and their guests are most welcome to attend Board meetings.*

- *September 23, 2010*
- *October 28, 2010*
- *December 2, 2010*

*Saturday, October 30, 2010: Annual MDIA Membership Meeting in Mitchell Canyon.*

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