

MOUNTAIN NEWS

MOUNT DIABLO INTERPRETIVE ASSOCIATION

Spring/Summer 2016 • MDIA, PO Box 346, Walnut Creek, CA 94597-0346 • 925-927-7222 • www.mdia.org

MDIA President's Message . . .

by Mike Woodring

With the El Niño rains finally returning, the flanks of Mount Diablo are once again green with splashes of colorful wildflowers dotting the landscape. Spring is an especially rewarding time to volunteer in Mount Diablo State Park, with the moderate temperatures and gorgeous scenery. But really, any time of the year is an opportunity to volunteer for Mount Diablo Interpretive Association (MDIA).



Raindrops on Dove Lupine

As you may already know, MDIA is the park's cooperating nonprofit organization with its charter to support Mount Diablo State Park (MDSP) in its interpretive and educational activities and other projects as requested.

MDIA publicizes docent-led hikes and presentations in the park and also provides financial support for trail maintenance, park structure maintenance, trash removal, and trail signage projects. These activities, as well as staffing the Mitchell Canyon Visitor Center with docents, are under the auspices of the MDSP Volunteers in Park (VIP) program. MDIA and its board of directors provide the funding and leadership that coordinates much of the VIP volunteer activity with park staff.

In addition, MDIA has its own operations to manage. The internal operations aspect of MDIA is not as inherently visible to the general public as, for example, publicizing docent-led hikes, but it is vitally important

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 4)

Annual Membership Meeting

The 41st Annual MDIA Membership Meeting was held on Saturday, October 24, 2015, at the Mitchell Canyon Picnic Area. MDIA President Mike Woodring chaired the meeting, highlighting accomplishments from the past year and looking ahead to plans for the upcoming year. A couple of major accomplishments to note included publishing the *Hiker's Guide to Mount Diablo State Park*, which describes 50 hikes in the park; and completion of major volunteer maintenance projects on the restrooms at Macedo Ranch and Rock City. Further information on accomplishments and plans will be covered in more detail in MDIA's 2015 annual report.

Mount Diablo State Park Report

Park Superintendent Ryen Goering thanked MDIA for all its help and support. The park is experiencing a staff shortage, so volunteers are relied on even more for day-to-day operations.



Park Superintendent Ryen Goering

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 4)

MDIA Remembers Sam Smoker



Sam Smoker at 90, April 4, 2014

RICH MCDREW

On Christmas Eve 2015, MDIA lost one of its key founders, first president and long-time docent Sam Smoker. The 91-year-old, described as an MDIA icon, passed away from pneumonia, leaving a saddened community to remember his countless hours of dedication to the organization.

Born in Michigan, Sam moved to California at a young age. He earned a Bachelor of Science degree in biology and teaching credentials at San Jose State, positioning him to teach biology at a community college. Sam's career soon veered toward wildlife and the outdoors as he helped to develop three natural history museums. From 1965 to 1985 he served as Executive Director of the Lindsay Wildlife Museum (now Lindsay Wildlife Experience).

Living and working in close proximity to Mount Diablo, Sam was approached in 1974 by Ed Earl, Superintendent of Mount Diablo State Park, also a friend and former classmate of Sam's from his days at San Jose State. Ed's idea of creating a volunteer organization that would supplement the work of the rangers, promoting educational and interpretive activities and publications in Mount Diablo State Park, was enthusiastically received by Sam.

Shortly thereafter, MDIA's first board meeting was held in Sam's living room in Walnut Creek. The date was January 30, 1974. Sam was elected president of

the young organization and, together with a group of likewise dedicated and talented volunteers, worked late into the evening compiling the carefully worded charter that would launch MDIA's activities. While MDIA has grown and expanded its service over the years, the organization has retained the core purpose that was envisioned by Sam and the initial board on that January evening in 1974.

After Sam's term as MDIA president, he continued to volunteer with MDIA for an astounding total of 40 years. A familiar figure in the Mitchell Canyon Visitor Center, Sam was generous with his time and knowledge. It was obvious to all that he received a great deal of joy from passing along his vast knowledge of Mount Diablo to visitors of all ages. Sam has been described by long-time friends and docents as humble, fun, and always wearing a smile. He will be truly missed by all of us at MDIA, and by the many people he touched through his stewardship on the mountain.

In accordance with his family's wishes, donations in Sam's memory may be made to MDIA.



Our friendship with Sam Smoker goes back further than his stint with MDIA. We knew him first as Yosemite Sam from the National Park when he arrived to be the Director of the Alexander Lindsay Junior Museum in its formative years. We both worked with him on many projects, and our sons volunteered at the museum caring for animals and going on many adventurous trips. Well, this led to years of interaction. Eventually, with the guidance of Ed Earl, state district superintendent, he helped to create our MDIA. He was an unusually slow hiker because he found so many interesting things to look at and to explain, like the creatures living under rocks (remember to point them away from you). Or he would explain the contents of poop (the kids always liked that)... He was particularly good with the younger visitors when working as a docent.

Farewell, Sam, from your many friends.

FRANK AND EDITH VALLE-RIESTRA
Frank is also a Founding Member of MDIA

Sam Smoker was to MDIA as John Muir was to the Sierra Club.

RICH MCDREW
Former MDIA President



Meet MDIA Board Member Jim Bily

By Debbie McKeown

When MDIA secretary Jim Bily was growing up in the Midwest, his interests veered toward sports and reading, and he remembers that he actively hated hiking! That's an extraordinary admission from a guy who has hiked every single trail in Mount Diablo State Park. A trip to the Rocky Mountains in his mid-twenties changed Jim's mind about hiking for good. He fell in love with the mountains, took some climbing classes and, as they say, the rest is history. He has been hiking and climbing ever since.

Jim earned a BA in Economics from the University of Missouri at Kansas City and, with his wife Linda, has lived all over the United States while pursuing a career in the commercial property and casualty insurance business. After retiring on June 26, 2013, it didn't take Jim long to get involved with MDIA. He started volunteering as a docent at the Mitchell Canyon Visitor Center the very next day! As Jim says, "I've been hiking in the park since the '80s, even before we lived in the Bay Area, and I knew I wanted to do something in the park as a major volunteer activity when I retired."

Jim was soon recruited to MDIA's board as secretary, a role that requires significant attention to detail and organizational skills. Given his business background, Jim is well equipped to handle the minute-taking and coordination of official board paperwork that fall under the purview of the board secretary. While continuing as

a docent at Mitchell Canyon Visitor Center, his love for the outdoors has prompted Jim to also get outside and work on the trail crew, trash removal, act as a backcountry rover, and occasionally lead hikes and take on other special projects in the park. You might think that all this time on the mountain is enough to fill any volunteer's calendar, but Jim also volunteers as a teacher's aide for a second grade class at Sequoia Elementary School once a week.

When not busy at one of his many volunteer roles, Jim can often be found scheming his next adventure. "Hiking and

travel are my two main leisure activities. I started ticking off things on my bucket list in my mid-30s and have done a 'big' trip at least once a year since then. But the list is getting longer, not shorter! I've had the privilege of visiting and hiking in 19 countries and 48 states." Jim accomplished one of his travel highlights in 2015 when he traveled to Nepal to hike to Everest Base Camp. Not surprisingly, his training for this strenuous trek was completed primarily on Mount Diablo.

Jim considers Mount Diablo's extensive wilderness to be one of the greatest assets of the Bay Area, and hopes that through his volunteer efforts he can help others have the same positive experiences in nature that he has enjoyed.



Jim Bily on 2015 Nepal Trek



I own one of the new Mount Diablo State Park T-shirts, but mine says, "I Hiked Them All!"

THANK YOU, WHEEL WORKS!

WHEEL WORKS
CAR CARE THAT WORKS WITH YOU FROM THE TIRES UP

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BRIDGESTONE
Firestone
MICHELIN
IRELLI
GOODYEAR
Continental
FALKEN
YOKOHAMA

At no cost to MDIA, this retail tire store is recycling dozens of old tires found in Mount Diablo State Park.

Annual Meeting (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

With a view to making the park more accessible for all visitors, Superintendent Goering noted some infrastructure work that was accomplished over the past year. The popular Mary Bowerman Trail was upgraded to Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards, and new telescopes and interpretive panels will be installed in the near future. Several ADA improvements were completed in the Rock City area.

Developing the Mount Diablo State Park Road and Trail Management Plan was a major initiative for the park in 2015. The public was invited to submit comments through community meetings or the park's website, leading to significant discussion and feedback. Since then, park staff members have responded to these comments, and the plan was submitted for official review.

Superintendent Goering noted that safety on Mount Diablo's roads is an important issue that is being looked at closely by park staff. Over 30 yellow caution signs were installed along the roads. Drivers entering the park are advised to drive carefully and share the road with bicyclists. Working with CalTrans standards, the park will conduct a survey for double yellow line striping.

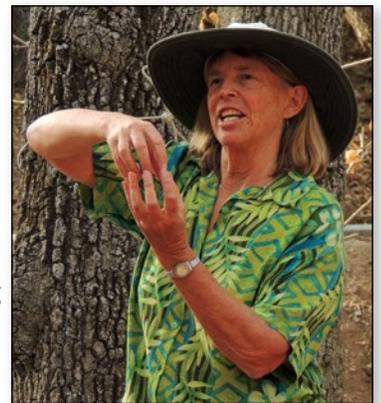
MDIA Board

Returning members Ruth Ann Kishi, Dereck Love, and Mike Woodring were re-elected to the board, and Bill Karieva, Jim McBride, and Jenn Roe were elected as new members.

Departing board members Leslie Contreras and Maria Tice were thanked by President Mike Woodring for serving nine years on the board. Leslie co-managed the Mitchell Canyon Visitor Center and was the hike coordinator. Maria was MDIA's bookkeeper. Both will be greatly missed as board members.

Kate Marianchild Shares Some Secrets

MDIA volunteer Staci Hobbet introduced guest speaker Kate Marianchild, author of *Secrets of the Oak Woodlands*. Kate gave an entertaining and informative presentation concentrating on interdependent relationships among many of the species common to Mount Diablo.



Kate Marianchild

President's Message (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

to keep the organization running smoothly. Consider a former board member who quietly but diligently handled MDIA's bookkeeping for many years. It may be an underappreciated task, but it is essential that it be accomplished accurately and on a timely basis.

If you would like to find yet another way to contribute to the park via MDIA, we would welcome additional administrative assistance in various areas, be it grant writing, merchandise fulfillment, concession management, and so on. We also very much appreciate volunteers who can offer technical expertise in areas such as website management and maintenance.

Our organization encourages people to volunteer as much and as often as they like, with no minimum number of hours a week or fixed-term commitment. It's rewarding to see that many MDIA volunteers have been doing so for many years as they find the experience worthwhile and appreciated.

Whenever I go into the park, whether I'm at the Mitchell Canyon Visitor Center, Rock City, or the summit, I see the lasting results of the work of volunteers, and I am in awe at their accomplishments. I can also appreciate all those unnoticed tasks the public will never see that are as instrumental to our success in supporting Mount Diablo State Park as are the obvious ones. It feels so good to know that we as individuals and as a group can contribute so much to our beloved park and the environment around us.

If you are interested in learning more about opportunities to volunteer, I'd love to talk to you. Please email me at President@mdia.org.