

March 1, 2012

Westport Wave

Published by the Westport Village Society, P. O. Box 446, Westport, CA 95488

Happy Landings!

Just as life itself, your monthly *Westport Wave* is like a box of chocolates – you just never know what you’re going to get next! This month, we seem to be full of “landings.” First, starting right here on our front page, is an important update on the big project to keep our Westport Union Landing State Beach open this year. On page 5, we have planes landing in Westport in the 1950’s, plus a surprising and dramatic emergency landing of a Coast Guard helicopter here 19 years ago. And just last month (see Kathryn LeMieux’s photo at right), alert shopkeeper Pam Halverson spotted a raven landing on a roof one morning across the street from the Community Store – with a real Rubber Ducky, which the raven left there on the roof! (And who says nothing ever happens in Westport!)

That reminds me – as we all know here, but visitors may not, it was our own world’s-first Westport Rubber Ducky Race that 21 years ago changed Mother’s Day forever! This year, our 22nd Annual “Contest On The Creek,” complete with great food and festivities, will be held on May 13th. Stay tuned for further updates in April, and Happy Landings! – *Steve Brigham, Editor*

Westport Union Landing Update

Thad Van Bueren

The Westport Village Society is actively engaged in negotiations with the California Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) to operate Westport Union Landing State Beach in an effort to avoid closure of the facility June 30th. DPR indicates our proposal is one of the most thorough they’ve reviewed, and as I write this, Bill Knapp and I expect to meet with top level staff to discuss the details. We have learned that no tribes or other commercial operators have come forward as yet to operate the park.



Last week’s *Advocate News* reported that bills were introduced in the State Senate (Noreen Evans) and State Assembly (Wes Chesbro) to stave off closure of some or perhaps all of the 70 State parks on the closure list. We urge you to write your legislators and the governor to support these measures. Meanwhile, WVS continues to make plans to address uncertainty about the park in our neighborhood. Bill Knapp attended a February 23rd seminar given by DPR at the CV Starr Center for all prospective operators. That provided an opportunity to meet representatives from the State Parks Foundation who we have been pursuing for startup grant assistance. Bill and I will also meet with top level DPR staff in the next week to further the negotiation process.

As explained in an article last month, there is a need to find a strategy to address an anticipated shortfall in the lean operating budget Bill Knapp developed. WVS also faces some challenges addressing risks such as liability. There is a possibility that liabilities may be managed through umbrella insurance coverage supplied to a group of operators under the aegis of Mendocino Area Parks Association or a similar entity. Senior staff at the State Coastal

Conservancy have agreed in concept to enter an agreement with WVS that would give partial liability immunity. We will also continue to work with tribes to see if they are willing to assist. In addition to representatives from the Coyote Valley, Sherwood Valley, and Cahto (Laytonville) tribes, we are now talking with individual members of the Round Valley Tribe who attended the February 23rd DPR meeting.

If you are interested in supporting our effort to keep Westport Union Landing State Beach open, donations can be sent to the Westport Village Society at P. O. Box 446, Westport, CA 95488, with a note that it is for "W-UL Park." All funds will be used to support the park. Your generous support and actions to prevent closure are greatly appreciated!

The Bookmobile Is Back!

Our excellent traveling library, the Mendocino County Bookmobile, is back in Westport! Well, twice a month, anyway, for a half hour on each visit. So mark your calendars for Thursday, March 8th, and Thursday, March 22nd, from 9:00 to 9:30AM across from the Westport Community Store. In April, they'll be here on Thursday, April 5th and Thursday, April 19th, same times. The massive Bookmobile roams the entire county throughout the month, and is quite an operation. So please visit them when they're here, and let them know how much we appreciate what they do! You'll love taking advantage of this excellent service, and they'll be happy to talk books with you, as well!

Water District News

In February, representatives from The Westport County Water District were pleased to have John Baker of California Rural Water visit us for a no-charge review of our facilities, operations, and financial data. With 50 years experience in operating, directing, and consulting for water and sewer systems of all types, John's current position allows him to visit and consult with small water districts throughout California, many very similar to our own. John was quite impressed with both our operations and our financial management, commenting that our system improvements over the past few years make us a real "cut above" most districts of our size. And he commended the excellent work of both Director Toby Hickman and Operator Josh Azevedo.

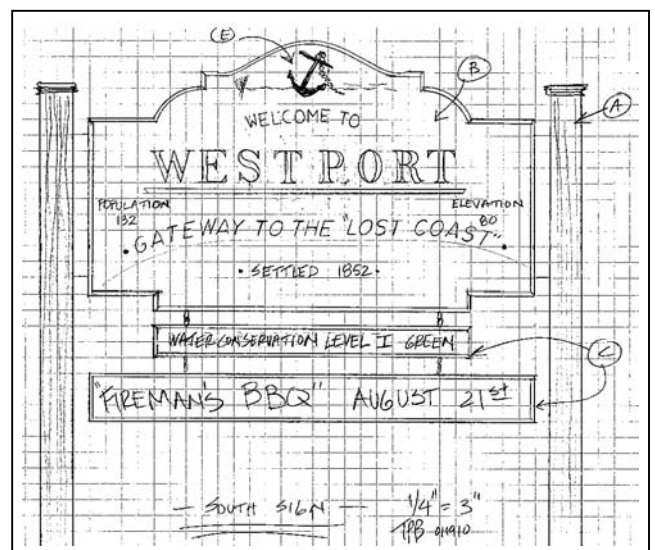
We are now in the process of finalizing our budget process, which is necessary to determine exactly what rate increases will be needed this year. More news on this will appear in the April *Westport Wave*, and in the meantime, watch the Community Bulletin Board at the Westport Store for further updates.

Welcome To Westport Sign

Tom Bangs

After years of having our small green Caltrans "Westport" signs missing and us being a "nameless" town, I've decided to try and give back our town its identity again. Three or four years ago, I noticed that our Caltrans signs, both north and south, were missing. After waiting for Caltrans to replace them, I brought the subject up at a Westport Village Society meeting two years ago. Most of the members didn't even realize that the signs were gone – I even had to take a drive with some of them to prove the signs' non-existence. I proposed that we could perhaps replace the signs with warmer "Welcome To Westport" ones that reflect our town's character and identity, as well as provide a strong sense of arrival to town, which would slow down speedy drivers.

The signs could be simple wood-grained sandblasted signs, similar to what Otto has at the Westport Inn. They could also have changeable hanging signs below the main sign that could advertise community events, such as "22nd Annual Rubber Ducky Race May 13th". We have been slowly getting feedback and design ideas during the past year. In the meantime, I did finally get Caltrans to reinstall their small green signs.



At the upcoming quarterly Westport Village Society meeting on April 19th (7PM at the church), we will be discussing this Sign Project, and we'd like to invite all interested townspeople to attend and tell us what you think. We need to get broad-based community input and support for these signs to happen, so that we can truly reflect our town's character. There are, of course, many options.

Topics of discussion which we need your input on include: What information would you like to see on a sign? What size should it be? Would you envision a painted or wood grain sign? Would you like to see the sign lighted at night, perhaps using solar technology? Do you like the idea of changeable hanging signs below the main sign to advertise community events, etc.? Would you like to help out with labor, materials, or fundraising? And hey! – you don't have to wait until the April meeting to tell us what you think. You can send your written comments at any time to the Westport Village Society at P.O. Box 446, Westport, CA 95488 or send Steve Brigham an email to westportwave@aol.com. Thanks for your input!

Drips and Drizzles

Steve Brigham

Even though there's finally a little storm action happening as I write this in late February, this winter has so far been "the winter without a winter" over much of the USA. In California, many areas haven't even gotten half of their normal precipitation totals through February, and are way, way behind last year, which was fairly wet. In Westport, we're a little bit better off than even some areas just south of here, since so far (at around 23 inches) we still at least have close to 70% of the rainfall total we had last year through February. But last year, we got a whopping 14.15 inches in March, and it's unlikely we'll even come close to that this year. Our 2010-2011 rainy season in Westport featured some notable rainy stretches, which really bumped up our rainfall totals. But this year, instead of deluges, most all we've gotten are drips and drizzles. So instead of last year's (July 2010 through June 2011) 55 inches of rain, I'm predicting around 35 inches total rainfall here this year (July 2011 through June 2012). That's below normal, right? Well, not exactly ...

Have you ever wondered exactly what is our normal rainfall total for Westport? Well, our "average" annual rainfall total here is probably around 43 or 44 inches (depending on how many and which years you're averaging in) – but it almost never rains exactly that much, so that's hardly "normal". However, if you look back over the rainfall totals in our history, you'll see an interesting pattern. Not only are the totals (fairly) dependably different from year to year, but there's actually a preponderance of totals fairly close to both 55 and 38, with some years much wetter than those numbers and some much drier. The difference between 55 and 38 is often just a few extra-rainy periods during the year. And guess what? If we look back at the 55 inches of rainfall that we got from July 2010 through June 2011, we see that the months of October, December, and March combined brought us almost 35 of those inches. If we reduce those months to more reasonable ("average"?) totals, our 55 inches becomes (yes, you guessed it) 38 inches! So maybe this year isn't so abnormal after all, and neither was last year. But it's still been too dry for me, and I keep hoping for rain. I want at least 38 inches by June so that I can feel "normal!"

Remembering Dobbie Bowen

(Editor's Note: Longtime Westport resident and friend to all, Raymond "Dobbie" Bowen died Sunday, January 29th, at Fort Miley Veterans Hospital in San Francisco, after a short illness. Dobbie was born February 25th, 1938 to Raymond and Carol Bowen in Phoenix, Arizona; his memorial service was held on February 4th in Fort Bragg, with internment at the Westport Cemetery that afternoon. He will be greatly missed.)

Marie Fostiak

I miss the sound of Dobbie's fan belt as he drove his yard waste to the terraform spot. We will all miss Dobbie when the day-fish run – he gave the earliest and best reports – and he always saw to it that those who couldn't fish, ate. Dobbie was so vigorous and active in his retirement – traveling and fishing – that we were blindsided by his passing. I regret that I didn't get a chance to tell him how much I appreciated knowing him (a reminder that we should show our love now!). Dobbie had the loveliest handwriting – a gift, I assume, from his schoolteacher mother. If you have a picture or a story that you'd like to share, send it to *The Wave* editor Steve Brigham for the next issue to help us all say goodbye!

The Time Traveler

Thad Van Bueren

Because I'm hard at work writing a new history of the Westport vicinity, my article this month will be a short one. I had the pleasure of meeting with Darwin Thompson recently on two occasions, and some of his family photographs will be featured in the new history that WVS and the Kelley House Museum will publish together in September. The image shown here depicts an aspect of local transportation that took me by surprise when I first learned about it a few years ago when Darwin presented two very well attended slide shows at the Westport Community Church.

The fact that airplanes touched down in the local area is nothing short of astounding. This view taken in the early 1950s shows two planes at a landing strip located north of Dehaven creek on the coastal terrace. The airstrip roughly followed the path now traversed by Highway 1. Darwin Thompson and his four brothers are seen lounging in the field near the planes. The visiting plane on the left was used to seed crops on the nearby Etter's Ranch. The plane on the right belonged to Bob Shannon. Bob died a short time later when his plane crashed into the ocean, attesting to the dangers of early air travel. The cause of the crash was never determined, as far as Darwin knows.

Nearly 50 years later a friend of mine took off and landed his motorized parasail on the same coastal terrace. I was not tempted to strap on his motorized backpack and parasail, but I still have the video he made while he sailed above the local coast and looped back into the Howard Creek Canyon.



The Thompson brothers near Dehaven in the early 1950s with airplanes (courtesy Darwin Thompson)

As reported in Issue #9 of the *Westport Wave* (published March 11, 1993), the final mission of the HH3F Sikorsky helicopter was plagued with mechanical problems from the start. After some serious repairs in Astoria, Oregon, all seemed "go" on March 3rd for the Astoria to San Francisco leg of the journey that day. After a mid-day stop for fuel at Humboldt Bay, the helicopter was coming around Cape Viscaino around 1:30PM. Suddenly, the crew of four noticed a burning smell, and their instruments signaled a complete oil pressure loss and imminent failure. With a water landing in high seas impossible, and only seconds to land, the crew made a beeline for the first level spot they saw, which was the turnout at Juan Creek. Fortunately, they made a safe but harrowing landing just as their transmission seized up completely.

Eventually, the aging helicopter was airlifted away, but not before Pilot Lt. Randy Moseng, Co-Pilot Lt. Paul Franklin, Flight Mechanic AM2 Steve Holmes, and Navigator AE2 Mark Osentowski became temporary celebrities in our little town. This brave rescue crew had just performed one of the most dangerous rescues of their careers – on themselves!

Are You Smarter Than A Gopher?

Steve Brigham

If the Groundhog sees his shadow on February 2nd (which he did this year), there's supposed to be six more weeks of winter. If we don't get much of a winter in the next couple of weeks, then the Groundhog was wrong (at least for us). Maybe the problem was that since we have no groundhogs here, I used a gopher instead. Well, that's not the biggest problem a gopher ever caused in my garden. And as much as I respect their rights and lifestyle, it's hard not to notice those gopher mounds that are starting to appear in my garden these days. Gotta do something, but what?

Actually, one thing I do with gopher mounds is to use that nice, loose, sifted dirt. It's great for filling in potholes in the lawn and garden! But as far as gopher control goes, my most effective solution is still Kitty Cat. Big neutered male brown and black striped Tabby cats seem particularly adept at gopher control, and I would never be without one. For the most part, Kitty Cat has things under control here, but there are

some plants that are much more prone to gopher damage than others, so I do use some protection when I plant them. Basically, anything you like to eat they'll like to eat, but the biggest factor seems to be if you try to plant a plant in a wide-open place where gophers rule the world. Probably the best thing to do for individual plants is to plant them in ½" wire-mesh cages. Ideally, these should be around 18 inches deep and across, with wire on the bottom of the cage, too. If the wire sticks up a little above the soil surface, then you can bend it in to prevent gophers from climbing over and into the cage and eating your plant's roots that way.

But what if you don't have much wire, and are too poor (or lazy) to buy any? If you have some old 5-gallon (or larger) plastic pots, just cut the bottoms out of them (pruning shears work good for this), and put the wire mesh below the pot when you plant (see photo). If you don't have any old 5-gallon plastic pots, maybe you know someone that does (I have a few if you need them).

Yes, friends, you just have to be a little smarter than the gopher (ask Bill Murray about that). But, in closing, I have to tell you that I wasn't quite that smart in last month's column. In my commentary about the plant known as Brass Buttons, I neglected to mention it's botanical name! Now for many of you, that may not be a big deal. But what if you tried to look it up on the Internet, and found out that there are many plants called Brass Buttons? Well, fortunately, not many are widely cultivated. For the record, however, the plant is *Cotula lineariloba*, which is a native of South Africa. Sorry for the omission, but that's show business!



Water All Around Us

Liza Saenz-Bernard

Have you heard about the Symphony of the Redwoods fundraiser? It is a traveling exhibit of 6 violins that have been painted by some of our local artists & one from one of my favorite cities, Los Angeles! These violins can be seen up and down the coast but you have to find out where they are on your own. The artists are Don Paglia, Claire Fortier, Karen Bowers, Judith Greenleaf, John Rossum & Babs Levine who are not from Westport, but you can google it for more information. Perhaps, one of these violins will appear at a Westport business.

Let's see what's up in Westport. There are some creative changes going on in Marie's Community Store that really caught my eye. Did you see the new wall behind the coffee? Erika added her creative touch again, with an old storefront piece that appears quite priceless and draws your eye directly to the new copper hot water vessel! I know there are a lot of new signs out front, and a new deck, but this is an art column, so hang in there. Anne Woodhead directed 2 operas, "I Can Not Stand Wagner!" and "Rita." These were "comical, amusing, colorful, and offensive." If you were offended, then a statement was made successfully, and that's what art is about.

Heritage Days is coming to the Mendocino Coast in May. What comes to mind is the fact that our town had wharves where vessels came and unloaded or loaded their wares. Here is an image for you painters, photographers (with Photoshop), and dreamers; people dressed in antique garb, standing on the Westport pier, waiting for their shipment of cargo. Do you have the vision? Do you have any old images of the Westport pier or a boat outside our seashore? Google Heritage Days and see what our neighboring towns are doing and see all the different events going on. This gives artists plenty of time to submit a piece of work on the following; ships, harbors, piers, docks, boats fishing or in dry dock, SINKING SHIPS FOR REEFS, getting the picture? Ken Van Der Wenda, of The Mendocino Photography Guild, will be showing his boat images in Fort Bragg harbor.

The LOVE SHOW will be up until the 3rd week of March at the Westport Hotel. We had a wonderful turnout for the LAST SATURDAY reception on



The Love Show at the Westport Hotel

February 25th, and ate Daniel's fine food after his beautiful plate of hors d'oeuvres. There will be a closing show POTLUCK for the artists around March 20th, where the art will be taken down, making room for April's WATER SHOW.

Pisces! We are all going through a process in some way or another and with Pisces we will be able to see and feel the water rising. For those who do not know me, I'd like to explain the way I write. It is a stream of consciousness and not written with a topic sentence to guide you into a perfect paragraph. I apologize to those who do not understand what I am saying. Some people write in prose and they call it poetry, some do not use commas or periods and call it clever, like the authors Garcia and Kerouac, but some understood them.

Have you seen the new TV show Justified, yet? Elmore Leonard created Raylan and is only now writing a book about him because everyone is going GA GA! Well, the New York Times Book Review, 2/5/12, by Olen Steinhauer, has some FUN. Here are quotes about what Leonard has to say about writing: "If it sounds like writing, I rewrite it." "Or, if proper usage gets in the way, it may have to go. I can't allow what we learned in English composition to disrupt the sound and rhythm of the narrative."

The old GALLERY THIS! used to have story telling night and The Spoken Word, in which writers, poets and musicians would come and read their pieces or short stories. It would be so fun to hear some stories that do not have to be perfectly written down on paper, but come right off the cuff.

Celebrate St. Patrick's Day at the Old Abalone Pub

The Westport Volunteer Fire Department will take over the bar at the Old Abalone Pub for St. Patrick's Day. Irish coffee and other spirits will be served in addition to beer. Music will be provided by Gypsy Spring and Butch-Logan. The Westport Hotel will serve a corned beef and cabbage dinner. Festivities begin at 5:00. The parlor will be reserved for dining, and chef Daniel Martin's full menu will be offered in addition to the corned beef special.

You don't have to be Irish to love a good story. Come to Story Night on Sunday, March 11 to share stories including some that might not be quite 100% true. Listeners are welcome and tellers even more so. We will start at 7:00 (Daylight Savings Time) and there will be hot chocolate by the fire. This is also a good opportunity to see the "Love" art show before it is replaced by a new show with a water theme.

Fridays in March will be the last times to hear Alejandro Yañez' Spanish guitar, since he will be moving away to attend school. Alejandro's music enhances a meal and also rewards straight listening. Friday regulars will miss him.

March 2012 Westport Calendar

March 6th – Westport MAC meeting, 7PM @ Church

March 8th – Full Moon, 1:40AM. Bookmobile here, Westport Community Store, 9:00 to 9:30AM.

March 11th – Daylight Saving Time Begins, 2AM (set clocks AHEAD one hour)

March 17th – St. Patrick's Day

March 19th – SPRING EQUINOX, 10:14PM

March 22nd – New Moon, 7:37AM. Bookmobile here, Westport Community Store, 9:00 to 9:30AM

You are reading the *Westport Wave*, a monthly community newsletter published on the first day of every month by the Westport Village Society. Contributions for our April 1, 2012 edition of the *Westport Wave* are due by **March 27th**, and should be sent to editor Steve Brigham at westportwave@aol.com, or P.O. Box 237, Westport, CA 95488. Electronic subscription requests can be sent to thadvanbueren@directv.net.