

February 1, 2012

Westport Wave

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20 Years Of Waves!

Steve Brigham

Hey, where did those Holidays go? At least they're still celebrating in China, and those folks really know how to put on a show. But even though my Christmas trees are garden mulch now, I'm still in a festive mood, since in December, I received a gift that truly keeps on giving. Just a loan, really – but what a thrill, as Marie Fostiak handed me a binder with all of the old Westport Waves from the 1990's, starting with the very first issue, dated June 5th, 1992!

Twenty years ago, big things were brewing in our little town. 1992 was not only the year that our community newsletter started up, but it was also the year that the Westport Village Society was established, beginning a "golden decade" of community involvement that really turned this town around. The founding Board Members of the Westport Village Society were Lois Senger, Marie Fostiak, Becca Killion, Lee Tepper, Dorine Real, Nedra Lancaster, and Harvey Chess. The amazing effort and results that these folks produced (and still are to this day) is astounding, especially to a "newbie" like myself!

Originally, the Westport Wave was not necessarily a monthly publication, although it usually worked out that way. Its motto was "News as it Breaks," and when they had enough news, they published. Dorine and Marie were the masterminds of those early issues, with WVS board members and many other community members contributing articles on many different subjects each month. Interestingly enough, *The Wave* in those days was quite similar to our current format (although obviously, there was no color email version back then), so it's nice to know that we're still following tradition.

And so, in this 20th Anniversary Year of both the Village Society and *The Wave*, you can look forward

to some interesting reports in upcoming issues on what was shakin' here two decades ago. This is going to be fun! But now for our current issue, and we've got some great articles for you, including Thad's popular Time Traveler, Bill's very educational account of a recent WVFD fire call, some timely food tips from ace-nutritionist Lois Senger, and the ever-popular art musings of Liza Saenz-Bernard – this time, on the subject of Love. After 20 years, your Westport Wave is still here for you every month, to "educate, amuse, and inspire." So watch out for HSO's (Heart-Shaped Objects) this Valentine's Day, and Enjoy!



Great Rubber Ducky Race

It's time to start planning for the Rubber Ducky Race. Remember to save the date! Mother's day is May 13 this year. Bobbie, Nita, and Amy have already started working on the Quilt and do we ever appreciate their creativity and dedication. They are always beautiful works of art and inspire many to enter the raffle for a chance to win it! We are looking for interested persons who would like to create a design for the teeshirt. Call Lois (961-0178) if you are inspired to submit some art work.

We would need the art work completed by March 15 so we can submit it to teeshirt printers by the beginning of April. Of course, a Ducky Theme should prevail! If you have volunteered before, you will be getting a call to confirm your availability this year. We really appreciate what each and everyone contributes to the success of the event. If everyone tries to get one new person to help, it lightens the work and increases the fun!

Westport Village Society

Thad Van Bueren

Several matters of community interest were reported at the WVS Board meeting on January 19th. Since WVS event planning is covered elsewhere, I will focus on other matters that may interest the community. To address ongoing requests for weddings on the Headlands, WVS approved an event policy, application, and agreement. Requirements were set to ensure events do not create a nuisance, impair public access, endanger guests, or degrade the property. Requirements for insurance and other policies were established, and fees were set to cover the cost of event oversight by WVS volunteers. WVS members living or owning property in the voting area for the Society will still be granted waivers of use fees. Contact Thad at 964-7272 for information.

After careful analysis and a significant investment of time, the WVS Board decided to move forward with formal negotiations with the California Department of Parks and Recreation to operate Westport Union Landing State Beach, a park scheduled to close June 30, 2012. A letter of intent, draft agreement, and provisional budget were submitted January 20th and Loren Rex, the newly appointed Superintendent of the Mendocino Coast District, called to acknowledge receipt and indicate it will receive serious consideration.

The key issues that will require resolution before WVS will consider signing an agreement with State Parks are how to address the projected budget shortfall and how to control WVS risks for public and fiscal liability. The WVS budget projection is very lean and will depend on ongoing use of volunteer camp hosts to supplement the work of paid staff. There are many unknowns that include the ability to generate enough revenue, whether closed camp areas

can be reopened for modest cost, and the number of camping fee waivers granted each year. Treasurer Bill Knapp supplemented State Park's 2010 revenue and utility costs with additional research to formulate a realistic business plan.

WVS met with over a dozen representatives from the Coyote Valley, Sherwood Valley, and Cahto (Laytonville) tribes to discuss the potential for cooperation and possibility of financial assistance. The State Parks Foundation and State Coastal Conservancy were also approached about startup grants and an agreement to limit WVS liability exposure. Several other groups including tribes and the Mendocino Area Parks Association may be interested in operating the park. WVS will cooperate with those groups if they move forward. We've also learned State Parks may solicit a commercial concessionaire. Since our primary concern is to keep the park open, WVS will only move forward if no other option emerges to keep the park open.



WVS nature walk at W-UL Park on January 1st.

Lastly, the WVS has adopted a plan to expand its outreach efforts beyond the distribution of this newsletter. Board members Steve and Thad led an interpretive walk at Westport Union Landing State Beach on January 1st that was well publicized and drew over two dozen visitors. WVS will also explore the development of a web site dedicated solely to the needs of WVS and its members. A design for that web site will be presented at the April 19th meeting.

The Time Traveler

Thad Van Bueren

Did you notice January 23 was the second new moon after the winter solstice? This has no special significance in the Gregorian calendar, but it marks the beginning of the new year for many eastern cultures that follow the lunisolar calendar the Chinese created over 4,700 years ago. That calendar meshes the solar year with the pattern of moon cycles, a task complicated by the fact that the length of the solar year and lunar cycles are not an integral (whole) number of days, but vary in duration.

The phases of full moon and new moon are examples of syzygies (another great scrabble word), when the earth, moon, and sun are roughly aligned. Eclipses are examples of more exact alignments. The time between two full moons (a lunar month) averages 29.53 days. In the Chinese calendar, the winter solstice must occur in the 11th lunar month. This means that an extra lunar month must be added on a regular basis to keep the solar year from getting too far out of whack. Last month I mentioned how our Gregorian calendar requires similar adjustments.

The Chinese calendar revolves through a 60 year cycle that meshes a 12-year cycle of the animal zodiac and a 10-year cycle of heavenly stems. Each of the ten heavenly stems is associated with one of the five elements of Chinese astrology, namely: Wood, Fire, Earth, Metal, and Water. The elements are rotated every two years, with a yin and yang association alternating each year. The ten year cycle thus proceeds as: Yang Wood, Yin Wood, Yang Fire, Yin Fire, and so forth. The new year we've just entered is Yang Water Dragon. Among the Eastern zodiac creatures, the dragon is particularly auspicious and was adopted as the symbol of the Chinese Emperors. It is a symbol of potent powers and good luck. Dragons are thought to exert particular control over water and air (storms).



An early view of Westport, ca. 1870s (courtesy of Kelley House Museum).

It may surprise some that the Chinese calendar is relevant to Westport history. Not all Chinese immigrants went to the gold regions or San Francisco. Some of them are listed on the Mendocino coast in census records. However, it is hard to determine precisely where they lived before the turn of the 19th century because the precincts were very large.

In 1900 it is certain that 17 Chinese men lived in and around the village of Westport. They resided in nine households, five of those headed by Chinese men. The rest lived in diverse households as lodgers, boarders, servants, and cooks. By 1910 two Chinese men lived at Rockport and two others resided on the Laytonville (Clay) Road near Westport. There were no longer any people of Chinese origins in the Westport precinct after World War I.

As an interesting aside, few realize that the Chinese new year parade was not in fact a traditional observance. It evolved in the 1860s in San Francisco to showcase their culture in a format Americans enjoyed – the parade. This was a deliberate effort to engage the dominant culture and attempt to address the rising tide of racism that culminated in passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. It is uncertain if any local parade was ever held, nor have I found any images showing the Chinese residents of Westport. Instead, the image shown here depicts the town before it really began to boom.



Plant of the month: Brass Buttons.

Full Bloom In Winter!

Steve Brigham

Although I've certainly had some fun times there, I always love it when I find yet another reason to never have to go back to Southern California again. And now that my Westport garden is becoming established, I don't even have to go south to see winter flowers anymore, especially with the nice weather we've been having this year. Yep, here at the ocean it's been just like San Diego this winter – very little frost, lots of sun, and tons of flowers on plants from all over the world. We've gotten just enough rain to keep things green, but the huge amount of calm, sunny days has been exceptional. That may have been bad news if you were trying to fill up your well (or keep your Christmas Tree green), but it's been great news if you're a garden plant that needs sun to flower!

So how dry has it been? Well, from July 1, 2011 through January 29, 2012, I've measured a total of 19.68 inches of rain here at Happy Acres on Pacific Avenue. But last year by this time, we'd gotten 28.25 inches total here. Some older in-town season totals from this time of year (as reported in the February 1993 Westport Wave, thanks to Jeff Saunders and Eddie White) include 1993, 33.02", 1992", 14.80", and 1983, a whopping 40.01". You can see how our rainfall totals can vary dramatically from year to year. But yeah, on average, we're coming up a little short this rainy season, especially due to a very dry

December 2011 (only 1.75", as opposed to 12.15" in December 2010).

But rainfall totals alone don't tell the whole story. Typically, our rainfall seems to come in bunches here in California, and just a few big storms can inflate the rainfall totals dramatically. So just by looking at season totals, you can't necessarily tell whether it rained a little every day or there were both rainless days and whopper storms. Our garden plants certainly don't need rain every day in the winter, but it's probably true that aquifers fill up better with more consistent rainfall. But everyone's water source is different, and the fact that there are still waterfalls on the bluff near my house now from our last storm a week ago hopefully means that someone's aquifer is filling up. For now, the old days of persistent, soaking El Nino storms are long gone in Westport (but with them, so are the most damaging of storms). The best we can hope for now is a wet February and March, even though we're still kind of stuck in a non-rainy pattern at the moment.

Back to the flowers – it's time for our "Plant of the Month"! And this month, we've got a real cute ground cover from South Africa that is small enough for pots but big enough for gardens, grows fast, and blooms all the time no matter what. You won't find it in many books (although it is available by mail-order on the Internet), but it's a winner here, especially right on the coast – and it even has a cute name, "Brass Buttons". Best of all, I helped introduce it way back in the 1980's.

To envision what "Brass Buttons" means, think daisy flowers without the white petals, and just the yellow center "buttons". This Brass Buttons blooms its brass butt off all year here in full sun or part shade, is hardy to around 20 degrees F., and it never sets seed and is not invasive. It's also easy to grow by cuttings, and my deer don't want to eat it. I've got a particularly nice specimen that I planted a year ago in an old concrete drainage pipe (see photo), and it looks just like a blooming "Cousin It" from the old Addams Family TV show! So what's not to like?

Would you like a free plant of "Brass Buttons"? Well, if you do something for me, I can arrange it! One of the reasons I do this column is to get you inspired to give me, and our community, your own story. You've got a great story – I know it – and

whether it's about Gardening, Natural History, Community History, Health, Food, Travel, or anything else Westportian – you name it, we'll print it! Even if you're just a visitor here, you've got a great story, too, and we love your happy Westport photos! And don't worry if your sentence structure isn't ready for the New Yorker – I can fix that, and work with you to perfect an article of any length, short or long, that you'll be proud of. That's what I'm here for, so email me at westportwave@aol.com, or drop me a note at P.O. Box 237, Westport 95488. You'll be glad you did, and so will all of the folks on the Wild North Coast!



Brass Buttons planted in drain pipe.

Summer Squash

Lois Senger

Squash is one of the oldest vegetables cultivated in the Western hemisphere. Almost every Native American tribe considered squash an important staple in their diet, where it was one of the "three sisters" of planting along with maize and beans. Squash seeds were revered as fertility symbols, and buried with the dead to nourish them on their journey to the afterlife. Winter squash is part of the Curcubitaceae family along with melons, cucumbers, and loofas. They have hard shells and sweet flesh. Among the many varieties are the more common Acorn, Buttercup, Butternut, Kabocha, Hubbard, and Spaghetti. Specialty varieties include Carnival, Turban, Red Kuri and Delicata. They are usually harvested in the Fall and their hard shells lend them to storage through

the winter. Their orange flesh is high in carotenoids and vitamins, especially Vitamin A. They make a great puree soup, and when baked in the oven the natural sweetness is enhanced, for a special treat. Enjoy them now!

Water District News

An important project at the Westport County Water District this month is our continuing work toward finalizing our operating budget for the year ahead. In February, the Board will be meeting with an experienced outside budget consultant from California Rural Water, a non-profit organization which supports and advises small water and sewer districts just like us. This consultation will be provided to us free of charge.

It is important to understand that no official decision has been made as to any rate increases for our customers this year. No official recommendations on that topic can be made until our working budget is finalized. We do know that our operating costs, including the cost of complying with increasing state requirements, have increased substantially in the past four years, even though our prices to our customers have remained the same. The reality now is that the cost of operating a safe and reliable water and sewage system exceeds the amount of income that the Water District is currently receiving, and so some increase in customer rates seems necessary.

Once the budget process is complete, the Board will hold a public meeting to discuss the issue of a rate increase. If all goes well, this meeting could be held in March. More about this will appear in the March issue of the Westport Wave, and we will keep you informed of our schedule as it develops.

The Art Around You

Liza Saenz-Bernard

"Out of my love for you, I give you back to yourself."
-- Minor White

February is the month of LOVE, and so that is our theme for this month's Last Saturday Art Show at the Westport Hotel, which opens on February 25th. What is love to you? Love, of course can take many forms, and its presence (or even absence) can be an essential part of art. Love can be a great inspiration, and I myself turn to the arts when that love bug fills me.

Famous American photographer Minor White saw love as an essential motivator in the creative process. He wrote, "If a man makes something that can be loved for its own sake and not its associations he makes great art. The artist creates that he might be loved". White once asked his fellow photographer Alfred Stieglitz if Stieglitz had ever been in love. When Stieglitz answered yes, White said "Well, then you can be a great photographer".

Love can also inspire by freeing the creative mind with emotion, and that can lead to powerful art. The Persian poet Rumi said "Let the lover be disgraceful, crazy, absentminded. Someone sober will worry about things going badly. Let the lover BE!" Crazy in Love! What a great concept – sometimes it is very important to get more than a little wild to create great art!

I asked a few friends in and around our town and local communities what they thought about love. Here are a few of their answers: Love is giving your sweetie the last bite of your cake, picking up the socks without complaining or saying you did it, taking time for yourself and doing something YOU love, writing this article and not expecting a response. Taking time to listen to the silence of a peaceful moment with another person.

We'll have some great photographs and other works of art from local artists on the theme of LOVE on display this month at the Westport Hotel, including Love Boats by Suzi Long, Love Letters, by Zida, Hearts of Stone by Xenia King, Greatest Frigates from the Galapagos Islands by Dolares Clark, Whale Exaltation by Patti Breed, Trilliums by Ken, Love birds and loving sea lions from the Mendocino Photographers Guild, and lots more. There is one more week to bring your own piece of art for display before February 10th, when we are finished hanging the show. When bringing your artwork to the Hotel, please fill out a price sheet with your title and medium description. So think about LOVE, and we know you'll LOVE this show! See YOU at

Westport Hotel & Gallery This!
Last Saturday Artist Opening
 February 25th at the Westport Hotel
 5:30-7:00 PM in the Dining Room

For more information call Liza at 962-9234.



Deeply-rooted vegetable love (© Thad Van Bueren)

WVFD Responding

Bill Knapp

At approximately 8 PM on Friday January 20, WVFD received a pager alert to check a fire alarm in Ocean Meadows. Ocean Meadows is at the south most boundary of WVFD's response area. A neighbor was alerted to the fire and called the 911 dispatcher verifying a fire in progress. The 911 dispatcher relayed the information that a fire was in progress. WVFD firefighters were already responding in 8590, our 2,000 gallon water tender / pumper. As soon as a fire in progress was verified WVFD requested mutual aid from Fort Bragg Fire. Because the 911 operator received a called in verification, they had automatically paged out Fort Bragg Fire based on the Automatic Mutual Aid agreement between WVFD and Fort Bragg Fire.

8590 was the first fire apparatus on scene and had the exterior flames extinguished in a few minutes. The fire had started inside the exterior mounted electrical panel containing the meter and circuit breaker box. The 911 dispatcher was notified to call PG&E to disconnect electrical power to the house. Soon after the flames were extinguished Fort Bragg Fire arrived with a Water Tender and an Engine. Fort Bragg Fire assisted in gaining entry to the house and verifying there was no active fire inside. Westport Fire maintained watch on the origin of the fire, the electrical panel, with a charged hose.

The fire originated in the electrical panel and was electrical in nature. In addition to the charged hose, an ABC dry chemical extinguisher was used to monitor

the fire. Multiple times over the next half an hour the electrical box started arcing and emitting large sparks and molten metal from the wiring and meter. While small areas of wood did reignite, the ABC extinguisher was used by Fort Bragg firefighters to keep the fire out and the arcing under control. Water is NOT the preferred means to control an electrical fire and can cause electrical hazard to firefighters or anyone nearby.

Until PG&E turned off the power to the house, it was not safe to overhaul the fire area and make sure there were no embers or any chance of reignition. WVFD remained on scene waiting for PG&E. Once the power was turned off, WVFD removed the meter panel and most of the burned siding and studs. It was determined that the fire had been contained to the outer wall cavity and siding. All burned areas were thoroughly soaked, including the foundation sill from the crawl space under the interior floor. The fire broke a window above the electrical panel, but the interior of the house sustained minimal damage.

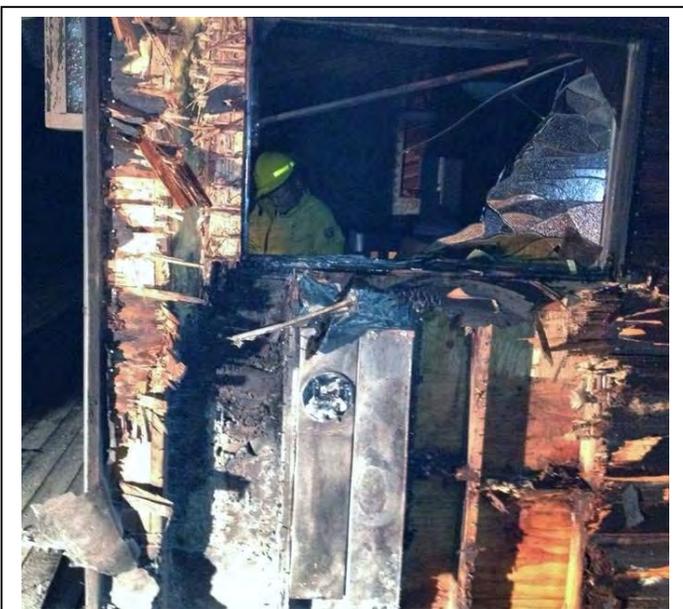
In all three engines, and the WVFD Rescue Unit (8530) responded. WVFD responded with eight firefighters and Fort Bragg Fire with six, including Chief Orsi. The fire was controlled quickly with minimal damage to the house. This was an excellent example of Westport Fire and Fort Bragg Fire working together protecting local property owners.



Detail of damaged electrical panel.

Some observations can be offered after the excitement. The house in this case was redwood siding, frame construction. The results could have been much worse. The homeowner had a fire alarm, which clearly saved the house. There was no one in the house at the time of the fire, and because of the location of the fire and landscaping around the house it was not visible from the street. For it to have been visible from the street, the fire would have had to spread under the eaves and into the attic area. An additional fortunate situation in this instance was the interior wall opposite the electrical box was of river rock construction, part of a fireplace surround.

The fire started either during or soon after a heavy rainfall accompanied by high wind. While not certain, it is possible rain got into the electrical panel causing a short. However started, the short managed to ignite framing and/or siding, enhancing the shorted condition. The short either started at or progressed to the meter, by-passing circuit breaker protection in the panel without being sufficient to trip breakers on the PG&E side of the meter. The wet siding did slow down the spread of the fire.



The extinguished Ocean Meadows fire.

It is very important to understand that the fire was electrical. Water SHOULD NOT be used on this type of fire. Dry chemical ABC fire extinguishers are the best approach. In the event of fire ALWAYS call 911 first and then investigate the possibility of safely controlling it. It is almost always best to use an ABC chemical extinguisher for an early stage fire. Here are some things learned from this event:

Make sure you have a fire alarm and the batteries are fresh. If you don't have close neighbors and are frequently away from home you may want to investigate a service that will automatically notify 911 if the alarm goes off. Check with the 911 dispatcher for a recommendation of a reliable company. False alarms are a problem and some cities are no longer responding to automatic alarms, requiring a confirmation call to dispatch a response.

Keep at least one ABC extinguisher in the house and make sure family members, and possibly neighbors, know where it is and how to use it.

If you have a wall mounted exterior electrical panel, check that it is surrounded by fire rated material and is secure from storm water entering.

February 2012 in Westport

- Feb. 2nd – Ground Hog Day (here, a gopher will do)
- Feb. 7th – Full Moon, 1:54 PM
- Feb. 7th – Westport MAC Meeting, **CANCELLED**
- Feb. 12th – Abraham Lincoln's 203rd Birthday
- Feb. 14th – St. Valentine's Day – Special 5-Course Valentine's Dinner at the Westport Hotel, with seatings at 5:30PM and 7:30PM
- Feb. 20th – Presidents' Day Holiday
- Feb. 21st – New Moon, 2:35PM
- Feb. 22nd – George Washington's 280th Birthday
- Feb. 25th – Last Saturday Art Show and Reception, 5:30PM to 7:00 PM at the Westport Hotel
- Feb. 29th – Yes, it's LEAP YEAR! (we get an extra day to enjoy). Look up St. Bridget's Complaint!

Contributions for the next WAVE are due by **Feb. 27th** and should be sent to editor Steve Brigham at westportwave@aol.com. Electronic subscription requests can be sent to thadvanbueren@directv.net.