

The Explorers Club Northern California Chapter May 2003

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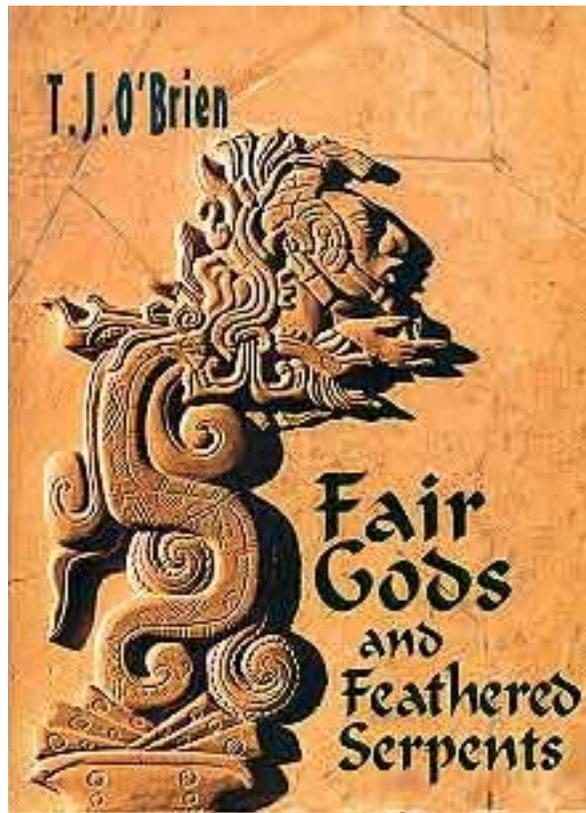
Web site: <http://www.diggles.com/ec/>

Palo Alto
May 30, 2003
Terry O'Brien

Fair Gods and Feathered Serpents
Very Early Civilization?
Mythology? Theology? Reality?

This creative three-projector presentation is a look at the Americas Before Columbus. Professor Terry O'Brien, a Mayanist and art-history expert on Central and South America, has an extensive collection of slides on ancient American sites and a large library devoted to the subject. He has given talks on this subject on television and the commercial speakers' circuit.

Fair Gods and Feathered Serpents is the title of his book on the subject (ISBN: 0882906089). The question posed: "Was Columbus really the first Old World visitor to the Americas?" Early explorers often encountered stories of a 'foreigner' who arrived in very ancient times—long before the 'New' World was explored. So remark-



able was this visitor that natives built huge monuments and great structures in his honor. His symbol, the feathered serpent, appeared in ceremonies, paintings, carvings, and architecture which can still be seen all over the Western Hemisphere. When the stranger departed, he left a promise that he would one day return, bringing them a golden age. That promise later helped the Spanish conquer the magnificent native cities of Mexico and Peru.

Professor O'Brien's book and presentation review these legends, attempting to discover, like a mystery novel, the identity and origin of the enigmatic fair visitor. There are recent discoveries not yet well known, that if proven true, could rewrite ancient history in the Americas. Both 'Isolationist' (no foreigners came to the Americas) and 'Diffusionist' (every body came) views are aired. But, as in the

fine tradition of sleuthing, the obvious may not be the surprising final answer.

Terry O'Brien is professor emeritus of Art History and Pre-Columbian Art at Cypress College in Southern California. He studied pre-Columbian art with Donald Robertson at Tulane University, under an NEH grant, and has attended and presented at many of the Mesa Redonda conferences for Maya scholars at Palenque, Mexico.

Terry jests his 'greatest' accomplishment: "I worked the jungle boat at Disneyland for six summers, touring all the great rivers of the world!"

Woodside
May 30, 2003
Garden Reception
4:30-6:00, before meeting
(see page 4)

NEW LOCATION

Date: Friday, 30 May 2003
Place: Sheraton Palo Alto Hotel
Palo Alto, near Stanford
Time: 6:30 pm, no-host cocktails
7:30 pm, dinner
Cost: \$45 (by May 23)
\$50 (if posted afterwards)

Reach Steve at 925 934-1051
or, preferably,
nauticos@oceaneearth.org

Reservation Form on page 5
Please reserve promptly!
NO MEAL WITHOUT RESERVATION

Cosmic Studies Martin Pomerantz San Francisco

Martin Pomerantz told us about the development of a scientific discipline in a harsh land over a period of some forty years. He is a cosmic physicist of note—the astronomical observatory at the South Pole is named in his honor, and he honored us with his remembrances.

Early in his career he was finding ways to observe cosmic rays, not only by developing sensors to trap their existence but in finding places where observations could be made. In pre-satellite days he relied upon high-altitude balloons. He also was fascinated with solar radiation, especially particle radiation that could be disruptive, even dangerous. This prompted him find a way to take his devices to the earth's magnetic poles, for the magnetic lines of force direct radiation, and the signals are stronger at these locations. In the mid 1950s he was successful in placing an instrument at Thule, Greenland. The results were noticed in his small community of specialists, and he was encouraged to find a way to gather measurements at the opposite pole, in the Antarctic.

The International Geophysical Year, in the late '50s allowed this to happen. He made his first visit to the South Pole. It was a revelation that this was a splendid place to observe the sun: high and dry, clear Summer weather (during the Northern Hemisphere's Winter), and controllable 'cultural' interferences. Besides the observing instruments were im-

Vice Chair, Lee Langan, presents the chapter certification to Dr. Pomerantz.



MAPO — The Martin A. Pomerantz Observatory
South Pole Station, Antarctica

mensely simplified by the rotation of ALL extraterrestrial bodies around and around, directly overhead. In December the sun is 23° above the horizon and spins a circle overhead each day. For the months before and after it slowly approaches the horizon. A mirror on the instrument rotated, reflects its beam down a pipe, just like a submarine's periscope. This first installation, about five miles from the Polar Station, to reduce interference, recorded the sun activity on film as never seen before. Dr. Pomerantz was in business.

The years that followed were a tale of ever-improving and expanding upon the instrumentation and experiments. Solar images, searching for the solar storms that release enormous (astronomical numbers are big) amounts of radiation, were soon recorded by digital means. Each year the pixel density improved, and the instrumentation tracked the evolution of the mini-then-personal computer history. The speed and memory (and small size) of the computer allowed more immediate and complex evaluation of the results. A major study, beyond the storm watch, was to observe the 'ringing' of the sun. This has allowed an extensive seismic evaluation of the sun's interior.

He continued his cosmic ray studies by placing an array of neutron counters at the Pole. By triangulating on the received results one can determine from where in space the particles emanate. They

were fortunate, in 1987, to measure the occurrence of a supernova event, an example of the most explosive events ever known. Supernova-1987 is located some 165,000 light-years away in the Large Magellanic Cloud.

Dr. Pomerantz's work in cosmic astronomy, acknowledged by his profession by the MAPO, allowed him to give us an oh-so-brief insight. We were delighted, as well, to have his wife of 62 years, Molly, as our guest.

If you are at the South Pole, you may not be! The Pole marker is never stationary and must be surveyed each year. Drifting snow builds the elevation; polar ice drift shifts the base.

Dr. Pomerantz and Mort Beebe recalled shared experiences in Antarctica.



The Chapter and the Internet

There was a lull of barely six months in Explorer-related email after I joined in 1992. By April, 1993, Bob Schmieder and I were sending Chapter-newsletter material back and forth. Julian Nott tried to get Headquarters to be electronic by signing them up for a half-dozen CompuServe addresses. New York's trouble was that 1200-baud modems were expensive; they only had one on a network, and the computer that held the membership data was not connected. By November, 1994, I began chatting with Bryan Jonson (FN'88) about setting up an Explorers Club presence on the Internet so people could gain access to data using Gopher or the National Center for Supercomputing Applications' (NCSA) Mosaic. Since Bryan spent most of his time in Spain, it appealed to him.

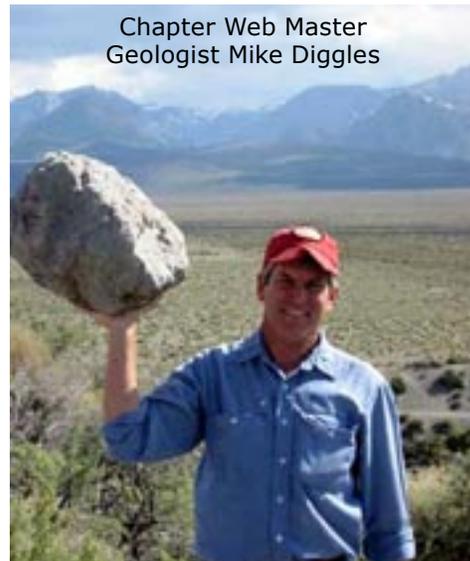
There were some nice little macros (shortcuts) for creating the HyperText Markup Language (html) in the Nisus word processor so I tried my hand at creating a Web page. In January, 1995, we did it; The Explorers Club went online! It was not until later that year that the likes of AOL and CompuServe provided access to the Web for their customers; the Web was mostly where academic and research users browsed. Marc Andreessen went from being a student at NCSA's Mosaic project at the University of Illinois to develop Netscape with Jim Clark in Mountain View. It was another year before Bill Gates joined the race with Internet Explorer.

I got all the Explorers' email addresses in the world from Julian in New York and sent out a message that you could use Mosaic to see the January 1995 newsletter about Ron Reuther's talk 'Aviation in Explora-

tion.' Bill Kruse (MN'92) was the first member with both home and work email. I got notes from Austria to Ithaca wanting to know what Mosaic was; Netscape 1.0N was also a choice. For the first couple of months we just took the black-and-white images from the paper newsletter and put them online as GIF files. By March, 1995, (when Diggles was the speaker) we were using color JPG files. By 1997, we were using Adobe Acrobat PDF files as well. We now have 145 MB of material online including movies by Mort Beebe, page-layout artistry by Lee Langan, and QuickTime VR panoramas from peaks.

The hardware, software, and locations have changed, but the first pages are still there. We started by having a subdirectory on a U.S. Geological Survey Mac IIfx, named Caldera, running A/UX. When that machine died, and the sysop moved to Lamont, I acquired a surplus Mac IIfx running OS-7, parked it under a fume hood in an abandoned chem lab next to a T-3 drop, and used NetPresentz software. As that server also held information on other Earth-science topics, it became home to papers on the *Chi-Chi Taiwan Earthquake* of September 20, 1999. The author of the first paper, Willie Lee, called me at home on September 22 and asked me to publish his report, *tonight*, before I went to bed, please. By October 2, there were three more papers on the server along with raw seismic data, and the machine got so much traffic it came to its knees. It hung so regularly that I went to Home Depot, got one of those timers you use to turn your living-room lights on and off, and set it up to turn off at 3:00 every morning and turn on again two

Chapter Web Master
Geologist Mike Diggles

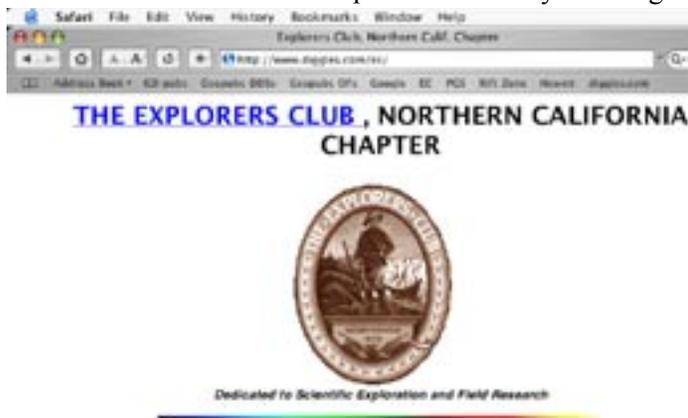


minutes later. Finally, I bit the bullet, got a Linux box built, and ran Apache server software.

In January 2000, Cagan Sekercioğlu (SM'99) told me he noticed that nobody had 'claimed' diggles.com, so I did. All was well until December 5, 2001, when Judge Lamberth shut down the U.S. Department of Interior's use of the Internet because Secretary Gale Norton was being sued over grazing-rights proceeds on Indian Trust Lands. I didn't want to wait for USGS to come back online so I called up Earthlink and put diggles.com online. I moved the Explorers Club site an hour later to <http://www.diggles.com/ec/>. We barely missed a beat.

The Northern California Chapter was the first place on the Web where information about the Explorers Club could be found. We also hosted the Texas Chapter on our server. In early 1997, Karen Brush (FR'93) and I were talking about a Headquarters home page. In April 1997, she went online with: <http://www.explorers.org/>

Continued on page 4



To bring the story of EC and the Web to a full circle, last December, I got a letter from a lawyer named Mark K.M. Wong complaining that my January 1995, Web site (that very first one! <http://www.diggles.com/ec/1995/ECJan95.html>) displeased his client, Allcair-Air-Transport. Happily, he said "...kindly correct the error." It turns out that Allcair owned the DC-6 transport plane that Norm Vaughn used (and lost) in Antarctica. My Web site referred to "Vaughn's DC-6." So I edited my content so it doesn't look like Norm owns a Doug. Never mind that when I say "I have to catch my plane." that nobody thinks I am the owner of a 767; or when I say "I'm taking my students on a field trip to Yosemite"

<http://www.diggles.com/yi/> that people don't think I own a phalanx of child slaves; or that when NASA wrote in their very own Web site <http://grin.hq.nasa.gov/ABSTRACTS/GPN-2000-001164.html>

"After securing his spacecraft, Armstrong radioed back to earth: 'Houston, Tranquility Base here, the Eagle has landed,'" nobody thought Neil was the proud owner of Apollo 11 (which my dad helped build, by the way!) Ah, but Mr Wong used the magic word: "kindly." Hey, if they want credit for owning that DC-6, I'm glad to give it to them. Besides, Bruce Allcorn, the owner, is to be complimented for his support for Ann Bancroft during Ann and Liv Arnesen's Antarctic expedition:

http://www.yourexpedition.com/bae_archive/

The Northern California Chapter of The Explorers Club has been providing information on field-based scientific research since Charlie and Joe founded it 30 years ago. Our Web presence is just another way we do that.

—Mike Diggles (FN'92),
Chapter Web Master

75th Anniversary — First Transpacific Flight

On **May 31, 2003**, the 75th anniversary of this historic flight will be commemorated at the Western Aerospace Museum, 8260 Boeing Street, North Field,

Dana & Bill
Isherwood
on a camel
in Eastern
China
'somewhere'.



Out of China — Silk-Road Camel

Bill and Dana Isherwood retraced the 2200 mile Silk Road across China from Kashgar to Beijing via camel, donkey cart, and train— mostly by train. Stopping along the way to visit the great Buddhist treasures of Turpan and Dunhuang and the Muslim treasures of Kashgar and Urumqi, they put their Chinese language skills to the test, resorting to sign language as needed.

Bill and Dana had some concerns about the reaction of the Muslims in Kashgar to Americans, given the Iraqi war was in full swing, but at all times they were treated with friendliness and respect. They returned to Beijing as it began its downward spiral in the SARs swarm and will retreat to the Bay Area this summer.

The Isherwoods will be at the May 30 Garden Party with some very nice souvenirs to be auctioned to raise funds to continue the education of our sponsored student, Jiangyang Quxi.

May Garden Party in Woodside Gracious Liebowitz Hospitality

Dan and Rusty Liebowitz have again invited the Chapter members to their home in Woodside for an afternoon Garden Reception preceding the May 30 meeting in Palo Alto. This is a treat for those who have been before, perhaps even more so for those who join for the first time. The hospitality is as warm as the afternoon sun. Do come. Be prompt (4:30) and enjoy the

special garden, the trains and friends. We leave by 6 to get to the meeting.

There is a bonus: by attending the reception it is easy to avoid the irksome traffic that accompanies the Friday commute and rush to leave for a weekend.

There is another bonus this year! The Isherwoods will have some treats to auction to raise money for the Tibetan student, Jiangyang Quxi, whose education we support.

From Woodside, proceed to the hills to Fox Hollow Road (on the left); The Liebowitz home is at the end of this road, on the left. See a map on page 5.

Oakland International Airport. Admission only \$5, lunch \$10, dinner \$50. For reservations call (510) 638-7100!

www.westernaerospacemuseum.org/

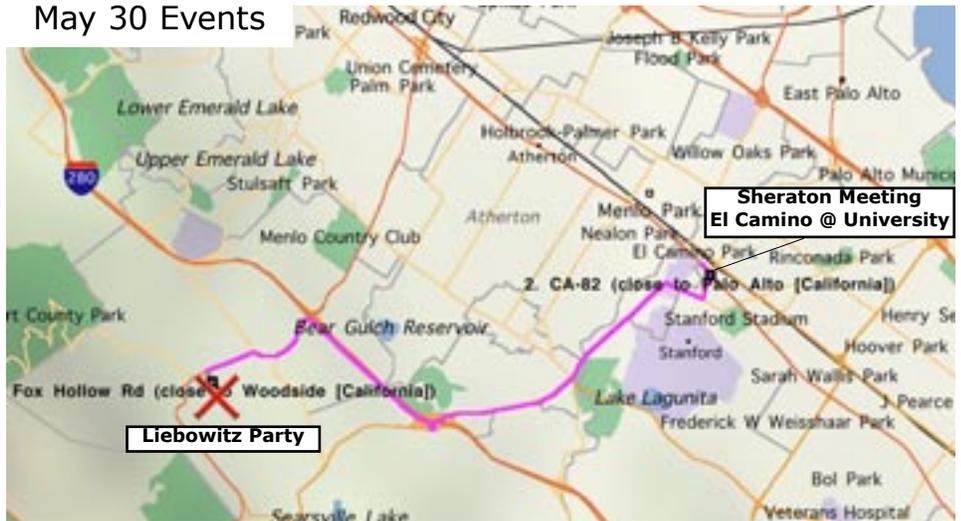
The Chapter Chair

Dear Northern California Explorers:

It is certainly hard for me to believe that we have reached the end of another meeting season. Once again our topics have covered the full spectrum of exploration. From experiencing the inner adventures of Ugo Conti to chasing Amelia with Reid Dennis, from Mars with Chris McKay to Mecca with Tom Joyce, from Hillary's peak with Anne Keiser, to beneath San Francisco with Jim Allan, and from investigating the heavens with Martin Pomerantz to investigating our mythos with Terry O'Brien. It's been another wonderful collection of presenters and topics. A salute of appreciation is due and is given to all who have invested their time to share their interests and expertise with our Chapter.

One of the reasons I have always been drawn to the Explorers Club is the diversity of the passions it embodies. One may not always agree with the views and approaches advanced, but the knowledge and insights are always invigorating and sometimes even challenging. During my time coordinating the speakers I have felt we have taken 'chances' with some of the topics we have scheduled—intentionally pushing the envelope, so to speak. I must say that I have been more than pleased and sometimes surprised with the reception by the membership. As I turn this role over to our Vice-Chair, I look forward to continuing our attempt to 'stretch' our intellect with some speakers and topics that may be a bit less conventional. I am also hopeful that we may be able to develop relations with other organizations that may enhance our ability to draw a wider audience for our speakers and increase interest and

May 30 Events



Here is a map for the events of May 30. Interstate 280 is the preferred access. To come to the Sheraton Palo Alto Hotel (located near the Palm Drive entrance to Stanford University) one could even take a train!

awareness of the club. Our Vice-Chair has already put forward some great ideas in this regard.

We close our season with the presentation by Terry O'Brien. This will be our annual south-bay event, and we will once again be feted with a garden party hosted by Dan and Rusty Liebowitz. I encourage all members, and especially those located on the Peninsula, to take advantage of the opportunity to join us for a lovely preamble to the night's topic. Terry is reputed to be a fine speaker with an impressive presentation. I expect a great evening, a fitting close to our schedule.

That said, time waits for no one. We need your help in suggesting presenters for next year's program commencing in September. We also continue to solicit your help in planning and organizing, and particularly in recruiting an individual to assist in the production of the chapter newsletter.

Finally, it's been a great pleasure to interact with the membership this year, and I look forward to the new season in the fall. Best wishes for your summer

adventuring and exploring.

—Stephen E. Smith, FN'96

Evolution

@ The Explorers Club

Our season of meetings will be over with the upcoming talk on the ancients of the Americas. Now it is time to go forth, if you do, or to sit back and reflect on accomplishments made and to be made. The traditional field season is upon us. Its time to get back outside.

As you trapse the wilds think of next year when we will assemble once again. Think of how you want to become personally involved in this unique and active organization. Think of what you want to contribute. Think of what you want from participating. Talk amongst yourselves and communicate to those on the masthead of the newsletter. The chapter, indeed the Club, needs people to be involved. It enhances the organization for us all.

The Centennial Year will be special!
—Lee Langan, FN'99

Please make your checks out to The Explorers Club, Northern California Chapter, and mail with this form to:

Please reserve _____ spaces for May 30, 2003, at the Sheraton Palo Alto Hotel. Cost: \$45 each by May 23; \$50 if postmarked thereafter (contact Steve at nauticos@oceanearth.org or 924 934-1051 to assure a reservation).

Name: _____

Address (if changed): _____

Guests: _____

Dr. Stephen E. Smith
402 Via Royal
Walnut Creek, CA 94596

meal choice (please circle):

meat

fish

vegetarian

Northern California 2002-2003 Event Calendar

(Mark the dates! Future venues to be determined)

September 27, 2002 St Francis Yacht Club	Ugo Conti	"Outer Adventure, Inner Journey"
October 25, 2002 St Francis Yacht Club	Reid Dennis	"Chasing the Ghost of Amelia Earhart"
December 6, 2002 UCSF, Laurel Heights	Chris McKay	"From Antarctica to Mars: The Search for Life"
January 31, 2003 St. Francis Yacht Club	Tom Joyce	"Hajj - The Journey of a Lifetime"
February 28, 2003 St. Francis Yacht Club	Anne Keiser	"Sir Edmund Hillary and the People of Everest"
March 28, 2003 St. Francis Yacht Club	Jim Allan	"In the Deep and In the Dirt: A Look at California's Maritime Archaeology"
April 25, 2003 St. Francis Yacht Club	Martin A. Pomerantz	"Astrophysics in Antarctica: Observing the Universe from the South Pole"

May 30, 2003 **Terry O'Brien** **"Fair God and Feathered Serpents".**
Sheraton Palo Alto Hotel

June, 2003 Chapter Picnic If, and when, we will be in touch!

Please note venues with care.
The May 30 meeting is at
Sheraton Palo Alto Hotel, Palo Alto.

In full and lively color!
To experience this newsletter in color,
see a 'pdf' version at our web site.

(When copying the URL addresses be sure to keep them all on one line; most are also available as links on our Chapter web site.)

May 2003

Dr. Stephen E. Smith
The Explorers Club
Northern California Chapter
402 Via Royal
Walnut Creek, CA 94596

