

# The Explorers Club

## Northern California Chapter

February 2011

In color at our web site: <http://www.explorersnorca.org>

### An Ethiopian Research Expedition Behind the Scenes San Francisco — February 25, 2011

We are all anxious to read the latest articles in the *New York Times* or *National Geographic* about *Lucy*, *Lucy's Baby*, *Ardipithecus ramidus* and other fossils which are recovered from the Ethiopian badlands and which help unravel the mysteries of our human evolutionary past. Little, however, is revealed about the challenges that face the expeditions that bring these discoveries to light.

Our speaker, Don Dana, is President of the San Francisco based *Leakey Foundation*, which has funded over 1,000 research expeditions around the world since its founding in 1968, including the research of famed paleoanthropologists Louis and Mary Leakey, and equally famed primatologists Jane Goodall and Dian Fossey. Our speaker is a lawyer, not a scientist, but he has participated as a volunteer on research expeditions around the world. He will share with us what really happens backstage—the good, bad, and ugly—in order to make these expeditions successful.

Don, a member of our chapter and previous presenter\*, will take examples from a successful 2007 research expedition to the Awash River Basin in Ethiopia's Rift Valley. It may be more than you want to know. Find out for yourself.



ALL PHOTOS COURTESY DON DANA



Guns and sticks are common necessities for all field trips into the Afar Region. The camp kitchen, smiling cheerful children and rewarding discoveries leave an indelible memory.



\* On May 18, 2007, he presented the results of his field trip which demonstrated the clear possibility that early man could make the leap from Siberia to Alaska by boat, without the need for a land of ice bridge. Don and his wife, Jeanne, have also hosted the Chapter meetings in their home.



# Story Night — NorCA Tales

San Francisco — January 29

(l-r) Hemming, Nichols/Boothe, Davis, Mueller, Howery, Langan

**Kay Schmieder** once again organized an evening that could well become a tradition for the Northern California Chapter, a *Story Night*. On January 21, six members took the podium to tell a short tale based upon their time in the field. It is telling, indeed, to realize the diversity that resulted. As Chair Alan Nichols noted, you never know what lurks within that mild-mannered person who sits beside you at an explorer's evening.

Each person was allotted ten minutes, in principle.

**Ken Howery MN05** told a poignant story of climbing Mt. Kilimanjaro twice in short succession. At 13,500' on October 5, 2003, he listened in surprise as his satellite phone rang. The call brought the sad news his grandfather had just died, his mentor, his teacher. Forty hours later he had scampered down the mountain and flown home in time for the funeral. Knowing his grandfather would want him to continue to live life fully, he immediately returned—to summit in time to watch the sun rise over this vast land so far away.

**Peter Hemming MN04** has maintained a life-long curiosity about bats. In the summer of 2005, he was invited to visit Bracken Bat Cave on a Members Night—the cave is the Summer home of the greatest concentration of mammals on earth! An estimated twenty million Mexican free-tailed bats exit each evening to feed upon local insects and to fertilize the local farms of the Texas Hill Country. He shared some pictures of this massive swirl of flight.

**Neal Mueller MN10** is the only person to summit the highest peaks of the seven continents AND swim the English Channel. We were surprised to learn that San Francisco Bay is the same temperature as the channel (58°F), thus a major locale for training.

However, the real place is an even more busy major shipping channel where looking for swimmers is not the norm. Neal relayed the marathon-distance of 26 miles, spending two hours in the water and two hours out while his partner swam. From Dover, they reached Calais in 14 hours, 22 minutes.

The austral summer of 2002-03 was an exceptionally cool one, and the ice never broke apart very well in the Ross Sea. **Joan Boothe MN07** (author of the soon to be published *The Storied Ice*) was on a circumnavigation of the Antarctic Continent aboard the Russian Icebreaker *Kapitan Khlebnikov* with a seasoned group of early Antarctic tourists. On January 24, her ship received word that an Italian logistic supply ship, the *Italia*, was locked in the ice and fearful that it could not break loose before the winter. The *Khlebnikov*, on a 22-mile detour, powered through thick sea ice to free her as the tourists and Italian sailors all cheered, and the Russian Captain beamed in pride.

**Chuck Davis MN10** has been on many oceanographic crews to photograph beneath the sea. He showed extraordinary pictures of Orcas taken on the last day of a voyage with the Cousteau Society to islands north of New Guinea. Both the *Calypso* and *Alcyone* comprised the expedition; Chuck was on the later, a most unusual turbo-sail vessel. The plan was to gather some final pickup shots

after three months building a documentary. Much to their joy several killer whales seemed to want to exhibit their eating prowess for the photographers. They dove to catch sharks and would bring their prey to show the men and the cameras! Unbelievable pictures!

**Lee Langan FN99** stepped back further in time to an early expedition as a member of a U. S. Coast & Geodetic Survey First-Order Triangulation Party. In 1953, as part of a four-month Alaskan survey, the survey party hired a flotilla of barges and small boats to transport the 25 members and their gear 400 miles up the Yukon River. Lee condensed the week-long experience into a few slides—showing life aboard, being stuck on a sandbar, presenting the Coast Survey aquacade, and celebrating his 21st birthday when King salmon were served on the shore of the river's rapids. Lee introduced Shirley Vernetti Newcomb, the trader's daughter, who had also made the trip!

The view from our meeting at the University Club



## NorCA Chapter The Corner Chair— 2011 Contributors

Barbara Berg  
Barry Boothe  
Joan Boothe  
Eugene Boudreau  
Ann Chokas  
Nicholas Clinch  
Wendy Crowder  
Mike Diggles  
Susan Dutcher  
Don Dvorak  
Elaine Dvorak  
Palmer Dyal  
Sue Estey  
Joann Franklin-Knox  
Charlene Glacy  
Gina Glantz  
Ron Glantz  
Harry Hicks  
Robert Higgins  
Ken Howery  
Alan Hutchison  
Anders Jepsen  
Kathy Jepsen  
Barbara Kanowick  
David Kennard  
Margot Komarmy  
Candida Kutz  
Keith Kvenvolden  
Joan Mary Lamphier  
Lee Langan  
Karine Langan  
Sara Shoemaker Lind  
Mary McGann  
Charles Merdinger  
David Moorer  
David Moyer  
Neal Mueller  
Linda-Lee Myers  
Nancy Nenow  
Alan Nichols  
Michael Powers  
John Richardson  
Ed & Sandra Ross  
Peter Rundquist  
Becky Rygh  
Carina Trowbridge  
Sabharwal  
Mark A. Smith  
Stephen Smith  
Patti Stack  
Phil Trowbridge  
Edward Von der Porten  
Saryl Von der Porten  
James Weil  
Christian Werner  
Dede Whiteside  
Robin Ziegler

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\$25!

That was a superb Story Night thanks to **Kay Schmieder** not to mention our Storytellers...we're starting a new tradition using an ancient format for exploring--the STORYTELLER...and discovering new talents in our fellow Explorers, **Ken Howery, Joan Boothe, Chuck Davis, Neal Mueller, Peter Hemming,** and our SuperEditor **Lee Langan.**

I'm afraid I overdid my pride of our Chapter by sending advice to the Board directly on motivating Chapters and attracting new members (based on our Chapter's success in gaining new members.) Maybe some of the ideas will be adopted, but I was advised that wasn't proper procedure.

Big national move to encourage formal election of officers; our chapter's emphasis has always been on selection of officers and Super Explorers based not on votes but on contributions to the Chapter; in any event every member is encouraged to become a SuperExplorer by taking on a special responsibility for the Chapter and, if interested, to become an officer.

**ELECTIONS:** We will hold our local NorCA election of new officers at our May meeting. (If you are interested in being elected to an office or would like to become a SuperExplorer for our Chapter, contact me.)

**ECAD:** Everyone is welcome to attend our international annual meeting March...in New York. If you would like to attend and join our chapter tables, sign up for the dinner on the national website ([www.explorers.org](http://www.explorers.org)) and be sure to request to be seated at the "Alan Nichols/NorCA Chapter Tables". Then send a copy of your reservation to [<nicholsalan9@gmail.com>](mailto:nicholsalan9@gmail.com)

**AWARDS NIGHT:** Save the date of May 20, 2011. We'll solve a 750 year old Mongolian mystery with our speaker and present some special awards to some unsung heroes!

**AWARD APPLICATION:** The \$6000 for winning the Chapter Membership contest has been received. These monies are not for general Chapter operations but for grants for special projects. If you have a proposal or any ideas as to how to distribute this money in whole or part, send it to me by March 31. (The general form of the application is like the Student Grant form: [http://www.explorers.org/index.php/expeditions/funding/expedition\\_grants/](http://www.explorers.org/index.php/expeditions/funding/expedition_grants/)) The application will be reviewed and acted upon by our officers and SuperExplorers in April. You must be a participant in our Chapter to be eligible. The grant should be related to exploration, but otherwise it's wide open!

—Alan Nichols FN84



Bob Schmieder, Lesley Ewing, Steve Smith, Lee Langan, Alan Nichols

This picture, taken on *Story Night*, has all of the living Chairs of the NorCA Chapter (except for Bill Isherwood, who spends so much time in China and now lives in Seattle.) It is an indication of the vibrant nature of our group that each of these leaders continues to maintain an active part in our chapter. It does not just happen. Each individual has a history of stepping forward to help and, thus, to enjoy more fully the camaraderie that is evident. Many hands make the tasks required more easily accomplished, and participation has its rewards in new friendships. Indeed, as a new Director of The Explorers Club, I hear this same claim whenever I am around a clutch of members. Any evening with explorers is a Story Night!

So, step forward. The first step for a volunteer is to contact a current officer—listed herein. Think about what you may want to do, or we can assign a job. Beginning in June there will be a turnover of the administration of NorCA as Alan moves on to undertake some work with the national Club. Our Vice Chair, Anders Jepsen, stands in the wings, and to be sure he welcomes those who wish to help.

We have a long list of folks who work hard to keep our expanding chapter humming. You see Sue Estey and Joan Boothe at each meeting. Jim Hurson, the new Lord of Sound and Light, too. Charlotte & Becky Rygh hosting. Sara Shoemaker Lind flashing for digital prints. Max Nichols behind the video. It all comes together. Behind the scenes Von Hurson is busy with field trips; Mike Diggles has maintained the website for 15 years! Elizabeth Rosen developing a student chapter at Stanford. Bob Higgins pressing for new member details and reminders. Lee Langan has written and published the newsletter for a decade, with the welcome support of articles and pictures submitted. The list goes further. The point is there is work to be done. Volunteer to help any of these folks. Before you know it you will get involved!

We have enjoyed continued record attendance for extraordinary speakers, established adventuresome and educational field trips. 2011 will continue this trend. **To maintain our ability to bring you these events and activities, we ask that you support your chapter with annual \$25.00 dues for the calendar year.** Remitting is easy. You can pay "digitally" by Paypal or by sending a check to our Treasurer Sue Estey.



### From the Board

I attended the national Board of Directors meeting, hosted by the Greater Piedmont Chapter, in Charleston, South Carolina, in late January. It was a treat where our day's work was surrounded by four lectures, two field trips, three sustainable seafood meals, plus some local fried chicken! A tour de force of Southern Hospitality in a charming city.

Your Board benefits from visiting the chapters, and the feeling is clearly mutual.

John Hodge speaks about local geology, where the Santee River enters the Atlantic

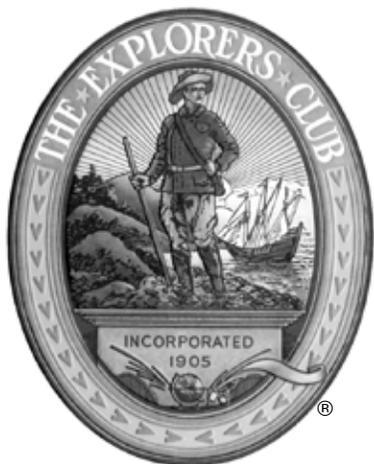
With enthusiasm, I offered an invitation, and it was welcomed. The Board will meet in San Francisco in January 2012. (If you want to serve on the host committee, just let me know.)

You have received the Ballot for new Directors to be elected to serve for three years, beginning in March. PLEASE read the materials with care and make your selection. The more you involve yourselves with the Club the more you know about those who serve. While we do not have a nominee from the West Coast this year, there are several exceptional choices.

**VOTE and MAIL soon.**

As the Chairman of the Publication Committee, I would appreciate your response to the questionnaire that was included. Please answer and return this sheet with your ballot. The form was prepared by a professional, and the results will give us guidance. —Lee Langan FN99

February 2011



Chair: Alan Nichols
415 789-9348
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Vice Chair: Anders Jepsen
925 254-3079
ajviking@aol.com
Treasurer: Sue Estey
510 526-2216
sestey@earthlink.net
Secretary: Stephen E. Smith
Webmaster: Mike Diggles
Newsletter: Lee Langan

Don Dana — February 25 — University Club

Northern California Calendar of Events

(Venues will be identified as soon as known.)

Our Next Events

February 25 . . . Ethiopian Research Expedition
Don Dana. . . . . University Club

Future Events

March 19 . . . . . ECAD
Maya Prophecies . . . . . Waldorf-Astoria
March 25 . . . . . Medical Exploration in Iraq
Tom Cromwell, MD . . . . . University Club
April 22 . . . . . The Storied Ice
Joan Boothe . . . . . University Club
May 20 . . . . . Dead Men Tell Tales
Alan Nichols . . . . . University Club
June 18 . . . . . Angel Island Picnic

Earlier Events (2010)

April 30 . . . . . Seth Shostak
Are We Alone in Space? . . . . . University Club
May 8-9 . . . . . Seashore Field Trip/lunch
Point Lobos, Monterey Peninsula, Hick's home
May 21 . . . . . Left Bank/Rive Gauche
Music of the Antarctic Expeditions . . . . . Stanford
June 5 . . . . . Angel Island Picnic
July 1 . . . . . Marcel Robischon
Discovering the Redwoods. . . . . University Club
September 17 . . . . . Don Johanson
Lucy and Our African Origins . . . . . University Club
October 29 . . . . . Josh Bernstein
Expeditions and the Media . . . . . University Club
November 19. . . . . Jack Dumbacher
Poison Birds of New Guinea . . . . . University Club
December 5 . . . . . Alan & Becky Nichols
Chair's Member Reception . . . . . Tiburon
December 13. . . . . Alan Nichols
Mongolian Flag Expedition . . . . . Honolulu
January 21, 2011. . . . . Story Night
Member tales . . . . . University Club

USE PAYPAL!

February 25: University Club, San Francisco

Date: Friday February 25, 2011
Place: University Club
Time: 6:00 - reception
7:15 - dinner
8:00 - talk
Cost: \$49 in advance; \$60 on the 21st
Students: \$33. (2011 dues \$25!)
Please mail information to Dr. Sue Estey, 216 Carmel Avenue, El Cerrito, CA 94530 or email sestey@earthlink.net or call (510) 526-2216

We have established a PayPal account.

For those of you who have these accounts, you can sign up and remit dinner costs to the NorCA Chapter by transferring money to:

explorersnorca@gmail.com

There is a PAYPAL BUTTON on our website (www.explorersnorca.org); easy to use!



University Club, Atop Nob Hill where the cable cars cross

Send address changes and corrections by email to Steve at nauticos@oceanearth.org

The University Club has Valet Parking for \$20; the Brocklebank Garage on Sacramento is only \$10! Other nearby garages are expensive. Some street parking. Muni (cable cars OR Sacramento #1) is very near; BART & CalTrans connections are easy. Car pool! The University Club is wheel-chair accessible.