

POINT REYES LIGHT

Volume LX No. 54/ Point Reyes Station, California

March 13, 2008

CALENDAR > West Marin galleries deluged with exhibits of jellyfish, ponds, vintage pistols and plein air paintings. /20



ARTS > Japanese-style wood block prints by Inverness artist Tom Killion sell as broadsides at Point Reyes Books. /12



Marin Supes bring word from Washington

Stegner's American West

Review by Mark Dowie

In the interest of full disclosure, Philip Fradkin is not only a friend, he dated my sister. So I suppose he should also be regarded as 'almost family.' When I told the *Light's* Managing Editor Tess Elliot this, she assigned a review of *Wallace Stegner and The American West* anyway. "It's simply impossible to find anyone in West Marin who doesn't know Phil Fradkin," she said.

So I blanked out the byline, wrapped myself in the cloak of objectivity and began reading the biography of a man I had almost forgotten, a writer whose work I hadn't read for 20 years or more. I soon forgot the author's identity and indulged myself in the triumph and turmoil of another writer's life.

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Golf tees bound with wire are on display at an art exhibit at Toby's Gallery in Point Reyes Station. Photo by Jacoba Charles.

by Justin Nobel

Marin County Supervisors Steve Kinsey and Charles McGlashan journeyed to Washington D.C. last week to bring the issues of West Marin before local Congress members, who began their yearly process of setting the budget in March. High on the supervisor's list of priorities were climate change, sustainable agriculture on parklands, and the Bolinas Lagoon Restoration project.

"The county has for many years recognized that in order to get attention in Washington we have to spend some time in their town," said Kinsey.

The supervisors spent three days meeting with Senator Dianne Feinstein, the staff of Senator Barbara Boxer and Congresswoman Lynn Woolsey, as well as Marin County's lobbyist. The supervisors also met with staff from the senate's Environment and Public Works Committee and the House of Representative's Resource and Infrastructure Committee, groups that control funding for many

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Bo guitarist remembered

by Justin Nobel

Buddy Craig, a Bolinas musician known locally as a "guitar phenomenon" who strummed his first strings at age eight and played country lullabies and bluegrass beats at Smiley's for years, passed away last week. He was 50. Buddy was troubled by drugs and alcohol throughout his life, which he ended himself in his Bolinas apartment.

"There is nothing that guy couldn't play. If it had strings on it, he could make it sound like it was supposed to sound," said friend Max Brimhall.

"He was afflicted by a lot of the things musicians fall prey to," said Max. "He was up, and he was down. When he was down he could turn on you in an instant and be incredibly sarcastic. When he was up, he was just as beautiful and admirable a human as you would ever want to meet."

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Pontacq on conserving the Giacomini wetlands

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Learn the lingo of the Bolinas street scene

ASK MISSY /15

Let me introduce you to the *Point Reyes Light*

Art born out of artifacts

by Jacoba Charles

Our American West is one great rambling collage; a ragweed tumble of people and places, myth and technology, hope and nostalgia.

In Toby's Feed Barn, an art installation stitches together the disparate and conflicting parts of our history, juxtaposing artifacts from 150 years of pioneering, conquering and conservation.

"The installation is a sampler and an American tale of the West," wrote the artists, Madeline Nieto Hope and Heather Peters Pratt, in their description of the project. "Reaching back in time, we keep in mind historical edges surrounding our

people's progress westward."

Ten-foot-tall drawings of common weeds sprawl gracefully along the western wall, while a long table draped in painted leather hugs the room's eastern edge. A giant, brilliantly colored compass on the floor points north.

If you look closer, innumerable details emerge: a tapestry densely spangled with buttons, an aged pincushion studded with mismatched pins. Small shelves on the walls display found-object sculptures: wooden golf tees and rubber washers and an antique pistol.

A letterpressed banner with the text of

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>> Guitarist

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Home made

Wallace "Buddy" Craig was born March 2, 1957. He grew up in Oceanside, outside San Diego. His father was in the Air Force and stationed nearby at Camp Pendleton. Both parents were musicians; they played in a band called Ken and Karol Craig, now in the rockabilly hall of fame. Both Buddy and his sister Laura were brought up on music.

When Buddy was eight he plucked an old Kay guitar from the wall of a party which he was at with his parents. He took the instrument home and later, while peeling potatoes in the kitchen, his mother heard him singing to himself:

"Had a little monkey, sent him to the country, fed him on ginger bread, long came a choo-choo, knocked him cuckoo, now my little monkey's dead."

His parents told him they would help buy a guitar if he came up with half the money. He went down the block to the local grocery store and asked the woman behind the counter if he could sweep the parking lot to earn cash for a new guitar. She asked Buddy to play a tune on the Kay he had in his hands.

When he did, the clerk was blown away. "Honey, you can sweep every parking lot we got," she said. Half a year later he had saved enough money and his parents chipped in and bought him a Yamaha. Within several months he was playing complex tunes like Malaguena, a popular flamenco piece.

In the 1970s he married and had two kids, Darcy and Rebecca, but the marriage didn't last. Buddy left when his girls were very young, and



Buddy Craig produced three CDs and was almost finished with a fourth.

for most of their lives he remained gone.

In the mid-1980s he moved to Grass Valley, where he met his second wife, Nichole Deluz, also a musician. The couple traveled the West in an old school bus with a wood burning stove and a piano, stopping at festivals up and down the coast. Nichole played keyboard, Buddy guitar, and they both sang. "She had a voice like an angel," said Max. "They made some incredible music together."

One night, while camped in a field outside Guerneville, a flood deluged the bus. They abandoned it and made their way back to Grass Valley. In the early 1990s Buddy and Nichole broke up.

Midlife Chrysler

Around that time he came to Bolinas, and aside from a trip to Colorado and the Texas Hill Country to produce music, that's where he's

stayed, living in an apartment across from the community center in a building that was once the Bolinas Bay Bakery.

When Max, who hitchhiked out of a small town in the Texas Panhandle in 1969, first came to town in 1997, Buddy was one of the first people who befriended him.

"Essentially there are two types of people who live in Bolinas," said Max, "the people who grew up in Bolinas, and the people from small towns all across America who never fit into their little town and end up in this little town."

Buddy played guitar and sang in The Buddy Craig Band. Marty Holland played bass and Brian Knade was on drums. They played mostly at Smiley's, but also at the Fourth Street Tavern in San Rafael and at the 1351 Lounge in St. Helena, known as "the only bar in Napa where you can't get a glass of wine."

Like so many musicians, Buddy had his share of problems. He had daughters he never saw and had developed an addiction to meth-amphetamines.

"It changed his brain chemistry," explained Max. "You knew his bad side would come out and it was hard to take."

Eventually, he got back up, with the help of Emmeline Craig, a watercolorist visiting from France who noticed him at Smiley's one summer evening in 2000.

"I liked his smile," said Emmeline. Later that night, he performed. "It just touched me so hard," she said, "his music, the way he was delivering it and giving it all out. I was absolutely amazed by his talent. I felt so much for him."

Emmeline's English was imperfect but Buddy was "extremely gentle" and helped her learn during her three-week stay in town.

"It went very, very fast," she said. "Three

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>> Supes

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of the issues on the supervisor's agenda that are relevant to West Marin.

Agriculture on parklands

Kinsey is concerned about the security of ranchers on the Point Reyes who lease their land from the Point Reyes National Seashore (PRNS). Many leases are for short periods of time and cattle ranching is the only type of farming formally permitted. Kinsey is eager to introduce new types of farming to the area and wants to change these guidelines. Dave Evan's free-range chickens and Kevin Lunny's artichokes, for example, have only been allowed under special permission from PRNS Superintendent Don Neubacher. This isn't very secure for the ranchers, said Kinsey. "They feel vulnerable."

One way to create legislation that would diversify farming on the point is through the park's General Management Plan, which is nearly a decade overdue. The other is through federal legislation.

Kinsey's team also discussed the Drakes Bay Oyster Company (DBOC) with Feinstein

and the staff of Boxer and Woolsey. While no actions were taken, the supervisors as well as Feinstein expressed their interest in ensuring that DBOC owner Kevin Lunny obtain a permit so he can operate through at least 2011.

"Our interest is similar to the senator's at this point," said Kinsey. "We wanted to see fairness for the Lunny family."

Climate change

The supervisors attended a briefing regarding proposed carbon trading legislation. The federal government seems serious about developing a cap and trade system, explained Kinsey. Such a system is already in place in the European Union and enforces carbon output by giving companies a certain cap on the amount of carbon they can emit. This credit can be abided by or sold to other companies. This is good news for Marin, said Kinsey.

What is not good, he said, is that Washington turned down California's request to develop its own emission standards for vehicles, an issue which the supervisors brought up with the legislators.

The Marin team also spoke vigorously about the need to reinstate tax credits for solar power. A bill that provided credits for homes and businesses installing solar for the past four years ended in December and was not reissued.

"You can't build a business knowing incentives will go away," said Kinsey, adding that their request received positive feedback. "I wouldn't be surprised to see something towards the end of this year," he said.

Bolinas Lagoon

The supervisors pressed the need for an additional \$700,000 for the Bolinas Lagoon Restoration project, which after several false starts is now being led by the Gulf of the Farallones National Marine Sanctuary and the Army Corps of Engineers. Kinsey says Congress has awarded the county millions for the project over the past couple years, but last year offered no funding.

"We kind of fell off the tracks," he said, "and now we're trying to get back on." He thought the chance of funding this year was better because with several working group meetings already having occurred, the path to a solution is now clearer.

The trip

Kinsey has made a trip to D.C. this time of year for nine years, but this year was the first time that the supervisors prioritized their points. In the past they simply went with a wish list in hand. The county plans to be as organized in future years.

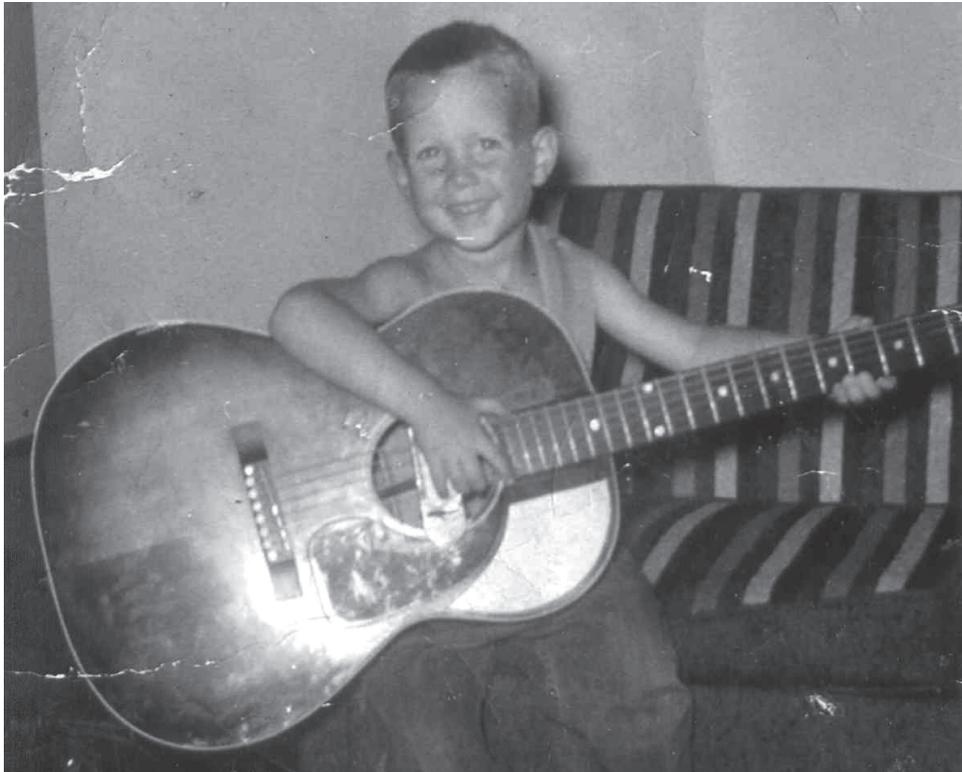
A thorough visit is well worth it, said Kin-

sey. Marin received \$25 million in 2005 to fund non-motorized transport like walking and cycling (Kinsey applied for additional funding from this program this year, most of which will go to East Marin). The county has also helped push through legislation for coastal salmon restoration, which has led to tens of millions of dollars for the state, several million of which has made its way to Marin.

Kinsey and McGlashan left Marin after a meeting Monday morning and returned Thursday evening, just in time for another meeting. Their days in D.C. were full and there was no time for sightseeing, although they did visit the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial, which was designed by Lawrence Halprin, a Marin resident.

Washington is always crowded, explained Kinsey, especially this time of year, when lobbyists flood the town to ply their points with legislators. Congress haggles over the budget during the summer and a final draft is completed by October 1, when the fiscal year begins.

"There was standing room only on the metro, the restaurants were crowded and the hotels were all full, so we had a hard time finding a room," said Kinsey. "The only spacious place was the National Mall, because the highest the temperature got was in the low 30s."



Buddy Craig started to play a Kay guitar at age eight.

>> Guitarist

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months later I was back here, because I could not stand it, and he could not stand it either.”

On Emmeline’s second visit they road-tripped to Marks, Mississippi in a Toyota camper truck to see Buddy’s dad, who was dying. It was the first time Buddy had been home in years.

Emmeline’s visa was only for three months but she returned again, this time for good. They were married at Smiley’s in October of 2000 and lived in Bolinas.

“Marriage to Emmeline was the best thing that ever happened to him,” said Max.

Buddy went into a spree of self-recording, burning albums in his apartment, which had 14-foot high ceilings and excellent acoustics. The bathroom served as an isolation booth.

In 2002, he produced “Midlife Chrysler,” filled with quick, smoky country music known as slamgrass. Songs have names such as “Goin’ insane,” “I’m crazy,” “Thankin’ Jose Cuervo” and “I do my cryin’ by myself.”

In 2003, came “home made,” an instrumental guitar disc. Decorated on the inside of the

jewel case is a beachscape done in watercolors, by Emmeline. Lavender bluffs rise from a languid sea and a lone bird flaps low over the water. The image matches the feeling that is evoked by soothing ballads like “Picker’s moon,” “Bolinasian waltz” and “While she sleeps.”

In 2004, Buddy released “Blue Kingdom,” which opens with “Blue kangaroo blue armadillo duet,” a song that he had written for Darcy years ago. Similar to “home made,” these songs are rich portraits populated by pleasant plucks and strums. There are no vocals but deeper chords well up as if they were words, a bit playful, a bit plaintive.

“It was mind-boggling,” said Max, referring to this massive output, “some of the best stuff he ever made.”

When he died, Buddy was at work on a new album, “Tales from over the hill,” a classic country CD that was mostly complete.

His music was played on local radio stations, to great fanfare.

“I was listening to Picker’s Moon on community radio while driving around town,” wrote one fan on a music website. “I ordered the CD and played it in my car for a solid week, the most uplifting trance guitar ever.”

“Buddy Craig’s music evokes every memory

and encompasses every emotion I have ever had,” said another commenter, “it literally heals my soul.”

But Buddy’s own soul remained troubled. In 2004, he and Emmeline separated. He quit meth but then turned to alcohol, and friends tried to get him admitted to a treatment center. They called family therapists, went to upscale rehab facilities and talked to crisis hotlines. The therapist took weeks to return the call and seemed disinterested, the rehab centers were too expensive and the hotlines didn’t know how to deal with Buddy, who hadn’t yet done anything to harm himself, although friends were worried he might.

“We all knew he had a problem,” said Emmeline. “He was in a lot of pain, physically and mentally.”

Blue kingdom

Buddy’s most recent girlfriend was Denise Soler, a special education teacher in San Francisco that he met four years ago at Smiley’s.

“I appreciated the incredible talent but I’m not the groupie type,” said Denise. “He tried to court me like I was a honky-tonk girl, but when he found out I was a special ed teacher that totally changed everything.”

Denise was with Buddy the night he died. Max was supposed to pick him up for an AA meeting, but they never made it.

“It’s the dark side and the sunny side of life out here on the coast,” said Max. “People get isolated and it darkens their hearts. You never really know what’s going through someone’s mind. Everyone loved Buddy and wanted to do what they could for him, but in the end the demons got him, and he threw his life away.”

On Monday evening there was a potluck dinner in remembrance of Buddy at the Coast Café. Candles lit the room and flowers decorated the tables. Buddy’s music played in the background as friends and family filed in, clinking wineglasses and helping themselves to platters of rigatoni and artichoke salad.

Photographs of Buddy covered a table in back: Buddy in a flannel shirt open at the neck and a cowlick across his forehead like the Dennis the Menace, Buddy with his hair hung shoulder length from beneath a white cowboy hat, a guitar slung across his chest, Buddy seated outside Smiley’s with a woman slumped in his lap, foreheads pressed together, lips curled in laughter.

Around 7 p.m., Buddy’s mother, Caryl, ad-

ressed the packed restaurant. “There was something about Buddy,” she said, “he just didn’t seem to be of this world.” She told the story of Buddy’s first guitar, then sang a song with his sister, Laura, who is a blues musician. Nichole played the accordion.

People took the mic throughout the night. Some told stories, some read poetry, one man with a top hat and tapered bellbottoms strummed a song he composed in Buddy’s bathroom.

“I don’t know if I’ve ever been in a town like this. It seems like a little Mecca” said his mother, “all of you make me want to go on.”

Outside, friends huddled around heat lamps and Orion flickered in a clear sky. Denise and Laura sat nearby, speaking about the event. “It’s like a nightmare wrapped in an I don’t know what,” said Laura, “but the people of this town have made it a whole lot more bearable for us.”

Another visitor everyone was eager to console was Darcy, Buddy’s oldest daughter, who was visibly moved by the event.

Darcy and her younger sister Becky grew up without their father, but they didn’t forget him. At age 21, Darcy decided to find him. She googled his name, noticed his band was playing at Smiley’s, and called the bar.

“I said I was looking for Buddy Craig,” she explained, “I’m his daughter and I haven’t seen or spoken to him in 16 years. Do you know how to get in touch with him?”

A little later, Buddy rang back. They kept in touch over the phone and made plans to meet. Then, in January of 2003, Darcy, who is in the National Guard, was deployed to Iraq, where she spent the next 18 months. Buddy wrote letters and emails. Several months after her return she finally visited him in Bolinas.

“I was still in military mode so it was kind of a culture shock,” said Darcy.

She lodged upstairs at Smiley’s, met his friends, and watched him perform. “It had been a long absence, but it was just the right time for me,” said Darcy, “I had a lot of fun.”

After the visit they lost touch. Darcy never saw her father again, but said she was glad to be back in Bolinas, where everyone knew the man she never did.

Buddy is survived by his mother Caryl, his sister Laura, his daughters Darcy and Becky and numerous friends, lovers and fans. A fund to pay for funeral and burial costs is being taken care of by Emmeline. Contact her at 415.868.9741 or emmelinebj@hotmail.com.



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