



THE VIEW FROM THE PRESIDENT'S WINDOW

C. Mack Shaver

President, Board of Directors

Thanks to all of you who attended John Muir's Birthday/Earth Day and the Association's Annual Meeting on April 23. Both were among the most successful events ever at the Historic Site - based on the number of people attending and positive comments we received. We're planning for next year already!

Don't forget Ranch Days on September 24. This will be a chance to experience ranch life as it was in the 1800s, with antique farm and kitchen equipment, horse and buggy rides, craft demonstrations, music, dancers, and great food. New this year are exhibitors who continue the Muir ranching legacy in Contra Costa County today. We hope you can come!

Money raised from all of our events helps the John Muir Association continue to offer events free to the public and to support projects at the site. We also continue to receive donations designated for the construction of the new Interpretive/Education Center for John Muir National Historic Site. We are at about 10% of our goal on this \$2 million project.

JMA is an active partner in the John Muir Festival Center, a capital fundraising partnership also including the National Park Service, the City of Martinez, Martinez Historical Society, and the Willows Theatre Company. Together, we are working to bring five capital projects consistent with John Muir's life and legacy to Martinez. Projects currently planned and underway are:

- A 200-seat Willows Cabaret located at 636 Ward Street that will feature tiered, table-seating for popular family-oriented entertainment.
- The Kenney Family Production Facility to enhance productions at the John Muir Amphitheater.
- Infrastructure improvements to the John Muir Amphitheater at Waterfront Park in Martinez, including permanent ticketing and concession buildings.
- An historic 1877 Martinez Train Depot Museum Annex to house exhibits and large items in the collection of the Martinez Historical Society, to include a theater ticketing center and administrative offices.
- The education and visitor center at the John Muir National Historic Site where scholars of all ages will gather to research and discuss issues relevant to contemporary conservation efforts.

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THE VIEW

View from the President, *cont.*

At the John Muir Amphitheater this summer the partnership made great progress with improvements to the site. Community volunteers built permanent ticket and concession stands. The city worked on the utilities, paving, and sky boxes. That big cement slab (the result of in-kind donations from our local businesses) is the foundation for the Kenney building, which will be erected soon. We were overwhelmed by the generosity of donors at the Summer Festival who gave the last \$20,000 needed to pay for rental of a 60 foot crane to lift the heavy steel building.

JMA took advantage of the gathering of Muir fans at the Summer Festival programs to promote membership and our John Muir Tribute CD. Proceeds from the CD go to the new building, in case you haven't bought one yet!

In other news, the Association welcomes two new National Park Service Superintendents to the Historic Site: Martha Lee, general superintendent for John Muir NHS, Eugene O'Neill NHS, Port Chicago National Memorial and Rosie the Riveter NHS; and Rick Smith, deputy superintendent. We look forward to working with both experienced park managers to preserve this important historic legacy for our community.

There are also three new faces at the Association. Juliet Don, Vice President and Market Development Manager for Bank of America, brings a strong background in communications and public relations as well as non-profit funding to the Board. Igor Skaredoff, co-founder of Friends of Alhambra Creek and active in many Martinez organizations and projects, has also joined the Board. Liz Eckstein is our new staff assistant, with experience in development and fundraising as well as business management. We are pleased to have their expertise and willingness to help steer JMA into the future.

Remember, we always need volunteers, new members, and board member recommendations. Please help your Association grow and succeed by being active in recruitment and volunteering!

*Thank You to our
Earthday/
Birthday Sponsors*

**Northern
California Solar
Energy Association**

**Toyota
Walnut Creek**

Birthday/Earth Day Celebration 2005

*Mary O'Hara Zimmerman
Board of Directors*

On April 23rd this year the place to be was the John Muir House! JMA and the NPS partnered with over 40 exhibitors to entertain and inform nearly 800 visitors. We spent months organizing an event to bring together resource conservationists, wildlife advocates, local land managers (farmers and gardeners), alternative energy aficionados, transportation visionaries, and others. Our mandate was to work with groups that would readily identify with the interests and ideals of John Muir and promote local causes.

Part of the planning process was consulting the Farmer's Almanac during those hot days in February. While it predicted rain, we prayed for sun. What we ended up with was "WEEDstock"! However, the grounds around the house and orchards were made ready by the NPS and the never-tiring Master Gardeners. There were tents, canopies, and "pop-ups" creating an informational promenade from gate to gate. Music from the *Felonious Blues Revue* and the smell of grilled tofu filled the air. We did have enough sunshine to power solar widgets and fountains to entertain the kids and impress the adults.

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Birthday/Earth Day, cont.

Like any birthday party, there was cake - an amazing two-tiered confection created in the image of the John Muir/Strentzel house! Once our invited guests and the NPS started cutting this masterpiece, long lines formed. Our sincere gratitude goes out to Karen Del Bonta at "Le Gâteau Élégant" in Martinez for her artistic mastery and baking skills!

As the Birthday/Earth Day event was drawing to a close, there was one last healthy down pour of rain, as the *Jolly Dram Drinkers* string band took the stage. Those four twenty-something year olds played instruments as old as 98 year, with songs of the same vintage. Soon, the clouds rolled back, the tents came down, and exhibits were folded up. Those of us that remained headed to the Annual Meeting where there was plenty of sunshine and smiles, though none brighter than that of Igor Skaredoff, the co-recipient with his wife Shirley, of the 2005 John Muir Conservation Award.

We enjoyed two wonderful testimonials about the work that Igor and Shirley Skaredoff spearheaded in the restoration and preservation of Alhambra Creek.

I think we all still feel the self-generated energy and magic created by a group of like-minded people. Thank you all for the support!

Meteors Streak Martinez

Tad Shay, Lead Park Ranger

That quick little glimpse of a streak of light across the night sky in mid-August is not the falling star or shooting star we remember from our youthful days of summer. It is something a little less, a lot less in fact. It is a meteor, which, to put it bluntly, are pieces of space debris that plow into the Earth's atmosphere. Most meteors are no bigger than a few grains of sand or pebbles. Occasionally a larger piece will survive the trip through our atmosphere and land here on Earth. Then it is called a meteorite.

Every year in mid-August, the earth passes through the debris left behind by the comet Swift-Tuttle. The meteors we see at this time of year appear to originate from the constellation Perseus in the northeast sky, thus are named Perseid Meteor Shower. It is an ancient meteor belt whose origins are linked to the Swift-Tuttle comet. The first known references to the shower were made by Chinese astronomers nearly 2,000 years ago.

At John Muir NHS we have been doing a Perseid Meteor Shower Walk on Mt. Wanda for more than ten years. Every year is different. Sometimes we have seen about 12 per hour, but it is possible to see up to 60 meteors per hour, depending on light pollution. Though this year's walk was held on August 12th, you may look for the shower in the night sky throughout mid-August. The best way to take in the whole sky for maximum meteor viewing is to lie down on a blanket in a wide open space.

The Wisconsin Historical Society has mounted more than 100 pages of original manuscript letters by John Muir on the Web at <http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/turningpoints/search.asp?id=1224>. These are personal letters to some of the oldest friends of his youth in Wisconsin and span his entire adult life. They date from 1861 to 1914, and were written from Madison, Meaford, Trout's Crossing, Yosemite, Menendez, San Francisco, and Arizona at some of the most important moments in Muir's career.

View from the Superintendent's Window

*David Blackburn
Acting Superintendent*

Following the retirement of Superintendent Glenn Fuller, the park has been managed by a series of acting superintendents. I am the third and final to serve, keeping the seat warm for the new superintendent. On that note, I am pleased to announce that Martha Lee of Yosemite National Park was selected as the new superintendent for John Muir and the other Contra Costa national park units: Eugene O'Neill, Rosie the Riveter, and Port Chicago.

Lee is a 25-year veteran of the National Park Service and is currently serving as acting superintendent at Pinnacles National Monument. Prior to this appointment, she served as the Hetch Hetchy program manager at Yosemite National Park, coordinating NPS responsibilities with the city and county of San Francisco for the Tuolumne River watershed and the O'Shaughnessy Dam.

While at Yosemite, she also worked on two significant planning efforts - the Yosemite Valley Plan and the Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan. She has a long history of working with park partners and for several years she served as the park's editor-in-chief.

Lee was on the staff of the Yosemite Museum for twelve years, where she confides that one of her most satisfying accomplishments was co-authoring (with Craig Bates) *Traditions and Innovation: A Basket History of the Indians of the Yosemite-Mono Lake Region*, a book of the history of Native people and their baskets in the Yosemite area.

"Martha has built bridges with organizations and partners in every position she has had held," said Regional Director Jonathan Jarvis in making the appointment. "I am confident she will bring her usual high energy, motivation, and infectious enthusiasm to the endeavors at the rich fabric of national park areas in the San Francisco East Bay."

Lee will be stepping into a newly restructured park organization. The four park units in Contra Costa County were merged, creating a single managerial team. In addition to Martha as Superintendent, Rick Smith will become the Deputy Superintendent. Rick currently serves as the chief of interpretation for Rosie the Riveter. I will remain the chief of interpretation here at John Muir and O'Neill and add Rosie to my responsibilities. By the end of the summer we hope to hire a cultural resource manager for the park group as well.

Merging the units capitalizes on the proximity of the four parks to one another and reduces duplication of work. It allows us to share limited resources for projects and the day-to-day administration of each unit. The merger also capitalizes on the common World War II theme at Rosie the Riveter World War II Home Front National Historical Park in Richmond and the Port Chicago Memorial in Concord.

"The ambitious planning schedule for Rosie the Riveter and the outstanding partnership opportunities at John Muir and Eugene O'Neill sites offer plenty of challenges," Lee said. "I look forward to meeting and learning from each of the staff and park partners."

Lee has completed the NPS Executive Leadership Training Program with long-term assignments in the Office of Budget in the Washington, D.C. office of the NPS and with the California Resources Agency. She has a BA from Stanford University. I know the John Muir Association board of directors and membership will find her an enthusiastic partner as we continue our work at the John Muir National Historic Site.

Welcome to our new and renewing members!

(January to June 2005)

Cheryl & Alan Abel
 Deanne Adams
 Mrs. Mary Baldwin
 Bill & Diane Barley
 Charles Bohakel
 Tim & Carolyn Carlson
 Rod & Barb Carpenter
 Arnold & Elsie Collier
 Pat Corr
 William & Mary Della Rosa
 JoAnne Dunec & Bruce Teel
 Richard Elliott & Andrew Holtz
 Denise & David Evans
 Mr. & Mrs. Terry Flynn
 Glenn Fuller
 Jim & Mary Ann Gaebe
 Diana & Bill Granados
 Rob & Barbara Grant
 Bill & Claudia Hanna
 David & Sharon Hanna
 Raymond & Esther Hickey
 Hulet Hornbeck
 Jane Jackson
 Elaine Jackson
 Joanne Jacobs
 Gabriel & Mara Jay
 Les & Mary Lou Johnson
 Dr. & Mrs. J.M. Jonte
 Sylvia Jordan
 John & Carol Keane
 Kathryn LaRosa
 Elmer Lindsay
 Harold & Betsy Little
 Ron Maier
 Jamie Menasco
 Annie Mills
 Gay & Dottie Parker
 Ted & Kathy Radke
 Laurel Rematore
 Bob & Pat Rezak
 John & Georgene Rostkowski
 Nancy Schaefer
 Mark Schuttenberg
 Steve Harvey & Pamela Seifert
 Phyllis Shaw
 Robert Simon
 Igor & Shirley Skaredoff
 Maxine Skeen
 Susan Smith, RN
 Jean Steffensen
 Fred Stickney
 Patricia Thomas
 Doug Tracey
 Robert Walcott, D.D.S.
 Gale & Ruth Weaner
 Claudia Whitnah
 Chris & Teri Wills
 Deborah Wittwer

A "Muir Immersion" for Kids

Jill Harcke, Camp Co-Director

Campers who attended John Muir Mountain Day Camp, sponsored by JMA, followed in the footsteps of John Muir who wandered around this same Alhambra Valley looking at *wild things* with his own children, teaching them the names of

local plants and flowers.

"How would you feel if no one knew your

name?" Muir would ask his two daughters, Wanda and Helen.



In its third successful year, John Muir Mountain Day Camp provided an immersion into the life and legacy of John Muir. Two sessions in August encouraged campers, ages 7 to 12, to explore local trails, study plant and animal life, and make bread using 130 year old sourdough starter. They turned their bread into bread balls, the very same food Muir took on his saunters, and visited the Alma, the type of scow schooner that Muir used to take his fruit up the inland waterways.

REI staff set the tone on the first day of camp with their *Leave No Trace Program*. Throughout the week campers felt more keenly their own

impact on the environment. Ranger Cheryl Abel took campers on saunters up Mt. Wanda and along the Martinez shoreline, gathering specimens for their plant presses. Campers later saw actual plants from John Muir's personal herbarium.

Nevada City artist and Camp Co-Director Sue Barry taught water color painting using a stick as a paintbrush and guided campers through exciting artistic, nature-oriented projects. Dr. Nature, Le Conte Memorial Lodge Curator and Muir scholar Bonnie Gisel, came from Yosemite to teach the campers about the *Web of Life* and her *Green Shoes* project. They learned that where we put our feet is important.

Sequoia Park Ranger Frank Helling portrayed John Muir and gave campers first hand experience of conservation, natural history, and camp games. At a performance of *John Muir's Mountain Days* at the Martinez amphitheater, campers sang *Born to Love the Wild*, an original song written by Jill Harcke, camp co-director. All in all, it was a gathering of folks from the local Muir community, eager to pass on their love of the wild to the next generation.

Co-directors and founders Jill Harcke, a Pleasant Hill teacher, and Sue Barry, look forward each year to teaching the children the love of the wild. They provide

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Muir Immersion, cont.

homemade journals for campers to record their experiences, just as Muir himself once did. "We have been honored to have members of the Muir family, musician Dan'l, "Dr. Nature" Bonnie Gisel, and the National Park Rangers bring a wealth of information and fun to the camp. The kids have a great time, learn to appreciate nature, and develop their creativity," noted Harcke.

For more information about the camp and next year's plans, visit our website at www.muircamp.org.



"When I was a boy in Scotland I was fond of everything that was wild, and all my life I've been growing fonder and fonder of wild places and wild creatures"

John Muir, *The Story of My Childhood and Youth*

A Member Supported Association

Since its founding in 1956, the John Muir Association has depended on members to support our mission and goals. As we set goals and plan for next year, we appreciate all those members who have renewed their membership and make our programs possible.

If you haven't yet renewed your membership, please do so today!

JMA also welcomes new members. **For a limited time, new members are being offered a special incentive to join: membership will be valid through December, 2006.** That means up to 16 months for the price of 12! If you have family or friends who would like to be members, please let them know about this special offer. Or, surprise them with a gift membership.

Thank you for joining us to preserve for our community a precious national resource through education, inspiration, and preservation of the legacy of John Muir.

Join JMA Today!

- \$ 30 _____
- \$ 50 _____
- \$ 75 _____
- \$ 100 _____
- Other _____

ADD:

- 12-month National Park Pass* \$ 50.00

Total Enclosed \$ _____

*The NPS National Park Pass provides admission to all National Parks and National Historic Sites throughout the country. When you purchase your National Park Pass through the JMA, 80% of your payment goes directly to support the John Muir National Historic Site.

Payment method

- Check (payable to JMA)
- Visa Mastercard
- Card # _____
- Exp. _____
- Signature _____

Member Information:

Name(s) _____

Address _____

City _____

State/Zip _____

Phone _____

Email _____

Send to:

JMA/Box 2433/Martinez, CA 94553
 Donations and membership in JMA are fully tax deductible as allowed by law.

RANCH RAMBLINGS

JOHN MUIR NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

Mt. Wanda is open sunrise to sunset. Trail maps are available at the Visitor Center. Please note that Mt. Wanda may be closed during periods of extreme fire danger. You may contact the Visitor Center for details at 925/228-8860.

The bookstore carries a variety of books about written by and about John Muir. Nature kits, posters, stuffed animals, specially designed pins and book bags are just a few of the many great gifts for John Muir fans of all ages. Like the park, the bookstore is open Wednesday through Sunday, 11-5.

Bird Walks resume in January, 2006
Wildflower walks resume March, 2006

SPECIAL EVENTS

September 24 Ranch Days, 11 -4

The harvest is done and it's time for a day of music, activities, informational displays, and fun to showcase the ranch as it was in Muir's time and learn about his ranching legacy in Contra Costa County today.

Free admission

December 10 Victorian Christmas, 11-4

Share stories under the Christmas tree, hear Scottish fiddlers perform holiday and traditional music, with holiday treats in the auditorium



Any Questions?

Call (925) 228-8860 or visit www.nps.gov/jomu



John Muir Association
P.O. Box 2433
Martinez, CA 94553

Mark Your Calendar
RANCH DAYS

SEPTEMBER 24, 11-4

John Muir (portrayed by Frank Helling) invites you to
experience life on the Muir fruit ranch in the 1880s and
enjoy our continuing local agricultural heritage!
Visit John Muir's home, the Martinez Adobe, and the
surrounding orchards, vineyard, and grounds

FOOD / MUSIC / DANCING / QUILTING / SPINNING
WAGON RIDES / ANTIQUE KITCHEN GADGETS
and MUCH, MUCH MORE

Presented by John Muir Association and John Muir National Historic Site

Free Admission, Handicapped Parking Available
For more information call (925) 229-3857

The John Muir National Historic Site is located at
4202 Alhambra Avenue, Martinez, just off Highway 4