

a view from the

# WEST POINT INN

The Newsletter for the West Point Inn Association and Friends

June 2022 • Issue 50

## Mission Statement:

*The West Point Inn Association exists to preserve, maintain, operate and educate the public about the significance of the historic West Point Inn.*

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The newsletter is published with funds provided in memory of Lifetime Member, Ernest E. Emig, and Honorary Member, Harold Allen Atkinson.

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

### Don Keeley

Greetings West Point Inn Association Members!

For the first time in two and a half years, we were able to hold an All Members' Meeting in person at the Inn. More than 65 members gathered at the Inn on Sunday, April 24, to enjoy the comradery of fellow members at a coffee hour, the Spring Members' Meeting, and a delicious lunch on the deck of the Inn. By all accounts, everyone enjoyed being at the Inn and meeting with members they may have not seen in over two years.

For those of you who were unable to attend the Spring Members' Meeting, the Board of Directors updated the membership on a number of topics, including:

- As a result of the severe financial impact of the pandemic, the Board has focused on assuring the financial health of the Association through careful cost control and targeted fundraising to "Keep the Inn Open". At several points during the pandemic, there was real concern that the Association could run out of money, but, thankfully, we were able to avoid that scenario. The Association is now in good financial health, and the Board is prioritizing several maintenance and capital improvement projects that were deferred during the past two years.
- Once the State of California and Marin County Health Orders allowed the Inn to reopen for overnight guests, the Board made the decision to open in a slow, safe, compliant fashion. We initially opened for only two groups at a time, using two separate sections of the Inn. We later opened at 50% occupancy, with all overnight guests sharing the kitchen, lounges and decks. We are now open at 100% occupancy.
- Hikers and bikers are now allowed to enjoy the decks, and one deck bathroom has reopened to the public. Only overnight guests are allowed inside the Inn.
- The website has been completely revised and updated.
- The Board partnered with Architectural Resources Group to develop an assessment report for the Inn which is now 118 years old. This 116-page report documents the current state of all structural, mechanical and electrical systems at the Inn, recom-

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mends and prioritizes maintenance and capital improvement projects, and provides cost estimates for this work. The Board will use this report to prioritize and manage improvement projects, to support fundraising efforts and to assist in lease negotiations.

- The Board approved an increase in value for West Point Inn Bucks (formerly known as Wampum) from \$25 to \$35.
- Beginning with October 1, 2022 reservations, the member price for Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday night Whole Inn Bookings has been reduced from \$1,400 to \$1,000.
- For 2022, the Board priorities are to negotiate a new lease with the Marin Municipal Water District (MMWD) to manage the Inn, to begin work on maintenance and capital projects that were deferred due to the pandemic, and to plan and implement a fundraising program to support the Inn during the next 30+ years.

Speaking of events, Pancake Breakfasts have returned! This year’s first breakfast was on Mother’s Day. Even though the temperature was in the low 40s, the wind was howling and there was off and on rain, we served over 700 breakfasts. At times, the line wrapped around the Inn, with people waiting in the wind and rain! For me, this type of commitment to support the Inn shows the deep level of affection for the Inn by members and the surrounding community. Pancake Breakfasts continue each month through October. I hope you will be able to attend and enjoy one.

The next time you are at the Inn, please be sure to thank the Innkeepers for everything they do to make the Inn a special place. They are on-duty 24 hours per day, 7 days per week. They do everything from cleaning the Inn, to maintaining the water and solar systems, to rendering assistance and first aid to hikers and bikers. The Innkeepers are the face of the West Point Inn Association to overnight guests. They are a major part of what makes the Inn a very special place.

The West Point Inn Association is run by volunteers, and it is the dedication and work of these volunteers that makes the Inn special. I want to thank the Board Members, Committee Chairs, Committee members, the hosts that organize and run all of our events, and all of the volunteers that participate at Work Parties, Pancake Breakfasts and other events. They are a very special group of people. There are plenty of ways to volunteer, and we are always looking for help at all levels. Please let me know if you are able to help.

Enjoy the Summer. I hope to see you at the Inn.

## MEMBER RESERVATIONS

Jennifer Greene

Use Promo Code for reservations: **NORA2021**

Please do not share the promo code with non-members. The member discount is 50% off the standard rate\*. The promo code can only be used for the room/cabin(s) that accommodate a member and may not be extended to non-members. The promo code will also open up the 90-120 day booking window. Members are allowed to book rooms/cabins for non-members in the 90-120 day booking window as long as the member will also be staying on site.

\*Member bookings are verified by the Reservationist using the Member Roster.

To make a reservation, go to our website: [westpointinn.com](http://westpointinn.com)

Click on STAY from the menu bar, MAKE A RESERVATION, then enter the promo code NORA2021 to see member rates and open the 30-day advance booking window.

## MEMBER’S WEBSITE

Alyssa Jorgensen

Use password MEMBER to access the member page on our website.

Please do not share the password with non-members. The Member page is a good resource for Board Agendas, Meeting Minutes, Bylaws, Policies, Contact Info, & Newsletters. The Member Booking Instructions document is being revised and will be posted soon.

## VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

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### TREASURER

Our treasurer, Mark Northcross, asks for a volunteer to begin assisting him as the assistant Treasurer. Not only has the job expanded to a point where he feels he needs some help, but Mark also feels it is time to start training a potential replacement. If interested, please contact Mark at manorthcross@gmail.com

### DONATIONS

The Board of Directors is looking for a volunteer to take on donation Thank You notes for 2022-2023. Estimated time commitment is 1-2 hrs/month (Jan/Feb 2-4 hrs/month during membership renewal). Please contact Alyssa Jorgensen at alyssajorgensen@gmail.com.

## PERSONNEL REPORT

### Lin Marcuse & Fran Rondeau

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The Inn has reopened at 100% capacity and our Innkeepers are doing a great job! We've had many whole property bookings and the IK's have been hopping, keeping everything clean and running well. They have had to dust off their housekeeping and handyman skills, doing everything from sweeping up to repairing leaks and tending to our bountiful garden.

One of the most important skills our IKs have is their medical training. While their background and experience run the gamut from basic first aid to full-on paramedic, our IKs are an important asset for our guests, members and the public. Over the last few months, our IKs have rendered assistance to people with ailments ranging from bruised shins and insect stings to compound fractures and cardiac events. While unfortunately not every incident turns out as we'd hoped it would, our IKs have helped and saved many people. Having a staffed Inn is a very important component of keeping people safe on the mountain. Thank you, team, for all you do!

## EMIG CABIN WINDOWS NO LONGER LEAK

### Michael Jefferies

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Since final construction of the Emig Cabin the south facing windows have leaked. Approximately 3 months ago the plastic sheeting which had been installed to protect the window and the cabin was removed. After a water hose test was conducted on the window we discovered that the leaks were coming from both the individual glass panes and between the 3 individual sets of windows, which had been installed by the window builder. The wood used by the builder was recycled redwood from an old water tank. It was obvious that the compound that was used to install the glass panes in the window frame had failed in some areas. After discovering the source of the leaks we decided to try and repair the window(s) rather than spend a lot of money replacing them.

First, the window and frame were coated with 3 coats of wood sealer and then we applied (old school) glazing compound to each individual window pane. The gap between each window was filled with a durable caulking compound and then the entire window was primed and painted to match the Inn windows. While we had the cabin windows painted we decided to have the remaining windows, door and trim painted to match the Inn. A final water test and two windy rain storms have revealed no leaks. Keep your fingers crossed.

Other recent repair projects have included repairing broken door locks and replacing the Chicken Coop door with an old salvaged redwood 5 panel door. Don't worry, it will be painted to match the Inn at the next work party!







## PANCAKE BREAKFASTS

Lin Marcuse

Pancake season is here! Scott & Lisa Halsted ran a successful Mother’s Day breakfast, serving over 700 diners even though it was a cool and blustery day. Nancy Fox & Patti Schmidt took charge of the cleanup team, getting everything sparkling after all those guests. We’re looking forward to Father’s Day, with Fran Rondeau & Bonnie Jones leading the breakfast and Don Keeley & Joanne Devereaux handling the cleanup.

Breakfast hosts for the rest of the season include Alyssa & Rye Jorgensen for July 10, Colleen & Pat Williams for August 14, Bob Newcomer & Donald DeLave for September 11 and me for October 9. Most of the breakfast teams are full, but we still have room for October. Our cleanup hosts are McCoy & Thomas Dodsworth in July, me in August and September, and Eileen Sullivan & Frances Sullivan in October. If you are interested in working any of these events, please contact us at [pancakes@westpointinn.com](mailto:pancakes@westpointinn.com).

I also want to give shout-outs to the creative Alison Bricker for putting together our posters and business cards, the extremely talented Bette Tarr for providing the artwork, and Patti Schmidt for her tireless efforts as our media liaison. And, as always, we want to give tremendous thanks to our awesome volunteers without whom our pancake breakfasts wouldn’t be possible!

## GARDEN OF EATIN’ IS RESURRECTED

Kathleen Kopp

After a couple of years of limping through challenges with water and logistical issues of the pandemic, our garden is full of hope, potential and healthy starts.

We have tomatoes, basil, peppers, strawberries, carrots, beets, fava beans, peas, string beans, and squash.

We also repurposed the old metal horse trough, which had holes in it and has been replaced. It is now up in the garden and planted with several lupine and other wildflowers, surrounded by many romaine and butter lettuces.

David has erected a fog catcher screen system, which has been quite effective at water collection. You should see it in an attached photo.

Several of the innkeepers have been diligent in maintaining and nurturing the compost and the garden, and Jim is an irrigation master, who is installing new drip.

It feels so great to be up at the inn more, with my hands in the dirt, and mind in the sky.

Hope you can get up to the inn and sit on the garden bench soon.

I miss so many of you, and hope to rendezvous on our magical mountain in the near future.



## HEATH COLLECTION

### Bonnie Jones

Have you ever wondered what exactly is behind those locked cabinet doors with the stained-glass West Point Inn logo in the Hikers' Lounge? The West Point Inn has an impressive collection of Heath dinnerware locked away for safe keeping. At the last Work Party Alyssa & McCoy tallied all our plates, cups and serving platters, cleaned the cabinets and arranged so that there is place-settings for 36 in the left-hand cabinet. We are encouraging folks that have a Whole Inn booking to request the Innkeeper to unlock these treasures so that they can be gently used and appreciated. Housekeeping has asked around some of the Old Timers & at this point we don't know how the West Point Inn received this bounty of beautiful dinnerware. According to the Heath representative our pieces are from the Rim Line in Redwood and Opaque White. We hope it can be cherished and used for special occasions.

Until October 30 there is a special exhibit at the Oakland Museum – Edith Heath: A Life in Clay featuring this amazing woman and her Sausalito workshop.

Trailblazer. Rebel. Revolutionary. Discover the story of Edith Heath, founder and designer of Heath Ceramics. Heath transformed the ceramics industry, creating dinnerware from California clay for "Sunday best" and everyday use. Driven by the power of good design, and a commitment to her craft, Heath's vision continues to live on through her stoneware and tile over 70 years later. Durable, not delicate, simple, yet stylish, Heath Ceramics is an icon of American design.

This is not a traditional ceramics or craft exhibition - it combines historic objects, photographs, documentary video and personal memorabilia to showcase Heath's legacy and story. Do not miss it!

<https://museumca.org/exhibit/edith-heath-life-clay>



## WPIA ANNUAL BOARD OF DIRECTORS ELECTION - CALL FOR CANDIDATES

The WPIA Board of Directors and Election Committee welcome inquiries from qualified members who might be interested in serving on the board. Here is some information:

- There are nine WPIA members on the Board of Directors.
- The term for a Director is three years.
- By-Laws require that a candidate be a member in good standing for no less than one year and who has not served on the Board for 12 months prior to taking office.
- By-laws state that the Nominating Committee consists of outgoing Board members and the President.
- By-laws state that any qualified member, other than those selected by the Nominating Committee, may run for the board by delivering a petition signed by at least 10% of voting members by September 1 (in this case, by 09/01/2022).

The election process is by mail. Candidates submit a short bio. An alphabetical list of candidates and their bios is printed in the Fall newsletter. Ballots and bios are mailed to the voting membership at least 30 days prior to the Annual Fall Meeting in October (10/23/2022) along with an addressed return envelope. Voting officially ends when the annual meeting is called to order. Votes are then tallied with results announced toward the end of the meeting. Results are kept confidential. Winners' names are announced alphabetically.

Serving on the Board of Directors is an excellent way to help the West Point Inn. Please consider sharing some of your time and talent to ensure that the Inn continues to operate for the benefit of the members and guests who appreciate the opportunity to experience our unique establishment.

### NOMINATING COMMITTEE:

Nancy Fox    nancy@nfassoc.com

Michael Jefferies    jefferies4@sbcglobal.net

Don Keeley    president@westpointinn.com

### ELECTION PROCESS COMMITTEE:

Lin & Chris Marcuse

NOTE: We welcome help from members in conducting the election. If interested, please contact us.

### QUESTIONS IN GENERAL:

Contact Chris or Lin    PHONE: (415) 516-4253 or  
e-mail: elections@westpointinn.com

PLEASE CONTACT SOMEONE ON THE BOARD OR ELECTION COMMITTEE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE IF YOU HAVE AN INTEREST IN BECOMING A CANDIDATE FOR THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS.



## BARBARA DEAN VOISIN

1929 - 2022

### AN APPRECIATION

Fred Runner

The West Point Inn has lost a good friend. Barbara Dean Voisin, the last living innkeeper from the days when the West Point Inn was a commercial operation, passed away at the beginning of April. She had just turned 93.

Barbara was a short grandmotherly type, with white hair, a friendly smile and wise words for anyone seeking wisdom. To me, she seemed like the personification of the West Point Inn itself: kind and gentle and always happy to share a good time.

I first met her 20 years ago.

Barbara called the Inn one night to see if it was still standing. She had been away for almost 60 years.

Volunteer innkeeper Pat Kavanaugh answered the phone, "Good evening, West Point Inn."

"Is this the West Point Inn, the inn built by the Tamalpais Railway?"

"Yes, why?"

"Because I used to live there."

"You need to talk to our historian."

That's how we met. The era when Barbara and her family were at the Inn was largely a black hole. Most of the people were gone. Barbara was 10, in 1939 and 13 when she and her family, the Deans, left in early 1943. She had photos, newspaper clippings about the Inn and postcards — A gold mine for a historian.

Barbara and I became fast friends sharing stories about her time at the Inn...

In the warm summer days of 1939, the last commercial Innkeepers moved their bags and boxes into the West Point Inn. Vignaud Dean and his wife Marie, and their daughters Pat and Barbara, would run the Inn until early 1943. Because no one could pronounce Vignaud (Veen-yo) he was called "Doc"; if you got to know him you could call him "Dad", Marie was "Mom" and you could spend a week at West Point with 3 meals a day for \$22.50. The Inn's phone number was 8-J-2.



Ten year old Barbara Dean and her dog Judy (right) at their new home in 1939.

Barbara Dean Voisin collection



2012

West Point Inn Historian Fred Runner and retired West Point Inn Innkeeper Barbara Dean Voisin at the 2012 History Night at West Point.

The Deans ran the Inn without a vacation, serving, feeding and entertaining the hikers and later the soldiers of Mt Tamalpais. There was always someone at the Inn keeping the coffee warm and the Deans loved it.

One of my favorite stories from Barbara was when she recalled standing on the porch one evening with her dad, both of them admiring the twinkling view of the city by the bay. Her father said, "Ya know, you couldn't buy this view for a million bucks." She crisply added, "That's when a million bucks was worth something."

Here's another story...

On the morning of Sunday, December 7, 1941, a number of off-duty soldiers were relaxing at the Inn when a canvas-covered Army truck came lumbering down the Old Railroad Grade to West Point. A Sergeant climbed down from the truck and came into the Inn, the room we know today as the "Member's Lounge".

Barbara recalled, "This was very unusual. No body ever drove around the mountain, people always hiked. On top of that, the Sergeant was wearing a gun."

The Sergeant looked around the room and said, "Everybody into the truck." The relaxing army-men moaned, "Oh Sarge!" The Sergeant patted his gun and said, "Everybody in the truck." Reluctantly the soldiers filed out the door and climbed into the truck. A few minutes later, the Inn's hand-crank phone rang. It was Barbara's Uncle calling from Alameda. He told them the Pacific fleet had just been bombed in Hawaii.

World War II was like nothing else. The entire country was focused on winning the war. As a result, people were hiking far less on Mt. Tamalpais. Weekend hikers, the lifeblood of the Inn, once numbering in the thousands every Sunday, plummeted. Rationing cut into supplies. The regular Coke truck that had delivered to the Inn no longer came because gas and tires were being rationed.

The Deans began using their savings to subsidize operations but it became clear running the West Point Inn was no longer a viable commercial operation. By late 1942, the Deans were faced with closing the Inn.

When they left at the end of January 1943, rangers from the Marin Municipal Water said the empty inn was a "liability and fire hazard." They considered burning it down. A columnist for the San Francisco News (a good friend of the Deans) wrote an obituary for the West Point Inn.

The newspaper stories Barbara had, told how the hikers that were their friends and customers somehow found a

way to save the Inn. In the middle of World War II, when no one knew how the war would turn out, they created the West Point Club, a volunteer-run corporation. They sold shares (memberships), bought the Inn's furnishings, staffed the Inn on weekdays and had a rotating pool of volunteers to run the Inn on the weekends. They thought that at the end of the war the Inn would become a commercial operation again. But the world had changed. People were driving everywhere. Hiking on Mt. Tam was a fading memory and the West Point Club continued to run the Inn.

In 2002, after almost sixty years away from the Inn, we welcomed Barbara back at one of our History Nights, celebrating her return with an evening of good food and stories. The Inn had changed little since the 1940s. Gaslights were a big improvement over Coleman lanterns she had known. The familiar Inn sparked both memories and good stories. That night she slept in room 2, the same room she had as a girl.

Barbara went to school at Park School in Mill Valley. Her father learned to drive by driving Barbara down the Railroad Grade to meet the school bus near the Mountain Home Inn.

Fridays were a big day. The Deans came to town, bought a ham and a roast beef and cooked them for dinner. Over the weekend they were used to make lots of sandwiches for hikers.

Barbara acted in the school plays. She was Gretel in Hansel and Gretel. During play rehearsals she spent the nights in Mill Valley at the home of Ethel Bogardus, a columnist for the San Francisco News and a regular Inn visitor on weekends.

Barbara's great stories of those days paint a picture of a different time, when people played board games, and read books at the Inn, when a young girl helped run the Inn and went to school in Mill Valley and then held on to the treasures and stories that we never would have known.

Thanks Barbara.



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*The West Point Inn Association exists to preserve, maintain, operate and educate the public about the significance of the historic West Point Inn.*



**CHANGE OF ADDRESS OR EMAIL?**

**PLEASE UPDATE YOUR CONTACT INFO**

**BY SENDING AN EMAIL TO:**

**[MEMBERUPDATE@WESTPOINTINN.COM](mailto:MEMBERUPDATE@WESTPOINTINN.COM)**

**WANT TO SUBMIT AN ARTICLE?**

**PLEASE SEND SUBMISSIONS**

**AND PHOTOS TO**

**[EDITOR@WESTPOINTINN.COM](mailto:EDITOR@WESTPOINTINN.COM)**