



a view from the
WEST POINT INN

The Newsletter for the West Point Inn Association and Friends

December 2022 • Issue 52

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

Happy Holidays Fellow Members,

My term on the West Point Inn Association Board of Directors and as your President is coming to an end. It is a bittersweet time.

After surviving the worst (I hope!) of the Covid Pandemic, the Association is in excellent financial health. As you may recall, there was a point in 2020-2021 when the Board of Directors thought that the Association may actually run out of money. The Association's largest source of income is overnight use fees. With the Inn now open at full occupancy (and frequently sold out), we have collected more overnight use fees, on an annual basis, than at any point in our history. Also, because major maintenance and capital improvement projects were delayed due to the Pandemic, the Association now has a large cash balance in our bank account. This balance will allow us to fund some of these deferred maintenance projects.

Earlier this year, the Board of Directors worked with an architectural firm to complete an assessment of the main inn building, cabins, other out-buildings and electrical and mechanical systems. This project produced a report that listed more than thirty-five maintenance and capital improvement projects that should be completed over the next 25-30 years. The total cost of these projects is in the range of \$1.5 – \$2.0 million (in March 2022 dollars). The Board has already undertaken one of these projects, an upgrade of our solar electrical system to include additional solar collection panels and higher capacity lithium ion storage batteries.

The Board typically allocates \$50,000 per year for maintenance projects, but to complete a total of \$1.5 - \$2.0 million worth of upgrades, we will need to rely on contributions from a range of generous donors. To accomplish that, the Development Committee is planning for a multifaceted fundraising campaign to begin in 2023.

The Association leases the West Point Inn from the Marin Municipal Water District (MMWD). Our current lease began in 1997 with an initial 5-year term and was renewed for four additional 5-year terms (25 years total). The current lease ends December 31, 2022. The Board has been negotiating a new, long term lease with MMWD to begin January 1, 2023, and we anticipate signing this lease during December.

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For the first time since the start of the Pandemic, the Pancake Breakfast Committee Chairs, and approximately 35-40 volunteers per Pancake Breakfast, organized a successful Pancake Breakfast each month from May through October. And instead of a typical Red Flag Day cancellation, there was a record number of customers at the October breakfast. These breakfasts not only raise money for the Association, but also serve as an outreach to residents of Marin County and the greater Bay Area.

Serving on the Board of Directors and as your President has been the most fulfilling volunteer activity I have ever done. I have met numerous members and potential members, made several new friends and had the opportunity to work with incredibly skilled and dedicated people. It has been a privilege to work alongside my fellow members of the Board of Directors. The Directors are all members who have volunteered to run for election to a 3-year term. During the last two and a half years of the pandemic, the Board has worked collaboratively to manage the Association's finances, operate the Inn in compliance with all Marin County and California Health Orders, re-open the Inn in stages to overnight guests, plan for long term fundraising to support the Inn's maintenance and capital improvements over the next 25-30 years, and negotiate a long term lease with the Marin Municipal Water District.

Our caring, capable Innkeepers, who are really the face of the Inn to overnight guests, bicyclists and hikers, do a tremendous job of making the Inn an inviting and welcoming place. Our Reservationist efficiently handles up to 78 reservations per week (4,056 per year), making sure our overnight guests are well prepared for their visit.

All other work to support and maintain the Inn is done by the different Committee Chairs and the volunteers who support them. The contributions of these volunteers should not be underestimated. You can find a list of all Committee Chairs near the end of this Newsletter, and I hope you will thank them for their service to the Inn when you see them.

Thank you for your support over the last few years!

ELECTIONS REPORT

Lin Johanson & Chris Marcuse

We want to welcome our three new Board members: Melanie Leavitt Cantarutti, Craig Hill and James Hill. We appreciate them stepping up to help lead the Association during their three-year terms.

This will also be our last election. After "working the polls" for the last 16 years, it's time for us to move on. If you are interested in taking over the Elections Committee, please contact us so we may answer any questions or provide any additional information you might need. While the Board must approve committee chairs, we hope to prepare any potential candidates for the transition. We can be reached at elections@westpointinn.com.

Thank you to everyone that participated in the Association's elections!

PANCAKE REPORT

Lin Johanson

Our first full pancake season in three years was an incredible success! Traditionally, we have around 800-1000 visitors for the Mother's and Father's Day events followed by 400-600 for July to October. This year, we started off strong and finished strong. Our last three events had over 700 customers each!

We couldn't have done it without all our volunteers, whether they worked the breakfast or the cleanup afterwards. While each of our workers is vital to the success of the pancake season, our team leaders deserve a special shout-out. So, THANK YOU to Scott & Lisa Halsted, Nancy Fox & Patti Schmidt, Fran Rondeau & Bonnie Jones, Don Keeley & Joanne Devereaux, Alyssa & Rye Jorgensen, McCoy & Thomas Dodsworth, Pat & Colleen Williams, Bob Newcomer, Donald DeLave, Janice Hayes, and Frances and Eileen Sullivan. Their guidance and inspiration led to a welcoming experience for volunteers and guests alike.

As we go into our winter hiatus, please think about joining the team next year. We usually start ramping up in March, so contact us then to let us know which event you might be interested in working. And, if you can't volunteer, please remember to come on up and enjoy a great meal with a spectacular view!

WORK PARTIES

Joanne Devereaux

We get an amazing amount of work done at the work parties. If you haven't been to one this year, you have missed out on some old-fashioned fun.

It's not often you get the chance to be excited about stacking a cord of wood, scrubbing picnic tables, or my two personal favorites washing antique windows and flipping mattresses, but I've seen dozens of people jump at the chance to do so.

It's also rare to get a chance to cook for 30 people. To see a group come together in a big kitchen under the direction of relaxed easy going French chefs Marc or Fran and pull together a fantastic meal. Hungry prospective members enjoy the time to eat and visit with one another after working hard.

As a group, we wrapped a knife and fork together with a napkin sticky over 2000 times for use at the 4,500-pancake breakfasts served during the season. We've washed every single window at least twice inside and out and repaired doors and window. The work parties keep the Inn sustainable. We all know the WPI is unique and once you're a member you become part of the place.

Some of you may not know we have a Chicken Coop (no chickens). At the October work party, it began a major renovation. In order to better use this space and gain lockers, the old wood shelves were removed and replaced by metal shelves. The CC floor was repaired with new concrete, making it much cleaner and safer to walk on. While one WP group worked on the CC another group cleaned out the paint storage locker of very old paint and toxic material. A generous prospective member donated their truck and time for three separate trips to the San Rafael Recycling Center. This style of job requires much teamwork and advance coordination.

Typically, I'm not a numbers person but after the all-members meeting in October, I decided to dive into WP numbers. We have had approximately 300 volunteers hike up on both hot and cold mornings on ten Saturdays in 2022. That works out to be approximately 1500 hours of volunteer time; the dollar value of \$30,000 for these volunteer hours is significant.

I am grateful to be part of this tradition and thank every person who has come to a work party. Donald DeLave gets special thanks for saying "yes" to co-chairing the work party committee with me. Bonnie Jones and Fran Rondreau do tons of important things as housekeeping committee chairs along with Michael Jefferies who has done so much with buildings and grounds. The Inn Keepers are a key part of a smooth work party and I appreciate all the extra things they do.

This year we started a new way to sign up for WP through our website which is working well. It allows us to keep the volunteers to 30. In case you've forgotten, the work parties are always the third Saturday of the month. If you have any comments, suggestions, or questions please feel free to get in touch with me through the sign up genius on our website at Events > Work Parties or via the link below.

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10c0f4ba4ad29a1f9ce9-monthly>

MEMORIAL TRIBUTE

BARBARA MARTIN

Olene Sparks-Toby

WPIA member since 1980, Barbara Martin passed away October 24 at her home in Point Richmond. She was 78 and had been under hospice care for cardiac amyloidosis, in which the same misshapen proteins that cause Alzheimer's disease are deposited in the heart.

Barbara was born in Peoria and spent her childhood on the family farm. She attended Southern Illinois University, for a time, moving in 1963 to San Jose where a sister was living. She met and married George Martin, who was living next door studying journalism at San Jose State. He is also a WPIA member since 1980. Barbara graduated from U.C. Berkeley. For most of her professional working life she was an office manager in Marin County accounting offices.

Barbara and George actively supported the West Point Inn, both donating time to fund raising efforts and to the Inn overall. They shared the 2012 Wall of Fame Award for their work organizing the bluegrass barbecues. This award is for "exemplifying over many years the Spirit of the West Point Inn". Barbara is survived by her husband, three sons, three grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

To make a reservation, go to our website: 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.

BOARD MEMBERS DONATE TO STEEP RAVINE TRAIL CAMPAIGN

Alyssa Jorgensen

Steep Ravine Trail has been closed due to structural issues with Bridge #4. Mt Tamalpais State Park has partnered with Friends of Mt Tam to help finance materials required to rebuild the bridge: beams, decking, and rails. The goal is to raise the necessary funds by mid-December in order to commence work in January 2023. They are asking for donations via GoFundMe and will match all donations up to \$20,000.

The Steep Ravine Trail is a popular hike on Mt Tam and with guests staying at the West Point Inn as it connects Pantoll Campground to the Dipsea Trail and Stinson Beach. For this reason, the WPIA Board has made a collective donation of \$300 to this initiative, using personal funds.

If others would like to donate, please visit www.gofundme.org and search for the "Help Replace Mt Tam's Steep Ravine Bridge" campaign.

<https://www.gofundme.com/f/mt-tam-steep-ravine-bridge-repair>



COZY & WARM

Fran Rondeau

Looking forward to those frigid winter nights out in a cabin, but at the same time wondering how you will keep warm? Fret no more. Look in the corner of the member's lounge on top of our handsome desk and you will see the handiwork and contribution of Bonnie Jones. You may now choose to borrow one of our 6 handsomely covered Hot Water bottles. Furthermore one of our kind guests loved the idea so much she brought up several more to add to the assortment. Thank you Bonnie and unknown guest!

MEMBER SKILLS SURVEY

Jean Jefferies

Please take a minute to fill out this member survey- we'd love to hear from you!

<https://forms.gle/f9w9SCbhh9bEqBp16>

There is always a need for more help at the Inn- check out the variety of ways you can help- Thanks so much!

THANK YOU TO DON KEELEY, WPI PRESIDENT 2021 & 2022

Alyssa Jorgensen

Don Keeley's two-year tenure as President of the Board and four-year term on the Board of Directors is coming to an end in early January 2023. The membership would like to give Don an enormous, heartfelt "thank you" for his many years of service, and would like to recognize his extraordinary efforts and achievements; it was not a job for the faint of heart.

WPI has weathered enormous challenges during the past three years. Don has led the response effort by being part of the pandemic reopening committee, renegotiating our lease with MMWD, ordering and implementing a 30-year study, creating a fundraising committee, upgrading the Inn's solar system, spearheading major fundraising projects, and recruiting new Board Members & Committee Chairs. Don's involvement has been integral to the advances the Inn has made on every single one of these important issues.

Don has distinguished himself as a faithful steward of the WPI and has never backed down when dealing with difficulties, even after a serious bike accident landed him in the hospital for five days!

We are especially grateful for Don's calm, cool, and composed manner, as well as his generosity when acknowledging and recognizing volunteerism at all levels of the organization.

So, please join me in giving Don a standing ovation for his unwavering attention to the Inn, we would not be in the place we are today without his dedication!

BOARD MEMBER TESTIMONIALS TO DON

"Years ago I used to crew on a highly successful racing sailboat and the owner would remind his crew: Rough waters are a true test of leadership. In calm waters every ship has a good Captain. Don has led us through a lot of rough and some calm waters over the last couple of years and it has been a real honor to be part of his crew. His leadership and commitment to the West Point Inn Association has been and is a true gift."
-Michael Jefferies

"Don Keeley has been an incredible WPI Board President! Not only has he steered us safely through the Covid shut-down and a robust reopening, he has selflessly devoted his time and energy to maintaining and upgrading the inn while successfully renegotiating our contract with MMWD and spear-heading a 30 year sustainability study. His generosity and dedication will be remembered for years to come" -Patti Schmidt

"It has been a pleasure working with Don over the past few years. He was instrumental in keeping the Inn functioning during COVID and tireless in making sure we made changes as the pandemic regulations kept changing. Without his strong leadership we would have been floundering!" -Nancy Fox

"Don's steadfast leadership through one of the most trying and tumultuous periods in the history of the West Point Inn has been invaluable. We all owe Don a huge debt of gratitude for his tireless efforts on behalf of the Association, setting the Inn up for success well into the future. Thank you, Don. You will be missed!"
-Andrew Grant

"After an intensive three years on the Board and two years as President, Don has decided to continue volunteering his time to do the most important job as Co-Chair of the Building & Grounds Committee with Michael Jefferies. Previously, he has helped by being Work Party Chair, forming a Personnel Committee, and by writing job descriptions, bylaws, and policy. Don always responds rapidly to questions, texts, and emails. He is very gracious and appreciative of all the volunteers!" -Fran Rondeau



A TRIO OF APPETIZERS

Fran Rondeau

Fancy appetizers are especially a must for festive occasions but once the holidays are over we still need to have some “amuse-gueules” as they say in France. These three are easy to whip up and the ingredients are available year round. Here are 3 of my favorites. Keep in mind these are not set in stone recipes as I rarely measure ingredients. These are guidelines that I think I follow!

Fromager d’hiver

Into the Cuisinart mix softened 8 ounces of cream cheese with 3 chopped cloves of garlic a handful of fresh chopped parsley and dried oregano and thyme. Add chopped chives if available. Taste and add a little salt and pepper.

Serve on plain table water crackers.

Crab Delights

Mash 8-12 ounces of crab meat with a fork. Add 1/2 cup of sour cream or crème fraîche, a tablespoon of lemon juice, a teaspoon of worcheshire sauce, and 1/4 teaspoon of chile pepper

Butter and toast thin slices of baguette. Spread a heaping tablespoon of the crab mixture on each slice.

Stuffed mushrooms

Purchase 12 -15 large mushrooms. With a serrated small spoon or tiny paring knife scoop out the “gills” and as much of the inside as possible so that each mushroom has a little bowl to fill.

Mix together: a half cup of bread crumbs, a half cup of chopped parsley, 2 minced garlic cloves, 2 T of fresh basil or 3 tablespoons of dried basil or oregano, 1/4 cup olive oil and 1/2-1 teaspoon salt. Place a heaping spoon full inside each mushroom cup, drizzle with olive oil, and bake for 15 minutes in a 400 degree oven. They should be brown and slightly crispy.



Crab delights



Stuffed mushrooms

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WANT TO SUBMIT AN ARTICLE?

PLEASE SEND SUBMISSIONS

AND PHOTOS TO

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