a view from the

WEST POINT INN

The Newsletter for the West Point Inn Association and Friends September 2018 • Issue 35

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

Wayne Koide

Let's Get Off of the Grid!

The Inn is about to be upgraded – an electrical upgrade that is! Your board, after a great deal of discussion and deliberation, has voted to upgrade the Inn's entire electrical system – something that has plagued us for quite some time and has been an issue on the table ever since I took office at the beginning of the year.

Electrical system?? Since when has the West Point Inn had an electrical system? – I thought this was still a "turn-of-the-century" place where we go to escape things like electricity – where gas heat, gas lamps and old-fashioned stoves are still the "norm." So thought I – please read on.

It turns out that the West Point Inn has had electricity for a long time – the 1920s, according to our historian, Fred Runner. Take a look at the refrigerators in the kitchen and pantry area – these aren't running on steam! They are, incredibly enough, 24 volt DC models and have been doing a pretty mediocre job of keeping our food cold based on periodic temperature readings taken by our Innkeepers.

The Innkeepers quarters are partially "wired" with 110v ac – so is the Emig cabin. This happens because there is a propane operated generator located in a shed across from the Innkeeper's quarters, that produces 110v AC power to these locations – but it's not quite that simple.

To be more technical, we have, what is known commonly as a "residential backup generator" designed primarily as a backup for powering certain circuits in homes when power is lost, as in a storm. In the case of the Inn, however, there IS NO power (no PG&E) so the generator is used to charge a bank of batteries which, thru an inverter, converts stored DC power in the batteries to AC power when needed.

When the charge on the batteries goes down to a certain level, the generator is supposed to automatically kick on to recharge the batteries. Solar power is also "wired" into the system to provide additional DC power to charge the batteries.

That's the way it's supposed to work. So much for theory. Some of our Innkeepers have complained about the generator not turning on when the charge on the batteries has gone down resulting in a depletion of our stored DC power, which is used to power the refrigerators and provides a backup to our fire protection system.

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Continued from p1.

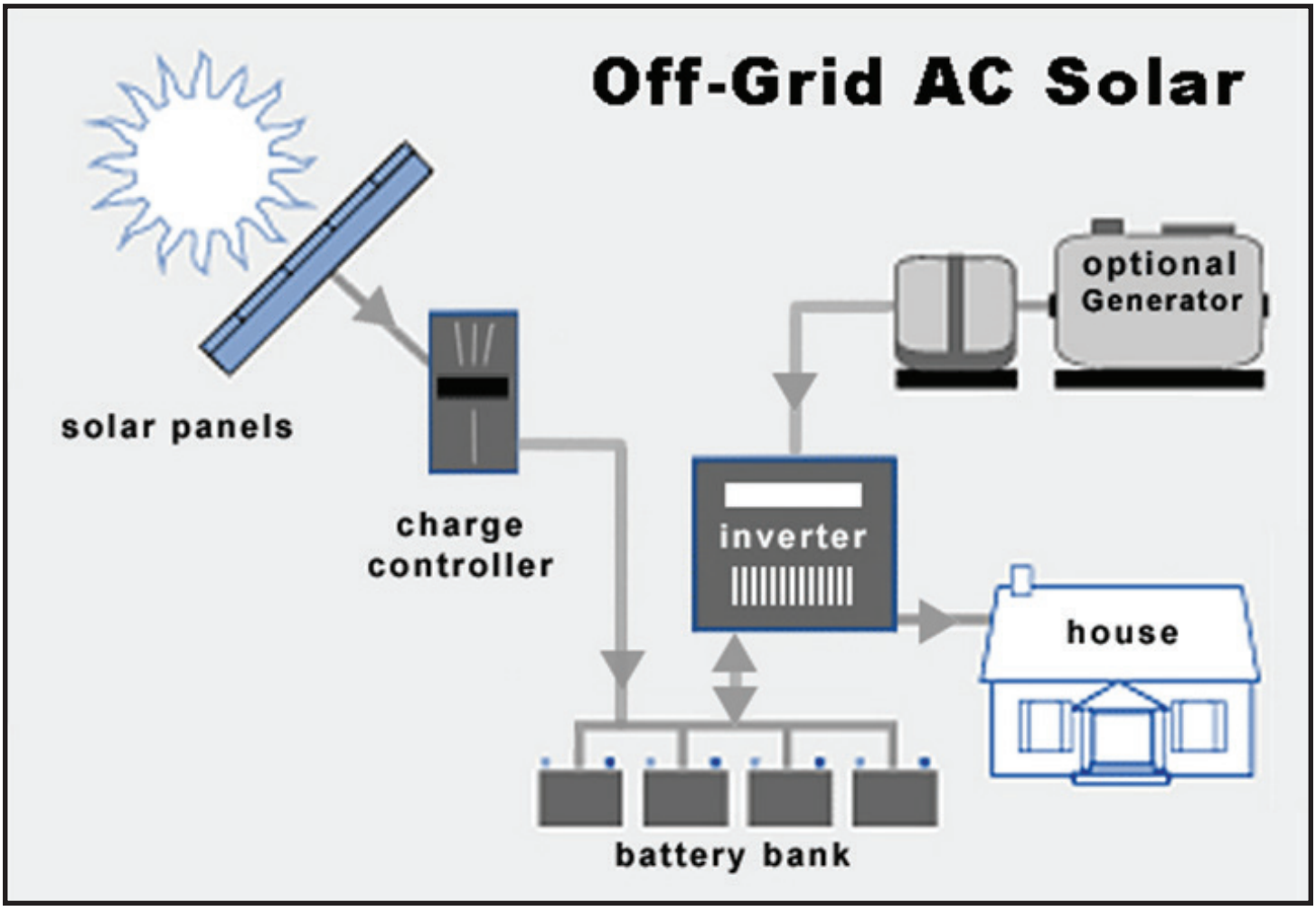
Our generator, which was purchased used, is excessively loud, when it does operate and, as it turns out, was not designed to operate in an enclosed area such as a shed. On numerous occasions the "system" has crashed with no power, no generator and fire alarm warning of no power. CO levels in the generator room have been a problem; our aging 24 v Sun Frost refrigerators are no longer being made, so once they go bad (and arguably, we are there), we would need to replace them with like models that are very expensive – try $3445 for an RF16 model.

As a result of these issues, we had an "off-grid" expert inspect and report on our electrical system. The results of that report were sobering – the most critical of which was the fact that our generator was enclosed indoors when it was clearly designed to operate outdoors and posed a potential fire/environmental hazard. Moving the generator to an outdoor location would be no easy task.

The board came to the conclusion that we need a true "off grid" system – not a hybrid system, which is currently the case. Upgrading our system to one which is designed with off-grid technology from the ground up, seemed to be the most reasonable course of action. Attendant with these changes will be replacement of our 24-volt dc refrigerators with all-new 110v ac models that are less expensive and easier to replace when needed.

These changes will not come cheap. We will have to purchase another propane tank dedicated solely to the new generator, which will be relocated to our solar panel field above the Inn. All of this will have to be re-wired. New, more efficient solar panels will replace our old ones and finally, a more "bullet proof" battery management system/inverter will provide the "brains" for the system insuring a reliable source of power when needed.

Total cost is estimated at $50,000 plus permits. I know what you are thinking – has the West Point Inn Association gone "Hollywood?" with all of these fancy bells and whistles? The answer is Absolutely Not! Nearly all of the changes you will see will be invisible, save the brand new refrigerators in the kitchen/pantry – maybe those leftovers you left might be a lot colder when they come out of the frig the next time. And you won't hear the generator when it's operating!



MEMBERSHIP NOTES

Gordy and Lynn MacDermott

Hello Members,

We are currently at our membership cap of 600 members. We have started our wait list for members who have completed their application and have been voted in by the board. As a reminder, Renewal letters will go out last wk. of December. If you have a change of address please let Membership know. Thanks!

Here are our latest new members:

Angela Byrne of Berkeley

Sean McCormick of Petaluma
Hi! My name is Sean McCormick and I have been coming to the West Point Inn since I was a child, when my family moved from Pacifica to Corte Madera. I wanted to be a member of the WPI because the Inn is just plain beautiful, but also, because the Inn signifies what makes Marin a beautiful place -- it is open to the public, it is affordable to stay at, and it brings people from all walks of life together. Presently, I work as a high school special education teacher. In my free time, I enjoy hanging out with my wife, playing basketball, and camping. Looking forward to seeing you on the mountain!

Eric & Lisa Magunson of Ross
If you were at the Mother's Day P.C.B. Eric & Lisa were the co-hosts helping Scott & Lisa Halsted. It is wonder to see new members jump right in and volunteer.

PANCAKE BREAKFASTS

Lin Marcuse & Gordy MacDermott

Summer's winding down and we are two-thirds of the way through our pancake season. It's been an unusual time, with the weather unable to make up its mind between cold and drizzly to roasting hot. Also, once again, we've had to deal with smoke from nearby wildland fires. Luckily, our beloved Inn is safe atop Mt. Tamalpais.

We want to thank all our breakfast and cleanup hosts and crews for creating such a wonderful experience for our guests. Our breakfasts wouldn't be the tremendously successful fundraisers that they are without the dedication and hard work of all our loyal volunteers. We greatly appreciate all the time and energy they put into these events. Just a side note, all our teams are full for the last two affairs but contact us at pancakes@westpointinn.com if you would like to be added to a waitlist.

Finally, we want to thank Gordy MacDermott and Pat Williams for their life-saving repair work. Our beloved Inn is a 114-year old beauty and needs all the TLC it receives to keep it humming along. The commercial grade coffee maker, "Topper," is nearly as old (not quite, but close!). Lately, Topper has been acting up and feeling all the aches and pains acquired over decades of service. Pat and Gordy went the extra mile and put additional time in to return Topper to his former glory. He needs a little more work, but he's almost as good as new. Thanks, guys!

These people just spent the last three hours cleaning pancake batter off of numerous pots and pans, degreased and cleaned four stoves, swept and mopped all floors, emptied large coffee and OJ containers and returned everything in the Inn back to normal. So why are they smiling? Find out why – volunteer for the next Pancake Breakfast Cleanup! -w koide

2018 CANDIDATES STATEMENTS

Lin Johanson & Chris Marcuse

TO: ALL VOTING MEMBERS OF THE WEST POINT INN ASSOC.

The term of office for a Board of Directors member is three years. Each year three members have finished their terms. Hence, three vacancies must be filled for the coming year.

Below are the candidates, listed alphabetically, for the Board of Directors – 2019 to 2021. Included are their candidate statements. Members will receive election packets via US mail in mid to late September. Please contact the Election Committee if you haven't received your ballot by October 1, 2018. Your completed ballots must be received at the Inn prior to the start of the Fall Members' Meeting at 11 AM on Sunday, October 21, 2018.

Election Committee
Lin Johanson elections@westpointinn.com (415) 516-4253

Your candidates are:

DON KEELEY: I was born and raised in Oakland, CA and attended UC Berkeley, before heading east for graduate school and a number of rewarding jobs. My wife, Joanne, and I returned to Oakland in 2000, right before our daughter was born.

My wife and I made our first trip to the West Point Inn on a cold, rainy, foggy day. Walking up from the Pantoll parking area, we couldn't see the Inn until we were literally at the foot of the front steps, and we couldn't see much farther than 20 feet from the deck of the Inn the entire time we were there. It wasn't until our second trip to the Inn on a clear, sunny day that we were able to fully appreciate the wonderful view from the Inn. We became members in 2015 after a short time on the wait list.

We have always been regular work party attendees, both before and after becoming members, and in 2016 I volunteered to be an assistant work party leader. Earlier this year I volunteered to become the Chair of the Work Party Committee. It is really a privilege to be the Work Party Chair. It is a great way to learn about how the Inn works and to help maintain it for current and future members to enjoy. It is also a great opportunity to meet every prospective member of the WPIA and to interact with current members.

I ask for your support to join the WPIA Board of Directors. I will do everything I can to support the Inn and its current and future members.

CHRIS MARCUSE: I have been an active member of the WPIA for twenty years. I am currently the chair of the Policy & Procedures committee as well as co-chair of the Elections Committee. I have previously served as co-editor of the newsletter, manager of the fundraising database, a Board member and as the Association's vice president. I also assisted with the Bluegrass Festival (our first MAJOR fundraiser) and several pancake breakfasts.

My background is in public service. I have a B.A. in political science from the University of Michigan and a Master's of Public Administration from Golden Gate University. I am retired from the Central Marin Police Authority, where I worked as a dispatcher, patrol officer and detective. Prior to that, I served in the US Army Reserve including a deployment to the Middle East as a military policeman during Operation Desert Storm.

My extensive involvement with the Association's operations have allowed me to learn about and stay informed of the many issues the Association faces. If elected to the Board, I hope to help preserve the historic character of the Inn while at the same time acknowledging the requirements of modern life. I thank all members of the Association for their support.

JIM PARTON: I first discovered the West Point Inn in 1975, soon after I arrived in Marin County to attend USF Law School and was exploring Mt. Tam. Over the many years that followed, I would stop in for a drink of water, a rest on the porch to enjoy the view and the occasional Pancake Breakfast. After 2 sets of kids moved out of the house and I neared retirement from my law practice, friends who are longtime members of the Inn suggested that my wife, Maureen, and I might enjoy getting involved. Boy, were they right! Between work parties and Pancake Breakfast cleanups, we have made many new friends and have gained a deep appreciation for the Inn's history and contribution, past and present, to this special place we love: Mt. Tamalpais.

Knowledge and preservation of our history, historical places and natural world is as important as ever to our civic life. The West Point Inn plays an important part in both sustaining older members and educating the next generation, especially in a world that seems to move ever faster. It is a sanctuary from the many distractions of our modern world (including glowing screens, small and large). As use of the mountain increases and climate change looms, the Inn will face challenges and have opportunities to continue as a positive presence in the lives of members and visitors alike.

For the past year, I have been privileged to serve as the Secretary to the West Point Inn Association Board and have been impressed by the dedication of all Board members to the Inn and its continued success. I would be honored to contribute to the Inn's future as a member of the Board.

MOUNTAIN SAFETY

Chris Marcuse

Due to a few issues that occurred earlier this summer, the Board just wanted to pass on some safety tips that we hope make your time at the Inn and on the mountain more enjoyable.

- Know your abilities and limitations. Mount Tamalpais is a beautiful place, but it can also be harmful if you aren't prepared. Check out a trail map or guidebook before you start out on a path to make sure that it isn't too strenuous a hike for you.
- Don't leave anything visible in your car. Unfortunately, not everyone that visits the mountain is there to enjoy the scenery. Reduce your chances of being an auto burglary victim by removing temptation.
- Be prepared. Always have water and appropriate layers of clothing for the time of year. The weather can be cold and gray in Mill Valley but turn sunny and hot up top. Or vice-versa. Also, if you start out in the afternoon, it's good to have a flashlight handy just in case it gets dark sooner than you expected. Plus, a little sunscreen never hurt anyone.
- Don't hike alone. Or, at least, make sure someone else knows where you will be hiking and when you should be home.
- Remember, MMWD rules are that you must be off the trails at sunset. If you are headed to the Inn for an overnight stay, make sure you leave enough time to get there by sundown. If you aren't at the Inn by dusk, the Innkeepers start calling your contact numbers to see if something delayed you. If that doesn't work, they alert MMWD and the rangers of a possible overdue hiker. Depending on circumstances, this can lead to a costly search-and-rescue response. So, PLEASE CALL THE INN AT (415) 388-9955 IF YOU'RE GOING TO BE LATE.
- Sometimes, the Association receives special permission for people to hike out after dark due to a special event (Heritage Night, etc.). The safest way to get down this late is to park at the Pantoll lot and take the level fire road from the Inn. Again, make sure to have a flashlight handy.
- Know where you are. If you are walking on a new (to you) path, make sure to take note of the name on the many markers located at trailheads and intersections.
- Have a charged cell phone. But remember that, due to the quirks of technology, you might not always get reception. Also, in the event you might need professional assistance, remember calling 9-1-1 doesn't always go to the closest emergency services. Depending on which cell tower picks up your call, it could be routed to Marin County, a local city or the Golden Gate Call Center (CHP) in Vallejo. Many of the CHP dispatchers that answer your call are unfamiliar with Marin County or Mount Tamalpais, which could cause a delay as they transfer you to the appropriate agency. It's best to preprogram (415) 472-0911 into your phone. This is the direct emergency line (ONLY TO BE USED FOR EMERGENCIES) to the Marin County Communications Center. These dispatchers, while not all completely knowledgeable about the mountain, know who best can help you. They also have the fastest way to get in touch with MMWD and Marin County Open Space rangers.

While not a complete list of the precautions and preparations you should take before enjoying a hike on our beautiful Mount Tamalpais, we hope these tips make your day as safe and pleasurable as possible.

PERSONNEL REPORT

Lin Johanson & Fran Rondeau

We just want to give our outstanding group of Innkeepers a quick thank you for all their outstanding service. Once again, one of them had to jump into action to help someone on the mountain. Recently, a hiker was dehydrated and disoriented when she arrived at the Inn. Our Innkeeper, Karl Jurgenson (who also happens to be an EMT), was able to calm her down and get her rehydrated. After getting her stabilized, Karl made sure the hiker got a safe ride home.

It's good to know these dedicated men and women are up there when needed. We're always so incredibly impressed when hearing from guests of their newfound love for the Inn and the Innkeepers. Each Innkeeper has their own special little charm that they add to our guests' experiences and it consistently shows in the glowing reviews we receive from visitors.

Whether performing their daily maintenance routine or assisting the work parties and pancake crews, our Innkeepers are keeping the place looking simply beautiful.

Thanks, team!

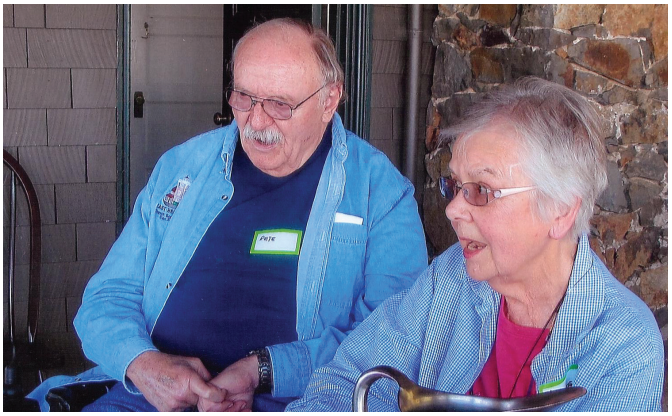
OLD TIMERS' APPRECIATION PARTY

Marilyn Skaff

On Saturday, June 2, a jolly group of West Point Inn members met at the Inn for the annual old timers' appreciation party. This event offers an opportunity for long time members to visit the Inn and to meet up with old friends. It also gives newer members the chance to meet the people who helped create and have supported the Inn for many years.

The weather was perfect for sitting out on the deck: listening to blue grass music, chatting with friends, reminiscing, enjoying great food and drink. The music was provided by our own bluegrass masters, George Martin, Lynn Ludlow, Steve Rubinstein, and Carolin Grannan. Margo Freistadt, who usually plays bass with the group, was sidelined by a hand injury (basketball mishap).

The festivities started off at 3:00 with drinks served by Olene Sparks Toby and Pierre Terrier and amazing hors d'oeuvres created by Bonnie Jones and Mike Satris. Fran Rondeau prepared one of her fabulous dinners. After dinner, guests gathered on the deck for story-telling time, with Olene as the Mistress of Ceremonies. Each guest shared memories of their first visit to the Inn or a memorable visit. It is this spoken history of the Inn that makes this occasion so special.



MOUNT TAM'S WEST POINT INN OFFERS STEP BACK IN TIME

Featured in the San Francisco Chronicle on 07.19.18

Written by Tom Stienstra

https://www.sfchronicle.com/sports/article/Mount-Tam-s-West-Point-Inn-offers-step-back-in-13086564.php?utm_source=email&utm_medium=email&utm_content=newsletter&utm_campaign=sfc_morningreport

High on the flank of Mount Tamalpais in Marin, West Point Inn offers lodge rooms and cabins without electricity — and access to a hiking route to Tam's summit and a rite-of-passage mountain-bike route on the Old Railroad Grade.

There's nothing else like it in the Bay Area.

A check this week shows rooms available for Thursday night, close to a sellout for Friday, and wide open Sunday for members of the West Point Inn Association. Through the rest of summer, space is available on many Tuesdays, Wednesdays or Thursdays. Members have their picks of any Sunday and the inside edge to book an elusive Saturday night four months out.

Members pay a $20 fee and volunteer for three workdays or public pancake breakfasts and can reserve 120 days in advance. That puts Saturday nights in their sole province. Nonmembers, on the other hand, are limited to a 90-day window.

West Point Inn was built in 1904 and remains much as it has been for the past 114 years: seven rooms in the inn, five cabins, where you bring your camping gear, food and perhaps a musical instrument. I've been with several groups that booked the entire inn, brought six-strings, 12-strings, mandolins, banjos, and — one time — even a stand-up bass, and played into the night.

A kitchen runs on propane and there is indoor plumbing. Otherwise, it feels much like 1904, off the grid. The views, hikes and mountain-bike rides are also timeless.

Summit option: When you arrive at Rock Spring Parking and the Y intersection at Ridgecrest, you turn right and continue 3.5 miles to parking at foot of East Peak Lookout. It's then a short-but-steep walk, 0.2 of a mile and a climb of 330 feet, to the top at 2,571 feet and the Gardner Lookout. The payoff views provide some of the most spectacular lookouts anywhere.

The view: Looking south, you tower over the Marin Headlands, the Golden Gate, with San Francisco Bay to the left and the Pacific to the right. Looking east, a rock outcrop provides a lookout perch for a view across the North Bay and beyond to Mount Diablo on the right. Looking north, the flank of Mount Tam plunges below to Lagunitas and Bon Tempe lakes and across miles of Marin Watershed lands and coastal hills. Looking west, the ocean extends forever, an awesome sight when a fog deck rolls in below you and you watch the sun dip into the stratus layer.

Rock Spring parking: The network of service roads and trails means you can reach West Point Inn from several trailheads, including Rock Spring/Mountain Theater, Pantoll, Bootjack and from the parking lot at the East Peak. The easiest and prettiest route is out of Rock Spring and Mountain Theater. After parking at Rock Spring, cross Ridgecrest Boulevard and make the quarter-mile walk to Mountain Theater. Continue on the Rock Spring Trail, an easy downhill glide of about 200 feet over the course of 1.5 miles to the West Point Inn (1,781 feet). No mountain bikes.

Pantoll alternate: To reach West Point Inn, many depart from Pantoll. My experience is that Pantoll is the first parking lot to fill each day and the route is on a dirt road, not a trail, which mixes mountain bikers and hikers.

Groups: To transport large volumes of food, supplies and instruments to West Point Inn, a group leader often can get permission, and the combination to the lock, to drive in on the gated service road to unload.

ADA: An Americans with Disabilities Act-compliant cabin (Emig) was opened last year. Those with placards are allowed to drive in.

Hike: From West Point Inn, it's a 1.6-mile hike, one way (multiple routes available) with a climb of 555 feet to the parking lot at the foot of the East Peak, then another 330 feet to the summit (3.6-mile round trip). A network of roads and trails provides a mosaic of routes, options and destinations that lead as far as you want to go.

Old Railroad Grade: For mountain bikers, the Old Railroad Grade on Mount Tam is something of a legend. To reach West Point Inn, most begin at the parking lot for East Peak; the start of the road/trailhead is just down the road on the left. From here, it is 1.4 miles with a descent of 450 feet to West Point Inn. The route spans 13.2 miles with a drop of 2,100 feet to the lower trailhead at the end of Blithedale in Mill Valley. Some ambitious riders will start in Mill Valley and ride to the top and back, considered by most to be the best-graded climb up Mount Tam.

Tom Stienstra is The San Francisco Chronicle's outdoor writer. His Outdoor Report can be heard at 7:35 a.m., 9:35 a.m. and 12:35 p.m. Saturdays on KCBS (740 and 106.9). Email: tstienstra@sfchronicle.com Twitter: @StienstraTom

2018 ACTIVITIES CALENDAR

September
9 Pancake Breakfast
Hosts: Bob Newcomer & Gail Shahan
10 Board Meeting**
15 Work Party

October
8 Board Meeting**
14 Final Pancake Breakfast
Host: Pat Kavanagh
20 Work Party
21 Fall Meeting & Member's barbecue

November
12 Board Meeting**
17 Work Party

December
TBD Cookie Party
8 Member's Holiday Party++
10 Board & Committee Chairs Christmas party
31 New Year's Eve Party
Host: Olene Sparks-Toby

* Location at MMWD Boardroom
220 Nellen Drive, Corte Madera
MEETINGS START AT 7PM

++ Walk-out nights

WEST POINT INN OFFICERS AND CHAIRPERSONS

PRESIDENT
Wayne Koide
415.847.2865, yuzuru3632@gmail.com

VICE PRESIDENT
Bonnie Jones
415.868.0974, bmjones4123@sbcglobal.net

TREASURER/PARLIAMENTARIAN
Mark Northcross
415.380.9746, mark@nhainc.net

PARLIAMENTARIAN
Johanna Sistek
510.237.9882, johanna.sistek@gmail.com

SECRETARY
Jim Parton III
415.264.1562, jparton@partonsell.com

POLICY & PROCEDURES
Chris Marcuse
415.516.4253, tover@aol.com

BUILDINGS & GROUNDS
Urban Carmel
415.548.3111, urbancarmel@gmail.com
Mark Cavagnero
415.398.6944, markc@cavagnero.com

DEVELOPMENT
Olene Sparks-Toby, Suzie Koide
and Patricia Schmidt
development@westpointinn.com

PANCAKE BREAKFAST
Lin Marcuse & Gordy MacDermott
415.516.4253
pancakes@westpointinn.com

MT. TAM LIAISON
Olene Sparks-Toby
510.236.8293, olenes@aol.com

COMMUNICATION
Jan Gauthier
415-328-2083, jangauthier08@gmail.com

GARDEN
Kathleen Kopp
707.328.9009, katkopp@gmail.com

FIRE SAFETY COMMITTEE
Pete Martin
415.499.8028, petemartin@comcast.net

HERITAGE
Fred Runner
415.302.7677, onesoundfred@mac.com
Linda Hulley
415.233.0123, linhulley@gmail.com

HOUSEKEEPING
Fran Rondeau
415.924.9132, franrondeau@gmail.com
Bonnie Jones
415.868.0974, bmjones4123@sbcglobal.net

INN HISTORIAN
Fred Runner
415.302.7677, onesoundfred@mac.com

MEMBERSHIP
Gordy & Lynn Mac Dermott
415.785.4223, membership@westpointinn.com

NEWSLETTER EDITOR
Alison Bricker
415.596.3922, editor@westpointinn.com

EVENTS
Gail Shahan
415.250.9223, events@westpointinn.com

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE
Lin Marcuse
415.516.4253, tover@aol.com
Fran Rondeau
415.924.9132, franrondeau@gmail.com

ELECTION
Chris & Lin Marcuse
elections@westpointinn.com

WAYS AND MEANS
Robert Newcomer
415.847.2572
rjnewcomer@comcast.net

WORK PARTY
Don Keeley
510.388.0765
workparty@westpointinn.com

OLD TIMERS LIAISON
Marilyn Skaff
415.713.5259
marilynskaff@gmail.com

ARCHIVIST
Nancy Skinner
415.457.9491
nancymskinner@comcast.net

BOOKKEEPER
Marta Gomez
bookkeeper@westpointinn.com

INN RESERVATIONS
Jennifer Greene
reservations@westpointinn.com

WEST POINT INN PHONE/
INNKEEPERS
Pat Williams
David Durr
Alex Edwards
Jennifer Greene
Craig Gordon
Karl Jurgenson
John Slater
415.388.9955
innkeepers@westpointinn.com

BOARD MEMBERS

Wayne Koide
Bonnie Jones
Robert Newcomer
Fran Rondeau
Mark Northcross
Olene Sparks-Toby
Patricia Schmidt
Johanna Sistek

WEST POINT INN ASSOCIATION
P.O. Box 796
San Anselmo, CA 94979

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

WANT TO SUBMIT AN ARTICLE?

PLEASE SEND SUBMISSIONS

AND PHOTOS TO

EDITOR@WESTPOINTINN.COM