



## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

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I have the sad duty to report the passing of Gary Nightengale, who was a member of the Oak Grove Nature Center Docent Council and our

Vice-President. Gary had an enthusiastic love of nature and was interested in both plants and animals. Gary had an outgoing

and optimistic personality and was always encouraging the docents. He will be sorely missed.

David Marraccini

President-  
Oak Grove Docent Council



## Gary Nightengale: 1953 - 2007

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It was a pleasure knowing Gary Nightengale. A permanent smile was etched in his handsome face and also in his heart.

As much as he loved nature, he loved human nature, too. For Gary, teaching kids to appreciate the splendor of the Oaks and to delight in catching (and releasing) butterflies flitting around the lagoon was a day well spent.

Leading people into the natural world with cheerful encouragement and boundless charismatic energy was a life well lived.

Our deepest condolences to Gary's family and to Ann Geiger who hopes that your love of nature will bloom and your

memories of Gary linger as you listen for the song of the woodlands. He will be greatly missed.

Our thanks to all who have sent memorial donations to the Oak Grove Nature Center Docent Council: Jeannette H. Fairbairn; Bobbie and Martha Johnson; Sally and Leonard Humphreys; Lois E. Davis; Madelyn R. Schmidt; Jim and Jean Schultz; Lucille Wudel; Nancy and Randy Diehl; Janet Galloway; David Marraccini; Madge Dutschke; Jack and Barbara Flockhart; Don and Elizabeth Linn; Wanda Walther; Jean Johnsen; Conni C. Bock; Charles and Elaine Isbell; Ann Geiger; Sally and Alan Johnson; Martha Mallery;

Doris Musfelt; Conni and Frank Warren; Diane Hansen; Virginia and James Toomer; Catherine A. Wawro; Janice and Caryl McNeilly; Alice B. Heusel; George and Norma Heusel; Beverly Hoag; Forrest Landeen; Linda Gromm; Clairmont School; Geiger Manufacturing, Inc.; Jewel and Roland Earsom; Alice Hunter; Avis Fisher; and the Oak Grove Docent Council.

We will be working with Ann and Gary's family to establish a memorial at Oak Grove with the donations. Thank you again for your kindness.

Martha Mallery

Treasurer

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## IMPROVEMENTS CONTINUE

Just to keep you updated, a few more improvements have been made to the Nature Center. New lighting has been installed in the office, meeting room, and display area. This has greatly improved the visibility of our displays as well as the “feeling” you have inside the building. Also, they installed new electrical outlets in the animal room that allow easier installation of lights and heat sources for the animals. Repairs were made to the wiring in the large diorama after a squirrel got in and chewed it up. An outlet was also installed in the atrium to power a filter for the turtle pond. We thank the county Government Buildings department electricians for their hard work on these projects.

The county carpenters have

repaired the squirrel damage to the outside of the building and rebuilt the AC security fence.

We don’t want to leave out the G.B. painters, who have painted the outside of the building, which spruced it up nicely. They also repaired the holes in the office walls and repainted it. It’s a much nicer place to work in now. And they have put an epoxy coating on the office floor. A big ‘Thank You’ to Government Buildings.

Our second Eagle Scout candidate is currently getting materials together to do his project in the animal room service area. It scheduled to get underway December 1.

In the large diorama, the ‘oak

tree’ has been outfitted with green leaves, making the exhibit appear much more ‘alive’. The small diorama at the center’s entrance has been disassembled and we’re developing plans for new exhibits that can be rotated on a regular basis. More to come!



*The office after lights, walls and floor were worked on.*

## Something Eating You?

Something’s eating us. Termites have been found in the Nature Center. We have had the building inspected and plans are in the works for treatment of the center. It may be necessary to close the facility briefly and relocate the animals during treatment.

The culprit is *Reticulitermes hesperus*, the Subterranean Termite, a native of western North America. They

live underground and feed on wood that is in contact with the soil and can build

*“The culprit is **Reticulitermes hesperus**, the Subterranean Termite, a native of western North America.”*

tunnels to reach dead wood above ground. Though they are important insects in nutrient recycling in the forest, turning downed trees into humus for the next generation, this behavior is destructive to our homes and businesses. ( At this time the treatment of the Nature Center has been completed and we hope for no further problems in the foreseeable future.)

## ACORNS-BUMBER CROP THIS YEAR

If you’ve been out amongst the oaks this fall, then you know we’re having a banner year for the acorn crop. Most of the trees are loaded with big, plump acorns. Here at Oak Grove Park, the geese, Acorn Woodpeckers, Scrub jays, ground squirrels and other rodents are feasting on this bounty. The docents, with the help of the visiting school kids are collecting a generous supply for use here at the Nature Center. We put away a

stockpile of the nuts for use by visitors to the center in trying their hand at acorn pounding. This lets them see how much work was involved in the day-to-day lives of the local native peoples. Our future plans include building an acorn granary modeled after those used by the local Miwok and



*Acorns a plenty this year.*

Yokuts peoples, as part of a native ‘village’ we plan on building on the north side of the Nature Center native plant garden.

## Special Focus—Acorn Woodpecker

The Acorn Woodpecker, *Melanerpes formicivorus*, is a common woodpecker found in oak and mixed oak-pine woodlands. Ranging from southern Oregon to northern Baja California and from Arizona to western Texas south to Columbia.

In general appearance, these birds have black backs, tails, breast collar, and chin, with white on the rump, belly, throat, and base of the first several wing primary feathers. In males the white throat extends up around to the fore-crown, which is black in females. The crown of both sexes is red.

These woodpeckers tend to be noisy, their call described as a raucous laugh. They also ‘drum’ as

do other woodpeckers.

Acorn Woodpeckers feed on a variety of insects usually caught on the wing, but, as their name suggests, they also feed on acorns (and sometimes other nuts) and create large caches of these in



The Acorn Woodpecker, *Melanerpes formicivorus*.

‘granary’ trees. These trees have had large numbers of holes made in them and the birds hammer the acorns into these for later use.

Another interesting thing to note about Acorn Woodpeckers is their gregarious behavior. It appears that extended family groups work together to make nests, raise young, and collect and store acorns. This behavior increases the overall chances of survival for both individuals and the group. Older offspring eventually leave or are driven off by the adults and start their own groups.

So the next time you’re out at the park, take some time to watch these wonderful birds and look for their granary trees.

## Grizzly Bear Sighted In Oak Grove

A Grizzly Bear has been sighted at Oak Grove Park. Actually, it has moved into the Native Animal Diorama inside the Nature Center.

Thanks to the generosity of Donald J. ‘Don’ Giottonini, Jr. of Valley Lumber, the Grizzly Bear will be helping to educate our visitors about the creatures that used to live in the valley, for the next couple of years.

Grizzly bears once flourished in California and were found throughout the state. They figured prominently

in the legends and lives of the Native Americans of California. European settlers in California were both impressed with and terrified of the Grizzly, putting it on the state flag and hunting it to extinction by the early 1920’s.

So take some time this winter and come out and see the Grizzly bear ‘living’ at the Nature Center.



## New Docents Join Our Ranks

We want to welcome our new docents to the Oak Grove Nature Center family. The first is Richard Ling, who found us during the Butterfly Count that occurred in June of this year. Richard is retired from county service and has been helping in the native plant garden and with the tule hut.

The second is Pamela Reyes. She visited the center with her two girls and a

friend this summer and liked what she found here and contacted us about becoming involved. She has been helping with some general cleaning, exhibit renovation and weekend staffing.

Yvuone Mohr, a fee collector with Parks & Rec. who has a background in art, will be helping us with some projects from time to time.

## Thank You

We want to thank those individuals that have made donations to the Nature Center recently. We received a Nature book series by Reader’s Digest and native plants for the garden from donors who have chosen to remain anonymous. Thank you.



## The Coordinator Takes A Class (Or Two)

In an effort to expand his knowledge base, our coordinator, James Rexroth took a class, two actually, from the Miwok Archeological Preserve of Marin (MAPOM). The first class was Flint knapping, with instructor Bill Mulloy, the making of arrow and spear points, as well as some other stone tools. The class covered the basics of creating the initial flake from the larger piece of flint or obsidian and then shaping the flake into a basic point. James managed to get several points almost completed and then had them break apart as he attempted to put on the finishing touches.

James also took a two day class on tule boat making. He assisted the instructor, Charles Kennard, and four other students in building a 16 ft. tule boat. They used hazel branches to make the interior support for the 3 main tule bundle floats and lashed them together with wild grapevine. A smaller bundle was placed on each side to make a gunwale for the boat. Next they put the boat on the instructor's truck and hauled it down to Tamales Bay and

launched it there. After all the students had a turn paddling it around they offered rides in it to the other people visiting the beach that day. After everyone had a chance to ride in the tule boat it was loaded back onto the instructor's truck for the ride to a museum that the instructor works with. James hopes to use the skills he learned there to make a tule boat for display at the Nature Center. We are looking forward to that.



*James and classmates preparing to launch the tule boat they made at the MAPOM tule boat making class at Point Reyes National Seashore.*

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## HOLIDAY PARTY

Please join us for our annual holiday get-together at the Boat House at Oak Grove Park. Bring your friends, relatives, and a hot dish or salad to share! Drinks will be provided.

**Monday, December 3rd,  
2007 - 6 PM**

**Chapeau by Mallery  
Photo by Leslie Corry**



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