

Moments in Time

SAUSALITO HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER FALL 2009

FOUR WATERFRONT PORTRAITS

The current exhibit of the Sausalito Historical Society, on view at the Society's exhibition room at the City Hall, features the work of photographer Bruce Forrester, who, over five years on Sausalito's northern waterfront (from 1975 to 1980), became chronicler of an extraordinary community that thrived there during those years.

Forrester's camera captured the faces and places that made up that unique world, an enclave which took shape from the remnants of Sausalito's World War II shipyard and has, in small part, survived to the present. Informally known as "the Gates," it was the incubator of an iconoclastic lifestyle based on voluntary poverty, creativity, unfettered individuality and a strong sense of community. Originally, it was a collection of, in the affectionate words of someone who lived it, "a warren of ramshackle junks, arks, hatches, rotting barges, battered ferry boats and abandoned hulls," which over time evolved into a maze of jerry-rigged docks and everything from the most primitive living quarters to the most fanciful and imaginative works of art. In its peak years, the houseboat community of Gates 5 and 3 (referring to the entrance gates of the wartime Marinship yard), known loosely as Waldo Point and including, further south, the area around the foot of Napa Street (today known as Galilee Harbor) served as spiritual home to a band of singularly like-minded people—mostly young, many educated and middle-class, some lost and disoriented—who chose to reinvent themselves and create their own culture.

In the outside community, they were viewed as disrepu-

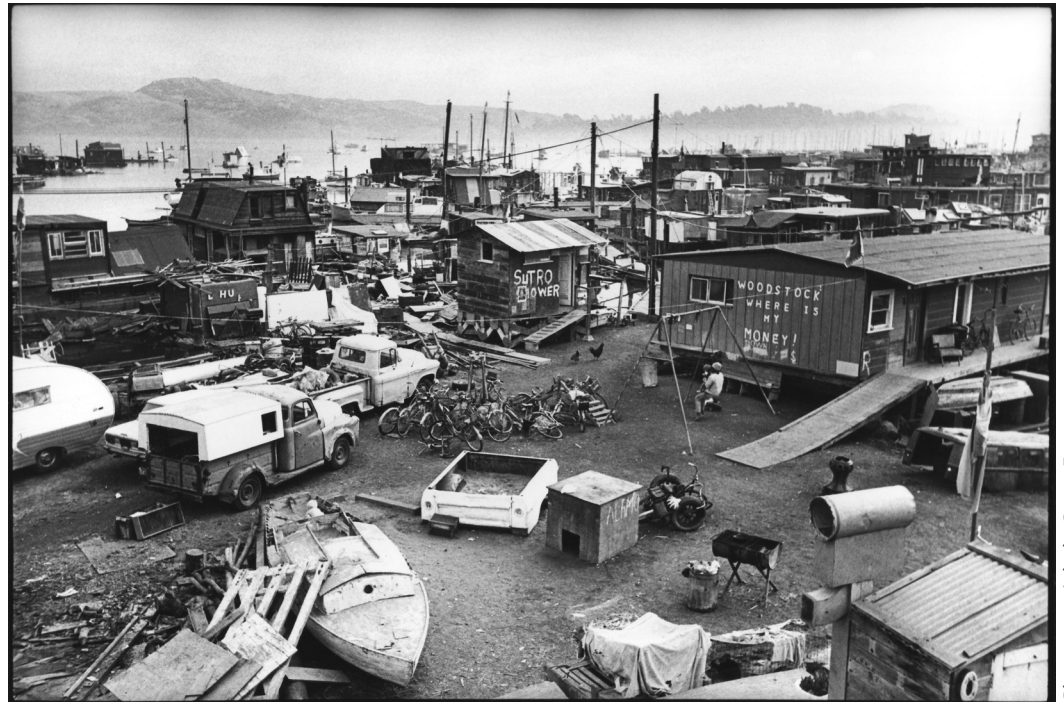


Photo: copyright by Bruce Forrester

This is a view of Gate 6 from the Charles Van Damme. Notice the community "Sutro" shower and, in the right lower corner, the roof of the composting privy.

table by some, colorful by others. The opinion of those who frowned on them was unequivocally stated in an April 15, 1961, article in a *Holiday Magazine* spread about the upscale attractions of San Francisco. In an essay about the Golden Gate Bridge and the area that lay beyond, it declared, "Sausalito is a hotbed of dangerous, vehemently dissident individuals with un-American beards."

In this issue of *Moments In Time*, we've interviewed four individuals whose photographs appear in the Forrester exhibit. Essentially, we asked these questions: Who were you back then? Why did you choose to move to the waterfront? What kept you there despite the challenges it represented? What are you doing now? And how do you look back on that lifestyle of almost forty years ago?

The Sausalito Historical Society's Exhibit Room, upstairs at 420 Litho Street, is open on Wednesdays and Saturdays from 10 to 2. The Bruce Forrester exhibit is scheduled to close in early November.

Pete Retondo



Photo: copyright by Bruce Forrester

In the late 1960's, after an investment of 3 ½ years at the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy, New York, Pete Retondo made a serious, even passionate decision about his life's course. He dropped his formal, academic studies and chose to work in the city's slums. "I decided I was an unfair recipient of white, middle-class privilege," he said in a recent interview.

By choice and motivation, Retondo soon moved to the Tenderloin in San Francisco where he made his way as a freelance journalist. One day in conversation with a hitchhiker, he took up the rider's suggestion for a story about "some interesting, vegetarian, hippie pirates" on the Sausalito waterfront. "My introduction to the waterfront was running around interviewing people. I decided it was much more interesting than the Tenderloin so I moved to the waterfront." His story in *San Francisco Magazine* was on "the hot topic of confrontation between houseboaters and Marin County sheriffs. A photo had been published of a knife-wielding houseboater and so I did an in-depth follow-up on that."

Retondo continued to write after the move, including a

cover story for the *LA Times Magazine* on the Tour of California bicycle race and a story on Mardi Gras for *Rolling Stone*. But over time, his livelihood became increasingly tied to the immediate needs of the houseboat community. He used funds from his writing to buy acetylene equipment and started the "more reliable work" of welding and doing carpentry. The waterfront economy was flexible and informal. Some paid in cash, some traded goods and services. People helped each other to survive in what was essentially "a third world community like a shanty town in Brazil or Mexico. I pretty much dedicated myself to a life of poverty at that time. I believed, as did Paul Goodman (*Growing Up Absurd: Problems of Youth in Organized Society*, 1960) that a life of poverty was the only real choice for serious-minded people. That was my dedication. I was not thinking about the future."

Pete Retondo, living in a diverse community of individualists over a period of 14 years, today understands the stakes well. "It was a free life, but you pay a price for it 24 hours a day." He now eschews the title of leader, but in fact he played an active role in many areas of waterfront life. "I was just a carpenter who got sucked into politics—a hard working person who needed to get things done and was serious about doing things." For involvement in civil disobedience, he was arrested six times "for standing where I should not. All charges were dropped because the developers did not always follow the proper procedures so the judge threw them out." The one exception was when he was assigned community service for having sat for a day atop the smoke stacks of the ferryboat *Charles Van Damme* in a futile effort to prevent its destruction.

His 1970 move to Sausalito coincided with Phase I of what is popularly known as "The House Boat Wars." During the period from 1969 to 1971, Marin County unabashedly sought abatement of the houseboats from the waterfront. But, "it was not possible either politically or legally for the County to enforce its abatement desires" so from 1972 to 1979 the issues settled into a long stand-off. Phase II of the struggle began after Arques, the property owner, was bought out. "The County decided it couldn't get rid of the houseboaters by using the law so they would get rid of them through gentrification, by issuing permits for legal houseboat berths which would be beyond the reach of most who lived there. This second phase was the most difficult for us."

"I helped to find legal representation and to organize it and helped to initiate the Gates Coop to give us a representational legal structure. We had a great legal team. It took a lot of effort to get some of our lawyers to take as many risks as we wanted them to. Joe Baxter, a Harvard graduate who lived on the *Issaquah*, was a constitutional lawyer who worked for us *pro bono*. Paul Kayfetz from Bolinas was an environmental

lawyer and, for compensation, we worked on his home. He was a fearless lion. We had Charles Bush, a Marin low-income housing advocate, another Harvard graduate, a Republican, who was effective and articulate.”

A major legal dispute concerned an unsettled part of the law—the status of under water lots. Could permanent houseboat berths be developed on navigable water? In the early 1980s, a tidelands case was settled in Berkeley giving the city the right to block development on underwater lots. “Based in part on that decision, we tried to roll back the County permits to develop Waldo Point and make it a public access area. We said, ‘We have a right to float here on the water.’”

After the destruction of Bob’s Boatyard in 1980, tensions in the houseboat community peaked. For dwellers accustomed to the free, open life style, pressing property rights issues became an even more serious daily challenge. “Not everyone is tough enough to put his or her whole life on the line. A lot of our great friends decided it was too intense. People moved away and we felt bad about that. This made it difficult, as people were the essence of the place. It was never easy to live there, but it can give you ulcers to stand in the way of bulldozers.”

As poignant as political and legal encounters may have been, creative problem-solving of issues related to daily washing and sanitation were also challenging. Retondo was an innovator on both these fronts. He instigated the setting up of two community showers on land (there was no running water to many of the boats, but more importantly, no space). “We had a gray water recycling system, but it was difficult to keep going.” More controversial than the showers, but highly successful, were the composting privies which decomposed “human metabolic by-products” in combination with wood chips into a kind of forest loam in a period of six to nine months. “The health department was getting paranoid about these privies. So I called up Sim Van der Ryn, State Architect in the Jerry Brown administration and author of *The Toilet Papers* about sewage system alternatives including composting privies. I told him about our troubles with the health department and he showed up with three TV news trucks because he believed in these alternatives. He said to me on the side, ‘How old is this stuff?’ and on hearing ‘nine months’ reached his hands in and smelled it in front of the TV cameras. The result was we got another couple of years of operating the privies without harassment.”

The claim that houseboats were causing the pollution of San Francisco Bay was, according to Retondo, used politically by the County to discredit the houseboat community. “In fact houseboats were no different from all the other boat users on the bay. The biggest violator was the Mill Valley sewage plant—proved by samples.”

Some of the darker problems working their way through American society at the time were magnified as they worked their way through the Sausalito waterfront community. “A large number of people there, many from middle-class backgrounds, were suffering from severe psychological difficulties—from traumatic childhood experiences and abuse I can’t even describe to you.” This reality was closely linked with prevalent drug use. “There was no sudden influx of drugs. They were always there, and more than in the larger community.” One character, a paranoid schizophrenic called De-range-o, entered Pete’s houseboat at 2AM wielding an ax and shouting “Fire drill! Fire drill!” Pete talked him down and he departed without physical incident. “Was he crazy or was he on drugs, or both? A lot of people were in a lot of pain. Drugs are a way people deal with that.”

Over the 14 years that Pete and his family lived on houseboats, he inhabited at least a dozen different ones, totally rebuilding two of them: *The Loose Noose* and the *Okie Dokie*. The latter, built with friends, was on flotation provided by the recycled diesel tanks from an old fishing vessel. A final houseboat, unnamed and unfinished, was built on a steel lifeboat hull. “I plastered it with ferro-cement. A friend finished it and towed it up to Sonoma County where it became a guest-house.”

In the twenty-five years since Retondo left the waterfront “because poverty became boring after years of it—not intellec-

Retondo (continued on page 10)



Sara Retondo

Photo: copyright by Bruce Forrester

Annie Hallatt

Photo: copyright by Bruce Forrester



Annie Hallatt is every inch a nonconformist, an artist who takes pride in pushing the envelope. The bumper stickers on her big, beat-up van proudly bear the identifying marks of the progressive—and, at times, the maverick: “KPFA,” “RALPH NADER,” “BRING THE TROOPS HOME NOW,” “SAVE ROE NOW,” “A PATRIOT MUST BE READY TO DEFEND HER COUNTRY AGAINST HER GOVERNMENT.”

But she’s much more than that. She’s an entrepreneur who’s parlayed a grass-roots masque-making venture into a successful business. She’s a student of Indonesian dance, a teacher, community organizer, political activist, feminist, social reformer, home builder, keeper of rabbits, chickens and goats, frequent host of concerts in her big Berkeley studio reminiscent of a treasured childhood memory—a Woody Guthrie ‘hoot’ in her parents’ home back in 1955.

And from the time in the early 1970s, when she first parked her school bus (i.e., her mobile home) at Sausalito’s Gate 6 parking lot, until 1990, when she decamped for Berkeley, she found the freedom to be any and all of the above on Sausalito’s northern waterfront. She no longer lives at what is commonly known as “the Gates.” But she looks back on her time there with deep appreciation for its uncritical respect for the individual and its unblinking inclusiveness.

“The wonderful thing about the waterfront,” she said in a recent interview, “was that we had free rein to invent ourselves. We created our own culture because we were totally nonjudgmental of each other. Sure we had drug addicts. We had alcoholics. We had drifters. We also had scholars, people collected dreams and published them, fishermen, boat builders, cartoonists, body workers, musicians, thespians, craftspeople, theologians, welders, salvagers, writers, painters. We had mad people living in the bushes, and we had a librarian who ran a free library at Bob’s Boatyard. We had every possible kind of person, and no one was excluded.”

The waterfront people, in Annie’s eyes, enjoyed that rare combination—independence and interdependence. “We proved

that you don’t have to push people out to have a healthy community.”

Community-building was a core concern of hers from her earliest years. Perhaps her family background—she spent much of her childhood and late teens in Berkeley—predestined her to gravitate to Sausalito, where she linked up with the unusual community at the north end of town that flourished there during the 1960s, ‘70s and ‘80s. Her father, an obstetrician active in the Planned Parenthood movement, was one of the founding fathers of Kaiser Permanente in Richmond, a community concept. Her mother was a modern dancer, which, she points out, is based on the principle of ensemble as context for solo work.

Trained as a teacher, she taught art in her early 20s at a collective high school in the Santa Cruz Mountains “where we generated creativity and taught community-building skills.” Later, at the Center for World Music at Mills College and Berkeley, she became a student of Indonesian dance, deeply involved in the village arts of Bali and West Java, including the uses of masques in dance.

Following years of being a drop-in at the Gates, she took up permanent residence in 1975 at Gate 3, where with her customary resourcefulness she set about making a home for herself. Bob Kalloch, a longtime spokesman for the waterfront community who managed Gate 3, rented her space for her bus, her goat barn and storage for her “life treasures.” She joined the newly-formed Gate 3 Co-op, which provided a way for the inhabitants of that part of the former shipyard—known in those days to the larger Sausalito community as the salvage yard of property owner Donlon Arques—to share tools and knowledge and camaraderie.

Annie lived on her bus for four years. Then, in 1979, “one night in a storm, an anchor-out houseboat got loose from its mooring and blew into our harbor and the boats on the dock. We all jumped out of bed, buck naked, to grab it before it crashed into everything. I located the owners and convinced them to sell it for \$100. I’d had a class in San Francisco State’s experimental college with Piro Caro (another of the waterfront’s ‘patron saints’) who taught survival strategies, and I’d learned from him how to build a houseboat—in this case, to rebuild a houseboat.” What did she do in the early years for money? “We actually lived without money; it was a barter economy. I arrived in 1975 with \$50 in my pocket. We traded, or we did the work ourselves.”

All this while, she was growing as an artist, creating masques that were becoming a vibrant element in the Gates culture—and a profitable business. Driving everything she did was her dedication to community organizing. “The waterfront brought all our various experiences together. Just one example. We had a place created by the women of the waterfront

where they sold cool clothing and hats to each other and the public called Waldo Works. The women could work at home and bring their wares there to sell or barter. There was a tremendous need for this. They were an underemployed group. When I hired my first helpers in the masque shop, to create masques for the Renaissance Faire, I employed women who were stuck at home with kids, but needed more. The surprise was the outburst of woman talk, the need for a place to share life stories and get together much like the quilting bees of former times. Many of them were kept, figuratively if not literally, barefoot and pregnant. It was a revelation to me, frankly, how little attention was paid then to women's issues."

Voluntary poverty came to an abrupt end for Annie in 1988. She was in New York taking orders for a gift show. The *Phantom of the Opera* was opening on Broadway. And an agent approached with an offer to sell her licensing rights to the Phantom logo. It meant she could produce Phantom-based masques and sell them to the public. "It just fell into my lap. Before I'd only worked with *papier mache*. I didn't know how to make what they wanted—leather and vacuum-form plastic masques. It was a huge leap for me. But I thought 'I'm going to do it.'"

She started producing and shipping masques by the thousands, and they sold by the thousands—in lobbies where the Phantom was being mounted and elsewhere. The heavy rush of orders tapered off after about three years. But since the *Phantom of the Opera* is still running in New York, her masques are still selling at a shop across the street.

Her 1990 move to her present property in Berkeley was necessitated by her need for more reliable production space. "I would have stayed in Sausalito, but I approached Galilee Harbor about studio space and although they were O.K. with the idea, it looked like I'd have to wait years for the rebuilding of Bob's Boatyard, where there could be enough room for me."

Her present space in Berkeley answers her needs. It consists of the back half of three lots, plus a driveway, on which there's a 4,000 square foot barn dating from the days when Japanese truck gardeners farmed the land, followed by wartime Victory Gardens. It accommodates two studios and two rental apartments. The cavernous main room, its walls densely covered with giant masques—glowering, grinning, weeping—is sometimes used for folk, classical and jazz workshops and other community events.

Hallatt (continued on page 9)

This close-up of the community space at Gate 6 shows mothers with children, roaming dogs and plenty of bikes for transportation.



Photo: copyright by Bruce Forrester

Heather Wilcoxon

Photo: copyright by Bruce Forrester



How do you get yourself from the Chouinard Art Institute in Los Angeles to living on the Sausalito waterfront in, well, just days? Heather Wilcoxon, after two years of study at Chouinard, “which was in transition and not a good climate for me any longer,” did just that after listening to her younger sister, Cici Dawn, exclaim: “You have got to come with me. I have found the most fantastic place in the world!”

“We hitchhiked from LA to Sausalito and that was it. I never looked back,” recalled Heather in a recent interview. That bonding took place in 1969. “My first impression was that the waterfront felt so free! I had never experienced anything like it before and I fell in love with the life style.”

Before finally settling down to Sausalito houseboat living in the mid-1970s, Heather explored tropical living in Hawaii and then sailed for three years in the South Pacific aboard the 30’ double-ender, gaff-rig sloop *Merriman*.

The Bruce Forrester photograph of Heather (seated on the piano bench in the above photo) and Cici Wilcoxon, fellow houseboater Bob Allerton, three dogs and a piano was taken in 1975 on her return to the Sausalito waterfront, this time to stay. The image suggests a more settled life, a pleasing domesticity aboard the houseboat *Omega*. But living arrangements in the houseboat world of that era shifted often as people struggled to find affordability, compatibility and livelihood. “Nobody ever stayed in one place very long.” It was almost nine years before Heather moved to the *Delta Queen* in Galilee Harbor where she has continued to live to the present.

During her stay on the *Omega*, Heather played piano in a band called *Big White* and participated in street art and theater with Chris Hardman’s *Snake* performance group. “Getting ready for the Fat Rat anti-developer play was an

all-nighter. In the Forrester photograph (see next page), we are singing Phil Frank’s song called Mr. Fat Rat (cartoon speak for greedy developer). We only did these street performances once and for our own community.”

Building habitat and community space were also creative, on-going endeavors on the waterfront. “That first year I was there, a guy named Don Bailey bought fifty steel lifeboat hulls and brought them to the Gates and sold them for between \$50 and \$100. People immediately started building homes on them (see photo on page 9). In the 1970s I remember the sinking of a barge to create a community space. Pilings were going in over at Gate 6.

We bought a barge and sank it in the middle of the night behind the pile driver owned by TJ Nelson, harbor manager, and put houseboats around the edge. The barge became a kind of community platform called the Isle of Contempt. We had wild parties. We were wild. You have to understand. There were no boundaries. We just pushed the boundaries at all levels. There was no one around to tell us no. I’ll leave that to your imagination.”

“Free,” “anarchic,” “communal” were words commonly used to describe the lifestyle of the houseboat community of those years. Under the sympathetic eye of waterfront property owner Don Arques (see photo on page 10), on whose land much of the community thrived, residents created a lifestyle of their own which was fueled both by necessity and intentional rejection of conventional restraints. It was itself a kind of art form.

But this way of life was threatened and overtly politicized when eviction notices from the County of Marin started to appear on boats and houseboats in 1970. Artists and musicians who had been content to entertain their own now started to organize with more of a political outreach to the wider community and the media. For example, Chris Hardman of *Snake Theater*, assisted by Heather Wilcoxon and other community artists, staged a confrontation with over two-dozen handcrafted, cardboard protesters. Created literally overnight, the figures were placed in an area where developers were preparing to bulldoze for a parking lot adjacent to a proposed high-end marina. The images not only attracted lots of media attention, but could not be arrested. They stood for over a week before being destroyed by the earthmovers.

“I was very passionate about the community. We all were. This was where we lived and Don Arques, he didn’t care about

the County. He hated the County and encouraged us to live here. What is interesting is that most of these people were from middle-class homes. They had been to college. It was the 1960s and '70s, when you rebelled against the norm. For me that meant I became self-sufficient and learned to take care of myself. How to build a fire and cook. I had never learned to do any of those things or take care of myself. It made me an independent person.

"While I was always doing art in this period, I was not the serious, focused artist I am today. For income, I did all kinds of boat work and whatever little jobs I could get. We all were supported by the Waldo Works cooperative clothing store on Gate 5 Road that basically supported the entire waterfront . . . It was founded by my sister Cici and Janis Speck in 1969 and stayed in business for 13 years. Everyone had a section of clothes for sale that they had bought at the flea market, then madly washed and ironed. We used to have the annual Waldo Works fashion show. We would get these wild outfits together. It was fun! Finally the rent was raised and the store closed. That was it.

"We were young in the '70s and everyone around was living the same lifestyle. It was a good period of my life and everyone who lived there felt the same way. We didn't have any money, but we didn't see ourselves as struggling. That happened later for me. When the drugs started coming in the '70s that destroyed many peoples' lives. It was a sad thing. I was kind of oblivious to it all and not involved with the drug people, but bad things happened.

"When I became a mom in 1978, it focused me right away.

I was grateful for that. Also, Laura Farabough, a waterfront artist, got me back into painting when she asked me to help her with the sets for a play called *Femme Fatale*. I painted the sets and it resurrected my passion for painting. So because of her, I went back to school starting at the College of Marin. Many years later in 1988, I graduated from the San Francisco Art Institute with my MFA in painting.

"I remain connected to the waterfront, although in general waterfront people don't understand my art. I have my art world and then my waterfront world and I like that. A niche. I live in a little village and we all take care of each other. I feel it is where I grew up and became a woman and an artist. I have had hard times here and have had to leave and come back, but this is my place. The biggest change from 30 years ago on the waterfront is the loss of that special sense of freedom. It is gone. You have to have permits, follow BCDC rules, put your dogs on a leash, etc.—all these things did not exist then. We are all in a system now. A sort of monoculture. Nonetheless, I am proud to have been part of Galilee Harbor's struggle to become legal and to evolve to where we are now. And I am so proud of my son Jonah, now a journalist in Merced, who still comes back home to the *Delta Queen* in Galilee Harbor where he, too, grew up."

Heather Wilcoxon is an artist living in Galilee Harbor. Her upcoming exhibits include: Fall, 2009, The Boulder Museum of Contemporary Art; 2010, The Jack Fisher Gallery in San Francisco (solo); 2011, American University Museum in Washington, D.C. (solo).

—Margaret Badger



The Fat Rat Players performing with Chris Hardman (center with cap) who masterminded numerous one-time street performances often featuring extraordinary masks such those pictured here.

Diane Karascek

Photo: copyright by Bruce Forrester



Her first encounter with the Sausalito waterfront was a party aboard the retired ferryboat *Vallejo*. It was hosted by collage artist and *bon vivant* Jean Varda, who played pied piper to an eclectic band of creative people—artists, writers, visionaries, eccentrics—at bacchanalian revels on the northern waterfront during the ‘60s and ‘70s.

The year was 1969. The scene was Sausalito’s version of the Summer of Love. And Diane Karascek immediately fell in love with the place, familiarly known among its residents as “the Gates.”

“I couldn’t leave,” she recalled in a recent interview aboard the *Evil Eye*, a waterfront fixture at Waldo Point’s Liberty Dock. Owned and intermittently occupied by the late children’s book author, cartoonist and song writer Shel Silverstein, his boat has long been an icon on the waterfront. And Karascek in her long, trailing gown couldn’t have looked more at home in this setting. Tucking her bare feet under her, she seemed all of a piece with this wood-paneled, book-lined space with its paintings and stained glass, its giant pillows and worn afghans thrown casually over low-slung couches, its wood-burning stove, hanging ferns, aging Persian rugs, heavy oak furniture and massive skylight suffusing the whole with soft overhead light.

She explained that she and her artist husband Larry Moyer, also a longtime Gates personality and a close friend of Silverstein, have been caretakers of what is known on the waterfront as “Shel’s boat” for some twenty years. Its understructure is a one-time “balloon barge,” a craft the U.S. Navy deployed to fend off Japanese kamikaze attacks in World War II. Its cabin was built by waterfront boat builder Chris Roberts in the ‘70s, reportedly in just two weeks. When Shel, who moved internationally, was in residence, Diane and Larry would retreat

to their anchor-out boat, *The Studio*, which they’ve owned since 1982. It’s the nearest thing to home for them, and they return to it whenever dockside lodgings aren’t available.

Acknowledging that anchor-outs are allegedly illegal in Richardson’s Bay, they point out that anchor-outs have been pioneers in the conservation movement, employing ecologically-sound practices long before they were embraced by the mainstream. “Since we have to carry water out to our boat,” Karascek says, “we’re careful to conserve it. As for electricity, we’re all solar.” Moyer is presently using the boat as his studio.

All of which suggests a relatively benign lifestyle, largely free of the stresses that bedevil land-dwellers. But that picture can be misleading. If there was ever a waterfront poster child exemplifying the lows as well as the highs of life at the Gates, Diane Karascek is surely it. Her early life could probably be described as privileged. Or, perhaps more accurately, emancipated. As a teenager, she attended a progressive school in Ojai, north of Los Angeles, where she was exposed to early New Age ideas. People like Aldous Huxley were on the Board of Directors. Another director, Indian mystic Krishnamurti, had a connection with Alan Watts, the Zen philosopher, and his following.

As a young art student, she spent a year in Italy at the Accademia de Bella Arte in Florence. She landed in San Francisco in the late 1960s, got a job with Bill Graham at the Fillmore Auditorium (“I was one of the first groupies, I guess”), and ended up at San Francisco State. Members of the art department had studios in Sausalito, one of them at Bob’s Boatyard, at that time a locus of creative activity at the Gates. Karascek inherited a studio at the boatyard from one of the faculty and for ten years it was her home as well as her studio. Besides the haul-out facility, there were places at Bob’s where all manner of people could work: artists, craftsmen, boat builders and other kindred spirits in a mutually supportive environment. Karascek remembers a kind of Golden Age in the ‘70s, when “we had wonderful parties there. Joe Tate and the *Red Legs Band* played almost every weekend.”

Then all that came to an end. On August 4, 1980, at 5 o’clock in the morning, the roof above Diane’s bed “caved in under the weight of giant hatchets.” The boatyard was demolished by local government on the grounds of alleged safety violations, and the stage was set for the waterfront’s longest-running *cause celebre*; Bob’s Boatyard is still memorialized at

the annual Maritime Day observance. Diane's trauma put a face on the event, and in the eyes of much of the county's media and human rights organizations she became a tragic victim of this long-running dispute between the City of Sausalito and the waterfront. She sued for \$10 million, settled out of court for far less, but garnered enough to finance the purchase of a houseboat of her own—the craft that is now *The Studio*.

Since then, Diane's life hasn't been easy. The couple's anchor-out boat, at one time called the *Glass Barge* because of its many "greenhouse" windows that allowed tomato plants to be grown onboard, has sunk several times and been raised several times. It has been blown over to Belvedere in a major storm. In another roof incident, eerily reminiscent of the boatyard demolition, the Shel Silverstein boat was hit by a tornado. But the neighbors on Liberty Dock pitched in and helped rebuild the roof. And it's that spirit—the readiness of the waterfront

to look after its own—that inspires Diane to declare with passionate conviction: "I couldn't live anywhere else. I still love it as much as I did the first day I came here."

Over the years, Karascek's work has been a strong presence on the local art scene. She was active in the Sausalito Art Festival in its early days, showing her work and participating on the local Artists Advisory Committee. She's primarily a landscape painter, a minimalist who produces spare, closely-observed interpretations of phenomena in nature, studying them in depth in order to capture their essence. Her canvases tend to have a misty, ephemeral quality, suggesting a kind of west coast version of Shangri La. "I've painted Mt. Tam hundreds of times," she says, "hoping to get it right." Her most recent undertaking has been a series of wall murals for the Montessori School in Mill Valley.

—Doris Berdahl



Photo: copyright by Bruce Forrester

The rower is passing by an anchored houseboat that is built on top of a former life boat. Note the deck extension which floats at the side, complete with chair and foot stool.

Hallatt (continued from page 5)

When Annie revisits Sausalito—she was here for the last Maritime Day—she sees evidence of a new spirit on the waterfront, generated by young newcomers to Galilee Harbor. It's a fresh breath of air, she feels, after a long period of decline in the one-time mystique of the Gates. "It means that

a minority village has survived in the context of the larger, dominant culture. And that's very exciting. Perhaps the town that wanted the alternative waterfront community to go away now sees the great gift of diversity it brings to Sausalito."

—Doris Berdahl



Donlon Arques, property owner on the waterfront, sits in his workshop surrounded by the scrap he collected. He and waterfront craftsmen created just about anything they needed—at very low cost.

Retondo (continued from page 3)

tually very interesting,” he’s had time to reflect on the experience. “The most overriding impression of the waterfront for me and most people was the intense intimacy of everything. We knew each other in our daily lives in a way you just don’t experience in our ‘normalized’ communities. We were interdependent and lived in a kind of unified space of the human spirit where you felt part of the people around you.”

Another legacy of living on the waterfront “was it gave me a high degree of mental toughness. I’m not fazed by lots of different struggles. If you have to deal with what we dealt with, well, it either pushes you over the edge or you are forever able to deal with those things. My daughter Sara is also pretty tough. It wasn’t always easy for her because the waterfront kids were looked upon as second-class citizens in the schools. But she has succeeded very well. She recently married and is attending the Parsons School of Design in New York, despite all the disadvantages. For me personally, I regret not having the ability financially to do the things for my kids other people do. In the ‘70s and ‘80s, I did not accept the financial realities of our world. By the time I finally decided that poverty was not

that interesting, I was a little behind the curve.”

“But I still dream about the waterfront,” Retondo says today. “The boats, the primal connecting quality of the water. It is a different kind of space. When I would sail on the bay at night in my skiff, it felt like a wilderness, another universe. It was like the dream space we lived in.”

Pete Retondo is an architect in the East Bay where he has lived and worked since leaving the Sausalito waterfront in 1984.

—Margaret Badger

Mission Statement

The Sausalito Historical Society collects and preserves art, artifacts, photographs and printed materials that document Sausalito's history; provides access to the collection for public and academic research; and develops publications and outreach programs to inspire local interest in Sausalito's history and to educate the visiting public.

HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWS

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Monday, September 14, 2009 Historic District Treasure Hunt

This event fell on the cusp of newsletter publication. You were invited by a postcard invitation to participate in the Treasure Hunt and enjoy wine and hors d'oeuvres at Piccolo Teatro. Hope you made it for the fun!

Friday, November 6, 2009 7:00pm to 9:00pm

Artistic Sausalito: An Historic Tour

This fast-paced evening will present images of the art that gave Sausalito its reputation as a legendary center of bohemian activity.

The event is co-hosted by the Sausalito Historical Society and the Sausalito Women's Club. No reservation is required for the dessert reception and no-host bar.

RUMMAGE SALES AT THE SHS

This fall, the Historical Society is scheduling rummage sales on the third Saturday of the month. During the course of our recent inventory/clean-up, we've found an eclectic variety of items to put up for sale: Sally Stanford T-shirts, Sausalito Historical Picture Post Cards, several different Sausalito posters, some sheet music (Oklahoma, Missouri Waltz, etc.), books, and more! Come visit us at: 420 Litho Street, second floor, anytime between 10-2 on September 19, October 17, November 21 and December 19 to see what treasures you can find.

EDUCATIONAL OUTREACH TO SCHOOLS

Board members Susan Frank, Bob Woodrum and Jesse Seaver are planning to launch a school program targeted at third graders in the 2009-10 school year. The Bay Model and the historic Sausalito downtown are likely destinations for field trips for the young learners. Stay tuned for more details on our newest community outreach adventure.

VOLUNTEERS POWER SOCIETY IN 2009

Volunteers are powering the SHS like never before! Thank you all for responding with your time and effort.

Billie Anderson coordinated the Bruce Forrester photo exhibit that is now on display in our Exhibit Room.

Ann Heurlin has been entering catalog data into our new Past Perfect software. She has also volunteered to become chair of the Catalog Digitization Committee, which will oversee the catalog digitization process. In time, this work will allow anyone to access our catalog over the Internet. We also have had three Dominican College students working with us on data entry during the past few months.

Betsy Stroman has also been scanning photos in our collection. The scans will be available for several uses. We will attach thumbnail pictures of the photos to Past Perfect catalog entries, display some of the scanned photos on our website, and also have scanned photos available for researchers.

Annie Sutter has joined Doris Berdahl in preparing the weekly SHS articles for the *MarinScope*. Annie and Nancy Osborne have also been helping with the inventory/clean-up of the Research Room which the board has undertaken this summer.

We are also adding some new docents. Randy Berner and Ann Heurlin, along with board member Roland Ojeda, have completed their on-the-job training and have now joined the current docents, Larry Clinton, Jeanne Fidler, Tom Hoover and Sharon Seymour. Docents are all scheduled to serve visitors from 10AM to 2PM Wednesdays and Saturdays.

And of course, Margaret Badger continues to do a wonderful job of editing our newsletter along with associate editor Doris Berdahl. Margaret also provided a workshop in July for docents and board members on researching a home.

Thanks to all the volunteers! We greatly appreciate your help. We'd love to have more members join us in our work. If you are interested in volunteering to help with any of our projects, please contact Sharon Seymour, Secretary, at 289-4117 or send an e-mail to info@sausalitohistoricalsociety.org.

SOCIETY WELCOMES NEW DIRECTORS

At our Annual Meeting in May, five new directors were elected by unanimous acclamation: Mary Griffin, Roland Ojeda, Jesse Seaver, Robin Sweeny and Bob Woodrum. Doris Berdahl and Kenn Roberts left the Board after serving their full six-year terms. In June, Carol Hayes resigned from the Board to pursue other interests.

We would like to express our pleasure at working with the new directors, and to thank Doris, Kenn and Carol for their many contributions to the Society.

