

# FLOATING TIMES

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The Floating Homes Association Newsletter

March/April 2006



Dancing to the music of "Overnight Success" at the FHA Annual Meeting/Dinner.

PHOTO BY EMILY RIDDELL

## Proposed amendments to county development code for floating homes

By Stan Barbarich

At the request of the FHA Board of Directors, county planning officials are prepared to move forward with some very necessary life and safety amendments to the county codes. A number of board members discussed the need for such amendments with senior planning department members at a meeting at the Civic Center last March. Basically, these are needed because the applicable codes related to the number of stories and the required setbacks somehow were changed from what they had been for decades. The result would have allowed multiple-story homes to be approved at less than the minimum 10-foot setbacks, even though the homes around it were built in accordance with the long-standing two-story (where the habitable story within the barge level counted as the first floor), 10-foot setback life and safety requirement. We are unaware of exactly how this happened, but the definition of a story was changed, to not count a story that was built into a barge. These issues were later reiterated in a letter from the FHA to staff dated March 25, 2005.

The principal concern expressed by the FHA is the lack of clarity surrounding the current floating home zoning standards that define floating homes as a single story, even if they have a barge designed to

accommodate habitable space below a full upper story, and therefore requiring only a 6-foot setback. These types of floating homes are usually larger than the conventional barge floating homes that existed at the time the single-story setback was established, and thus result in greater impacts to adjacent floating homes (visual, fire hazard, etc.) if the minimum 6-foot setback is required rather than the 10-foot setback required for two-story floating homes.

The code revision verbiage below attempts to address this concern by clarifying that a 10-foot setback will apply to floating homes with barges that meet the minimum ceiling height for habitable space according to the UBC. The County would, therefore, follow the current UBC standard of 7.5 feet to define a barge with habitable space as a "floor."

These code revisions will be reviewed by the Planning Commission during a public hearing next month on March 27. The Planning Commission will be reviewing them prior to deciding whether they wish to recommend adoption by the Board of Supervisors.

FHA will also give the planning department input on the idea of exempting barge transfers from the architectural deviation process. This would have effect when an old barge is sunk inside the new one, and

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 2)

## A little, of this, a little of that

By Stan Barbarich

First off, an announcement: this Labor Day weekend, FHA will, for the first time, have a food booth at the Sausalito Art Festival. The menu is not yet set, but we hope that it will have a broad appeal, both to FHA members, as well as the general population of festival patrons. This new fundraising opportunity will take a bit of the load from the shoulders of the Floating Homes Tour, so we hope it will be well received. As with everything else that FHA does, lots of volunteer help will be needed (on this one, please contact me), to spread the workload and help ensure that it will be a big success. If it is, we should be able to continue it in future years.

Speaking of the Floating Homes Tour, have you volunteered, yet? Open homes, docents, ticket sellers and so on and so forth are required to pull this event off, so, if you have not volunteered yet, please do so, and soon, so that the committee does not have to phone up 400 homes and ask for help.

Did you simply LOVE the Annual Meeting and Member Party? From the looks of things, what with the

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 2)

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

CONTENTS

County Code Amendments .....	1
President's Message.....	1
FHA Meeting Door Prizes .....	3
FHA 2005 Financial report.....	3
CPR class .....	4
CERT training and captains.....	4
Real Estate Market 2005 .....	5
Water you doing here?.....	6
Artists of Issaquah Show .....	6
Solar Electric .....	7
Dock Talk .....	
Classified Ads .....	9
Key Contacts .....	10

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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

food being eagerly consumed down to the last morsel, and the dancing and all, it seemed to me to be a big success. Special thanks are due to our ever-faithful member and caterer, Ted Sempliner, who voluntarily stepped in at the last minute (there were some production problems with the other caterer doing our event) and offered to pull the fat from the fire as it were and who produced what was arguably the best meal served at this party in years! Malia Dailey did an outstanding job with door prizes.

Supervisor McGlashan once again demonstrated that he is doing a superb job for the residents of the county, and our community in particular. And, of course, the folks at the Bay Model were very helpful and welcoming. The meeting was standing room only, the party was, too, and we look forward to doing it again, next year!

*In keeping with the New Orleans themed dinner, caterer Ted Sempliner asks for FHA matched donations to the ASPCA Pet Reunification Fund for Katrina victims.*

*Photo by  
Larry Clinton*



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## PROPOSED AMENDMENTS

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

the new barge is only large enough to allow the old barge to fit inside it (and not creating any additional expansion of the current footprint). The idea would be to have that be approved if the new barge only extends a minimal distance into the required spacing between floating homes and does not include other protrusions for architectural elements and so forth. This point is not addressed within the following text. There are some explanatory notes interspersed with the code text, and are marked as such.

### 22.32.075 - Floating Homes

This Section provides standards for the floating homes that may be located within floating home marinas.

**2. Mooring.** All vessels shall be securely and safely moored to ensure that the required space between floating homes is maintained at all times, in compliance with Section 22.32.070.C (Floating Home Marinas - Standards and Criteria). Vessels shall be moored to provide a clear waterway projection between adjoining boats or floating homes of at least six feet on all sides. A clearance of 10 feet shall be maintained when either floating home is in excess of one habitable story in height, as defined by the California Building Code. These requirements shall not apply between the vessel and the walkway or slip. See Figure 3-15.

Vessels shall be moored so as to allow landward vessels unlimited access. When used, mooring lines shall be of

sufficient strength and be installed in a manner that will prevent the floating home from moving more than 12 inches in any lateral direction.

*[NOTE: Planning has also included a minimum setback of 3 feet between architectural projections extending from adjacent floating homes that may be permitted through the Architectural Deviation process. This is intended to address the FHA concern about the proximity of these projections between floating homes and in particular, the very serious fire hazard and safety issues that have been raised in the past by fire officials (currently, there is no prescribed limit for proximity of these projections between floating homes). Former and current fire chiefs have stated that even 10 feet is less than they would like to see, and less than 6 feet is the same as if the structures were touching, when one is concerned about fire spreading from one home to another.]*

### 22.46.030 - Application Filing, Processing, and Review

**C. Review authority.** The Director or Zoning Administrator may approve, approve with conditions or deny a Floating Home Adjustment Permit or Architectural Deviation application for the following:

1. Architectural Deviations. The Director may act on deviations from:
  - a. The 16-foot height limitation up to a height of 20 feet; and
  - b. Architectural projections up to 30 inches, such as decks, bay windows, roof overhangs, eaves, flotation barges and other similar architectur-

al features, that extend beyond the specified length and width of the floating home and into the required spacing between floating homes, provided that a minimum distance of 3 feet or greater is maintained between floating homes.

*[NOTE: With respect to fire safety and potential contact between floating homes during storm events, planning has included a new finding for deviations and adjustments that clarifies the County's ability to consider health and safety hazards when reviewing proposals for exceptions to the standards. FHA feels that this is a very necessary protection factor.]*

### 22.46.040 - Decision and Findings

**A. Architectural Deviations.** The director may approve or conditionally approve a Floating Home Architectural Deviation only if all of the following findings are made:

5. The deviation will not result in public health and safety hazards, including, but not limited to, applicable fire safety standards.

**B. Adjustment Permits.** The zoning Administrator may approve, or conditionally approve a Floating Home Adjustment Permit only if all of the following findings are made:

5. The deviation will not result in public health and safety hazards, including, but not limited to, applicable fire safety standards.

So, please be so kind as to give any and all feedback to FHA or to Brian Crawford at the planning department. We will update this in the next issue of the *Floating Times*.

# FHA ANNUAL MEETING DOOR PRIZES

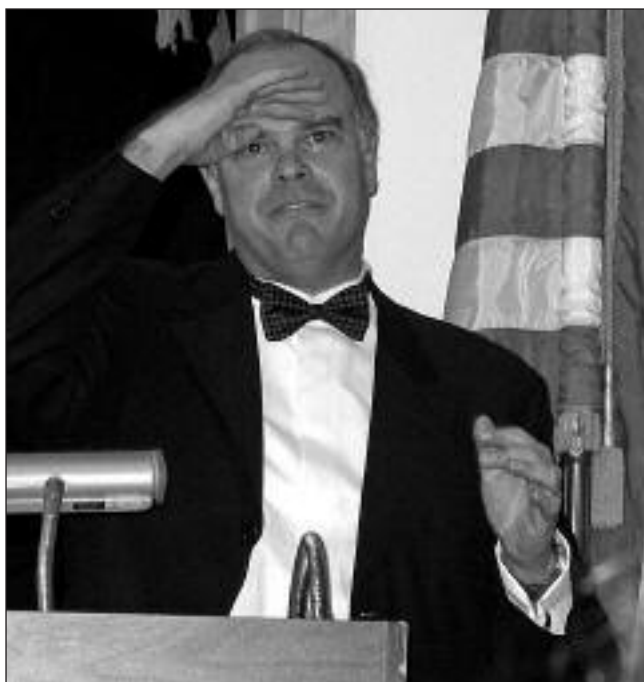
**A Bicycle Odyssey** donated a bike tune-up won by Richard Kiiski  
**All Marin Painting/Chuck Green** donated a Water Street Hardware \$25 gift certificate and a free door painting won by Elana Rosen  
**Bayside Cafe** donated \$20 gift certificates won by Rosemary Maldoon & Bill Wilson  
**Bridgeway Bagel** donated a gift certificate won by Jim Muldoon  
**Caledonia Street Barbers** donated a hair cut by Ed won by David Vitan  
**Doug Lawrence Computers** donated computer time (winner unknown)  
**Financial Benefits Credit Union** donated gift certificates for the Spinnaker restaurant won by Barbara Duncan & Annette Jensen and a gift certificate for Horizons restaurant won by Cheryl Labate  
**Rachelle Dorris/Frank Howard Allen Realtors** donated theatre tickets and dinner at Joe's Taco won by Bonnie Meyer  
**Goodman Building Supply** donated a battery powered drill & light set won by Maryann Griller  
**Horizons** donated \$25 gift certificates won by Diane Chute & Ann Duvall  
**Hubba-Hubba** donated a \$25 gift certificate won by Debbi Handler  
**Kitti's Place** donated a \$20 gift certificate won by Jane Clinton  
**Michelle Affronte & Gabor Bunda/Laurel Avenue Associates** gift certificate - Joe's Taco & a gift basket won by Ric Miller  
**North Point Coffee Company** donated a gift basket won by Stewart Riddel and \$25 beverage cards won by Ron Rankin, Felicity Kirsch, and Dana Curtis  
**Paradise Bay** donated a \$75 gift certificate won by Cort Mast  
**Howard Meyers/Peg Copple and Associates** donated a \$150. gift certificate for the Caprice restaurant won by Jane Chamberlain  
**Pine Street Papery, Inc** donated \$25 gift certificates won by Loni Miller & Todd Bennett

**Ric Miller Photography** donated a canvas print won by Alex Spivak  
**Salon Des Artistes** donated a haircut won by Sam Penrose  
**Sausalito Wooden Boat Tour** donated a tour for up to 5 people won by Marling Mast  
**Saylor's Landing** donated a \$50 gift certificate won by Mark Williams  
**Soul Water Day Spa** donated a gift certificate won by Gail Hicks  
**Spinnaker Restaurant** donated a gift certificate (winner unknown)  
**Zemansky Insurance/ Diane Chute** donated a gift certificate and a gift basket won by Skip Hunter



*Debbie Ludwig extols the virtues of wearing an official Humming Toadfish Marching Kazoo Band cap*

PHOTO BY EMILY RIDDELL



*Supervisor Charles McGlashan shares his vision at the FHA Annual Meeting*

PHOTO BY LARRY CLINTON

<b>ACCOUNT BALANCES</b>	
As of 12/31/2005	
Account	Balance
<b>Bank Accounts</b>	
Checking - Bank of Marin	30,009.74
Savings - Bank of Marin	19,307.31
<b>TOTAL Bank Accounts</b>	<b>49,317.05</b>
<b>OVERALL TOTAL</b>	<b>49,317.05</b>
<b>2005 FHA ANNUAL CASH FLOW REPORT</b>	
1/1/2005 Through 12/31/2005	
<b>INFLOWS</b>	
Donations to FHA	.240.00
FT Ad Income	.760.00
Interest Inc	.252.82
Member Dues	.6,100.00
Merchandise Income	.1,330.50
Misc./ Income	.20.00
Tour Income	.26,462.80
<b>Total Inflows</b>	<b>.35,166.12</b>
<b>OUTFLOWS</b>	
CERT Training	.40.00
Dock Activities	.2,516.69
Dues	.628.00
FHA Coordinator	.3,200.00
Insurance	.2,542.11
Legal & Prof. Fees	.20.00
Mem. Party, Meeting Expenses	.5,359.36
Merchnising Costs	.981.75
Misc. Expense	.1,029.42
Newsletter	.3,819.88
Office Expenses	.1,756.62
Tour Expense	.13,498.93
<b>TOTAL OUTFLOWS</b>	<b>.35,392.76</b>
<b>OVERALL TOTAL</b>	<b>-.226.64</b>

# Another CERT training is planned

Another houseboat oriented CERT class is being planned. It will probably take place on a weekend in April. The class will be located at the Marin City Fire Station. If you are interested in getting this invaluable training, contact your CERT dock captain, or phone Jon Sibaila at 415-250-9561, or e-mail Jon at seadancer48@hotmail.com. Also, if there is sufficient interest, a CPR class may be scheduled soon. CPR is a four-hour class held on a weekend day.

The FHA pays for CERT and CPR classes for FHA members. For attendees who are not members of FHA, the CERT class cost is \$25.00 for individuals and \$35.00 for couples. CPR training for non-members is \$25.00.

## CPR and 911

By Larry Clinton

On February 11, 18 FHA members took a one-day CPR class at the Marin City fire station. Led by EMT Graham Groneman, the group, all graduates of previous Community Emergency Response Team trainings, practiced resuscitation techniques for both adult and juvenile victims.

Among the tips we picked up at the class: 911 calls from Bay Area cell phones still go to the Vallejo CHP office, and there's a delay before they're routed to the proper authorities. It's best to call 911 on a landline, since the call can be traced if necessary. Use a speakerphone if you have one, because the emergency medical dispatcher will be able to talk you through the CPR procedure. If you have to use a cell, call 415-472-0911 to reach the Marin County emergency dispatcher. That's a good number to put in your speed dial directory.

The FHA has budgeted \$1,000 for additional CERT trainings. If you're interested, contact Emergency Services Chair John Sibaila at 331-1344 or seadancer48@hotmail.com.



CERT FHA members learn to prime the pump.

PHOTO BY EMILY RIDDELL



CERT Mickey Allison puts out a fire

PHOTO BY EMILY RIDDELL

### CERT CAPTAINS

- A Dock .....T.J. Nelson
- Issaquah Dock ..... Jon Sabaila
- Commodore .....Richard Kiiski
- Gate 6 1/2 .....Joan Lisetor
- E. Kappas .....Ron Moreland
- W. Kappas .....Lance Bellvue
- Liberty .....Steve Frish
- Main .....Tony Williams
- Yellow Ferry .....Shannon Hartnett
- So. 40 .....Ryan Phelan



FHA members practice CPR with dummies

PHOTO BY LARRY CLINTON



FHA members pay close attention to CPR instruction

PHOTO BY LARRY CLINTON

Georgina Richie practices clearing breathing passage while Engineer Breanna Buchanan supervises and Lance Bellville observes.

PHOTO BY LARRY CLINTON



# Real Estate Market and Floating Homes – 2005

By Howard Myers

*The data in this article is as reported by the Bay Area Real Estate Information Services (BAREIS), currently the source of our Multiple Listing Service (MLS). Whenever I refer to this source, I use MLS.*

## Marin Real Estate, 2005

In 2004 the average sale price of a land home in Marin was \$929,103. The average was up 13.9% over 2003. The average sale price for a Marin home reported for 2005 is \$1,078,819, an increase of 16.11% over 2004. There was, however, a 9.48% drop in the number of closed sales in 2005. While prices and interest rates continued upward, number of sales went down. The biggest increases for the year were in the more expensive neighborhoods: Ross + 29.02%, Kentfield + 24.00%, Tiburon + 19.22%

Following closely were Larkspur (+24.8%) and Greenbrae (+20.76%). Sausalito trailed along at +7.97% and Mill Valley was +13.68%. For some reason in Belvedere, even though sale numbers were good, prices went up only 3.8%.

The fact that the number of sold properties in the County overall dropped 9.5% in 2005, I suspect, was in response to higher prices and interest rates. This would be especially so in the interest-sensitive middle and low end of the market. The lowest end of the market, mostly condominiums, did keep selling well as we gradually slipped into what appears to me a market with prices trending toward flattening and sale numbers declining. For example, January of 2006 started out with 308 properties on the market. Of these, 148 sold (compared to January 2005 when 220 sold), a decline in sales of 33% from January 2005. I would suggest this could be a one off event if it were not for the steady decline in sales numbers throughout the year. Of the 12 months of 2005, eight had lower sale numbers, resulting in the year-end decline.

One more interesting indicator is asking price. While sale prices continued to go up in 2005, as the year progressed the prices sellers asked for their properties increasingly had to be lowered to attract buyers. Where a year before almost any price would get activity, 2005 changed to a lowering of asking prices and more negotiation between sellers and buyers. This is a more normal market!

But what does all this mean to us floating home owners? We are subject to the same market conditions as Land homes, except that we are a niche market. Ours is a



Howard Myers

lifestyle not for everyone. Most families, people who suffer motion sickness, those apprehensive about water, and people who can't get around not owning the land under their home are not typically interested in floating homes. The pool of buyers out there is not as big for our homes. But when a person is attracted to the homes and lifestyle, it can be very compelling — sometimes even compelling enough to pay the berth fees and higher loan rates.

## Floating Homes Sales - 2005

In 2005, twenty floating homes were reported sold on the MLS. You may recall this is about half the number that sold in 2004, an unusual year for sales. There were a couple sold not on the MLS, but I don't have reliable information to report on these. However, twenty sales is closer to normal. Prices went up on our homes a bit more than did Land homes in Marin, with a very nice 17.98% increase.

Sale prices ranged from a low of \$235,000 to a high of \$1,090,000. The average Sale Price was \$511,275. Three sales ranged from \$235,000 to \$282,000. Four ranged from \$335,000 to \$390,000. The largest cluster was 7 sales in the \$400,000 to \$485,000 range. Three were \$558,000 to \$685,000, and 3 more from \$900,000 to \$1,090,000.

It was an odd year for inventory. For the first six months of the year there were very few floating homes on the market, and only five closed sales. Fifteen sales closed in the last six months. My suspicion is that in the last six months of the year Land home prices were still high, and higher interest rates had people looking a step or two down

in price where our homes might look more attractive. We also benefited from sales of high-priced Land homes and sellers using chunks of cash to buy down into an affordable floating home. Nice choice! These are often retired or semi-retired people.

Now, what's going to happen in 2006? As I write these lines, there are 7 floating homes listed for sale on the MLS. Two are in escrow. So far this year, 3 sales have closed. Compared to the previous year, this is a good beginning.

It's too early to tell what the 2006 market will really be like. If interest rates on our loans reach 8% or more, if the economy takes a serious downturn, or there is a nasty bout of inflation, any of these of course will seriously affect the market. I think there is still considerable pent-up demand for housing. Interest rates and prices have just caused buyers to back off. But my hunch is that this is just a leveling-off period and we are going into a steady and not-so-frantic market. I doubt that sale prices (on average) for our homes will go down much, if at all, compared to previous years. Our expectations on asking prices will go down just as they have on Land homes. We may wait longer to sell and have to negotiate more. When a first buyer comes in with an offer, we can't be so confident that another buyer is right there in line.

But we will get through it even if there is a nasty downturn. If it is not advantageous to sell at a particular time and one can wait, that may be wise. Bottom line: I think the near future looks pretty good, and I am anticipating a good 2006.

By the way, if you are thinking of selling you inevitably have to consider where you are going next. If you sell your floating home, what can you get out there that's decent short of leaving the area completely, e.g. Upstate New York or Peoria. In our area it's not much unless you have something to add to the proceeds of your home sale. You know what the average sale price of a property in Marin was in 2005 but what are prices in some other areas like? Let's look. Below are some average 2005 sale prices for counties and towns north of us.

These are just some of the options to the north of us. You can see where the really desirable locations are by the prices. Even though many of these locations are quite nice, none is desirable enough to make me want to sell and move. I'll stay put for now.

Well, I've rambled on a bit, but it's always interesting to look at this information and pass it on.

I have a glass of wine here – so here is wishing all of you a wonderful year.

## Water you doing here? by the Dinghy Dame

This month I had difficulty convincing anyone they had a story to tell. So...I had to interview myself! And that ain't easy!

Because I don't really want everyone to know who I am, choosing a photo for this was difficult. The Dinghy Child is me in third grade. My seventh grade school picture actually took second prize in an ugly contest at Princeton (thanks to a not-so-adoring old boyfriend). I had intended to use that one, but this one is a better likeness.

I grew up in a small upstate New York town near the Finger Lakes, where the most exciting thing was (and still is) to attend the high school football games.

There were more bars than churches, the best beauty shop was the Salon deLovely, and there were thriving businesses lining the main street, which was dotted with maple trees.

A post war idyllic peaceful time of playing outdoors all day, catching crawfish in the streams...until Walmart came to town. Those were good ole days. We all spent many a summer sailing, skiing, and enjoying the water. (Now I just look at it) But water, for me, affords a feeling of being grounded, yet connected to all the wonders of nature. And it makes one feel that all is right in the world.

After finishing college and working in a large hospital for four years, I checked outta Dodge on my 25th birthday with my buddy Mary Lou. I recently asked her if she remembered how we happened to make our big decision to leave home.

She said, "I remember it well. You called me and said, 'I'm headed for California. Wanna come along for the ride?'"

She sold her Triumph, we bought a tent and sleeping bags, packed everything we owned into my 1967 dark blue VW bug and set out to see the country.

It was July of '69 and my father was worried to death that the Hells Angels would get us, or we would succumb to the perils of marijuana. Only one of those things happened, thank goodness.

San Francisco was our destination. We took our twin peaks to Twin Peaks and moved in with a friend from back East and her roomie. That's when I decided to stay, and picked up the Sunday paper to look for a job. There it was...an ad for a lab tech. in a doctor's office in Sausalito.

"Where's Sausalito?" I queried.

And that day we found ourselves at Zacks dancing away the afternoon, and licking double ice cream cones from Swenson's while sitting on the rocks overlooking the city. That did it...I was hooked.



*Dinghy Child*

Got the job, moved to Sausalito and became enmeshed in the community. And what an exciting one for a country mouse like myself! Sterling Hayden was a big presence. He actually filled up a whole doorway.

Other patients included Bola Sete (Brazilian guitar), John Stewart (Kingston Trio), Rip Torn and Geraldine Paige (They lived on the Van Damme), Gale Garnett ("We'll Sing in the Sunshine"), Vince Guaraldi (*Peanuts* pianist), and Shel Silverstein to name a few. On several occasions, in full regalia, Dennis Banks and his entourage from Alcatraz adorned the waiting room. I can still see their white-feathered headdresses. (And to think I've seen most of them naked!)

Freddy Mayer was the local pharmacist, The Tides and the Crow's Nest were happenin' places. The Two Turtles was a popular watering hole, turtle races were "in" at Zacks and Sausalito still had a small town feeling. (But it did smell funny.)

Freddy was the one who turned me on to the houseboat scene and tried to convince me to buy a place near the heliport. Shoulda done it. But, it was a full 18 years before I found myself sittin' on a dock in the bay. And I've enjoyed life here in the floating home community for the last 18 years. It's a nice feeling to be among "like minds." And anybody who says that this place is for the birds is all wet!

A neighbor recently said that she had been at a county meeting where someone said that there were no neighborhoods in Marin anymore. WRONG...We live in one of the best.

## Artists of Issaquah do it again

By Richard Mickley

Mark your calendars. The fourth annual art show by the Artists of Issaquah is happening on Saturday, April 29, from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. This year a group of Liberty Dock artists will be having a concurrent exhibition. This increasingly popular event will feature a wide variety of artworks on display and for sale.

Since 2003, when this event was founded by Issaquah artist Jim Woessner, a number of new artists have gotten a start, and several veteran artists have had successful shows.

On Issaquah Dock, the show will include paintings by Jim Woessner, Annie Sutter and Lisa Manthe; sketches by Barbara Duncan; photography by Emily Riddell, Ric Miller, Sandra Schlesinger, Malia Dailey and Mike Knibbs. There will also be jewelry by Jon Sibaila; sculpture by Richard Mickley and exotic lathe turned bowls by Thomas Ludlam. This work will be exhibited in 5 Issaquah Dock homes, which will be set up as galleries for the day.

On Liberty Dock, the artists will be Elaine West, mixed media; Susan Trott, paintings/sculpture; Dana Price, mosaics; Sonia Lovewill, photography; Stuart Sheldon, painting/poetry; Emma Hervochow, collage; and Nora Stratton, photography/sculpture.

Don't miss this excellent opportunity to see what your artist neighbors are doing and to add to your personal art collections. This is a great day to bring visitors to the houseboat community where they will be welcomed heartily by the participating artists.



*Issaquah artist Jim Woessner painting #56 Issaquah.* PHOTO BY EMILY RIDDELL

# Floating Home Solar Electric

By Ron Moreland

A little over a year ago my wife and I decided to do some major remodeling of our floating home. The end result of that remodeling was a fantastic lighting system, but also a 50 percent increase in our electric usage. So instead of being part of the greenhouse gas problem, we decided to be part of the solution. We decided to install a solar electric system, or as we later learned, its officially called a photo voltaic (PV) system. We knew virtually nothing about PV systems, so we went to the Web to find out what we could. There is a ton of information out there on the Web and way too many places to look at to list here.

After learning what we could, we called two local PV contractors, Cooperative Community Energy (CCE) and Solarcraft. Both were great to work with and both provided us with a wealth of information, including a design for our PV system. In the end we went with Solarcraft because they offered to do the work on a "turnkey" basis. This meant they handled the County building permit, PG&E paperwork, State rebate paperwork, design, equipment procurement and installation. Frankly I don't know how it could have been easier. In the end Solarcraft even gave us a credit on our invoice for the State rebate, with us assigning it to them. This means you don't have to pay for the system upfront, then wait for the very sizeable rebate.

Here are some important things we learned:

- The cost of a PV system is greatly reduced by a variety of tax credits and rebates. By far the biggest one is the State rebate, which currently is \$2.80 per watt generated. Other cost reduction items are the Federal tax credit (up to \$2,000) and the Marin County rebate (\$500). The California tax credit expired in 2005 (up to \$1,750), but hopefully it will be reinstated by the Legislature this year.
- By using your old PG&E bills, a good designer will provide you with the maximum size for your PV system. This will allow you to breakeven with PG&E. If you generate more than you use, it's free electricity for PG&E. There are no dollar credits from them.
- Surprisingly, the monetary breakeven point with PG&E will be less than the output breakeven point. This is because PG&E credits you with a very high rate per kWh for electricity generated during

summer afternoons. For example, peak (noon to 6 p.m.) generation, during the summer (May 1– October 31) in 2006 will give you a credit of \$0.293/kWh. Off peak, summer production gives you \$0.866/kWh. Peak and off peak winter credits are \$0.114/kWh and \$0.896 respectively. The good news is that when your PV system is producing its maximum output (summer afternoons), most of us are at work or at least using very little power (we don't have air conditioning). For us this meant that a PV system that produced 75 percent of our usage, covered 100 percent of our PG&E electric bill.

- Once your PV system is installed and signed off on by the County, PG&E will come out and install a "time of use" meter. This meter not only records what you use/produce, it also records when you do it. So during summer afternoon, you can go out and watch your meter run backwards.
- Once the meter is installed, your monthly electric bills from PG&E disappear. Instead, every 12 months PG&E will compare your usage to your output. If you used less than what you produced, you get a note of thanks from the PG&E stockholders. If you used more, then you get a bill for the difference. If due to space or budget reasons you design a system that will produce less than the breakeven point, PG&E will bill you something each month, with an annual true up. However, you still get a report from PG&E each month outlining your usage and production.
- There are three major costs for a PV system, solar panels, inverter and installation.
- Don't worry about County or BCDC building permits. First, there is a state law that says local or regional political entities cannot regulate PV systems based on height. They can only regulate based on safety issues (i.e., its tied down to your roof correctly). Secondly, the County cannot increase your property assessment based on the value of the PV system (so no additional property taxes).

If you have any questions, I would be more than glad to help you. Just call or e-mail me.

Ron Moreland  
25 E. Kappas  
332-2429  
ron@moreland.ws



Whitey and Blackey PHOTO BY RENEE BAER

## Whitey and Blackey are in duck heaven and we miss them.

By Renee Baer

There were a pair of ducklings, one black and one white, who were raised in Mark and Linda Trotter's bathtub in their home on Main Dock. When the ducks were old enough to be set free, they became residents and part of the community. They would tour the houseboats like Buddhist monks, begging for food.

I don't know how many residents the ducks were soliciting food from but they regularly would show up here on South 40 for breakfast and dinner. Twice a day, Blackey and Whitey would announce that it's time to eat by quacking loudly outside our window until I would toss them a few cupfuls of cat food (they loved cat food). A few months ago Whitey didn't show up for his regular feeding. He failed to show up the next day and the next. I looked for him on all the docks and ended up at VARDA landing where I was told that a river otter was seen dining on a white duck. Blackey was despondent. She didn't eat, she quacked constantly and a few days later she also disappeared and hasn't been seen since.

A pair of young white ducks used to try to dine with Blackey and Whitey but was aggressively chased away. They became regular dinner guests after the disappearance of Blackey and Whitey. For the past few weeks, the white ducks have not shown up for their regular feeding. I only hope that they are alive and well and busy mating somewhere.

Darwin explains what happened as "survival of the fittest." I only wish that the river otters in our community would eat mussels instead of duck for dinner. I am deeply saddened by the loss of our feisty and lovable ducks and know there are many floating home residents who will miss them too.



### In memoriam

#### Albert Morse, long time Main Dock resident

Albert Morse, intellectual property lawyer for underground artists died on January 29, aged 67 from kidney disease. Morse was best known for having successfully defended R. Crumb, whose "Keep on Truckin'" cartoon character was an early 1970s counterculture icon. With the fees Crumb paid him, Morse was able to take on a number of cases on behalf of lesser-known cartoonists on a pro bono basis. Because many of them were so grateful they used him as a character in their strips, Morse eventually compiled them and published a book, "Morse's Funnies." He lived on Main Dock for more than four decades. He was self-publisher of a book about tattoo art, "The Tattooists," a collector of 17th century chastity belts and erotica. A candle-light celebration of his life was held on the pier beside his houseboat on February 7. He leaves his devoted companion of ten years, Christine Valenza.



— Suki Sennett



*HGTV visits our floating homes. Their high definition video camera, on the end of a jib boom, peeks into windows on South 40's "Train Wreck" and Issaquah Dock's "Dragon Boat." Watch your dock bulletin board for notices of broadcast dates and times.*

PHOTOS BY EMILY RIDDELL

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