

A COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATION SUPPORTING THE LONG-TERM STEWARDSHIP OF CLAREMONT CANYON

President's message

by L. Tim Wallace

This was an eventful summer in Claremont Canyon. On everyone's mind was the August 2nd Grizzly Fire. We applaud the firefighters from several agencies who sprang into action and extinguished the fire before it could spread beyond its estimated 20 acres. It was obvious that the lessons from the 1991 firestorm were learned and incorporated into emergency response plans. Fortunately, there were no strong on-shore winds that day that could have sent flames gusting into LBL, the UC campus, and nearby neighborhoods.

To help unravel how state, regional, and local fire departments are coordinated to deal with fires in the East Bay Hills, we are honored to host two outstanding leaders, Robert Doyle and Ken Pimlott (see back page and article on page 6), as our Annual Meeting speakers. The speakers will cover each agency's fire prevention activities as well as firefighting strategies.

There is good news to report on other fronts. After two years of trail building along a steep hillside, Conservancy volunteers completed a long-planned continuation of the Gwin Canyon Trail (see page 2). For years the Gwin Canyon Trail on East Bay Regional Park District land led down from the end of Norfolk Road but dead-ended where the District's land abutted UC's. Now it is possible to hike down that trail and continue onto UC's existing network of trails in the upper canyon.

Elsewhere on the trail front, *Take to the Hills*, a group of local volunteers, has completed a trail in neighboring Derby Canyon, which goes from behind the Clark Kerr Campus up Panoramic Hill. We are working with T^3H to encourage the Park District to build switchbacks on the very popular but steep section of the Stonewall-Panoramic Ridge Trail.

Nurturing native plants and removing invasives are some of the Conservancy's major goals. The *Garber Park Stewards* are doing a tremendous job making the 13-acre, City of Oakland John Garber



A robust group turns out on Creek-to-Bay Day for the unveiling of Garber Park's new interpretive map.

Park a case study on how to successfully accomplish these goals. The *Stewards* recently completed a self-guided trail map to showcase the park. We are pleased to have helped sponsor the *Stewards*' efforts (see page 4).

Finally, we note that UC has moved forward in its suit to overturn FEMA's withdrawal of funding, which would have helped pay for measures to remove the most fire-prone invasives from Claremont Canyon and other areas in the East Bay Hills. These funds were abruptly canceled in a legal settlement behind closed doors after years of environmental review and public involvement—and after FEMA had already awarded the grants. The Conservancy supports UC's effort and will be working with the University, the Park District, the City of Oakland, and East Bay MUD to get more fire prevention work done on lands owned by these agencies, especially along roadways and ridgelines where fire danger is greatest.

As always, the Conservancy is committed to doing its part. We undertake and support programs to improve wildfire safety and long-term protection and restoration of the canyon's natural environment. We also are dedicated to seeking out the most effective measures that private property owners can take to protect their homes from fire within the intermix of wildlands and residential areas between Strawberry and Tunnel Canyons.

STEWARDSHIP EVENTS IN THE CANYON

PLEASE JOIN US for stewardship events in Claremont Canyon throughout the fall and winter months: once a month (third Saturday) in Garber Park led by Shelagh Brodersen of the Garber Park Stewards and once a month in the main canyon (fourth Saturday) led by Jon Kaufman and other Conservancy members. All levels of fitness are welcome. Watch for the monthly emails or check the Conservancy website for added events and to see where to meet. We usually meet at the Claremont Avenue entrance when working in Garber Park and at signpost 29 for main canyon events. Events are 10 AM till noon. When volunteering, please wear long sleeves, long pants, sturdy shoes and a hat. If you have gloves, please bring those too but we'll have extras. Please contact GarberParkStewards@gmail.com for Garber Park events and for all other events contact info@ ClaremontCanyon.org.

Claremont Canyon is the largest relatively undeveloped canyon on the western slope of the Oakland/Berkeley
Hills. Most of the canyon's watershed is owned by
the East Bay Regional Park District, the University of
California, the East Bay Municipal Utility District and
the City of Oakland, with about one-fifth in private hands.

The Claremont Canyon Conservancy promotes the long-term stewardship of the entire watershed, coordinated among the stakeholders to preserve or restore a healthy native ecosystem, reduce wildfire hazards, and foster education and research.

Join the Conservancy:

Founding Sponsor: \$1,000 over 10 years. Family Membership: \$50 per year. Student or Limited Income: \$25 per year.

Contact Us:

PO Box 5551, Berkeley CA 94705, 510-843-2226

Email: info@ClaremontCanyon.org Website: www.ClaremontCanyon.org

The Board of Directors: L.Tim Wallace, President; Joe Engbeck, Vice President; Jon Kaufman, Vice President, Marilyn Goldhaber, Secretary; Members-at-Large are: Josh Borkowski, Steve Holtzman, Jerry Kent, Tom Klatt, Nancy Mueller, Bob Strayer, and Dick White.

Treasurer: Kay Loughman

The Claremont Canyon Conservancy News is edited by Marilyn Goldhaber and Kay Loughman.

WALKS AND WORKSHOPS

Saturday, October 21, Gwin Canyon Trail Hike starts at 10 AM, with Bob Strayer and Josh Borkowski. Meet at Signpost 29. Come see the newly opened section of trail that connects UC's Willow Trail at Signpost 29 with the Park District's Gwin Canyon Trail. We will talk about the Conservancy's restoration and trail building efforts in this part of the Canyon. The hike begins as an easy, moderately paced loop of the Summit/Willow Trail (1.0 miles with occasional moderately steep terrain-40 minutes). For those who choose to continue, there will be an additional trek up the Gwin Canyon Trail to Norfolk Rd, where you can be met by a car or hike back down (an additional 1.5 miles of steep terrain, 1 hour or 2 hours if going up and back). More details on our website.

Wednesday, October 25, SOD Blitz Survey, 1-3 PM, led by Matteo Garbelotto, PhD, Director of UC Berkeley Forest Pathology and Mycology Laboratory. Meet at 251C Hilgard Hall on the UC Campus. Learn about Sudden Oak Death and what you can do to protect your oaks and to slow down the progression of this lethal exotic disease. Register at kpalmieri@berkeley.edu.

Saturday, December 9—The Birds of Claremont Canyon, 8-11 AM, led by Dave Quady, Audubon Christmas Bird Count Leader, and Kay Loughman, creator of Wildlife in the North Hills (nhwildlife.net).

Join us to look for winter birds in Claremont Canyon. Dave and Kay will also lead a special owling adventure in the wee morning hours, followed by a break for breakfast. Join us for one walk or both.

Owling (December 9), 4:30-6:30 AM. Meet at the trailhead on the north side of Claremont Avenue (Signpost 28), about one half mile uphill from the Alvarado Road intersection. After a brief owling lesson, we'll listen for owls at a couple of locations in the canyon. We will walk a little, but mostly stand quietly in the dark and listen. Owling is chancy: we hope to hear an owl or two; if we're lucky we may see one. Rain or high wind cancels.

Daytime Bird Walk (December 9), 8 AM. Meet at the top of the canyon at Four Corners (the Claremont Avenue/Fish Ranch Road/Grizzly Peak Boulevard intersection). We will drive to a couple of locations

to sample different habitats in search of resident and migrant birds. Rain or high wind cancels.

Call Dave at 704-9353 before 9:00 PM on Friday, December 8 if you're unsure whether the walks will run in light of the next day's weather forecast. Dress warmly and bring binoculars, field guide and flashlight (for owling).

Saturday, January 20—Fungi in Garber Park, 9:00-1:00, led by Lech Naumovich of Golden Hour Research Institute. We will be hiking through the damp forests of Garber Park with eyes on the world below. We will talk about basic fungal ID, timing, and reproduction as well as nutrient cycling and their use in restoration as amendments. We will dig into the soil and ID some anatomy of the fungus.

Big Cats in Claremont Canyon by Janis Bankoff

A NEW STUDY conducted by the East Bay Regional Park District reveals the presence of mountain lions ("Big Cats"), an elusive apex predator utilizing the wilderness ridegtop above the Caldecott Tunnel to transit between the open spaces north and south of the tunnel. The study, expanded earlier this year to include the Caldecott Tunnel Corridor, is led by veteran Park District wildlife ecologist and science consultant Steve Bobzien in conjunction with Panthera, a global non-profit dedicated to the preservation of Big Cats and their ecosystems. Technically, mountain lions are not considered part of the Panthera group of Big Cats which include African lions, tigers, leopards and jaguars, all of which roar. In contrast, mountain lions



A mountain lion traversing the wildlife corridor above the Caldecott Tunnel is captured by the Bobzien study's remote camera.

Mountain lions are extremely shy of people and rarely observed by hikers. A few sightings, however, were reported this year. Some hikers witnessed a "big cat" near the Clark Kerr Campus in July. More recently, a North Hills resident, Tula Economou, described seeing a large animal with a long, sleek tail, undoubtedly a mountain lion, while out walking her dogs early on the morning of September 25. She said the animal "bounded across the road and in a single graceful motion leapt across a neighbor's fence to the open space (Vicente Canyon) below." How to keep yourself safe while protecting wildlife can be found at: wildlife.ca.gov/Keep-Me-Wild/Lion.

do not roar; instead, they "chirp" and purr. While neither threatened nor endangered today, mountain lions are considered a "specially protected mammal" and are protected from any kind of hunting.

Approximately 20 years ago, the Park District purchased land above the Caldecott Tunnel in an effort preserve the open space and wildland ecosystem. Through the use of remote cameras lined with small LED lights, the study hopes to record and document the presence, habits and biodiversity of mountain lions in peri-urban areas like the Oakland Hills. In addition to mountain lions, the cameras capture images of feral pigs, great horned owls, bobcats, countless grey foxes, and cows. Mountain lions are scavengers, but are selective in their prey.

The Bobzien study focuses on three eco-regions: the mountains of the Hamilton Range, Mount Diablo, and the Oakland Hills. All three are mountain lion habitat, each separated into a kind of island by busy freeways and BART tracks. The goals of the study are to learn how many mountain lions inhabit these areas and find out if they are able to cross from one area to the next. In some cases, GPS radio collars are used to help track individual cats. The cameras are successful in providing brief glimpses of these shy, predominately nocturnal mammals, who are ultraaware of the presence of people.

Conservancy board member and steward Bob Strayer and I were able to catch up with Bobzien at the Contra Costa County Annual Fish and Wildlife Fall Forum in Martinez, where Steve was the guest speaker. One of Steve's goals is to get people excited and maintain interest in conservation, without which these open space lands cannot be maintained.

The wonders of Garber Park

by Nancy Mueller

IF YOU HAVEN'T DELVED INTO the wonders of Garber Park, you need to know about it! You will find a delightful native oak woodland with native fern grottoes, giant coast live oaks, California buckeyes, California big leaf maples, and a fascinating old defunct fireplace from old boy scout days of the 1920's! All this is within walking distance from the intersection of Ashby and Claremont avenues.

For the last eight years the *Garber Park Stewards*, with support from the Claremont Canyon Conservancy, have been lovingly restoring the native vegetation and improving the trails in the park while reducing the risk of wildfire.

There are four entrances to Garber Park: The main entrance on Claremont Ave is east of the back of the Claremont Hotel, just beyond the employee parking lot. This is where you will find a few places for offstreet parking. A second entrance is east of the 800 block on Alvarado Road, a third at the end of Rispin Drive, and a fourth at the end of Evergreen Lane. In case of emergencies, it is a good idea for local residents to know Garber Park trails and their egress down to Claremont Avenue.

So, get a copy of the new self-guided, interpretive trail map and brochure (see next article) and enjoy nature in the midst of an urban environment. Bring the kids and find the nine spots on the map!



Walkers on Alvarado rejoice! At the Alvarado entrance to Garber Park there is a new, sweet log bench cut from a fallen bay laurel tree that had blocked the trail near the Rispin entrance. Upcycling at its best!



An early version of the brochure at our May workshop.

The Garber Park interpretative brochure journey by Shelagh Brodersen and Lech Naumovich

SEVERAL YEARS AGO, Garber Park Stewards and Golden Hour Restoration Institute first tossed around the idea of creating an interpretative brochure that would enrich the experience of visiting Garber Park. We wanted to create a document that was engaging and informative for all park users—first timers as well as regular visitors.

With a bit of luck, we met Lauren Fong on one of our regular volunteer work days. She had served as the Sustainability Director of the Claremont Club and Spa and informed us of a competitive grant that we could apply for to allow our brochure idea to blossom. We applied and were fortunate to be selected for a grant, which would not only cover the brochure design and printing but also a year of workshops and new hand-routed trail signs to be crafted by Ricardo Mannequin.

We kicked off our project with a community workshop on "how to design a great brochure." We brainstormed our content and spent a good deal of time reviewing layout and design strategies of similar brochures. We really wanted to include all the wonders of Garber Park but found we had to trim back quite a bit so not to inundate park goers with too much information.

Fortunately, we were able to team up with Bob Birkeland and Hope McManus of Restoration Design Group. They walked us through a rigorous process of creating an elegant hand-drawn map of the park, which is central to the brochure. Hand drawn icon elements adorn the brochure, as well, including our personal favorite—the colorful orange lichens of the Garber's ancient buckeyes.

The brochure will be available soon online on the Conservancy's website, the Claremont Club and Spa, and at kiosks at Garber Park entrances. We can't thank everyone enough for all their work, feedback and commitment to Garber Park.

© 2002 Courtesy Ralph Samue

The legacy of Ralph Samuel

(This story first appeared in a newsletter for retired employees of the East Bay Regional Park District, 2002.)

Saturday, May 18, 2002 was the dedication of the Ralph Samuel bench at the Claremont Canyon Regional Preserve. Ralph was the District's Land Acquisition Specialist from 1979 to 1986. Hulet Hornbeck, Land Department Chief, originally hired him to acquire the privately owned lots that were included in the Claremont Canyon Preserve. During his seven years with the Land Department he acquired in excess of 1,000 acres of parkland for approximately four million dollars plus several miles of trails. Two hundred of these acres were in Claremont Canyon with a total purchase price of \$2.7 million. When Ralph left the District, the project was 95% complete and none of the private inholdings posed a threat to the Park. The plague on the bench reads "Ralph Samuel purchased 400 lots from 200 owners to create this preserve."

About 20 of Ralph's friends attended the dedication including former District Manager, Dick Trudeau, Hulet Hornbeck, and District Retirees President Bob Blau and Assistant General Manager for Park Operations, Jerry Kent. Jerry accepted the bench on behalf of the Regional Parks Foundation. Afterwards everybody enjoyed lunch at the Thornhill Coffee House where daughters Suzanne and Lysa brought a cake inscribed "Happy Bench Warming." Ralph provided a 15-passenger bus to take the guests up Panoramic Way to the bench and back again.

The bench is located at the top of the trail that starts at the Stonewall Road trailhead just off of Claremont Avenue. Park Supervisor Ed Leong coordinated the siting and erection of the bench.

Ralph left the District in 1986 to join the City of Oakland Real Estate Department and eventually retired from the Real Estate Services Department of BART in 1997 after 25 years in local government land acquisition throughout the East Bay.

Since retirement, Ralph keeps busy attending Park District retiree's meetings and is on the Board of the BART Alumni (& Retirees) Association. As a Holocaust survivor, he is on the speaker's roster of the Holocaust Center of Northern California and often speaks to Bay Area public and parochial schools and other organizations about the Holocaust and his experiences. Ralph was one of the 10,000 children that in 1938 and '39 were sent alone from Germany and Austria to England on the Kindertransports.

Paper subdivisions of Claremont Canyon

by Ralph Samuel

At the time, I was hired as Land Acquisition Specialist to the East Bay Regional Park District, I was 48 years old and previously had worked for 13 years as Right of Way Agent in the Real Estate Department, Alameda County Public Works doing land acquisition for flood control, street widening and other public purposes.

In the early 1900s a paper subdivision, with a name now forgotten, was laid out on the hillside behind the Claremont Hotel, located on the Oakland/Berkeley line on Old Tunnel Road, just below the Caldecott Tunnel. Sometime in the 1910s or 20s, the San Francisco Chronicle gave away individual lots in this paper subdivision with a year's subscription to the newspaper. Generally, these lots were 15 or 20 feet wide by 100 to 110 feet deep and the streets were laid out running with the contour lines.

Over the next many years, none of the streets or utilities in the paper subdivision were developed, some of the lots were inherited by the heirs of the original owners—many of which went tax-delinquent and were bought at tax sale by investors and/or speculators. Some of the lots closest to Claremont Avenue, and reaching all the way up to Panoramic Way, were owned by the Marron family and used as a dairy farm.

In the 1970s and 80s a neighborhood group, the Friends of Claremont Canyon, including people living on the hillside on the south-side of Claremont Avenue asked the Park District to purchase the remaining lots in the subdivision and create Claremont Canyon Preserve.



"Happy Bench Warming" wishes from Ralph's friends. Seated left to right are Richard Trudeau, Ralph Samuel, Hulet Hornbeck and Jerry Kent. Standing is Bob Blau.

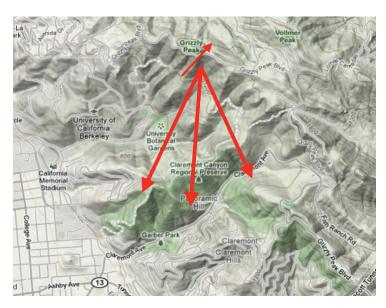
Grizzly Peak and ridge fire potential by Jerry Kent

THE AUGUST 2 FIRE, known as the "Grizzly Fire," was sending up bright flames at about 1:05 PM, as reported by firefighters from the East Bay Regional Park District's Tilden Park Fire Station, the first crew to arrive on the scene. Winds that day were calm from the west and the weather was moderate. Firefighters were able to drive to the location along Grizzly Peak Blvd between UC's Signposts 14 and 15 and easily stage their firefighting equipment. Nonetheless, by the end of the day, there were as many as 200 firefighters, 50 fire trucks and support vehicles, and a multitude of aircraft providing up to 200 helicopter and fixed wing water and retardant drops, in order to contain the 20-acre fire. This massive response indicates that all agencies are now acutely aware of the extreme fire hazard potential in the hills, even under optimal firefighting conditions. We applaud the firefighters from several agencies who sprang into action and extinguished the fire before it could spread further.

If this fire, which had been set by an arsonist, had been accompanied by a Diablo wind (such as that which fueled and spread the 1991 Oakland/Berkeley firestorm), firefighters would have been chasing fire into dense eucalyptus, pine, and shrub lands with hot embers blowing 1/2 mile or more into steep and largely inaccessible Strawberry and Claremont Canyons. With the potential of 150-foot flames and rapid spread, firefighters would not risk venturing into these steep canyons. Their only chance for a containment would be in residential areas along roads, such as upper Claremont Avenue, or even further into the cities of Oakland and Berkeley.

The Grizzly Fire started in the very area where FEMA withdrew UC's grant, which would have paid for fire hazard mitigation measures to remove fire-prone eucalyptus and pine while reestablishing lower-growing and less flammable native oaks, bays, and shrubs. Native trees are already present in varying degrees under the over-topping eucalyptus and pine forests that resprouted after the 1972 freeze and subsequent logging.

Grant funds were yanked away last year behind closed doors in a legal settlement—after 10-years of environmental review since the grants were awarded in 2006. The Conservancy supports UC's suit to over-



The large arrows emanating from the site of the Grizzly Fire represent Diablo wind conditions (strong, gusting winds from the north and northeast) that were present during the 1991 firestorm. The small arrow represents the normal off-shore winds from the west, southwest that were present on August 2. Map source is Google Maps.

turn FEMA's withdrawal of funding and will continue to work with the University, the Park District, the City of Oakland, and East Bay MUD to get more fire prevention work done on lands owned by these agencies, especially along ridgelines and steep hillsides.

Annual Meeting is November 12, 4-6 PM *by Marilyn Goldhaber*

The Annual Meeting of the Conservancy will be held again at the Claremont Hotel in the Sonoma Room, second floor. All are invited to attend free of charge. After light refreshments and brief updates from the board, we will hear from our two invited speakers, both East Bay residents who have risen to leadership positions in key agencies that have direct impact on the management of public lands and protection of residents. We will first hear from Robert Doyle, followed by Ken Pimlott. They will update us on their agencies' efforts to improve fire safety in the East Bay Hills, and the role of the coordinating body, the Hills Emergency Forum, in fostering interagency communication (read more on the next page).

Please come hear what these experts have to share with us and stay for the questions and answers afterward. Be sure to RSVP (see back page), as we expect a strong turnout.

Robert Doyle, General Manager East Bay Regional Park District



GENERAL MANAGER ROBERT DOYLE began his park career over 40 years ago as a member of the East Bay Regional Park District's eucalyptus crews, following the big freeze of 1972. He went on to serve in several field, planning, and administrative positions before becoming

Assistant General Manager for Land Acquisition and Planning in 1990. For the next 21 years he led the District's expansion of parklands to serve the rapidly growing populations of Alameda and Contra Costa counties. In 2010, he was appointed General Manager by the Park District's seven-member, elected Board of Directors to oversee 70 regional parks totaling 124,000 acres, 1,200 miles of interconnecting trails, and a staff of 1,000 employees.

Since 1936, the Park District has been a major owner of land in the East Bay Hills and has long been concerned about wildfire risks to both parklands and adjacent residential areas. The District has its own uniquely dedicated and versatile Fire Department, which cooperates and coordinates with state and local firefighting agencies. Its mission is to prevent and suppress fires in the wildland-urban interface and remote wilderness areas through vegetation and strategic property management, and to rapidly respond to fire emergencies. The department is currently staffed to operate out of 10 fire stations.

Robert Doyle is this year's chair of the Hills Emergency Forum, a consortium of Easy Bay fire fighting agencies, and is personally involved in gearing up to implement the District's 2010 Fire Hazard Mitigation Plan and the District's portion of the 2016 FEMA East Bay Hills Hazardous Fires Risk Reduction program. With litigation finally resolved, the Park District can obtain the required mitigation permits from the State Department of Fish and Wildlife necessary to proceed with several million dollars of District-funded projects and \$5.6 million in FEMA grant funds for critical work in Tilden, Claremont Canyon, Sibley and other regional parks —reducing fire risks for nearby residents, including those in Claremont Canyon.

We are honored to have Mr. Doyle present alongside Chief Pimlott on November 12.

Ken Pimlott, Director of CAL FIRE CA Department of Forestry and Fire Protection

CHIEF KEN PIMLOTT was appointed Director of CAL FIRE by Governor Jerry Brown in 2011 after an outstanding, 30-year long career in state fire protection programs. As Chief of CAL FIRE and also California's State Forester, Mr. Pimlott is responsible for 237 fire



stations, 39 conservation camps, 12 air attack, and 10 helitack bases.

At the heart of CAL FIRE's emergency response and resource protection capability is a force of over 5,300 full-time professionals, foresters, and administrative employees; 1,783 seasonal firefighters; 600 volunteers; and 3,500 inmates and wards. To transport and support these forces, CAL FIRE operates nearly 1,000 fire engines (343 state and 624 local government); 184 rescue squads; 63 paramedic units; 28 aerial ladder trucks; 59 bulldozers; 22 1,200-gallon air tankers, 12 helicopters, and 17 air tactical planes.

Some may be surprised to learn that CAL FIRE is the primary fire fighting agency for much of the land east of the main ridge of our East Bay Hills, and is the most important mutual aid partner for our local fire agencies when called to assist with fires in the Hills

From the time of his youth, Chief Pimlott demonstrated a interest in the great outdoors, and also in locomotives! While still in his teens he worked on the miniature "Redwood Valley Railroad" in Tilden Park alongside his father, Ken Sr., grandfather Neil, uncle Ray, and brother John, according to Ellen Thomsen, current owner and operator of the Railroad. Ms. Thomsen also recalled that the Pimlott family was active in a redwood restoration program, which followed the removal of frost damaged eucalyptus trees in the 1970s. "It was Kenny's job to go around every weekend with a hatchet and knock down any suckers that started out of the old stumps—until the eucalyptus just gave up. It took years. Now the redwood trees are 100 feet tall and busily harvesting fog to feed the headwaters of Wildcat Creek."

We are honored to have Chief Pimlott present alongside Robert Doyle on November 12.



P.O. Box 5551 Berkeley CA 94705 www.ClaremontCanyon.org

THE CLAREMONT CANYON CONSERVANCY

Dear Friends and Neighbors

Please join us on

Sunday, November 12, 2017, 4-6 PM
The Claremont Hotel

Sonoma Room

Annual Meeting

Reception 4:00 PM Presentations 4:30 PM Open Forum 5:30 PM

Invited Speakers: Robert Doyle, General Manager of the East Bay Regional Park District Chief Ken Pimlott, Director of CAL FIRE "Protecting our public lands, local and state"

Refreshments and wine bar. Invite a friend or neighbor.

RSVP: info@ClaremontCanyon.org or call 510-843-2226