

The Explorers Club Northern California Chapter

March 2007

In color at our web site: <http://www.diggles.com/ec/>



San Francisco — March 23, 2007 Craig Childs

“House of Rain” What Happened to the Chaco People?

Craig Childs has written a book long in the making. He has spent years trekking over the mesas, plateaus and washes of the Four Corners; he has interviewed nearly every archaeologist who has worked in these regions; he has talked with the pueblo folks and the Navajos. His driving interest: where did the ancient ones go when they ‘disappeared’ some 800 years ago.

Craig was born and raised in that geomorphic region known as the Colorado Plateau. It is a distinct and spectacularly beautiful part of our Southwest. Today it is

mostly uninhabited, save for scattered nomadic Athabaskan peoples who arrived close to recorded historical times. Yet hidden among so many nooks and crannies are vestiges of others who were there before: the *Ancestral Puebloans*, the ancient ones. (*Anasazi* is considered pejorative by some.)

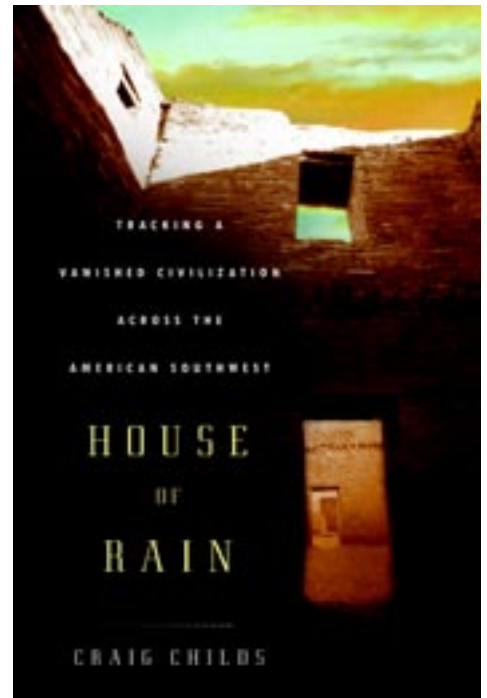
Some of these are spectacular cliff dwellings, some are large great houses, all contain ‘kivas’, thought to be ceremonial chambers. Some are ‘great’, large, kivas. Though various means of dating their age—often through dendrochronology (tree-ring dating)—it is evident there was a great drought in the late thirteenth century. Population centers were evacuated. Large populations dispersed; somewhere.

Craig spoke at the New
York Club Public Lecture
Series on March 5

Craig Childs lives off the grid in the West Elk Mountains of Colorado with his wife and two young sons. He holds a master’s in Desert Studies from Prescott College in Arizona. His field work is wide-ranging: eight consecutive seasons of Pleistocene excavations deep in a Rocky Mountain cave, excavation work on prehistoric pueblos in Arizona and Colorado, mapping waterholes along the Arizona-Mexico border, and translating 16th-century Jesuit journals.

Craig is a frequent lecturer throughout the American West. Through his books and writing in, among other places, the *New York Times*, the *Los Angeles Times*, *Outside*, *Audubon*, *Sierra*, *High Country News*, and *Arizona Highways*, and his work as a commentator on National Public Radio’s *Morning Edition*, readers and listeners have journeyed to the heart of the American desert. His body of work has won the *Spirit of the West Award*, and he is recipient of the *Colorado Book Award*.

Note venues and dates with care.
Our next meeting is at 6:30 on
March 23rd, a Friday, at the Golden
Gate Yacht Club, San Francisco.



Childs’ book speaks of his travels, often over long distances on foot, following the evidence of this diaspora. The dominant ancient ruins are interspersed with innumerable smaller sites; if you look closely, almost everywhere. And, there are roads—some distinct from satellite photography. They radiate out from a major center like Chaco Canyon. Along the trails, potcherds leave evidence of when and where these people went.

Their descendents are alive and well today. Craig will discuss how this is known and the task it took to learn. Accrued evidence also gives insight into the intellectual culture that existed in earlier times, when the populations were larger.

House of Rain will be published on March 21st, just before our meeting. He will have some copies available for sale, if you wish, to autograph.



Lost in the North

Helen Klaben Kahn
San Francisco

Helen Klaben Kahn has told the story she related to a crowded Chapter meeting hundreds of times. She says each time is different, a bit more reflective. After all, the event that catapulted her to celebrity happened 44 years ago. It was the winter of 1963, that she responded to a newspaper ad in Fairbanks, Alaska. She had come north the previous summer on a lark,

responding to another classified for someone to share driving and expenses along the AlCan Highway, from New York City. She had never left the environs of her Brooklyn home; she was twenty-one; she was seeking adventure. She thought they must need a teacher in Fairbanks. (They did not.)

The ad was offering a flight to San Francisco to share the costs of fuel; three, maybe four, days for the trip. It was time for her to leave. A romance was over, and she wanted to see more of the world. San Francisco was a portal to Asia. She accepted the chance to see the wilderness on her way. Two days later they left. Two more days, the 1941 Howard (N5886) crashed somewhere south of Watson Lake, near the Yukon Territory/British Columbia border. The wings were torn off by the stunted northern forest; the fuselage slid by tree trunks, and came to earth. Helen woke first; her fingers were already dark. The pilot, Ralph Flores, was smashed against the instrument panel. In the cold, spattered blood was sticky. It was -48°F.

Helen and Ralph were found seven weeks later after 49 days of physical, emotional and spiritual challenge. She was

Helen's plane in 1963 (above)
and in 1998's Summer



LEE LANGAN

45 pounds lighter; he lost 58 pounds. The aircraft was not outfitted with any survival gear; they had only snacks, brought to eat between refueling; she had left her parka and winter boots with friends. Both had broken bones and lacerations.

Helen spoke with charm and humor, exuding an optimism and *joie d' vivre* that was the enabling personality that carried her through the ordeal. She is a woman filled with curiosity; her experience has brought upon her an inner calm.

It took weeks for both to heal. Meanwhile, despite the pain, they had to survive. Socks for mittens, sweaters for hats, every scrap of clothing for warmth. The empty fuselage was home; a hammer and chisel felled trees. After a week, melted snow was all they had for sustenance. The Yukon's winter animals eluded them.

Her Jewish heritage caused her to reflect upon the holocaust—if they could survive, she could. His new-found Mormonism caused Ralph to see the crash as a test by God. During the eight hours of daylight he insisted they read the Bible—she read aloud; it was read through by the time they were found. Ralph's energy and ingenuity solved everyday problems. Helen's questioning and lack of anger gave him a motive: save her.

After five weeks, healed, he ventured forth to reconnoiter. Helen was alone for a week; she thought, perhaps, for the rest of her life. When he returned, however, they decided to trek to a clearing he had found. There, he stomped an SOS in the snow. Within days a bush pilot saw this—and

Helen Klaben Kahn and
Chapter Chair Lee Langan after her talk.



Morton Beebe



A hidden talent of our Treasurer, Dr. Anders Jepsen, flowed forth prior to the lecture on Canada's Yukon Territories. Anders, a Canadian and geophysical explorer, has spent many months in the Far North. He entertained the group with his rendition of the entire Robert Service poem, "The Cremation of Sam McGee." A real treat!

them. In another day they went from lost souls to celebrities.

Their successful survival is a record in the Arctic. A New York City girl, nary even a Girl Scout, had managed to explore loneliness, harsh Winter wilderness, living with a stranger and lived to tell and write about it. (See Amazon: "Hey! I'm Alive". Scholastic Books and McGraw-Hill Book Company or the VHS TV movie of the same name.)

The Chapter Chair

Helen Klaben Kahn held the assembled crowd in rapt attention as she remembered the experience she endured those many years ago. Her demeanor put all at ease to ask questions. It was a rewarding evening. She 'roles with the punches': due to traffic she was a bit late in arriving; as she scurried up the roadway from parking, a rogue wave hit the seawall drenching her from the rear. (I assure you she was wet!) Unabashed, she towed her self, sat for a moment and proceeded to speak. Explorer stuff.

Before our next meeting I shall be at the ECAD gathering. You will get a brief briefing if you attend Craig Childs talk. This should be another great evening. Craig will speak about the country in which I was raised. Reading an advance copy of his book brought back many memories of exploring the Colorado Plateau and the ruins that lie everywhere. He has brought the story together!

I did not write separately about the request for local Chapter Dues. These are needed from all of you who enjoy participation in the Chapter's activities. From those who only receive the newsletter, as well as those who come out to meet and enjoy the lectures, the modest sum of \$25 helps defray our costs.

Last year we lost \$1,015! Our paid meetings (we had several that were 'free!') were, for the most part, revenue neutral. (Each allowed us to pay also for the speaker, their guest and a token gift.) The newsletters: we tried to reduce the number by combining a couple of months, but the printing/postage costs still exceeded the local Chapter dues by the thousand dollars. (40 people could defray this.)

25 of you have responded (out of 335 newsletters we mail!) A check from others would be appreciated. Send it to Anders.

—Lee Langan (FN99)



John H. Roscoe (FE54) 1919-2007

As our February meeting was to begin we learned that our senior member, John H. Roscoe, Ph.D. (FE54), COL USMCR (Ret.), had died of a heart attack in Riverside a few hours earlier. Chapter members have fond memories of John, with his wife Elsa. Retired, he lived near Riverside and in Woodside.

Mike Diggles and Ron Reuther spoke of his contributions, and all present reflected for a moment of silence. John attended many of our meetings, the last in November. At some of the Annual ECAD Dinners at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel in New York, he was particularly pleased to have been assigned to Table #1 because of his seniority and contributions.

John was a geographer; his speciality: aerial photo interpretation. He received his Ph.D. in 1952, in the University of Maryland's Geography Department's fourth graduating class. His dissertation was entitled, "*Contributions to the Study of Antarctic Surface Features by Photogeographical Methods.*" Beyond this he published widely and professed briefly at the University of Georgia. During WWII, John joined the Marines, where he performed photo-interpretation in the European and North African Theaters. He served on occasional active-duty assignments thereafter, while working on his doctorate. In the late 1950s, John joined Lockheed to work on early satellites. He retired from Lockheed in 1982. In his retirement, John spent significant time researching the Knights Templar; perhaps these notes will be saved.

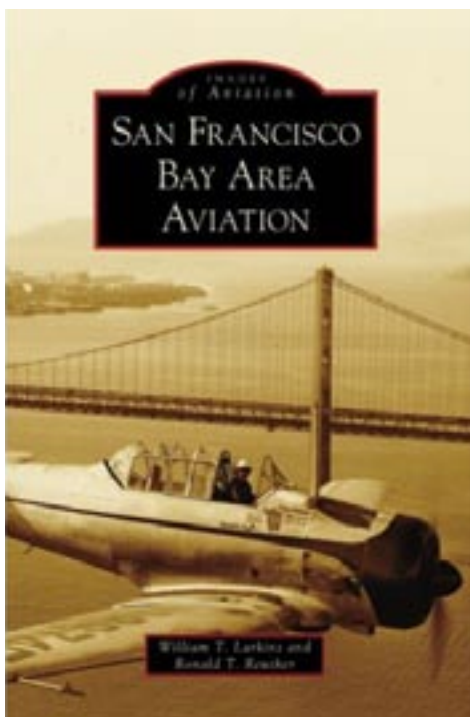
His lasting exploration claim was having served six years as RAdm Byrd's Scientific Director. He travelled to Antarctica on several expeditions from the mid-1940s into the International Geophysical Year. From the U.S. Board of Geographic Names: "Roscoe Glacier, 66 30S, 95 20E. Channel Glacier, 12 miles long. 3 to 5 miles wide descends from a small valley in the west portion of Shackleton Ice Shelf, midway between Cape Moise and Junction Corner. Charted as the valley depression during southern reconnaissance in March 1912, by Frank Wild and other members of the

western base. Delineated in aerial photograph taken by Operation Highjump, 1946-47, and named by the US-ACAN for John H. Roscoe, geographer, author of Antarctic bibliography and scientific advisor to the Director of the United States Antarctic Programs." At a Chapter Summer Picnic on Angel Island, in 2001, Mike Diggles managed to find John's Antarctic tent (in USGS storage) to use as a shelter from the Bay's Summer fog!

Our sincere condolences to Elsa, his widow, a frequent attendee at Chapter meetings.



Col. John H. Roscoe (left) met with Col. Norman Vaughan, who accompanied Admiral Byrd to the Antarctic in 1928 and drove the first dog team to pull a supply sled from the ship to the site of Little America. The event was the Grand Gathering Banquet of the 1998 Golden GateAway of the Northern California Chapter of The Explorers Club.



Reuther Writes About a Favorite Topic: Airplanes

From hot-air balloons to jets, no other location has a more diverse aviation history than the San Francisco Bay Area. Aside from private and commercial airline operations, the area has housed the NACA/NASA Research Center, the prestigious Boeing School of Aeronautics, and the dirigible USS Macon. It is currently the center for antique aircraft in Northern California and has been the site of numerous flight records, including the Dole Race and Amelia Earhart's circumnavigation attempts. San Francisco was also home to the pioneer Pan American Airways flying boat, which opened the Pacific Ocean to air travel.

The Authors: William T. Larkins is an internationally known aviation photographer and the author of seven books on aviation. A graduate of the University of San Francisco, he is a 76-year Bay Area resident. Coauthor Ronald T. Reuther is but a 52-year resident who founded the Western Aerospace Museum in Oakland. He is a retired lieutenant colonel, army aviator, and air force pilot. This amazing compendium of flight explores float planes, military aircraft, balloons, blimps, gliders, races, air shows, and the unique aspects of the Bay Area that have made it critical to the growth of aviation.

You can preorder on Amazon (or wait to "meet the author, our esteemed Chairman emeritus" at a meeting after publication. Arcadia Publishing (March 26, 2007) ISBN-10: 0738547239.

March 2007



Chair: Lee Langan
415 567-8089
lee@langan.net
Vice Chair: Alan Nichols
415 789-9348
ahnichols@att.net
Treasurer: Anders Jepsen
925 254-3079
ajviking@aol.com
Secretary: Stephen E. Smith
Webmaster: Mike Diggles
Newsletter: Lee Langan

Craig Childs: Beyond Chaco Canyon
23 March — GGYC

**Northern California
2006-2007 Calendar of Events**
(Venues will be identified at time of event.)

Our next Meeting
March 23, 2007 (Friday) Craig Childs
Tracking Vanished Peoples Across Southwest
Golden Gate Yacht Club, San Francisco

Future Meeting Schedule
March 17, 2007 (Saturday) ECAD
The Importance of Polar Places
New York City, Waldorf Astoria

April 20, 2007 (Friday) Phil Rasori
Ceremonial Dress in New Guinea

May 18, 2007 (Friday) OPEN
..potentially held on the Peninsula

June 16, 2007 (Saturday) Annual Picnic
Angel Island (contact Dave Moorer)

Meetings earlier this Season
September 17 Gene & Sibyl Boudreau
Tarahumara Expedition (Lee Langan)
Boudreau Home, Sebastopol
October 13 James G. Moore
King, 40th Parallel, Discovery of the West
Golden Gate Yacht Club, San Francisco
November 8 Ed Ross
The Lives of Insects (Exhibition)
Presidio Officers Club, San Francisco
December 8 Jeff Morgan
Global Heritage Fund in El Mirador, Petén
Marines' Memorial Club, San Francisco
January 19, 2007 (Friday) Olaf Malver
Kayaking the Frontiers of the Seven Seas
Golden Gate Yacht Club, San Francisco
February 23, 2007 Helen Klaben Kahn
Hey! I'm Alive! Lost in the Yukon
Golden Gate Yacht Club, San Francisco

March LOCATION

Date: Friday, 23 March 2007
Place: Golden Gate Yacht Club
1 Yacht Road, San Francisco
Time: 6:30 pm, no-host drinks
7:15 dinner; 8:00 talk
Cost: \$50

Reach Anders at
ajviking@aol.com
925 254-3079

Reservation Form ---->
Please reserve promptly!

Please mail information below, with payment,
to Dr. Anders Jepsen
23 Dos Posos
Orinda, CA 94563
or email ajviking@aol.com
or call 925 254-3079

Reserve ___ spaces for **March 23, 2007**, at Golden Gate Yacht Club, San Francisco.
Cost \$50 each.
Prospective members are welcome.
Drinks are no host for the evening! Wine hosted at table.

Name: _____
Address (if changed): _____
Guest(s): _____

INCLUDE ANNUAL DUES!

