

The Explorers Club

Northern California Chapter

April 2007

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

San Francisco — April 20, 2007
Phil Rasori

Ceremonial Masks of New Guinea
Reflections from Endangered People



New Guinea is an extraordinarily diverse island land mass; rather like a tropical version of its larger neighbor to the south, one that has been left alone for time immemorial. It is but 1% of the earth's land, yet it is home to an incredible 1200 languages—each a culture, distinct in its ways. Politically it is independent to the east and part of Indonesian in the west. The tribes of Papua New Guinea have fared the best in modern times, but peoples of the west have managed to maintain their traditional dress and ancient customs, as well. These customs are best exemplified by ceremonial dress and, most dramatically, in the masks associated—by painted faces and/or adornments.



Dr. Phil Rasori has traveled to Papua's interior, bringing modern medicine into the wilds. During eight trips he has also brought his camera and a keen eye. The act of bringing health care has enabled him to become closer than most to many of these native individuals. In gaining their confidence they have allowed him to capture their images, close up. This interaction has also allowed him to become familiar with their healing practices—frequently ceremonial. His growing love of the land has resulted in a corpus of photographs second to none. A selection of these pictures was recently brought together as "*Portraits From the Edge*", a 2006 exhibit hung in several museums. Together with earlier exhibits, almost a million viewers have come to see his photos.

The slides this evening will show the evolution of the masks, a living art form, from approximately seventy different endangered cultures on the island, how they have changed over 200 years, and the currently effects.



An Arita Warrior (above, left) and Hagen Woman (above, right.)
Dr. Rasori (left) with one of his museum photo mounts.

Following the Ancestral Puebloans

Craig Childs
San Francisco

Craig Childs wrote his most recent book, *House of Rain*, to tell the story of the travels of the ancient peoples of the Southwest, what happened to so many, and where they are today. Why should we be surprised that the Hopis, Zunis and pueblos along the Rio Grande are the offspring of people who have occupied the Colorado Plateau for millennia. At our March meeting he regaled our Chapter with an animated, no-note lecture painting a vocal picture of the land and the routes of the diaspora since the fall of Chaco Canyon some 800 years ago.

Craig has studied what can be found in the multitude of ruins spread nearly everywhere a crop might be grown or an indentation in a canyon wall might provide shelter. A sizable population, indeed an entire civilization, moved. They were prodded by the shifts in weather patterns in this spectacular desert region. The same dry conditions that caused villages and tribes to move on to sustain themselves has, over these centuries, preserved their trail. Look at the land carefully, coordinate the details you see and a grand movie of movement comes into focus.

House of Rain (2007): Little, Brown & Company, 0-316-60817-3.

The author was kind to sign a personal comment for all.



The Chapter Chair

Those who came to the March meeting to hear Craig Childs were delighted by a stand-up orator. Clearly he lives and breathes the story he has expanded upon in his latest book. The behind-the-scenes truth is that we did not have a projector for his carousel of slides; he urged us not to scramble. He insisted he was perfectly comfortable to give an extemporaneous lecture; in fact, he observed, showing slides could interrupt the flow of a talk. He was so persuasive I agreed, and the result was a wonderful lecture. (He spoke at the San Francisco Main Library the following week—with slides.)

A weekend in New York was the over-the-top experience it can be at The Explorers Club. The city cooperated: upon arrival the weather was Spring-like;

Childs was born and raised in this Indian and canyon country, and it is a very part of him; the beauty of the lands, and the stories they hold, draws him back constantly. His lecture was an animated tale of his love of the land. He has walked that grand circle from the high culture of Chaco Canyon counter clockwise to the high country of Mesa Verde, through the natural trail established along Comb Ridge, the hidden canyons and existing towns of Black Mesa and, further south, across the Painted Desert to the Mogollon Rim. His feet carried him further into the *barrancas* of the Sierra Madre, where T-windowed cliff houses, indeed entire cliff villages, challenge those of Mesa Verde in scale and content.

The images and details he described could have been supported by slides; he chose to bring these to our imagination. Nevertheless, you can enjoy many pictures taken along the journey for this book at his web site:

www.houseofrain.com.

Sierra Madre cliff dwelling (top) shows characteristics of the major archaeological sites of the Colorado Plateau.

Childs sits upon steps worn into Comb Ridge, part of an ancient cross-country trail system.



A spectrum of experts: Gene Boudreau (FN02), left, writes about Mexico's Sierra Madre natives; Merle Greene Robertson (FN90), the doyenne of Mayanists; our speaker, who expounds on his native Southwest.



the next day there was a six-inch snow cover. (After all, the theme of this year's ECAD: "The Importance of Polar Places!")

At the Chair meeting there was great commonality, camaraderie and cooperation; the new officers of the Club listened and stated appreciation and support. It seems that there is full realization that 75% of the membership is non-resident. The new president's position: "I consider the members my customers. I am here to serve them." He posed this to the staff on his first day; he surveyed the membership (with a very high 30% return), twice. He has taken several steps to insure this approach is embedded. However, it is fair to say, not all operations are smooth. The debacle concerning very-late and too-late ballots caused a scramble; the solution was to allow downloading from the members'

section of the web site. Not adequate; Dan promises to do better. The new directors are: Anne Levine Doubilet, Will Harte, Kathryn Kiplinger, Daniel Kobal, and R. Scott Winters

The first presentation was by the new Membership Chairwoman, Lynda Roy (a member volunteer.) She has delved deeply into the process and files. We stand at about 2900 members. Currently one-third of applicants are international; over 40% domestic non-residents. The average applicant age is 47. From one-fourth to one-third are involved (the '80% rule', more or less); the rest infrequently participate. This was the only top-down presentation; a change from year's past. Committee reports were handed out and discussed at the general member meeting on Sunday.

Greg Deyermenjian (New England) read a peti-

Reuther Reports on a World-Record Attempt

The reception and dinner on March 25, overlooking Lake Merritt, was a unique opportunity to meet two intrepid flyers, Jennifer Murray and Colin Bodill. Both are attempting to set a new world's record by flying a Bell 407 helicopter around the world from Pole to Pole and back. (They nearly lost their lives crashing in Antarctica three years ago on their first attempt.) Nona Cheatham (MN90) and Ron Reuther (FE74) welcomed Jennifer, a recent member of the Club.

Jennifer commented that Colin wanted to know why such a big airfield, Oakland, was selected. The reason: to visit the Western Aerospace Museum. It turned out to be a friendly and uncomplicated airfield for landing!

On March 19, they were at an LA

reception; among the guests were Buzz Aldrin (MED76) and his wife. Both felt an immense honor and pleasure to meet with someone who has actually set foot on the moon! He told us he had accepted an invitation to do a 'Space Walk' at the Grand Canyon: walking out over the lip of the canyon on the clear Perspex walkway.

Buzz asked when they hoped to be at the North Pole: April 12. "Well, that is an auspicious day," he said. "Did you know that it was on the 12th April that Russia successfully launched their Sputnik and Yuri Gagarin became the first man in space? It was also on the 12th April that the first Space Shuttle was launched.' And,



he added with a laugh, 'It's also my father's birthday!' It looks like a good date!

The expedition will take approximately 175 days, covering over 36,000 nautical miles and making over 120 stopovers in 32 countries. Find details of the record breaking attempt at

www.polarfirst.com.



EXOTIC PHOTOS BY LANGAN

(counter-clockwise) the reception (with early arrivals);

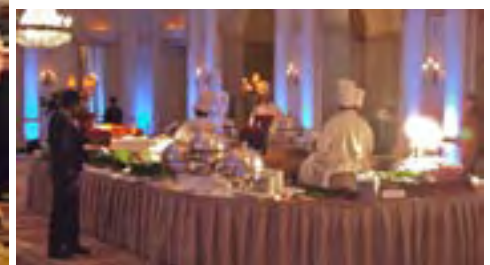
hors d'oeuvre table (before opening);

Gene Rurka (MR90) Club Exotic Chef (serving bear paws);

exotic service with wild boar, penguin ice sculpture and mounted narwhal (before the crowd);

durian & grubs (whew!)

Exotic Scenes- from ECAD 2007



tion asking the Board to create a grant program for members not based upon age. He proposes any Flag expedition that shows need should qualify for seed funds. The bottom-line question, of course, "Funds from where?" (It was noted that Hyerdhal's *Kon Tiki* Expedition was Club funded!)

Most of the balance of the meeting was taken with statements and introductions of the 32 chapter representatives. Time consuming, but many side discussions emerged. I was reminded that we need to make a concerted effort to gather a group from the Bay Area to attend next year!

Last month the cover of Ron Reuthers' new book (he will bring some to the next meeting) was shown. Ron : "The guy in the back seat of this T-6, flying parallel to the Oakland-San Francisco Bay Bridge in 1946, is

a 16-17-year-old Don Walsh," our esteemed speaker last April!

The St. Patrick's Day Parade was a bonus on ECAD day! A bit chilly for kilts though.

—Lee Langan (FN99)



LANGAN

April 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

Phil Rasori: Ceremonial Masks 20 April — GGYC

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

Our next Meeting
April 20, 2007 (Friday) Phil Rasori
Ceremonial Dress in New Guinea
Golden Gate Yacht Club, San Francisco

Future Meeting Schedule
May 18, 2007 (Friday) Don Dana
The First Americans: Siberians!
To be held at Portola Valley's Parkside Grille

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

September 23 (Sunday) Gene & Sibyl Boudreau
Meteorite Collision (Rick Blake)
Boudreau Home, Sebastopol

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 23, 2007 Craig Childs
Tracking Vanished Peoples Across Southwest
Golden Gate Yacht Club, San Francisco

April LOCATION

Date: Friday, 20 April 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 **April 20, 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!

