

Berkeley's PATHS

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Berkeley Path Wanderers Association

Winter 2012/2013

We've traveled far, but still have far to go

— *BPWA President Keith Skinner*

The end of the year is traditionally a time for reflection on recent accomplishments and to set goals for the coming year. That is particularly true for BPWA as we prepare to celebrate our 15th anniversary as a grassroots community organization. 2012 was a bit like one of our walks – there were some steep hills, some easy stretches, a few slippery patches and several amazing discoveries. Here at the the end of our adventure, we find ourselves energized by our efforts -- and once again grateful for the pleasant company in which we find ourselves.

This year our volunteers, our board and our membership pulled together to build the final link in the Glendale Path corridor as we completed La Loma Path in record time. This brought the number of rustic paths BPWA has developed to 30. That achievement was possible only with a great deal of selfless dedication and hard work by Charlie Bowen, Steve Glaeser and a cadre of dedicated path building volunteers.

We pulled together again to fund and install an expensive handrail on La Loma Path – a project that seriously depleted our modest financial resources. We put out the call for donations and you responded quickly and with heartwarming generosity.

Those were the steep uphill and slippery patches. But there were also payoff moments, moments we'll savor for a long time. BPWA was frequently featured in the news this year, from a story in *The New York Times* to a segment of "Eye On The Bay" to a feature in Bay Nature. Then Charlie Bowen was named the Cox Conserves Hero for Northern California. It was a well-deserved recognition of everything Charlie has done for BPWA and something everyone who has ever pulled weeds or helped to set a step can share. Charlie and BPWA were also formally recognized by the City Council in a proclamation issued on Nov. 13. We have also been meeting with city staff to

clarify procedures and roles and refine the way we communicate.

We can't thank you enough for your contributions of time and money this year. As a long-time resident of Berkeley, I am continually in awe of the the generosity of our membership and the Berkeley community in general. Special thanks goes out to those members and donors that live outside the Berkeley city limits, some who live in other states and countries. They support resources they get to enjoy only infrequently, if at all.

The Cox Conserves grant we received was a welcome boost to our finances and will help fund the next round of path development. We'll be telling you about those plans in forthcoming newsletters. Still, the grant only gets our bank account back to where it was at the beginning of the year, so we continue to rely on your membership fees, merchandise purchases and generous donations to fill in the holes. We hope you'll remember us at the end of year when you're making donations to your favorite organizations.

At the cusp of our 15th year, we face a new challenge: We find ourselves in dire need of people. Our path building ranks are healthy but we need volunteers to help with walks, work our booth at street fairs, sell maps, and help run the organization. Modern life is busy and most of us have more activities than we have spare time. But if we can't staff our board, our walks and our special events, we won't be able to continue as the vital and energetic organization we've become.

As Margaret Mead once said, "Never doubt that a small group of committed people can change the world. Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has." BPWA has been an important advocate for open space and walking for the past 14 years. I'd like to think that we have made important changes in Berkeley as well as the Bay Area at large. Please help us continue that work in whatever way you can.

BPWA Walks

Walks last 2-3 hours unless otherwise noted. They are free and open to all. Note the revised walk descriptions which indicate the difficulty of terrain and the pace of the walk:

DIFFICULTY

EASY: Smooth trail or pavement.

MEDIUM EASY: Some uneven surface, moderate hills.

MEDIUM: Some difficult terrain such as hills or stairs.

MEDIUM DIFFICULT: Rough surface and/or steep inclines.

DIFFICULT: Rough trail, steep hills, strenuous stretches. Only for those in good physical condition.

PACE

FAST: a vigorous pace of at least 3 mph

MODERATELY FAST: 2-3 mph

MODERATE: 1-2 mph

LEISURELY: 1 mph or less

Questions about the walks? Contact walks@berkeleypaths.org.

Jan 1, Tuesday – Stepping Into the New Year – 2 p.m.

Leader: Glen Lindwall. Meeting Place: SW corner of The Arlington & Coventry Rd., Kensington (at bus stop). Transit: AC #7 bus

Get off on the right foot in the new year, or walk off lingering remnants of the old one as we cover the high ground along the Berkeley/Kensington border on the first afternoon of 2013. We will cover some of the same territory as last year's New Year's walk including the walk along the edge of Tilden Park and sliding the slide in Dorothy Bolte Park (optional). The pace will be moderate but there will be many stairs. RAIN CANCELS. **Well-behaved dogs on leashes permitted.**

Level: MEDIUM DIFFICULT • Pace: MODERATE

Jan 5, Saturday – History & Architecture Walk – Northeast of Campus – 9 a.m.

Leader: Bob Gomez. Meeting Place: Northwest corner of Hearst and Oxford in front of Earl Warren Hall, UC Berkeley. Transit: AC buses #67, #52, or Downtown Berkeley BART

Starting with Normandy Village and Holy Hill, we hike to Hillside School, Greenwood Common and Tamalpais Road. This moderate hike will include early Berkeley lore as well as many architectural treasures. RAIN CANCELS.

Well-behaved dogs on leashes permitted.

Level: MEDIUM • Pace: MODERATE

Jan 22, Tuesday – St. Mary's College High School & Environs – 2:30 p.m.

Leader: Barbara Robben. Meeting place: Passenger loading zone located between 1284 & 1292 Monterey Ave., Berkeley.

Transit: AC bus #25, or North Berkeley BART

On the occasion of St. Mary's Sesquicentennial, view that historic campus with a guided tour of the facilities and neighboring ecological area.

We will explore the history of the neighborhood and important buildings around the periphery of the school. RAIN OR SHINE **No dogs, please.**

Level: MEDIUM • Pace: MODERATE



CLIP AND SAVE

(Walks continued)

February 9, Saturday – King Tide Walk – 10 a.m.

Leader: Susan Schwartz. **Meeting place:** Sea Breeze Market & Deli, 598 University Ave., Berkeley, CA 94710. **Transit:** AC bus #51B

Enjoy the bay shore during one of the year's highest tides and talk about what the future may bring -- from rising sea levels to restoration. Bring cameras -- you might snap photos for the King Tides Initiative, www.californiakingtides.org. Friends of Five Creeks President Susan Schwartz leads this easy 2-hour walk. RAIN OR SHINE. **Sorry, no dogs; we cross areas where they are banned.**

Level: EASY • **Pace:** MODERATE

February 23, Saturday – Wineries of Berkeley Walk

Leader: Keith Skinner. **Meeting place:** RSVP for meeting place & time

Wineries in Berkeley? Berkeley has become an urban winery hotspot. We'll stop for tasting at three wineries that are spread out across West Berkeley. We must limit participation to 12 people so please RSVP to walks@berkeleyinfo.org. The walk is free but all the wineries have tasting fees ranging from \$5-\$10 (waived if you make a purchase) so bring at least \$20 with you. HEAVY RAIN CANCELS. **No dogs, please.**

Level: EASY • **Pace:** MODERATE

March 12, Tuesday – Seasons: A Year on the Berkeley Paths: Late Winter – 5:30 p.m.

Leader: Keith Skinner. **Meeting place:** Spruce & Acacia Walk (located btwn. 619 & 625 Spruce). **Transit:** AC bus #65 & #67

Please see the article on page four describing this walk. Bring your favorite method of recording (camera, art pens & small pad, journal, etc.). We'll finish at Dorothy Bolt Park on Spruce for a post-walk soiree and to compare notes. HEAVY RAIN CANCELS. **Well-behaved dogs on leashes welcome.**

Level: MEDIUM • **Pace:** MODERATE

March 23, Saturday – El Cerrito Power Walk – 10 a.m.

Leader: Colleen Neff. **Meeting Place:** Corner of Arlington Blvd. and Roberta Dr., El Cerrito. **Transit:** AC bus #7

We promise great views as we traverse some of the many stairways in the hills of El Cerrito. We'll venture into the Hillside Nature Area where the El Cerrito Trail Trekkers have been working on several new paths. There will be lots of ups and downs, as well as some steep trail hiking. A great chance to explore El Cerrito's hills! HEAVY RAIN CANCELS. **Well-behaved dogs on leashes welcome.**

Level: DIFFICULT • **Pace:** FAST

Volunteer profile: Path builder Steve Glaeser

—Michael Gray

Anyone who has turned out for a BPWA path-building work party in the past several years is familiar with Steve Glaeser. He's the burly guy with the big smile who helps organize and direct volunteers of widely varying experience. With his sweat and supervision in support of path-building leader Charlie Bowen, BPWA has opened, improved and constructed some of the most challenging paths in its 15-year history.



Steve Glaeser, pathbuilder

—Photo, Colleen Neff

Steve, a 52-year-old Berkeley native and Cal grad (Geography, Class of '86) whose parents still live in the Elmwood, has been a hiker since his youth and joined the Cal hiking club in college. He got involved with BPWA after coming across Charlie leading the building of Stoddard Path high in the North Berkeley hills in 2004.

Says Steve: "I followed (Charlie's) progress, and decided to join BPWA, so I could give them my support. I feel very strongly about people being able to access public property. I attended a meeting prepared to write a check, and Charlie said that I should come out and help install steps." He's been helping build paths ever since.

"I am continually amazed by the amount of time Steve is willing to devote to path work," says BPWA President Keith Skinner. "He always seems to be resetting steps, laying gravel or pounding in rebar."

As an experienced supervisor, Steve has helped systematize BPWA's path projects, which involve both strenuous physical labor and thoughtful planning and execution. "We get people of all ages, physical strengths and skill levels," he says, "but hardly any volunteers have done anything like this before."

"We have learned a lot as we have gone along," Steve says of path building, citing technical issues such as the "rise/run" of steps that are installed – how high each step should rise and how much level ground should be between each. Too high or too long can make for an uncomfortable or challenging hike.

One of his key contributions was to help develop a jargon and techniques so

that the path-building leaders could explain themselves to volunteers.

As Steve says, "it is not just knowing how to do something." As a crew leader, "you have to be able to explain it to yourself before you can explain it to others."

Steve says the most challenging projects BPWA has tackled, such as the steep slope of Northgate Path, are probably his favorites. But as a longtime hiker, he is also moved by the natural beauty

of Wildcat Path. The stand of bamboo that crews dealt with on Miller East Path was "a heck of a challenge," he says.

"And La Loma Path?" he laughs as he recalls its obstacles. "What can I say?"

As he heads into a new year with BPWA, Steve has a few goals in mind. Topmost is the long-term aim seeing all Berkeley's unimproved paths made accessible to walkers. Another is to see concrete steps replacing wood tie steps in the steeper sections of some paths. He's already led an effort to place gravel on many paths, making them safe and traversable in wet weather.

A science fiction fan, Steve says he'd also love to see a Berkeley path named someday for famed Berkeley science fiction author Phillip K. Dick. "One of these days," he muses, "that just might happen."

But, he says, "I have come to learn that working with people is much more fulfilling than achieving some goal like building this path or that."

To those considering getting involved with BPWA, Steve's message is simple: "Get involved! If heavy labor isn't your thing, you could help with the walks, or take on some other project. ... No one will tell you that is not your job."

Contacting BPWA

Walks: walks@berkeleypaths.org
General: info@berkeleypaths.org

BPWA Board Meetings

The BPWA Board meets on the third Thursday of each month, except April, Oct, and Dec. Meetings are at 7 p.m. at Live Oak Community Center in Live Oak Park. Board meetings are open to all.

Charlie Bowen named Cox Conserves Hero for Bay Area

—Glen Lindwall

BPWA path-building head Charlie Bowen has been named the 2012 Bay Area Cox Conserves Hero. The \$10,000 grant from the Trust for Public Land and KTVU Channel 2 will be used by BPWA for our path building efforts. We thank everyone who voted for Charlie. Her contributions were also recognized in a proclamation from the mayor and City Council that was presented at the Nov. 13 council meeting.

Charlie is a long-time Path Wanderer. She attended one of the first public meetings in 1999, where she signed on to the volunteer board of directors. She was later elected to the first official board of directors and served two terms.

Charlie's first effort in path building came in 2003 when she agreed to direct a Cal Corps Student Day of Service project. The students worked on opening Stoddard Path, which was overgrown with brush and berry bushes and had steep sections at both top and bottom. When they were done that day the path was completely cleared and a few steps had been installed in the steep sections. Both Charlie and the students were thrilled, stunned by the difference they had made in only four hours. Charlie was hooked and has been leading path-building efforts ever since.

Charlie is a physicist by training and was working as a project manager in the computer industry when she began her career as a volunteer path-builder. Her background was a good start for her new avocation, but she has mastered new skills since.

Charlie coordinates with the city in deciding which paths to work on, arranges a survey of each path, develops a plan for the path and then schedules work parties to carry out the work needed. One of Charlie's

most important jobs is communicating with neighbors. Some path neighbors are very welcoming, but others are dubious or apprehensive, and a few oppose having a path opened next to their property. There have been a few instances where neighbors have fenced off a path route and incorporated it into their yard, or otherwise blocked access and hoped to keep it that way.

Charlie meets with the neighbors along every path-building project, explains what BPWA plans to do and seeks input from them. She explains that the paths are public rights-of-way. They are not merely loved by walkers, but were recognized after the Oakland Hills fire as an important safety feature in emergency situations.

One of the hardest things to learn, Charlie says, was to stay cool and calm when faced with the occasional upset neighbor. Listening to and respecting people's concerns usually calms the situation, she says. Her firm but non-confrontational approach has helped insure that most neighbors accept the paths. Many come to love them.

Charlie has high praise for her corps of path-building volunteers. There is a rock-solid group of regulars who show up for most of the work parties, supplemented by others who come once or twice a year and are "fabulous because they have experience and add an instant shot of new energy to a work party." Then there is the delight of welcoming new volunteers, or groups such as Cal students who bring fresh enthusiasm.

BPWA's path-builders have opened 30 paths over the years. The easier paths are



Keith Skinner, Charlie Bowen and Steve Glaeser: Big smiles for a big honor

—Photo, Mary Lynch

mostly done, but the builders have developed the skills to construct much more difficult paths, such as the long and steep Northgate Path.

In addition to her BPWA efforts, Charlie is currently chair of Berkeley Partners for Parks, BPWA's parent organization. Partners for Parks is an umbrella organization that helps administer 15 to 20 active groups. Partners for Parks takes care of bookkeeping, insurance, official filings and other bureaucratic concerns, allowing groups to easily form around new projects. Charlie has also been active elsewhere, including the Berkeley Rose Garden 75th birthday celebration, where she led work parties to improve some of the neglected areas of the garden.

Asked what she has learned through her BPWA work, Charlie says: "Always keep going forward, stay calm, focus on building the path. Building paths has much community support and city support. Build in a responsible, respectful way and don't get distracted by side issues."

Charlie's dedication has helped make Berkeley a walker's paradise.

Tax-deductible household memberships in the BPWA are \$5.00 and cover one calendar year. Benefits include a newsletter and other BPWA mailings and emails. If you can give more, please consider a donation. You can join or donate online at www.berkeleypaths.org or by sending this form and a check, payable to our fiscal parent BPPF (Berkeley Partners for Parks) to:

BPWA
1442-A Walnut Street - #269
Berkeley, CA 94709

BPWA Membership/Donation Form

Please print clearly

Name _____

Address _____

E-mail _____

Telephone Number (optional) _____

- I am enclosing \$5 for membership new renewal
- I am also enclosing a donation of _____
- I am interested in volunteering

Please make checks payable to our fiscal parent, Berkeley Partners for Parks (BPPF)

Berkeley Path Wanderers Association *Winter 2012/13*

Dedicated to the creation, preservation, and restoration of public paths, steps, and walkways in Berkeley for the use and enjoyment of all.

The Berkeley Path Wanderers Association, an affiliate of Berkeley Partners for Parks, is a volunteer group of community members who have come together to increase public awareness of the city of Berkeley's pathways. Our activities include guided path walks, the mapping of Berkeley's path network, the building of paths that are proposed, and the restoration of those that need maintenance.

Four Seasonal Walks: A Year on the Berkeley Paths— Keith Skinner

"Live in each season as it passes; breathe the air, drink the drink, taste the fruit, and resign yourself to the influence of the earth."

– Henry David Thoreau, Walden, or Life in the Woods

Annie Dillard spent a year noting the changes that occurred around Tinker Creek, a small patch of land in the Blue Ridge Mountains. Henry David Thoreau spent two years in a similar residency at Walden Pond, just outside Concord, MA. More than a century apart, these two writers shared a reverence for the land and for the infinite variety of the natural world.

Focusing on a small area over the period of a year or more allows an observer to become more familiar with the plants and animals in that area, understand the microclimates, and notice things that might otherwise go undetected. A person following such a regimen is better prepared to notice subtle changes that a more casual visitor would miss.

Rather than Tinker Creek or Walden Pond, what if we were to focus on a small area of Berkeley for a year? What might we learn? What changes would we witness?

That was our thinking as we developed a new series of walks that will be offered at seasonal intervals during 2013. The route will cover a variety of terrains and neighborhoods, passing through remote parts of the hills as well as dense residential areas lower in elevation. We will walk the same route each quarter and be able to witness the variation of flora and fauna, how the activities of the residents vary from one season to the next, and how the "feel" of neighborhoods changes from season to season.

To make this yearlong experience even more memorable, we're hoping you'll bring along some method of recording your observations: a camera, a journal, a sketchpad. We'll devise some means of storing and sharing these artifacts so everyone can enjoy them. And, weather permitting, we'll end each of the four walks at a park so we can share our observations, socialize and possibly enjoy a light snack together.

The first walk of the series will take place on Tuesday, March 12, beginning at 5:30 p.m. Every walk will begin at the foot of Acacia Walk on Spruce Street. There is no sign for this path, so plan to meet on the sidewalk between 619 and 625 Spruce on the east side of the street.



Autumn grape leaves, Billy Jean Walk

—Photo, Keith Skinner

Berkeley Path Wanderers Association

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www.berkeleypaths.org

Board Members

KEITH SKINNER, president
MARTY CAMPBELL, membership/correspondence
LYNN DEREGOWSKI, walks
SANDY FRIEDLAND, map sales committee chair
LORI KOHLSTAEDT, treasurer/archivist
GLEN LINDWALL, newsletter co-editor
JANE LEVY, external events
MARY ROSS LYNCH, webmaster
EMMA MORRIS, walks/volunteer coordinator
BETSY MUELLER, sales, path maintenance
CHRIS STERBA, secretary
ELSA TRANTER, external events
JAZ ZAITLIN, internal events coordinator, e-newsletter

ANGUS DUNSTAN will be joining the board in January
MICHAEL GRAY is the new newsletter editor

Renew your membership now if you see "Mem 12" by your name. "Mem 13" means you have another year on your membership.