



DIABLO *w a t c h* Special Edition / Silva Ranch Dedication

Save Mount Diablo

Protecting the Mountain Since 1971

Summer 2003 No. 35



Riggs Canyon rising past the Morgan amphitheater to Silva Ranch, with Mount Diablo beyond

You're invited to the SILVA RANCH DEDICATION CEREMONY Saturday, July 26, 2003, 8:30 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

Delays in the property transfer required rescheduling

- 8:30 - 9:00 Arrive at Finley Road for shuttle. You can hike a moderate 1.7 miles uphill to the event site, or take a second shuttle
- 11:00 Dedication Remarks
- 11:30 Refreshments
- 12:00 Hikes: Highland Ridge or Tassajara Creek Loop
- 1:30 Walk down and last shuttles to parking

RSVP required by Wednesday, July 15. Call SMD at 925-947-3535 to RSVP

Directions to Finley Road on reverse; east of Blackhawk, turn from Camino Tassajara onto Finley and you'll be directed to parking and shuttle buses. Temporary parking is generously provided by John Pereira.

GENEROUSLY UNDERWRITTEN BY:  SHAPELL
HOMES OF QUALITY

Tassajara Creek Trail East Bay Trail Dogs complete Silva Ranch Loop

Harry Silcocks is coordinator of the East Bay Trail Dogs, an all volunteer group which has built trails, removed trash and old fencing and done other park maintenance activities since the mid-1980s. The Trail Dogs originally limited themselves to Sunol Regional Preserve, but soon outgrew its boundaries to include the entire East Bay. Harry called Save Mount Diablo for help with contacts at Mt. Diablo State Park. We had a better idea.

Save Mount Diablo had already set a date for the dedication and transfer of the 427-acre Silva Ranch to Mt. Diablo State Park. Most acquisitions have more old fire roads than needed, but Silva had limited access, mostly on exposed

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*A few of the East Bay Trail Dogs:
Fred Fukasawa, Charlie Olsen,
Harry Silcocks, Warren Tighe, John Van Heertum*

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Masthead Panorama

Riggs Canyon & Highland Ridge, Mt. Diablo, by Stephen Joseph
Diablo Watch is published by *Save Mount Diablo*, a non-profit organization dedicated to preserving land on Mount Diablo and educating the public since 1971.

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CONTAINS SOY OIL



Charles Gresham at Bobs Pond, Silva Ranch, March 2003

**Silva Ranch:
Bobs Pond and Charles Pond**

In 1998, the day before Thanksgiving, Charles Gresham called Save Mount Diablo for the first time. He had read in the *San Francisco Chronicle* about our campaign to save the 1,030 acre Clayton Ranch property, and was impressed.

Charles is a shy, retiring 82 year old man, who can walk most twenty year olds into the ground. He allowed us to tell his story in hopes that it would inspire generosity in others. Throughout his life, he has lived modestly. He was born in Oklahoma but lived in San Marino near Pasadena starting in the 1930s, in a small craftsman bungalow built by his carpenter father. The elder Gresham was able to buy a house lot when the Huntington Estate was subdivided, and built a \$13,000 cottage with plans donated by architect Elmer Grey. Grey's portfolio also included the Beverly Hills Hotel, the Huntington Mansion and Library, and Pasadena's Rose Bowl. By the time Charles and his brother Walter sold the home in 1998, it had grown quite valuable.

He describes himself as a little bit of a hippie--he wandered the railroads during the Depression, working odd jobs and then on a ranch in New Mexico. Both fit in well with his love of hiking. Later he studied art, but took a job in a warehouse because he liked physical work. Sydney Engelberg, his partner of 50 years and an accomplished painter and a commercial artist for magazines, including the *New Yorker*. Eventually they settled in a tiny twelve foot wide house on San Francisco's Telegraph Hill. When Sydney became ill, Charles took care of him for ten years, rarely leaving the house. Sydney died in September 1997 and Charles decided he wanted to get out, hike and help preserve land.

Two weeks after his call we met Charles for the first time and went for a hike on the 427 acre Silva Ranch. We had signed a \$25,000 option on Silva in August toward a \$750,000 purchase price. The second payment of \$50,000 would be due in February, \$25,000 more in May and again in August and then a \$625,000 balloon payment in November 1999.

The first \$25,000 option payment came from Robert Gemell Adams (1925 - July 24, 1999) a member of Save Mount Diablo's Board of Directors. In his

honor, SMD named the small pond below Windy Point "Bobs Pond" for him shortly before his death.

Although Charles offered to take BART, we picked him up in San Francisco since he doesn't drive. It was a spectacular day in Riggs Canyon, the mountain brilliant to the northwest and, as we climbed up toward Windy Point, we had a broad, crystal clear view of the snow-covered Sierra. Charles wanted to continue our hike all the way to the peak of Diablo, but private land got in our way. At the end of the hike and dozens of questions, Charles said simply, "My brother and I will give you \$100,000 for your next three option payments so you have time to raise the rest of the money." We were successful in acquiring the property and will now add Silva to Mt. Diablo State Park. Meanwhile, Charles continues to provide substantial support and has named SMD in his estate planning. We honored him with a *Mountain Star* award in 2001.

In March, Charles attended a two mile hike for some of our large donors at Vasco Caves. Then he accompanied Seth Adams, SMD's Director of Land Programs, on another six mile hike at Silva, on the new Tassajara Creek Trail. As part of a mitigation project for the threatened California red-legged frog, developer Shapell of Northern California repaired the Bobs Pond dam and built a second and much larger pond at the center of Silva. No trail goes to the pond and you'll be lucky if you ever find it. We took Charles Gresham there to show him "Charles Pond," which we named after him.

We sat on the dam for awhile admiring Charles Pond, then headed up the hill to the Highland Ridge Trail. It was 'magic hour'; the sun was on its way toward setting, the shadows were lengthening on the brilliant green hills and the nearly full moon was already high above. At the top of the grassy ridge a bobcat sat, tawny head framed in the green grass, still until we were fifty feet away, before heading into the trees, his 'bobbed' tail clearly visible. After we passed, he returned to the ridge behind us.

Twenty minutes down the canyon we saw a coyote, just as close, framed in the trees. He never moved as we walked past. Minutes later a Great Horned owl hooted off in the trees, and then a chorus of coyotes began howling from the surrounding ridges. It was a modest celebration, but very special, in honor of Bob Adams, Charles & Walter Gresham, and all of the donors who help save Mount Diablo.



Charles Pond



Tassajara Creek Trail

Continued from page 1

ridgelines with dramatic views. A short section of Finley Road crosses Silva's southeast corner, the Highland Ridge Trail rises across the property's eastern third and, near the property's northern boundary, the Bobs Pond Trail heads to the property's western boundary below Windy Point.

Much of Silva, however, is a steep, heavily wooded main branch of Tassajara Creek rising to Bobs Pond. If a trail could be built in the shaded canyon, it would complete a loop from Bobs Pond back to Finley Road, through completely different habitat, maybe in time for the property's dedication event. It would be a big job, though; on the map the route looked to be three quarters of a mile in length, often on steep slopes. Winter rains promised to quickly limit vehicle access.

The Trail Dogs were excited, however. "It was the opportunity of a lifetime," said Warren Tighe, "We usually just repair existing trails. To be able to help design and then build a trail of this complexity and beauty is a rare opportunity." In January, Seth Adams, SMD's Director of Land Programs, laid out the route with the Trail Dogs, carefully avoiding trees and sensitive areas, often following animal trails. Roger Epperson, superintendent of Morgan Territory and other Diablo regional parks, helped with the alignment. Then on nearly every weekend and on some weekdays the

Trail Dogs got to work, a varied cast of a dozen volunteers putting in hundreds of hours of labor. By Spring construction was complete, including removal of several truck loads of old debris and barbed wire fencing by the State Park volunteer Trash Removal Committee.

The new "Tassajara Creek Trail" is one of the most beautiful single track trails anywhere (narrow, and limited by State Park regulation to hikers and equestrians). It's mostly of moderate grade --no easy feat in the rugged canyon--and almost entirely shaded by large moss covered live oaks, big leaf maple, buckeye, madrone, sycamore, and huge grape vines. Most of its length is in sight of the creek, but with a significant buffer, winding past small fern covered side canyons.

The name? Mission San Jose was founded in 1797, in order to convert East Bay Indians, and its residents used Mount Diablo for winter grazing from around 1800. The first evidence of the naming of Tassajara Creek was in 1841, according to Gudde-Bright's *California Place Names*, 1998. "The creek in Alameda Co. is shown as Arroyo de la Tasajero on a *diseño* (1841) of Valle de San José." An *arroyo* is a creek, or its bed. A *diseño* is a map-like document showing or describing boundaries.

Tasajero is a Spanish-American word designating a place where meat is cut in strips and hung



in the sun to cure. By 1882, published accounts referred to "Tassajara Valley".

As trail work was completed, there were surprises; woodland wildflowers appeared everywhere, including more trillium and fritillary than anywhere else on the mountain, and the trail was quickly adopted by wildlife. Their tracks are everywhere. Volunteer Kate McKillop mapped the trail with a hand held global positioning system (GPS), which uses satellites to provide exceptional accuracy. In fact, the trail that we thought would be about three quarters of a mile in length turned out to be twice as long. "It sure seemed like it was a lot longer when we were building it," said Trail Dog John Van Heertum.

Tremendous thanks to the East Bay Trail Dogs: Harry Silcocks, William Brewster, Fred Cervantes, Peter Coy, Jim Felde, Fred Fukasawa, Bill Gibson, Roy Canright, Emma Davies, Annie Izaki, Jil Kiernan, Tim Malte, Sam McGee, Charles Olsen, Steve Reed, Octavino Romano, Sharon Saffas, Gordon Stevenson, Howard Thomas, Warren Tighe, John Van Heertum, Rollye Wiskerson; and the Trash Removal Committee: Burt Bogardus and Rich McDrew.

For more info or to volunteer with the East Bay Trail Dogs, call Harry Silcocks, 925-443-3925, or visit: www.eastbaytrail-dogs.org ; Burt Bogardus and the Trash Removal Project can be reached at 925 820-2347.

All photos by Scott Hein, except Charles Gresham, and Silva map by Seth Adams; Riggs Canyon by Bob Walker/Oakland Museum

"Moonlight on the Mountain"

Saturday evening, September 13, 2003

An elegant evening under the light of the moon,
at the China Wall in Mount Diablo State Park
Celebrate Save Mount Diablo's 32nd anniversary and
acknowledge recipients of Mountain Star Awards.

Gold Sponsor: Chevron/Texaco

*Catered reception
with hosted bar,
sumptuous dinner,
jazz quartet, silent
& live auctions.*

• *Sign up as an
event sponsor*



- *Be a table host,*
- *Donate silent or live auction items,*
- *Join the planning committee.*

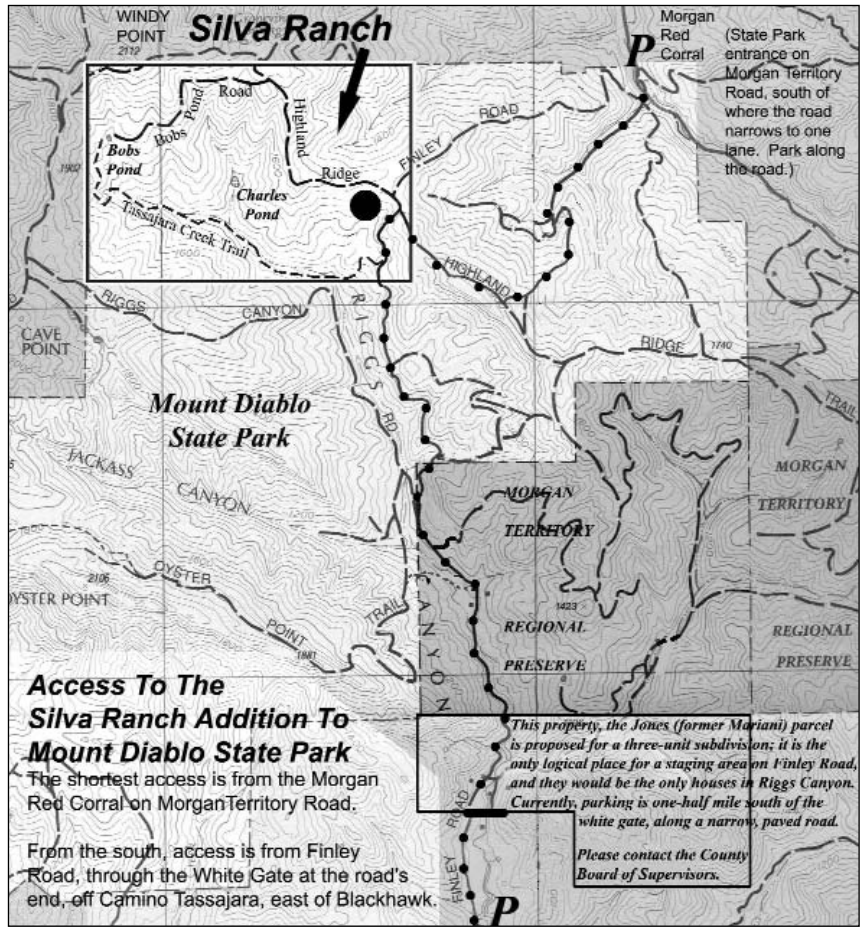
*Contact us at
925-947-3535*

Accessing Silva Ranch & the Tassajara Creek Trail

The Silva Ranch addition to Mt. Diablo State Park opens to the public on July 26, 2003, and is accessible from the east at the Morgan "Red Corral" on Morgan Territory Road, or from the south near the end of Finley Road. Both have limited road side parking. Once you reach Silva (1.3 miles from the Morgan Red Corral, or 2.6 miles from Finley Road parking, you can take a beautiful three mile loop around the Tassajara Creek canyon. The loop is best enjoyed clockwise, rising through the shaded stream canyon and returning down Highland ridge. It starts just inside Silva's southern boundary, and includes moderate uphill grades along the creek to Bobs Pond, below Windy Point. Cross the pond dam and follow the Bobs Pond Fire Road east to the Highland Ridge Trail, and back to Finley Road. There are short steep sections. From Finley Road 8.2 miles round trip, from the Morgan Red Corral 5.6 miles round trip.

Morgan Red Corral, from the North: From Concord, at Ygnacio and Clayton Roads, take Clayton Road 5.9 miles east to Morgan Territory Road then 4.5 miles south to the Red Corral. **From the South,** it is 4.5 miles north of the Morgan Territory Regional Preserve Staging Area. Follow the Morgan Creek Trail up the canyon then left on the Highland Ridge Trail to Silva.

Finley Road, from the South: Take Diablo or Sycamore Valley Roads east to the intersection of Blackhawk and Camino Tassajara (Blackhawk Plaza), and follow Camino Tassajara further east 3.3 miles to Finley, and left just over a mile. The remaining half mile before the White Gate is narrow, and you'll see "no parking" signs. From the parking area, it's 2.5 miles to Silva, the first section paved and on a trail easement across private land. The easement is clearly marked, and curves left as the paved road turns right. Enter Morgan Territory Regional Preserve through a second gate and head up the Canyon past the boarded up farm house. Several trails will split off, but continue on Finley as it gradually rises through a third gate into Mt. Diablo State Park, then a fourth into Silva.



Emergency Alert!!! Riggs Canyon Threatened

Owners of the Jones-Mariani property have proposed a 3-unit subdivision at the Riggs Cyn entrance. They would be the canyon's only houses. in the only place for a public staging area. Trails & endangered species habitat would be impacted. Ask the County Supervisors to stop the project: File # MS010006, applicant: Mark Jones.

Contact: **Mark DeSaulnier** 925-646-5763, FAX925-646-5767, 2425 Bisso Lane, #110, Concord, CA 94520, Dist4@bos.co.contra-costa.ca.us **John Gioia** 510-374-3231, FAX510-374-3429, 11780 San Pablo Ave, El Cerrito, CA 94530, Dist1@bos.co.contra-costa.ca.us **Federal Glover** 925-427-8138, FAX925 427-8142, 315 E.Leland Road #100, Pittsburg, CA 94565, Dist5@bos.co.contra-costa.ca.us **Gayle Uilkema** 925-335-1046, FAX925-335-1076, 651 Pine Street, Room108A, Martinez, CA 94553, Dist2@bos.co.contra-costa.ca.us

Saturday, July 26
Silva Ranch Dedication
 8:30 am - 2 pm
 RSVP by July 18

UPCOMING EVENTS

Saturday, September 13
"Moonlight on the Mountain"
 at the China Wall in the State Park

Sunday, November 2
Trail Adventure
 Half-marathon, 10K run & hike
 Family, fun, food & entertainment

s a v e **MOUNT DIABLO**

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