Take the Scenic Route, BART to BART, on BPWA’s Fifth Annual Long Walk

By Sandy Friedland

If you’re hankering for an all-day hike with good company, then save Saturday, May 30 for the 5th annual BPWA Long Walk. This 14-miler will start at the

Berkeley Path Wanderers Association Spring 2015

North Berkeley BART station at 9 a.m. and finish at El Cerrito del Norte BART station about 4 p.m.

Leading the hike will be intrepid Berkeley hiker and unofficial BPWA photographer Neil Mihalos, who has run and walked 1000s of miles in the Bay Area. He now adds 25 miles a week, documenting each walk with his camera and GPS devices. (See our profile of Neil in our Summer 2014 newsletter.)

When it came time to plan this year’s hike, recalls BPWA walk co-chair Kay Englund, “we knew that Neil would come up with a great adventure, given his passion for hiking, love of history, and photographer’s eye for scenery.”

Neil’s itinerary includes lovely neighborhoods, sites of historic significance, and trails that offer panoramic views, weather permitting. Count on about 2,000 feet of cumulative elevation gain. He’s also included restroom stops and several “bail out” possibilities for those who want a shorter walk.

We will start by walking to San Anselmo Ave., where we’ll begin climbing pathways and stairs into the Berkeley Hills.

At Spruce and Cretin Peaks, we will descend into Tilden Park on the Memory Trail and Packard Trails to Jewel Lake.

Another uphill leg on Laurel Canyon Road will put us on Nimitz Way, where Neil will share his military history. We’ll stop for a BYO-picnic lunch at the end of the Nimitz Way before we continue our north along San Pablo Ridge Trail.

We’ll walk down the Berkeley Trail to Wildcat Creek Trail, which ends at historic Alvarado Park, with its WPA-era stone walls, light standards, and arched bridge. We will provide snacks there and then take city streets downhill for our final 1.8 miles to the del Norte BART Station.

March 17 to 19: The Memory Trail, returning via Vistamont, round Lake Anza to the Wildcat Gorge Trail. We’ll pick up Loop Road and climb to the Memory Trail, returning via Vista Creston, and Keefer Paths.

Start:
Northwest Berkeley Quirk Saturday, May 9 @ 10 a.m.

Leader: Tom Dzaltz (aka Mr. Quirk Bier)

Where the Wild Things Grow Saturday, April 4 @ 10 a.m.

Leader: Philip Stark, Tom Carlson, and Kristen Rasmussen

Start: Codornices Park (on Euclid Ave.)

Join expert foragers on this three-mile hike to Grizzly Peak Blvd. and back. We expect to spot at least 15 types of tasty greens along the way. Note that this will be an information-only tour; no picking or munching of finds.

However, you can sample wild greens at local restaurants that will feature them on their menus April 4th, including Chez Panisse and Cesar in Berkeley and Mission Chinese Food in San Francisco. Check our website for exact times.

Local Waterfalls and Creeks Sunday, April 26 @ 11:30 a.m.

Start: Euclid Ave. & Eureka St.

Transit: AC Transit bus # 52 or # 67

Our teen leaders return — a little older but no slower! — to take us to see waterfalls and creeks on this vigorous six-mile trek. Count on 3½ hours, including a BYO picnic lunch. The first mile is a steep climb to Grizzly Peak, almost entirely on stairs. We’ll then descend into Tilden and round Lake Anza to the Wildcat Gorge Trail. We’ll pick up Loop Road and climb to the Memory Trail, returning via Vista Creston, and Keefer Paths.

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Great Estates of Claremont-Rockridge
Saturday, June 6 @ 10 a.m.
Leader: Ron Sipherd
Start: Claremont Avenue at The Uplands (opposite Star Market)
Transit: AC Transit bus #49
Circa 1900, this scenic neighborhood boasted several imposing mansions with extensive grounds that belonged to some of the Bay Area’s wealthiest tycoons. Many other “very nice” homes belonged to the merely affluent. We will find what remains of these grand houses and try to imagine the splendor of those bygone eras.

Over the years, we have held occasional work parties to tidy up the newer paths, but now we have added regular path-maintenance work parties to our schedule.

BPWA volunteers have added an impressive 33 new stair paths to the city’s public walkways since our organization began in 1997. Because these newer paths are not paved and have wood-tie steps, they require more attention than the older paths that were installed in the early 1900’s as Berkeley’s neighborhoods were developed.

This is a great opportunity for people who want to work on the paths but may not be able to do some of the more physical tasks involved in building paths, like carrying heavy wood ties up steep slopes,” says Mary. “Even kids can help us pull ivy.”

Under the guidance of two experienced former BPWA board members, Mary Lynch and Elsa Tranter, volunteers gather once a month to weed, sweep debris, and trim overhanging branches and intrusive foliage.

They also will pound in any rebar that has worked its way above a step surface to become a trip hazard. However, replacing rotted ties, improving drainage, and adding gravel between the steps remain jobs for our path-building volunteers.

“BPWA’s success comes from the dedication of our members,” says Mary. “Even kids can help by pulling ivy.”

BPWA Adds Path Maintenance Crew

BPWA volunteer, Melissa Weaver

By Colleen Neff

As snow and ice pummeled her native Tennessee, Melissa Weaver was enjoying our sunny winter days installing steps on recently completed Tilden Path, “I love hard physical work,” she declares. “Give me a task, and I’ll do it.”

This dedicated BPWA volunteer has more than fulfilled that vow since she moved to Berkeley in 2013. After years of creating trails in Tennessee state parks, Melissa wanted to use that experience here. She learned about BPWA from City Council member Susan Wargraf and quickly became one of the path-building regulars, aka the Weekday Hotshots.

In addition to Tilden Path, Melissa has helped build Upper Halkin Path and to improve Shasta Stoddard, Sterling, El Mirador, and Cedar Paths and Fountain Walk and Latham Lane.

“Melissa has some serious skills,” says Steve Glaeser, who co-leads our path-building efforts. “She has built some of our finest flights, keeping the rise and run of the steps consistent in difficult situations. She has a great eye for placing them so they look natural and inviting.”

She also has a scientist’s knowledge of lakes, ponds and other bodies of fresh water, having completed a Ph.D. and two post docs in limnology. That background may explain how, as Steve notes, “she anticipates drainage and erosion as she puts in steps.”

In fact, one of Melissa’s goals is to approach paths holistically. “We should consider the durability and sustainability of each trail we build, not just the ease and safety of hiking,” she says. “Trails should be built to last.”

Melissa still does some consulting work and loves to hike, go backpacking, and garden. She seems quite happily transplanted in the Bay Area.