



Bob Jasperson at Yosemite
Courtesy of Sally Jasperson

Remembering WCOSF Founder Bob Jasperson

Editor's Note: This year marks the 40th anniversary of the Walnut Creek Open Space, as well as the Centennial of the founding of Walnut Creek. We are pleased to present profiles of some of our founders, beginning with Jo Ann Hanna in our last edition, and now Bob Jasperson in this remembrance by Foundation Board member Linda Judd.

The Walnut Creek Open Space Foundation had the good fortune to have had Robert Wrenn Jasperson as one of its five founders. Bob's unique set of academic, legal, and personal skills made him an asset to whatever group he worked with. He helped save many redwood and sequoia groves in California, legally incorporated numerous environmental groups, giving them the ability to better protect their parks and open spaces, and as an effective negotiator, brought opposing sides together to add thousands of acres of protected land to California parks.

From Annapolis to Yosemite

So how does being from a military family and going to Annapolis lead to a lifetime of protecting parks and forests? Bob's interest in forest preservation began in Yosemite National Park where his first summer job at age 16, as a waiter in Camp Curry, allowed him to hike all around Yosemite on his days off. His love for the trees and mountains nurtured a desire to protect them, which stayed with him for life. His father was a Navy captain and the family lived in Hawaii, Panama, San Francisco and Annapolis, Maryland. *(continued on page 3)*

The Hills are Alive...with *brassica nigra*

Most of us enjoy that harbinger of spring and summer, the dazzling yellow mustard blooms that cascade down our hills in early spring every year.

You won't find a lot of mustard fans among Walnut Creek Open Space Foundation volunteers. The mustard plant, technically called black mustard (botanical name: *Brassica nigra*,) is one of the non-native invasive plants that bedevil Foundation restoration projects. It's native to parts of Africa, Asia, and Europe. It has been naturalized in most other parts of the world, including North America.

According to the California Invasive Plant Council, "Like other mustards, black mustard grows profusely and produces allelopathic chemicals that prevent germination of native plants. The spread of black mustard can increase the frequency of fires in chaparral and coastal sage scrub, changing these habitats to annual grassland."

Mustard's centuries-old popularity

Mustard, and the condiment produced from its seeds, has been with us for centuries. According to the Mother Earth Living website, "In the Bible (Luke 13:19), reference is made to a mustard seed that grows into a tree, as a seed of black mustard (*Brassica nigra*) certainly might in the climate of the Middle East." (Our mustard here tops out at six to eight feet.) *(continued on page 2)*

Upcoming Events

Tuesday Volunteer Group

Every Tuesday
Location Varies
9 to noon

Sutherland/Fossil Hill Restoration

Every other Saturday
Shell Ridge
July 26–November 1
9 to noon

Master Gardener's Sustainability Fair

Saturday, September 6th
Native Plant Nursery
10 to 3

Walnut Creek

Community Service Day

Saturday September 27th
Time and Location TBD



Open Space Foundation Native Plant Nursery

New Volunteer Group at Native Plant Nursery

The Foundation is forming a new group to meet monthly at our native plant nursery behind the Shadelands Civic Art Center. Activities include planting seeds, transplanting new seedlings, potting up larger ones, and doing various nursery maintenance tasks.

This group is perfect for anyone who wants to be involved, but may not be able to spend three hours hiking or doing more strenuous labor in the open spaces. The Foundation will provide all the necessary tools, but please bring your own gloves (consult leader before buying any). Bathrooms are available at the nursery. However, with all of our groups: don't forget a hat, sunscreen, and water!

For more information or to join this group, please contact the project leader, Lesley Hunt, at lesleyh@wcosf.org.

Reaching Out

This quarter has been exceptionally busy! Between the spring wildflower hikes and Heritage Day festivities, we have actively engaged with the community in fun and informative ways.

In collaboration with the City of Walnut Creek, WCOSF sponsored four wildflower hikes: Shell Ridge, Acalanes Ridge, Lime Ridge, and Sugarloaf, led by Lesley Hunt, Sean Micallef, Phil Johnson, and David Ogden/Barney Howard respectively. Our leaders brought a breadth and depth of knowledge that really impressed our

guests. Each hike had on average about 10 hikers and the hikes were so popular that we had a core group that came to every one.

Similarly, Heritage Day (at Borges Ranch) was another opportunity to introduce the Foundation to residents. City staffers placed the environment-oriented booths in close proximity so we had terrific synergy. In addition to Katrina Nagle, Linda Judd, and Karen Van Der Veer, longtime Foundation member Gene Shulting staffed our booth. Katrina updated the colorful

presentation board while Linda shared her interactive Q & A display with its rewarding flashing light for correct responses. Lesley Hunt provided blooming beauties from our native plant nursery as well as seed samples, while Gene brought vivid Lime Ridge oak restoration documentation plus his valued insights on the program's efficacy, deer antler damage, and voracious voles. People enjoyed stopping by and we enjoyed introducing visitors to the Foundation's work.

— Karen Van Der Veer



Before: Stand of black mustard (*brassica nigra*) on Fossil Hill before restoration and revegetation. — Brad Heckman



After: Thousands of California poppies (*Eschscholzia californica*) illuminate Fossil Hill. — David Ogden

(“The Hills” continued from page 1)
The same source notes that, “Mustard’s immense popularity in Europe during the Middle Ages may have resulted partly from its effectiveness in disguising the taste of spoiled food, but that can’t be the whole explanation: guests at a fete given by the Duke of Burgundy in 1336 are said to have consumed 70 gallons of prepared mustard in one sitting.”

Stateside, there’s little doubt that mustard was brought to California when the Spanish began grazing cattle here. And a UC Irvine paper on mustard claims that “Mission fathers spread the seed of *B. nigra* to mark the trail from one mission to another along the coast.”

Useful to Wildlife and Cattle

While Foundation volunteers and project leaders generally prefer to do away with stands of mustard in areas where restoration and revegetation projects are underway, the plants do provide cover and habitat for birds, snakes, insects, voles, and other wildlife.

Mustard is also useful to ranchers like John Ginocchio, whose family settled in the area 140 years ago. Ginocchio’s cattle, through an agreement with the City, graze mustard in Shell Ridge and Lime Ridge, “but only when it’s young and tender,” he says. “Once the plant gets past a certain stage, it becomes bitter and tough, and the cows aren’t interested in it. But depending on the time of year, if it’s the last green plant available, they’ll eat it.”

Nancy Dollard, Walnut Creek’s Supervising Ranger for the Open Space, views mustard as, “an area-wide insurmountable problem best tackled as the Foundation has been doing — project area by project area. Yes, the public by and large enjoys the early spring color and wildlife has learned to make use of the mustard, but the removal in active restoration areas and a return to native species is always desirable for everyone.”

Persistence Pays Off

Project leader and Foundation Board member Phil Johnson takes a scientific and detailed approach to mustard elimination in the Fossil Hill area of Shell Ridge, near the Sutherland gate, where a revegetation/restoration project has been underway for about three years. “Mustard seeds remain viable in the soil for years,” he says, “so it’s important to eliminate the plants before they are close to going to seed.” Johnson and team volunteers mow or weed whack the plants when they’re young, to discourage re-sprouting. Plants that do re-sprout are uprooted by hand or shovel. This process takes weeks and months of patient and persistent work, working the area repeatedly, until the plants are gone.

Johnson’s project on Fossil Hill illustrates how the land changes when hundreds of volunteer hours are spent scouring the land and removing mustard. This spring, instead of yellow mustard, part of the hillside was abloom with thousands of California poppies from seed sown by volunteers. These are planted not just for their dazzling beauty, but also, Johnson says, “to provide a food source for pollinators that previously used mustards, and to fill the cleared areas with natives rather than some other opportunistic non-native weed.”

For more info about Foundation projects, visit our website at www.wcosf.org.

— David Ogden

(“Bob Jasperson” continued from page 1) Bob studied for two years at the Naval Academy, then decided studying forestry was the direction he would rather follow. He received a degree in forestry from the University of Montana, then served as a lieutenant with the infantry in Korea, on the front lines. After Korea it was back to the University of Montana on the GI Bill, this time studying law, which he thought would be the most useful way to protect wild areas. Summers were spent working in Glacier National Park as a naturalist.

Beginning his law practice as a deputy district attorney in Montana, then moving to San Francisco to work in a law firm, Bob joined the Sierra Club and Save the Redwoods. Then, because of his background in forestry and law and his desire to protect wild areas, he became the Executive Director of The Conservation Law Society of America.

Brower, Sierra Club ask for help

In 1968 he was asked by David Brower of the Sierra Club to research grounds for a lawsuit to block Walt Disney from developing Mineral King, a high glacial valley in the Southern Sierra near Sequoia National Park. Disney had plans for a massive ski resort there. Bob’s finding that Disney was planning to widen a road through protected redwood forest, which was illegal, was among the initial research he provided that helped send the case to the Supreme Court. After almost a decade of legal wrangling, Disney withdrew his proposal, ending the case. During court proceedings Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas gave the opinion that “Because of public concern, environmental objects should be conferred ‘standing’ [in a court of law] to sue for their own preservation.” This idea, that Bob had articulated, became part of the framework for the emerging field of environmental law. The Mineral King case was the one he was proudest of in his career. In 1978 the 15,000 acres of the Mineral King Valley were added to Sequoia National Park.

Bob and his family moved to Walnut Creek in 1974, just after its citizens had voted to buy and preserve Shell Ridge land for open space. He joined the group working on planning for the open space and volunteered his time to help them become incorporated, and attain non-profit status for the Walnut Creek Open Space Foundation.

Served major Bay Area environmental groups

Bob served as president, board member, and/or legal counsel for many environmental organizations over his career, among them Save the Redwoods (for 33 years), The Nature Conservancy, The Alaska Conservation Foundation, the Conservation Law Society, The Legal Defense Fund, Earthjustice, The Sierra Club, Save Mt. Diablo, and the Walnut Creek Open Space Foundation. “He listens”, people said of him. In one example of Bob’s negotiating skills and personal effectiveness, a family of 24 members who could not agree on what to do with their inherited property (which had old growth redwoods on it), gave it to Sequoia National Park after Bob visited each member individually and negotiated the deal. Most of the work Bob did for environmental groups was done pro bono.

The Walnut Creek Open Space, and the Foundation were fortunate to be among the groups Bob Jasperson worked for in his life-long efforts to protect our forests and natural environment. His efforts as one of our founders have made us stronger and more effective. His calm demeanor, his keen mind, his kindness, and his ability to listen made him special to all who worked with him. His legacy is the thousands of acres of land he saved for future generations.

Bob died of cancer in Walnut Creek on April 15, 2005 at age 76. He and his wife, Sally, had a son, and Bob had two children from a previous marriage. Sally now lives in Gardnerville, Nevada, near her son.

Special thanks to Sally Jasperson, Bob’s widow, for her contributions to this profile.

— Linda Judd



Maddie Corich — Brad Heckman



Madi Hight — Brad Heckman

Student Volunteers Honored

The Foundation was pleased this year to initiate a Student Volunteer of the Year award. The awards will be presented annually to one or more local students who have demonstrated a passion and dedication to our open spaces and the environment.

Madeleine Corich and Madison Hight are our two honorees. Both Las Lomas seniors, Maddie and Madi have worked extensively in the open space on Foundation restoration projects, and both are involved in the school’s Eco Action Club. The young ladies received their awards—a certificate and official Foundation t-shirt—at the annual Las Lomas Senior Class Awards Night in June.

Maddie Corich enters in UC Santa Cruz in the fall, and Madi Hight is off to UC Berkeley. We wish them both great success.



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Yes, I want to help protect and preserve Walnut Creek's Open Spaces.

We invite you to join the Walnut Creek Open Space Foundation. Memberships and contributions are tax deductible to the extent allowable by law. There are numerous areas where you can help. Interested? Drop us an email at volunteer@wcosf.org, visit our website at www.wcosf.org, or fill out the form below and mail it to WCOSF, Box 309, Walnut Creek, CA 94597-0309.

I would like to join the Walnut Creek Open Space Foundation

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____ CITY _____ ZIP _____

PHONE _____ EMAIL (WE NEVER SHARE) _____

PATRON—\$500 BENEFACTOR—\$250 SUSTAINING—\$100 SPONSOR—\$50 FAMILY—\$40, INDIVIDUAL—\$25

I WOULD LIKE TO VOLUNTEER TO: MAINTAIN OAKS PLANT NATIVES CREATE WILDLIFE CORRIDORS

Join Our Board?

The Foundation's all-volunteer Board of Directors is seeking new members for 2014-15.

The Foundation Board meets monthly to discuss and make decisions about restoration projects including our Oak Habitat Restoration Project and uses of other native plants, the state of our open spaces, educational and outreach programs, and more.

If you're involved in the Open Space in any capacity—hiker, cyclist, equestrian, dog owner, botany or biology student—and are interested in joining the board, please send an email to us at: contact@wcosf.org.

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